

Haggai 1

Last week, as introduction, we saw the Context of this short book.

1. Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem, the temple, and taken many of the people into exile in Babylon.
2. About 50 years later Cyrus sits on the throne.
3. God stirs his heart to send the exiles back to their homeland to build a temple for their God.
4. The foundation is laid under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, but things stall, and 16 years later the events of Haggai take place.

Let's look at the first chapter with the time that we have together.

READ

The manifest presence of God resided in the Jewish temple. So, when God instructed the people to build, or prepare, the temple, He was in essence instructing them to prepare for the presence of God. My hope is that we will take some clues from this account that would encourage us to prepare for the presence of God in our own lives and in our church.

I. The Lord's Rebuke

- A. The people had their "reasons" for not building. v1-2
 1. Their Enthusiasm had waned
 2. Their Enemies had attacked
 3. The Economy had Suffered
 4. These were more excuses than reasons.
- B. Needless to say, the Lord was unimpressed with their excuses. He attributed their misplaced priorities to 3 things
 1. **Their Selfishness v3-4**
 - a. The people were concerned about the wrong houses.
 - b. In the beginning, the people had thrown up rough houses to shield themselves from the elements, then turned their attention to the temple.
 - c. But in no time at all, they began focusing on improving their own living conditions.
 - d. Haggai asks how it could be that the time was wrong for building the temple, but right for building their private dwellings.
 - e. Whose interests were most important to them? Their's or God's?
 - f. Though I am sure they felt perfectly justified, God identifies their selfishness.

Think about it...are we selfish...self centered?

1. Time demands. We are too busy...or are we just self centered and have misplaced priorities?
2. Family demands...or just self-centered with misplaced priorities?
3. Financial demands

2. Stubbornness

v5-6; 9-11

- a. They got the message loud and clear! They just misread it!
- b. God had tried every way possible to wake them up.
- c. The difficulties the people experienced were not simply coincidental.
- d. Their problems were the result of the Lord's discipline directed against them due to their misplaced priorities.
- e. God had not left them to their problems. He was causing their problems!
- f. What little they could gain, they brought to the wrong house...because they had to take care of themselves and their families...and God pressed them harder... and it was a vicious cycle!
- g. The disasters being currently experienced were due to nothing less than wrong priorities.

Is God trying to get our attention?

1. Are we so sure that we are right, that we are just presumptuous? Consider your ways X 2
2. Are we steadfast...or are we just hard headed?

3. Stewardship

v7-8

- a. About 15 years before Haggai's message, the returnees had brought in cedar from Lebanon for the temple.
- b. Now God is telling them to go up, cut wood, and bring it down again
- c. So we have a mystery! What happened to the wood?
- d. Perhaps these materials had been used for private homes.
- e. Their bad stewardship had delayed the rebuilding of God's house
- f. And the empty foundation was a sad testimony and representation of God

Our stewardship is a testimony of our faith.

1. Is it all inward, temporal, and self-centered? Parable of the talents...5, 2, and 1.
2. Or is it outward, eternal, risky! and kingdom centered? What are our priorities?

The lack of progress wasn't due to bad timing. It all went back to wrong priorities

1. Their priorities consisted of their homes, their finances, their safety, and their families.
2. They would get around to the work of God after those priorities had first been settled.
3. But because their priorities were out of order, they could never get their life in order.
4. All of their hard work was reduced to nothing, so did they get their priorities right?
5. No, they worked harder! And it turned into a vicious cycle.

I. The Lord's Rebuke

II. The People's Response v12

The people responded immediately and decisively to Haggai's message.

1. They recognized that this was God's man, sent to open their eyes
2. And they responded by repenting of their sin and restructuring their priorities

I. The Lord's Rebuke

II. The People's Response v12

III. The Lord's Reassurance v13

A. For the past 16 years, God had been against them.

1. He had hindered their harvests
2. He had emptied their cupboards.
3. He had dried up their wells.
4. He had emptied their wallets.
5. He blew away everything they brought home, because they were bringing it to the wrong house.
6. Now, he is not against them anymore. He is with them.

B. The Lord stirred them up! v14-15

1. The verb for "to stir up" draws on the imagery of sleepiness.
2. These people had been roused from their spiritual inattentiveness to participate in the urgent task before them.
3. There was an awakening!

We need the Holy Ghost to stir us up...but before He stirs us up, maybe we will need to repent...and repent of our misplaced priorities.

1. Examine your priorities
2. Obviously, they will differ from individual to individual and from time to time based on where God has you and what season of life you are in.
3. But we can be sure that regardless of what other priorities God has for you, there are 2 that are constant.

The Great Commandments

1. Love God
2. Love Others

The Great Commission

1. Matthew 28:19-20...make disciples
2. Mark 16:15...proclaim with our mouths
3. Luke 24:47...repentance for forgiveness of sin
4. John 20:12...as His sent ones
5. Acts 1:8...globally!

These are really 2 constants all throughout Scripture. It has been said that these two things (The Great Commandments and the Great Commission) are like left and right wings on a plane. If we get them both in place, and balanced, we will soar...if not, we will crash. So consider your ways...consider your own priorities. Are they well ordered, in place, and balanced? If not, what is your reason, or excuse?

1. Are you positive it's not self centeredness?...stubbornness? poor stewardship?
2. Let us consider our ways...our priorities...and ask, are they God's?
3. And if not, let us repent and pray that God would be with us and stir us up to experience His presence in our lives and in our church.