

# Note

## Haggai – Part 1 of 1

Era	Characters	Chapters
In the beginning	God created the world.	Genesis 1
Before 4000 BC	Adam & Eve	Gen 1-5
Before 3000 BC	Cain Abel Seth	Gen 4-5
Before 2500 BC	Noah	Gen 5-10
Before 2100 BC	Job Elihu	Job
About 2000 BC <b>Era of Patriarchs</b>	Abraham Isaac & Ishmael Jacob & Esau Joseph	Gen 11-50
About 1500 BC~ 1000 BC <b>Era of prophets</b>	Moses Aaron Joshua	Exo Lev Num Deu
	Joshua	Joshua
	Judges(Othniel Ehud Shamgar Deborah Gideon Tola Jair Jephthah Ibazan Elon Abdon Samson) Abimelech	Judges
	Ruth Boaz Naomi	Ruth
	Eli Samuel Saul David	1 Samuel
About 1000 BC <b>Era of princes</b>	Saul Jonathan David Absalom Solomon	1 Samuel 2 Samuel
	Solomon Jeroboam Rehoboam Ahab Elijah Elisha Jehu	1 kings
	Ahab Hezekiah Manasseh Josiah Elisha Jehu Elijah	2 kings
	Saul David Solomon	1 Chronicles
	Solomon Rehoboam Asa Jehoshaphat Jehoram Joash Hezekiah Josiah	2 Chronicles
About 500 BC <b>Era of priests</b>	Zerubbabel Ezra Nehemiah Haggai Zechariah	Ezra Nehemiah
	Esther Mordecai Haman Ahasuerus	Esther
	Isaiah Ahaz Hezekiah	Isaiah
	Jeremiah Baruch Zedekiah	Jeremiah
	Jeremiah	Lamentation
	Ezekiel	Ezekiel
	Daniel Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar	Daniel
	Hosea	Hosea
	Joel	Joel
	Amos	Amos
	Obadiah	Obadiah
	Jonah	Jonah
	Micah	Micah
	Nahum	Nahum
	Habakkuk	Habakkuk
	Zephaniah	Zephaniah
	Haggai	Haggai 

# Summary

## **Haggai - Part 1 of 1 .....3**

Haggai narrates the Jews' journey as they returned from exile in Babylon to rebuild Jerusalem and the House of the Lord. The message of Haggai is a wake-up call to the Jews who had neglected the building of the temple as they got distracted with their own interests and led unclean lives even as they went about God's work. Through this, we learn that God expects His people to put Him first and His concern for the holiness of their lives. At the same time, God promises to exalt Zerubbabel – the last survivor of David's royal line – as His chosen one, through whom would be fulfilled the kingdom promise of his descendant, Jesus Christ.

# Transcript

## Haggai – Part 1 of 1

Haggai was a post-exilic prophet. That means he prophesied after the exile. The Jews had been in Babylon for 70 years but they were freed from the exile to return to Jerusalem. Haggai's prophecy overlaps with Zechariah, the next book we will be studying. Both of them were post-exilic prophets. Before the exile, the primary role of prophets was to warn people, telling them that if they do not listen to God, there will be negative consequences. After the exile they learnt many lessons, especially not to worship idols. Until today, the Jews never go near an idol. Second, they were more obedient rather than resistant to the prophets. Before that, when the prophets warned the people, they did not believe them. "It cannot be. God will never let His temple be destroyed. God would never let His city be destroyed. What are you guys telling us about?" But when it happened the people replied, "Oh, the prophets were right!" Haggai had a different kind of audience when he preached. They were more teachable and receptive.

The book is extremely short because Haggai's prophetic ministry was within a short period of time. It lasted only three months, unlike Isaiah and Jeremiah who had 40 to 50 years of ministry. This book has two chapters. Interestingly, each prophecy has a very accurate date. For example, verse one says, "In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by in the hand of Haggai the prophet..." So, it is dated and you can follow the sequence of events quite closely, which is very rare among the prophets. Comparatively speaking, Haggai and Zechariah were pretty much alike in that they dated their prophecies. We do not know much about Haggai. There was no indication of his genealogy. His father's name was not given, or was there any indication that he was a priest or not. We just know God raised him up for a season to do a job.

The book was written some years after Cyrus had conquered Babylon. God predicted the fall of the Babylonian Empire-unthinkable! It was impossible in the eyes of men but it happened. It is as if there will be no New York City. God prophesied that the great city of Babylon will be destroyed, taken over by Cyrus, the Persian king. Cyrus was a totally different king from the Babylonian kings who practiced scorched-earth policy, destroying everything with cruelty.

Cyrus had a benevolent heart. He was kind. He told the exiles, (the Jews who were in exile by the Babylonians, who destroyed their lands in Jerusalem and had taken the elite back with them, the princes of Judah and other leaders)

to return to their homeland with one condition: they must rebuild the temple, and pray to God for him. Cyrus was a God-fearing ruler but he didn't know which God was the right God. When that news came to the Jews, 50,000 of them decided to leave Babylon and return to Jerusalem to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. Fifty thousand people is a very small number compared to the number of Jews who stayed in Babylon. Seventy years composed almost two generations and they prospered and multiplied. Many of them became very prosperous businessmen.

Babylon was like the trading center. It is like having your business at Wall Street, New York. The Jews prospered and are excellent in trading. That's their skill! Many of them did not want to go back. Only 50,000 of them decided to go back to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. I want to share something very interesting. When Singapore became independent from the British Empire, the first Chief Minister was a Jew. His family came from Baghdad which is near Babylon. They are called "Baghdadi Jews". Our chief minister's name was David Marshall. He became our first leader. Can you imagine how successful the Baghdadi Jews were? That was over 2000 years after they were brought into Baghdad. They lived in that prosperous community. Most of them have left Baghdad, a part of the world Mesopotamia. Obviously, these 50,000 Jews were making a huge sacrifice. I mean, they were leaving a prosperous place, like New York City, to go back to a place that has been desolate for 70 years. Everything had been wiped out by the Babylonians. The whole city was without walls. The temple was burned to the ground. There was nothing left. Imagine you are prosperous, having a nice house in a fancy city in the world, and you are successful! Would you leave? A large number were priests. They had dreams. The prophecies that God have given, especially in the book of Chronicles, stated that the kingdom would come back again to Israel, and the king would reign again. So, the people went back with high hopes. They are going to build their own kingdom and have their own king.

There are two main characters in this book that stand out. The first one is Zerubbabel. His name means "seed of Babylon." He was born in Babylon. He had never seen the Promise Land. He was the last survivor of the line of David, the grandson of King Jehoiachin. He was so precious that God preserved him. He led the first group of 50,000 Jews who were going back. God had promised the line of David would be the line which all of us will be blessed. The second character is a man called Joshua. The name Joshua is another way of pronouncing the word "Jesus." Joshua means "God saves" or "God is our Saviour." Joshua went back as the high priest. These are the two people that I want you to know; one from the line of David and the other man was a high priest, whose name is the same as Jesus, "God saves."

It was a long journey from Babylon going back to the land of Judah. They started by building an altar. Eventually they built a temple around the altar to

worship God. Do you realize this is exactly what Abraham did? About 2000 years before this, God called Abraham out from Ur of Chaldees, very close to Babylon. After Abraham left, the first thing he did when he went into the Promise Land was to build an altar to worship God. So the Jews have gone one big cycle. After 2000 years, the Israelites went back to square one again. That is life, a life that brings you in full circle and never getting better.

When they went back, they started off with high hopes, big dreams, high motivation, and started to build. They laid the foundation for the temple. However, they did not have houses to live in because they were so poor, having nothing. There were no crops to harvest so they had to survive. Because of this condition, they began to neglect the building of the temple and put it off. "We've got to survive!" After 2 years of some building, chipping stones to put a low wall for the temple, they began to lose morale and started leaving. They began to focus on building their own houses, their own business, and their own farms, but the house of God was left unbuilt. For 14 years, the temple was neglected with just a few stone walls, low and uncompleted walls as they built their beautiful houses.

At this point, after 14 years of neglect, God raised up Haggai.

Haggai 1:1 ESV

In the second year of Darius, the king, in the sixth month on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

Darius succeeded Cyrus. Haggai gave the exact date when the prophecy was given to him. Zerubbabel was appointed governor by the Persian. When he left the court of King Darius, he said to Zerubbabel, "You are the governor." In fact, he became, shall we say, the king of Judah but, of course, he cannot be the king because Darius is the king. But in effect, Zerubbabel was like the King of the Jews, a little hint of the preservation of David's line.

Haggai 1:2

Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say that time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.

Why did they stop? They think it's not yet the right time to build the temple. You see, our logical thinking is, if we start to build something, we have to have enough money first. There should be enough resources to build a house. That's how most Christians think. "Let me get my life settled first, then one of these days I will serve God." Ninety-nine percent of Christians think that way rather than serving God first. It seems logical from the perspective of 'human economics.' You must have something before you can give. But God reminded them,

1:3-4

Then the word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet. "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?"

The logic is, we need to have money so we can serve God. But the problem with that kind of logic is, we begin to serve ourselves first and put God as a poor second. Most Christians do that. We build everything we want before we give something to God. We only give basically our spares or leftovers. I want you to know the word 'paneled houses' means nothing to us nowadays but to the Jews in Jerusalem, that was the ultimate luxury. During those times, the Jews had just returned to Jerusalem. If rocks are plenty you can build houses that are solid rock. No problem. But trees were rare after the scorched-earth policy. All the good trees were gone. Quality timber was scarce. To panel your house with timber like cedar, they had to be imported from Lebanon. To get the work done, it takes a long process to have your house paneled. It was basically a luxury. It is compared with having French chandeliers and Italian furniture in your house. Haggai said, "It's not yet time, yet your houses are paneled? For 14 years, all of you have nice, gorgeous houses." Our thinking is, if I have more, I can give God. The trouble is, it diverted to 'me' first.

1:5-6

Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourself, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

What is the economics of God? When you put your things first, you ignore God. You think your economy leads you to success. You think things do not come from God, but they come from your work. That is your economics. You are in big trouble when you think that way. You have to work extremely hard and yet get very little. Your work does not give you what you want. It does not make you prosper. Our human economics is work hard, but God's is different. Put God first, then He blesses your work. The human economics puts God out of the picture. This is an example of cause and effect: hard work equals success. God's economics is, put God first, and He blesses your work. Then certainly you will have plenty, more than enough to serve God and yourself.

God was saying, "Have you thought that you've been working extremely hard for 14 years, but somehow, the fruit of your labor does not give you the results you want? You have a paneled house, but somehow the crops did not have good yield and your business did not succeed the way you thought? All the prosperity you got did not give you the satisfaction you thought you deserved?"

1:7-9

Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD. You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with your own house.

God is simply saying, "I will teach you a new kind of economics. You take care of my things; I will bless your things. You bless my things; I will bless your things." We call this God's economics. Most of us are familiar with a verse in the book of Matthew but we do not really practice it - But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matthew 6:33).

Everything you need for life, not everything you want, God will surely provide. Everything you want, like a paneled house, may not be good for you. Desire to seek God's kingdom first, and His economics will bless you with everything you need. Not just your wallet is full. Maybe your house is not paneled, but your family is happy, your soul is satisfied, everything is good. Very few Christians can say, "My life is full." Every aspect of my life is full. My belly is full. My heart is full. My home relationships are beautiful. My relationships with others are beautiful. Most of all, my relationship with God is beautiful. Often, we hear people say that they lack something because they believe in human economics.

"You do not understand. Consider your ways." God said it several times to the Jews but He keeps on telling Christians today, "Consider your ways." Are you totally satisfied with your life? I am! I was never satisfied before because I applied human economics.

1:10-11

Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.

1:12-15

Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, declares the LORD." And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people And they came and

worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

Within three weeks, everybody was stirred up. They considered their ways and said We are working hard but somehow things didn't work out the way we want. The business we thought was good went down. Our kids we taught well became rebellious. We have a shattered marriage; we quarrel and fight about nothing. Everywhere you find famine, even goods fail. There is not enough to be satisfied." In the Old Testament, they use the word "goods" as a way that speaks of satisfaction and prosperity. The people started to obey. God started to get them going.

2:1-5

In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet: "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to all the remnant of the people and say, 'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.

The people resumed building the temple. Some older Jews had seen the former glory of Solomon's Temple that was destroyed. These old men were probably around 10 years old when they were dragged off to Babylon and they can still remember the glory of the temple. Now they're about 80/90 years old. When they saw the temple, they burst out into weeping and said, "This is terrible. It's so pathetic!" This account can be read in the book of Ezra. The people were dispirited, discouraged, and demoralized when they saw the contrast between the new temple and the former one. Haggai had to be sent in to encourage them. "Don't let other people demoralize you. Be strong. God is in your midst. Just hang in there. Do what you need to do."

Whenever we do something and the results do not look as good as we or others have anticipated, we get discouraged along the way. So, God sent Haggai to remind them, "Fear not! Be strong; just go on."

2:6

"For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater



than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts."

As they were building and being discouraged, they were running out of resources and morale. God says, "Don't worry! the gold and the silver is mine; you just build and I will provide." We read in Ezra 5:1-2, Darius had cut their subsidy. However, God moved him to give so the rebuilding of the temple continued. "Everything is mine. I will shake the nations so that their treasures come in to fill this house with glory." It was God providing and they were encouraged. Remember, do not be discouraged when you do God's work because He will provide.

Two months later, we see something very unusual part in Haggai 2:10-14  
On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by Haggai, the prophet, "Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests about the law: If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?" The priests answered and said, "No." Then Haggai said, "if someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?" The priests answered and said, "It does become unclean." Then Haggai answered and said, "So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, declares the LORD, and so with every work of their hands. And what they offer there is unclean.

While the rebuilding of the temple was going on, something strange was going on, too. Haggai was ordered by God to go and put two questions to the priests. First, "If one carries a holy thing and touch something unholy, does it make the unholy thing clean?The priests answered, No!"  
Second, "If one has touched something dirty, like a dead body, whatever else he touches, does it become unclean? And the priests answered, Yes!"

Now what is all this got to do with building? The people were building the temple, which is a holy thing they were doing, but their lives were unclean. Probably, some were still oppressing their employees; others were cruel to the poor people around them. Maybe there were widows around and their children were being exploited in child labor to do unclean activities. Then they went to build the temple thinking that if I touch something clean, although I live a sinful life, it will make me clean. That's not true! When the clean thing touches the unclean thing, the unclean thing is still unclean. And the clean thing becomes unclean when touched by an unclean thing. It sounds very complicated!

In other words, you thought that by 'touching the temple' while practicing dishonesty and exploitation in your business, you will be blessed because you are serving God. When you build the temple with unclean hands, you contaminate the building. What is Haggai telling them?"You are doing a good

work, but please do not think that by doing God's work He will bless your dirty practices." Many Christians has this kind of mindset. They go to church. They give lots of money for the building fund or charity. They support God's work, but in doing business, they are horrible. I know some well-known people, whom you probably know, who look pious and religious. They would call me to speak in their fellowship. But when I talk to their employees, I am shocked by the words they use and the cruelty they impose on the people. It's unbelievable! They think, since I do God's work, my business will be blessed, it's God's business now. With the profit made from things done illegally, they want to bless God's work. As a church administrator I would firmly say, "Money? No need, thank you very much. We will do God's work without that!"

We see a very important principle that God is teaching us. He is not just concerned about us doing holy projects. He is more concerned about us having holy lives.

2:15-19

Now then, consider from this day onward. Before stone was placed upon stone in the temple of the LORD, how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. When one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty. I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and mildew and with hail, yet you did not turn to me, declares the LORD. Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider: Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on, I will bless you.

He's saying, you did all these things in the wrong way-putting yourselves as priority and God's things as low priority, and doing God's work while living a sinful life - do you realize that all your hard work always fall short? Something is missing in your life. It does not come up to your expectation. In other words, you are not satisfied in every area of your life because God has put a 'drought' on it. Consider your ways. Get your life right with God and you be blessed.

2:20-23

The word of LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow their chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts."

There is a total switch of gears so to speak. God does not focus on the people but on Zerubbabel. "You know what Zerubbabel? One day, all the kings, even the might ones, will be gone. I will finish them all. But you, Zerubbabel, are like the signet ring. I have chosen you." When you put a ring on a girl's hand you are saying, "You are the one!" A ring on a king's finger shows He is the King. It is a symbol.

And God said, "Zerubbabel, you are nobody. Do not look down on yourself for one day

that kingdom you dreamed of, and a future king will rule in peace forever and ever. From the seat of David, you are the representative."

The story of Haggai is an open-ended one. It is not a book; it is a chapter in the redemption story. One day, in the book of Revelation, all these things will converge. And the story will end like this, "And they live happily ever after." This is a real story, not a fairy tale.

There are several things we learn from Haggai:

First, God expects us to put Him first. That sounds almost unfair but in God's economics, that is the fairest deal of all: "you put 'Me' first, I will bless your labor; I will bless your marriage; I will bless your kids, your home, your health. I will give you all your need. Put Me first." Christians today need this lesson. This is not the story of Haggai; it is about the character of God. He expects to be put first. When you read the Bible, 'seek Him first,' don't try to seek some verses for yourself. Many people read the Bible and look for verses to support their ideas and wants, not the other way around. Seek first the kingdom of God. Seek God first. Everything begins with God and He should be the center of everything. It is doing what God wants, not what you can get from God.

Second, God is concerned for His children. I, as a human father, am concerned for the lives of my children. My success in rearing them up depends on how they are living on their own, treating their children and their wives. Bringing up my children well is very important to me, not how much money they have in the bank, or give to the church. I am more concerned about their daily lives.

This little book with two chapters helps us set our priorities right. Put God first, and "all these things shall be added unto you." Be watchful of your daily doing, not on Sunday only, but every day. As you and I apply the principles taught in this little book, our lives will be changed. We will then respond properly and become pleasing before God, Who loves us and wants the best for us.