

Title: Haggai: Our God Restores #3 (“I Can Promise You a Blessing”)

Text: Haggai 2:10-19

Date: Jan 31, 2021 at FBCW

INTRO.

Background. The Israelites are back from their 70 year-exile in Babylon. They have been back in their homeland, Jerusalem, for several years.

Initially, when they came back – they were eager to do the work of the Lord – which in their case was restoring Solomon’s Temple after it had been decaying and in ruin for 70+ years.

After about two years of work, they were successful at laying the foundation of the Temple. Things started off quite well!

- But after the foundation was laid, they got off track. Ezra 3-4 tells us this story.
- Opposition from neighboring nations caused a delay in Temple construction, which put the rebuilding of the Temple on hold for many years.
- The people then focused on their own homes/houses...while the spiritual heart of the Israelites remained in a state of neglect/apathy.
- So the Lord raised up a prophet named Haggai.

Haggai’s message is simple: come back to the Lord...realign your priorities with God!

- *You’ve focused all your energy on your own houses...while God’s house remains in ruin.*
- *Put your energy into God’s House...and God will take care of everything else.*

So now the question for Israel is this → will we consider our ways? Is their truth in what Haggai is saying to us? By what authority do we live?

This is a very important question. When it comes to the authority of God’s Word...or the reading of God’s Word...or the preaching of God’s Word → we’ve got to decide WHO is speaking to us?

When we gather for church as the people of God, we must consider –

- Who is speaking to us?
- What is He saying?
- What must I do in response?

Hag 1:1, *The word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai...*

Hag 1:2, *“The Lord of Armies says this...”*

The beauty of the Book of Haggai is this → it’s both *a prophet* and *a people* under the authority of the Word of God.

- It’s a prophet with no ego: Haggai always quotes God, and not himself.
- It’s a people wise enough to know, it’s not a man they are hearing from, but God.

All the way from Haggai 1:1, up through Haggai 2:19 (the conclusion of today's text) – Haggai's sermons/messages to Israel are saturated with the Word of God.

Note, God is the substance of Haggai's message – the “word of the Lord” and/or “the declaration of the Lord” is stated at least nine times – 1:1, 1:3, 1:12, 1:13, 2:1, 2:4, 2:10, 2:14, 2:17.

Note, God is the authority of Haggai's message – “The Lord of Armies says this” is stated at least twelve times – 1:2, 1:5, 1:7, 1:9, 1:14, 2:4, 2:6, 2:7, 2:8, 2:9, 2:9, 2:11.

- The phrase: the Lord God of Armies means → There are armies on earth...then there is an army in heaven that is over the armies on earth...and this heavenly army has a general: and God is His Name.

What I'm saying is this: we are reading a book called, “Haggai” – but we are hearing a message from the Lord God Almighty himself.

Haggai's messages are just saturated with the Word of God. He is like his contemporary, Ezra.

- Ezra 7:10, *But Ezra set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, to do it, and to teach its statutes in Israel.*

God's criteria for every faithful pastor/preacher: does he know the Bible? Does he personally submit to the Bible? Is he willing to proclaim the Bible?

And this is something I'm saying out loud to you, but before the Lord, I'm preaching it primarily to myself.

Haggai is a humble prophet with no sign of ego. Is he courageous? Yes. Is he about himself? No! He quotes God and not himself.

But also, when the people hear from Haggai, they don't say, “Haggai has spoken!” They say... “The Lord has spoken!” (Haggai 1:12).

This is personal for me (Jeremy)

- I'm useless to my family and you if I'm not walking with God.
- I'm empty if I'm not listening to God.
- I'm useless if I'm imparting my own opinions.
- I'm foolish if my messages are about me.
- If I say one thing and live another way – how tragic!

Haggai wanted the people to hear the Lord, because Haggai himself had heard from the Lord.

- If the truth is from God, I beg you to obey.
- If it's of the flesh (or from me), I beg you to forget it.
- No wonder the Bible says: *let not many become teachers, for they incur a stricter judgment* (James 3:1).

FACT. What makes the Lord's Day special (Sundays) is experiencing the rich truth of the Word of God.

- Notice, God speaks in Haggai at the festivals, or to the assembly of people (plural).

The loneliest feeling in the world is God's silence – feeling distant from God.

The saddest feeling in the world is listening to the wrong voice.

- In Eden, Eve listened to the serpent, not the Word of God.
- In Proverbs 9, both wisdom and folly call out, "Turn in here!" – but who do we listen to?

The most glorious feeling in the world is when Jesus calls your name! ("Mary") (John 20:17).

Hear me, beloved church family:

- Your Sundays are useless if you come to be seen.
- Your Sundays are powerless if you expect to be told, "You are fine without Christ."
- But if you come thirsty...if you come to drink of the Word/Spirit...my my!

From today in Haggai 2:10-19, let us recognize:

First, the Word of God reveals the true nature of my spiritual condition (2:10-14). Haggai uses questions for the priests – because they know the Law – to cause the people to see their personal uncleanness due to sin.

Question 1 shows my own self effort cannot save me (myself).

Question 2 shows that the poison of my sin is contagious; it adversely affects my whole life.

Question 1 is in verse 12 → *if a man is carrying consecrated meat in the fold of his garment, and it touches, bread, stew, wine, oil, or any other food, does it become holy?* (Jer 11:15; Lev 6:27).

- The priests answer, "No!"

LESSON. Our human effort at "sacrifice" can't touch something else and make it righteous or holy. In my own strength I can't change my spiritual condition!

- Rom 3:10; Rom 3:23; Eph 2:1; Isa 64:6

The life I need ("righteousness") is totally dependent upon the life of another ("Jesus").

The Ten Commandments are helpful – they let me know I've fallen short!

(ILLUS: Covid testing is everywhere. Testing positive or negative? We've all tested positive for sin and negative for righteousness.)

- Do we want a real diagnosis of our spiritual condition? We must turn to the Bible!

Question 2 is in verse 13 → *if someone defiled by contact with a corpse touches any of these, does it become defiled?* (Lev 22:1-9; Num 19:11-13).

- The priests answer, “Yes!”

LESSON. Sin in one area of my life carries over and wrecks other areas of my life.

The lie from the devil: sin can be compartmentalized and controlled. It won't kill you.

It's a lie that alcohol...pornography...premarital sex...outbursts of anger...stealing...cheating...that it only affects you and no one else. Lie lie lie!

FACT. All of the combined righteousness/goodness in this room cannot bring the revival that we need...only God Himself can send it.

The wisdom that we all need: only God can send it.

- Adjusting to Covid: pastoring, online, safe in-room growth, etc.
- Marriage reconciliation...parenting a difficult child...overcoming depression...

Second, we are totally dependent upon the Lord's strength for spiritual progress (2:15-17).

The truth is, if we are not making progress in our spiritual lives, what other progress matters?

Mark 8:36, *For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?*

Haggai says to Israel in 2:16 –

- *You wanted a 20-bushel crop, but you only got 10.*
- *You wanted 50 gallons of drink, but you only received 20.*

And in 2:17 → *all that work you were doing in your own strength...for nothing! I (God) was the one who sent the blight, mildew, and hail. And you didn't turn to me – how stubborn!*

LESSON. It's shocking how stubborn/foolish I can be!

LESSON. Sometimes God allows failed plans and unfulfilled dreams → just so I will remember my strength comes from Him and Him alone.

Question: how much must we go through before we realize there is no win in fighting against the Word of God?

Note, the message of the Bible is clear → God is our strength! (Eph 6:10) (Psalm 28:7).

- God's Word flips it: Strong men are actually weak...but weak men are actually strong.

You are my strength when I am weak, you are the treasure that I seek, you are my all in all. Seeking you as a precious jewel, Lord to give up I'd be a fool, you are my all in all. Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is your name... (2x).

Third, let us consciously decide: will we commit our lives to trust the promises of God, and leave the results to Him? Or will we live by our own terms? (2:18-19) How will we live?

Matt 4:4, *Man shall not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*

Jer 15:16, *Your words were found, and I ate them. Your words became a delight to me and the joy of my heart.*

Notice the definitive timeframe of Haggai 2:18 → *from this day on...from the 24th day of the 9th month...approximately Dec 18.*

- The point of all of this – you must decide – who is in charge? What will you do?

ILLUS: my seminary professor Dr. Dan Parker called them, “Spiritual markers...defining moments.” ILLUS: My dad wrote out his resignation from his first church, then threw it in the garbage.

2:18, *From the day the foundation of the Lord’s Temple was laid...think carefully.*

The point Haggai is making in all of this → when will you decide that God’s Word is going to be the permanent foundation...the cornerstone...of all of your life?

2:19, *“Is there still seed left in the barn?”* the two interpretations differ here → (while the seed is in the barn) OR (while the seed is in the earth, before it sprouts)

The grapevines, figs, pomegranates, and olive trees → have not yet produced!

- BUT God promises: He will bless you...it’s as good as done!

Here is the point of 2:18-19 → the lesson of the seeds and produce.

- The seed: represents the obedience/faith of the people.
- The produce: represents the promise that God will bless them.

The seed may be in the barn, or in the ground, but if you put it in God’s hands...he knows what to do with it.

- Put your heart/obedience in God’s hands...He knows what to do with the results!

Seed: *Prioritize the Word with your kids* → (Prov 22:6).

Seed: *Ask, Seek, Knock in prayer* → (Matt 7:7).

Seed: *Without faith it is impossible to please him...but He is a diligent rewarder* (Heb 11:6).

Bottom Line: Haggai told the Israelites the assurance of blessing only comes when they obey the Word of God.

BIG IDEA. The only blessing I can promise you is this: you will never regret obeying the Word of God.

- The blessing I can promise you is this: you will be blessed by submitting to the Word!

Blessing here was used – to humbly bow/kneel before the King. It was used in ancient, royal cultures. You didn't even know what the King was going to bless you with, but you trust the character of the King that it will be good.

CONCL. Ever been lost at a mall, or an airport, or Six Flags, or Disney? And you see the sign that says, “You are here” with a big dot/arrow. The sign is the point of reference that dials you into focus about your present location and your future plans.

You can't get to where you want to go until you know where you are!