

# Haggi, a challenge of priorities

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## Background

- We're nearing the end of our study of the minor prophets—just two more to go: Zachariah and Malachi
- These three, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi are what are known as the "Post-exilic" prophets, meaning they were God's teachers to Judah after they returned from the Babylonian exile
- How the prophets are divided overall:
- Of the 16 prophets in the OT books:
- 11 prophesied before the captivity
- Ezekiel and Daniel during the captivity
- These 3 afterwards, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

## Content of Haggai

- Distinction of being uncontested by all critics as to date and content
- Written in 520 B.C.
- About 14-16 years earlier The Jews went back to the land based, not only of God's promise of return, but on Cyrus command in 2 Chronicle 36:23:
- "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:
- "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up, and may the Lord their God be with them."
- A small remnant returned, about 50,000, mostly priests, those associated with the temple and the poor (well-off stayed behind)
- And they began to build the Temple

## Then challenges came

- Problems with Samaritans – wanted to help, but turned away because of their mixed religion
- So bent on vengeance. . . .
- Ezra: 4:5 Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. <sup>5</sup> They bribed officials to work against them and frustrate their plans during the entire reign of Cyrus king of Persia and down to the reign of Darius king of Persia.
- It worked. . . . Ezra 4:24 Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

## So how did the people respond?

- With prayers, petitions, doing whatever they could.....nope
- The people turned from building the house of God to building their own homes
- For 15 years, they concentrated on what they could do for themselves
- But then troubles came. . .and God sends Haggai to

Jerusalem his message:

- Haggai 1:2-9 New International Version (NIV)
- <sup>2</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house.'"
- <sup>3</sup> Then the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai: <sup>4</sup> "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?"
- <sup>5</sup> Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. <sup>6</sup> You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."
- <sup>7</sup> This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. <sup>8</sup> Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the Lord. <sup>9</sup> "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the Lord Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house."

## God promises his protection

- Haggai 2:4-5 New International Version (NIV)
- <sup>4</sup> But now be strong, Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord. 'Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares the Lord, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares the Lord Almighty. <sup>5</sup> ***'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'***
- Great parallel passage in Zechariah 4:6-10: <sup>6</sup> So he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.
- <sup>7</sup> "What are you, mighty mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. Then he will bring out the capstone to shouts of 'God bless it! God bless it!'"
- <sup>8</sup> Then the word of the Lord came to me: <sup>9</sup> "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. <sup>10</sup> "Who dares despise the day of small things, since the seven eyes of the Lord that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone<sup>[a]</sup> in the hand of Zerubbabel?"

## The people respond and they begin to build

- But once the building starts they again start to complain that this temple wasn't going to be as great as Solomon's temple that they were replacing

- God's answer:
- Haggai 2:8-9 New International Version (NIV)
- <sup>8</sup> 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty.<sup>9</sup> 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty."

### **Glory of the second temple greater because**

- The glory of this temple will be greater because it is the Temple
- That Jesus will preach from
- That the Jews who had been scattered throughout the world will return to on a Passover in 33AD and who will stay until the day of Pentecost to hear that the Messiah had come, died, and risen and who went out to start his church.

### **Book ends with a repeat of reasons for problems and promised blessings**

- Haggai 2:15-19:
- "Now give careful thought to this from this day on—consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the Lord's temple.<sup>16</sup> When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. <sup>17</sup> I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not return to me,' declares the Lord. <sup>18</sup> 'From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid. Give careful thought: <sup>19</sup> Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit.
- "From this day on I will bless you."

### **So what do we make of this? What should our application be?**

- If things aren't going well for us financially—if we do a little work around the church will that mean that everything will get better?
- If we work hard for God, shouldn't we be protected from hardships?
- That's what the book seems to teach
- But does it?
- As always, we need to look at the "whole counsel of God" before we get into specific applications
- This term comes from the verse, where Paul was summing up his teaching to the Ephesian elders:
- For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.  
- Acts 20:27
- The way it is used today means that we have to look

at all that God says on a topic in both the Old and New Testaments before we can draw conclusions on what he teaches or on what promises we can "claim"

- Most of the problems people have today with trusting God is that they do not take time to do this
- In all my teaching I try to do this for you as it is incredibly important.

### **An overview pattern of promises and fulfillment in OT and NT**

- We've been studying the Minor Prophets
- Highly recommended because it is a part of the Bible that will radically change your life if you study it in it's historical content (which the read through the Bible in a year plan on UFL will guide you through)
- Because it shows exactly how God commands certain actions of his people, makes promises, waits for obedience,
- Sadly how people respond and then how God responds
- The pattern repeats again and again and when we get to the application section of these books here is something I've noticed on the differences between how God relates actions and blessings in the Old and New Testaments

### **In OT—they had a covenant with God regarding earthly blessings**

- Very clearly stated in Deut 27-29, where God clearly states that if the people will do certain things that He will bless them and if they don't that they will suffer the consequences
- Summary verse:
- Deuteronomy 30:15-18 New International Version (NIV)
- <sup>15</sup> See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.<sup>16</sup> For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.
- <sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, <sup>18</sup> I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

### **Results**

- As we know, the people did not obey God, but served idols
- They were not a witness to the nations around them, but joined in immoral practices and worship

in their religious life and in their private lives exploited the poor and aliens and lived lives of selfish indulgence

- Though God was patient and it often took decades, if not centuries for the people to realize that God meant what he said, the penalties were carried out, but so were the blessings
- Haggai is a perfect example and OT summary book of this
  - Exile
  - Promised return to the land to build the temple—blessings, promise fulfilled
  - Temple started, stopped, penalties for failure
  - Haggai preaches, challenges, people repent
- Temple built, blessings
- \*\*\*KEY to keep in mind—they could SEE the earthly consequences of sin and the blessings that followed obedience, but they could only look ahead at a promised Messiah
- Their life lessons were not only for them, but a witness to all the nations that surrounded them. Again and again, God’s deliverance and blessings could only be because of divine intervention. God’s punishment came because they sinned.
- That was their calling—to be a witness—good or bad, they witnessed to the sovereign power of God

#### **New Testament—we serve a risen Savior**

- Things totally changed at the cross
- Many of the OT prophecies regarding the Messiah now fulfilled (his complete return and reign, not yet)
- That is our solid foundation for life and faith
- **For us, the promise of peace and blessings is IN THE MIDST of challenges**
- These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulations, but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world. John 16:33
- The future for us is glorious, though the present might be challenging.
- **It is HOW we deal with these situations is what is a witness to people today about our faith in God.**
- Today people attribute success, wealth, power, to personal achievement
- But when life is challenging, those resources don’t matter

#### **Back to specific application of Haggai**

- Often called the Matt. 6:33 of the Old Testament
- Matt 6:33 says “Seek first the kingdom of God and then all these things will be yours as well.”
- But let’s look carefully to see the relationship

particularly as it regards application

- Again, asking the questions we did earlier: “If things aren’t going well for us financially—if we do a little work around the church will that mean that everything will get better?”
- If we work hard for God, shouldn’t we be protected from hardships?”
- The obvious answer is no....but
- Let’s look at this in more detail

#### **Be very careful on “claiming” promises anywhere you want in the Bible**

- Just because God acted a certain way in the past to a certain group of people in a certain context, does not mean that you can pull out of it a statement that will apply in all times and in every situation
- ESPECIALLY in regards to TIMING
- \*\*\*THIS IS IMPORTANT—when we read ALL of God’s Word and become familiar with “the whole counsel of God” we will see that He follows very consistent patterns in his interactions with people
- **It is the patterns that are important to note and what we can count on, not pulling out promises we like and demanding God make them apply to the situation we are in right now**
- The result of that will almost always be disappointment with God
- To avoid disappointment and to see “the whole counsel of God” you have to start by always at the immediate context of the passage, then what the rest of the Bible says about it, then you can draw some overall conclusions
- So let’s look at Matt. 6:33

#### **Context of Matt. 6:33—begins with an eternal viewpoint of what it means to be blessed, or happy as J.B. Phillips translation says.....**

- **Matt 6: 2-12** Then he began his teaching by saying to them, “How happy are the humble-minded, for the **kingdom of Heaven** is theirs! “How happy are those who know what sorrow means for they will be given courage and comfort! “Happy are those who claim nothing, for the **whole earth will belong to them!** “Happy are those who are hungry and thirsty for goodness, for they will be fully satisfied! “Happy are the merciful, for **they will have** mercy shown to them! “Happy are the utterly sincere, for they will see God! “Happy are those who make peace, for they will be sons of God! “Happy are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of goodness, for the **kingdom of Heaven is theirs!** “**And what happiness will be yours when people blame you and ill-treat you and say all kinds of slanderous things against you for my sake! Be glad then, yes, be tremendously glad—for your reward in Heaven is**

**magnificent.** They persecuted the prophets before your time in exactly the same way.

- **Did you notice the eternal viewpoint he puts in mind here from the start of the Sermon on the Mount?**

**VERY different than the promises in Deut or Haggai or other OT passage—those are primarily EARTHLY promises**

**It goes on....**

- No, when you give to charity, don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be secret. Your Father who knows all secrets **will reward you.**
- **Reward clearly shown in Matt 25—done to least of brothers, to Jesus, eternal, public reward**
- It is your giving, not how much fun you had while on earth—that shows you belong to Jesus....
- Continuing the immediate context of the start of Matt 6:33:
- <sup>19-21</sup> **"Don't pile up treasures on earth,** where moth and rust can spoil them and thieves can break in and steal. But keep your treasure in Heaven where there is neither moth nor rust to spoil it and nobody can break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, you may be certain that your heart will be there too!" . . . You cannot serve God and the power of money at the same time."

**Then into Matt 6:33 passage**

- <sup>25-30</sup> "That is why I say to you, don't worry about living—wondering what you are going to eat or drink, or what you are going to wear. Surely life is more important than food, and the body more important than the clothes you wear. Look at the birds in the sky. They never sow nor reap nor store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you much more valuable to him than they are? Can any of you, however much he worries, make himself an inch taller? And why do you worry about clothes? Consider how the wild flowers grow. They neither work nor weave, but I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like one of these! Now if God so clothes the flowers of the field, which are alive today and burnt in the stove tomorrow, is he not much more likely to clothe you, you 'little-faiths'?"
- <sup>31-33</sup> "So don't worry and don't keep saying, 'What shall we eat, what shall we drink or what shall we wear?! That is what pagans are always looking for; your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Set your heart on the kingdom and his goodness, and all these things will come to you as a matter of course. Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself! One day's trouble

is enough for one day."

**Let's face it, it is really hard to get specific about application of this passage**

- I admit I don't always like God's timing and it is sometimes hard not to worry....but we can't give in to that
- But the overall lessons in Haggai and here
- God is to be #1 and served in whatever way and time HE chooses
- Serving GOD is to be our focus, our priority,
- Money and even legitimate concerns are not to be #1 to us
- THE answers for each life situation are not easy and I don't have them figured out
- But.....point of much of it.....
- **In whatever situation we are in—what is our witness?**
- When people look at our lives, how do they describe us?
- How do they know?

**Challenges for each of us**

- How do you respond when things go wrong or are difficult? Do you trust (like the example of Habakkuk last week) or do you question and whine?
- What are you building?
- In every life we are working towards something
- Either enlarging the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of ME
- How can you tell?
- What do you spend your time on?
- Money on?
- What do you post on Facebook or share in social media?
- What is the legacy of life you are leaving?
- You can redirect at any time: more time in God's Word, with His people, consciously making choices pleasing to Him

**Finally**

- In Haggai—when the Temple was completed, can you imagine the joy?
- They finally finished the work they were called to do, that they had returned to land to accomplish
- Yes, material blessings would now return, but the approval of the Lord the greatest blessing of all
- What is the work Jesus wants you to accomplish? Spend time with him, time in his Word, pray and listen for his help to do it.
- Who knows what "rewards" will be in your life, but GREAT will be your reward in eternity.

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