

# *Consider Your Ways!*

## 4- The Seed in the Barn; the Overthrow of Kingdoms; and the Supremacy of Jesus Christ

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March 6, 2022

### **Haggai 2:10-19**

**10 On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Haggai the prophet, saying,**

**11 "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Ask now the priests for a ruling:**

**12 'If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?'" And the priests answered, "No."**

**13 Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?" And the priests answered, "It will become unclean."**

**14 Then Haggai said, " 'So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,' declares the Lord, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.**

**15 'But now, do consider from this day onward: before one stone was placed on another in the temple of the Lord,**

**16 from that time when one came to a grain heap of twenty measures, there would be only ten; and when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there would be only twenty.**

**17 'I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,' declares the Lord.**

**18 'Do consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month; from the day when the temple of the Lord was founded, consider:**

**19 'Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit. Yet from this day on I will bless you.'"**

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;  
and God the Holy Spirit; Amen.*

It is true that History is usually written by the Victors of War. Those peoples and the Nations who *lose* Wars usually don't get to write the books about what

happened. So, for example, Nebuchadnezzar and Darius and Cyrus, and Xerxes; and Artaxerxes didn't write a lot of History. But Samuel; and David; and Ezra; and Nehemiah; and Zechariah; and Haggai did.

And even though History is usually tainted by the thoughts and the biases and the prejudices of the Victors- we must understand that *this* particular History- the "*historical Narrative*" that we read in the Bible- is Inspired. And that means that the History that we read in the Bible is not only true (*this* man did *these* things in *that* city on *this* day)- but it also means that the historical Narratives that we find in the 66 Books of the Holy Bible are also Inerrant; and Infallible; and Relevant; and Sufficient.

And the historical Narratives are all of that- because they are Inspired. And that means that History is the "*Story*" of how God moved in previous times with various people; and places; and things; and even great Kingdoms.

So, in that sense- History is really, "*His Story*". It is the "*Story of God*" touching lives; and changing circumstances. It is the display of God raising up some while casting down others. It is the manifestation of God's mighty Hand in empowering *some* people to conquer while allowing others to be conquered. And it is the Account of some receiving great Joy while others were getting tremendous Agony.

And the visible "working out" of God's Will- the impact of God's Will and Word on various peoples and nations and kingdoms and dynasties and civilizations is called, God's "*Providence*".

Now Providence is an outdated word that has been dropped from the lexicon of most believers of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And that is a real shame- because nothing describes the visible "working out" of God's Will and His Decree in the world like the word, "Providence".

You see, "*Providence*" comes from two Latin words, "*Pro*", which means: *first or before* and "*Vide*"- which means "*to see*". So, "*Providence*" literally means: "*to see first*" or "*to see before*". But what sense does that make? So, we must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture in order to understand what is meant by God *seeing* something *first* or *before*. So, look at what Moses wrote in **Genesis 22:1-14:**

**1 Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."**

**2 He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."**

**3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.**

**4 On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.**

**5 Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."**

**6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together.**

**7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"**

**8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.**

**9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.**

**10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.**

**11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."**

**12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."**

**13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.**

Now look at what Abraham called that place in the very next verse:

#### **Genesis 22:14**

**Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."**

So, the word, "*pro-vidē*" actually means: *to see on behalf of; or to see for the benefit of.* And the way this is used in English is when people say, "*I'll see to that.*" And when used this way- the phrase, "*see to*" actually means: *to take care of; or provide for.* So, when someone says, "*I'll see to that*"- they are not talking about literally "seeing" something with their eyes and that's it. But they mean to

say that they are seeing something with the intention of *providing for what they see*; or the see with the intention of *taking care of that Need*.

In other words, they are “seeing” something with a specific Purpose in mind. And when we are talking about God- the Purpose is God’s Will; or God’s Promise; or God’s Decree. So, for God “to provide” then is for Him to: “*make provision for what He sees*” or “*to take care of a Need that He is aware of*” or “*making sure that His Will; Word; or Decree is carried out- exactly as He intended.*”

So, “*seeing to*” something is acting on behalf of something or someone. It is “providing.” Therefore- “*Providence*” is the sovereign Act of God in “*seeing to*” the Function and Operation and Order of the entire Universe- in such a way- that it all lines up according to His Will; His Word; or His Decree. So, when it comes to making sure that His Will or His Promise or His Decree is *always* carried out- *exactly* as He has already determined it will be- God will “see to that!” (provide)

So, when Abraham was told to sacrifice his son Isaac- before they went up the mountain- young Isaac asked his father,

**Genesis 22:7b**

**... where is the lamb for a burnt offering?**

...and Abraham replied in faith:

**Genesis 22:8b**

**...My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering...**

... and not long after that- God proved His Faithfulness and showed Abraham a ram caught in the thorns (**Genesis 22:14**). And in response to this sovereign Provision-

**... Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah (Yahweh) -jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen. (KJV)**

**Genesis 22:14**

**Abraham called the name of that place The Lord (Yahweh) Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided." (NASB)**

**Genesis 22:14**

**14 So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord (Yahweh) will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."(ESV)**

... so literally in Hebrew, Abraham relied to his young son,

“God *will see* for Himself the lamb.”

Now why does God’s “seeing” in Hebrew mean that He will “provide”? We can find the answer in one of the other Characteristics of God called, God’s *Omniscience*. *Omniscience* is that God already knows *everything* about *everything*. And this means that God NEVER learns new information. There isn’t anything that God doesn’t already know- in fullness and in perfection.

When we “see” something our “seeing” is very limited. Because even though we may *think* we see something clearly- we probably don’t know everything about that subject. And this is why- when it comes to angelic visitations or new Revelation- we should never say, “*I KNOW what I saw*” ... because you really DON’T know what you saw in absolute fullness. And this is why sleight of hand hucksters at county Fairs can fool people, who are standing there watching him. So, because we are limited- we always must be humble and realize that there is always more to “see” about that subject.

But that involves ONLY the Present. Because the Truth is that we have forgotten most of the Past; and we have no idea what will happen in the Future. So, our “seeing” must *always* be accompanied with great Humility.

But God “sees” the Past, Present, and Future- all at once. And His “seeing” of that subject is perfect and complete. There is nothing that God doesn’t see- fully and rightly. And this Quality of God is what empowers God’s Immutability.

Now Immutability is the Character of God that allows Him to NEVER change. And there are two reasons why God never changes:

1. God sees the Past, Present, and Future- perfectly and fully and all at once.
2. God has the Power to change anything in order to CAUSE His Will to come to pass.

So, God personally guarantees EVERYTHING He has promised because His Omniscience is wrapped in His Omnipotence- and it is guided by His Immutability. And so, what God promises will happen in the Future- based on three other Characteristics:

1. God CAN’T lie (**Hebrews 6:18**)
2. God is Immutable (**1Samuel 15:29; Psalm 110:4; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8**)

3. God is Almighty/Omnipotent (**Genesis 17:1; Genesis 35:11; Exodus 6:3; 2Corinthians 6:18**)

Now keep in mind that the Bible does NOT say that God DOESN'T lie. Instead, it says He CANNOT lie. In other words, God doesn't have the Power to lie. But doesn't that fact *diminish* His Omnipotence? No, because it *magnifies* God's pristine and holy Character and Nature. So, what we must understand is that God CANNOT think or speak or act in any way that is contrary to His sinless Nature. And that is one reason why EVERYTHING He promises will ALWAYS come to pass.

But it is also true that because God knows everything about everything- past, present, and future (Omniscience)- He never has to change His mind based on unforeseen situations and circumstances (Immutability). So, it is true to say that the God of the Bible "sees" and "understands" the future- *fully*- before it happens.

So, God doesn't simply passively understand what will happen in the Future- but God also orders and controls and governs the past, present, and future together- in such a way- that He always causes to come to pass that which is His Perfect Will. And the manifestation of this Order of all things- is called, "God's Providence".

So, God never simply "*sees*" without "*acting*". God doesn't simply "*know*" on an intellectual level that something will occur at some point in the future- and then He sits back passively- hoping that by allowing Man to struggle to try to obtain God's Will- what God wanted- happens. The Bible doesn't teach that. No, God actually *controls* and *orders* and *governs* all of the Circumstances; and all of the Situations (including Man's choices and actions and desires) in such a way that two things will always be true:

- ✓ Man will be held completely responsible for his actions and will be judged if he doesn't do the "Right" thing
- ✓ That which God has determined (from before the Foundation of the world) *will* happen- *exactly* as God has ordained it.

... and all of this will be done so that- in all things- God will be Glorified! And that is *exactly* what God is doing here with the Prophet Haggai.

We must remember as we put together all of God's Characteristics- that the one true living God of the Bible is not a laid back; passive; by-stander in a world that exists without His sustaining it. Wherever God is looking- and seeing- God is acting. Always. So, if God perceives- He performs; If He inspects- He effects; and where He patrols- He controls.

In other words, there is a profound and very wise and important Biblical reason why “Providence” does *not* merely mean: *Foreknowledge* but means: “*the active and determined Sustenance and Governance of the Universe.*” When God “sees,” He “sees to.” And His “*seeing*” is *always* with a view to *doing*.

So, when we say that God exercises His Absolute Sovereignty through His Governance and Order of the Universe- we mean to say that the single most important Aspect in all of God’s Creation is that His Will is accomplished- so that the one single ultimate End will be accomplished (and not simply desired) that God is glorified.

And nothing else matters to God as much as this one aspect. Therefore- God Sovereignly Governs and Orders the Universe with this one single Objective in mind.

And all of this is true with the Passage that is before us today in Haggai. And in order to see the Providence of God more clearly- so we may discern just what the Prophet was saying here- we need to rehash all that we have discovered so far.

Back in 586BC the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem. And God was using a vicious and pagan Empire to subjugate His people- so they would repent of NOT following all of God’s Commandments found in the Old Testament.

So, the Jews had become distant from God by being carnal and worldly and sinful. So, the very people God had chosen to display His Glory had become bored with God; and could not stand to hear the Word of the Lord anymore. They had become very attached to the things of this life that are passing away. And the act that symbolized their Distance from God was found in Chapter 1 when Haggai rebuked them for,

### **Haggai 1:4b**

**...Dwell(ing) in your paneled houses while this house (of God) lies desolate**

Now what made the Sin of this generation of Jews so unbelievable- was they had already seen God raise up the Empire of Assyria to utterly destroy the northern Kingdom of Israel because of their refusal to repent and keep the tenets of the 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant. And they had also seen God raise up the Babylonian Empire to ride in and take the southern Kingdom of Judah back to Babylon and destroy Solomon’s Temple- for the very same reason.

And now God has mercifully delivered these Jews from their Babylonian captors after 70 years of Captivity and yet 18 years has gone by and they have forgotten the Lord; they have forgotten His Word; and they have turned their attention to their own earthly possessions- while the House of God lay desolate! How could this be?

So, 70 years as slaves wasn't enough? Being gloriously delivered (by another King and Empire that God raised up) wasn't enough? What else does God need to do to wake these wicked Jews up?

Now keep in mind- that as long as the Old Covenant was in force- the Temple in Jerusalem was MANDATORY in order for them to worship God according to what Moses wrote. In other words, without the Temple- they simply could NOT worship God according to the Law of God. So, this initial 18- year neglect was much more than them simply allowing some obscure section of the Old Testament to slip their mind. Without the Temple standing- the Levitical Priests and the animal Sacrifices (which were all shadows and symbols of the True- that would become Real when Jesus lived and died and rose again and inaugurated the 2<sup>nd</sup> Covenant or the *New Covenant*)- could NOT be carried out.

Now as soon as the New Covenant came to be- the First or the Old Covenant became totally obsolete and useless as far as worshipping God was concerned. And this is so true that, today, if anyone- for any reason sacrifices an animal- he is blaspheming against Jesus- Who was the once for all Sacrifice for Sin. If any religious Organization; for any reason; has a formal and official *hierarchical* Priesthood- they are blaspheming God and they are rebelling against the Concept of the "Priesthood of all Believers" that the New Testament teaches. And if anyone, for any reason seeks to build a Temple in Jerusalem- where both the hierarchical Priesthood and the animals Sacrifices can be conducted- they have blasphemed against God and they are attacking the New Jerusalem and the New Temple in heaven made without hands. For anyone for any reason seeks to go back under the tenets of the Old Covenant- they are testifying that Jesus is NOT enough. And you simply CANNOT insult God any worse than that.

But in Haggai's day- the Jew lived under the Old Covenant that *demand*ed animal Sacrifices; and demanded the Levitical Priesthood. So, in order to have those parts of the Old Covenant- there MUST be a Temple in Jerusalem. But since the Babylonians had destroyed Solomon's Temple- another Temple MUST be built. And that Temple would first be called, "*Zerubbabel's Temple*". But later- in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century- the Idumean ruler over the Roman Province of Palestine would put a lot of money and great effort into refurbishing Zerubbabel's Temple- which had fallen into disrepair. And the Jews were so grateful to this pagan Ruler for refurbishing the Temple- that they called it, "*Herod's Temple*".

And *that* is the Temple that was standing in Jesus' day. And it is the Temple that, by the time Jesus walked the earth, represented everything that was wrong with the Jew's Religion. And *that* is the Temple about which Jesus said,

**John 2:19b**

**... Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up...**

... and later, John himself gave an inspired Commentary about what Jesus said in **John 2:21&22:**

**But He was speaking of the temple of His body. So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had spoken.**

... and this not only refers to Jesus' Resurrection- but also equates Jesus to the Temple under the auspices of the New Covenant. And both things happened. Jesus rose from the dead after three days and this 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple was destroyed in 70AD.

So, over the last several weeks- we have seen that the fulfillment of Haggai's Prophecy in **Haggai 2:3-9** that says,

**3 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?**

**4 'But now take courage, Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord, 'take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,' declares the Lord, 'and work; for I am with you,' declares the Lord of hosts.**

**5 'As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!'**

**6 "For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.**

**7 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord of hosts.**

**8 'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,' declares the Lord of hosts.**

**9 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts, 'and in this place I will give peace,' declares the Lord of hosts."**

... was NOT fulfilled by Herod's Temple. And it was NOT fulfilled by whatever else the Jews did from the moment of Jesus' Death to this very day.

And that means that this Inspired and Infallible Prophecy of Haggai is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And at His Coming and the establishment of the "New Jerusalem" on the earth and the "Temple in Heaven" made without hands- as taught in **The Revelation 21**- this Prophecy will see its *final* and *complete* fulfillment.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Please see the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sermon in this Series. Note: My conclusions represent my best shot at allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture. However, I may be wrong- as I am but a man.

Now I have many reasons to believe and teach this. First, History tells us that this 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple that Haggai is *commanding* the Jews to build- did NOT glorify God. The days of Solomon's Temple represent the "high- water- mark" of the 1<sup>st</sup> Covenant. It was all downhill after that. And the Jews and the land of Israel have NEVER seen anything like it since. But more importantly, we need to realize the infinite *superiority* of the New Covenant over the Old; and the Glory that Jesus Christ had and has as being the "one and only" of the Father.

But we also need to remember that Haggai never saw Jesus or the New Covenant- except from a distance. And so, everything he believed and taught was operating under the Old Covenant- which absolutely *needed* a Temple.

Now even though Cyrus did NOT know God- the Bible teaches that God knew him. And God chose King Cyrus and used this pagan to allow the Jews to leave Babylon and go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the walls and the Temple (**Isaiah 44&45**).

And all of this was owing to the sovereign Hand of God fulfilling the Prophecies of Jeremiah. Look what **Ezra 1:1-4** says:

**1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also put it in writing, saying:**

**2 "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah.**

**3 'Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.**

**4 'Every survivor, at whatever place he may live, let the men of that place support him with silver and gold, with goods and cattle, together with a freewill offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.'"**

And among the returning exiles were (probably) the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah. And **Ezra 5:1&2** sums up for us what these two contemporaries accomplished:

**1 When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them,**

**2 then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose**

**and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them supporting them.**

So, Haggai and Zechariah were sent by God to assist in the rebuilding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple in Jerusalem. And this Work began (according to **Haggai 1:15**) on the 24th day of the sixth month of the second year of the reign of Darius<sup>2</sup>, which according to my calculations would be September 21, 520BC.

So, you can see that about 18 years went by between the return of the exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple. And it is this 18- year delay that has troubled the Prophet Haggai and is what caused him to write this Book.

But the way Haggai motivates the Jews to build the Temple of God has a powerful Application to our own efforts to Work and pray and cry out for the Gospel to triumph as Jesus builds His Church.

And the way we will do that is by analyzing the two Questions that Haggai asks about Holiness in verses 12& 13:

**12 'If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?'" And the priests answered, "No."**

**13 Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?" And the priests answered, "It will become unclean."**

Now as we ponder these two Questions, we need to remember that the people have waited 18 years after God set them free from the Babylonian Captivity to build the Temple. And that has nothing to do with ignorance- because under the Old Covenant- having a Temple was *mandatory*. So, the people are proving beyond any doubt that they have nothing but contempt for Divine Worship- because they regarded their own homes and their own possessions as being much more important than the Will and word and Temple of God. And so, as they continually improved their own homes- they left the House of God desolate.

And God was greatly displeased with this Sin. And He compelled the Prophet Haggai to rebuke them. And to some extent- that Rebuke worked because now many of the Jews are laboring to rebuild the Walls and the Temple in Jerusalem.

So, we need to ask a Question at this point. God was displeased when they neglected the Temple. So, is He pleased now that they are laboring to rebuild it? And the Answer is, "Yes!". Okay, but God put the Curses and the Plagues from

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<sup>2</sup> Darius took the place of Cyrus to rule the Persian Empire

**Deuteronomy** on them when they *neglected* the Temple. So, have the people now earned God's Blessings and Favor since they have left off improving their own homes and are now busy in the construction of the Temple? And the Answer is, "No!"

But why is that true? Why does it just work one way? Because we must realize that, *ultimately*, we can't do *anything* to earn anything from God- *including* His Blessings and His Favor. *Everything* God gives to us- is *always* based on His Mercy; and His Love and is NEVER based on Him owing us anything or us earning anything. So, no, we can't EVER earn ANYTHING from God.

But that isn't the *worst* thing. What is even *worse* than seeking to earn God's Favor is laboring to build the Temple out of some sense of Guilt; or Obligation; or Duty; or because they have Pity on poor old God, Who doesn't seem to have His Own House. And that makes all their Labor to be both Sin and Superstition. And if that is the case- then God is NOT pleased at all. In fact, it would have been better that they never built the Temple. Because to a lost soul- *whatever* God requires of them is a terrible Burden and a joyless Job that can never satisfy the human soul.

The only way God is honored and glorified by the things we do for Him; and in His Name; and for His Glory- is if we have been so radically transformed by what God alone has done in us and for us- that we labor *joyfully*! God is pleased when we are filled with the Hope of eternal Life; and if we understand that *whatever* level of energy we expend in the Service of God is a Privilege and an Honor and is NEVER a Burden! Only then is God pleased with us. Because to a saved person- *whatever* honors God- no matter what the Cost may be to us- brings Satisfaction and the fullness of Joy to God's people.

Now it is very common today to hear about the lack of Commitment in far too many people in the modern church. I get newsletters from some of the largest churches in our area. And in those Letters- the Pastor is very often bemoaning the lack of Commitment; and the lack of Giving; and the lack of Attendance in the people. And so, he rebukes them and seeks to make them feel guilty.

But I see this differently. I am not interested at all in trying to make you feel guilty about the level of your Commitment. And that is true because I believe that truly saved people are willing to die for Jesus. And I really don't think that is unusual. It is just "*normal Christianity*" because Jesus said this in **Luke 9:23-25**:

**"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.**

**24 "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.**

## 25 "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"

Now this is not required of super-duper people, who lead large mega churches. No, Jesus said this applies to EVERYONE who wishes to “come after Him.” (*follow Him; be close to Him*)

So, we NEED to compare our level of Commitment with others. And we don't need to try to compete with others for how much we can give; or how much we can do the hard and unpleasant aspects of church like mow the yard; and tend to babies and infants during the Service.

Instead, we need to monitor our level of Love for Jesus. We need to cry out to God so He can open our eyes and give us the Gift of being able to see ourselves as He sees us. We need to check our ability to deny ourselves and take up our Cross and follow Jesus. Because if your Love for God is such that you cannot bear to disappoint Him; that you would rather die than sin against Him- then Commitment will take care of itself.

We must always keep in mind that the worship of God is completely corrupted when it is confined to only external things like Rituals and Ceremonies. Because when that happens- God is transformed in our minds into having a Nature that is more like us than like Him. You see, God is pure Spirit. And that means that God can ONLY be worshipped by us- *spiritually*. But if that spirituality is hypocritical; or only displayed on Sunday; or not mixed equally with Truth- then it isn't really spiritual at all. And that means we are merely speaking words into the air.

So, *whoever* seeks to only worship God in areas like “external pomp” and “open shows of glory” and “false Humility”- thinking they can fool God and pacify Him- will soon realize that the only thing they have done- is to trifle with the Almighty. And when humans trifle with God- they only trifle with Him- childishly. And this is what the Prophet now seeks to know and correct.

From the seventh to the ninth month- they had been diligently engaged in the Work which the Lord had commanded them to do. Yet the Reality is that carnal and lost men seek to busy themselves with external things and in doing so- they completely neglect spiritual Worship. Which is why the Prophet is speaking this way.

God made Man in His Image and Likeness. So, we are “religious” by nature. And so, if we do not worship God- we are going to worship something or someone. And because we are fallen- we have an *enormous* capacity to deceive ourselves by our humanly engineered religiosity. And that is one of the reasons God gave us the Bible- because the Bible *exposes* our hypocrisy; and our

lukewarmness; and our backsliding; and it confronts us with our false and superstitious Religion.

What Haggai desires the people to understand- and us as well- is that it is NEVER enough to try to satisfy or please God- through carnal and earthly means. Once they truly heard Haggai's rebuke- these Jews spared neither expense nor labor in building the Temple. Yet they never realized that something far greater was required of them by God: namely that God desires for us to ENJOY Him; DELIGHT in Him; and LOVE Him. And that is *infinitely* greater than building any building- even when that building is the Temple.

Now in Old Testament lingo- "Clean" has to do with being "Holy"; or "Saved"; while "Unclean" has to do with being, "Sinful"; or "Worldly" or "Unholy" or "Lost". And, basically, Haggai is asking the Rulers if "Holiness" and "Sinful" can be transferred through touch. In verse 12- the Prophet asks:

**If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?**

In other words, can I take something that is "Unholy" and make it "Holy" by simply touching it to something else that is "Holy"? And the Priests answered correctly, "No". Now under the Old Covenant- some foods were pronounced "Unclean". But in the New Covenant in which we live and operate- no food is "Unclean"- as long as it is received with Thanksgiving. Because the Word of God and Prayer has made it "Clean" (1 Timothy 4:5).

So, if I touch a sinful thing to a godly thing- do I make the sinful thing to become godly? No. Godliness is NOT transferable to something else by association or touch. So, if a person wants to be "Godly" or "Holy"- then he is to, first, be saved. Because Unsaved people CANNOT be Godly.

But even after he is saved- that saved person needs to strive to alter the way he lives his life so that he can be found humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in his daily life- all to the Glory of God.

For example, my children are not born again; and they are NOT going to Heaven simply because they are related to me. I can't give my family my own walk with God or impart to them my own Relationship with Jesus. Now I can inspire them; and I can make Jesus look irresistible to them. So, because I *can*- I should. But they have to *individually* experience the Miracle of the New Birth themselves; and they have to have their *own* Relationship to Jesus.

But then Haggai asked the 2<sup>nd</sup> Question in verse 13:

**Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?"**

So, can something that is already "Clean" become "Unclean?" And once again, the Priests answered the Prophet correctly by saying,

**"It will become unclean."**

So, what was the point in Haggai asking these Questions? Well, he tells us in the very next verse:

**Haggai 2:14**

**Then Haggai said, " 'So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,' declares the Lord, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.**

... and the only Work of their hands they are engaged in now- is the building of the Temple.

So, Haggai is saying that the people of God- his fellow Jews- are like this. And so, the issue was this, *"How can a lost person build the House of God? How can people, who take no pleasure in God- build a Temple for God?"* So, if a lost person helps to build the House of God- does that make the House to be Unholy?

Now look at the last strange Statement Haggai made in verse 19:

**Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit. Yet from this day on I will bless you.**

Now what in the world is Haggai talking about here? Some Commentators have suggested that Haggai was actually making a Statement of Fact here rather than asking a Question. Others think that the "Seed" and the "Vine" and the "Fig Tree" and the "Pomegranate" and "Olive Trees" are all symbolic of Nations.

But I think this Statement is much simpler than that. God, through Haggai, is asking the people, who at first were neglecting the Temple if the "seed" is still in the barn. And then he lists which seeds were in the barn- the vine (meaning the grapes), the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree. All of these Seeds were still in the barn. Now they're safe. And they're dry and ready to plant. But they're in the Barn! And God wants His people to get the Seed OUT of the Barn and into the soil! Seeds are of no use at all sitting in the barn. They have to be planted in order to bear fruit!

Likewise, the Word of God- that Jesus said was the Seed in the “*Parable of the 4 Soils*” (Luke 8) is in the Barn- which represents the House of God. And we hear the Word and we believe the Word. But if we are not careful- the Word of God can become like good wine and good food. And we can eat and drink in the Word until we are ready to burst. And then we go on our way rejoicing- because we have eaten a sumptuous meal.

But the Bible condemns Gluttony. And even though our nation has become the land of 10,000 buffets- God hates Gluttony. So, we have to be careful that we don't become gluttons. But there is a spiritual Condition- I call it, “spiritual Gluttony” where we eat and drink in the Word of God and we rejoice and are made glad- but we NEVER pour out to others what God has poured into us!

We keep the word of God that He has poured into us and we keep it dry and safe- but we never see an opportunity to “*pour out*” to a lost and dying world the glorious Good News that God has “*poured into*” us. And so, we have become “*spiritual gluttons*”. And so, the Seed of the Word of God is in the barn- but there is no fruit. Why? Because God intends for us to “pour out” all that He has “poured into” us. God doesn't need us to keep the Seed safe and secure. God wants us to put the Seed into the ground.

Yes, some will reject it out of hand. And yes, some will rejoice- but die out under Persecution. And yes, some will receive the Word but allow the cares of this life to rob them of the benefit of the Seed. But some will also receive the Word and bear fruit!

But it is certain that NOBODY will bear fruit as long as we keep the Seed locked up in the Barn! Yes, planting the Seed is risky. Yes, sowing the Seed will create Persecutions. And yes, sowing the Seed may cost us everything. But sowing the Seed; getting the Seed out of the Barn and planting it in the ground of human hearts through Preaching and Teaching- is the Will of our Father!

And it was God's Will for Israel too. But their mentality was that they had the Truth; they were God's people; and they had the Temple- so sinners needed to “come and see”. But God was speaking through Haggai of a New Covenant whereby we go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.

So, Haggai spoke of a time when God's people would, “Go and tell.” Which is an infinitely BETTER Covenant! And look what God promised them at the end of verse 19:

**... Yet from this day on I will bless you.**

Now we know that, as bad as the Jews had already suffered- their *greatest* suffering would come in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. So, God is speaking here

of His Blessings on those, who believe; and on those who strive to obey; and NOT merely those who are born Jewish.

So, Haggai is speaking on God's behalf of a *different* people; and a *different* time- a time of great Blessing and a time of great Upheaval. A time when one Covenant would come to violent end- while another Covenant would begin; and then flourish; and then spread around the world!

My dear friends, Haggai speaks here of one Kingdom being overthrown; while God raises up a new Kingdom; an invisible Kingdom; a Kingdom that CANNOT be shaken- which is the Church of the Lord Jesus. Because Haggai saw Jesus afar off- yet he spoke here about the absolute Supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ over all of planet earth- as the writer of **Hebrews** says in **Hebrews 12:18-29**:

**18 For you have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind,**

**19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.**

**20 For they could not bear the command, "IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED."**

**21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, "I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling."**

**22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,**

**23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,**

**24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.**

**25 See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.**

**26 And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN."**

**27 This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.**

**28 Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;**

**29 for our God is a consuming fire.**

...and we can hear Haggai cry out, “**Consider your ways!**”

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.