

Timeline / Overview

The book of Haggai is the first of the three post-exile prophets. Haggai was a contemporary of Zechariah. His name means "my feast(s)" or "festive". We are not told anything else about Haggai. Out of Haggai 2:3 many have concluded that he must have seen Solomon's temple before its destruction in 587 BC (**2 Kings 24-25**). In this case Haggai would have been much older than 70 years when he wrote his book.

Haggai probably returned from the 70-year Babylonian captivity with the first group to return in 537/536 BC under the leadership of a high priest named Joshua (**1:1; Ezra 2:2; Zech 3:1**) and the governor Zerubbabel (**1:1; Ezra 2:2** - an heir from the line of David). King Cyrus of Persia had issued an edict in 538/37 BC for the Jews to return to Judah. 42,360 Jews returned and began to rebuild the destroyed temple in Jerusalem in 536 BC. These events that build the historical background of the book of Haggai are described in detail in the book of Ezra. This is where we learn that the work of rebuilding the temple was interrupted for around 14 years but taken up again as a result of the prophetic ministry of Haggai and Zechariah in the second year of King Darius. The building of the temple was then accomplished in Darius' 6th year (**Ezra 4:24; Ezra 5:1-2; Ezra 6:14-15**).

King Darius is known as Darius I (Darius the Great, Darius Hystaspes) in history. He reigned from 522 to 485 BC. It was in the second year of his reign, during a period of four months, that Haggai's inspired ministry took place (**1:1**). From **Ezra 6:14** one can see that Haggai's ministry lasted at least up to the inauguration of the restored temple in **516 BC**.

In this short book Haggai announces Jehovah's messages. The phrases "the word of Lord" or "thus says the Lord" appear 25 times. Haggai's goal is to reach the hearts of the Jews so that they would give God the first place in their lives. This is why the book of Haggai is very relevant for our days and time as well! The book contains four sections that summarize Haggai's message given to the people of Jerusalem over the course of four months:

Admonition to Build (1:1-15) – 1st Day of the 6th Month 520 BC

He opens by accusing the people of misplaced priorities (**1:1-11**). They have come back to Jerusalem but are spending all of their time and resources rebuilding their own houses while the temple still lay in ruins from its destruction 70 years ago. Haggai asks, are your own fancy houses really more important than your allegiance to God?

Haggai 1:4 (ESV) - *"Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?"*

This neglect is why the land is still unproductive...why there is famine and drought.

Haggai 1:10-11 (ESV) - *Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors."*

Haggai's challenging words are followed by the people's response (**1:12-15; Ezra 5:1-2**). Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the remnant of the people were provoked by Haggai's message, and were motivated to get to work. They started rebuilding the temple on the 24th day of the 6th month in 520 BC (**1:15**).

Encouragement While Building (2:1-9) – 21st Day of the 7th Month

Haggai follows up a little less than one month later. He addresses some problems of shattered expectations among the people. The temple they are rebuilding is unimpressive compared to the glory of the temple Solomon built here some 500 years earlier (**1 Kings 6:21-22**). Because of this morale was really low for finishing the project. Haggai reminds the people that the only glory that truly matters is that of the presence of God himself (**Ex 29:45; 1 Kings 8:11**). He points to God's future kingdom, with the Messiah as king, and the future judgment. All of this is encapsulated in describing a time when everything will be shaken (**2:6-7; Heb 12:26-27**).

Admonition to Holiness (2:10-19) – 24th Day of the 9th Month

Haggai follows up again two months later with a call to faithfulness. He engages some priests in a conversation about ritual purity. He asks if someone carries "holy meat" in his garment, will it make any other food it touches holy (**2:12**). The priests answer "No." He then asks if someone touches a dead body and becomes ritually impure, and then they go and touch some food, is that food unclean too (**2:13**)? The priests, knowing the law (**Num 19:11, 22**), say "It does become unclean." Haggai applies the priests' answer to the people. Just building the altar or the temple will not make everyone in Jerusalem holy. Becoming impure, on the other hand, requires no effort, only contact with the unclean. The lesson for the people was that they had not taken appropriate action to deal with the priorities in their lives. Their failures in rebuilding the temple created a cloud of disobedience over all they did.

Future Hope of God's Kingdom (2:20-23) – 24th Day of the 9th Month

The book concludes with Haggai's summary of the future hope of God's kingdom. God will confront and defeat evil among the nations (a reference back to the shaking from **2:6-7**). God will fulfill His promise to David and establish the King from his line (**II Sam 7:12-13; Psa 89:3-4; Isa 9:6-7; Isa 11:1-10; Jer 23:5-6**). This is ultimately fulfilled by the Messiah (**Matt 1:1**) who was from the line of David. In Haggai's day that was represented by Zerubbabel, a descendent of David.

Haggai 2:23 (ESV) - *On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts."*

This short book contains a great challenge to every generation of God's people, that our choices really matter, and that the faithfulness and obedience of God's people is part of how God has chosen to work out His purposes in the world. This surprising truth should motivate humility and action in God's people.

Teacher's Notes

Handout notes are adapted from The Bible Project

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juPvv_xcX-U

Text

Haggai 1 (ESV)

¹ In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: ² “Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.” ³ Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, ⁴ “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? ⁵ Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁶ You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

⁷ “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁸ Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD. ⁹ You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹ And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

¹² Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. ¹³ Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD’s message, “I am with you, declares the LORD.” 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 Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, ¹⁵ on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

Haggai 2 (ESV)

¹ In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: ² “Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people, and say, ³ ‘Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? ⁴ Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the

LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts,⁵ according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.⁶ For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.⁷ And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, 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 shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.’ ”

¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet,¹¹ “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests about the law:¹² ‘If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?’ ” The priests answered and said, “No.”¹³ Then Haggai said, “If someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?” The priests answered and said, “It does become unclean.”¹⁴ Then Haggai answered and said, “So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean.¹⁵ Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the LORD,¹⁶ how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty.¹⁷ I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and with mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD.¹⁸ Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD’s temple was laid, consider:¹⁹ Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.”

²⁰ The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month,²¹ “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth,²² and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.²³ On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts.”

Timeline / Overview

2 Kings 24–25 (ESV)

¹ In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him. ² And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans and bands of the Syrians and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets. ³ Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, ⁴ and also for the innocent blood that he had shed. For he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD would not pardon. ⁵ Now the rest of the deeds of Jehoiakim and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? ⁶ So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his place. ⁷ And the king of Egypt did not come again out of his land, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the Brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates.

⁸ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. ⁹ And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

¹⁰ At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. ¹¹ And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to the city while his servants were besieging it, ¹² and Jehoiachin the king of Judah gave himself up to the king of Babylon, himself and his mother and his servants and his officials and his palace officials. The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign ¹³ and carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold in the temple of the LORD, which Solomon king of Israel had made, as the LORD had foretold. ¹⁴ He carried away all Jerusalem and all the officials and all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained, except the poorest people of the land. ¹⁵ And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officials, and the chief men of the land he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. ¹⁶ And the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valor, 7,000, and the craftsmen and the metal workers, 1,000, all of them strong and fit for war. ¹⁷ And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

¹⁸ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. ¹⁹ And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. ²⁰ For because of the anger of the LORD it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence.

And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

¹ And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built siegeworks all around it. ² So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. ³ On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. ⁴ Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of

war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah. ⁵ But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him. ⁶ Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they passed sentence on him. ⁷ They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon.

⁸ In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ And he burned the house of the LORD and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. ¹⁰ And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹ And the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon, together with the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile. ¹² But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen.

¹³ And the pillars of bronze that were in the house of the LORD, and the stands and the bronze sea that were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces and carried the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴ And they took away the pots and the shovels and the snuffers and the dishes for incense and all the vessels of bronze used in the temple service, ¹⁵ the fire pans also and the bowls. What was of gold the captain of the guard took away as gold, and what was of silver, as silver. ¹⁶ As for the two pillars, the one sea, and the stands that Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weight. ¹⁷ The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and on it was a capital of bronze. The height of the capital was three cubits. A latticework and pomegranates, all of bronze, were all around the capital. And the second pillar had the same, with the latticework.

¹⁸ And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest and the three keepers of the threshold; ¹⁹ and from the city he took an officer who had been in command of the men of war, and five men of the king's council who were found in the city; and the secretary of the commander of the army, who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land, who were found in the city. ²⁰ And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²¹ And the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was taken into exile out of its land.

²² And over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, he appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, son of Shaphan, governor. ²³ Now when all the captains and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah governor, they came with their men to Gedaliah at Mizpah, namely, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite. ²⁴ And Gedaliah swore to them and their men, saying, "Do not be afraid because of the Chaldean officials. Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you." ²⁵ But in the seventh month, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men and struck down Gedaliah and put him to death along with the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him at

Mizpah. ²⁶ Then all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the forces arose and went to Egypt, for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

²⁷ And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, graciously freed Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. ²⁸ And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. ²⁹ So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table, ³⁰ and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, according to his daily needs, as long as he lived.

Ezra 2:2 (ESV)

² They came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, and Baanah.

The number of the men of the people of Israel:

Zechariah 3:1 (ESV)

¹ Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

Ezra 4:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

Ezra 5:1–2 (ESV)

¹ Now the prophets, Haggai 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 that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

Ezra 6:14–15 (ESV)

¹⁴ And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia; ¹⁵ and this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

Admonition to Build (1:1-15) – 1st Day of the 6th Month 520 BC

Ezra 5:1–2 (ESV)

¹ Now the prophets, Haggai 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 that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

Encouragement While Building (2:1-9) – 21st Day of the 7th Month

1 Kings 6:21–22 (ESV)

²¹ And Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold, and he drew chains of gold across, in front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold. ²² And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.

1 Kings 8:11 (ESV)

¹¹ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

Hebrews 12:26–27 (ESV)

²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” ²⁷ This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

Admonition to Holiness (2:10-19) – 24th Day of the 9th Month

Numbers 19:11 (ESV)

¹¹ “Whoever touches the dead body of any person shall be unclean seven days.

Numbers 19:22 (ESV)

²² And whatever the unclean person touches shall be unclean, and anyone who touches it shall be unclean until evening.”

Future Hope of God’s Kingdom (2:20-23) – 24th Day of the 9th Month

2 Samuel 7:12–13 (ESV)

¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Psalms 89:3–4 (ESV)

³ You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:

⁴ ‘I will establish your offspring forever,
and build your throne for all generations.’ ” *Selah*

Isaiah 9:6–7 (ESV)

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 11:1–10 (ESV)

¹ There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
² And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
⁴ but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

⁶ The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;
and a little child shall lead them.
⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.
⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy
in all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD

as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰ In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

Jeremiah 23:5–6 (ESV)

⁵ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’

Matthew 1:1 (ESV)

¹ The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.