

This is, therefore, a book designed to stir, and designed to stir a particular class: the elect remnant of God. May its rich content and direct dealing stir our hearts to participate in God's eternal purpose of building His House in the perilous days in which we live.

Now, for a brief look at the outline of this messenger's message. The first prophetic discourse (1:2-11) was uttered in August/September 520 BC, on the first day of the sixth month in the second year of the reign of Darius, and consisted of a rebuke to the nation for their neglect to rebuild the temple, and a call to self-examination. The second message (2:1-9) was delivered in September/October, on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, 520 BC, and sought to encourage the remnant that the apparent insignificance of their labors and the current temple structure, in comparison with Solomon's magnificent temple, were to be viewed in the light of God's ultimate purpose, being but groundwork for a later, greater glory. A third oracle (2:10-19), dated the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, November/December, 520 BC, sets forth the timeless truth that obedience will eventually bring God's blessing, though temporarily delayed due to God's Sovereign purpose. While the fourth message (2:20-23), delivered on the self-same day as the third, predicts the final overthrow of the Gentile kingdoms and the reestablishment of the

Davidic Kingdom under Messiah. While these four messages constitute the basic outline of the book, the historical occasion, the prophet's direct dealing, and the people's response, suggest a more subtle theme: that of God's dealings with *the remnant* that had originally made the long, desert trek from Babylonian captivity (a type of religious bondage), rebuilt the altar and made a preliminary attempt to lay the temple's foundation, before a restraining order from Artaxerxes led to a halt in their efforts and a subsequent 16 years of inactivity. Many of God's dear people today, who have been called out of the darkness of a secular and religious world, are struggling along with life and find themselves in need of similar heart-stirrings and prophetic preaching that cuts to the quick, arouses to obedience, and results in a resumption of God's work in His temple. God is dealing with His remnant today along these very lines, and we trust that as we take a deeper look into this subtle theme of Haggai, God's people will once again be encouraged to overcome the impasse of spiritual stagnation.

Consider Your Ways

Haggai 1:2-7: "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled

houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways."

The pungent command of Haggai, "Consider your ways!", which prompted them to a serious, sincere, inner look at their lives and circumstances, actually sparked a revival of returning to the Lord in obedience among the remnant. The generation of returned exiles had learned the important lesson that a life of promoting self-interest and neglecting their spiritual obligations, eventually results in frustration and failure. It seems to be an abominable tendency of human nature to seek to secure its own interests first, and then, if convenience permits and the notion strikes, begin to address the matter of God's claims upon the human soul. The nation in Haggai's day had actually reversed the order of Christ's command, "*Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*" and was ignoring God's house and His interests while it eagerly ran after their own. Many today likewise sit in church and listen to sermons, but exhibit little if any deep-seated interest in the things of God's Word, His House (the assembly of saints),

and His work. Their "way," or daily round of life, seems to be a constant quest for more money, pleasure, and leisure, while the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting and a deeper study of God's Word remain boring and unappealing. The remnant of today, just as in Haggai's day, is being challenged anew to "consider its ways," and by thoughtful reflection, and genuine repentance, resume a life of placing God's interests first.

Only those who have been duly and deeply stirred from a life of self-interest, will have the necessary incentive to engage in the holy work of temple construction. The house of God, be it our own personal lives (I Cor. 6:19,20), the church of Jesus Christ (I Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:21,22), or the 2nd temple of Haggai's day, will always lie waste, a heap of rubble, unless and until God's people are purged from their self-preoccupation (Phil. 2:21; Matt. 16:24; II Cor. 5:15; Isa. 58:13) and revived (Hab. 3:2; Ps. 85:6) to consider God's interests first (Haggai 1:9).

Stirred to Consecrated Effort

Haggai 1:14: "And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God."

The remnant in this late hour are being stirred by the Lord's message through the Lord's messengers from a state of listless inactivity and a life of self-interest to a re-directed focus upon the need of participation in God's purpose for His House. עיר, the Hebrew word underlying the translation "stirred," means to "incite or excite to action" and refers to that special, supernatural influence whereby God moves the hearts of men and accomplishes His purposes—in this case, carrying the construction of the temple through to completion. Those genuinely stirred by God in salvation, or for the purpose of His sovereign plan, will always have a focus on God's house (Ezra 1:1-5).

My Spirit Remaineth Among You

Haggai 2:5: "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not"

The remnant of the last days will draw strength from the recognition that God's Spirit, yea even the very Comforter that descended in soul-confirming power on the day of Pentecost, remains personally active and present in their midst (I Cor. 14:25). This remnant will have the Spirit in an even more profound way than their Old Covenant counterparts, for the Spirit that remained with the ancient people of God, will personally inhabit

and indwell the New Covenant remnant (Jn. 14:17; Eph. 2:22). The tokens of His continued power, presence, and activity will be abundantly seen. The sign of His incoming, speaking with other tongues as the Spirit supplies the utterance (Acts 2:4) will be a welcome evidence in their midst. Moreover, the presence of the promised comforter (Jn. 14:16) will not only be received at some juncture in their spiritual history, but will remain a living reality, wooing, convicting, baptizing, sealing, and continually guiding them with His heavenly counsel until they be taken to glory (Ps. 73:24; Jn. 16:13)! Yes, the remaining Spirit will be a characteristic token of the true latter-day remnant.

Surviving The Coming Shaking

Haggai 2:6-7 "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations [רְבֵּאִי חֲמוֹתָ בְּלִי-הַגּוֹיִם] shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts" (cf. 2:21,22).

Hebrews 12:26-27 "Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

According to Haggai, the apparently insignificant (2:3) rebuilding effort of a tiny people with slight resources (2:16), was actually laying the groundwork for cosmic convulsions (2:21), the overthrow of Gentile world domination (2:22), and the greater glory of a future age when the Desire (Messiah Jesus) of all nations would come (2:7). As an important link in a chain of divinely orchestrated events, so their efforts were not to be despised, for their day of "small things" (Zech. 4:10) would one day eventuate in the grand culmination of the Kingdom of God on earth. Like the remnant of our day, they were laying up a good foundation against the time to come, securing for themselves, through the strength of God's Spirit (Zech. 4:6), an everlasting kingdom, that will outlive all others and survive the unprecedented quaking, upheaval, and geopolitical instability that will precede and mark the transition to Jesus' millennial rule (Luke 21:25-27; Isa. 2:19; 24:19,20; Joel. 3:16; Eze. 38:19,20; Rev. 16:17-19). Seeing that all these things shall shortly come to pass, let us, with them as an encompassing cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1), have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28).

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THE REMNANT IN REVIEW

Heart-Stirrings From Haggai

KJV Haggai 1:13a : "Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people"

Haggai 1:14 "And the LORD stirred up the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God"

The voice of Haggai came as a shrill siren to awaken a sleepy and listless nation of returned exiles. His four distinct and carefully chronicled messages constituted an arousing call to action, a rebuke to the life of self-interest, and a promise of future reward and blessing in both this world, and in the coming Messianic age, for those who believed and obeyed. But the scope of this small book's (the smallest in the Hebrew canon, next to Obadiah) message is not limited to Haggai's generation, for contained therein are many timeless emphases that speak cogently to contemporary Christendom as well. In particular, there seems to be a call to the remnant of his day that spans the centuries and addresses with the power of Divine inspiration pertinent issues that likewise face God's remnant "upon whom the ends of the world have come" (I Cor. 10:11).