

HAGGAI: CALLING GOD'S PEOPLE BACK TO HIS WORK

II: God's Antidote For Discouragement In Doing His Work

(Haggai 2:1-9)

I. Introduction

- A. Haggai, the first prophet after the Babylonian Captivity, was assigned by God to direct Israel to get back to the work of rebuilding the temple after the work had been delayed for 15 years. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, p. 1306, "Introduction to the Book of Haggai")
- B. Since the civil governor Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua were the leaders of the people, Haggai addressed primarily them in regard to the temple completion issue. (Ibid., "The Recipients")
- C. Haggai 2:1-9 gives God's antidote to discouragement in doing His work, what we view for our edification:

II. God's Antidote For Discouragement In Doing His Work, Haggai 2:1-9.

- A. According to Ezra 3:8-13, when Israel's leaders Zerubbabel and Joshua had initially led the returned Hebrew exiles to begin rebuilding the temple foundation, many of the priests, Levites and elders of the people who had seen the glorious temple of Solomon wept when they had seen the inferior foundation that they were building.
- B. About sixteen years later when Zerubbabel and Joshua obeyed Haggai's Haggai 1:1-11 sermon to return to the work (Ibid., fn. to Haggai 1:4), they fought discouragement mainly because they saw the inferiority of their work compared to that of the former temple, and this problem was compounded by their need to clean up 60 years of rubble left by Babylon's invasion and the interruption of their work by the many rest days of the seventh month (Sabbaths, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Booths). (B. K. C., O. T., p. 1541)
- C. Accordingly, God sent His prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people and he addressed their unfavorable comparison of their workmanship with that of the former temple of Solomon, Haggai 2:1-3.
- D. The Lord then corrected their disappointment by declaring the strategic role they had in God's eternal plan, how they were continuing what God had begun in Israel's past and would complete in her future, Hag. 2:4-9:
 1. First, God claimed that the returned exiles were continuing the work begun by their ancestors, Hag. 2:4-5:
 - a. The Lord said that He was with them like He had been with the generation that came out of Egypt, so He told Zerubbabel, Joshua and the people to be strong and continue to rebuild the temple, Haggai 2:4-5.
 - b. The Lord backed up this call to be strong in their attitude with the encouraging news that as He had covenanted with them as a people when they came up out of Egypt to be with them (Exodus 29:45-46; 33:14), so His Spirit remained with them now as they rebuilt the temple, Hag. 2:5. (Ibid., fn. to Hag. 2:5)
 2. Second, the Lord announced that their work was very important in view of His future plans, Haggai 2:6-9:
 - a. God added that "in a little while" something wonderful would occur, the "in a little while" phrase not necessarily indicating "chronological immediacy but the impending or imminent it-could-occur-anytime character of God's action," Haggai 2:6a; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1541.
 - b. What God would do would be to shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land, what likely refers to the Great Tribulation Period that is yet to occur, Haggai 2:6; Ibid., p. 1541-1542.
 - c. The Lord would then shake all nations, correcting and punishing them at the Battle of Armageddon to get them to align with the Lord in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom, Haggai 2:7a; Ibid., p. 1542.
 - d. Then, the "desired of all nations" (v. 7b NIV) would come, what many commentators have held referred to the Messiah, but more recent commentators have viewed the expression to mean "'desired things,'" that "surrounding nations will gladly give up their treasures to adorn the temple in Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 60:5; Zech. 14:14)." (Ibid.) [It may be that Haggai "deliberately selected a term that had exactly the ambiguity he wanted in order to include both an impersonal (wealth) and personal (Messiah) reference," Ibid.]
 - e. God would then fill His Millennial temple with glory (Haggai 2:7c), for the silver and the gold of the world's nations belonged to the Lord (Haggai 2:8), and the glory of the latter Millennial Kingdom temple would be greater than that of the previous temple of Solomon, and in that future temple God would give mankind peace, the wars of the world having ceased, Haggai 2:9.

Lesson: *When the returned Hebrew exiles faced discouragement over their work to rebuild a temple that was less attractive than what they had seen of Solomon's temple, God urged them to be strong and to keep working, for they were part of His long-term plan for Israel in providing continuity between her past and future Millennial blessings.*

Application: *May we handle what discouragement we face in serving the Lord today by recalling the importance of our current work in God's eternal plan, that we then commit ourselves to fulfilling our assignments from Him.*