

Seeing Through Spiritual Eyes

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I. The Context

- A. The southern kingdom of Judah had just undergone judgment having spent 70 years captive in Babylon.
- B. The Medes and Persians overthrew the Babylonian kingdom (recorded in Daniel 5) – Cyrus, as predicted by Isaiah (Isa. 44-45), issued a decree for the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple.
- C. Progress languished, God was neglected, focus turned to personal goals.
- D. The people neglected spiritual matters and became materialistic—so God intervened in the material realm to speak to them about spiritual realities.
- E. He “spoke” to them through the very things which had become their idols: material blessing and productivity. They were working hard, but not moving forward. Haggai revealed that God had called for a drought on the fruit of the land and on the labor of their hands (v. 11).
- F. Haggai identified their inverted priorities as the root cause of their troubles: a focus on self advancement over service to God. (Incidentally, isn’t this where our country and culture are today?)
- G. As the people responded to God’s correction through Haggai and renewed their reverence for Him, He stirred up their spirits to resume work on the Temple.
- H. In our passage today, it has been almost 1 month since the rebuilding of the temple began anew.
- I. It is also becoming apparent to the people that the temple they are working on will only be a shadow of its former self—the glorious temple built by David's son Solomon which had been destroyed when they were taken to Babylon.

II. Haggai 2:1-9

- A. In the seventh *month*, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying: "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, *is this* not in your eyes as nothing? Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I *am* with you,' says the LORD of hosts. '*According to* the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!' For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it *is* a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry

land; 'and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The silver *is* Mine, and the gold *is* Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the LORD of hosts. (Hag. 2:1-9)

III. Exposition

- A. "Who saw this temple in its former glory?" (Hag. 2:3)
1. Speaking to the remnant of the people: a paltry subset when viewed in human terms.
 2. In comparison with the days of former glory – how do you see it now?
 - a) The former glory – the Temple built by Solomon.
 - (1) The immense wealth and materials amassed by David in preparation.
 - (2) Ornate and decorative carving, including images of cherubim, palms, garlands, and opening flowers.
 - (3) Elaborate furnishings, overlaid with pure gold. The temple itself wholly overlaid with gold (1K. 6:21-22).
 - (4) Contained the Ark of the Covenant
 - (a) Wherein were stored the tablets of the law given by Moses (1K. 8:21; 2Chr. 5:10).
 - (b) Over which dwelt the Shekinah (or "dwelling") presence of God (1K. 8:10-11; 2Chr. 7:1; Ps. 26:8) between the Cherubim over the mercy seat (2K. 19:15).
 3. "Is this not in your eyes as nothing?"
 - a) When the foundation had been laid, there was great praise and fanfare. But amidst the fanfare, ". . . many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' households, the old men who had seen the first temple, wept with a loud voice when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes" (Ezra 3:12)
 - b) The memory of what had gone before—unknown to the newer generation—weighed heavily on the older generation who had experienced the former glory.
- B. "Yet now be strong . . . for I am with you . . . I covenanted with you . . . My Spirit remains among you . . . do not fear!" (Hag. 2:4-5)
1. The covenant established with Israel by the hand of Moses at Mt. Sinai

- a) Exodus 33:12-15
Then Moses said to the LORD, "See, You say to me, 'Bring up this people.' But You have not let me know whom You will send with me. Yet You have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found grace in My sight.' "Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation *is* Your people." And He said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." Then he said to Him, "If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here."
- b) The question for the people of God is not, "what do we have?" or "how are we doing?", or "how does this look in the eyes of the world," but "is God with us?"
2. "I am with you . . . My Spirit remains among you"
- a) Jeremiah 20:10-11
For I heard many mocking: . . . All my acquaintances watched for my stumbling, [*saying*] . . . "we will prevail against him, And we will take our revenge on him." But the LORD [*is*] with me as a mighty, awesome One. Therefore my persecutors will stumble, and will not prevail. They will be greatly ashamed, for they will not prosper. [*Their*] everlasting confusion will never be forgotten.
- b) How the world mocks the puny work-force of God:
- (1) Nehemiah 4:1-3
But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish-stones that are burned?" Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* beside him, and he said, "Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall."
- (2) The Sanballat's and Tobiah's of the world see our efforts and our church in exactly this way: a joke to be mocked. In the eyes of the world, we are as nothing.
- c) Romans 8:31
What then shall we say to these things? If God [*is*] for us, who [*can be*] against us?
- C. Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land, and I will shake all nations . . . (Hag. 2:6-7)
1. This "shaking" of the nations most likely refers to God's gathering the nations for the Battle of Armageddon in the Day of the Lord.
2. Isaiah 24 reads in part:
Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste, Distorts its surface And scatters abroad its inhabitants. . . . The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, For the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns *and* fades away, The world languishes *and* fades away; The haughty people of the earth languish. The earth

is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws, Changed the ordinance, Broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, And those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, And few men *are* left. . . . *It shall be* like the shaking of an olive tree, . . . Fear and the pit and the snare *Are* upon you, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall be *That* he who flees from the noise of the fear Shall fall into the pit, And he who comes up from the midst of the pit Shall be caught in the snare; For the windows from on high are open, And the foundations of the earth are shaken. The earth is violently broken, The earth is split open, The earth is shaken exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, And shall totter like a hut; Its transgression shall be heavy upon it, And it will fall, and not rise again. It shall come to pass in that day *That* the LORD will punish on high the host of exalted ones, And on the earth the kings of the earth. . . .

3. The writer of Hebrews speaks of this passage and describes two important elements of this event:
 - a) It is future to his day, Hebrews 12:26
 . . . whose voice then [at the giving of the law at Sinai] shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more *I* shake not only the earth, but also heaven."
 - b) The purpose of the shaking, Hebrews 12:27
 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.
 - c) This is one of several purposes of the coming period of Tribulation – to undermine all things which man trusts in other than God—the "things which are made" - temporal things which will eventually pass away.
 - (1) Sixth seal, Revelation 6:12-17
 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"
 - (2) Trumpets, Revelation 8
 - (a) 1st - The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. (Rev. 8:7)

- (b) 2nd - Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Re 8:8–9)
- (c) 3rd - Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter. (Re 8:10–11)
- (d) 4th - Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. (Re 8:12)

(3) Man's technology, the environment, even aspects of the very cosmos will come unglued when God "shakes the nations" to get their attention!

4. They shall come to the Desire [or "desired things"] of All Nations (NKJV)

a) A grammatically difficult passage with two main interpretations

(1) NKJV – the nations *come to* that which is considered desirable by them. The nations *seek that which they will then value*: the Messiah or promised redeemer.

(a) The same Hebrew word, which frequently refers to *inanimate objects* of wealth, is used in a similar construction to describe king Saul

i) "on whom is all the desire of Israel?" (1S. 9:20)

(2) NASB – "they will *come with* the wealth of all nations". The nations *bring their own wealth*.

(a) Immediate context:

"The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of hosts." (Hag. 2:8)

(b) Isaiah 60:8-11, speaking of Jerusalem:

"Who [*are*] these [*who*] fly like a cloud, And like doves to their roosts? Surely the coastlands shall wait for Me; And the ships of Tarshish [*will come*] first, To bring your sons from afar, Their silver and their gold with them, To the name of the LORD your God, And to the Holy One of Israel, Because He has glorified you. The sons of foreigners shall build up your walls, And their kings shall minister to you; For in My wrath I struck you, But in My favor I have had mercy on you. Therefore your gates shall be open continually; They shall not be shut day or night, That [*men*] may bring to you the wealth of the Gentiles, And their kings in procession.

(3) or gathered to "the Desire of All Nations" Who will reign from the temple in Jerusalem (NKJV)

D. I will fill this temple with glory . . . The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former (Hag. 2:7,9)

1. How could it be possible that this meager second temple would have a future glory exceeding that of Solomon's?!
2. Two possibilities
 - a) Refers to the millennial temple to be established following the second coming of Jesus.
 - (1) The context follows the pattern of the Second Coming leading to the millennium.
 - (a) The judgment of the nations.
 - (b) The nations bringing wealth to the temple, or gathered to "the Desire of All Nations" Who will reign from the temple in Jerusalem (NKJV).
 - (c) A period of time characterized by peace.
 - (2) Refers to Jesus, as the glory of God incarnate.
 - (1) The incarnation as a revelation of God's glory
 - (a) John 1:14
And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.
 - (b) Col 2:9
For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;
 - (c) In the incarnation, God was revealed and approached as never before.
 - (d) In the incarnation, the redemption of mankind is highlighted and brought to pass – one of God's most glorious acts within all of history.
 - (2) Jesus' seemingly purposeful retracing of the departure of the Shekinah glory from Solomon's temple (Eze. 8:4-6; 9:3; 10:4,18-19; 11:22-23) via the Mt. of Olives.
 - (a) Jesus visited the temple being built in this passage (the second temple, Zerubbabel's temple), which was extensively enhanced by Herod in the time of Jesus.
 - (b) Jesus came from the Mt. of Olives to cleanse the Temple and then departed again—seemingly purposefully retracing the path of the visible glory of God which, for reasons of idolatry departed Solomon's temple via the Mt. of Olives prior to the temple's demise by Babylon.
 - (c) After the Shekinah glory had departed Solomon's temple, it was doomed to destruction by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
 - (d) After the Jesus had departed Zerubbabel's temple, it was doomed to destruction by Titus of Rome.
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 - c) Although the context favors that Haggai saw aspects of the millennial context, it seems it was the purpose of the Spirit of God for the passage to function as a double reference

- (1) primarily the millennial temple
- (2) typologically brings into view the visitation of God's glory in the incarnation of Jesus Who visited Zerubbabel's temple—the very temple whose foundation was being laid in this passage.

E. In this place I will give peace (Hag. 2:9).

1. This undoubtedly refers to the coming reign of the Prince of Peace.
2. Isaiah 9:6-7
For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.
3. Then shall come to pass the words written on the United Nations building, originally penned by the prophet Isaiah.
 - a) Isa. 2:4
He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.

IV. Application – What Have We Learned From Haggai?

- A. We do not see what God will do through meager beginnings. We dare not despise the day of small beginnings! Physical appearance is no measure of the significance of a spiritual work in the eyes of God.
 1. What often externally appears as a great work of God, may not be within His will
 - a) Matthew 24:1-2
Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not [*one*] stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."
 2. God's work often involves seasons of *apparent* meagerness and leanness. The people of God must persevere beyond the appearance while keeping their eyes focused on the "big picture" of God's principles and purposes in history coupled with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to bear spiritual fruit.
 - a) The *physical* glory of Zerubbabel's temple never approached that of Solomon's temple, yet the glory of the Lord entered Zerubbabel's temple in a way that Solomon's never saw.
 3. The ways God chooses to work and the people through whom He chooses to work nearly always differ from how the world evaluates significance.

- a) The world places great acclaim upon resources, talents, and self-motivated aggressiveness.
 - b) God often initiates important work with little in the way of visible resources, but by way of people who, by His Spirit, exhibit consistency, obedience, and faithfulness in believing and pursuing the work which He is undertaking.
 - c) We must not evaluate Christian ministry—especially our own ministry—in the light of what secular society considers “successful” or “relevant.” This is the “business model” mentality having taken over the church.
- B. A time of great physical cataclysm yet remains on the horizon. A time when God will shake the nations so that only that which is rooted in Him will endure.
- C. Beyond the storm clouds, a great time of glory and peace await those who will experience the kingdom of God. They are the ones who recognize Jesus as the incarnate glory of God who came to earth as a man to die in their place.