

WTF LIFE MAJOR LESSONS | from the MINOR PROPHETS



LESSON 11 – HAGGAI

FACILITATOR'S

Note

In Haggai we explore the first of the 3 post-exilic prophets (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi). Haggai is one of the shortest Minor Prophets with a very short, but direct message: BUILD THE TEMPLE! The first group of returning exiles had become indifferent in their faith and to their task of building the temple. Haggai and his younger contemporary Zechariah are given the responsibility to spur the people back to the task they had been given. This week's study will focus on the shorter of these two prophets and will also provide some foundation for the coming two lessons on Zechariah. Focus this week on how God uses us to spur others on to the work He has called them to. Like the Israelites, we can become indifferent and complacent with the task. Yet, God calls us all to the task of building His temple (Eph. 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-5) not made of wood or stone, but of people. And we should not become lazy or weary in the work, but carry on to its completion.

Through this lesson we hope to provide material that will provide knowledge (HEAD); then ask questions that will bring us understanding (HEART); and then motivate participants to go and live the Word in the world and demonstrate Godly wisdom (HANDS).

HEAD  **→ HEART**  **→ HANDS** 

We hope that by this study your class participants will not only hear, know, and understand the Word, but that they will also be driven to become the "Living Word" to the world around us. Your role in this process as a class facilitator is very important. Go beyond these lessons to demonstrate how what the Minor Prophets teach us can and should be lived daily. Use your life and the lives of others as examples of this "Living Word" concept.

*As always, we would encourage you to begin preparing for this lesson by digging into the Word and reading through the book of **Haggai**. We also encourage you to read/scan through **Ezra 1-6** as background to the book. As you move through **Haggai**, jot down any thoughts that come to you and particular passages that stand out and speak to you. We assure you that these will come into play as you facilitate this discussion. It is then that you should approach this lesson plan and use it (and others) only as a guide for the weeks to come. Your group is different than all the rest and so your lessons should be adapted accordingly.*

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PRAYER



Begin your time with a prayer asking God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit as you and your class seek to encounter Him through His Holy Word.

FOCUS

- Presentation of introductory material on the prophecy of Haggai.
- Understand that prosperity can often lead to complacency and indifference. Yet, God expects us to fulfill what He has asked us to do.
- Successful people are those who listen to God's Word and do it. Thus, it is success not defined by worldly standards, but success by Godly standards.
- Do not put off till tomorrow what you can accomplish today for God.

DISCUSSION STARTERS (OPTIONAL)

- Have you ever put something off that you had time to do that day? Why do we procrastinate?
- How does success or prosperity affect our tendencies of procrastination? Does it help or hurt? Discuss.
- Do we tend to procrastinate in the work of God (in our faith)? How? Why?
- Sometimes we find ourselves excusing our lack of work for God by saying, "I'm just not ready yet. So, it not the right time yet." When is it the "right time" to do the Lord's work? When will you be "ready enough"?

KNOWLEDGE HEAD

From God's Word through Haggai

- **OVERVIEW**
 - **Author**
 - The author is identified as Haggai the prophet.
 - The name Haggai means, "the festive one," "festival," or "the joyous one."
 - Haggai is a contemporary of Zechariah (who is younger than him).
 - Haggai must have been among the first Jews (nearly 50,000) who returned from exile (Ezra 2:1-67).

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- What we know about Haggai is limited to what is recorded in Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14-16, and what is recorded in the prophecy itself.
- Some have suggested that Haggai had seen the original temple built by Solomon by his statement in 2:3 (which, if true, would make him at least 80 during his prophecy). Others have suggested that he was of priestly descent by what he shares in 2:10-14. However, neither of these suggestions can be substantiated.
 - The Midrash and Talmud share the legend that Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were the founders of the "Great Synagogue" (which played a great role in post-exilic Judaism in preserving Scripture and Jewish traditions).
 - It is also believed by the rabbis that the Holy Spirit departed from Israel when these three prophets died off. Again, all of this is conjecture, but interesting to consider.
- **Date**
 - Haggai is the easiest Minor Prophet to date as he shares the exact time of his prophecy. "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..." (Haggai 1:1 ESV)
 - This is Darius the Great (or Darius I, Darius Hystaspes), not to be confused with Darius the Mede of Daniel 6. This would put the time of writing at 520 B.C.
 - A more detailed timeline will help us understand the conditions to which Haggai was addressing:
 - **605 B.C.** – First Israelite captives taken by Nebuchadnezzar. (Daniel 1:1-2)
 - **597 B.C.** – Second group of exiles taken to Babylon. (2 Kings 24:10-16; Ezekiel 1:1-3)
 - **586 B.C.** – Jerusalem falls to Nebuchadnezzar and the temple is destroyed. (2 Kings 25:1-21)
 - **562 B.C.** – Death of Nebuchadnezzar; beginning of decline of Babylonian empire.
 - **549 B.C.** – Cyrus unites the Medes and Persians into one empire.
 - **539 B.C.** – Cyrus (of the Medes and Persians) seizes control of Babylon and begins releasing all captives back to their homelands. (Daniel 5; Isaiah 45:1-4)
 - **538 B.C.** – Cyrus issues a decree for the return to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22; Ezra 1:1).
 - **536 B.C.** – After 70 years in exile (Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10-14), the first return (with almost 50,000) to Jerusalem is led by Zerubbabel and Joshua. (2 Chronicles 36:21; Ezra 1). Some initial work on the temple (the altar and

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foundation) is begun (Ezra 3:8). However, opposition from the surrounding peoples, discouragement amid the Jews, and the death of Cyrus in 530 B.C. halted the work on the temple for 16 years.

- **522 B.C.** – Darius Hystaspes begins to rule; shows favor to the Jews' efforts in rebuilding.
- **520 B.C.** – Haggai and Zechariah are called to spur the Jews on to complete the building of the temple and work resumes. (Ezra 4:24)
- **516 B.C.** – The temple is completed. (Ezra 6:15)
- **457 B.C.** – Ezra leads a second remnant to Jerusalem. (Ezra 8:1)
- **444 B.C.** – Nehemiah leads a third remnant of Jews back to Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 2)

○ Theme(s)

- The main theme and message of Haggai is: "BUILD THE TEMPLE!"
- However, several other themes emerge:
 - God saves those who willingly obey Him rather than their own selfish interests (see Matthew 6:31-34). This time, God's problem is NOT with idolatry, but with indifference and complacency.
 - God does not look favorably on those who neglect their spiritual responsibilities (see John 4:23-24). God desires those who WANT to worship Him as opposed to those who feel obligated to.
 - Procrastination can be sinful and deadly (see James 4:17). Do not put off till tomorrow what you can do today for God.
- **ASK:**
 - Do these themes still speak/apply to us today? How?

• THE TEXT

- The text of Haggai is so short that it is recommended to read the prophecy in its entirety as you move through the text. It's only 39 verses!
- The prophecy of Haggai can be divided into four sermons:
 - **Sermon 1 – Priorities:** Remember to obey Me and rebuild My temple (1:1-15)
 - **Sermon 2 – Presence:** Be strong and fear not, for I am with you (2:1-9)
 - **Sermon 3 – Purity:** Impurity exists among My people due to their lack of attention to My temple (2:10-19)
 - **Sermon 4 – Promise:** I will bless my people through the house of David (2:20-23)
- **1:1-15 (Sermon 1 – Priorities: Remember to obey Me and rebuild My temple)**
 - **Read 1:1-11**
 - **August 29th, 520 B.C.**
 - God urges His people, through Haggai, to consider their ways. They have received a great deal from God, but not given anything in return. So much

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so that they are never filled and always wanting more.

- God is frustrated that His people neglect His house in order to care for their own.
 - An indifference to God's house had come upon the people. So much so that they had accustomed themselves to live without a temple.
- He has sent them discipline to bring them to awareness, yet they still do not listen.
- God asks them to "Consider your ways..." The frustration He has is not with the times and conditions, but with the hearts of His people.
- **ASK:**
 - Do we still struggle with this today? Do we neglect the work of God and His holy temple (His people) in order to care for our own "home" and desires? In other words, do we spend more time on gaining our own glory rather than glorifying God?
 - What does God do today to bring us to attention in these matters?
- **Read 1:12-15**
 - **September 21st, 520 B.C.**
 - The sermon brought the fear of God on the people. The Spirit of God began to stir them and 24 days later they set to work on the temple.
 - **ASK:**
 - Has God's Spirit stirred our hearts to actions? If so, have we feared Him and heeded His call?
- **2:1-9 (Sermon 2 – Presence: Be strong and fear not, for I am with you)**
 - **Read 2:1-9**
 - **October 17th, 520 B.C.**
 - God is challenging those who are making comparisons with the former temple to the one being built.
 - Among the remnant were some in their 70's or older who vividly remembered Solomon's temple that had been destroyed some 66 years earlier. The loss of Solomon's temple and the land of promise is evidence of God's punishment for disobedience and unfaithfulness. The older people of the remnant could see that the rebuilt temple was inferior to Solomon's temple and they were saddened.
 - Read Ezra 3:10-13 for deeper understanding
 - **ASK:**
 - Do we make similar comparisons today? In what way?

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- Is the point the place (building) or the presence (who resides there)?
- God goes on to encourage His people to continue the work. Why? Because it has little to do with the place and more about His presence. No matter what, God is in their midst and He will fill His house with His glory. That's all that matters!
- While this passage is focusing on the present time and situation of the Jews in 520 B.C., it also rings with the sound of a coming glory that is promised throughout the New Testament.
 - Many see this passage as a foreshadowing of the incarnation of Jesus and His second coming (consider when Jesus spoke of his body as "this temple" in John 2:20-21)
 - In the New Testament, the "mystery" that is revealed is a new spiritual temple that is made up of the people of God from all nations (1 Cor. 3:9, 16-17). This is a new spiritual community (the family of God) that is a sign and reflection of God's grace in the world (Eph. 3:8-10).
 - The ultimate fulfillment of 2:9 may be seen in Revelation 21:22-26 with the presence of God and the Lamb throughout the whole city of new Jerusalem ("for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb ... and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it," Rev. 21:22, 24).
 - Read Revelation 21:22-26
- **2:10-19 (Sermon 3 – Purity: Impurity exists among My people due to their lack of attention to My temple)**
 - Read 2:10-19
 - **December 18th, 520 B.C.**
 - Here, God takes His people back to His laws of impurity in regards to the touching of the dead. His point is to help His children recognize that their lack of activity was a sign of lethargy. Their sacrifices were unacceptable and made the entire nation unclean.
 - Haggai is demonstrating that holiness cannot be transferred from a consecrated object to another. Yet, one who has been defiled by contact with something impure (i.e., a dead body) can pollute all who come into contact with them.
 - God is telling them to get out of their lethargy and get to work, present pure devoted hearts before Him, and He will bless them. The blessing is not obligated by their obedience in building the temple, but rather a gift from a loving Father.

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- **ASK:**
 - Holiness is something granted by God and His Spirit in us. He sets us apart for His work. It's not something that passes on from one person to the next. However, impurity and defilement is infectious. Do we see signs of that in the church today? Does one bad apple spoil the bunch, really?
 - How should we address this in the church?
- **2:20-23 (Sermon 4 – Promise: I will bless my people through the house of David)**
 - **Read 2:20-23**
 - **December 18th, 520 B.C.**
 - On the same day as the previous sermon, Haggai shares a vision of a future creation that is shaken, overthrown kingdoms, and defeated armies. However, the sermon focuses on the actions of a divine King whose hand would bear the "signet ring" of the sealed promise of David's house restored in Zerubbabel.
 - This divine King is referred to as "my servant," a title given to individuals who God selected to accomplish His work. It was most often attributed to David as king or an ideal Davidic king (2 Sam. 3:18; Ps. 89:3; Isa. 49:5–6; Ezek. 34:23–24).
 - A "signet ring" provided evidence of kingship and ownership. As a king would sign legal documents and seal them with his ring, so also God will set His seal upon the world through his royal agent. Zerubbabel, heir to the Davidic throne, is God's seal of the promised divine King. Therefore, His promise to bless all nations through the line of David stands firm (Matt. 1:1).
 - PRAISE GOD!!!

UNDERSTANDING ♥ HEART

- What do the times of Haggai have in common with our own times?
- What are some of the modern-day messages that we have heard through Haggai today?
- When is it time to do the Lord's work and why do we halt ourselves from doing it? What are the excuses we make? Are we lazy and lethargic or faithful and active? Discuss together.
- Consider the attitude of those who had seen the former temple and those who had not (from 2:3 and Ezra 3:10-13). How can we fall into the same trap today with some wishing things could be as they once were while others are rejoicing for all that is new? What really matters? Place and Traditions, or Presence and Promises? Why do we get so wrapped up in the memories?

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WISDOM HANDS

- What messages did you hear in this lesson that need to be shared with people you know?
- Who in your group of friends or family do you need to share the message with TODAY? Think specifically.
- Commit to each other that you will have the courage to share the message. Pray NOW and then pray for each other through the week to have the boldness to share.

PRAYER



End your time together with a prayer. Ask God to help you in sharing His Gospel message of HOPE to a lost world. Ask Him to open the eyes of our hearts through this study so that we may know Him more and develop an intimate relationship with Him.

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SEMESTER OUTLINE (SPRING 2016)

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS – Why Study This? (January 3)
2. HOSEA – PART 1 (January 10)
3. HOSEA – PART 2 (January 17)
4. JOEL (January 24)
5. AMOS (January 31)
6. OBADIAH & NAHUM (February 7)
7. JONAH (February 14)
8. MICAH (February 21)
9. HABAKKUK (February 28)
10. ZEPHANIAH (March 6)
11. HAGGAI (March 13)
12. ZECHARIAH – PART 1 (April 3)
13. ZECHARIAH – PART 2 (April 10)
14. MALACHI (April 17)
15. CONCLUSION TO THE MINOR PROPHETS (April 24)