

HAGGAI

Chapter 1

The Command to Rebuild the Temple

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: 2 “Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.” 3 Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, 4 “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? 5 Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. 6 You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. 7 “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. 8 Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD. 9 You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. 10 Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. 11 And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

1:1 *second year ... first day ... sixth month.* Aug. 29, 520 B.C. (CSB)

King Darius. Darius Hystaspis (or Hystaspes) ruled Persia from 522 to 486 B.C. It was he who prepared the trilingual inscription on the Behistun (Bisitun) cliff wall (located in modern Iran), through which cuneiform languages were deciphered. (CSB)

Persian king (522–486 BC).

first day. The New Moon was the day on which prophets were sometimes consulted. (CSB)

the word of the LORD came. Haggai recorded God’s words. (TLSB)

Haggai – The OT book of Ezra provides the historical setting for the book of Haggai. To understand God’s people as Haggai knew them and talked to them we must first hear what Ezra tells us. (PBC)

Along with Zechariah, this prophet promoted the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Haggai may have returned from exile in Babylon with the remnant under Zerubbabel. (TLSB)

Zerubbabel. Led some of the Judeans back from the Babylonian captivity and was appointed governor of Judah by the Persians (2:21). (TLSB)

Shealtiel. According to 1Ch 3:17–19 he was Zerubbabel’s grandfather (in Hebrew “son” sometimes means “grandson”). (CSB)

Also an ancestor of Jesus (Mt 1:12; Lk 3:27). (TLSB)

Joshua. Mentioned with Zerubbabel also in vv. 12, 14; 2:2, 4. (CSB)

Not the son of Nun (Jsh 1:1). As high priest, this Joshua assisted Zerubbabel in rebuilding the temple (Zec 3). (TLSB)

Jehozadak. Had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar (1Ch 6:15). (CSB)

1:2 *LORD of hosts*. Used more than 90 times in Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. See note on Isa 13:4. (CSB)

These people. See 2:14. Because of their sin, the nation is not called “my people” (see Isa 6:9; 8:6, 11–12; Jer 14:10–11; see also note on Hos 1:9). (CSB)

time has not yet come. After the foundation of the temple had been laid in 536 B.C. (see Ezr 3:8–10), opposition hindered and then halted the work until 520 (see Ezr 4:1–5, 24). (CSB)

rebuild the house of the LORD. The Judeans who returned to Jerusalem in 538 BC built an altar to offer sacrifices to the Lord and laid the foundations for the temple (Ezr 3). But work stopped when they ran into opposition (Ezr 4:4–5). (TLSB)

1:3 *the word of the LORD came*. Repetition of these words (v 1) strengthens Haggai’s assertion that the Lord spoke through him. (TLSB)

1:4 *paneled houses*. Usually connected with royal dwellings, which had cedar paneling (1Ki 7:3, 7; Jer 22:14). (CSB)

Private dwellings were nicely finished with wood, such as cedar on the walls (Jer 22:14), but God’s house was a desolate waste. (TLSB)

1:5 *consider your ways* – Is it fit that you should be building yourselves elegant houses, and neglect a place for the worship of that God who has restored you from captivity? – It is always a matter for weeping when God’s people lose their determination and desire to establish his church and build his house. And the prophet must speak to us today. In an era of the greatest personal riches and per capita wealth that the world has ever seen, and in a country that has been blessed with more material blessings than perhaps any country in history ever has, the church goes begging. Building projects limp and stumble. Modest mission proposals languish. (PBC)

Call to repentance. People were to examine their hearts, looking closely at what they had done since returning from Babylon. (TLSB)

1:6 *sown much ... harvested little*. A curse for disobedience (see Dt 28:38–39). Lev 26:20 also describes the unfruitfulness of a land judged by God. (CSB)

drink ... fill. Cf. Isa 55:1–2. The people experience futility in all their activities, legitimate or illegitimate (cf. Hos 4:10–11). (CSB)

bag with holes. Famine causes prices to rise sharply. (CSB)

Hbr refers to a package that had been carefully wrapped but whose contents fell out because it was punctured. Such is the life of people who fail to put the Lord first. (TLSB)

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

1:7 *Consider your ways.* Repeated (v 5) for emphasis. (TLSB)

1:8 *hills and bring wood.* Perhaps wood from the hills around Jerusalem was to supplement the cedar wood already purchased from Lebanon (see Ezr 3:7). (CSB)

Though Solomon’s temple had been built using cedar from Lebanon (1Ki 5:6), now the Lord orders that wood from nearby hills be used. (TLSB)

take pleasure in it. And in the sacrifices offered there (contrast Isa 1:11). (CSB)

be glorified. An obedient nation would bring praise and honor to God (see Jer 13:11). (CSB)

Because the place would be ready to welcome worshipers. Even a “second class” worship setting could bring God glory. (TLSB)

1:9 *it came to little.* Their lives lacked fulfillment because the temple lay in ruins. (TLSB)

busies with his own. Rather than concern for God’s house, the people’s number one priority was themselves. (TLSB)

1:10 *dew.* Normally abundant, and often as valuable as rain (see 2Sa 1:21; 1Ki 17:1). (CSB)

In dry Israel, dew was an important source of moisture for healthy crops. (TLSB)

A warning is perhaps in order here that we don’t try to second guess the visible evidence and try and ascertain the crime. In other words, it isn’t for us to judge every crop failure of a Christian farmer or every accident or setback a Christian might experience as some direct reference to unfaithfulness on the person’s part or disregard for God’s house and God’s work. (PBC)

1:11 *drought.* Hbr play on words: the Lord punished the people with drought (Hbr *choreb*) because they had let God’s house lie in ruins (Hbr *chareb*). (TLSB)

hills. The hills were cultivated, especially through terracing (see Ps 104:13–15; Isa 7:25; Joel 3:18). (CSB)

the grain, the new wine, the oil. The three basic crops of the land, often mentioned in a context of blessing or cursing (see Dt 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; Hos 2:8, 22). Olive oil was used as food, ointment or medicine. (CSB)

In the ancient biblical world, these were the basic foods. (TLSB)

men and beasts. The drought affected men and cattle and so could be said to be “on” them too. (CSB)

1:1–11 The Lord chastises His people for being concerned about their own houses while His sacred house lies in ruins. The Lord’s work suffers today when we take care of our own material wants and needs but fail to support the work of proclaiming the Gospel. Jesus had a different priority. He came to serve, giving His life as a ransom for us. Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor so that we might become rich (2Co 8:9). The riches we have received in Him move us to become rich in our love for Him and others. • Dear Jesus, fire me with zeal to have You first in my life. Unite me in service with others. Amen. (TLSB)

The People Obey the LORD

12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, 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 feared the LORD. 13 Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, “I am with you, declares the LORD.” 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 Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

1:12 remnant. Judeans, some of whom had returned from Babylon. One estimate puts this number at fewer than 4,000 people. (TLSB)

The people did not say, “Building God’s house is the priest’s business. That is his work; that is what we are paying him for.” (PBC)

obeyed. Responded positively to the Word of the Lord spoken by Haggai. (TLSB)

feared the LORD. Showing reverence, respect and obedience (see Dt 31:12–13; Mal 1:6; 3:5, 16). (CSB)

This fear is a profound and worshipful respect that results in obedience. (TLSB)

1:13 messenger. A title for prophets (see 2Ch 36:15; Isa 42:19 and note) or priests (see Mal 2:7). (CSB)

Hbr *mal’ak*, often translated “angel” but could describe preachers. (TLSB)

He was the Lord’s messenger, and he came with the Lord’s message, and consequently he came with authority. (ACC)

I am with you. A sure indication of success (see 2:4; Nu 14:9; Ge 26:3 and note). (CSB)

The Lord, by assuring His people of His living presence among them, means to give them the needed confidence to carry out the building project. (TLSB)

1:14 stirred up the spirit. The Hebrew for this expression is translated “moved (the) heart” in Ezr 1:5, where God stirred up many of these same people to return home and rebuild the temple. (CSB)

Emphasizes how completely the people and their leaders have the Lord's support. (TLSB)

This is the thrill of watching God's church in action. God supplies the gifts to the people in the church. He puts the spirit in them to do the work. The people don't all have the same gifts but together they build the church. (PBC)

1:15 *twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.* Sept. 21, 520 B.C. (CSB)

Three and a half weeks after the Word of the Lord had come to Haggai (v 1), the people began the work of restoring what had lain in ruins for nearly 70 years. (TLSB)

1:12–15 The people of Judah obey the Word of the Lord and begin the task of rebuilding the temple. They demonstrate repentance for their previous selfishness. The Lord in turn promises to be with them, and He stirs up the spirit of the people and their leaders to work hard. Through Word and Sacrament, God is present with us today. His Spirit stirs us to repentance and gives us a burning desire to serve Him. • Lord God, bless my hearing and my doing of Your holy will. Amen. (TLSB)