

HAGGAI

- 1) 1:1 – Haggai was probably 14 years old at the time of the destruction of the Temple in 586 BC, so would have been 80 in 520 when he started his campaign to rebuild the Temple, 17 years after return from exile. He was a very important man, son of Pedaiiah, the grandson of Jehoiachin, who was a grandson of Josiah. /// Several psalms, esp 38, are attributed to Haggai. /// Zerubbabel means “offspring of Babylon.” He was born there and with Cyrus’s blessing led the first band of captives back to Jerusalem. He started to rebuild the Temple but for 17 years was prevented by the angry Samaritans (Ezra 3:2-8.) Zerubbabel was born c 570, in direct line from David, 20 generations later.
- 2) 1:2 – “Haggai” is related to the Hebrew stem meaning “make a pilgrimage.” It is not known whether he was a returnee from Babylon or had remained behind in Jerusalem.
- 3) 1:2,5,7,9; 2:4,11,23 – The repetitive use of “Lord of hosts” reflects the thought that though the Lord will be honored by the rebuilding of the Temple, he will never again be limited to it.
- 4) 1:12 – The scene shifts to three weeks later (see 2:15). /// The phrase “the people feared the Lord” might be better translated as “the people stood in awe of the Lord.”
- 5) 2:3-4 – Haggai is addressing the people who never left Palestine and who are not pleased with what they see of the rebuilding of the Temple. He is pleading with them to disregard the negative comments of the older folks who continued to compare the present with the “good old days,” and were in fact the major foes of Haggai.
- 6) 2:7-9 – The Vulgate translation understands “the treasure of all nations” to be the Messiah, saying, “the desire of all nations.” Grammatically this cannot be and therefore refers merely to the physical treasures being restored. But God’s intention goes beyond mere restoration of the Temple to restoration of peace and prosperity.
- 7) 2:12 – The point being made is that the people were using the Temple altar before it was properly purified – after the desecration (perhaps destruction) by the Babylonians.
- 8) 2:15 – This was on the 7th day of the 8-day Festival of Booths, commemorating Israel’s journey from Egypt to Sinai, and Solomon’s bringing the ark of the covenant to the Temple and dedicating it to the Lord. The custom was to use at least one stone from the previous altar when building a new one, in order to preserve continuity with the past. Now, on 12/18/520, a new era of prosperity is on the horizon.
- 9) 2:23 – Jews believe that this passage means that Zerubbabel is being named the Messiah. But the prophecy came to nothing and Zerubbabel disappears. The Jews remained without a secular leader for four centuries till the time of the Maccabees. /// The signet ring was a symbol of great power. Haggai stops short of calling Zerubbabel a king (Darius was still the ruler over Palestine) but clearly gives him the power of the Lord. He is granted God’s authority as God’s proxy, the right to sign in God’s place. Haggai makes the obvious point that God works through people. What is surprising is that Zerubbabel disappears from history except for short references to his part in rebuilding the Temple and in genealogies of Jesus (Matt 1:12-13, Luke 3:27)