

Title: Our God Restores – Restoration #4

Text: Haggai 2:20-23

Date: Feb 7, 2021 at FBCW

INTRO.

We've been calling this series, "Restoration." → Restoration is the very clear theme of Haggai.

- God wanted restored hearts.
- God wanted a restored Temple.
- God wanted a restored vision of purpose within His people.

Background. How did we get here in this little book called Haggai?

We must all remember that God is simultaneously a God of love and truth.

God is Truth! → God sees your sin and he's unwilling to let you get away with your sin.

- He is a God of integrity, justice, and honor.
- Numbers 32:23, "*Be sure, your sins will find you out (catch up with you).*"

God is Love! → God loves you more than you can imagine.

- He will cover your sin with grace...if you're willing to admit your sins to Him.
- Prov 28:13, *He who covers his sins will not prosper; But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*

But this is an important key to the Old Testament, and particularly Haggai → God is love.

Even when the Israelites broke their covenant with God...God never broke His covenant with them.

- God never stopped lovingly pursuing His people in the Old Testament.

Centuries before Haggai, under Moses, God had given Israel a Law (a covenant). It was called The Decalogue, or The Ten Commandments.

No other gods...Make no idols...Don't take the Lord's name in vain...Remember the Sabbath...Honor your parents...Do not murder...Do not commit adultery...Do not steal...Do not lie...Do not covet.

This Law would define them.

- You are My people....You will be different...You will be ambassadors of My character.

If they obeyed the 10 Commandments – they would be blessed.

If they ignored the 10 Commandments – they would be disciplined.

Unfortunately, the story of the Old Testament is largely about Israel's failure to keep the Law.

- Idols.
- Intermarrying with unbelievers.
- Failed Sabbath-worship.
- Instead of being guided by the Word, they gave in to the popular whims of the nations around them.

God the Father was very sad about Israel's disobedience. Therefore, God had to do what He said He was going to do – He must punish them.

Yes, God punished their disobedience. But even as God punished the Israelites, he did so with a heart of love and restoration.

Prov 3:11-12, Do not despise the Lord's instruction, my son, and do not loathe his discipline; For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.

(ILLUS: I was talking with a friend who felt shame over his recent divorce. He said he felt dirty. And I just blurted out – *Hey man, God is heartbroken about your divorce, just like you. But God still wants you. No, God doesn't want your divorce. But God still wants you.*).

FACT. God's discipline is not retributive...God's discipline is restorative.

- Retributive: this means recompense, especially punishment.
- Restorative: this means grace, it means to come back.

God does NOT punish us to push us away. Rather, God disciplines us to separate us from our poor behavior and to pull us close!

We have so many Father Wounds and Daddy Issues among us! It's tragic.

- Abandonment...Abuse...Neglect.
- Alcoholism...Prison...Divorce...Harshness.
- Overbearing Criticism...No acceptance.
- Dads who love money and career...but have no time for Mom and kids.
- Dads that are present...but they haven't emotionally or spiritually connected in years.

And the devil wants us to be/remain warped (skewed) in our theology about "God as our Father."

Sadly, this is our image of God the Father in the Bible: He's mean...he's angry...he's impossible to please...he's taking names...he only judges us...he's ready to swat us on the backside when we get out of line.

But NO! This is a grossly inaccurate picture of God our Father. Luke 15:1 tells us He receives sinners and eats meals with them. He welcomed the tax collectors! (Matt 11:19).

This is our Father – have you ever heard the story of the Prodigal Son? (Luke 15:11).

- *He's on the porch watching and looking.*
- *When the boy was a long way off...the Father began running.*
- *"His eyes were watching the road" – (Today could be the day...picture of hope).*
- *Runs full speed...Hugged and Kissed...Compassion...Party.*
- *"My son was dead, but now is alive again."*
- *"He was lost, but now my son is found."*

So what's the point of Haggai? Haggai is our beautiful reminder → God is primarily interested in restoring His children to fellowship.

- Yes of course He will punish you if He must, because He is holy and just.
- But he'd much rather have you...with your sins covered...a trophy of grace...than he would lose you.

Remember Haggai's story. Israel has just returned to Jerusalem after 70 years of exile in Babylon.

- They initially started on the Temple...they laid the foundation.
- But after two years, the work ended...and the people turned to their own interests.

It is amazing how quickly we forget that God is the real source of our strength! → What we have...how we got here...

- Everything we have is because of God's grace, but we are prone to forget.

It is amazing how easily we are tempted to quit on God when things become difficult! → when it gets hard...we turn internal...we drop out.

- I, too, can start focusing on my own House and fall away from God's work.

So God tells them numerous times in Haggai – *consider your ways; think about your ways.* Four times God says this → (1:5) (1:7) (2:15) (2:18).

- Look in your heart and see if your life is a reflection of the Word of God?

LESSON. It's interesting, really, the Israelites were glad to be back in Jerusalem, but they weren't initially motivated to rebuild the Temple.

- They hated Babylon...and they are thrilled to be back home in Jerusalem.
- Worse thing we can do is take God's grace for granted.
 - "I'll take the Lord's grace."
 - "But I'm not interested in personal holiness or obedience."

And so God is letting them learn this principle – a restored life is primarily the result of restored Lordship!

God tells them in Haggai 1:6 → *I'm the one who never let you get ahead.*

God tells them in Haggai 2:16-17 → *I'm the one who allowed your work to be difficult!*

God did this so that they'll consider and remember – *"I am the God of Israel...Lord God of Armies."* → → you cannot wear God's name and then just live however you want.

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.*

When you put God first, He restores you! When God isn't in His rightful place in your heart...you always end up regretting it.

KEY. When you put God first, you cannot lose. When God is not first, you will not win!

So what is going on in Haggai 2:20-23 as we conclude this book?

- This closing section is a positive encouragement for the people, affirming their decision to move forward in the Temple rebuilding project.
- The encouragement is clear because – God has assured them that their dismal past will be overcome by a glorious promise about the future!
- Zerubbabel is a symbol of the enduring nature of God's promises to King David.

Mark Boda, *The temple was the place of God's manifest presence, the place from which God ruled the earth in relationship with King David and the descendants of his lineage.*

By rebuilding the temple, the people in Haggai's day are fulfilling the priorities of the Davidic line, providing a palace for the Great King – the Lord God Himself. The ultimate purpose of this rebuilding project is now revealed: It is the first step in the program of God to bring his rule to all the nations of the world.

LESSON. Haggai and Zerubbabel serve as a bridge...linking God's promises to King David (one from your throne will always rule)...to Jesus Christ the Messiah...who was born as a descendant of David and Zerubbabel.

- Jesus is the ONE who came to establish God's perfect rule on earth as the Great King.
- Jesus is the ONE who makes it possible for all of us to enter the Temple of heaven, and never fall away.

First, God is going to shake the heavens and the earth for His glory (2:21).

- Think of how big the universe is: 125 billion galaxies... 100,000 Million stars in the Milky Way galaxy alone.
- Think of how large the earth is: 195 nations...7.8 billion people...12,057 unique people groups.

- Think of how unique/small I am: yet God knows the hairs on our head, our fingerprints.

The Bible says in Haggai 2:21 that God is going to pick it all up and hold it with His hands to pronounce His holy judgment!

Heavens: this includes the angels and demons.

Earth: every nation, people, tribe, tongue...every generation that has ever lived since Adam!

Q: Who can survive this?

A: Revelation 7, *There was a vast multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language, which no one could number, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands. And they cried out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

Then one of the elders asked, "Who are these people in white robes, and where did they come from?"

Then he told me: They washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

FACT. History is moving to a point. Every person will stand before God. The only way to be prepared is to be covered and cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, God is going to totally humble all men who have trusted in their own power (2:22).

- God will overturn kings. (power)
 - Men who have led in their generation...Men who have ruled/owned.
 - These men will be paraded before God and give an account for it all.
- God will "destroy the power of the Gentile kingdoms." (secularism) (money)
 - This means every ideology/philosophy that thinks it knows more than God.
 - In this hour, every position in the world that thinks it's smarter than God will immediately regret it.
- God will overturn chariots, riders, and horses. (looks) (fleshly appeal)
 - If you think you can get by on your giftedness, beauty, looks, popularity, skills.
 - No! ... Furthermore, these things will turn on each other and attack each other.

The chaos/madness of this coming, future event will be so significant, the enemies of God's people will slay each other.

- Ezek 38:21, and the prophecy of Gag and Magog.

Third, the only people with hope for a bright future on this last day are the true servants of God – those who have trusted in Jesus Christ alone (2:23).

“*Signet ring*” – this image is common in the royal vocabulary of the Ancient Near East. It means a piece of metal jewelry on which was etched the impression of the seal of the king.

- Authenticate legal documents.
- Make royal decrees...To decide the future of lands, peoples, groups, etc.

God’s name/character will be etched on us...we are like his jewelry!

- The same hands that have the power to pronounce judgment...
- Are now the same hands that have the power to save and deliver!

CONCL. Haggai’s message to us is the same. Haggai might say it like this:

“Hear this, you sinful people...that have fallen away...God wants to *restore* you and bring you back, while there is still time.”

- Of course you have sinned.
- But his love and grace are greater through Christ.

Big Idea. God made me. Sin corrupted me. Jesus redeemed me. The Father intends to keep me.

What is Restoration? This is how we might define biblical restoration:

- God made me.
- Sin corrupted me.
- Jesus redeems me.
- The Father wants to keep me for eternity.