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## Lesson 1: The Problem (Haggai 1:1-11)

### 3 The Poison of Apathy

- The editor of *American Opinion* said that the epitaph of our society should be: "This civilization died because it didn't want to be bothered."

### 4 A Prophecy of Apathy

- Dr. Lawrence Gould, president emeritus of Carleton College said, *"I do not believe the greatest threat to our future is from bombs or guided missiles. I don't think our civilization will end that way. I think it will die when we no longer care. Arnold Toynbee has pointed out that nineteen of twenty one civilizations died from within and not by conquest from without. There were no bands playing and flags waving when these civilizations decayed. It happened slowly, in the quiet and in the dark when no one was aware."*

### 5 The Perspective of History

- The children of Israel had seen the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar.
- Babylon was characterized by the worship of pagan gods, and the Jews were encouraged to worship these gods.

### 6 The Perspective of History (2)

- In 539 B.C., a Persian, Cyrus the Great conquered the kingdom of Babylon.
- God had ordained Cyrus as king that he should decree the return of Israel to Palestine and the rebuilding of her sanctuary for worship.
- Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest returned in 537 B.C. The reconstruction of the temple began.

### 7 Ezra 3:10-11

- *And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.*
- *And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.*

### 8 Ezra 3:12-13

- *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 that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.*

### 9 Why the weeping?

- Some indeed wept for joy to see the Lord's house – the Temple – being rebuilt.
- But those that had seen the "first house" (Ezra 3:12) wept in part because the rebuilt house would not have the same glory as the Temple built by Solomon.

### 10 The Pain of Opposition

- Enemies had come during the time of Nehemiah to try to stop the rebuilding of the walls.
- The walls were finally completed but opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple came next.
- Opposition is tiring; the people grow weary of their tormentors.
- The Temple reconstruction stops.

### 11 The Prophet Haggai

- In 520 B.C., God sends the prophet Haggai to deliver a message concerning the need to rebuild the Temple.
  - Opposition is quiet at the moment.

- Funding is available.
- Foundation prepared.
- But the work went undone because people quit caring.

## 12 THE APATHY OF THE PEOPLE TOWARD GOD'S WORK

### 13 Haggai 1:1-2

- *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,*
- *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.*
  - This is a far cry from David whose heart longed to build a house for God!

### 14 Selfish Preoccupation

- Haggai 1:4 -- *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?*
  - “Cieled” = paneled
    - 1 Kings 6:9 -- *So he built the house, and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar. (See also 1 Kings 7:3,7)*
    - Jeremiah 22:14 -- *That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.*

### 15 Selfish Preoccupation (2)

- In other words, the people had taken the cedar that had been set aside for rebuilding the Temple and had paneled their own homes with it.
  - The Temple is only a foundation; no beams, no walls, no ceiling, no décor.
  - Meanwhile, God's people sit home having made their homes luxurious with what belonged to God.

### 16 Application point

- Do we care more about our own comfort than the well-being of God's house?
- What about the people who complain when the carpet at the church is replaced that it is nicer than what is in their homes? Is it right to complain?
- Are you too preoccupied with self to care about your church or your country?

### 17 Bostin Curtis wins election

- Bostin Curtis elected Republican committeeman from Wilton, Washington in 1938 by a 51 vote plurality.
- Sponsored by mayor to prove the town's voters were careless.
- Filing notice signed by candidate's hoof-prints. Bostin Curtis was a mule.

### 18 Arthur Robbins wins election

- Defeated incumbent Justice of the Peace Sam Davis by 7 votes in 1883.
  - Arthur Robbins was a wooden cigar store Indian; voters was not aware he was only a wooden statue.
  - Justice Davis resigned out of indignation.
  - Some consider Arthur Robbins a viable candidate for President.

### 19 Serious Problems

- Key: Selfish preoccupation always leads to serious problems.
- 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.*

### 20 Trouble with satisfaction

- Verse 6 tells us that they have sown, but bring in little; they eat, but are not filled; they drink, but they remain thirsty; they are clothed, but they are not warm; they earn wages, but there is never enough.
- Living in lavish houses, they are not satisfied.

### 21 Trouble with satisfaction (2)

- Part of the reason for this dissatisfaction is that those with their minds only upon themselves can never find satisfaction in life. God ordained for us to find satisfaction in His work.

### 22 Trouble with supply

- In verse 9, God takes credit for causing a lack of provision. Why?

- *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.*
- The people suffered a lack of supply because they did not use what had been given them to do God's work.

23  **Trouble with sight**

- The Apostle Peter said those who do not grow in grace become spiritually shortsighted (2 Peter 1:9) *"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off. . ."*
  - Peter uses the Greek word myopia which is the same word an optometrist uses if he tells you that you suffer from near-sightedness.

24  **Trouble with sight (2)**

- When suffering from this condition, you can only see things near yourself without the aid of corrective eyewear.
- The same is true spiritually. A person with spiritual myopia only sees his/her personal needs, desires, and troubles. They cannot – as Christ was able to do — see the needs of others and thereby minister to them.

25  **Trouble with sight (3)**

- These people were dwelling in their "ceiled" houses.
  - With walls around them, a ceiling above them, and the ability to live comfortably in luxury, these people were not able to see the need for the rebuilding of the temple.
  - They could not see their own need. Does this remind you of the church at Laodicea?

26  **Revelation 3:17-18**

- *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. . . . anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

27  **Trouble with skirmishing**

- The people isolated themselves from God and from the needs of others. They exhibited great selfishness.
- They were a complaining people because of the trouble with supply and with satisfaction.

28  **Trouble with skirmishing (2)**

- This led to arguing and bickering among the people. When the call to build the temple was made, what was the result? Every man ran unto his own house (verse 9).

29  **Trouble with skirmishing (3)**

- Haggai 1:9b --. *Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.*
- James on wars and fightings:
  - *From whence come wars and fightings from among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not because ye ask not.*

30  **There is a pattern**

- Apathy for the things of God leads to
  - Selfish preoccupation, which leads to
  - Serious problems, including:
    - Trouble with satisfaction
    - Trouble with supply
    - Trouble with sight (so we fail to see the needs of others)
    - Trouble with skirmishing (fighting)

31  **How peaceful is your house?**