

# The Book of Haggai Survey

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## [Preamble, Faith and Money.](#)

Haggai challenges our faith in a way unlike any other book in the Bible, it hits us hard where we like it least and that is particular with respect to money. Money is the one area in which most people desire to separate from their faith, it is untouchable for many, sooner we give up our faith than give up that which we think brings us the greater comfort, money.

Money is the security blanket we all put on practically, faith in the Lord to so many of us seems to be unpractical. Haggai addresses this in the most profound way. There are things we choose to do in the pursuit of money, it is rarely respecting abundance, but most often our perceived or actual need, and this pursuit has us make choices contrary to the Lord desire for us.

In our Church and in most of the Churches of the world this will be manifest most often in two ways, in those who choose to be gainfully employed on the Lords day and in those who's dedication is determined by time. With respect to work on the Lords day we can establish this to be wrong biblically and historically but, due to the nature of the times today we think there is no choice, but today is even less severe than 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel on that matter. With respect to time, it is made manifest mostly in men and most particularly with their addiction to their work or business, a dramatically unbalanced life that has placed the work of the Lord within them at the bottom rung of the ladder, first their income, a distant second contain a variety of competitive alternatives different to each, and often toward the bottom is faith, this second is my past example. However our faith, or lack thereof, may manifest also as a mix of both.

Both pictures related to a competitive choice of faith and money, one precedes the other and it is always manifest in our treatment of the law of God, in the two cases above one ignore the universal command of the Sabbath day, the second chooses mammon its master. Both have the effect of diverting from the work of God on the Temple of the Spirit of God, to the relative comfort of the flesh.

Perhaps the widows mite should be our example more that we credit it.

## [Introduction](#)

Hag 1:1

In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying;

Immediately we have the setting of the book before us.

80 years earlier the people of Judah were taken by King Nebuchadnezzar into Babylon.

For seventy years they were strangers in a strange land, a land the Lord commanded that they should build houses and live in them, plant gardens and have the fruit of them, have children and bring them up, for the captivity would be long. (Jer 29:28)

Jeremiah told them these things and he made clear that 70 years would be *accomplished in Babylon* (Jer 29:10), Daniel confirmed saying that God would “*accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem*” (Dan 9:2), *until the land had enjoy her Sabbaths* (2 Chron 36:21).

It may surprise people to know it, but Chronicles tells us that the people did not keep a Sabbath of the land for 490 years, and seventy years were owed.

Now, after our consideration of the previous nine minor prophets, all of whom were written prior to the captivity itself, we come to the last three minor prophets, all of whom are written after the captivity was completed.

Haggia is the first, and his ministry covers only a few months. We hear of Haggai no more after the ninth month.

He brings his words to the governor of the Land, to Zerubbabel.

### Motivation to Trust

<sup>2</sup> Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. <sup>3</sup> Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,

<sup>4</sup> Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses,  
And this house lie waste?

<sup>5</sup> Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

<sup>6</sup> Ye have sown much, and bring in little;  
Ye eat, but ye have not enough;  
Ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink;  
Ye clothe you, but there is none warm;  
And he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

<sup>7</sup> Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

<sup>8</sup> Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house;  
And I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little;  
And when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it.  
Why? saith the Lord of hosts.

Because of mine house that is waste,  
And ye run every man unto his own house.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew,  
And the earth is stayed from her fruit.

<sup>11</sup> And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains,  
And upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil,  
And upon that which the ground bringeth forth,  
And upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

The people had become apathetic respecting the things of the Lord.

They have worked to care for themselves at the expense of the Lord. They have built their own

homes, glorified their own habitations and left the buildings of the Lord to lay waste and broken.

We recall the zeal with which they began the work in Nehemiah and Ezra, we recall that they were distraught because thought they desired to build they were continually hampered by the people of the land until finally the gentiles sought permission from Artaxerxes in Ezra 4, to charge the Jews to stop their work.

But after Darius came to the throne search was made in the palace of Cyrus for the original order of Cyrus; that incredible command that we witnessed was prophesied long, long ago by Isaiah and fulfilled **to the letter** by Cyrus the Persian.

To give the command to restore and to build Jerusalem, and to the Temple he would say “**thou shalt be built**” but Daniel reminds that this would occur “**even in troublous times**” (Dan 9:25) and so it was.

We note Daniel because the same prophecy was given in part by Daniel in the ninth chapter of his book.

Though many have distorted the truth of the matter and trusting rather in the secular dates of the gentiles, there is no question that the prophecy of Daniel is consistent with that of Isaiah. For the history is so plainly given also in the Chronicles and the book of Ezra that the command to build **both the city and the temple** was for Cyrus to give in prophecy (Isaiah), and it was Cyrus who gave it in history (Ezra & 1 Chronicles).

Even the king Darius looked for that **same commandment** in order to right the wrong of his predecessor Artaxerxes who wrote to STOP the work.

The wrong was righted, but at some point the Jews took the focus away from the work of restoration of the temple of God, but rather worked to restore their old dwellings, to comfort their own nests, to the expense of the things of God.

The result?

<sup>6</sup> **Ye have sown much, and bring in little;  
Ye eat, but ye have not enough;  
Ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink;  
Ye clothe you, but there is none warm;  
And he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.**

It amazes me how we so often spend time trusting in the work of our own hands rather than trusting in the work of the Lord.

We think we are doing things to benefit ourselves all at the neglect of the that which the Lord benefits even in us.

There is a temple we are to focus our attention on building, **there is a new dwelling of the spirit of God** that we should be spending so much of our time to build up that it may glorify the Lord.

But we turn to trust in the work of our own hands, we reject the commands of the Lord and still think we can prosper.

We *sow much but bring in little*

Our hunger is not satisfied; our thirst is not quenched. We think we can continue to do the things we did before but forget we are in a **new dispensation**, we are governed by a new law.

We think that the deal is done, **heaven is a given** and we can still live the way we lived **before we had faith**, but we are governed by a **new law**, a new principal, **we are now to live by faith** not sight! And when we don't, we *earn wages to put it into a bag with holes*.

<sup>9</sup> Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little;  
And when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it.

Why does this happen?

Why? saith the Lord of hosts.  
Because of mine house that is waste,  
And ye run every man unto his own house.

And after I was born again I too had run back **to my old house**, living life the old way, **even thinking that gain might also be godliness** (1 Tim 6:5), I forgot that I was to trust in the Lord for my living and not in myself.

I did not understand that **the Just Shall LIVE by faith**, only that *becoming Just was ATTAINED by faith*.

I did not live by faith, I still ran hard after my comforts thinking that the way to attain those comforts was the same as it was before. But the harder I ran that less I travelled. The more I worked the less the land gave of its fruit, what is going on?

I was not growing spiritually and I was not gaining monetarily and all because I was trusting too much in me and too little in him, **And the more I worked the less I gained in either benefit**.

<sup>10</sup> **Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew,  
And the earth is stayed from her fruit.**

<sup>11</sup> **And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains,  
And upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil,  
And upon that which the ground bringeth forth,  
And upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.**

How much I longed for that dew from heaven as well as the fruit from the ground. But for all my efforts to attain these things, walking by sight and not by faith, the Lord **called for a drought up my land**.

Many who are called by the name of Christ chosen to work on the Lords day for just the same reason.

In this church as well as in churches all over the world these days, people pick and choose when to keep the Lords Sabbath as it suits their circumstances.

I don't pretend to know the motivation of each man or woman, each circumstance is different, each rational given for it is also different, each justification also is different.

But our passage is dealing with that of anticipated material benefit and our labour on that day is supposed to gain such a benefit, but at what cost?

Please understand that I know the difficulty, particularly related to money, which I will touch on shortly.

But please also know that we do what we do at a cost. Forgetting that we no longer gain by the sweat of our brow, there is another law we are to live by.

And when we forsake it, our money will end in **a bag with holes**, the very thing we think to gain we lose; and **few people know this reality better than me**.

Literally millions of dollars past through my hands, and none of it made it to my pockets. Sadly, in those years, I actually took money out of my pockets to work the work. My men all got paid, but my mortgage grew larger.

I was working over 100 hours per week, **living by sight and not by faith**. I suffered a nervous breakdown as the Lord called a drought upon my mountain. Other than my salvation, **that drought was the best thing that ever happened to me**.

When I surrendered even my family's material needs to the Lord, everything changed.

The Lord destroyed my trust in wealth to motivate me to trust completely in him and **he called me to work on that temple within**.

**We limit the Lord when we choose to live by sight and not by faith.**

Short story:

A young Christian who was desperate for work, found great difficulty in getting a job, as young people do. Especially those young ones without work experience. Newly married, he lived away from his mother and father but would see them on the weekends when he travelled to them for Church with his new bride.

He applied for work time and time again, but nothing.

A job came up, he was told that if he got the job he was required to work on weekends. Strangely, he thought it was God who opened the door and he took the job.

He cannot go to Church anymore, not on the days he works at least, but nor does he see his family often.

He made a choice based on a wrong assumption and contrary to the Lords command, **was the Lord testing his faith?**

If he honoured the Lord first, could not the Lord honour him?

**I know the answer to that question**, and it excites me to know it. I have made many decisions by faith and the Lord has so abundantly blessed me, but I have **also made poor decisions by sight, which still costs me**.

Israel neglected the work of the Lord for their own gain, and neither were benefitted.

Take a look at the 13<sup>th</sup> verse as I close this first point;

<sup>13</sup> Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord.

Through all that the Lord did to withhold the dew, the fruit, the corn, the wine, the oil, the cattle and all the labour of men's hands, he did so to **motivate them to trust him**.

Brethren, I am not going to bring up the matter relating to the Lords day again, you know the truth of the matter, take a risk on trusting the Lord alone, but do so by faith and not by compulsion **and do not forget that ALL YOU DO IS A WITNESS TO OTHERS**, are you a stumbling block for the work THEY are to attend to?

Seek the Lord prayerfully and earnestly, and once you have done so, **be motivated to trust him**.

### Consolation to Obey

Hag 2:3-9

<sup>3</sup> Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?

And how do ye see it now?

Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

<sup>4</sup> Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord;

And be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest;

And be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work:

**For I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts:**

<sup>5</sup> According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt,

So my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.

<sup>6</sup> For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while,

And I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

<sup>7</sup> And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come:

And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

<sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.

<sup>9</sup> The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts:

And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

There we certainly some who had seen the glory of Solomon's Temple, they may be old but the Lord asks if they can recall its splendor and compare it to the one left **disheveled before them**.

Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

When they left off the rebuilding works, the temple still looked as nothing in comparison to what was first built. But the Lord consoles them saying;

<sup>4</sup> Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord;

And be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest;

And be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work:

**For I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts:**

A spiritual application is not difficult to see here. When we are born again of the Lord we are turned

to children again, as if we need to learn everything again from scratch.

**And that is not far from the truth.**

It's like we are looking at this world with **new eyes** almost as if we have never used them properly before.

**So bright is the day it seems**, that we feel we need to take a break from that light lest it blinds us.

**So we turn back to the dimness we feel more comfortable in** more and more. Sometimes we stay there so long we **end up asleep, and you can't feed a sleeping babe.**

But now being woken by hunger, the Lord consul's us to obey him, **be strong.... For I am with you, saith the Lord.**

Look at verse five;

<sup>5</sup> **According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt,  
So my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.**

Incredible how in the Bible, the coming out of Egypt is a **type of salvation**, and here we are addressing our growth in the Lord the same way.

And verses six and seven he reminds us of his power and ability that we might have the consolation needed to obey him.

<sup>6</sup> **For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while,  
And I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;  
<sup>7</sup> And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come:  
And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.**

God is making a promise that the temple the people attend to building, will be far greater than that of Solomon's.

The natural state of the heavens and the earth would change, the nations of the heathen also will submit to his will, as he fills that house with glory.

It will be a witness to the world, as the temple of the Holy Spirit **YOU ARE TO BE A WITNESS TO THE WORLD** of that same glory.

**We live under a completely different regime than what we lived under before** brethren. We are to live by faith and that is so completely different to how the world works. The people of the world don't live that way and they think we are mad when we do, **yet it is a witness of the Glory of God.**

They don't pray and ask the Lord for strength or help, but they do ask us to pray for them. We are charged always to pray, when **we are weak he is strong** because *without* him **we can do nothing.**

Who lives that way?

We are not used to living that way, but that is how we are expected to live, we don't obey the Lord by sight, we do it by faith and leave the consequences to him, **for we know that all things work together for good to them that love God** and the best way we demonstrate our love is by trusting and

obeying him.

Verse eight he says

<sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.

The people needed to be reminded that all the earth belongs to the Lord; it's not their silver they are giving for the work, but his.

They are giving him what already belongs to him.

Deut 10:14 reminds us;

Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

The Lord is in need of nothing, but we give to him that we may be blessed by the one who owns it all.

Like the widows mite, we give out of faith and trust, even all our living, that he might be glorified.

And when we commit ourselves so completely to the Lord... well verse nine;

<sup>9</sup> The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts:  
And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

There are times I so often grieve that I have not trusted in the Lord more, for him to do with me more. **I think of how much I hold back and it brings me so often to tears.**

How much I could glorify the Lord if I was more faithful to him than I am.

And how I pray it never be in my life that I think I have attained, **when I look to the Cross and see all that was given for me.**

### [Affirmation to Strengthen](#)

Hag 2:11-14

And what a fascinating passage we have before us, let's read and see how our sermons might also fit.

<sup>11</sup> Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, <sup>12</sup> If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, **shall it be holy?** And the priests answered and said, No. <sup>13</sup> Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, **It shall be unclean.** <sup>14</sup> Then answered Haggai, and said,

So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord;

And so is every work of their hands;

And that which they offer there is unclean.

Haggai here is making something very plain for the people for them to understand. So easy it is for the people to defile themselves that if they **were to try the best they can do, they will still find their efforts less than pure.**

Verse 12 tells that even if the skirt of the clothing touches bread or pottage, wine or oil while they are attempting to perform a holy ordinance, they are defiled.

And even if some are made unclean by a dead body and touch any of those things, they also will be unclean.

And verse 14 he links all of this to the nature of the people respecting **all the work of their hands** to God, *unclean*.

Remember Isaiah who also reminds us in Isa 64:6 saying;

But we are all as an unclean thing,  
And all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;  
And we all do fade as a leaf;  
And our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Brethren, even when you have done all you do respecting the Lord, don't think that it makes you any holier.

Turn to Luke 17:7-10

But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? <sup>8</sup> And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? <sup>9</sup> Doth he thank that servant because **he did the things that were commanded him?** I trow not. <sup>10</sup> So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, **We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.**

Brethren, if you undertake faithfulness **through compulsion** to show yourself righteous and not rather for **your own burden before the Lord**, giving to him ONLY THAT WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS BLOOD, *FOR YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN*, then "*every work of your hands that you offer is unclean*".

We are to live by faith alone, that is the all we give and offer to the Lord.

I have exhorted you about the Lord's day, I would be most miserable of men if you made your decision in obedience to me rather than the Lord.

He and he alone can affirm to strengthen your faith.

So the Lord goes on for the next few verses reminding them of their lack when they looked for gain, and then tells them what he will do when the foundation is laid.

Verse 18-19

<sup>18</sup> Consider now from this day and upward,  
From the four and twentieth day of the ninth month,  
Even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it.  
<sup>19</sup> Is the seed yet in the barn?  
Yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought

forth:  
From this day will I bless you.

The time of year was one that had **as yet not brought forth its fruit**, and yet, when the foundation of the Lords temple was laid, from that day, regardless of the apparent barrenness of the field, **from that day**, the Lord will bless you.

- Brethren, only the Lord can make the dessert bloom.
- Only Christ can make a clean thing out of an unclean.
- Only God can straighten a crooked path.

No matter how small our faith, begin now to trust the Lord and see how much he will bless you, **even at a time when fruit is unexpected.**

### Anticipation of Glory

Hag 2:20-23

<sup>20</sup> And again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, <sup>21</sup> Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying,

I will shake the heavens and the earth;

<sup>22</sup> And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms,

And I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen;

And I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them;

And the horses and their riders shall come down,

Every one by the sword of his brother.

<sup>23</sup> In that day, saith the Lord of hosts,

Will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord,

And will make thee as a signet:

For I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

It's an interesting context this passage, it's the last of the four messages Haggai brings to the people. Our outline today has followed those four messages separated at Chapter 1, 2:1-9, then 10-19 and now 20-23.

It speaks of a time yet future and but does so in words that remind us of the past. As we read we can't help but get a picture of Egypt as the Red Sea

And I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them;  
And the horses and their riders shall come down,

But the shaking of the heavens and the Earth in verse 21 and the overthrow of the Kingdoms of the heathen in verse 22 gives to us a picture of the day of the Lord at the end.

Nevertheless it is given as an Anticipation of Glory. The Lord reminds of what has come to pass and how he delivered out of Egypt and tells of that which is yet future how he will culminate all things in complete and final glory.

- Our book begins with the rebuke of Gods people for their faithlessness,

- Then an encouragement to faithfully obey
- Then an affirmation that through faithful obedience he will bless
- Until ultimate glory is gained by him and for him.

When we have come out of Egypt, when we have come out of our enslavement to sin through Christ, though we first rejoice in that freedom, we find that there is still much of Egypt within us.

Israel spent 400 years needing to fend for themselves through the worst of conditions in Egypt.

When they were saved by God alone, they rejoiced in that victory.

But ultimately they turned from faithfully serving the Lord, to fend again for themselves, not realising that the governing principal of faith was to be their new way of life.

From the day their heart would turn to him, he will bless with nourishment even at a time out of season.

My dear brethren, you are no longer of the world. The governing principals of the godless life, where the sweat of your brow is required to bring forth the fruit of the ground, NO LONGER APPLIES.

**For the Just shall live by his faith.**