

Supplementary Materials for KOOL Journal for Parents/Adults

Week 9: 19 to 25 March, 2018 (pp. 73 – 81)

Context

Haggai gave his second message during the Festival of the Tabernacles/Shelters on 17 Oct 520 BC (2:1). The day selected is significant. The twenty-first day of the seventh month was the seventh and last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This was the festival of harvest thanksgiving, with numerous sacrifices prescribed by the Talmud for the first day exceeding that of any other day in the year. Thus the scanty harvest and the small beginnings of the Temple would have led to feelings of despondency among those who were old enough to remember the Temple of Solomon that was destroyed about 70 years earlier. If the injunction of Cyrus (Ezra 1:3, etc.) had been carried out, the dimensions of the new temple would have exceeded those of the old; but Zerubbabel seems to have been unable, with the small resources at his disposal, to execute the original design, though even so the proportions were not greatly inferior to those of the earlier temple. But the chief inferiority lay in the absence of the splendour and enrichment with which Solomon adorned his edifice.

Haggai's third message (2:10) was given on 18 Dec 520 BC followed by a fourth message on the same day.

19 to 25 March: Haggai Chapter 2

Review Verse of the Week Haggai 2:7

I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty.

Date/Read/Watch	Reflection and Response (R & R)
<p>Mon. 19 March</p> <p>Haggai 2:1—5 {Haggai 2:1-4}</p>	<p>The older people could remember the incredible beauty of Solomon's Temple, with its costly accessories and elaborate festive rites. Haggai was wise when he began with echoing the old men's disparagements ('seem like nothing'), and in their full view of them, bravely encouraged them with God's message that this time, the Lord would bless their efforts and they were to be strong in executing the work (the repetition to be strong thrice is reminiscent of the same in Joshua 1:6, 7, 9). They were reminded that although God had punished them for their sins, God had never left them (Exo 29:45-46), bringing them from captivity in Egypt to the Promised Land.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What difficulties are you facing today? No matter what these are or how frustrating our work may be, God's Spirit is with us (2:5) and we can draw on His supernatural strength while we use our God-given abilities (Eph 6: 10-13). • We must be people of prayer, taking time to study the Bible and worship God but there is also the time to step out to do the work God has prepared us (2:4) for at our place of work, at home and in the church. Do we dare to change the world as ambassadors of Christ?

<p>Tue. 20 March</p> <p>Haggai 2:6—9 {Haggai 2:9}</p>	<p>God is the God of History and He could act anytime ('in a little while') to bring about His worldwide reign of the Messiah. When God promised to shake all the nations in judgement, He was speaking of both His present judgement on evil nations and future judgment during the last days. God had all the resources (treasures of the nations) at His disposal to rebuild His Temple (Psalm 50:10-12). There may also be intended a word of comfort for the desponding; they need not grieve because they had but poor offerings to bring to the house; he wanted not gold or silver, for all was His (2:8). But God needs willing hands as He had chosen to do his work through people. The glory of this second temple shall exceed that of the former, not in riches or costly ornaments, but in that there the Prince of Peace shall make His appearance, and there the gospel of peace shall be preached and published. (Isaiah 9:6; another word of comfort). Haggai was seeing beyond this post-exilic temple to a future temple whose glory will be far better. Some 500 years later, Jesus Christ would walk in the Temple courts.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do our hearts desire? Jesus our Messiah? • Are your hands available to do God's work? <p>Notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "This is what the Lord Almighty says/declares...." (2:6) recurred frequently (2:7,8, 9, 11, 23) is a marked feature of the prophecies of Haggai (and of Malachi, and of some sections of that of Zechariah). It is of the nature of an appeal to the power and resources of Almighty God, either as here to awaken the confidence, or as elsewhere to subdue the obstinacy/disobedience of the Jews. • "the desire/desired/desires of all nations" (2:7) have been interpreted to refer to Jesus the Messiah and/or the earthly treasures/the riches of all nations that will be brought to the temple in Jerusalem. The Messiah was not desired by all nations..."having" no beauty that we should desire Him (Isa 53:2) and was/is still rejected by men. But what is implied is that He was the only one to satisfy the yearning desires which all felt unconsciously for a Saviour, shown in their painful rites and bloody sacrifices.
<p>Wed. 21 March</p> <p>Haggai 2:10—14 {Haggai 2:14}</p>	<p>The people had now for three months (1:14-15) been actively engaged in the work of restoration. The question was put to the priests, whose office it was to put a difference between holy and unholy, between clean and unclean, (Lev 10:10). Legal holiness was not so easily communicated as legal impurity: for the holy flesh did not make any thing that was touched by it holy; but the touch of a person who was unclean rendered holy things unclean. Thus vice is much more easily contracted than virtue! The point of the message (delivered on 18 Dec 520 BC) is that holiness will not rub off on others but contamination will. The neglect of God's temple and the disregard of His worship had made the people unclean, as if they had contracted legal pollution by touching a dead body; and rendered everything they undertook, even the sacrifices they offered on the altar, unclean and unacceptable.</p>

	<p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to James 2:10, "whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." If we insist on maintaining close relationships with sinful people or harbouring wrong attitudes, we will be defiled. Even good deeds done for God can be tainted by sinful attitudes. Where do we stand in this regard? • What have we neglected in our walk with God?
<p>Thu. 22 March</p> <p>Haggai 2:15—19 {Haggai 2:15,18-19}</p>	<p>Haggai exhorted the people to fix their attention on the long period of their neglect of God and His House; the eighteen years that had intervened, between the laying of the foundation of the Temple and the 24th day of the ninth month of the second year of Darius, on which this prophecy was uttered. Let them give careful thought to the fact that it had been throughout a period of distress and dearth, of gloom and darkness. However, let them note the bright contrast, the plenty and prosperity, which their return to God and care for His House and worship should immediately introduce. "From this day will I bless you, says the Lord."</p> <p>The people re-laid the Temple foundation (Ezra 5:2) and immediately God blessed them. He did not wait for the project to be completed but instead sent His encouragement and approval with the first few obedient steps. The Temple would not make Judah a holy community but their obedience in building it, their demonstration of readiness to put God first, freed God to give them gracious, unmerited blessings. God was not rewarding the people for what they did—but for being obedient!</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we are fully committed to obey the Lord, do we merit God's blessings?
<p>Fri. 23 March</p> <p>Haggai 2:20—23 {Haggai 2:21-23}</p>	<p>Haggai's final message acknowledged that he was merely the messenger who brings the word of the Lord. It is addressed to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah. The rebuilding of the Temple, like the restoration of the Jews to their homeland, is but a reminder of the great promises that God has given to His ancient people. The shaking of the heavens and the earth (in 2:21, repeating the prediction in 2:6) and overthrow of thrones prophesied went beyond any event in the life of Zerubbabel. The prophecy reaches forth to the more distant future, and still awaits its full accomplishment. The day will come when this earth is shaken and the kingdom of Christ shall overthrow and occupy the place of all the empires which opposed His cause. God ended His message to Zerubbabel with this tremendous affirmation: "I have chosen you."</p> <p>Note: A signet ring was used to guarantee the authority and authenticity of a letter. It served as a signature when pressed in soft wax on a written document. God was reaffirming and guaranteeing His promise of a Messiah through David's line (Matt 1:12, Luke 3:27) but Zerubbabel was just a governor of Judah, not a king. Judah was merely a minor region, one of the Persian Empire's 120 great provinces. Yet the word is directed to Zerubbabel as a representative of the kingly line who was included in Jesus' genealogy too. This glorious truth may not have entered Zerubbabel's mind but he must</p>

	<p>have been greatly encouraged when God declared that He would make him His signet ring. What a great honour and encouragement to Zerubbabel!</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The message of the Cross would turn the world upside down. Why? • The proclamation of God choosing Zerubbabel applies to us too: Each of us has been chosen by God (Eph 1:4-6, 11). How should this truth motivate us to work for God who loves us so much? <p>Each of us has our own unique stamp (like the signet ring) that reveals how we're created in God's image and expresses our particular mix of gifts, passions, and wisdom. It's our call and privilege to act as this signet ring in God's world.</p>
<p>Sat. 24 March</p>	<p>Haggai's message to the people sought to get their priorities right, help them quit worrying and motivate them to rebuild the Temple. Like them, we often place a higher priority on our personal comfort than on God's work and true worship. When we give God first place in our life, He is pleased and promises strength and guidance.</p> <p>R & R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just as Zerubbabel is likened to a signet ring, we are identified as Christians (Acts 11:26; 1 Pet. 4:14–16) and authorized as envoys or carriers of the most important information in the entire world (Matt. 28:18–20). How can we be more effective in disseminating this truth in the coming week? • As Easter approaches, what can we offer in gratitude and thanksgiving to God? • Spare a thought and pray for our church leaders who are entrusted with the awesome task of building God's sanctuary in the Lord – the body of Christ (Eph 2:2) – and extending His kingdom through such projects as building a after school care centre at Blk 50 of Teban Gardens.

References:

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