

HAGGAI

Chapter 1

A Call to Build the House of the Lord

In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua^a son of Jehozadak, the high priest: ² This is what the LORD Almighty says: “These people say, ‘The time has not yet come for the LORD’s house to be built.’” ³ Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: ⁴ “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” ⁵ Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.” ⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. ⁸ Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the LORD. ⁹ “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?” declares the LORD Almighty. “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. ¹¹ I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands.” ¹² Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. ¹³ Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: “I am with you,” declares the LORD. ¹⁴ So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, ¹⁵ on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius.

1:1 *second year ... first day ... sixth month.* Aug. 29, 520 B.C. (CSB)

It was the sixth month of the ecclesiastical year, and the last of the civil year, and answered to a part of our September. (ACC)

King Darius. Darius Hystaspis (or Hystaspes) ruled Persia from 522 to 486 B.C. It was he who prepared the trilingual inscription on the Behistun (Bisitun) cliff wall (located in modern Iran), through which cuneiform languages were deciphered. (CSB)

Persian king (522–486 BC).

first day. The New Moon was the day on which prophets were sometimes consulted (see 2Ki 4:22–23 and note on Isa 1:14). (CSB)

the word of the LORD came. Haggai recorded God’s words. (TLSB)

HAGGAI – The OT book of Ezra provides the historical setting for the book of Haggai. To understand God’s people as Haggai knew them and talked to them we must first hear what Ezra tells us. (PBC)

Along with Zechariah, this prophet promoted the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Haggai may have returned from exile in Babylon with the remnant under Zerubbabel. (TLSB)

Zerubbabel. See note on Ezr 1:8, “Sheshbazzar.” (CSB)

Led some of the Judeans back from the Babylonian captivity and was appointed governor of Judah by the Persians (2:21). (TLSB)

Who was son of Jeconiah, king of Judah, and of the family of David, and exercised the post of a governor among the people, but not over them, for both he and they were under the Persian government; but they were permitted to have Zerubbabel for their own governor, and Joshua for their high priest; and these regulated all matters relative to their peculiar political and ecclesiastical government. (ACC)

Shealtiel. According to 1Ch 3:17–19 he was Zerubbabel’s grandfather (in Hebrew “son” sometimes means “grandson”). (CSB)

Also an ancestor of Jesus (Mt 1:12; Lk 3:27). (TLSB)

Joshua. Mentioned with Zerubbabel also in vv. 12, 14; 2:2, 4. (CSB)

Not the son of Nun (Jsh 1:1). As high priest, this Joshua assisted Zerubbabel in rebuilding the temple (Zec 3). (TLSB)

And son of Seraiah, who was high priest in the time of Zedekiah, and was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. (ACC)

Jehozadak. Had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar (1Ch 6:15). (CSB)

1:2 *LORD Almighty*. Used more than 90 times in Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. See note on Isa 13:4. (CSB)

These people. See 2:14. Because of their sin, the nation is not called “my people” (see Isa 6:9; 8:6, 11–12; Jer 14:10–11; see also note on Hos 1:9). (CSB)

time has not yet come. After the foundation of the temple had been laid in 536 B.C. (see Ezr 3:8–10), opposition hindered and then halted the work until 520 (see Ezr 4:1–5, 24). (CSB)

rebuild the house of the LORD. The Judeans who returned to Jerusalem in 538 BC built an altar to offer sacrifices to the Lord and laid the foundations for the temple (Ezr 3). But work stopped when they ran into opposition (Ezr 4:4–5). (TLSB)

1:3 *the word of the LORD came*. Repetition of these words (v 1) strengthens Haggai’s assertion that the Lord spoke through him. (TLSB)

1:4 *paneled houses*. Usually connected with royal dwellings, which had cedar paneling (1Ki 7:3, 7; Jer 22:14). (CSB)

Private dwellings were nicely finished with wood, such as cedar on the walls (Jer 22:14), but God’s house was a desolate waste. (TLSB)

If the time be not come to rebuild the temple, it cannot be come for you to build yourselves comfortable houses: but ye are rebuilding your houses; why then do ye not rebuild the house of the Lord? The foundation of the temple had been laid fourteen years before, and some considerable progress made in the building; and it had been lying waste in that unfinished state to the present time. (ACC)

1:5 GIVE CAREFUL THOUGHT TO YOUR WAYS – Is it fit that you should be building yourselves elegant houses, and neglect a place for the worship of that God who has restored you from captivity? – It is always a matter for weeping when God’s people lose their determination and desire to establish his church and build his house. And the prophet must speak to us today. In an era of the greatest personal riches and per capita wealth that the world has ever seen, and in a country that has been blessed with more material blessings than perhaps any country in history ever has, the church goes begging. Building projects limp and stumble. Modest mission proposals languish. (PBC)

Call to repentance. People were to examine their hearts, looking closely at what they had done since returning from Babylon. (TLSB)

1:6 *planted much ... harvested little*. A curse for disobedience (see Dt 28:38–39). Lev 26:20 also describes the unfruitfulness of a land judged by God. (CSB)

drink ... fill. Cf. Isa 55:1–2. The people experience futility in all their activities, legitimate or illegitimate (cf. Hos 4:10–11). (CSB)

purse with holes. Famine causes prices to rise sharply. (CSB)

Hbr refers to a package that had been carefully wrapped but whose contents fell out because it was punctured. Such is the life of people who fail to put the Lord first. (TLSB)

Matthew 6:33, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

1:7 *Consider your ways.* Repeated (v 5) for emphasis. (TLSB)

1:8 *mountains ... timber.* Perhaps wood from the hills around Jerusalem was to supplement the cedar wood already purchased from Lebanon (see Ezr 3:7). (CSB)

Though Solomon’s temple had been built using cedar from Lebanon (1Ki 5:6), now the Lord orders that wood from nearby hills be used. (TLSB)

take pleasure in it. And in the sacrifices offered there (contrast Isa 1:11). (CSB)

be honored. An obedient nation would bring praise and honor to God (see Jer 13:11). (CSB)

Because the place would be ready to welcome worshipers. Even a “second class” worship setting could bring God glory. (TLSB)

1:9 *it came to little.* Their lives lacked fulfillment because the temple lay in ruins. (TLSB)

busy with. Lit. “running to.” (CSB)

Rather than concern for God’s house, the people’s number one priority was themselves. (TLSB)

Ye made great pretensions at first; but they are come to nothing. Ye did a little in the beginning; but so scantily and unwillingly that I could not but reject it. (ACC)

1:10 *dew.* Normally abundant, and often as valuable as rain (see 2Sa 1:21; 1Ki 17:1). (CSB)

In dry Israel, dew was an important source of moisture for healthy crops. (TLSB)

A warning is perhaps in order here that we don't try to second guess the visible evidence and try and ascertain the crime. In other words, it isn't for us to judge every crop failure of a Christian farmer or every accident or setback a Christian might experience as some direct reference to unfaithfulness on the person's part or disregard for God's house and God's work. (PBC)

1:11 *drought*. Hbr play on words: the Lord punished the people with drought (Hbr *choreb*) because they had let God's house lie in ruins (Hbr *chareb*). (TLSB)

mountains. The hills were cultivated, especially through terracing (see Ps 104:13–15; Isa 7:25; Joel 3:18). (CSB)

the grain, the new wine, the oil. The three basic crops of the land, often mentioned in a context of blessing or cursing (see Dt 7:13; 11:14; 28:51; Hos 2:8, 22). Olive oil was used as food, ointment or medicine. (CSB)

In the ancient biblical world, these were the basic foods. (TLSB)

men and cattle. The drought affected men and cattle and so could be said to be "on" them too. (CSB)

1:1–11 The Lord chastises His people for being concerned about their own houses while His sacred house lies in ruins. The Lord's work suffers today when we take care of our own material wants and needs but fail to support the work of proclaiming the Gospel. Jesus had a different priority. He came to serve, giving His life as a ransom for us. Though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor so that we might become rich (2Co 8:9). The riches we have received in Him move us to become rich in our love for Him and others. • Dear Jesus, fire me with zeal to have You first in my life. Unite me in service with others. Amen. (TLSB)

1:12 *remnant*. See note on Isa 1:9. (CSB)

Judeans, some of whom had returned from Babylon. One estimate puts this number at fewer than 4,000 people. (TLSB)

The people did not say, "Building God's house is the priest's business. That is his work; that is what we are paying him for." (PBC)

obeyed. Responded positively to the Word of the Lord spoken by Haggai. (TLSB)

feared the LORD. Showing reverence, respect and obedience (see Dt 31:12–13; Mal 1:6; 3:5, 16). (CSB)

This fear is a profound and worshipful respect that results in obedience. (TLSB)

The threatening of Haggai had its proper effect.—The civil governor, the high priest, and the whole of the people, united together to do the work. When the authority of God is acknowledged, his words will be carefully obeyed. (ACC)

1:13 *messenger*. A title for prophets (see 2Ch 36:15; Isa 42:19 and note) or priests (see Mal 2:7). (CSB)

Hbr *mal'ak*, often translated “angel” but could describe preachers. (TLSB)

He was the Lord’s messenger, and he came with the Lord’s message, and consequently he came with authority. (ACC)

I am with you. A sure indication of success (see 2:4; Nu 14:9; Ge 26:3 and note). (CSB)

The Lord, by assuring His people of His living presence among them, means to give them the needed confidence to carry out the building project. (TLSB)

1:14 *stirred up the spirit*. The Hebrew for this expression is translated “moved (the) heart” in Ezr 1:5, where God stirred up many of these same people to return home and rebuild the temple. (CSB)

Emphasizes how completely the people and their leaders have the Lord’s support. (TLSB)

It is not only necessary that the judgment should be enlightened, but the soul must be invigorated by the Spirit of God, before any good work can be effectually done. (ACC)

This is the thrill of watching God’s church in action. God supplies the gifts to the people in the church. He puts the spirit in them to do the work. The people don’t all have the same gifts but together they build the church. (PBC)

1:15 *twenty-fourth day of the sixth month*. Sept. 21, 520 B.C. (CSB)

Three and a half weeks after the Word of the Lord had come to Haggai (v 1), the people began the work of restoring what had lain in ruins for nearly 70 years. (TLSB)

Haggai received his commission on the first day of this month and by the twenty-fourth day he had so completely succeeded that he had the satisfaction to see the whole people engaged heartily in the Lord’s work; they left their own houses to build that of the Lord. Here was a faithful reprover, and he found obedient ears; and the Lord’s work was done, for the people had a mind to work. (ACC)

1:12–15 The people of Judah obey the Word of the Lord and begin the task of rebuilding the temple. They demonstrate repentance for their previous selfishness. The Lord in turn promises to be with them, and He stirs up the spirit of the people and their leaders to work hard. Through Word and Sacrament, God is present with us today. His Spirit stirs us to repentance and gives us a burning desire to serve Him. • Lord God, bless my hearing and my doing of Your holy will. Amen. (TLSB)