

*Welcome to the book of the prophet Haggai!*

We have chosen 1:4 as a key verse for Haggai. The phrase "Is it Time?" reflects the purpose of the book of Haggai. God seeks to motivate His returned remnant to the task of rebuilding the temple. Many seek to build upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. Are you a masterful or a mediocre builder?

# HAGGAI Obedient Building

<p><b>REVERENCE FOR GOD</b></p> <p>Priorities... 1:2-6 Produce... 1:7-14</p>	<p><b>ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GOD</b></p> <p>Vision... 2:3-5 Acceptance... 2:20-23</p>
1	2

*"Consider your ways" 1:4,5*

Note the passages listed within the overview chart above. How does each passage relate to the corresponding section title? Is your contribution to the Kingdom of God an edifice of perishable stubble or a storehouse of imperishable truth and good deeds? What do you learn about obedient building as you study these section passages and key verse? Haggai is the first of the "restoration prophets" because Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesied to those coming out of captivity, urging them to return to Jerusalem and to rebuild the walls of the city (Nehemiah) and to restore the glory of the Temple (Ezra).

The people were encouraged to consider their ways and to make sure of their availability to the task! We know very little about Haggai himself (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), but his name means celebration. He was apparently part of one of the first groups to return from Babylon, and his prophecies probably followed the return of 520 B.C. To Haggai fell the important task of inspiring the returning remnant to place first things first.

*Open your heart as you read!*

An obedient builder has a reverence for God that will be reflected in his or her concern for proper priorities. Are your priorities in line with God's desires for you? Is your paneled house more important to you than rebuilding the house of the Lord!? What is the "house" of God?



# Haggai Chapter Chart

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Here are some questions that will help you to dig deeply for interpretation in the book of Haggai. You may wish to answer these questions as you read and choose titles for chapters.

## CHAPTER 1

How would you describe God's attitude in this chapter? Who was Zerubbabel and what was his role in Israel? What was the problem? What was the response of the people?

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ KEY VERSE \_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER 2

Read Ezra 3:11-13. What does this passage teach you about some of the emotions involved in rebuilding? Notice how many dates are mentioned in these two short chapters. What significance do you think these dates carried to those who had returned? (Note Jeremiah 25:9-11; Daniel 9:1,2)

TITLE \_\_\_\_\_ KEY VERSE \_\_\_\_\_

## CONCLUSION

There are four critical statements from God in these two instructive chapters. Note each one in your Bible. What would you determine is the purpose for each statement?

- 1:4 Is it time? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2:4 I am with you... \_\_\_\_\_
- 2:18 From this day... \_\_\_\_\_
- 2:23 I will make... \_\_\_\_\_

## What about today?

Haggai is a companion prophet to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. He tries to motivate the unmotivated to set aside their entanglements and press on with their previous commitment to rebuild!

Someone has said that Haggai, chapter one, is a commentary on inflation.

How can financial inflation be tied in to our spiritual condition?

The need for self-examination and reflection is evident throughout the Scriptures.

Do you find yourself considering your ways on a consistent basis?

What types of entanglements siphon your strength to "rebuild"?

# IT'S BUILDING TIME!

**It's Building Time!** May the Lord give us the grace to build wisely, effectively and consistently. Consider the "Temple" as it applies to you today as individual believers and as part of the body of Christ. What is the Temple for a follower of Christ? Is the temple being built or is it lying desolate? (Philippians 1:6; 1 Corinthians 6:17-20; 3:8-23)

Throughout history, men have built magnificent monuments as memorials to mankind. There are the great pyramids of Egypt, the Taj Mahal of India, the Eifel Tower of France, to the Empire State Building of America. Throughout Scripture as well, we have written memorials to men who were obedient builders for God. The things built were not always made up of brick and mortar but they frequently outlasted such crumbling remains.

In the book of Haggai, we have a prophet "who said it with bricks". This Old Testament prophet saw one of the fastest responses to his message of any Old Testament prophet. The Temple was completed within four years of his first prophecy. What was the secret of this obedient builder and others like him throughout history?

## **For your consideration...**

Write down principles for building for God from the following passages:

Exodus 18:17-23 \_\_\_\_\_

Genesis 12:1-4 \_\_\_\_\_

Nehemiah 2:12-15; 4:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Nehemiah 3:10, 17, 18, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Kings 5:3-7 \_\_\_\_\_

John 17:4-17 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 4:8-10 \_\_\_\_\_

In the days of Haggai, God's work had ground to a halt for fourteen years! The people's interests had shifted to more "pressing" matters like the building of homes and careers. The prophet had to deal with a half-built temple and a half-hearted people. And yet, the work was still accomplished.

We are unlike Haggai in one way and like him in another. God has commissioned us not to a church building but rather to building the church through His power. Perhaps you are embracing a half-hearted people as Haggai was. Remember God's accomplishments through the prophet. We must maintain our resolve to "build yourselves up in your most holy faith as you pray in the Holy Spirit" (Jude 20)!



## CONSIDER YOUR WAYS!

With a series of stinging sermonettes, Haggai rebukes the people for misplaced priorities and admonishes them to complete the task God had set before them - rebuilding the temple. In 1:4, the Lord speaks through the prophet, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?" The selfishness of the people is stressed by the repeated pronoun "for you yourselves." Unlike David who in 2 Samuel 7:2 lived in a cedar house but longed to build a temple for God, these people think only of themselves.

Not only were the people able to build houses, they were fancy ones at that. Unlike today, in Haggai's age, paneling connoted luxury and was associated with royal dwellings, such as the palace built by Solomon (1 Kings 7:3, 7; Jeremiah 22:14). These houses were paneled with cedar and even though the type of wood is not stated in Haggai, it might have been the famous cedar from Lebanon. We do know that Zerubbabel and Joshua did purchase cedars from Lebanon for the temple upon their return from exile (Ezra 3:7). It is very possible that the construction delay of fourteen years on the temple had tempted the Jews to use this "temple cedar" on their own homes rather than see it go to waste. If that is the case, then the words of 1:4 - "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?" contains not only a rebuke but a note of sarcasm as well!

### **For your consideration...**

How can the seeming inconsistency between the people's prosperity be reconciled with their poverty between 1:4 and 1:7? What New Testament principles concerning giving can be applied here?

Viewing the following passages plus any others you choose to use, give a Biblical philosophy on the right use of money:

Matthew 6:19-21

Mark 1:29

John 21:3

Proverbs 12:27

Proverbs 13:22

Proverbs 13:4

Matthew 6:24-25

Matthew 19:16-22

James 2:16-17

Job 42:10

Matthew 6:31-33

Matthew 7:11

1 Timothy 4:3-4

2 Corinthians 8:1-15

Amos 4:1

Amos 2:6-7

2 Corinthians 9:6-13

Proverbs 30:8-9

Giving is only half the story of money and our love for God. If everything comes from the Lord and belongs to Him, and if we have dedicated ourselves to Him, then not only is what we give to Him important; but also what we spend on ourselves is indicative of our love. It is fallacious thinking to reason that when we have given a portion of our income to God, the rest belongs to us. It is all His; we merely use part of it for ourselves. Although the average family's income is up considerably from what it was a few years ago, the universal complaint is "I do not have enough money." Everyone seems to want more, which of course, is not wrong in itself. One wonders, however, for what purpose people want more money. It seems that very few have monetary goals in order to be able to increase their giving to Christ's work. When all things are considered, the purpose in too many cases seems to be to have more things. Today, the abundant economic life has become the necessary life. We need to apply the words of Haggai to ourselves when we begin to have such a mind set: "Consider your ways! You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why? declares the Lord of Hosts, because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house" (1:5,9).