

Bible Study Of Haggai 2

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] is from the book of Haggai. And Haggai is, again, let me remind you, one of those books in the Old Testament that always moves around so you can never find it. And the best way is to go to the end of the Old Testament and then count your way back through Malachi and Zechariah, and there is Haggai. So it's in the Blue Bibles. It's on page 831.

Can we just bow our heads and we'll begin? Father, as we turn our minds and our hearts to your eternal Word, we move from what in some ways seem the petty circumstances of our daily lives to the eternal purposes of the sovereign God that you are. And yet it's only that in those eternal purposes that we can recognize the working out of your purposes in our lives and circumstances.

And so give us hearts to hear the things that you're calling us to. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Haggai is one of the prophets. The prophets come under that heading which I told you about last week, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man or woman of God may be complete and equipped for every good work. So Scripture is important to us. There's a lovely book review in this week's Manchester Guardian which talks about a literary view of the Bible, and it seems to be an anthology of various writers on the subject of the particular books of Scripture. And the review ends having been quite overwhelmed by this review of Scripture by quoting Kierkegaard. And he says about Kierkegaard that Kierkegaard suggested that we take the New Testament, and the man who wrote the review and the Guardian said he thought it would be good if we took the whole of the

Bible and gave it back to God and said, we don't want this book, it makes us unhappy. It somehow disturbs our little world. And we would like you now to take it back, please. And that quietly and reverently we would say to God, you know, here it is. We have our own little lights and we'll live in the sideside, we'll take it back. And so the future is like, um, here we walk into this book, it comes up to the book that it Mukherjee is to most ■■■■ dasemi nines gDwird wasbec Alterfa and again you take it from husband to ■äl his name, uh, One of the week that it is a of the covenant that belongs to our preparable plate and we are char embargoes made it with slavery, you know, to ■■■■ e's' labor of his founder, Österreich, is typically an example ofucharist that only rebuild the temple and what they had there then was this you see their little house which was here and

[4 : 18] Here like this and their little garden which surrounded it like this and maybe even their hedge which went around it like that and In this they had their little family and in this they had you know security written in large letters right across this and This is what they maintained by this little house and They were in a sense protecting themselves They had now been back from the captivity in Babylon for 15 years and all they had done was to establish themselves establish their homes build their houses try and get the economy going again and Haggai I came along and said it's time to build the temple That's what's happening to you now look at it and you'll see how how Haggai puts it to them which I find a fascinating story If you look at it

It's in it's in chapter 1 verse verse 9 you have looked for much and It all came to little Which you came back to the promised land full of visions and it hasn't amounted to anything He goes on in verse 10 I Do you have trouble finding verses in this passage I do do it in the end of verse 9 why says the Lord of hosts because My house that lies in ruins while you busy yourselves each with his own house you're all very busy building up your own little base of private security and and My house lies in ruins so that's the way Haggai describes what the problem is and He goes on and says the heavens above have withheld dew the

Earth has withheld its produce I I have called for drought upon the land and the hills upon the grain the new wine the oil What the ground brings for?

Upon men and cattle upon all their labors Now once upon a time I I was assigned the job of driving from Kingston to Towards the Quebec border to a city called No, it was past Brockville and not as far as as Cornwall Anyway, it was along there and we drove this sort of spring day through mile after mile of prosperous farms and And the person I was driving was Bishop Chandu Ray from Pakistan and He said oh the prosperity of the countries of the open Bible He made the direct connection between A country that lived with an open Bible and the prosperity that he saw all around him

Now of course we live in a in a different kind of world But you know the weather is a bit gray outside and you're forced to wonder whether There's acid rain coming down from above On the basis of industrial complexes in the state of Washington and Whether the rivers have been polluted and whether the Ocean shores have been are being rendered done lifeless and And why that gray brown mist lies over from sort of Horseshoe Bay down to Boundary Bay that you can see when you come across on the ferry and down The the whole the whole thing is is there and and we think about it and we you can't say well It's without significance, but but something in a sense you get that sort of

[8 : 44] There's something wrong with with our time Things don't grow the way they used to you know that the the the winters are longer or the ground is less fertile and that this this wonderful picture by By the prophet Haggai that with it. We are very much a part of the air we breathe the land we live in the gardens We keep the houses we have all that is part of who we are and we're locked into it all and it and it it's part of who we are so that You know somebody says to you How about two weeks on a sand beach with the ocean coming in and the coconuts and the palm trees?

Well, we like to escape in a sense from the from the physical atmosphere in which we live our lives and the and the depression of these short cold dark rainy days and all the that that has on us and the kind of spiritual results it gives to us and That we're all locked into that and the prophet looks at at at this little land of Judah and he says You know that there's drought and the oil and the cattle and the crops and everything nothing seems to be going right and you know how if we were to lend ourselves to a little exercise of this kind With such a company of people as we have here How many things we could discover are wrong with our city?

And with the environment that we live in and the problems we live among and how depressing and discouraging and hopeless and despairing? It would be if we were to do that and only that and How irrational it is to be optimistic and hopeful and to think that things may yet be better than they have been and How out of step you would be with the rest of society if you thought and talked that way?

Well, that's what Peggy I points out to them Heavens above have withheld their dew the earth with it has withheld its produce I've called for a drought and the land and the hills and the grain and the new wine and the oil and the ground up and And that man and all his labor are somehow under the curse we're not getting anywhere There's a certain futility a certain hopelessness a certain despair that has afflicted us We've been back in this country now for 15 years We came back with a high vision of what we were going to do We came back because the world was going to be a new world and we've been in captivity a long time and And now we've been here 15 years and what have we done?

Nothing the years have gone by So we mark and measure out in a sense the years of our lives well, then you get on to the To what happens as a result of that as Haggai says something's got to happen and He tells them what's going to happen And you you get this then in in versa in verse 13 The word of the Lord comes from Haggai and in verse 13 He speaks to the people the Lord's message and the Lord says I am with you and In verse 14 He's going to stir up the spirit of Zerubbabel and Zerubbabel has the name of The the the Babylonian name but he's nevertheless in his blood

[12 : 41] Got the blood of the royal line of David and it's through the line of David That God's kingdom is going to come and the spirit of Zerubbabel is stirred up and the Spirit of Joshua the high priest is stirred up and the spirit of all the remnant of the people is stirred up and They come and work on the house of the Lord their God So something happens to bring renewal and revival to this despairing community It's hope and it's hope which concerns something in the far distant future It's not a hope that actually was realized they got around and they went to work and they established the foundations and they put the cornerstone down and things fell away again but nevertheless the hope they were talking about was a kind of

Eternal hope and not at not an eternal hope but uh, but a transcendent hope it was the the messianic hope which belonged to the people that God would bring his kingdom and that they in their generation had to give expression to that and their expression to that hope was to be in their coming together and building or starting to build laying the foundations of of the temple in Jerusalem well You see the trouble with the Bible is that uh You know if time begins here and wanders on and on and on like this and just keeps going and and you happen to live in that segment of it That segment of it is is a peculiar mystery that you never understand You never have the chance to understand it You know people 50 years from now will tell you what was happening in the 80s And if you happen to be alive to read it you will be surprised right out of your mind

To know what happened in the years through which we are in a sense dully and insensitively going because we don't know Where we are?

We don't know what's happening. We don't know the forces that are at work corroding our society We don't know the forces that there might be at work building a whole new culture a whole new society maybe the very seeds of a new or a spiritual revival are being sown among us at this very moment and we don't know it and And that's why you're asked to live with the totality of scripture Why you're asked to go back to Adam?

And the garden of Eden and then Moses or Abraham and the family of God's people if you want and then and then Moses and then the judges and then the king and then the prophets and then the the writers of the Psalms and then the and then the the the the fullness of time in which Christ comes into our world and Out of that comes the people who begin to interpret it in the Gospels and to try and understand it in the epistles and the people who catch the vision not just of what has been from the beginning which they have recorded in Scripture But they go right to the end of time and they talk about a new heaven and a new earth And it says the people of Scripture have to live somewhere in between Adam and the apocalypse And they have to know the reality of who Adam was and they have to know the hope that belongs to What one day will be and that's the way you're to live your life and you can't live it in here because you don't know what this means

[16 : 34] You can't see beyond the narrow confines of your own Little existence the own the time the sort of I blink of time which is your life If you can only live in that you're not going to know what's happening And so you need to know the whole span of it and that's what That's what Haggai tries to do that's what the prophets work at Is to help you become aware of the fact that you're living within a whole process of God's ultimate and eternal Purposes now Look at chapter 2 there this the the the The book of Haggai is Is divided by scholars into three discourses one is chapter 1 The second is chapter 2 verses 1 to 9 and the third is chapter 2 verses 10 to the end and we're going to work in

Such time as we have mainly now on the Second discourse which is chapter 2 verses 1 to 10 And just sort of to get it in your mind i'll read it for you and then we'll go back over it In the second year of darius the king this in the seventh month on the 21st day of the month the word of the lord came by Haggai the prophet Speak now to zerubbabel the son of shealtiel governor of judah and to joshua the son of jehoshaddak the high priest and to all the remnant of the people and say Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory?

How do you see it now? Is it not is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet you take courage o zerubbabel says the lord Take courage o joshua son of jehoshaddak the high priest take courage all you people of the land says the lord for i am with you says the lord of hosts According to the promise that i made you when i came out from egypt My spirit abides among you fear not For thus says the lord of hosts once again in a little while I will shake the heavens and the earth the sea and the dry land I will shake all nations So that the treasures of all nations shall come in and I will fill this house With splendor says the lord of hosts The silver is mine the gold is mine says the lord of hosts The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former says the lord of hosts And this place I I will give prost and to this place in this place. I will give prosperity says the lord of hosts so that's the the second discourse and

He begins by asking them to look at at the old temple and compare it with the new now the old temple was was uh uh was uh destroyed in 586 or before and uh, it's now 520 So you can see that you'd have to be more than 66 years old to have seen the old temple but among them no doubt there were people that Spanned that time and who had seen the old temple and they saw this little building that That they're starting on and they said oh, no the old days That was when it was the way it should be not now the old days You can't you know what's happening now is of no significance it was then That God was among us. It was then that we had some content to our faith. It was then that uh That God's purposes were acknowledged and realized

And you know that particularly disease that we all suffer from that It was better in those days than it is now There were great men great people great movements. We can that was when it was but right now Dismiss it. It's meaningless this petty little temple you're building here Which incidentally lasted a lot longer than the other one had But uh, the uh That was the contrast that that he said points out in in verse two and three and he said you're going to be You're going to look at this and think it's nothing But he says there's something else. How do you see it now?

[21 : 17] You know, what is it in the way that you see it? um Is it not in your sight is nothing then he goes on to to chapter 2 verse 4 and says take courage For I am with you that's to be the great reality of their lives the fact that the lord is With them that's the factor that changes every human circumstance The presence of the lord changes every human circumstance and outweighs every human circumstance The fact that the lord is with you Makes the deepest tragedy into the grounds for the ultimate joy It takes every circumstance of our life and turns it upside down and makes the point of despair and the point of Defeat and so on can can change all that because of the simple fact That the lord is with us that he has this promise that he's given if you look in verse chapter 2 verse 5

You get this According to the promise that I made you when you came out of egypt my spirit abides among you fear not That is according to the ancient promise And that of course is is what happens to you when you read the scripture That that the ancient promises of god to adam and to abraham and to moses uh all those promises become the reality of god's continuing purpose in history And it's our business in our generation to know the ancient promises You know so that uh, I was uh, just looking at a book by uh Jeffrey bull who was a a missionary who was imprisoned in in prisoner of war camp and his whole book is built around psalm 103

You know that bless the lord o my soul and all that is within me bless his holy name you know who uh, bless the lord o my soul and forget not all his benefits and He goes on and describes these because even in the midst of his very adverse circumstances He was able to recognize the continuing and eternal purposes of god And so Haggai is saying to these people Caught as they are in the particular little insignificant niche of history Um, that the eternal promises of god apply And that's the reality of their lives as it is indeed the reality of our lives One of the one of the lovely One of the lovely statements in that book review from the manchester guardian that I was telling you about was a a book by a Jewish writer an article by a jewish writer on the book of joe

And he says that he he deals with the the the terribly Anthropocentric way that we read scripture As though at the center of scripture is man, you know He says no at the center of scripture is god God You read yourself into there you're misreading scripture It's god who is at the center and it's god who's active and it's god whose purpose is being revealed And it's god who is being justified and god who is being vindicated and god who will be glorified And that's the reality and if you make if you start reading scripture in a self-centered way You'll miss what it's talking about and that's uh That's what I think a haggie eye is getting on when he points them to the to the ancient promises And says that that it's you know that the the circumstances of our lives are within the redemptive and eternal purposes of god

Look at chapter 2 verse 6 Where it says for thus says the lord of hosts once again in a little while I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land Things are going to be shook The whole careful order and structure of our world is going to be taken and shaken like that so that you won't even begin to recognize it anymore There's a lovely article in one of the magazines this week on shaking And it describes the terrible american trade deficit with relationship to japan And the enormous wealth of and prosperity of japan at the moment and uh Somebody discussing this with a very senior japanese politician and said how is that imbalance going to be redressed And the japanese man said i think we will probably ask them to give us california

[26 : 51] You know The land which they couldn't touch militarily They now may just take economically You know things that you couldn't have imagined Happened and things are shaken and the the the you know the the sort of whole structure of human society Things happen which we could never have anticipated I as a generation ago You know I I Always am drawn back to my I Two friends that I knew in toronto who had both been right through the last world war And they were one of them described to me riding on the young street subway and going downtown one remembrance day morning And uh, you know having given their lives in a great cause And as young men having gone and enlisted and fought With a tremendous loyalty

You know and one of them turned to the other and said What does it mean? You know as though everything has been so shaken you know to try and persuade people on november the 11th That something happened then which was a world significant Our world has been shaken so many times that all the things that we try and say this is what's happening in our world they don't happen and And the world gets shaken and things happen which we could which we could in fact never have anticipated And that's what haggii tells them is going to happen They know for instance because this starts in the second year of darius and that darius's throne uh that darius was Was in a very precarious position But he was in fact the man who took over from the babylonian empire and uh so that on an international level things were being badly shaken and that's what haggii says is going to happen again he says it in in verse 6 um

In verse 6 of chapter 2 when he says once and once again in a little while i will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land and i will shake all nations So that the treasures of all nations shall come in well You see what what it means is that uh again, I have to come back to this little span of time within which we we live our lives and we think we know what's going to happen you know um And uh uh We think we know how the world is going to unfold but but we don't we don't even recognize Why we believe the things we believed a generation ago because every everything's changed And we don't understand why it's changed And it shouldn't have changed because we thought that this was really what the answer was going to be But it's all changed

It's all been shaken And uh And what we have to do Is we have to be in touch with the unchangeable and unshaken promises of god in the midst of history and to see how that works out We have to get the great themes of scripture and see how they work out You know, we can we can trace within this span The decline and fall of the roman empire and even it just takes a quite short span in this whole line We can see the rise and fall of the british empire We can see the british commonwealth of nations which was so great But what's happened it's been so it's been so badly shaken And yet the eternal purposes of god in christ are there And we see the beginning and we see the end And the faith of a christian man or woman based on the scriptures is that in some measure what will be is now

And if you go on to find out what will be you look at haggyi chapter 2 and verse 6 uh uh where it says sorry uh where it says the treasures of all the nations shall come in and i will fill this house with splendor says the lord of hosts the silver is mine the gold is mine says the lord the latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former says the lord of hosts and in this place i will give prosperity says the lord of hosts that's the that's the picture that and that's that's the thing that that we have to come back to time and time again in our in our lives and in our circumstances you know that the silver belongs to the lord and the gold belongs to the lord and the wealth belongs to the lord and time belongs to the lord and history belongs to the lord and god will in his purposes bring to pass what he has made known to us in his ancient promises and the hope that he's given us for the future and we have that we have that reality within which to to live our lives and uh to to recognize that that uh that that's what happens and what happens then is that uh in this place he says in verse verse 9 in this place i will give prosperity says the lord of hosts that prosperity is not a human achievement it is a god given gift and when we get confused about that about that kind of prosperity and when we when we think that we have in a sense achieved this prosperity by ourselves then we're in trouble because we don't achieve it it's given to us and because it's given to us we have to treat it in a radically different way and in the same way that if you think you are the author of your own prosperity then you are responsible to nobody but yourself as to what you do with it and uh and uh that's how you how you treat it but if that prosperity is something that god has given because it ultimately belongs to him and you ultimately can't take it with you as the saying goes then uh you treat it in a very different way and that's you know part of the of the sorrow of our world is that god has enough to provide for us all but somehow we can't share it we all have a lot that we could share with one another but we don't know how to do it we don't know and that's why why uh haggai is important he says in the midst of all the circumstances of our life there needs to be the building up of the temple the building up of the worship of god you know so that week by week we come back together and say god is who god is and from that i am who i am and as we go away from that our world becomes often becomes burdened and we become discouraged and

[35 : 36] downhearted and desperate we'll say i'm just going to build my little house and look after my little family and and that's the way it's going to be and uh god calls us back to worship him and to acknowledge who he is and to acknowledge his purpose in our midst and so haggai says go and build the temple and uh that's how it's going to work well we'll finish haggai next week and the week after that you