

Haggai 2.1-9 Reflections

by Will Groben

Day 1

Learn: Read Haggai 2.1-9. The first prophecy we have from Haggai came from God on August 29, 520BC, about eighteen years after the exiles returned to the promised land. On September 21, God encouraged them by promising he was with them. On October 17, God gave Haggai a prophecy about the end times. This was the last day of the Feast of Booths, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles, so the people would have been gathered at the temple mount for the weeklong festival. This is significant, because they would have known this was the time of year when Solomon had dedicated the temple originally, and because God ordained this feast to remember God's provision and deliverance during the exodus from Egypt and as a celebration of God's provision and deliverance through the harvest. Of course, they just had a bad harvest due to God's discipline over their sin, so their enthusiasm would have been diminished from that, and now apparently they were feeling a little down about the temple project.

We know from Ezra that some of those who returned from exile had seen the temple before its destruction in 586BC. The Persian plans were to make the new temple bigger than Solomon's original, though we do not know for sure if that became reality. The ornate precious metals of Solomon's temple had been plundered before these people saw it in childhood, but no doubt they did lament not having their sacred artifacts, like the Ark of the Covenant. They also might have felt bad that what they were building would not measure up to the temple envisioned by Ezekiel and Isaiah, nor would it be a complex of buildings like before, nor did they have craftsmen who could work the wood and rock as beautifully as before. Maybe during the exile, they had built up the image of the former temple in their minds. God sensed the discouragement of the people.

Reflect: Can you remember times when you felt discouraged because in human terms a project or desired goal seemed hopeless? What made that project or goal so challenging for you? How did you handle the discouragement? How might you have handled it better? Do you believe God can do what seems impossible from the human perspective? How can you take hope and encouragement from that?

Day 2

Learn: Read Haggai 2.1-5. God gave them three assurances here: he was with them, he had made a promise to their ancestors, and his Spirit would testify to them. During the exodus from Egypt, God promised deliverance and provision, and that his Spirit would be in their midst, so they were not to fear their enemies, hunger, or anything else. Nine centuries later, these people were celebrating a feast of remembrance for that deliverance and provision. They were to take God's words as reiteration of his covenantal promise: just as he had provided, protected, and empowered before, he would do so again.

Reflect: Can you remember times in your life when you really needed God's help and he came through for you? God might not have always worked in the way you expected or given you exactly what you wanted, but can you see that God has provided for you and empowered you and even protected you in the past? Make a list of the most significant interventions God has made in your life. Does remembering these events encourage you to trust God going forward? Why or why not?

Day 3

Learn: Read Haggai 2.1-5 again, perhaps in a different translation. The people had learned over the past few weeks to fear God, but God told them not to fear the world, not to fear failure, for he was faithful and he was with them. God's message was, "Take heart! and get to work! because I am with you!" Philosophically, we might summarize God's message as, "Do what God asks, and trust God with the results and everything else!" This essentially was what God instructed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, what God said to Abraham

repeatedly as he grew Abraham into his representative, what God said to Israel and her kings repeatedly. This is a key attitude for successful life! These people in Haggai's day were not to allow their concerns to be more influential than God's plans. God is all powerful, all capable, so if he wants us to do something, we should do it, trusting him to empower us and deliver us.

Reflect: Why is it hard to trust God with the results? Why do we not always actually do what God asks us to do? Why is it hard to trust God with everything else in life and focus on his tasks? For each of these questions, think of some examples in your life history, your life now, or at least what you have seen in others.

Day 4

Learn: Read Haggai 2.6-9. Again this language recalls the exodus from Egypt [as in Psalm 68.8; Exodus 15.14]. They were at a festival celebrating God's deliverance in the exodus and they would know these scripture passages referring to that deliverance, so they would understand that God was promising a new exodus-like deliverance from Gentile oppression in the future, as other prophets had already taught. In that first exodus, the people carried away gold and silver and gems which God forced from the Egyptians, which they used to decorate the tabernacle; and Solomon decorated the original temple with tribute from the nations which David had taken. God promised the same would happen in the future [as in Isaiah 60.4-14], so they should not be troubled, for the new temple would end up more glorious than ever.

Also there would be peace [the Hebrew word שָׁלוֹם =shah-LOME]: they would be free of Gentile oppression, free of Samaritan resistance, free even of sin and sickness. During the exile, Ezekiel and Daniel prophesied of the coming Messiah who would be king and savior, with assurances of peace in his reign. After Haggai, the prophets Zechariah and Malachi would say the same. We believe Revelation 20 promises a 1000 year reign for Christ when he returns, and that he will rule as king of Israel, and through Israel he will rule the world. After that dispensation [biblical time period], Christ will establish an eternal kingdom in which there will be no sin, no death, no crime, true peace, and then no need of a temple [Revelation 21.22].

Reflect: Do you ever get discouraged by world events or the way our culture is changing? What sorts of things bother you most? Is it encouraging to know that God is in control right now, limiting evil, and that God has a plan for making all things right in the end, with Jesus as ruler of the world? How can you let these truths build your hope, sense of peace, and enthusiasm for life?

Day 5

Learn and reflect: From this prophecy, we are reminded that God can defeat the greatest powers or nations on earth, shape human history, alter nature, make happen what he wants to happen. We should take comfort to know God promises to do this in the end, so as to end corruption, war, crime, sin; that someday Christ will return and demand an accounting, set all things right, and rule over the earth as king. End times prophecy teaches us that Jesus is even more magnificent than we often think. He is the savior; the Messiah or Christ promised to the Jews and even before that to Adam and Eve; the head of the church he founded; the high priest advocating for us at God the Father's right hand; he is God the Father's anointed judge; but he is more. And though there is nothing greater than the Son of God, which he is, we can say that he is more in the sense that there is more to know about him. Jesus is the king, and not just king of our hearts or king of Christians or even the king of the earth someday, he is the king of the Jews, descended from David, he is the prophesied Son of Man and Davidic king, which makes him God the Father's ultimate representative, God the Father's chosen one. End times prophecy gives us that important part of who Jesus is, shows us how history and scripture all ties together in Christ, and develops our faith of every one of God's promises coming true. And if we sense all this about God, about Jesus, about their plans for history, this should shape who we are and how we respond to God and his revelation. What impact will this have on you, your thinking and your life?