



“The righteous . . . shall grow  
like a cedar in Lebanon”

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion  
to the Book of  
**Haggai**

*“So they read in the book in the law of God . . .  
and caused them to understand the reading”*

Nehemiah 8:8

By  
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## **Introduction**

The last three books in our Old Testament are the last of the writing prophets to minister during the Old Testament (O.T.) era. These three books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are commonly called the “postexilic” prophets because the ministry of all three came after (post) the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon. We find the setting for these three last prophets in the historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), two of the main leaders of the postexilic period. The other two main leaders of that era of Israel’s history were;

- Zerubbabel, the grandson of King Jehoiachin of Judah, the king reigning over Judah when the nation was taken by Babylon (I Chron. 3:17-19). Zerubbabel was appointed governor of Judea by King Cyrus of Persia upon the return of the first wave of Jews from their 70-year captivity in Babylon (Ezra 5:14).
- Joshua, the high priest (Zech. 3:1), son of Jehozadak, who was the high priest when Judah was taken to Babylon.

The empire of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar had

destroyed Jerusalem and taken the people of Judah and Benjamin captive. When the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon 70 years later and Cyrus came to the throne, the Jews were allowed to return to Judah with a commission from Cyrus to rebuild the temple and city of Jerusalem. About 50,000 Jews returned. Haggai's was then the first voice to be heard from God after their return, joined by Zechariah two months later. Malachi's ministry followed, coming much later. His burden was to rebuke the apostasy then developing in the nation.

The main thrust of the messages of both Haggai and Zechariah was to stir up the Jewish people to put their hearts and backs to the Lord's work, particularly to finish building the temple, a construction project that had remained unfinished for a decade and a half when these two prophets were sent by the Lord. These men called their people away from selfish materialism and indifference to the Lord's things. Haggai's message is all about proper priorities, putting first things first if one would have God's blessing.

Ezra relates in his book how opposition arose with the effort under Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple (Ezra 4);

- Upon the arrival of the Jews in Judah they quickly cleared away the rubble and laid the temple foundation.
- The people of the area (Samaritans) offered their help as the temple work began. These local people were a mixed race of Jews and Assyrians who were settled in the area decades before (II Ki. 17:24ff). Thus their religion was a mixture of pure and pagan.
- Therefore the offer was firmly declined by the Jewish leaders, fearing compromise!
- With this the would-be helpers turned hinderers in their angry resentment over Jewish exclusiveness. Hiring advocates they turned things to a legal wrangle, and managed to bring the temple project to a halt.
- As soon as Cyrus was out of the picture at the Persian capital a formal letter of complaint was lodged by the Samaritans, and was upheld by the new administration. Thus an official restraining order was placed upon further construction of the temple or the city of Jerusalem.
- With the arrival of Haggai and Zechariah, bringing God's rebuke for their lethargy, the

temple work began again in spite of illegalities.

- The local Samaritans sent off another letter of complaint to the powers that be (Ezra 5), but the administration, now under Darius, found and confirmed Cyrus's old decree to build (Ezra 6).
- Not only was permission granted to carry on with the temple project, but those bitter opponents were commanded to help finance the work out of their tribute money (Ezra 6:8-9). And if anyone dared to alter the king's decree, gallows were to be made of timber from his own house and he executed thereon, his house then made into a dung heap (Ezra 6:11)!
- Four years later the job of building the temple was done (Ezra 6:14).

It is evident that the returning Jews were a bit too willing to be stopped in their temple rebuilding project, too eager to turn their full attention to their own lands and houses and concerns. Very little resistance do we see in them toward the resistance raised up against them. We find in Zerubbabel no inspiring tenacity or fight as we later see in Nehemiah, though the returning Jews

possessed every right from the Persian government to rebuild their temple and capital city. How quickly they had fallen into an attitude of selfish indifference to the Lord's things. How easy for us to fall to the same. Quick they were to see to their *own* things, while allowing the Lord's interests to fall to neglect and idleness. The prophet Haggai was sent by the Lord to bring His rebuke to this self-serving mindset, and to point out to them the reason why success in life had been eluding them.

There is a much needed challenge here for our own day, for there is ever the same tendency in God's people to see only to their own interests, efforts, finance, forwarding, etc. to the exclusion of God's. And our God's words and ways of dealing with this selfish slant in His people are ever the same. Haggai 1:4 is the key challenge of the prophet's message; *"Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled [panelled] houses, and this house lie waste?"* Was it right for them to see to their own well-fitted houses to the neglect of God's house? To their shame, how readily they had agreed with their opponents that *"it is not time"* to see to God's interests (vs. 2).

Typical of the prophets, Haggai just seems to appear on the scene. We do not know if he came

over with those returning from Babylon or if he was born in Palestine. He is one of those prophets for whom no background information is given for one reason or another. This underscores an interesting point. It does not matter who the man is. The vital concern to God, and therefore that which comes down to us, is what the man *did*. Haggai bravely proclaimed the words of his God to his drifting generation and scored a victory. The Lord saw to it that His spokesman was in the right place at the right time, with heart and mouth full of God's words. The phrase "*saith the Lord*" or "*the word of the Lord*" appears 25 times in the 38 verses of this little book. Can there be any doubt as to whose message Haggai carried?

Haggai's ministry was brief, spanning only 3-4 months, but he enjoyed a wonderful privilege that few of the prophets ever experienced. He saw immediate, visible success as a direct result of his preaching. Jonah was another who knew the same privilege, though for Jonah this was no joy to see. Perhaps we could find a lesson here for modern ministry. It seems the Lord's men do not tend to see abundant fruit as a general rule, certainly in days of apostasy. Therefore there is no valid place for discouragement in God's work based upon poor results, for great is the company

of men who have seen little fruit for their labours.

Haggai ministered together with Zechariah in Jerusalem, his work beginning two months prior to Zechariah's. Compare Haggai 1:1 with Zechariah 1:1. The date of Haggai's writing is given in 1:1 as the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Darius, or 520 B.C. Jensen suggests the following dates and sequence of events;

- 606 B.C. – The first invasion of Babylon.
- 536 B.C. – The first return of some 50,000 Jews under Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:5-2:70).
- 536-535 B.C. – Altar built at Jerusalem and temple foundation laid (Ezra 3:1-13).
- 535-534 B.C. – Opposition from neighbouring Samaritans (Ezra 4).
- 534 B.C. – Temple construction stopped (Ezra 4:24).
- 536-520 B.C. – Zerubbabel serving as governor and Joshua as high priest (Haggai 1:1).
- 520 B.C. – Haggai, and then Zechariah, prophesied and the temple project resumed in spite of opposition (Ezra 5).

- 516 B.C. – Temple completed (Ezra 6:14-15).

Haggai's book is made up of 5 messages preached to the Jews, two in chapter 1 and three in chapter 2;

Message #1 (1:1-11). Theme – Rebuke.

*“Consider your ways”* (vs. 5 & 7).

The people were saying that *“the time is not come”* (1:2) to attend to things of God's interest. Was it not because they were full of their own interests? The Lord's brusque response to this was, *“Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build My house!”* (1:8). *“Look well how I have cursed and whittled away all your efforts and increase, because you are lightly esteeming My things”*. Behold the Lord's whittling tools in 1:10-11; 2:17. Compare Malachi 3:10-11.

Message #2 (1:13). Theme – Encouragement.

A word of encouragement for their positive response to the first message of rebuke. The people *obeyed* (1:12), *feared* the Lord (1:12), and *worked* (1:14). Therefore *“I am with you”*, saith the Lord! (compare 2:4). Their God stood opposed and resisting until the

moment of their repentance, when He was quick to send encouragement.

Message #3 (2:1-9). Theme – Instruction.

They were not to worry about the plainness of the house compared to its past glory. Compare Zechariah's counsel, "*For who hath despised the day of small things?*" (Zech. 4:10). It is not the outward glory but the glory within that matters, for *Jesus Christ Himself* would walk in this temple. Jesus within is a far greater glory than all of Solomon's silver and gold (2:7-9), greater by far than all the combined splendour of earth.

Message #4 (2:10-19). Theme – Confirmation.

The impurity of their sinful disobedience had contaminated all of their efforts and turned God's blessing away (2:11-14). But with their repentance God called them to watch how His blessing would now come flooding back! (2:15-19)

Message #5 (2:20-23). Theme – Encouragement.

The Lord will not forget those leaders who do His will, making the hard decisions to lead in standing for Him. Can you imagine what

a lift this message gave to Zerubbabel?

The point of the book is that the Lord's will and work must take first priority for His people. When this is true of our way, there will be notable blessing, the Lord making straight our path (Prov. 3:6). When there is failure in this regard God's blessing is withheld, resulting in a trouble way before us! Compare Proverbs 11:24-25.

# Chapter 1

A “*remnant of the people*” of Israel had returned from captivity in Babylon to Judah with a purpose to rebuild the temple, that O.T. focal point of the worship of the true God on earth. But the project was delayed due to local opposition, and the temple foundations had stood neglected for about 15 years when the prophet Haggai appeared on the scene. Haggai’s message was brief and to the point, his book one of the shortest in the Bible. But as with all of God’s words, the message is strong medicine. And though it was a message spoken to His people in a particular setting, as with all that God has given to man the principle of it is just as relevant and applicable to His people in our current age as in every age. There are wonderfully potent lessons for us found in these few verses.

The thrust of Haggai’s message to “*the remnant of the people*” was FINISH THE TEMPLE. The theme of God’s message through him was FIRST THINGS FIRST. Be wise to give the Lord and His work priority over every other work. To obey in this avoids discouragement and ensures success in our earthly endeavours.

**1:1** *In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,*  
**1:2** *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.*

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## **1:1-2** – Introduction.

Vs. 1 – “*Unto Zerubbabel...and to Joshua*” – God’s messenger does not come on the sly, whispering his message to the people behind the backs of the leaders, seeking to raise up a popular movement against God’s appointed leadership. He rather goes directly to those duly appointed, speaking God’s message openly. Zerubbabel was the governor or civil leader. Joshua was the high priest or spiritual leader. It was to these that Haggai brought “*the word of the LORD*”.

Here is the first of that phrase so prominent in this book. Again, words to the effect of “*saith the LORD*” or “*the word of the LORD*” are found some 25 times in these two brief chapters, from this first verse to the last.

Vs. 2 – “*The LORD of hosts*” – A very prominent name of the Lord in this book expressing God’s

almighty power. Why would this name feature? We must remember the context. God's people were no longer building on His house because "*fear was upon them*" of those who opposed the work (Ezra 3:3). Through fear of man those opposers had "*weakened the hands of the people of Judah*" (Ezra 4:4). It was important for God's timid people to know that "*the LORD of hosts*", the Almighty Himself, was calling them back to the work. Their call was from the One who is quite big enough to handle all earthly opposition. Only a proper fear of God can deliver God's people from the fear of man.

"*This people*" – Do you hear the note of irritation? Do you sense the subtle distance in this phrase? Rather than "My people" it is "*this people*". There is a touch of impersonal, arm's-length handling here. Compare Exodus 32:9. God is not impressed with those who fear people more than Him.

The Lord through Haggai then expressed in vs. 2 what the people were commonly saying as an excuse for not completing the temple; "*The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.*" "The time is not right", they were saying. "It will be obvious when the time is right". Now a decade and a half later they were still "waiting" for

the right time! Were they waiting for some special token or omen or indication? Well here it comes, in the form of hot, direct reproof from the Lord of hosts. They had no business waiting for some mystical indication of when the time seemed right to them! They had no business delaying at all when they already had a commission from God to build His temple! Some do the same with the matter of salvation, waiting for some mystical indication of when “the time is right”. But God’s answer is already given in this regard as well;

*“Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (II Cor. 6:2).*

*“While it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13).*

To wait or delay even a moment can only fairly be called rebellion. Some do the same with the matter of service. But again, God’s clear answer is already given;

*“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep” (Rom. 13:11).*

*“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15).*

*“Redeeming the time, because the days are evil”*

**1:3** *Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,*  
**1:4** *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?*

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(Eph. 5:16).

We do not wait for indications when we already have a commission from the Lord of hosts. Get saved! Get baptized! Get sanctified! Get serving! *Get on with it, man!!* To wait for the “right time” when God has already given command is to choose disobedience!

### **1:3-11** – Rebuke.

Haggai brought God’s word of sharp rebuke to His negligent people. Where they would likely have used words to justify their actions (or inaction), words such as “patience” and “waiting on God” and “not running ahead of God”, God implied the better fit of words like “negligence”, “lethargy”, and “selfishness”.

Vs. 4 – *“Is it time for you...?”* – With a word their hypocrisy is exposed. “Is it not true that time for God’s interests has not come because time for your interests is all your interest?” They had left God’s house to waste, while seeing to their house with

**1:5** *Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts;  
Consider your ways.*

**1:6** *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.*

**1:7** *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.*

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haste, and taste. The KJV “*ceiled*” speaks of pretty wood panelling, a fancy feature indicating a measure of luxury. While on the temple site lay only a messy, weed-choked slab!

Vs. 5-7 – “*Consider your ways*” – Here is another important phrase of the book, the word “consider” found 5 times. The Lord calls them to look well to or to set their heart upon their ways. This is a command and spoken with intensity. The Lord insists that they take stock of their experiences and what these were telling them. This command is repeated in vs. 7, and sandwiched between in vs. 6 is the type of thing God would have them notice;

- No progress – Labours not going nearly as far as they might.
- No pleasure – Life’s simple pleasures not enough to satisfy (food, drink, warmth).

**1:8** *Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.*

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- No profit – Income annoyingly nibbled away. The constant tendency was to find themselves falling short rather than finding more than enough.
- Grub, garb, and guilders alike affected.

Seems the more we cater to self the less we actually acquire or achieve. Compare Proverbs 11:24-25.

Vs. 8 – *The time is now!!* – All excuses arising from their fears aside, the Lord demanded directly that they get up and get busy *now*, out of fear of Him.

*“Go up to the mountain, and bring wood”* – Get busy gathering the materials needed. In those days the mountains of Israel were still forested with trees. Both timber and stones would be needed in the building, but stones were immediately available in abundance, scattered around the city area from Nebuchadnezzar’s old destruction.

**1:9** *Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.*

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See how God turned them to the obvious practical starting point. How does one arise from a spiritual rut? The beginning of deliverance is in our just beginning to do the practical things we *know* God would have us do.

*“I will take pleasure in it”* – They were taking pleasure in their own houses, thoughtless concerning God’s pleasure. Now the Lord insisted upon their concern for His pleasure. We are ever wise to make God’s pleasure our chief interest. For He deserves our all, and nobody out-gives Him!

*“I will be glorified”* – Not in the splendour of the house, but in a people serving Him with hearts put right. God is glorified in man’s obedience, and He is glorified in His evident, supernatural help as His people give themselves in service. He is glorified when He is seen for what He can do in a committed life, when He no longer has to hold back on the blessings He longs to pour out upon the obedient, even beyond our ability to receive them (Mal. 3:10).

**1:10** *Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew,  
and the earth is stayed from her fruit.*

**1:11** *And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon  
the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new  
wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the  
ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon  
cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.*

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Vs. 9-11 – A return to vs. 6. Expectations of much were continually disappointed by resulting in little. And then, even the little they did manage to bring home “*I did blow upon it*” says the Lord. Like blowing on a dandelion flower gone to seed, and its feathery appearance of substance is gone with the wind, only a few lacy bits still clinging. Why? Because, while waste was considered good enough for the Lord’s house, they did “*run every man unto his own house*”. The word “*run*” communicates their eagerness for their own things, and running all the faster for the Lord’s wasting efforts so hard on their heels. The Lord was answering their waste of His things with the wasting of theirs. The phrase “*every man*” indicates that all were personally involved in this negligent attitude. None can be lost in the crowd with the Lord. He knew “*every man*” involved. The Lord “*sought for a man among them*” who would run after His interests, but found none.

*“With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and*

**1:12** *Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD.*

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*with the forward Thou wilt show Thyself forward”*  
(Ps. 18:26).

Vs. 10-11 – God’s whittling tools, used for denying those who are denying Him, are drought and barrenness. Compare Malachi 3:11. Haggai spoke to them on the first day of the sixth month (1:1), or toward the end of August by our calendar. It was the latter end of their growing season. It had likely not been a good year for them, perhaps so for several years. The barley and wheat seasons had already passed, and judging by the Lord’s words had not produced well. The grapes, figs, and olives were ripening even then and coming ready for processing, such as they were. And with Haggai’s words of reproof from the Lord it must have been a moment of reckoning, of recognizing. *So this was the reason why!* The poor produce of the seasons had likely been all the talk at the fence and dinner table for years. Now it came clear what they should have seen sooner. It was their own God against them for their neglect of Him and His place

of worship.

**1:12-15** – Reaction.

Vs. 12 – Here is now that beauty comparable to “*an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold*” of Proverbs 25:12. Here is the happy effect of “*a word fitly spoken*”, the powerfully profitable combination of “*a wise reprov*er” speaking to “*an obedient ear*”. See Proverbs 25:11-13. “*Reproofs of instruction are the way of life*” (Prov. 6:23). The leaders and people, having heard God’s faithful reproof, quickly responded with obedience. And it was not only with grudging agreement that they turned from their private interests to do what they were told. They “*did fear before the LORD*”. They were genuinely concerned that they had so wrongly handled their God. Theirs was an immediate and complete turnaround to a right heart.

They recognized as well that “*the LORD their God had sent*” Haggai. Here is an important point. They understood that it was “*the voice of the LORD their God*” that they were hearing in “*the words of Haggai the prophet*”. When the heart of the hearer truly responds with a proper humility, he will readily recognize God’s message and messenger. Compare John 7:17. Yet when a man’s pride blinds his heart from recognizing God’s faithful

**1:13** *Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.*

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reproof and call to repentance he is quick to find fault in both the message and messenger, quick to accuse God's true spokesman of falsifying or fabricating the message. That these men recognized in Haggai God's messenger and message proved the readiness of their hearts to hear from God. *"The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him"* (Ps. 25:14). The attitude toward God's message and messenger demonstrates the attitude toward God Himself. And when folks at last get their hearts right with God through His faithful rebuke, it is His place and institutions they return to honour. Compare in the corporate recommitment of the nation in Nehemiah 10 their vow to *"not forsake the house of our God"* (vs. 39).

Consider as well that *"the words of Haggai"* rightly taken as *"the voice of the LORD"* speaks of God's inspiration. Compare the direct statement of the same in vs. 13.

Vs. 13 – *"I am with you, saith the LORD"* – Oh look well now to the Lord's speedy assurance of His

protecting and providing presence. This is now His 2<sup>nd</sup> message through Haggai, a response of encouragement sent for their right response of obedience and fear. Here is blessing found through cursing, triumph through tragedy. Mark it well how the Lord waits just on the other side of our repentance. He is so ready to quickly step in with blessing for humble penitence. The repentant publican found the same (Lk. 18:9-14), returning to his house with the justification he had immediately received from God. The prodigal son found the same, his waiting father running to bless his returning child (Lk. 15:11-24). To be sure God's divine principle stands, that "*except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish*", but with repentance comes a pardon that is both direct and complete.

Now remember the result of this word of assurance from the Lord through His messenger. The remnant did begin building again. And what happened? Well, a second letter of protest was sent right off to the Persian capital by the local opposition. But, lo and behold, this time Cyrus' old permit was found. And not only were the Jews sent permission to carry on, but the troublesome opposers were commanded to help finance the deal, with severest threat levelled against any who

**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,*

**1:15** *In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king*

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would dare hinder the work. This was God's sufficient answer! This is what happens when He turns the tide, when He turns to work *with* rather than *against* His people. He stands opposed until repentance. But with repentance His pardon, peace, and provision come like a flood.

So their God had in fact been running interference, sending drought and barrenness, nibbling away at their profits, shrivelling away the results of their selfish efforts. With Haggai's call back to right priorities, demanding that they put God first if they would have Him working *for* them rather than *against* them, the people turned, not only to the right action of obedience but to a right attitude of fear. Both hand and heart were put right. And so Haggai was back in vs. 13 with a word of encouragement from their God, "*I am with you, saith the LORD*".

Vs. 14 – *“The LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel...Joshua...and the people”* – Do you see how it was the Lord now moving their hearts to even greater willingness and gladness in their good resolve to get back to the work? Note the order of events here. First the fair rebuke of God’s words challenging to change. Then the right decision in the hearers to fear and obey. And then a stirring to encouragement in them from God. When we decide to do right in the fear of God He meets our good decision with a strengthening of our will in it. The decision is ours, but the strengthening of our resolve in that decision is His. The darker side of this same human-divine interaction we often see in the Bible as well. With Pharaoh’s resolve to harden his heart against the Lord’s will in Exodus 5 his decision was met with further hardening from God’s side. With the refusal of the Jews to see Jesus for who He is, in portions like John 6 and John 8 Jesus tipped the direction of His discourse to a more offensive slant, moving His unbelieving hearers to even greater hardness. As the Lord is given to the further hardening of hearts already hardened against Him, even so He steps in to stir to firmer resolve those making decisions in a right direction as well. Perhaps you have experienced something of the same, that happy lifting of the heart that comes after wrestling

through to a hard resolve to do right. At such times God's Spirit rushes in to affirm and assure us in our painfully right decisions for Him. The spirits of all here were given a supernatural lift by the Lord now, and all were eager to get on with the work they had left for so long.

*“And they came and did work”* – Our will to obey and to fear must come to this, to actual work, before it means anything. The fruits of repentance must be in evidence before the reality of the repentance is confirmed. It is why John and Paul preached that repentance must *“bring forth fruits/works meet [fit] for repentance”* (Matt. 3:8; Acts 26:20). In the same way the fruits of faith must be in evidence before the faith is deemed real. The Lord through James says *“show me thy faith...I will show thee my faith by my works”*. Real faith, real repentance cannot help but to become evident in works consistent with such a genuine heart change. That hall of faith of Hebrews 11 is actually a divine record of *works* of faith. Every faithful hero listed there *did* something, *endured* something, *denied* something, displaying the reality of their faith.

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## **Ponder Points**

The sin of these people in putting their desires before the Lord's is still very much with us today, and the application of principles found here are just as true as ever. Consider some applications;

- In the giving of our finance to the Lord's work – In portions such as Proverbs 3:9-10, Malachi 3:8-12, and II Corinthians 9 the Lord makes it clear that His rich blessing is available to the one who honours Him with the firstfruits of his increase. God is Lord of all increase. He promised His people that if He saw in one the purpose to leave his land fallow in the 7<sup>th</sup> year as commanded, He would make the 6<sup>th</sup> year produce so abundantly that they would still be eating from it in the 8<sup>th</sup> year (Lev. 25:1-7, 20-22). *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:33).
- In the giving of our time to church attendance – How easy it is to find excuse to avoid such, keeping our time for ourselves rather than giving of ourselves to the Lord and His people. Hey you have got *hours* for a cricket match boet, but scarcely *one* for

the Lord's things. Who cares if the football game goes into overtime, but woe to the Pastor who tries it!

- In the giving of our lives to the Lord's leadership – God's people today say the same as these about service, that “*the time is not come*” to put the Lord's work first. If not now, when? If not you, who? If not here, where? If not all, how much? And why not all spent for our Lord when He gave His all, His very best for us?

Be wise to give pre-eminence in your life to God, for we only *lose* when we leave Him out and we only truly *gain* when with Him. Give Him what is His of “your” time, talents, and resources, coupled with the attitude that it is actually *all* His, and watch how He makes the remainder go farther than it ever would had you kept all. Watch the peace and satisfaction arrive for which you were striving before by keeping all. Not only will your cup be full, but overflowing.

.....

It appeared at the first that the Lord was against the returned remnant. Indeed He *was* lined up against them in their rebellion. Yet as it turns out He was actually for them, for He was so quickly at

their side in their right response to His reproof. Confrontation of wrong is not necessarily an enemy act. God reproves and chastens whom He *loves*. It all depends on the motive behind it. Here is much of the explanation of Christ's Matthew 7 instruction to "*judge not lest ye be judged*". The motive driving confrontation must ever remain the will to restore. When sincere desire for the best of the other is no longer present, such a desire to cut down turns confrontation to condemnation. To confront wrong with the wish to lead to right is not wrong. To condemn wrong with no wish for the best in the other (or in myself) is judging.

.....

Compare Mark 1:14 – "*After that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching...*". The captivity of John the Baptist was a tragedy, but a tragedy that had to be, before the blessing of Christ's presence could be fully perceived. Jesus will not share the glory or focus with another. God often must first sweep away other attention magnets before introducing Jesus to man's attention, as He did in Haggai's day. Every tragic loss is a clearing of the way for something better when God remains our heart's pursuit.

“Consider now  
from this day and upward...  
even from the day  
that the foundation of the  
LORD'S temple was laid...  
from this day will I bless you”

(Haggai 2:18-19)

## Chapter 2

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- 2:1** *In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying,*
- 2:2** *Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,*
- 

This chapter now begins with Haggai's 3<sup>rd</sup> message from the Lord to His people, brought to them a month after they had begun to build. The nature of this message is again encouragement, with a good bit of instruction as well. Though they had begun the work, being stirred to such happy zeal in it (1:14), to begin again took them back to when laying the foundation of the house at the first. This brought to their remembrance the nature of the temple they were now building in comparison to the gleaming splendour of the temple they lost. What Haggai now brings to them is something of the encouragement of Paul in Philippians 3, *"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."* Prolonged crying over spilled milk is not only a waste of time, but can be dangerous for its

discouraging effects as well.

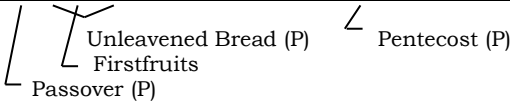
**2:1-3** – Do Not Look Back.

Vs. 1 – Haggai’s 3<sup>rd</sup> message came on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup> month, the month called Tishri. This 7<sup>th</sup> month of the Jewish calendar contained three important feasts;

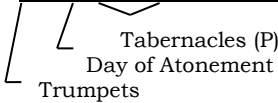
- 1<sup>st</sup> day of Tishri – The Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25). This feast was a call for Israel to present themselves before the Lord in a time of preparation for the Day of Atonement. This date later became Rosh Hashanah (head of the year), the Jewish New Year.
- 10<sup>th</sup> of Tishri – Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). This was the day of that solemn procedure of national cleansing described in Leviticus 16.
- 15<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> of Tishri – Feast of Tabernacles or Booths or Ingathering (Lev. 23:33-36). A happy week of celebrating the harvest and thankful remembrance of all their God had delivered them to and through and from.

# Jewish Calendar & Feasts

1	2	3	4	5	6
Nisan (Abib)	Iyyar (Ziv)	Sivan	Tammuz	Ab	Elul
Mar-Apr 14 15 16 21	Apr-May	May-Jun	Jun-July	Jul-Aug	Aug-Sept



7	8	9	10	11	12
Tishri (Ethanim)	Marchesvan (Bul)	Chislev	Tebeth	Shebat	Adar
Sept-Oct 1 10 15 21	Oct-Nov	Nov-Dec	Dec-Jan	Jan-Feb	Feb-Mar



(P) = Pilgrimage Feast – Men must go to place of tabernacle or temple

So Haggai came to the people with his 3<sup>rd</sup> message now on the final day of the final feast of that season, the Feast of Tabernacles. There is great meaning in his coming at this time and with the message he brought. All of the feasts which the Lord required of Israel have prophetic significance. There was a series of feasts in the 1<sup>st</sup> month (Nisan) of their calendar; Passover, Firstfruits on the third day following Passover, within the week

of Unleavened Bread, and then Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks came 50 days later, the day after seven weeks from Firstfruits. Passover of course pointed to Jesus, our Passover, marking the day He was sacrificed for us. Firstfruits foreshadowed Christ's resurrection the third day following His death on Passover when He arose the firstfruits from the dead. Pentecost pointed to the day the Spirit would come in the very special way in which He now indwells the church of believers on earth during this current age. This first group of feasts picture the events of Christ's first coming. Then came the summer months of the main harvest season during the 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> months. This period pictures the current church age, with fields white unto harvest and our work of ingathering until the Lord's return. The next round of feasts in the 7<sup>th</sup> month then marks events relating to Christ's 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. Trumpets points to the sounding of the trump at the return of Jesus Christ after the harvest of earth, calling His church to her presentation before Himself. This is then followed by our Yom Kippur or the complete reckoning of sin at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Feast of Tabernacles then points to the kingdom age. This is the only feast mentioned in prophecy to be celebrated during Christ's 1000-year earthly reign (Zech. 14:16), for there the redeemed shall

**2:3** *Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?*

---

celebrate with greatest joy and thankfulness all that our God has brought us to, through, and from. So Haggai appears now on the ending day of this second round of feasts, to speak of things relating to Christ's return, to which this round of feasts pointed.

Vs. 3 – *“Is it not in your eyes...as nothing?”* – Haggai came with questions aimed at exposing a muttering undercurrent that had begun again with their return to the temple work. Whenever God's people begin again to do His work opposition arises in one form or another, this time in the form of discouragement. There were present among the *“ancient men”* some who remembered the magnificence of Solomon's temple, destroyed by Babylon so many decades before. These were the same who wept in the midst of joy a few years back when the foundations of the house were laid (Ezra 3:12). They wept because this little house was so small in comparison to the one they had lost! Solomon's grand temple was all white stone, cedar, and gold on the exterior, and within all overlaid with gold, decked with fine carved work, and

draped with the most beautiful tapestries. The value of millions upon millions worth of gold was used in the building of that matchless temple, *now all gone!* I Chronicles 22:14 gives the quantities of gold (180 cubic metres) and silver (over 300 cubic metres) used in the gilding of Solomon's temple. The thought of what they had lost and the sight of this plain house they were now building, "*in comparison of it as nothing*", had a deflating effect on the whole effort, perhaps even threatening to turn the hearts of the people from the project again. Because the old ones just would not let go! This grumbling sentiment needed to be brought out into the open and addressed in order to keep all encouraged in so vital a work. *God's* heart on the issue needed to be known, not the discontented attitude of the wet blankets among them. Much of the work of *God's* leaders is just this, keeping the hearts of *God's* people encouraged to keep living His kind of life and doing His work and holding close His purpose, what pleases Him (and avoiding or confronting the wet blankets as well). It is an ongoing, vital work.

There was likely another factor contributing to a general spirit of gloom growing among them as well. *God* had sent drought upon them for their previous selfishness (1:9-10). Therefore their Feast

**2:4** *Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:*

**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.*

---

of Tabernacles or Ingathering, partly a celebration of the harvest, was likely a bit dampened as well by the poor produce of field, orchard, and vineyard. So it seems they were facing a rather dismal outlook at that point in time. These concerns the devil was sure to magnify in the eyes of the immature. Of course their miserable prospects on all sides were due to their own sin as a nation, but the Lord was with them now (1:13). They had Him, His pardon, and this should be enough. Indeed this is *everything!* So the people were in need of instruction on this score. They needed help in resting their hope upon their sufficient God. They must not put their hope or base their happiness on what they owned, but on their great Provider, their God of hope (Hab. 3:17-19).

**2:4-5** – Look Up.

*“Be strong...and work...for I am with you, saith the*

*LORD of hosts*” – Their God does not advise them to a change of plans, to build a bigger, grander house. He rather turns them to courage and confidence in the fact of His presence with them. The house does not matter. God in the house is what makes the house glorious, not gold. Do not worry about the plainness of the house, as long as the Lord is with you. Do not be concerned about the plainness of your house, your life, your looks, your things. Do not be concerned about what you have never had, or will not likely ever have. Leave it! Rather be eager to know God, to hold Him close, to please Him. Outward, material considerations are non-issues with God. He looks on the heart (I Sam. 16:7). Even Jesus Christ’s appearance was plain and unimpressive, He described by Isaiah as having *“no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him”* (Isa. 53:2). No stately majesty that we should be drawn to look upon Him. No special, magnetic appearance that we should be attracted to Him. And do not judge the worth of the work or worker by the external signs of progress either. Judge righteously, by the evidence of faithfulness. Be much less concerned with form or facility, much more concerned with “Ichabod”, that the true glory of God is not there (Ezek. 9:3; 10:4, 18-19; 11:23). There be many a

- 2:6** 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;
- 2:7** And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.
- 

church or “saint” on this earth that are grand and impressive, but Ichabod! It is the Lord’s presence that is the true mark of distinction of His true people (Ex. 32:16). And success in God’s estimation is the *only* estimation!

### **2:6-9** – Look Ahead.

The Lord through Haggai now turns the gaze of His people to the future, to the days leading up to and including Christ’s return. As related earlier, these are the days indicated by the feast days they had just passed through.

Vs. 6-7 – “*I will shake...*” (also vs. 21) – The days surely come, during the last days, the Great Tribulation period before Christ’s return, when God will most certainly shake the heavens, earth, and nations (Joel 3:16; Matt. 24:29). The writer of Hebrews applied Haggai’s words here to the day of the Lord, when all will be so shaken as to sweep away all that *can* be shaken loose, leaving to

remain only what cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:26). As the voice of God shook the earth at Sinai, so *“He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven”* in bringing in His kingdom. And we who have believed in Jesus, knowing that we are *“receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear”* (Heb. 12:28). Compare Peter’s description of the coming *“day of the Lord”* in II Pet. 3, when *“the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat”* (vs. 10), and with the same personal application there as in Heb. 12; *“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness”* (vs. 11). Compare prophecies of great earthquakes in the last days (Rev. 6:12-17; 11:13; 16:18-20). Compare prophecies of the kingdoms of men overthrown (2:22; Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45). Compare prophecies of sweeping changes in the heavens, when the sky will in some way depart as if rolled up like a scroll (Isa. 34:1-4; Ps. 102:26ff; Heb. 1:10-12; Rev. 6:13-14).

*“A little while”* – Speaking of the comparative blip in time of the centuries, when at last seen from the perspective of the vast span of eternity. Compare

Habakkuk 2:3; Hebrews 10:37.

*“And the desire of all nations shall come”* – This undoubtedly refers to Jesus Christ. Among the people of *“all nations”* are those sensing their need and crying as Job for a *“Daysman”*, a Mediator sufficiently great enough to come *“betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both”* (Job 9:33). Job looked for a God-man and thus One able to reach both to God and man. The presence of that very One at last coming suddenly to the temple is what *“will fill this house with glory”*. Though the house they were busy building was *“as nothing”* compared to the outward splendour of Solomon’s, this house would have the supreme honour of Jesus the Messiah Himself entering it in His first coming. Indeed all the glory of Solomon’s riches were *“as nothing”* in comparison to the glory of Christ’s presence within. All of creation is not fit to be compared with the Creator. So it is for us. All the collected wonders of all this world has to offer are *“as nothing”* compared to Jesus Christ within our soul. He is the Pearl of greatest price. His worth truly grasped is well worth selling all to have. Once He abides in us and we in Him *we have all and abound!*

Vs. 8 – *“The silver is Mine, and the gold”* – While

**2:8** *The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.*

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some were bemoaning their lack of Solomon's resources to restore this house properly to its old dazzle, they must understand that all such resources are well within God's reach. "The earth is Mine, with all of its precious metals," God assures them. If He wanted them to have access to such earthly glitters for use in decking His house again to something closer to its old glory He could easily give to them. They must understand and accept that they did not have these things for one reason only, because such was not His will for this house. For this one He had far greater plans of things far more wonderful. Again, the special feature of this one would be greatest splendour through Christ's presence within rather than outward sparkle. Their limited resources were no oversight. The Lord knew what He was doing. This change was likely meant as well to display the "more glorious" inward nature of the new covenant then yet to come, in contrast to the "glorious" outward form of the old (II Cor. 4:7-13).

By the same principle we must beware of the folly of pining for things we do not have. It all belongs to our God. All things are within His reach. If He

**2:9** *The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.*

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wants us to have, we will have! Man is a fool to fall to the folly of demanding in his heart what God has not allowed, for this is proud man demanding his will over God's!

Vs. 9 – “*Glory...greater than of the former*” – Not just a special or different feature, but a more glorious feature. When Jesus was brought as a baby to the temple for His dedication godly Simeon took Him into his arms and called Him “*the glory of thy people Israel*” (Lk. 2:32). Jesus referred to Himself as “*one greater than the temple*” (Matt. 12:6), and “*greater than Solomon*” (Matt. 12:42). A further fulfilment of this greater glory will be the millennial temple which Jesus will enter as well, described in Ezekiel 40-48. And the ultimate will be Jesus Christ as the very light and temple of the New Jerusalem throughout eternity (Rev. 21:22-23).

How appropriate that Jesus used the Feast of Tabernacles as well, and the last day of it, to present Himself as the answer to the soul's thirst, and to give promise of the Spirit to all who believe

(Jn. 7:37-38). This was a call to salvation after the image of Isaiah's call in Isaiah 55:1-3.

*“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”*

*“In this place will I give peace”* – What place? Jerusalem, the “City of Peace”. This peace through the coming Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6-7; Isa. 11). In Jerusalem God would give peace in that;

- There Jesus would come suddenly to His temple presenting Himself to the nation as Messiah – *Prince of Peace*.
- There Jesus would be sacrificed in death and raised again to life as the only answer for man's sin – *bringing inward peace*.
- There Jesus will return to rescue His beleaguered people in the days of Antichrist, finally crushing the kingdoms of men – *bringing outward peace*.
- There the Lord Jesus Christ will centre His earthly kingdom of righteousness and peace for 1000 years.
- And there will be the capital of the new

heavens and earth into eternity – *eternal peace!!*

“*Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*” The great work and worth of God’s prophecy is the *hope* with which our hearts are filled by faith.

We come now to Haggai’s last recorded day of service for bringing a word from God to his people. His 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> messages were brought in the same day, on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month (Chislev);

- Two months after his 3<sup>rd</sup> message.
- One month after the prophet Zechariah began his ministry (Zech. 1:1).
- Nearly four months after Haggai’s initial message of rebuke.

The nature of Haggai’s 4<sup>th</sup> message is confirmatory, now seeking to solidify in the understanding of the people the significance of what was happening, calling them again to careful consideration of it, this time from a positive perspective. They must see well how their obedience would now bring God’s blessing in the same measure that their disobedience had robbed them of it previously.

“Watch Me now bless you for your obedience”, is

**2:10** *In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,*  
**2:11** *Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying,*  
**2:12** *If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.*

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the happy assurance of their God.

**2:10-19** – Call to Continued Obedience in the People.

Vs. 10 – As we have seen repeatedly, the assurance is again given here that the word Haggai brought was not his own but *“the word of the Lord”*.

Vs. 11 – The Lord through His prophet came again with leading questions, this time relating to God’s law and to be asked of the priests for they were the authorities on the matter.

Vs. 12 – Question – Can ceremonial purity be communicated by touch? Answer – No. This the priests well understood. Meat that was sanctified or holy and carried in a sanctified garment or vessel when touching something else did not transmit holiness to the thing touched.

Ceremonial purity was not communicated or contagious by touch. Such cleanness could only be given or restored through the positive input of a special procedure appointed by God. Only through the sprinkling of water mingled with the ashes of a red heifer, and only when prepared in just the right way. See Numbers 19 for the precise formula with the red heifer;

- Must be a red heifer, with no spot, which never wore a yoke. It was the only sacrifice of specified colour.
- Must be killed outside the camp. It was the only sacrifice not killed in the tabernacle.
- Blood sprinkled 7 times before the tabernacle.
- Must be burned with specific ingredients.
- Ashes must be collected and kept. It was the only sacrifice requiring the ashes to be kept.
- Ashes must be mixed with water.
- This divinely appointed mixture must be applied by sprinkling to the unclean.

The figure suggests God's very specific answer in Jesus Christ for the cleansing of man's defilement

**2:13** *Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.*

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in sin (Heb. 9:13-14).

Vs. 13 – Question – Can ceremonial *uncleanness* be communicated by touch? Answer – Yes. According to God’s O.T. law, one who touched a dead body for example became unclean by the touch (Lev. 22:1-6). The Lord was pointing up the fact that uncleanness could be transferred by mere contact, while purity cannot be so transferred.

Let me illustrate. Suppose you are very thirsty, and I set before you a sparkling glass of pure drinking water. But before I let you drink it I add one drop of raw sewerage, only one drop. Would you drink it? You are not that thirsty, you say? O.K., suppose I set before you a glass of raw sewerage, but then add one drop of pure water. Would you drink it? Not a chance! What if I add a litre of pure water? Will that make a difference? Not in the least! So a touch of uncleanness defiles the pure, but the opposite does not follow, that a touch (even a *ton*) of purity purifies the unclean. The defiled water would require a complete process of purification to restore it to a drinkable form.

**2:14** *Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.*

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When we were kids one of my sisters came down with one of the typical once-off childhood sicknesses (chicken pox I think). My mum had that sister kiss all of us! Why? So we could communicate our health to her? No. So we would all get the sickness together in one go and be done with it. In a similar way health is not communicated through contact, though disease is.

Vs. 14 – “So is this people and nation and every work of their hand”. Haggai now makes application of the principle to the experience of the people. When they were walking in the uncleanness of their disobedience the impurity of their condition before God touched and defiled all they were, all they did, all they hoped for. It was like a dead thing among them! Even “*that which they offer there is unclean*”. Even their religious services and sacrifices, offered from the context of the unresolved evil of their disobedience, were defiled in the Lord’s sight. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22). Barrels of religious sacrifice and

duty without true cleansing cannot make such a doer acceptable to God. More religion thrown into the pot does not purify the pot defiled by the evil of our unconfessed sin. Another dose of holy religion communicates no holiness. Yet the entrance of one sin defiles the whole, now requiring a positive input of a divinely appointed nature to restore purity. *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all”* (James 2:10). Though one be a law-keeper on every point but one, that one violation of the law makes him a law-breaker and thus *“guilty of all”*, as guilty as if a crass violator of every point of the law. One touch of sin, to come short of God’s glory even at one point, is the drop of defilement that contaminates the whole.

The application of this principle to the unsaved is obvious. “Oh sure, I am not perfect” admits the Christ-rejecter. “But hey I do a lot of good things too, certainly a lot more than some, maybe more than most. Surely my good makes a difference!” But alas, a measure of good added to the pot communicates no good or cleansing to a life contaminated by sin. Only the positive input of God’s appointed remedy can restore purity to a life in His sight. Only the blood of Jesus Christ, applied in God’s appointed, specific way to a sin-

stained soul can make that soul good or right or pure before God.

The application of this principle to God's own saved children is equally clear. If we regard or hold onto unconfessed iniquity in our hearts the Lord will not hear us, for we have lost His blessing on our lives when we do so. As the Lord later explained to another selfish generation of His people through Malachi, "*Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me*" (of tithes and offerings). This accusation He then followed with the challenge to put it right and see the blessing He would pour out upon them. When a believer denies God His lordship and holds onto sin in his life, he will find God Himself standing in his way like the fearful angel before Balaam. When one is defiled by unconfessed sin, every work of his hand becomes unclean. But when he at last puts it right in God's appointed way, through confession, the way is cleared again for God's blessing. Many of God's children live in this defiled way all of their Christian lives, acting as if God winks at their sins, thinking that perhaps since they are doing things in His service it must be alright. Surely such good and godly service must transmit a measure of good to the pot of their Christian existence. In time a man's sin finds him out and the house-of-cards of

**2:15** *And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:*

**2:16** *Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty.*

**2:17** *I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.*

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his life, propped for a time by the prayers of others, comes tumbling down. Do not deceive yourself, for God is not deceived. “*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Gal. 6:7). Just because God does not call you to account today does not mean He *never* will. With Reuben, Jacob waited until the end before he revealed his full knowledge of all of Reuben’s shameful sin against him (Gen. 49:3-4). He allowed him many years to come and confess his shameful deed and put it right, but he never did. And then it was too late, when he was fully exposed before all his brothers in the end!

Vs. 15-19 – “*Consider now*” – Again God’s prophet returned to the command with which he began (1:5 & 7), calling the people to look well to what their experiences displayed. They were to compare the Lord’s dealing with them “*from this day*”

**2:18** *Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider it.*

**2:19** *Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.*

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onward with the way things had been before their turning. He calls them to think back to how it was “before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord”, before they turned again to fear and obedience. The Lord reminds them of what it was like when their lives were defiled by their selfishness and rebellion, contaminating everything they touched and chasing away all of His blessing. They would come to their heap of barley or wheat (on the threshing floor perhaps), when all the great work of harvest and threshing was done. And where they were hoping for 20 measures they would find only 10. Their hard-earned hopes were dashed with a 50% reduction on their expected income! When they would go to their press in those days expecting 50 measures of wine or oil they found instead only 20. A 60% loss of hoped-for gains! With God against them, at every turn life issued to them diminished returns, bad decisions, costly losses, discouraging downturns, etc. It is not that the Lord is rubbing

their noses in their evil history now after their turning. But He would very clearly confirm the record to their awareness that they might fully collect on the marked change “*now from this day upward*”, and lest they should ever fall back again to the same.

Vs. 19 – “*Is the seed yet in the barn?*” – The implication is that it was not. It is doubtful they then had much of any seed in the barn at all. Due to God’s drought, they simply had not harvested much seed to put in the barn! It being now the 9<sup>th</sup> month, they had already planted what seed they had toward the next crop. This month was the time of planting for the next harvest. And with nothing carried over from previous poor seasons they could only acknowledge that they were running pretty sparse. As of yet, for their past disobedience, the blighted, hail-damaged fig, olive, and pomegranate had hardly produced at all! Hey a turn to real repentance does not bring *immediate* change to our dismal outward circumstances. The natural results of sin must still run their course as an ongoing reminder of the darkness from whence we have come. Yet the Lord challenges them now to clearly mark this day on their calendar as the day from which the tide of their fortunes turned. “*From this day will I bless you*”. See how greatly

He underscores the point (vs. 15, 18, & 19). They (we) must not miss the connection between the beginning of *obedience* and the beginning of *blessing*. It would be no coincidence. And though the consequences of sin be not immediately removed, yet the forgiveness and friendship of God was with them even then. This would make all the difference. Though the reformed druggie must still cope with semi-fried grey matter, and though the repentant prisoner remains a prisoner still, yet pardon and peace with God can be theirs. It is the way in which the Lord works with us, leading us on to mature trust in the promise of His Word rather than in hope of some immediate outward turn of prosperity. Beware the ministry that offers glowing promise of instant material returns or instant spirituality for obedience. For it is likely a ministry either living in spiritual babyhood or on its *own* mission. Every con comes wearing some such robe of unreasonably direct gains.

As well, if our God could make Aaron's rod to bud, how easy for Him to cause the trees to quickly bloom and produce. It is only ever a question of God's will. "*The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the LORD of hosts*". However many cubes of precious metal are needed for the task, all is ever within His reach. This 9<sup>th</sup> month was when they

**2:20** *And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying,*  
**2:21** *Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;*  
**2:22** *And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.*

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looked for the early rain to give vital water to their newly planted seed. I think we can safely assume it started raining! The sound of distant thunder perhaps punctuating Haggai's message even as he spoke?

**2:20-23** – Call to Continued Obedience in the Leader.

Vs. 20 – Again it was a word from the Lord. This is now the 2<sup>nd</sup> message on the same day as the previous. And this time the message was a personal one to Zerubbabel the governor.

Vs. 21-22 – *“I will shake the heavens and the earth”* – Again looking to the day when *“the times of the Gentiles”* will come crashing to an end at Christ's return (as at 2:6-7; Dan. 2). The judgment of the nations will be complete, for the throne of

**2:23** *In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.*

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kingdoms will be overthrown and the strength of heathen kingdoms will be destroyed. The whole machinery of human weapons and warriors will “*come down*” together. The pinnacle of this of course will be the grand finale of the final battle of Armageddon under Antichrist, “*like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger, and in His wrath*” (Deut. 29:23).

“*Everyone by the sword of his brother*” – It seems the Lord will use the same tactic there He has so commonly used in dealing with a great attacking host. He need only send confusion among the ranks, turning the enemy army against itself. Compare Zechariah 14:13; Judges 7:22; I Samuel 14:20; I Chronicles 20:23; Ezekiel 38:21.

Vs. 23 – I “*will make thee as a signet*” – A king’s signet was as his signature, the stamp of his ownership and authority. It was an item very precious to him. Joseph was honoured by Pharaoh to carry his signet. Whatever this

promise to Zerubbabel entails, it certainly speaks of a place of great honour to be granted to him in Christ's coming kingdom, he to be placed in such a way as to display his preciousness to the Lord. For his part in leading his people to obedience and fear of their God, the Lord will pay tribute to Zerubbabel in the last days.

See how the Lord gives strong encouragement to those who step into the role of the spiritual leader and serve Him well in that capacity. It is no small promise the Lord gives to this man, though Zerubbabel might seem to be in so much more an insignificant role than a David or Solomon ruling as kings over an independent nation. Here is a relatively unknown governor, leading a relatively small band of a Jewish remnant, because the vast majority of the Jews did not think a return to the land important enough to bother with. Here is a man serving over a tiny, out-of-the-way province of the vast, impressive earthly empire of Persia. Such a little crumb of the great cookie. Zerubbabel was a small-time governor serving under a great Gentile king. And here he was struggling to put up a relatively puny, unimpressive temple compared to the likes of what they had lost. How easy it might have been to allow discouragement to get the best of him in such a leadership role. But

faithfulness even in such seemingly paltry places and periods and positions as that was **major** as far as the Lord was concerned. It was the landing pad of Messiah they were preparing, the province in which His presence would be known. It was the temple in which Emmanuel would walk. God's purposes and the nature of a man's involvement may often seem little and unimpressive on earth, but to have His blessing *is all!* To be a part of His greater plan is thrilling, regardless of what is showing on the ground. If Zerubbabel needed encouragement for his labours he certainly found it here, with such wonderful prospects lined up for him.

God does not take lightly what we do in faithfulness for Him! God does not reward lightly what we do in faithfulness for Him!

*“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (II Cor. 4:17).*

*“And, behold I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. 22:12).*

