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**BIBLE STUDY**

**Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith, Inc.**

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**IT’S TIME TO BUILD GOD’S HOUSE**

**HAGGAI 1**

It is believed, by many scholars, that Haggai the prophet was born during the Babylonian captivity. After years of rejecting the warnings of prophets, Judah was devastated by King Nebuchadnezzar, and Judah’s people were taken into captivity to Babylon for seventy years. After that, God graciously allowed them to return home. At the time Haggai wrote, those who’d returned had been back in the promised land for sixteen years. They’d laid the foundation for a new temple, but no further work had been accomplished. In 539 B.C. Babylon fell and the Jews returned to Israel. One of the first projects was the rebuilding of the temple. They laid the foundation, and problems arose with the neighboring people. They stopped construction on the temple. God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to prophesy to them of the need of rebuilding the temple. In Ezra's time, they began, again, to rebuild the temple.

***Haggai 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,"***

Darius reigned over Persia from 521 to 486 B.C. It appears that Haggai had returned to Judah by permission of Cyrus in the first year of the reign of Darius. Zerubbabel was reigning as governor of Judah at this time. God sent the message by Haggai to Zerubbabel, because he was in charge. Joshua was the high priest at the time and the message was sent to him, also. Zerubbabel was descended from the family of David, and Joshua was descended from Aaron. The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to the leaders of God’s people. Prophets were God’s alarm clocks in a sense. And, in the same way that our alarm clocks are often not appreciated when they interrupt our rest, biblical prophets were not appreciated when they sounded the divine alarm that a spiritual wake-up was needed.

***Haggai 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."***

We noted earlier, that the returned of Judah, had immediately built the foundation for the temple in Jerusalem. That really was as far as they got. The opposition of neighbors, and excuses pertaining to their own homes being built, stopped them from going any further. They kept putting of the building of the Lord's house, saying, the time was not right. God, now sends them a message by Haggai, showing His displeasure at their attitude. The Israelites had been back home for sixteen years, and they had not rebuilt the temple that the Babylonians destroyed many years earlier. It was still in ruins. Keeping that structure in such a state was a significant decision because the temple was where the manifest presence of God was, where the glory of God came, and where God sat in the midst of his people. So, in neglecting to rebuild it, the people were saying that it was not important to have God in their midst. We, unfortunately, are often the same in our attitudes toward God: We are happy to have God in our vicinity even though he is not in our midst.

***Haggai 1:3 "Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,"***

***Haggai 1:4 "(Is it) time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house (lie) waste?"***

Again, it is emphasized that the message, coming from the mouth of Haggai, was really the Word of the Lord. They had not followed the following Scripture.

***Matthew 6:33 "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."***

They were more concerned with their own homes, than they were in the house of God. They should have built the temple first. That they had time to repair their own houses says their failure to erect the temple wasn’t a time problem; it was a priority problem. People make time for what they think is important. People want God in a 911 situation, but then they don’t want him between the invocation and benediction.

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

They have just been released from 70 years of captivity in Babylon, because of their indifference to God. Now, they are doing the same things all over again. Perhaps, they should consider what they are doing. It is as if, God is questioning whether they have really changed, or not.

***Haggai 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."***

Their labors are not blessed of God. Because of their selfishness, they have not given anything to God for Him to multiply back to them. They labor, but in vain. They had already forgotten that God blesses their generosity, not their greed.

***Malachi 3:9-11***

***9 "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, (even) this whole nation."***

***10 "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that (there shall) not (be room) enough (to receive it)."***

***11 "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts."***

***Haggai 1:7 "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways."***

***Haggai 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."***

This is another warning to examine their actions, and see whether they are pleasing to God, or not. Haggai says, "You had better consider what you are doing". There was much wood in the very close proximity of the temple area. They could get the wood to build the temple there. God would be pleased with their building. It would not have to have the cedars of Lebanon. When they build the house of the Lord first, it glorifies God and man. God’s advice to his people to go up into the hills, bring down lumber, and build the house; and I will be pleased with it and be glorified is a reminder that we can please him through actions. So, if you want God to make you happy, make him happy first. Don’t just think about it and talk about it: do it.

***Haggai 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. "***

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

God did not bless them, because they had forgotten Him. The temple was for God, and for man. It was a place of fellowship. God loved these people. He wanted to be near them. They wanted a rich harvest, but they had forgotten who sent the big harvest. They hurried and built their own houses but forgot about God's house. It had been over 15 years since they had put the foundation of the house down, and they had not built upon it. It is as if, they have forgotten God. God will not send the dew they need or multiply their fruit. Until they build Him His house. It is a sin of omission. They have omitted the worship of God from their lives.

***Leviticus 26:19 "And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass:"***

***Haggai 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."***

The only times these people reach out to God, is when they are in need. It sounds a bit like us, doesn't it? God will bring the drought to get them to repent and do their first work. The drought cuts off food for man and beast. Their labor will be in vain. Without rain, nothing will grow. Sometimes, Christians call the negative circumstances in their lives “bad luck,” but don’t disconnect God from your mess. If there is calamity in your world, it didn’t happen because of impersonal forces operating on the universe. God called for it. When you return to God, and invite him to operate in your midst, it won’t stress you out when trials come. You’ll know this truth firsthand: God “is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think”.

***Ephesians 3:20-21***

***20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,***

***21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.***

***Haggai 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."***

Haggai reports the rapid response to his message. The leaders and people accepted it as a message from God, and they feared the Lord and began to reorganize their priorities. It took drastic measures, but they finally agreed they had neglected the work of the Lord. The king Zerubbabel led the way, and the priest, Joshua followed with him. The people followed, as well. Haggai had convinced them, that God would not bless them, until they began building the temple. They accepted Haggai’s words as being the Words of the Lord, and they agreed to work on the temple. The fear of the LORD caused the people to do what Haggai said they must do, if they were to be blessed.

***Haggai 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."***

The LORD was quick to answer them through the words in Haggai's mouth. If they would seek God first, God would bless them and their work. The blessings of God are upon a people who are anxious to please the LORD. God is always ready to accept our repentance for our sins, and to bless us in our walk with Him. Haggai was the LORD's messenger. He was like an ambassador that takes someone else's message to the people. And in this response of obedience, they were becoming what the remnant of God’s people should be. Thus, God assured them of his presence to guide and empower them as they obeyed his Word: I am with you.

***Haggai 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,"***

Their indifference was over. Once they had committed to the work, the Spirit of the LORD filled them all. The Spirit was a confirmation that the LORD was pleased with their decision. The Spirit gave them the strength to do the work, as well. They took one step forward to God, and He met them. The work is, now, begun.

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

It appears, that 23 days after Haggai began to prophesy about the rebuilding of the temple, the work began. This is approximately 3 1/2 weeks. This was one of the quickest fulfillments of a prophecy ever given. The people had immediately responded to Haggai's warnings.

**QUESTIONS**

1. When was Haggai born?
2. What year did Babylon fall?
3. What was one of the Jews first projects, when they got home?
4. Who were the two prophets God raised up to remind them of the need of building the temple?
5. Who was in power, when they rebuilt the temple?
6. When did Haggai begin to prophesy?
7. Who did Haggai speak his message from God to?
8. Zerubbabel was governor of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
9. Who was the high priest?
10. Where did this Darius rule?
11. Who had given Haggai permission to return to Judah?
12. Who was Zerubbabel descended from?
13. Who was Joshua descended from?
14. What does the LORD of hosts say to the people in verse 2?
15. What had the people built, immediately on their return from captivity?
16. They were more concerned with their own \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ , than they were the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of God.
17. What did God tell them to consider?
18. How many years had they been in captivity?
19. Why are their labors not producing results?
20. Where could they get the wood for the temple?
21. The temple was a place of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
22. What did God call for to get them to listen?
23. Who led the way obeying the voice of God?
24. What caused the people to build on the temple?
25. What reassuring words did God send them?
26. The LORD stirred up their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
27. How quickly after Haggai's prophecy, did they begin the building?