

Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Return to the LORD

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of
Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you;
righteous and having salvation.*

Zechariah 9:9

Paul Deterding

Contributions by Robert C. Baker

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Written by Paul Deterding

Edited by Robert C. Baker

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SAMPLE

<i>History</i>	<i>Date (BC)</i>	<i>Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi</i>
King Cyrus of Persia allows Jews to return to Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–4)	538	
Temple's foundation completed (Ezra 3:10–13)	536	
Persian king Darius Hystaspis rules	522–486	
	520	Haggai (Haggai 1:1–11; Ezra 5:1) and Zechariah (Zechariah 1:1; Ezra 5:1) begin prophetic ministries
High Priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, crowned (Zechariah 6:9–15)	519	
Temple finished and rededicated (Ezra 6:15–18)	516	
Ezra begins priestly service among Jews (Ezra 7:1–9)	458	
Persian king Artaxerxes permits Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:1–9)	445	
	ca. 440	Malachi (1:1) written
Alexander the Great conquers Palestine	332	
Alexander dies	323	
Ptolemy I conquers Jerusalem	320	
Translation of Hebrew Old Testament into Greek (Septuagint)	ca. 250 and later	

An Outline of Haggai

Haggai's name in Hebrew ("festive") typifies this two-chapter book, which, after Obadiah, is the smallest book of the Bible. In Haggai God shares His plans to rebuild His Jerusalem temple made of stones, certainly a joyous occasion for His long-exiled people. Even so, this temporal joy will be surpassed by everlasting joy. The source of this joy is the One who would temple (John 1:14, also Greek "tabernacle") among us in human flesh: Jesus Christ. This is the "[treasure] of all nations" (Haggai 2:7, 9) for Jew and Gentile alike. Zerubbabel, the Jewish governor, not only precedes the Messiah in the flesh, but also serves as God's seal, or "signet ring" (2:23), of His messianic promise. Ancient believers longed for His first coming, which was fulfilled in Jesus, and now contemporary believers eagerly look forward to His triumphant, and final, coming again.

- I. First Prophecy: Yahweh's Call to Rebuild the Temple (1:1–11)
- II. Zerubbabel and the People's Response (1:12–15)
- III. Second Prophecy: Yahweh's Promise of Presence (2:1–9)
- IV. Third Prophecy: Yahweh's Priestly Ruling (2:10–19)
- V. Fourth Prophecy: Yahweh's Signet Ring (2:20–23)

An Outline of Zechariah

Zechariah, whose name means “Yahweh remembers,” rebukes God’s people, restores them to God’s grace, and encourages them to rebuild the Lord’s temple. His prophetic message is sometimes apocalyptic (hidden) and eschatological (related to the end times), but is always to encourage God’s people, never to frighten them.

Rich with visual imagery, the Book of Zechariah contains numerous prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Most notable among these are the prophecies about the “servant, the Branch” (3:8), who is both King and Priest (6:13), who is the Suffering Shepherd (13:7), who is sold for thirty pieces of silver (11:12–13), who is crucified (12:10; 13:7) and yet is also the coming judge and righteous King (ch. 14). In the Palm Sunday liturgy, we hear Zechariah’s prophecy of Christ’s triumphal entry (and mode of transportation!) into Jerusalem: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation” (9:9; see John 12:14–15 and Matthew 21:4–5).

- I. Introduction: Call to Repentance and Renewal (1:1–6)
- II. Eight Nighttime Visions (1:7–6:8)
 - A. Horseman among Myrtle Trees (1:7–17)
 - B. Four Horns and Four Craftsmen (1:18–21)
 - C. Man with a Measuring Line (ch. 2)
 - D. Clean Garments for the High Priest (ch. 3)
 - E. Gold Lampstand and Two Olive Trees (ch. 4)
 - F. Flying Scroll (5:1–4)
 - G. Woman in a Basket (5:5–11)
 - H. Four Chariots (6:1–8)
- III. The Crowning of Joshua, the High Priest (6:9–15)
- IV. Fasting and the Future (chs. 7–8)
- V. Two Oracles: The Messiah and God’s Kingdom (chs. 9–14)
 - A. Arrival and Rejection of the King (chs. 9–11)
 - B. Suffering Shepherd and Lord of All Nations (chs. 12–14)

An Outline of Malachi

Malachi, which means “my messenger,” is the last of God’s prophets until the arrival of John the Baptist some four hundred years later. Malachi points to John as the forerunner of Christ (3:1), and refers to him as “Elijah” (4:5–6; see also Matthew 11:13–14; 17:12–13; Mark 9:11–13; Luke 1:17). Malachi’s brief oracle shows the continuous, downward effects of faithless religion that is not based on God’s Word. The prophet rebukes both priests and people for cynical unbelief (2:17; 3:13–15) and its inevitable results. Nevertheless, God’s election and promise (1:2–3) is sure—it points to the coming of the Messiah, the messenger in whom they would “delight” (3:1; see Haggai 2:7).

- I. Yahweh’s Relentless Covenantal Love (1:1–5)
- II. Rebuke against the Priests (1:6–2:9)
 - A. Sloppy Worship Practices (1:6–14)
 - B. Teaching Not Based on God’s Word (2:1–9)
- III. Rebuke against the People (2:10–16)
 - A. Intermarriage with Unbelievers (2:10–12)
 - B. Rampant Divorce (2:13–16)
 - C. Mistreatment of the Less Fortunate (2:17–3:5)
 - D. Failure to Support the Lord’s Work (3:6–18)
- IV. The Lord’s Coming (4:1–6)
 - A. Wicked Punished and Righteous Rejoice (4:1–4)
 - B. Elijah Will Turn the People’s Hearts (4:5–6)

Introduction to Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are the last three of the twelve prophetic books called “The Minor Prophets.” Written after the Jews’ return to the Promised Land (538 BC and later, which the Book of Ezra details), Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi primarily exhibit the prophets’ pleas to rebuild the Jerusalem temple and through it to restore the Old Testament system of sacrifice and worship. (According to Ezra 3:1–6, the altar of burnt offering was built on its former site and sacrifices were resumed according to Moses’ injunctions prior to laying the new temple’s foundation.)

Through rebuke (Law) and promise (Gospel), Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi exhort God’s people to repentance and faith. They are called away from self-serving materialism (the paneled houses of Haggai 1:4), injustice toward the oppressed (the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, and the poor of Zechariah 7:8–10; see also 8:16–17), and false doctrine and false practice (evidence of a cynical faith, Malachi 3:14–15). The prophets also call the people to trust in the coming “messenger . . . in whom you delight” (Malachi 3:1), the “Branch” and coming “King,” who is the stricken “Shepherd” (Zechariah 6:12; 9:9; 13:7), the “Lord” who is preceded by a “messenger,” an “Elijah” (Malachi 3:1; 4:5). Through these promises God shows again the richness of His love and grace through the sending of His one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

Lesson 1

Haggai: A Prophet to Finish the Temple

The Life of Haggai

The four prophecies of the Book of Haggai are all dated in the year 520 BC (Haggai 1:1; 2:1, 10, 20). Along with his contemporary, Zechariah, with whom he ministered for two months, Haggai exhorted his fellow Jews who had returned from exile to complete the work of rebuilding the temple (Ezra 5:1–2; 6:14).

The temple had been destroyed in about 586 BC (Jeremiah 52:12–13). Although the rebuilding of the temple had begun in 536 BC (Ezra 3:1, 8), it had been interrupted in 530 (Ezra 4:24). Haggai's ministry helped to promote the resumption of the rebuilding in 520 (Haggai 1:1, 15; Ezra 5:2), which culminated in its completion in about 515 (Ezra 6:15).

If Haggai 2:3 implies that the prophet himself had seen the former temple built by Solomon, he would have been at least seventy years old at the time he delivered the prophecies of his book.

The Message of Haggai

As we examine the message that moved the people toward rebuilding the temple, we will see that it was a message of both rebuke (Law) and promise (Gospel).

1. To whom was the prophet's message especially addressed (1:1; 2:2–4)? We will meet these individuals again, when we take up the book of Zechariah.

2. Why did Haggai rebuke the people of Judah (1:2–4)? What had been the consequences of the people’s failures to rebuild the temple (1:5–11)? What were the Lord and His prophet directing the people to do (1:8)?

3. How might God similarly direct events in your life to affect your faith, your attitude, or your actions?

The rebuilding of the temple was significant for at least two reasons: (a) its rebuilding showed God’s gracious favor toward His people (compare 1 Kings 8:10–11 with Ezekiel 10:18–19; 11:22–23; and 43:2–5), and (b) what went on at the temple was the means God had given to His people to deliver His forgiveness (as described in Leviticus 1–7 and especially chapter 16).

4. Because of the temple’s significance in the Old Testament, temple language is also important in the New Testament’s message about Jesus Christ, the gift of salvation, and the work of Christ’s Church. What is the significance of the temple language in the following passages?

John 2:19–22

1 Corinthians 3:16–17

1 Peter 2:2–6

Ephesians 2:19–22

Revelation 21:22

5. How did the people respond to the ministry of Haggai (Haggai 1:12, 14–15)? With what promise did the prophet encourage the people (1:13)? What was the real power behind this work of rebuilding (1:14)?

6. How is God similarly at work in your life (see Philippians 2:13)?

The idea of the “remnant” (Haggai 1:12, 14) is an important one in the Scriptures, especially in the Old Testament. When the people of God become unfaithful, He smites them with His judgment, so that only a tiny remnant is left. Yet no matter how severe the judgment of God, He always preserves a remnant of survivors, from which He resumes His plan and work of the world’s salvation (see Isaiah 1:9; 10:20–22; Micah 2:12–13).

The Subsequent Ministry of Haggai

Even when the rebuilding had resumed (Haggai 1:15), Haggai’s work was not done. He had a series of other messages to deliver from the Lord.

7. How did some people feel about the new temple, whose rebuilding was underway (2:1–3; compare the earlier reaction of Ezra 3:10–13)?

As Haggai encourages the people, he has a twofold message: (a) the Lord will be with you, because He made you His own by the exodus from Egypt (2:4–5), and (b) the Lord has the power to make this temple greater than the former one (2:6–9).

8. How did the Lord fulfill His promise to “fill this house with glory,” so that “the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former” (see John 1:1, 14; 2:13–14, 19–22)?

Haggai’s first message had focused on God’s judgment against the people for their unbelief and their failure to rebuild the temple. In his third message (Haggai 2:10–19), his words recall that former rebuke.

9. What contrast is there between the people’s life when the temple lay unfinished and what would take place now that they had resumed rebuilding (see especially 2:19 and contrast it with 1:10–11)?

Zerubbabel had been an important figure in the events of this book. Haggai’s concluding message has special words of blessing for him, a message that looks beyond the prophet’s own day to a future one.

10. What was God’s word of promise through Haggai to Zerubbabel (2:21–22)? Considering that Zerubbabel was the governor of the land (1:1), why would this promise be especially meaningful to him?

A signet ring was an important item for an ancient ruler; the emblem on it would be used to seal all official documents (see Esther 8:10). Zerubbabel’s faithless grandfather, Jehoiachin (also known as Jeconiah and Coniah) had been rejected by the Lord as His “signet ring” (Jeremiah 22:24–25). God’s promise to Zerubbabel is that He will reverse that judgment for him (Haggai 2:23), meaning that he would be both precious and useful in God’s sight.

11. In what way does Zerubbabel point us to Jesus and His ministry (Matthew 1:12)? Note that we will examine the significance of Zerubbabel further in some of the lessons on the prophet Zechariah.

12. What reassurance is there in knowing that in His Word and Sacraments God is present for you with His forgiveness in Christ? How does that shape your attitude and actions regarding such things as church attendance and Bible reading?

In Closing

Encourage participants to begin the following activities:

- Pray to the Lord, confessing the times when you have failed to trust in Him and to follow Him fully. Thank Him for His full and free forgiveness in Christ.
- Reread the thirty-eight verses of Haggai sometime during the coming week.
- In preparation for the next session, read Zechariah 1–2.

Leader Guide

This guide is provided as a “safety net,” a place to turn for help in answering questions and for enriching discussion. It will not answer every question raised in your class. Please read it, along with the questions, before class. Consult it in class only after exploring the Bible references and discussing what they teach. Please note the different abilities of your class members. Some will easily find the Bible passages listed in this study; others will struggle. To make participation easier, team up members of the class. For example, if a question asks you to look up several passages, assign one passage to one group, the second to another, and so on. Divide the work! Let participants present the answers they discover.

Preparing to Teach Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

To prepare to lead this study, read through the Books of Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and, if time permits, the Book of Ezra, which provides a detailed account of the Jews’ return to the Promised Land. You might secure good commentaries on these prophetic books and read them over, or read the introduction to the books in *The Concordia Self-Study Bible* or a Bible handbook. Several maps showing the Old Testament world around 600–400 BC would also be helpful.

The materials in these notes are designed to help you in leading others through this portion of the Holy Scriptures. Nevertheless, this booklet is to be an aid to—and not a substitute for—your own study of and preparation for teaching the Books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

If you have the opportunity, you will find it helpful to make use of other biblical reference works in the course of your study. These three commentaries can be very helpful: Theodore Laetsch, sections on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi in *Minor Prophets*, Concordia Classic Commentary Series (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, reprinted 1987); Pieter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); and Eric S. Hartzell, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*,

The People's Bible Series (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1991; reprinted by Concordia Publishing House, 1994). Although it is not strictly a commentary, the sections on Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi in *The Word Becoming Flesh* by Horace Hummel (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1979) also contain much that is of value for the proper interpretation of these biblical books.

Group Bible Study

Group Bible study means mutual learning from one another under the guidance of a leader. The Bible is an inexhaustible resource. No one person can discover all it has to offer. In any class, many eyes see many things, things that can be applied to many life situations. The leader should resist the temptation to “give the answers” and so act as an authority. This teaching approach stifles participation by individual members and can actually hamper learning. As a general rule don't “give interpretation,” instead “develop interpreters.” In other words, don't explain what the learners can discover by themselves. This is not to say that the leader shouldn't share insights and information gained by his or her class members during the lesson or engage them in meaningful sharing and discussion or lead them to a summary of the lesson at the close.

Have a chalkboard and chalk or newsprint and marker available to emphasize significant points of the lesson. Rephrase your inquiries or the inquiries of participants as questions, problems, or issues. This provokes thought. Keep discussion to the point. List on the chalkboard or newsprint the answers given. Then determine the most vital points made in the discussion. Ask additional questions to fill gaps.

The aim of every Bible study is to help people grow spiritually, not merely in biblical and theological knowledge, but in Christian thinking and living. This means growth in Christian attitudes and insights and skills for Christian living. The focus of this course must be the Church and the world of our day. The guiding question will be this: What does the Lord teach us for life today through Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi?

Teaching the Old Testament

Teaching the Old Testament can degenerate into mere moralizing in which “do-goodism” becomes a substitute for the Gospel and sanctification gets confused with justification. Actually, the justified sinner is not moved by God’s Law but by God’s grace to a totally new life. His or her faith in Christ is always at work in every context of life. Meaningful personal Christianity consists of faith flowing from God’s grace in Christ and is evidenced in love for other people. Having experienced God’s free grace and forgiveness, the Christian daily works in his or her world to reflect the will of God for humanity in every area of human endeavor.

The Christian leader is Gospel oriented, not Law oriented. He or she distinguishes Law from Gospel. Both are needed. There is no clear Gospel unless we first have been crushed by the Law and see our sinfulness. There is no genuine Christianity where faith is not followed by a life pleasing to God. In fact, genuine faith is inseparable from life. The Gospel alone creates in us the new heart that causes us to love God and our neighbor.

When Christians teach the Old Testament, they do not teach it as a “law book,” but instead as books containing both Law and Gospel. They see the God of the Old Testament as a God of grace who out of love establishes a covenant of mercy with His people (Deuteronomy 7:6–9) and forgives their sins. Christians interpret the Old Testament using the New Testament message of fulfilled prophecy through Jesus Christ. They teach as leaders who personally know the Lord Jesus as Savior, the victorious Christ who gives all believers a new life (2 Corinthians 5:17) and a new mission (John 20:21).

Pace Your Teaching

The lessons in this course of study are designed for a study session of at least an hour in length. If it is the desire and intent of the class to complete an entire lesson each session, it will be necessary for you to summarize the content of certain answers or biblical references in order to preserve time. Asking various class members to look up different Bible passages and to read them aloud to the rest of the class will save time over having every class member look up each reference.

Also, you may not want to cover every question in each lesson. This may lead to undue haste and frustration. Be selective. Pace your

teaching. Spend no more than five to ten minutes opening the lesson. During the lesson, get the sweep of meaning. Occasionally stop to help the class gain understanding of a word or concept. Allow approximately five minutes for the closing and announcements.

Should your group have more than a one-hour class period, you can be more leisurely. But do not allow any lesson to drag and become tiresome. Keep it moving. Keep it alive. Keep it meaningful. Eliminate some questions and restrict yourself to those questions most meaningful to the members of the class. If most members study the text at home, they can report their findings, and the time gained can be applied to relating the lesson to life.

Good Preparation

Good preparation by the leader usually affects the pleasure and satisfaction the class will experience.

Suggestions to the Leader for Using the Study Guide

1. The Lesson Pattern

This set of lessons is designed to aid *Bible study*, that is, to aid a consideration of the written Word of God, with discussion and personal application growing out of the text at hand.

The typical lesson is divided into these sections:

1. Theme Verse
2. Objectives
3. Questions and Answers
4. Closing

The theme verse and objectives give you, the leader, assistance in arousing the interest of the group in the concepts of the lesson. Focus on stimulating minds. Do not linger too long over the introductory remarks.

The questions and answers provide the real spadework necessary for Bible study. Here the class digs, uncovers, and discovers; it gets the facts and observes them. Comments from the leader are needed only to the extent that they help the group understand the text. The questions in this guide, corresponding to sections within the text, are intended to help the participants discover the meaning of the text.

Having determined what the text says, the class is ready to apply the message. Having heard, read, marked, and learned the Word of God, they can proceed to digest it inwardly through discussion, evaluation, and application. This is done, as this guide suggests, by taking the truths found in Scripture and applying them to the world and Christianity in general, and then to one's personal Christian life. Class time may not permit discussion of all questions and topics. In preparation you may need to select one or two and focus on them. Close the session by reviewing one important truth from the lesson.

Remember, the Word of God is sacred, but this study guide is not. The notes in this section offer only guidelines and suggestions. Do not hesitate to alter the guidelines or substitute others to meet your needs and the needs of the participants. Adapt your teaching plan to your class and your class period.

Good teaching directs the learner to discover for himself or herself. For the teacher this means directing the learner, not giving the learner answers. Directing understanding takes preparation. Choose the verses that should be looked up in Scripture ahead of time. What discussion questions will you ask? At what points? Write them in the margin of your study guide. Involve class members, but give them clear directions. What practical actions might you propose for the week following the lesson? Which of the items do you consider most important for your class?

Consider how you can best use your teaching period. Do you have forty-five minutes? An hour? Or an hour and a half? If time is short, what should you cut? Learn to become a wise steward of class time.

Plan a brief opening devotion, using members of the class. Also be sure to take time to summarize the lesson or have a class member do it.

Remember to pray frequently for yourself and your class. May God the Holy Spirit bless your study and your leading of others into the comforting truths of God's Christ-centered Word.

Lesson 1

Haggai: A Prophet to Finish the Temple

Theme verse: *The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts.*

Haggai 2:9

Objectives

By the power of the Holy Spirit working through God's Word, we will

- see the significance of the Old Testament temple and how it points to Christ, to the Church, and to eternity;
- be moved to greater trust in the Lord and greater faithfulness in keeping His Word;
- grow in our appreciation of God's power and grace;
- see in Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, one who points us to Christ.

1. We will study the significance of Joshua (also known as Jeshua) and Zerubbabel more thoroughly in the lessons on Zechariah. This question mostly introduces them as high priest and governor, respectively, and hence as spiritual leaders of God's people Judah.

2. Judah's failure to resume and complete the rebuilding of the temple had led the Lord to chastise the people by greatly diminishing the agricultural yield of the land.

3. Let participants discuss how God has used or might use events in their own lives to call them to repentance, faith, and renewal of life.

4. The following comments may help in the study of these passages:

John 2:19–22—Jesus came to replace the temple as the place of God’s gracious presence. By His death and resurrection, He acquired for all time what the temple services had provided during Old Testament times: forgiveness of sins before God.

1 Corinthians 3:16–17—The temple language is also applied to the people of God, the Church, as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27).

1 Peter 2:2–6—The Church is a spiritual house (temple) in that it dispenses the forgiveness won by Christ. It dispenses this forgiveness in Baptism (“newborn infants”), the Word of God (“pure spiritual milk” would be better translated “pure milk of the Word”), and the Lord’s Supper (“tasted that the Lord is good”).

Ephesians 2:19–22—The Church is a house and temple of God in that God dwells among His people in forgiveness through the “apostles and prophets,” that is, through the Word about Christ.

Revelation 21:22—In eternity there will be no need of a temple, for we will dwell directly in His holy presence.

5. Haggai’s message to the people that the Lord God was with them moved them to resume the rebuilding. Thus it was really God, working through His Word, who moved the leaders and the people to the task of rebuilding.

6. While we may accomplish much, in reality it is God who empowers us to all that we are and do as Christians.

7. When evaluated by sight rather than by faith, the rebuilt temple seemed inferior to its predecessor. Yet the one who had brought Israel out of slavery in Egypt (and out of captivity in Babylon) would make its glory greater.

8. Christ would come to this temple, and He would carry out His work of replacing the temple with His flesh as the means to God’s saving forgiveness.

9. As the people’s unfaithfulness had brought them the Lord’s chastisement in the form of poor harvests, so He would bestow His blessings on them in the form of improved harvests when they were faithful to Him.

10. The Lord promised Zerubbabel that He would overthrow nations and their military might. This would be a message of protection and deliverance for those whose protection had been entrusted to Zerubbabel.

11. As a descendant of David and an ancestor of Christ, Zerubbabel serves to point to Jesus as the one who fulfilled all of God's promises regarding a son from David's line. If there is time, you may wish to read 2 Samuel 7:11–17.

12. This time of reflection may help guide class members in growing in their appreciation for what God's people receive through His Word and Sacraments. God's grace freely given through His means of grace invites the faithful response of frequent hearing and reading of the Word and attendance at the Lord's Supper.

SAMPLE