

Haggai – Chapter 1

Session 2

Introduction

- The focus of the book of Haggai is on the re-building of the Temple in Jerusalem.
- The group of exiles who had returned to Jerusalem under the decree of Cyrus in 538 BC commenced the work of reconstruction (Ez 3:1-11) but the work quickly stalled and ceased (Ez 4) for approximately 16 years.
- Haggai is a call to these returning exiles to resume the work of re-building the Temple, and the covenantal implications of their doing so.

Historical background to Haggai

- Timeline:

| Date | Event |
|------|--|
| 957 | Completion of the First Temple (Solomon) |
| 605 | Nebuchadnezzar becomes king of Babylon. Babylon invades Judah - First deportation to Babylon. |
| 597 | Babylon capture Jerusalem (following Jehoiakim's rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar). |
| 587 | Jerusalem falls - Destruction of Solomon's Temple - Full exile begins |
| 539 | Persia – under King Cyrus II (559-530) - conquers Babylon. |
| 538 | Decree of Cyrus – allowing Jews to return to Judah. |
| 537 | First group to return to Judah/Jerusalem. |
| 536 | Work begins on the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem; work stalls. |
| 525 | Second group of exiles returned to Judah; under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua. |
| 520 | Prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah. |
| 520 | Work on the construction of the Temple resumes. |
| 516 | Construction of the Second Temple completed. |
| 458 | Third group of exiles return to Judah under Ezra. |
| 445 | Fourth group of exiles return to Judah under Nehemiah; walls of Jerusalem completed. |
| ? | Prophecy of Malachi. |

- Key events and background information

Covenant context of Haggai

- A central theme behind the book of Haggai – that of covenant – the basis and nature of the relationship between the Lord and his people.
- That is – God's relationship with his people is determined and governed by a solemn bond – where, upon the condition of absolute obedience and fidelity on the part of his people, God commits himself to those people – to protect them, provide for them, and bless them.
- So the kingdom of God – as much today as for the people of the Old Testament – can be defined as:
 - God's people
 - Dwelling in God's place, where he is present with them
 - Living under God's rule
 - Receiving God's blessings

Haggai 1

- Who Haggai speaks to – his covenantal people (v.1)
 - Zerubbabel – the governor (from the line of David)
 - Joshua – high priest (from the line of Aaron/Levi)
- The people’s excuse – covenant infidelity (v.2)
- The Lord’s indictment against the people (vv.3-11)
 - The Lord’s “charge” against them – their disobedience in neglecting the Lord’s house – covenant disobedience
 - The hypocrisy and inconsistency of their excuse (vv.3-4)
 - What they should have been doing (vv.7-8)
 - The consequence of their disobedience – two-fold call to “Consider your ways” – covenant curse
 - The futility of their efforts (vv.5-6)
 - That this was the Lord’s judgement upon them (vv.7-11)
- The people’s response – Covenant restoration and blessing (vv.12-15)
 - Heard the word of the Lord, repented, and obeyed (v.12)
 - The Lord’s declaration – “I am with you” (vv.13-15)

The covenantal significance and importance of the Temple

- The centrality of the Temple to the covenant and therefore its importance
 - Is that which identifies the Lord’s people
 - It is the centre of the place where the Lord’s people dwell
 - It is the “seat” of the Lord’s rule
 - It is the source and means of the blessings the Lord’s people receive
- Haggai 1:8 – “Take pleasure in it and be glorified”
- Central to the restoration of the Kingdom of Judah as the nation of the Lord’s people
- Under the New Covenant – this is Christ and his church

Concluding comments