

Title:       **HAGGAI PROPHET OF RESTORATION**

Text:       Haggai 1:1-2:23

Subject:   *Encouragement in the Work God Gives*

Date:       Sunday Evening — December 30, 2007

Tape #      Haggai 1

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Introduction:

Have you ever noticed how often in the Book of God we are given “wake up calls”? Repeatedly, the Lord God commands us to wake up. He commands sinners he has awakened from death to wake up, because we are all inclined to the shameful sleep of indifference. Our blessed Savior lavishes his mercy, love and grace upon us. He gives us fresh revelations of his glory, sweet experiences of forgiveness, and rapturous times of communion with him by which our hearts are so roused to devotion, praise and thanksgiving that we cannot imagine ever being indifferent to our great God and Savior again. — But those mountain-top experiences never last long, do they? How quickly the cares of the world choke out the good seed! How quickly clouds of darkness hide the Sun of Righteousness. Therefore, the Lord graciously calls us and commands us to awake. — “*Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust*” (Isaiah 26:19; Romans 13:11-14; Ephesians 5:14).

(Romans 13:11-14) “And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed. (12) The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. (13) Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. (14) But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.”

(Ephesians 5:14) “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

Yet, though the Lord calls us to awake, such is our weakness and inability, such is the sinfulness of our nature that, until the Lord himself graciously awakens us, we will sleep on like the disciples of old, even upon the very mount of transfiguration!

## **A DIFFERENCE**

Still, even in such a dead and lifeless frame, which brings leanness to our souls and sorrow to our hearts, every heaven-born soul can say, “*I sleep, but my heart waketh*” (Song of Solomon 5:2). There is an immense difference between the sleepy, languishing frames of the believer and the death sleep of the unregenerate.

- Ours is the sleep of frailty. The unregenerate sleep in death, being dead in trespasses and sins!
- We sleep in weakness. The unregenerate sleep in hopelessness.
- Painful and shameful as it is, ours is the sleep of hearts in mourning, longing for Christ. The unregenerate sleep with hearts of enmity against our Beloved Redeemer.
- Though we do not, in such seasons enjoy our Savior, still we desire him. The unregenerate desire him not.
- Though we do not hear his voice or see his face, still Christ is known, even in our lowest frames. The unregenerate know him not.
- Though our blessed Savior hides his face from us, he still dwells in our hearts, even when our hearts are languishing. In the unregenerate he has no place.

I want you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, even in your lowest condition to ever be assured of your Savior’s mercy, grace and love. However unconscious you may be of his presence, he remains the same. Our hope is not in our spiritual frame, but in his steadfast faithfulness! Though it is more desirable and more delightful to hold him fast in the galleries of his manifest grace (Song of Solomon 7:5). Still, grace is sure even to the Lord’s languishing people. He promises that he will fill the hungry soul and comfort the mourning heart. He will come to those who look for him; and the soul that pines for him and seeks him shall find him.

### **THE BACKGROUND**

Now, turn with me to the Book of Haggai. The prophet Haggai was sent to Israel when God’s people were in just such a low estate as I have been describing. The Jews had been captives in Babylon for 70 years, just as Jeremiah had prophesied. What a sad time those seventy years of exile and bondage were for those among the Jews who truly worshipped God.

After the 70 years were fulfilled, Daniel, who prophesied in Babylon, tells us that God graciously delivered his people from Babylon and began bringing them back into their land.

They came first under Zerubbabel, who is mentioned in the opening verse of Haggai. Zerubbabel was the captain of the remnant that came back from Babylon. He was appointed Governor of Judah. When they came to Jerusalem, they found the city in ruins. The walls were broken down and the temple was utterly destroyed.

The Lord had sent them back specifically to rebuild the temple, to rebuild the city, and to re-establish true worship, the worship of God in the land. They began the work immediately. The first order of business was to rebuild the temple, the house of God, in Jerusalem.

At this time, they were still under Babylonian rule. But God had given them favor with the king and they were granted permission to do the work. So they started working. I can imagine the enthusiasm with which they commenced. They returned to Jerusalem with joy unspeakable, and began the work God had put in their hands with great zeal. Soon, the foundation of the temple was laid. It was much smaller than the original temple Solomon had built; but the work went rapidly. In a short time, they had a row or two of stones laid on the foundation.

But something happened. They quit the work. These Jews who had returned with Ezra, some 50,000 of them, specifically to build the house of God, just quit. They did nothing for more than fifteen years.

### **THE PROPHET**

This is where Haggai comes in. He was sent of God, along with Zechariah and Malachi, to speak for God to his people (Ezra 5:1-2). Haggai was an exemplary prophet. His name means, “festive” or “festival of the Lord.” He was sent of God to minister to his people after they returned from the 70 years of Babylonian captivity.

Haggai spent no time at all talking about himself. He came as God’s messenger to his people. His singular authority was, “*Thus saith the LORD.*” His singular desire was the glory of God. The objects of his care were the people of God. He had to rebuke; but his rebuke was full of encouragement.

He had to correct; but his correction was full of comfort. Haggai was a prophet of restoration. He was sent to stir up God's languishing people and to restore them to their former devotion, joy and usefulness. He was distinctively sent of God to stir up his people, to rouse their hearts, to inspire in them devotion and consecration to their God, his glory and his worship.

### **FOUR MESSAGES**

Haggai delivered four messages to Judah. These four messages are specifically dated by him. They cover a period of about three months. And everything Haggai says in these four messages is written for our learning and admonition today (Romans 15:4). His messages call for us to "*consider*" some things. He uses that word, "*consider*," four times.

- In Haggai 1:5, he says, "*Consider your ways*," telling Judah and us to give serious thought to the way we lived.
- In verse 7, he repeats that admonition, "*Consider your ways*." But here, he is calling for us to seriously think about our present circumstances in the providence of God, showing clearly that there is a connection between the way we live, in reference to God, and the things we experience in the providence of God. — Our heavenly Father takes pleasure in our obedience and shows his displeasure with disobedience. When we seek to serve him he is glorified. When we seek to serve ourselves, we put everything into "*a bag with holes*." Looking for much, it always comes to little. — In a word, if we are his, the Lord God will not leave us to ourselves. He will not allow us to prosper in disobedience.
- Then, in chapter 2 (v. 15), the prophet calls for us to consider the house of God (the worship of God), in connection with the great barrenness we have experienced.
- In verse 18 of chapter 2, he again calls for us to consider the house of God (the worship of God), and the blessedness he promises in connection with it.

Tonight, I want us to look at Haggai's messages to us, as they are given in these two chapters, praying that God the Holy Spirit will inscribe upon our hearts the lessons he here teaches us.

### **INDIFFERENCE**

Haggai's first message (1:1-15) is a stern word of rebuke regarding indifference to the things of God. The house of God had lain in ruins for 15 years.

Of course, the people had a very good, theologically sound reason for doing nothing. The 70 years Jeremiah had spoken of were not quite finished. The predestined date of deliverance and restoration had not yet come, and some of the Jews were still in Babylon. These fine men did not want to interfere with the sovereign purpose of God. I'm not stretching this a bit. Read verse 2.

(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."

But being the faithful prophet he was, Haggai was not about to let them off the hook. Instead of saying, "Oh, I understand that. I had not thought of that. I see what you're saying; and we certainly don't want anyone to think we're a bunch of Arminians." No. Haggai sticks his finger right on the sore spot and pushes hard (v. 4).

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

In other words, the prophet says, "The real problem here is not that you are waiting on the Lord; but that you have other things that are of such consuming concern to you that you are indifferent to the things of God. Your love of the world has made you lukewarm toward Christ."

He appeals to our sense of shame. God's house was in ruins while they lived in comfortable homes. They had shamefully neglected the house of the Lord. Our Master addresses this very issue in Matthew 6:33.

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

Now, let us learn the lesson. — **It is impossible to ignore Christ and the interests of his kingdom and glory, it is impossible to live in indifference to the things of God and prosper.** We will suffer the

consequences of such behavior. Ask Bro. Jonah. The Jews sowed much and reaped little, though they looked for and expected much. They ate; but they were not filled. They drank; but they were not satisfied. They put on clothes; but they were not warm. They received wages for their labor; but they had holes in their pockets. They gathered wood; but God's breath of judgment was upon everything. **Everything they did came to nothing, because they were serving themselves, not God** (1:6, 11).

(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.”

(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.”

They made God, his worship, and his glory secondary to their own pleasure, comfort, and earthly concerns.

**Haggai's message had its desired effect, and the house of God was built** (1:14).

(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,”

## **DISCOURAGEMENT**

A month later, the work stopped again. So Haggai steps up to deliver his second message (2:1-9). The people had worked hard on the temple and finished it. But the restored temple appeared to be nothing compared to the great edifice Solomon built. Some of the people remembered the former temple, and said, “This is nice, but it is not nearly as great and glorious as Solomon's temple.” They compared the present to the past, and said to themselves, “We cannot reproduce what our fathers did, so let's just do nothing (2:3; Ezra 3:12).

(Haggai 2:3) “Who *is* left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? *is it* not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?”

(Ezra 3:12) “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:”

Haggai had a message from God for the complainers, and it had four parts:

1. The Lord said, “**I am with you**” (v.4).

(Haggai 2:4) “Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I *am* with you, saith the LORD of hosts:”

2. **Then he assured them of the Lord’s presence and his steadfast covenant** (v.5).

(Haggai 2:5) “*According to* the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.”

3. **Then the prophet spoke of greater things than their natural eyes could see, promising the coming of Christ and the glory that would fill his house** (vv. 6-7, 9).

(Haggai 2:6-7) “For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it *is* a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry *land*; (7) And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.”

(Haggai 2:9) “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.”

Certainly, this prophecy was fulfilled when Christ came into the temple at Jerusalem as an infant. But the ultimate fulfillment referred not to the physical temple, but the church and temple of God that that temple represented. The glory spoken of here is the glory that shall be revealed and shall be ours in the last day, when we are made partakers of his glory (Hebrews 12:25-29).

(Hebrews 12:25-29) “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven: (26) Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. (27) And this *word*, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. (28) Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: (29) For our God *is* a consuming fire.”

**Note:** In verse 28 the apostle declares that we are presently receiving this kingdom and glory of which Haggai spoke.

- **Christ is the Desire of all nations.** — He is that One who alone is the embodiment of all those things every human heart desires (Genesis 49:10; Malachi 3:1).

(Genesis 49:10) “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.”

(Mal 3:1) “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.”

It is only in Christ (crucified, raised from the dead, ascended into heaven and accepted) that sinners find righteousness with God, forgiveness of all sin, and that peace of conscience that flows from a well-grounded assurance of eternal life.

- **Let us never despise the day of small things.** — The Lord our God has promised that our labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

(1 Corinthians 15:51-58) “Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. (55) O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? (56) The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. (57) But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”

We can never measure, by carnal means, the success of our labors in the kingdom of our God, and should never try to do so. We should never pine for former days, as if they were more desirable for us than the present. The day in which we live and serve our God and Savior is the very best day for us to do so. We ought to say, regarding the day in which the Lord has placed us, “*This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it*” (Psalm 118:24).

We cannot do what others do, and are not responsible to do what they do. We cannot do what our forefathers did, and are not responsible for that. **We can and must do what the Lord our God has given us the means and opportunity to do; and for that we are responsible.** As we put our hands to the work, our God will both sustain us in it and enable us to accomplish it.

(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 fact ought to cheer the hearts of all those men who labor for Christ in obscure places, with little apparent success, and those small assemblies of

God's saints scattered across the globe who are scorned by the world as meaningless and insignificant. No child of God and no assembly of God's saints faithfully doing what they can for Christ ever has reason for discouragement. If like that redeemed sinner described in Mark 14, we do what we can for him, like her we shall be honored by him.

4. In verse 8 **the Lord God assures us that he has in his hand everything we need to do what he would have us to do.**

(Haggai 2:8) "The silver *is* mine, and the gold *is* mine, saith the LORD of hosts."

Our God owns all things, and rules all things. He is both the possessor of all things and the omnipotent "*LORD of hosts.*" If only we (both individual believers and local churches) used what the Lord God has put in our hands as stewards in his house (time, talents, possessions and opportunities) for the furtherance of the gospel, the building of his kingdom and the glory of his name, rather than for our own gratification, we would never lack the means to do his work.

### **UNCLEANNES**

Haggai's third message describes our utter inability to do anything acceptable to God because of our uncleanness (2:10-19). Apparently, many who worked feverishly in restoring the house and worship of God got the idea that they were making themselves holy by their contact with the temple. So Haggai takes us back to the law of Moses to show us that we cannot be accepted of God and cannot serve him acceptably, cannot do anything acceptable in his sight, except we be made clean (2:11-14).

(Haggai 2:11-14) "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests *concerning* the law, saying, (12) If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. (13) Then said Haggai, If *one that is* unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. (14) Then answered Haggai, and said, So *is* this people, and so *is* this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so *is* every work of their hands; and that which they offer there *is* unclean."

In verses 15-17, the prophet tells us to consider the temple itself, from its very foundation. Our cleanness and acceptance with God is to be found in the person and work of Christ that was portrayed in all the sacrifices and priesthood connected with the temple.

(Haggai 2:15-17) “And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD: (16) Since those *days* were, when *one* came to an heap of twenty *measures*, there were *but* ten: when *one* came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty *vessels* out of the press, there were *but* twenty. (17) I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye *turned* not to me, saith the LORD.”

As the building of the temple was God’s work alone, so our salvation, our righteousness, is God’s work alone.

Again, he calls for us to consider all that was typically symbolized in the temple at Jerusalem, and keep our hearts focused on that, focused on Christ and his glory, and be assured of the blessedness found in and flowing to us from him (2:18-19).

(Haggai 2:18) “Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth *month*, *even* from the day that the foundation of the LORD’S temple was laid, consider *it*.”

**There is “a time to sow and a time to reap.”** Here, we are, as it were, just planting the seed. While the seed is in the ground, no one looks for the harvest. The harvest time is future. This is our sowing time. So let us sow. Soon, we shall reap.

### **COMING BLESSEDNESS**

Haggai’s last message was about the coming blessedness that awaits God’s people (vv. 20-23). He spanned the ages of time and speaks of Christ even more fully.

(Haggai 2:20-23) “And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth *day* of the month, saying, (21)

Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; (22) And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. (23) In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.”

**Zerubbabel is set before us here as great a type of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

- He is the Governor of Judah.
- He shakes heaven and earth.
- He overthrows and subdues kingdoms.
- He is Jehovah’s Servant.
- He is the Signet, “*the express image*” (Hebrews 1:1-3), of the Father.
- He is Jehovah’s chosen One.
- He is the One who builds his house.

The words of **Psalm 2** and **Zechariah 4** are echoed at the conclusion of Haggai’s prophecy:

(Psalm 2:6-8) “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. (7) I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee. (8) Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.”

(Zechariah 4:6-10) “Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This *is* the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. (7) Who *art* thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel *thou shalt become* a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone *thereof with* shoutings, *crying*, Grace, grace unto it. (8) Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, (9) The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. (10) For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice,

and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel *with* those seven; they *are* the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.”

### **TIME TO AWAKE**

Haggai’s message to us is crystal clear. It’s time for us to awake! Oh, may God the Holy Spirit stir our spirits, arouse our hearts, and restore our souls with ever-renewing devotion and consecration to our Savior and the building of his house and kingdom in this generation, “*knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer when we believed.*” The heathen rage against our God and Savior everywhere. The perilous times in which we live call for constant vigilance. — “*Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober*” (1 Thessalonians 5:6).

(Romans 13:11-14) “And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: for now *is* our salvation nearer than when we believed. (12) The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. (13) Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. (14) But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*.”

(Ephesians 5:14) “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

If anything can awaken our hearts, stir us from our lethargy, inflame our souls and restore devotion to Christ, it is the wondrous mystery of his redeeming love! — God manifest in our nature and made man, to bleed and die for our salvation. — That He should condescend to be sold for thirty pieces of silver, arrested and condemned as a common malefactor; crowned with piercing thorns; scourged at the bloody pillar; numbered with transgressors; reviled as an evil-doer; torn with tormenting nails; pierced with a hostile spear; and suspended on the ignominious tree, between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either, though He was the maker and preserver of both, made sin for us, forsaken of his Father, and slain under the violent wrath of God as our Substitute! What thought can reach, what tongue can tell, the infinite riches of his love for us! Such is our Savior’s

love for us that he not only suffered all for us freely, but even longed for the hour to come that he should accomplish such a death for us. — “*I have a baptism,*” he said, a baptism of sufferings, “*to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished*” (Luke 12:50).

Was the Christ of God so utterly committed and devoted to me? Blush with shame, O my soul, blush to think of being indifferent to him!

Amen.