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Haggai

Haggai was a prophet in Judah. He spoke God's message to the people after they returned from their captivity in Babylon. Cyrus, the king of Persia, had freed the people of Israel and Judah from Babylon. He allowed them to return home. He also ordered them to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem.

In this book, Haggai speaks God's message to the small community of Jews who had come back to Judah. He encourages them to start the work on the Temple. The prophet delivers his message from the Lord to the whole community. But he directs most of his words to two people. He addresses Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah. And he also speaks to Joshua, the high priest. The Lord used Haggai to help these men take their place as leaders of God's people.

In this short book, the prophet Haggai...

Calls for people to work on the Temple (1:1-11)

Hears the response of the leaders and the people (1:12-15)

Lets the people know that God is with them (2:1-9)

Speaks for God about being holy and receiving God's blessing (2:10-19)

Gives God's message to Zerubbabel (2:20-23)

It Is Time to Build the Temple

1 On the first day of the sixth month of the second year that Darius was king of Persia, Haggai received a message

from the LORD. This message was for Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jehozadak. Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah and Joshua was the high priest. This is the message: ²This is what the LORD All-Powerful said: "The people say it is not yet the right time to build the LORD's Temple."

³Again Haggai received a message from the LORD. Haggai spoke this message: ⁴"You people think the right time has come for you to live in nice houses. You live in houses with beautiful wooden panelling on the walls, but the Lord's house is still in ruins."

⁵This is what the LORD All-Powerful says: "Think about what is happening. ⁶You have planted many seeds, but you have gathered only a few crops. You have food to eat, but not enough to get full. You have something to drink, but not enough to get drunk. You have some clothes to wear, but not enough to keep warm. You earn a little money, but you don't know where it all goes. It's as though there is a hole in your pocket!"*

⁷This is what the LORD All-Powerful says: "Think about what you are doing. ⁸Go up to the mountains, get the wood and build the Temple. Then I will be pleased with the Temple, and I will be honoured," says the LORD.

⁹"You people look for a big harvest, but when you go to gather the crop, there is only a little grain. So you bring that grain home, and then I send a wind that blows it all away. Why is this happening?" asks the LORD All-Powerful. "Because my house is still in ruins while each of you runs home to take care of your own house. ¹⁰That is why the sky holds back its dew and why the earth holds back its crops.

*1:6 *You ... pocket* Or "The one who saves money is putting it into a purse full of holes."

¹¹“I gave the command for the land and the mountains to be dry. The grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything the earth produces will be ruined.[†] All the people and all the animals will become weak.”

Work Begins on the New Temple

¹²The LORD God had sent Haggai to speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and to the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak. So these men and all the people listened to the voice of the LORD their God and to the words of Haggai the prophet. And the people showed their fear and respect for the LORD their God.

¹³Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, gave this message to the people: “I am with you,” says the LORD!

¹⁴Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel was the governor of Judah. Joshua son of Jehozadak was the high priest. The LORD caused them and the rest of the people to be excited about working on the Temple of their God, the LORD All-Powerful. ¹⁵So they began this work on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year Darius was the king.

The Lord Encourages the People

2 On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, this message from the LORD came to Haggai: ²“Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the people: ³‘How many of you people look at this Temple and try to compare it to the beautiful Temple that was destroyed? What do you think? Does this Temple seem like nothing when you compare it with the first Temple?’ ⁴But the LORD says, ‘Zerubbabel, don’t be discouraged!’ And the LORD says, ‘Joshua

son of Jehozadak, you are the high priest. Don’t be discouraged! And all you people who live in the land, don’t be discouraged! Continue this work, because I am with you!’ This is what the LORD All-Powerful said! ⁵‘I made an agreement with you when you left Egypt, and I have kept my promise. My Spirit is with you, so don’t be afraid!’

⁶“This is what the LORD All-Powerful says: ‘In just a little while, I will once again shake things up. I will shake heaven and earth, and I will shake the sea and the dry land. ⁷I will shake up the nations, and they will come to you with wealth from every nation. And then I will fill this Temple with glory.’ This is what the LORD All-Powerful says! ⁸‘All their silver really belongs to me! And all the gold is mine!’ This is what the LORD All-Powerful says. ⁹‘And the LORD All-Powerful says: This last Temple will be more beautiful than the first one, and I will bring peace to this place.’ Remember, this is what the LORD All-Powerful says.”

Today Begins a Time of Blessing

¹⁰On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month in the second year that Darius was king of Persia, this message from the LORD came to Haggai the prophet: ¹¹“The LORD All-Powerful commands you to ask the priests what the law says about these things: ¹²‘Suppose a man carries some meat in the fold of his clothes. This meat is part of a sacrifice, so it is holy. If his clothes touch some bread, cooked food, wine, oil or some other food, will the thing the clothes touch become holy?’”

The priests answered, “No.”

¹³Then Haggai said, “Whoever touches a dead body will become

[†]1:11 *dry ... ruined* The Hebrew word “dry” is like the Hebrew word “ruined”.

unclean. Now if they touch anything else, will it also become unclean?"

The priests answered, "Yes, it will become unclean."

¹⁴Then Haggai said: "This is what the LORD says: 'This is also true about the people of this nation. They were not pure and holy before me. So anything they did with their hands and anything they offered at the altar became unclean.

¹⁵"Think about what has happened to you. Think about how things were before you began working on the LORD's Temple. ¹⁶People wanted 20 measures of grain, but there were only 10 in the pile. People went to get 50 jars of wine from the storage place, but there were only 20. ¹⁷That was because I punished you. I sent the diseases that killed your plants and the hail that destroyed the things you made with your hands. I did this, but still you did not come to me,' says the LORD. ¹⁸'Today is the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. You have finished laying the foundation of the LORD's Temple. So notice what

happens from this day forward. ¹⁹Your seed for planting is still in the barn. And look at the vines, the fig trees, and the pomegranate and olive trees. They have not yet produced any fruit. But beginning today, I will bless you."

²⁰Another message from the LORD came to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month: ²¹"Go to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah and tell him that I will shake heaven and earth. ²²And I will overthrow many kings and kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of those other people. I will destroy their chariots and their riders. I will defeat their war horses and riders. These armies are friends now, but they will turn against each other and kill each other with swords." ²³This is what the LORD All-Powerful says: "Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, my servant, I have chosen you. I, the LORD, tell you that I will use you like a signet ring to represent my authority!" This is what the LORD All-Powerful said.