

Bible Study Of Haggai 4

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[0 : 00] What have we done that this has happened to us? You dismiss that and say, oh, well, that's just circumstance. There's nothing we can do about that. We're not responsible. It doesn't matter.

You know, tenants is down. Money's not coming in. We're not selling the product. Things are not happening. And that's just too bad because, well, you know, it's the same all over and everything is going on like that and there's nothing we can do about it.

Rather than using that, the Lord says, to turn to me and say, I'm in this situation, we're in this situation, what are we doing wrong? Why can't we examine it?

Why can't we look at it? Why must we hide our eyes from it? If you go to your wine vat and you find that three-fifths of it has gone bad and you can't do anything, it's wasted, useless.

If you go to your granary and find that half the grain that you were going to live on has been mildewed, why don't you ask some questions?

[1 : 03] Why has this happened? So you see, in a sense, it's a very easy parallel. What's happening in their world is happening in their relationship to the Lord himself.

It's gone bad. And they're not living in the relationship to the Lord to which the Lord has called them to live. And that's what Haggai is trying to point out to them and saying, consider this.

And the translation, which I think is a better translation, which I think comes in the authorized version, lay it to heart. You know, take this thing and look at it.

Consider. It's a wonderful sort of thing that we should spend time laying things to heart. You know, why is this happening?

Why is this relationship not working? Why is this program not meeting the need? Why are we, as a congregation, failing to do the job we should be doing?

[2 : 22] Lay these things to heart, Haggai says. Because the Lord has something to show you here. And if you're not willing to find that out, then you're just perpetuating the condition.

Well, then he goes on in verse 18 and says, again, lay it to heart. Do you see that? Lay it to heart from this day forward. And the day from this day forward is this 24th day of the ninth month.

This is the day on which this prophecy was given to Haggai. He said, since the day of the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider.

Lay it to heart. Look what's happening. Is the seed yet in the barn? The answer is no. Do the vine, the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing?

The answer is yes. Yes. Okay. The Lord says, from this day on, I will bless you. I will bless you as you take it into your hands to lay this to heart and to watch what's happening.

[3 : 37] To see what I am doing in your life, in your life as a people. From this day on, things are going to be different.

That there's going to be, their life will be marked in a totally different way. When you turn and obey and do his work.

The work that he has called you to do. And I think it's hard for us. I think it's really quite hard for us to recognize that we do the will of God.

We seek the will of God. Because it is the will of God. We try and justify it on other grounds, as though it needs other grounds.

That I will do the will of God because that way I will become fat and prosperous and better off than my neighbor. I will do the will of God because that way I will get rid of my guilty conscience.

[4 : 49] I will do the will of God because it will help me in my personal relationships. Well, no. All those things may in some measure be true.

But the bottom line is we do the will of God because it's the will of God. That's what we are to look for. And if we can't justify it in terms of some benefit that will come back to us from doing it. Then we don't do it. And that's what these people were in trouble over. They hadn't laid it to heart what was happening.

And if God chooses to prosper us, well and good. If he doesn't choose to prosper us, well and good. Our course is clear. Our business is to do his will.

And to recognize that. When our whole world may be crumbling around us, we're going to do his will. And you say, God, why is this happening? Well, God may give you the answer or he may not. [5 : 54] But the alternative is still the same. You're to go on doing his will. Seeking the place of obedience. So, I tell you that.

And Haggai demonstrates that and asks you to consider it. Do you see how verse 18 begins? Consider, lay to heart from this day forward, from the 24th day of the ninth month, since the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid. Lay it to heart.

The sentence begins and ends with this business of, take this seriously. Think about it deeply. Ask the question, is the seed yet in the barn?

And that from this day forward, things are going to be different. God is going to bless them. Then he has a concluding, and some people think this is the fourth, the fourth of Haggai's statements, beginning with verse 20.

[7 : 04] The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the 24th day of the month. This is the same day that the other one came. So, that's why they're put together, I think.

Speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth and to overthrow the thrones of kingdoms.

I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations and to overthrow the chariots and their riders and the horses and their riders shall go down, and every one by the sword of his fellow. Well, you will know that the Assyrian Empire had given away to the Babylonian Empire, and the Babylonian Empire ultimately gave away to the Greeks under Alexander the Great, and Alexander the Great ultimately gave away to the Romans.

And there's just been this story of things being shaken. Remember, there was another great shaking that was spoken of in the first chapter.

[8 : 10] By the sound of leaves turning, I guess I should find that for you, but it's verse 6 of chapter 2, where it says, Thus says the Lord of hosts, Once again in a little while I will shake.

Now, there's a lovely kind of contrast, which I think you should look at here, just because of the wording, if for no other reason.

And that is the difference between stirring and shaking. If you look in chapter 1, verse 14, you'll find that the Lord stirs up his people.

I am with you, says the Lord, and the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, and the spirit of Joshua, and the spirit of the remnant of the people.

He stirred them up, and that was to do and to be what God called them to be. But the other nations he shook, and that is to destroy them.

[9 : 20] And to destroy them because of the purposes of his kingdom. And we were studying in the Breakfast Bible study this morning, the first sermon of Christ as recorded in the Gospel of Mark, when Christ says, And the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

And that kingdom is a present kingdom among all the kingdoms of the world. This is a totally different kind of kingdom.

Because this kingdom is a kingdom which exists where there are those who live in obedience to Jesus Christ as Lord. This is the kingdom of obedience to God.

And you belong to that kingdom insofar as you are seeking to obey him. And if you're not seeking to obey him, you don't belong to it. There are no passports that are given to you.

There are no geographical boundaries that surround you. There are no uniforms that you wear or flags that you fly. It's hearts obedient to Christ as Lord that marks that kingdom.

[10 : 34] And that that's the kingdom which is promised in the Old Testament and which is fulfilled in Christ and which is being fulfilled as we pray, Thy kingdom come.

That is, hearts obeying you is the mark of that kingdom. So, these kingdoms of the earth, you know, change and decay in all around I see.

That the whole process of the breakdown of the human order and, you know, that this government gives way by reason of corruption and by reason of insensitivity gives away and something else must come along and take over.

perpetual revolution is taking place and the authorities that rise up by the process of revolution, they in their turn go down and somebody else comes up.

And this is the shaking that God is giving to our world in order to bring us into obedience. But then he says, and this is with, these are the words with which the whole book concludes.

[11 : 53] On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and make you like a signet ring.

For I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts. It's almost as though the Lord takes a ring and puts it on his finger. And on that ring is the signet to say who he is.

And Zerubbabel, who is the king of this remnant people of God and the people whom he rules over, they are to be God's signet ring.

They are the one through whom God is going to reveal in the midst of all this shaking who he is. the church of God is to be that community of people through whom God reveals himself to an alien world.

And that's the picture that's given to Haggai. And he talks about Zerubbabel, the king, the leader of this people.

[13 : 08] And in Zerubbabel he's talking about all the people. In the same way that if you are arrested you will be brought to court on that.

Not as in the, not as in America where you would say the people versus Joe Smith. It will be Joe Smith or the king or the queen against Joe Smith because the queen represents the people.

Zerubbabel. And you get that kind of picture as Haggai ends that Zerubbabel who is the one who is born of the line of David.

He is the one. And it's in this way that Christ will come and that the people of God will be recognized as God's signet ring identifying who he is and what he stands for.

Well, that's the end of Haggai and that all happened just over 2,500 years ago I guess.

[14 : 22] 2,500 years ago. But it's wonderful that there are some contemporary parallels, isn't it? That we need to pay attention to as God speaks to us through the prophets.