

# Introduction To Haggai

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## I. Why Teach The Minor Prophets?

- A. Less familiar portions of Scripture which are equally part of God's Word.
- B. Our understanding of the New Testament –and even the words of Jesus—is too often compromised by our lack of understanding of the Old Testament—especially the historical context within which the various books of the Bible were given.
- C. Modern man imagines he has progressed, not just in technology or science, but also in social advancement. This, as anyone with unbiased eyes can see, is manifestly untrue. Thus, universal principles concerning man's predicament and his relationship with God are just as applicable today as when written thousands of years ago.

## II. Haggai 1:1-2

- A. In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, "Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.'" (Haggai 1:1-2)

## III. Historical Context – Restoration Following Judgment

- A. Judgment
  - 1. Civil war of Israel after Solomon.
  - 2. Northern kingdom (Israel, Samaria) falls to Assyria in 722 B.C.
  - 3. Southern kingdom (Judah) continues, but eventually disintegrates.
    - a) Josiah (last godly king)
    - b) Jehoahaz (Shallum) – deposed by Egypt
    - c) Vassal kings – God is beginning to judge the Davidic ruler.
      - (1) Jehoiakim (Eliakim) – vassal of Egypt then Babylon
      - (2) Jehoiachin (Jeconiah, Coniah) – deposed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
      - (3) Zedekiah (Mattaniah), uncle of Jehoiachin.
    - d) Jerusalem and Temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 586 B.C.
  - 4. The end of Davidic rule (but not the throne!)
    - a) Jehoiakim

- (1) 'Therefore thus says the LORD concerning Jehoiakim king of Judah: "He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David, and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night. (**Jeremiah 36:30**)
- b) Jeconiah
- (1) "As I live," says the LORD, "though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet on My right hand, yet I would pluck you off; (**Jeremiah 22:24**)
- (2) Thus says the LORD: 'Write this man down as childless, A man *who* shall not prosper in his days; For none of his descendants shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling anymore in Judah.'" (**Jeremiah 22:30**)
- c) Last ungodly kings are slighted in Matthew's genealogy of Christ.
- (1) Josiah begot Jeconiah and his brothers about the time they were carried away to Babylon. (**Matthew 1:11**)
- (a) Josiah – last godly king.
- i) Intermediary ungodly kings omitted.
- (b) Jeconiah – cursed ungodly king.
5. 70 year captivity (2Chr. 36:21; Jer. 29:10).
- B. Captivity followed by restoration.
1. A series of rulers while in Babylon.
- a) At the death of Nebuchadnezzar (561 B.C.):
- (1) 2 year reign of Amēl-Marduk (562-560)
- (2) 2 year reign of Neriglissar
- (3) Less than 1 year reign of Labashi Marduk
- (4) 17 year reign of Nabonidus (556-539 B.C.)
- (5) Belshazzar begins coregency with Nabonidus (553-550 B.C.)
- (a) Nabonidus living away from Babylon, leaves his son in charge.
- b) Darius the Mede captures Babylon from Belshazzar, then coregent with Nabonidus (Dan. 5:31, 539 B.C.).
- (1) Not the Darius of Haggai - "Darius" was used as ruling title similar to Pharaoh.
- (2) A Mede, but acting under the authority of Cyrus of Persia (Isa. 45:1).<sup>1</sup>
- c) Cyrus of Persia ruled from 539-527 B.C.

<sup>1</sup> It is our conviction that Gubaru, the governor of Babylon and the region beyond the river, appears in the book of Daniel as Darius the Mede, the monarch who took charge of the Chaldean kingdom immediately following the death of Belshazzar. . . this identification is the only one which satisfactorily harmonizes the various lines of evidence which we find in the book of Daniel and in the contemporary cuneiform records." [Whitcomb, 24].

## (a) Prophetesied to rebuild the Jewish Temple (Isa. 44:24-28)

Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: "I *am* the LORD, who makes all *things*, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, And makes their knowledge foolishness; Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' And I will raise up her waste places; Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers'; Who says of Cyrus, '*He is* My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."

## (b) God's choice to allow the Jews to return from Babylon (Isa. 45:1-4)

"Thus says the LORD to His anointed, To Cyrus, whose right hand I have held—To subdue nations before him And loose the armor of kings, To open before him the double doors, So that the gates will not be shut: 'I will go before you And make the crooked places straight; I will break in pieces the gates of bronze And cut the bars of iron. I will give you the treasures of darkness And hidden riches of secret places, That you may know that I, the LORD, Who call you by your name, Am the God of Israel. For Jacob My servant's sake, And Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me.

## (c) Cyrus Cylinder – in the British Museum

"I returned to [these] sacred cities on the other side of the Tigris, the sanctuaries of which have been in ruins for a long time, the images which [used] to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. I gathered all their [former] inhabitants and returned [to them] their habitations. . ." [Price, 251]

## d) Cambyses of Persia

(1) Viceroy with Cyrus (538-530 B.C.).

(2) Sovereign reign (530-521 B.C.).

## e) Darius I Hystaspes (522-486 B.C.) = "king Darius" of Haggai 1:1.

(1) 2<sup>nd</sup> year of King Darius (Hag. 1:1 cf. Ezra 4:24).

## f) Haggai was the first true prophet—in the sense of speaking God's word directly to Israel—since the return from Babylon.

(1) Although Daniel had been given prophetic revelation while in Babylon, this dutifully recorded but never pronounced to the nation in the traditional formula, "thus says the Lord."

## C. Rebuilding the temple amidst opposition.

1. First year of Cyrus (of Persia), a decree was issued to allow the Jews to return and rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:1-3, 538 B.C.).
2. Arrived in Jerusalem, set up an altar, and began offering sacrifices before the foundation of the Temple was even laid (Ezra 3:1-6).
3. Seven months later, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Cyrus, they laid the foundation amidst much fanfare (Ezra 3:8-13), 536 B.C.).
4. Opposition from Samaritans and Persians.
  - a) First, they claim religious identity with the Jews (Ezra 4:2) and offer to help.
    - (1) But their approach to God was that of syncretism and was rejected.
    - (2) The ongoing tension between the Jews and what would become the Samaritans continued into NT times and forms the backdrop to understanding Jesus' conversation with the women at the well (John 4).
  - b) Outright opposition which frustrated progress during the reign of Cyrus (Ezra 4:4-5).
  - c) The temple is on hold: 16 years have elapse when Haggai receives the word of the Lord (Ezra 5:1, Haggai 1:1, 536 – 520 B.C.).
  - d) Opposition arises again and appeal is made to then King Darius to stop the Jews.
5. King Darius searched the archives in Babylon and confirms the original degree of Cyrus (Ezra 6:1-5). Jews granted authority to proceed and their opponents told not to interfere, but to support the work (Ezra 6:6).
6. Temple finished about 5 years later in the 6<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Darius (Ezra 6:15, 515 B.C.).

#### D. Zerubbabel and Joshua

1. Both kingly and priestly roles represented.
  - a) In Israel, prior to Christ, governmental rule and priestly rule where not invested in a single individual.<sup>2</sup>
2. Joshua the high priest: in the line of the Aaronic priesthood (through Zadok, 1Chr. 6:1-5,14-15).
  - a) His father was among the captives at the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
  - b) His grandfather Seraiah, as chief priest, was taken captive and put to death by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Ki 25:18 ff; 1 Ch 6:15).
3. Zerubbabel
  - a) Name means "dispersed to Babylon" or, more probably, "the seed of Babylon" indicating that he may have been born during the captivity [Feinberg, 238].

<sup>2</sup>In the time of Abraham, we encounter Melchizedek who typifies Christ by functioning in both governmental and priestly roles (Gen. 14:18; Ps. 110:4).

- (1) Led the Jews of Babylon in their returned to Jerusalem (538 B.C.).
- (2) In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, he led the first band of exiles, numbering about 42,000 Jewish men (with additional family members and servants) returning from the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 2:64).
- (3) A descendant in the kingly line of Judah.
  - (a) In the line leading from David through Solomon to Joseph, husband of Mary who gave birth to Jesus (Mtt. 1:12).
  - (b) Seemingly strange fact: he is never pronounced or anointed as king!
    - i) Due to Persian dominion, declaring him king would have signaled possible insurrection.
    - ii) The real reason: God arranged the historical circumstances to preclude this possibility because he was the grandson of the cursed Jehoiachin (Mtt. 1:12)!
    - iii) Dates given in Haggai and Zechariah are not in reference to Jewish kings, but instead refer to Gentile rulers (Hag. 1:1,15; 2:10; Zec. 1:1,7; 7:1)!<sup>3</sup>
- (4) Times of the Gentiles.
  - (a) Occupation of the throne of David terminated in the Babylonian Captivity.
  - (b) Times of the Gentiles have not come to an end.
    - i) "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." (Luke 21:24)
  - (c) The end of the book looks forward to the end of Gentile domination and restoration of Davidic rule.

#### IV. What Will We Learn From Haggai?

- A. Misplaced priorities (Hag. 1)
  1. God's warning regarding inverted priorities (Hag. 1:1-11)
    - a) Focus on self while neglecting God's house.
    - b) Working hard, but still lacking.
    - c) God withholds His blessing.
  2. The people repent and change their focus (Hag. 1:12-15)
- B. The rebuilt temple (Hag. 2:1-19).
  1. Small beginnings and insignificant appearance to men (Hag. 2:1-5).

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<sup>3</sup>"The dating of the prophecy (so Zechariah also) according to the reign of a Gentile king reveals clearly that the times of the Gentiles were in progress. (See Lk 21:24.)" [Feinberg, 238].

- a) Encouragement to continue forward in the face of seemingly hopeless circumstances.
  2. Future glory to surpass Solomon's temple (Hag. 2:6-9).
  3. The need for purity among the people doing God's work (Hag. 2:10-14).
  4. Restoring God's blessing in response to obedience (Hag. 2:15-19).
- C. The promise of final overthrow of Gentile oppression and rule (Hag. 2:20-23).

## V. Resources

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