

A Glorious Temple

Haggai 2:1-9

Studies in Haggai #2

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“**W**E walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). This is one of Paul’s more memorable sayings. He said it in the context of the sufferings of this life in the body in contrast to the glories to come. We don’t see that glory now, so we live our lives by faith while one day we will see.

It’s an apropos line for what’s going on in 520BC as the prophet Haggai continues his ministry. We saw in chapter 1 how the LORD delivered rebuked his complacent people on the first day of the sixth month (1:1) and then on the twenty-fourth day they began working on rebuilding the ruins of God’s house (1:15). The LORD speaks again, this time it’s twenty-eight days into construction **on the twenty-first day in the seventh month** (v. 1). And this second word from the LORD is a gospel encouragement to that what they see with their eyes as they rebuild the temple is not all there is; but by faith the LORD is preparing a glorious temple to come.

The Glory Seen With Eyes Now (vv. 1-5)

So as chapter 1:15 said, they began rebuilding the ruins on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. And this second word from the LORD came on the **twenty-first day of the seventh month** (v. 1). This is really important in terms of *the glory seen with eyes now*. The **seventh month** was full of required festivals according to Leviticus 23. The first day was the Feast of Trumpets and no work could be done (vv. 23-25). Since the Jewish calendar had 30 days in a month this means they worked for six days, then stopped. Then beginning at sundown on the ninth day through sundown of the tenth day was the Day of Atonement. Again, no work was to be done (vv. 26-32). So there was another period of eight days of work, but in there somewhere was another Sabbath, so seven days. Finally, from the eleventh through fourteenth day there was another period of work, but on the fifteenth day began a seven-day festival called the Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 33-43). And the last day was the day of our text, the **twenty-first day**. So they've had a mere thirteen days to work on rebuilding the ruins of Solomon's Temple. And on this day they were coming out of this weeklong festival in which they remembered the LORD's bringing them out of Egypt and providing for them as they lived

in tents in the wilderness. But there they were living in paneled houses! Oh, and just to reinforce that what they were seeing with their eyes was not glorious, do you know which month of the year Solomon's Temple was completed? You guessed it; the seventh month (1 Kgs. 8:2).

On that **twenty-first day the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet again (v. 1) to Zerubbabel...to Joshua...and to all the remnant of the people (v. 2).** There he stood at the place of the temple saying, **“Who is left among you who saw *this house* in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?” (v. 3)** **Nothing** is a good way to put it! They were depressed! They knew the descriptions in the Word of God about the Temple. Potentially there could have been some in their nineties who remembered seeing it with their eyes. But *the glory seen with eyes now* is **nothing!** Remember, it's been eighteen years since they returned from exile. Within two years they had rebuilt the altar of burnt offering and the foundation. But Ezra 3 tells us that the weeping was just as loud as the rejoicing when they did. Why? They were depressed. What was their work compared with Solomon's? If they felt

that way then, how much more so now that a decade and a half has passed and that's still all they have to see?

There's an old adage: "Don't judge a book by its cover." God's spoke through the prophet to encourage them to walk by faith and not by sight in their work. But like our ancient forefathers, don't we do the opposite? We drove past massive complexes of financial and retail glory this morning! We drove past million dollar houses! We even drove past mega churches in all their splendor! And here we are! Some of us have even come here from the glory of those massive churches. And you might even be thinking, "Why did I ever get involved with this rabble? It's like the rubble of the ruined Temple the Jews saw." But God encourages us to serve him by faith just as he encouraged our forefathers.

Look at verse 5. In contrast to Israel's depression, Haggai says: "**Yet now *be strong*, O Zerubbabel...*Be strong*, O Joshua...*Be strong*, all you people of the land**" (v. 5). He's not speaking of physical strength, but being *strong-hearted*. Why should they be? **For I am with you...according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not**" (vv. 4 5). That

word **made** is the word for **cut**. When God makes covenant's he *cuts* a **covenant** by making some ritual sacrifice to ratify it. In the Garden he cut animal skins. With Abraham he cut animals in half before passing through them. With Israel at Sinai he cut animals whose blood was sprinkled on them. The Lord says he's the same God for Israel in their depression as they look out and see no glory with their eyes now.

The Glory Seen With Faith Then (vv. 6-9)

But the Lord was encouraging them not merely to see through tear-filled eyes wood, stone, and metal. His encouragement to their discouragement was *for the glory seen with faith then* into their future when **the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former** (v. 9). Solomon's Temple was overlaid with gold, had the most skilled artisans and craftsmen carve cherubim and pomegranates into those gold walls and pillars, and he had the best weavers make tapestry of purple, red, and blue (2 Chron. 3). Walk by faith, not by sight was the message.

How would the Lord accomplish this? **"Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations**

shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory,” says the LORD of hosts (vv. 6-7). Shaking heaven and earth is the language of what we call a theophany, meaning, when God comes down from heaven and appears among us. When he does that, nothing is unaffected. In fact, the grammar of the word **shake** speaks of multiple shakings before an ultimate shaking. How is the Lord going to make this temple more glorious than Solomon’s? He’s going to grab the world and all those in it, lift them upside down, and shake out all the treasures in their pockets, so to speak! That’s why the Lord says in verse 8, “**The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts.**”

But notice something: the glory is not that the Temple itself would be made out of gold like Solomon’s, but that its glory would be that all those in the nations would bring. *The treasures* or desired things of **all nations** would be brought to the temple just like Israel plundered the Egyptians so many generations ago. I don’t think the Lord is speaking here of a rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem in the so-called “end times.” He’s using imagery and language these particular believers would have understood 500 years before the coming of Christ to speak of a new age.

At the very end of the story in Revelation 21 what do we read? “And the kings of the earth will bring their glory into [temple]...they will bring into [the temple] the glory and honor of the nations” (vv. 24, 26). The Lord is going to cause this by shaking until the last shake when all things are made new in a new heavens and new earth.

So how do we get from point A in 520BC to Point B in the new heavens and earth? What’s the all-time Sunday school answer? “Jesus!” John’s Gospel describes the Christmas story as the eternal Word “became flesh and dwelt among us.” I’ve said before that the word “dwelt” is used in the Greek Old Testament to speak of God’s dwelling in the tabernacle. The Word tabernacled among the world (John 1:14). Then Matthew’s Gospel says the Magi went from east to west, which was going towards the Holy of Holies but even more, of going towards the Garden in Eden. They brought with them gold, frankincense, and myrrh to worship (Matt. 2). Jesus went on to say his body was the Temple that would be destroyed but rebuilt in his resurrection (John 2). Thus Hebrews says Jesus’ crucified body is the veil through which we enter the Holy of Holies.

Turn with me to Hebrews 12. Haggai 2 is quoted as being fulfilled in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ *now*. When we bring ourselves like treasures to Jesus to gives us an unshakeable kingdom! The glory of the coming temple the Lord wanted Israel to see by faith was not found in it's wood, stone, and metals, but in the people from every tribe, and language, and people, and nation. *We* are that more glorious temple that is a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (Eph. 2). As living stones the Lord is using us to rebuild this more glorious Temple. It's not in Jerusalem that God is going to rebuild his Temple; he's already rebuilding it since the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. He's rebuilding this temple not in one place but in every corner of the world until one day in a new heavens and new earth there will be no temple because the Lord and the Lamb are the Temple!

We walk by faith and not by sight when we see Christ's church persecuted worldwide. We walk by faith and not by sight when we see our church struggling. We walk by faith and not by sight when we see the influence of the Gospel wane in our culture. We walk by faith and not by sight because we know the promises. Amen.