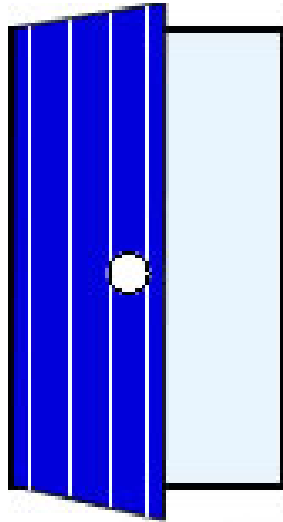


# **BIBLE STUDIES**



**Mill Lane Chapel**

**Haggai**

## **(4) "I will fill this house with glory"**

### **Read Chapter 2: 1-9**

Just to refresh our memories, the book of Haggai comprises four messages: **(1)** To reprove their idleness, 1: 1-15 **(2)** To restore their confidence, 2: 1-9; **(3)** To rebuke their unholiness, 2: 10-19; **(4)** To reward their leader, 2: 20-23.

### **1) TO REPROVE THEIR IDLENESS, 1: 1-15**

As we have seen, the first message can be divided into two sections: **(A)** The reproof, V1-11: "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways." **(B)** The result, V12-15: "They came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God." We now come to the second message, which was

### **2) TO RESTORE THEIR CONFIDENCE, 2: 1-9**

This is addressed, in the first place, to the 'senior citizens' in Jerusalem. They had lived long enough to remember the original temple. "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?" So God knew exactly what they were thinking and saying about the rebuilding project! As we would say, 'not much!' But God does not censure them. He encourages them. We do not have a hard and unmerciful God. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust", Psalm 103: 13-14. The second message, therefore, was intended to revive their flagging spirits by giving them confidence for the future, and encouraging them to continue with the temple reconstruction.

We can divide the passage as follows: **(A)** The month, V1. The message came at a significant time; **(B)** The men, V2. The message is addressed individually and collectively; **(C)** The message, V3-9. It covers past memories (V3), present encouragement (V4-5), and prospective glory (V6-9).

#### **A) THE MONTH, V1**

"In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai." There are at least two important lessons here:

##### **i) The significance of the time**

The second message was delivered **four weeks** after work had recommenced on the temple. See 1: 14-15, "They came and did work in the house of the Lord

of hosts, their God, in the ***four and twentieth day of the sixth month***, in the second year of Darius the king." So work had restarted, but some people were already discouraged. We all know that discouragement is never far away. A buoyant start is not always followed by undiminished enthusiasm! But God did not intend to let His people give up once they had restarted the work! He therefore spoke to them again through Haggai, and He continued to speak. Zechariah had a message for them in the "eighth month" (1: 1), Haggai in the "ninth month" (2: 10), and Zechariah again in the "eleventh month" (1: 7).

This reminds us that we need the word of God at all times. We need it to 'get us going', and we need it to 'keep us going.' Paul laid excellent foundations when he visited Thessalonica. The two epistles abound with references to his oral teaching there. The assembly had been reared on a balanced spiritual diet covering doctrine, practical living, church order and prophecy. Check it out! But they needed further help and encouragement. Paul therefore sent Timothy to "establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.", 1 Thessalonians 3: 2. However well assemblies have been founded, and however good past teaching has been, we cannot dispense with the word of God. We need to constantly hear His voice. We notice, then, that God continued to speak to His people through Haggai and Zechariah. They needed His help and encouragement as much in Chapter 2, as they had in Chapter 1!

### ***ii) The significance of the date***

The "seventh month" has further significance. The second message was delivered when the Jews celebrated the "feast of tabernacles." See Leviticus 23: 33-43, and Ezra 3: 4. This commenced on the "fifteenth day of the seventh month", and lasted for seven days (that is, until the twenty-first day), after which there was an "eighth day." It was the last festival in the Jewish calendar, and took place after Israel had "gathered in the fruit of the land." It was a time of great rejoicing and, bearing in mind the prophetic significance of the Jewish calendar, anticipated the coming glorious millennial age. Bearing in mind the recent drought (1: 11), there probably wasn't much to celebrate, and in any case, we are not specifically told that the feast was kept that year. But the "feast of tabernacles" also looked back to the beginning of their nationhood, and their deliverance from Egypt: "Ye shall dwell in booths seven days.....that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt", V42-43.

But now, Israel was again in virtual captivity. After all, they were only a small group of people in a country that had been annexed by a foreign power. There was no apparent prospect of a glorious national future! It must have been thoroughly depressing for them! But God had good news for them! But before this, however, we must notice

## **B) THE MEN, V2**

"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." There are important lessons here:

### **i) The urgency of the message**

"Speak **now** to Zerubbabel.....and to Joshua the son of Josedech.....and to the residue of the people." Haggai was not to delay. He was to address the situation immediately. Delay could prove dangerous. Discouragement could spread, and the whole project could be in jeopardy. Urgency permeates this chapter. We have already noticed the repetition of "**now**." See, V2, 4, 11, 15, 18. So often, things begin to go wrong, and good men stay silent. Whilst elders must not be abrasive, and act like 'a bull in a china shop', they must address assembly problems without delay. This is particularly true where moral and doctrinal issues are concerned, for "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (1 Corinthians 5: 6, Galatians 5: 9). We should also recognise the urgency of the Lord's work: perhaps He is saying to us, "Son, go work **today** in my vineyard", Matthew 21: 28. How often we fail when an opportunity occurs to witness for Christ. The Lord says, "Speak now", but so often we keep quiet!

### **ii) The recipients of the message**

**a) It was addressed individually.** Leaving aside for a moment the important role of Zerubbabel and Joshua, let's just register the fact that these two men are named. The word of God was addressed to them personally. We **all** ought to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have **me** to do?" We must **all** feel the 'cutting edge' of God's word.

We have already discussed the roles of Zerubbabel and Joshua, but it certainly won't hurt to remind ourselves that good leadership involves healthy public lives, and healthy private lives. Or, to put it another way, a healthy life before men, and a healthy life before God. Or, to put it in yet another way, a healthy 'princely' life, and a healthy 'priestly' life. (Zerubbabel was the grandson of Jehoiachin, and great-grandson of Josiah: his royal descent is traced in Matthew 1: 12-13). Paul refers to the need for good leadership in Romans 12: 8, "He that ruleth with diligence." That can never be achieved without spending time in the presence of God.

It is worth noticing that kings and priests were not always in harmony. See, for example, 2 Chronicles 26: 16-21. We must also notice that so far as Israel was concerned, the roles were never united in one person. (Melchisedec was both king and priest, see Genesis 14: 18, but that was long before Israel's national history commenced!). But the Lord Jesus will combine both roles: He will "build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his

throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both", Zechariah 6: 12-13.

**b) It was addressed corporately.** "Speak now.....to the residue of the people." As we shall see, this wasn't a case of dealing with the 'other ranks', after saluting the officers! The description, "residue of the people", emphasises their value and importance. It was a divine compliment! But we must notice that God addressed individuals and **companies** of people. The word of God touches our individual lives, and our collective assembly lives. We are not left to do as we please personally, or collectively. God has a pattern for local church life, and it must therefore be second to none. Anything else must be inferior. God does not have alternatives.

But what about this expression, "the residue (*sheerith*) of the people?" Compare 1: 12 & 14: "the remnant (*sheerith*) of the people." Perhaps, from their point of view, it was added cause for despondency. After all, that's all they were: just a "remnant": not everybody came back from Babylonia. But these were people who turned their backs on Babylon, and set their hearts and their faces on the 'place of the name!' It was only the people who came back that heard the voice of God! God acknowledges their loyalty to Him.

### **C) THE MESSAGE, V3-9**

As we have noticed, the message covers **(i)** past memories (V3), **(ii)** present encouragement (V4-5), and **(iii)** prospective glory (V6-9).

#### **i) Past memories, V3**

"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?" It all looked very disappointing. The same people had wept when the foundation was laid. See Ezra 3: 12, "But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen **the first house**, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy." (So it was a case of 'tears and cheers!'). They remembered the 'good old days!' This was the third reason for despondency. First of all, it was the seventh month with the "feast of tabernacles", then they were only a "remnant", and now, an inferior building! The old days were so much better! Older people tend to look back, and make comparisons. Some of **us** can remember when 'the assemblies were much larger and much stronger.....when there was more evangelism.....when.....when.....' Well, we must learn the lessons of the past, but it can be very counter-productive to dwell in the past!

Of course, they were looking at it from their point of view. "How do **ye** see it now?" In comparison with the original temple, it was "as nothing." But that wasn't how **God** saw it: "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", 1: 8. Let's say, again, that however small and unimpressive, work undertaken sacrificially for God, and out of devotion to Him, will bring **Him** immense joy and pleasure.

It's worth noticing the expression "this house." At first glance, the wording seems inaccurate: "Who is left among you that saw **this house** in her first glory?" But it wasn't the same building! There is yet another building in V7, and that is also called **"this house!"** See also V9. Quite obviously, God sees the succession of temples as 'one house.' (I Steeds, *The Minor Prophets: Their Relevance for Today*). They represented different phases of one thing. As we shall see, the "first glory" of "this house" will be totally eclipsed by the 'latter glory of this house', V9 JND.

## **ii) Present encouragement, V4-5**

"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. According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not." We must notice **(a)** Their responsibility, and **(b)** Their resources.

**a) Their responsibility.** Years before the enemy had "weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building", Ezra 4: 4. Compare Ezra 6: 22. But now they were to "be strong", and "work!" They were not to give up because they could not match the 'good old days!' They were to get on with the job in hand. They were to be resolute and determined. Joshua was to be **"strong** and of a good courage" in connection with the **task** before him ("for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land"), in connection with the **teaching** of God's word ("that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law"), and in connection with the **trials** that awaited him ("be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed"). We can only "be strong" as we enjoy fellowship and communion with the Lord Jesus. See, for example, Ephesians 6: 10, 2 Timothy 2: 1, 2 Corinthians 12: 9. The injunction, "and work", reminds us that we are to be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord", 1 Corinthians 15: 58.

**b) Their resources.** Whenever God gives instructions to His people, He always provides the necessary resources. They could never have been "strong" and continued to "work" without divine help! Neither can we! Incidentally, it was **building** work. It was building 'the house of God.' We need divine help in assembly building. Notice the words "building", "buildeth", "build", and "built", in 1 Corinthians 3: 9-14.

Here are their resources. **His presence:** **"I am with you,** saith the Lord of hosts." Compare 1: 5-6 and 1: 9-11. He had been against them. But now they



enjoyed His presence. See also 1: 13, "I am with you, saith the Lord." **His power:** "I am with you, saith the **Lord of hosts.**" This divine title (Jehovah Sabaoth) emphasises God's infinite power and resources, together with His leadership. It has been pointed out that this title is used particularly when God's people were weak. It is first mentioned in 1 Samuel 1: 11. **His promise:** According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you." This refers to Exodus 29: 45-46, "And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God." The words, "So my Spirit remaineth among you", refers to the prophetic office. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost", 2 Peter 1: 21. See Nehemiah 9: 20, "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them." Read Isaiah 63: 10-14, where the Holy Spirit is mentioned three times. With such resources, we can understand the final injunction: "Fear not." "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me", Hebrews 10: 5-6.

### **(iii) Prospective glory, V6-9**

God had assured His people of His presence and power as they laboured for Him. Now He gives them assurance for the future. The 'senior citizens' had looked back: now they are invited to look forward. What a future! "I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.....The glory of this latter house (the latter glory of this house) shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts." We must notice the three statements: **(a)** "I will shake", V6-7; **(b)** "I will fill", V7; **(c)** "Will I give", V9.

**a) "I will shake", V6-7.** "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while (compare Hebrews 10: 37: it is only a "little while" when compared with eternity!), and **I will shake** the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and **I will shake** all nations." This passage is cited in Hebrews 12: 26-27: "Whose voice then (referring to Mount Sinai) shook the earth: but now hath he promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

Quite obviously, this refers to the coming 'tribulation' period, which will terminate with the return of the Lord Jesus. The convulsions described here recall Isaiah 24: 19-23, "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.....Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." See also

Matthew 24: 29, Revelation 6 (the "seal" judgements), Revelation 8-9 (the "trumpet" judgements), Revelation 16 (the "vial" judgements). This leads to the return of God's glory to the temple.

**b) "I will fill", V7.** "And the desire of all nations shall come: and **I will fill** this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts." Since the word "come" is plural, most commentators conclude that this refers to the 'desirable things of all nations' (RV) which will be brought to the temple at that time. That is, the silver and gold in V8. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) has 'And they will come with the wealth of all nations.' It has, however, been pointed out that when two nouns stand together, as here ("desire" and "nations"), the verb can agree in number with either noun. It is therefore quite legitimate to conclude that the plural verb ("come") agrees with the plural noun ("nations"), and that "the **desire** of all nations refers to the Lord Jesus Himself. As M.C.Unger observes, 'the appellative ("desire of all nations") does *not* imply that the nations consciously longed or yearned for Him, but rather that He was the only One to satisfy the deepest desires that all felt unconsciously for a Saviour-Deliverer.' On the other hand, He will certainly be the "desire of all nations" in the millennium. See Zechariah 14:16 It is significant that when He first came, Israel said, "there is no beauty that we should **desire** him", Isaiah 53: 2.

The words, "I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts", are amplified in Ezekiel 43: 1-5: "Afterward he brought me to the gate, even to the gate that looketh toward the east: and, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east, and his voice was like the voice of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory.....And the glory of the Lord came into the house, by the way of the gate whose prospect is towards the east.....So the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house." Compare Ezekiel 10-11. This leads to enduring peace.

**c) "Will I give", V9.** "The glory of this latter house (JND, 'the latter glory of this 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." The 'senior citizens' looked back to Solomon's temple. Quite obviously, even they never saw it in its **original** glory! But the future was going to be even better than the past! This was God's full answer to their despondency. For us, too, 'the best is yet to be.' "Eye hath not seen, not ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him. But (don't forget to finish the quotation!) God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit", 1 Corinthians 2: 9-10. See also 1 Peter 1: 3-4, Romans 8: 17, Revelation 21: 1-6, etc..

There wasn't too much peace around when Haggai preached. The rebuilding project had been interrupted by enemy activity of various sorts, and it wouldn't be long before Nehemiah was given the same treatment. But the centuries-long opposition to God's people will not be for ever. "In this place will I give **peace**, saith the Lord of hosts." The "Prince of peace" will be there! He "shall speak peace unto the heathen; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the



river even to the ends of the earth."

The prospective glory described in these verses is guaranteed by "the Lord of hosts." This divine title occurs five times. God, with infinite resources, is able to fulfil all His promises, and like Abraham, we are "fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform", Romans 4: 21.

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