

Haggai 2:1-13

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- [0 : 0 0] in the Old Testament and in the book of Haggai. Now if you go to the very last of the prophets, Malachi, the one before is Zechariah and the one before that is Haggai.
- I'm looking at the second chapter and the first nine verses. In the second year of Darius the king, in the seventh month, in the twenty-first 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 Jehozadak, 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 in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord.
- Take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work, for I am with you, says the Lord.
- [1 : 2 5] According to the promise which I made when you came out of Egypt, my spirit dwells 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 and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all nations so that the measures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts.
- The silver is mine and the gold is mine. 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.
- Amen. May it be to his praise and to his glory. So the fact of the matter is, the lockdown is nearly over.
- And because of that, there's a question that comes to me as I've thought about this, and it comes to us all this morning, which is simply this.
- How do we start again when the lockdown will be finally over? The wisdom of the world says it's simply a matter of going back to before the lockdown and starting from there.
- [3 : 0 3] But that can't be for this reason. According to the statistics, there were nearly 120,000 people have died.
- Thousands have lost their employment. Businesses have gone to the wall. People have been made bankrupt. We're not going back to a society that existed.
- We're going back. We're going forward to a new situation. And this meditation in Haggai is directed to that.
- Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? As far as ancient Israel is concerned, they didn't have so much of a lockdown as a lockout.
- Because if you read the prophetic voice through Jeremiah, he is saying to them, you cannot carry on as you are. And the carry on as you are meant you can't worship the Lord and every other God that you choose to worship at the same time.

[4 : 26] It can't be done. And if you don't respond, God will come to you in judgment and carry you away to Babylon. And that took place.

2 Kings 25 parallel to Jeremiah 52 tells you all about it. The whole of the nation carried away. It started in 5606 BC and ended in 536.

And in Haggai 2, we're in 520 BC. So I want to look at this question. Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory?

How do you see it now? In three different ways. First of all, it's a question looking back. The problem with this book is concerned is that while the people are living in well-furnished homes, the house of the Lord lies in ruins.

Let's see what God says in chapter 1. Verses 7 and 8. Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it, that I may appear in my glory, says the Lord.

[5 : 54] In verse 9. You have looked for much, and lo, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? Because of my house that lies in ruins, while you busy yourselves each with his own house.

So why was it after this return, which took place in 536 BC, which the book of Ezra testifies to, that the house of the Lord had been left in ruins?

Well, there's a reason for that. And in the book of Ezra, which tells you about the history of the people coming back, This is taking place in 535 BC, i.e. one year after the people had returned.

So here we have the people with, under the inspiration of these two men, Joshua and Zerubbabel. They went to themselves and applied themselves to this work with great zeal.

But it came to a stop. And this is instrumental. It's instructive. If you look in the book of Ezra, you find it was the Samaritans who were involved in bringing the work of God to a rapid stop.

[7 : 40] They brought the work of God to an end by opposing what was going on. The people of the land were disheartening the people of Judah and frightening them off from building.

They hired counsellors against them to break up their plans. So here is a fact. That whenever the work of God starts, there's always someone around, or something around, to oppose what's being done and to bring it to a stop.

And what had happened was, these people who had started with such zeal had been defeated. Because instead of zeal, discouragement came in and took its place.

A terrible thing is discouragement. Because if you are discouraged in doing God's work, it means that you've lost the vision that you once had.

And this cessation of work went on for 17 years. So the vision had been lost. And these two people, Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets, were instrumental in having it restored.

[9 : 09] The prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel who was over them. Then Zerubbabel and Joshua rose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

And with them were the prophets of God helping them. So here we have it. Through this prophetic ministry, those who listened regained their vision.

Now what can we learn from this bit of Old Testament history? There is a word which Jesus spoke which we'll come to to Peter.

I tell you, Peter, Peter, you are Peter. And on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

That's the word that Jesus gives to us today. Yes, there are oppositions. There are discouragements.

[10 : 21] There are failures. But what the Lord is saying to Peter is simply this. My work will go on. A question looking inward. Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory and how do you see it now? A question that looks back to where we were.

but a question also that looks in and asks us to consider what we're actually doing at this moment in time.

So when the prophet asks this question who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory how do you see it now? that's precisely what he's doing.

Not he's asking having a memory of what it once was isn't any good because a memory can't minister to the needs of the people as they are now.

[11 : 31] what does it mean? This is not just a history list.

While all that is historical in this situation has gone there are spiritual principles that are still here. And the spiritual principle that first comes out is this question.

do we have the faith to believe that God is able to carry on his work and restore what was lacking into an entirely new situation and a level of glory we may not yet have seen.

Now this is what the prophet encourages the people to believe. 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.

As far as the historical situation is concerned this house that they were building way back there in 520 odd BC was replaced by the temple which Herod the Great built on this site.

[12 : 55] it was far greater than anything any had ever seen before but it has to be said that through our Lord Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection he was going to raise a far greater temple than anything that Herod could have built and so we find the Jews taking this question up.

Jesus answered them destroy this temple in three days I will raise it up. Then Jesus said the Jews said to him it has taken 46 years to build this temple and will you raise it up in three days?

But he spoke to them of his body. The third day and Christ arose from the dead moving forward some weeks to the day of Pentecost which created the body of Christ the church of the living God and that power Pentecost is still with us today.

He is in our midst. we cannot nullify his influence. Do we believe that God is able to deal with this and to restore as I'm indicating?

I tell you you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. Now to that promise there's another one and you get this one in the Acts of the Apostles where Jesus says to the Apostles before he ascends you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria to the end of the earth and we see these people who were fearful for the Jews transformed into a mighty army of people and the church takes off and it starts in Jerusalem and it goes round Judea into Samaria and the Acts of the Apostles tells us that the gospel finally reached

[15 : 24] Rome but that doesn't mean to say that that's it there's more to be done there's a fulfillment that lies outside of the Acts of the Apostles so the question looks back the question looks in how are we responding to this it also looks forward speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel governor of Judea and to Joshua the son of Jehoshaphat 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 and how do you see it now so the question that is now coming is looking forward forward for the days that lie in advance of this day and as far as the ancient people were concerned they received the promise the latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former and in this place

I will give prosperity says the Lord of hosts now one of the things we find is that when these people came back from Babylon they were confronted with a Jerusalem that was largely destroyed and in ruins the very end of the book of Jeremiah here is what they found the captain of the body guard of Babylon entered Jerusalem and he burned the house of the Lord and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem and every great house he burned down and all the army of the Chaldeans broke down all the walls round about Jerusalem that is what they saw but that is not what God is saying the latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former and in this place

I will give prosperity so given that the exiles are listening to what God is saying and I trust that we are listening to what instruments do they have in their favor so that God can do this well the first thing that they have is the prophetic word and they also have the faith in the ability of the Lord to fulfill his own word and so in a quotation I've already given you from Ezra chapter four we read that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah the son of Ido prophesied to the Jews in Judah and in Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel who was over them then Zerubabel and Joshua arose and began to rebuild the house of

God which is in Jerusalem and with them were the prophets of God helping them these prophets one of the things they had to have was not only the ability to prophesy but they had to have a personal faith in what they were saying God was able to do it's an act of faith to issue out the word of the Lord so the prophet is a man or woman of faith and so in preaching this word to you this morning I'm not in any doubt about what God is able to do I have to believe that God is able to fulfill every promise he's given in this book he can do it and in him we also can do it in the

New Testament terms the apostle Paul was a man of faith and so he wrote to the Ephesians in this way to him who by the power at work within us he's able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever amen a man of faith a man who believed in prayer I trust we all believe in prayer personally speaking I've seen some marvelous answers to prayer even when I didn't expect it and there's a confession but that is true but this man of faith wrote some 13 epistles or letters to the various churches he had founded this man of faith did this in spite of all the severe persecution and testing and as a result was able to say just before he died

[21 : 15] I have fought the good fight I have finished the course I have kept the faith faith what is faith how can we define it the apostles once asked Jesus increase our faith what does he say if you have faith and do not doubt you will be able to say to this mountain be taken up and planted in the sea and it shall remove for nothing shall be impossible to you that is faith in the great chapter in Hebrews 11 the two words are repeated time and time and time again are by faith and here we have this great cloud of witnesses who accomplished so much simply because they had faith in their

God who was able to do more than we could ever ask or think indeed the epistle to the Hebrews says in verse 6 without faith it is impossible to please him for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and he rewards those who seek him so we need faith we need prayer we need our hearts to be set on the word of God but we also need a vision in Ezekiel chapter 47 there is a vision where the prophet is taken in vision to a new temple and he stands at the door of the temple and there is water trickling out it's a small stream but it becomes larger and larger and it flows down to all the barren places in the earth and makes them live this is

God's temple God's throne and from here there is a river of life it is flowing from the word of God to you and to me and through you and me to all the surrounding streets round about there may be death there now but if we have faith in this vision death will be turned into life that is what we have to do amen nothing or third and final hymn let's pray gracious and eternal God we thank you for being in your midst this day and you have told us very plainly that where two or three are gathered you are here in the midst and we would savor your blessing on each and every one of our lives as we go from here to serve you in our different places our different localities asking your blessing upon us draw near to us use us that we might glorify you in

Jesus name we ask it amen amen amen amen amen amen amen