

**Record of Sermons delivered during the month of  
May 2017**

(added progressively after each Sunday)

---

(see following pages)

Haggai Chapter 1  
First Things First – Introduction – The Temple

This book is a story about the Temple. And therefore before we look into the book, I'd like to say a few words about the Temple:

As you know, the old Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, didn't worship God in a Temple. They knew that God was everywhere. They knew that He was a Spirit. They knew there was only one God. Where-ever they pitched their tent they built an altar (a pillar) and they worshipped God there.

Then they went to Egypt and the race grew there. The Israelites (descendants of Jacob whose new name became Israel) grew to be a mighty nation. When they 'came out' of Egypt they were travelling through the wilderness, in which they found themselves, for 40 years. Here God gave them exact instructions, that they should build, not a Temple, but a Tabernacle – a portable place of worship. And whenever the pillar of cloud or fire moved them on and brought them to their next camp, the very first thing they did was to erect the portable Tabernacle. Only then were their own tents erected in strict tribal order around the symbol of God's presence. The centre of their National life, then, was always the Tabernacle.

All the time, through the Judges to Saul and David, they continued, none the less, to worship in the Tabernacle.

God made it quite clear, however, that this wasn't going to last forever. It was a 'picture' of what Christ would do when He came. Everything in the Tabernacle had a meaning, a significance, speaking of some aspect of the character or work of Christ. God made it quite clear that this Tabernacle wouldn't last forever.

Eventually it was replaced by a stone Temple.

David wanted to build it but God said, “No! Because your hands have been touched with the blood of your enemies. You're not a fit man to build the Temple, in which the presence of God is to be felt.”

None the less, David amassed the materials and it was to his son, Solomon, that the amazing privilege came, to build the Temple (in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of his reign). It was 7 years in the building. Tremendous craftsmanship!

Amazingly, wonderful beauty, riches and treasures were in this Temple. Not a massive building, but a very, very beautiful building.

Solomon died and other kings followed. Some of them neglected the Temple, so it became almost a ruin. Some of them robbed the Temple. Some stripped off the treasures to bribe off their enemies.

Some of them repaired the Temple. The Temple continued! It was the 'life of Judah'

However eventually Judah was defeated by the Babylonians, as God had said. The population was lifted up and taken away to Babylon. The Temple was left absolutely desolate. A great deal of it was knocked down. It lost all its former glory. All its vessels and other treasures were taken off to Babylon. The handful of people who were left behind gathered at the ruined site and continued to worship God there.

However after the prophesied 70 years, back came an initial group of people from Babylon. They laid the foundations for the Temple. But then the work stopped. (That's where the book of Haggai fits in.)

But let us go on with the story of the Temple.

Eventually, after Haggai preached, the Temple was rebuilt!

It wasn't half as glorious and beautiful as the previous Temple. Lots of things were missing: The Ark of the Covenant disappeared sometime just before the 'exile' to Babylon; Solomon's 10 lamps were gone, so they put in a seven-branched candle stick – just like Jews still use today in their homes and synagogues. But the Temple was rebuilt and for 500 years – much longer than the first Temple and much longer than the next Temple – it was the centre, once more of the life of the Nation. People came to worship and this was the place where sacrifices were to be made. Once again this was where the presence of God was felt.

In 19 BC along came Herod the Great, who was an Idumaeen<sup>1</sup> and therefore not very popular with the Jews, over whom he was to rule. To win their favour he built a new Temple. He promised that this new Temple would be far more grand and far more beautiful than anyone had ever seen.

After 10 years the main structure was up, but they continued putting on the final masonry through to the year AD 64. Unfortunately in AD 70 the Romans, as you know, destroyed Jerusalem so completely that apart from a little part of Solomon's Temple (some foundations) not one stone was left standing on another. Herod's Temple was completely destroyed.

That's the history of the Temple:

- Pillars (altars) for the Patriarchs
- Tabernacle in the time of Moses, Judges, Samuel, Saul and David
- Temple from Solomon to the 'exile'
- (No Temple during the 'exile')
- Another Temple after the 'exile'
- And a far more glorious and grand Temple in the days of the Lord Jesus

---

<sup>1</sup> Herod the Great was born in the land of Idumea or Edom around 74 B.C. He was the son of Antipater of Idumaeen, who was a high-ranking official for Hyrcanus II. Herod was an Edomite who had adopted the customs of the Jews. In the past, the Edomites were ancient enemies of the Jewish people but they no longer were relevant as a people during this era. Many of the Edomites were absorbed into other cultures of the time. The Jews had conquered these people around 140 B.C. and forced many of them to accept their religion or to leave the region. Though many Jewish people didn't care for foreigners worshipping God and adopting their customs Herod was made governor of Judea when he was 25 years old.

## Christ, and the acts of the Apostles.

Now there's no Temple!

Or is there? Well in fact: there is!

Remember the 'word' of God, tells us that the Tabernacle and all those previous stone Temples were only pictures, shadows, *types* of something that was to come.

And now that the substance, now that Christ has come, there's no need for the *type*.  
Now the 'fullness' has come, there's no need for the 'shadow'.  
Now the reality has come, there's no need for the 'picture'.

It wasn't an unfortunate accident that the Roman's destroyed the Temple. It was the will of God. As it is that no Temple of God can be built (on earth) again. It's impossible because there is already another Temple. But where is it? And what is it? It's a Temple not made with bricks or stone. It's a Temple made of people.

God still had His Temple. There is still one place on earth, and one only, where the true God is worshipped. There is still one place on earth, and one only, where God's presence is found. There is still one place on earth, and one only, where the Great High Priest ministers. And there is still one place on earth, and one only, which is worthy of the title: *The Temple of God*.

Well, what is it? We find the answer in 1 Corinthians 3:16,17

*<sup>16</sup> Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?  
<sup>17</sup> If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.*

Or we read, elsewhere in the New Testament: (2 Corinthians 6:16 – 7:1)

*<sup>16</sup> What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,*

*“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.*

*<sup>17</sup> Therefore go out from their midst,  
and be separate from them, says the Lord,  
and touch no unclean thing;  
then I will welcome you,*

*<sup>18</sup> and I will be a father to you,  
and you shall be sons and daughters to me,  
says the Lord Almighty.”*

*<sup>7:1</sup> Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*

And again, elsewhere in the New Testament: (Ephesians 2:19 - 22)

*<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

What the Scriptures tell us then is that there is still a Temple. Not a Temple of bricks. Not a Temple of stone. But a Temple just as real! A Temple where the presence of God is found. A very place where God is truly worshipped. And what is this Temple? You. Me. Us.

Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A person who is called by the Spirit of God, who comes to see the things which before he didn't believe, who places his faith in Christ and who therefore has all his sins taken away. Who receives the privilege of being called 'Child of God'. Someone therefore who becomes a Christian.

Such a one becomes part (a living stone) within the Temple of God.

If you like then: the whole company of believers is the Temple of God. The whole aggregate. The whole sum of Christian people is God's Temple. This is God's Temple. This is God's Temple manifested locally. (Therefore it's quite right to talk about the local Church as being the Temple of God. You are the habitation of God, through the Spirit. This is a place where God dwells! Not a Church building, but in the people who have a living faith in the living God. Who are saved by the gospel and who are in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit.

That then is the Temple. And the moment we grasp that, then the book of Haggai will have an altogether new meaning for us.

What I mean is this: Take the message which God gave to those people when they had that Temple and apply it to this people who are part of this Temple.

The Temple of God has been altered. It used to be bricks and mortar. It is now people. But although the Temple has altered God has not altered, Himself! The principles that are found in the book of Haggai, still apply. Those principles once applied to a stone Temple. Those same principles now apply to a living Temple. The things God said then, applied to bricks and mortar. The things God said, now apply to people. Men and women, boys and girls, who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When God rebukes them for leaving a building waste, we should take that to mean that God is rebuking us if we neglect the Church of God.

When God rebukes them and says, "You haven't built the Temple." We should take that

as meaning that God's rebuking us if we don't build up the Church in its most holy faith. It's in that sort of spirit in which we should approach the book of Haggai.

[1783 ]

**May this understanding of the certainties of God's Word be with all the saints gathered here today.**

Next week Chapter 1:1-15

**Delivered Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

Haggai Chapter 1:1-15

First Things First

This is just not an interesting book of history. God spoke! And if God said such things as that, when there was only a stone Temple at stake, how much more do these things need saying, now that the Temple is a living congregation of people. Therefore let's go to Haggai Chapter 1.

This morning I intend to talk under 3 headings:

First, the **situation**.

Secondly, the **message**.

Thirdly, the **response**.

What is the situation? Well the situation is that the captivity in Babylon is over. Back from Babylon have come some of the Jews to their homeland. They have permission to rebuild the Temple. In fact, that's why they have come home.<sup>2</sup>

As the story, recorded in the book of Haggai, opens, the initial work on the Temple lies untouched for 16 years. Cyrus who sent the people home has been killed and eventually Darius has acquired the throne of the all-conquering Medes and Persians. It is in his second year.

As for the Temple. The foundations and some gathered bricks are there. And so is the grass and weeds that have invaded and covered the site. Not unlike deserted vineyards we saw a few years ago in Mildura. Desolate and forlorn!

For 16 years the people have walked past the accusing site and not cared. 16 years

---

<sup>2</sup> Cyrus, the Persian, who has defeated the Babylonians, sent the Jews home. He said, "Go and rebuild the Temple". So, they went home. Full of enthusiasm! Longing to see the Temple rebuilt. They laid the foundations. The work beginning with tremendous zest, terrific enthusiasm. Then there's outward opposition. The work stops! Quite legitimate. But the work doesn't get off the ground again. Why not? Because the outward opposition continues or even gets worse? No! It passed. But because the 50,000 people who have come back to the 'promised land', their homeland, have lost heart. They have become indifferent. It's as though they couldn't care less whether the Temple was rebuilt or whether it remained a ruin. They just stopped caring. When Haggai brings God's message it had become 16 years or so, since they first came back, full of enthusiasm: getting the foundations down very quickly; began to gather some of the stones. Then the opposition stopped it. Now there's no reason it shouldn't carry on, but they had just lost interest. They just couldn't care.

That's the background to the situation.

So at that stage God sends Haggai. And two months later Zechariah.

Haggai's job is to stir the people up. To point out to them what God's attitude to their laziness is. To awaken them from their indifference. To make them finish with their lethargy and their idleness, and to get on with the job of putting up a dwelling place for God.

There are 4 dates and 4 messages in the book; representing the 4 months preaching of the prophet Haggai.

Thank God, the preaching was successful. 4 Years later the Temple was finished! The people held a great festival, which is very fitting since Haggai's name means 'feast' or 'festival'.

and nobody has done anything. 16 years of inactivity. 16 years of ruin and wastage and then God sends Haggai. That's the situation! Now let's look at the message, verses 1-11.

This message is in two parts: Verses 1-5 are words of rebuke, while verses 6-11 are words of explanation.

Consider verse 1:<sup>3</sup>

Now as you may know, Jews on the first day of the month (the new moon) come together. And so the people of the land assemble on the first day of the month as usual. Perhaps they gather at the site of the Temple. But this is going to be no usual gathering. One they will never forget! Haggai is there. Perhaps he's been before. But this time he is there as the Prophet of the Lord. This time he comes with a 'word from God'!

To whom is this 'word' addressed? Zerubbabel, the governor; Joshua, the high priest. God has it all covered. The message is to the civil authority and the religious authority. It's a political message and a Spiritual one. It's a National message and a moral one. Zerubbabel, governor, born in captivity in Babylon – grandson of the last king of Judah, descendant of David. Joshua grandson of the last high priest of Judah. These represent all aspects of the returning Jewish society. Haggai brings a stern message from God to all the people so represented.

Verse 2:

What then about these people? They still had a conscience. They had enough conscience to admit that the Temple needed building up. They could see that. But as you know and I know, not only from what we read about others in the Bible, but also from our own experience, if our heart is unwilling to do something – we can always find an excuse for not doing it. So although they knew the Temple needed building they found an excuse. The reason didn't lie in the original outward opposition – now long gone. They just said it wasn't the right time! This is something that can wait. Not now. We've got other things in hand. We'll do it one day! All in good time. We'll get around to it. One day! It's just not the right circumstances to be doing it. Not now!

They knew it had to be done. They knew it must be done. They knew it couldn't go on indefinitely like this. They just kept shelving the issue. Putting it to one side and getting on with something else.

<sup>2</sup> *“Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.”*

Note, at this point and in this condition God doesn't refer to them as His chosen people. He says, “These people say”. These people!

And what had they been doing, if they were not putting their hands to the work of God?

---

<sup>3</sup> <sup>1</sup> *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:*

When they were not building up the dwelling place of the 'living God'?

Verse 3 and 4:<sup>4</sup>

16 years before they had come back to their home country, but there were no homes there for them. So they got their homes. Fair enough. But then once they had their houses they set to improving them.

And these houses weren't just suitable houses, they were 'panelled' houses. The King James version retains the old English spelling when it refers to cieled houses – from which we get the more modern spelling for ceiling. But on the other times this word is used in translations of the Bible it means fancy woodwork sometimes covered with gold that faced the walls as well as the ceiling. Usually associated with the decoration you would expect to find in a palace of those days. The ESV uses the word 'panelled', which heads in this direction. They weren't just standard, 'functional', adequate, suitable houses. They were tending toward palaces!

And all the while God's house was a ruin.

“Is it a time’, God asks, “for you to be building up your already beautiful houses, while mine is a forgotten ruin?”

Verse 5:

*<sup>5</sup> Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways.*

Here is the rebuke. The warning. “Consider your ways”.

God's rebuke is that they put themselves and their own comfort and pride first and God second. Not even second or even third. Almost forgotten!

Just a little bit of conscience still speaking to them: “You must get around to it sometime”. But sometime is no time, and 16 years have gone by and not a finger has been lifted. “Consider your ways”, says the Lord Almighty!

Is there anyone here like that? Am I like that? Are we a people who know that the Church of God needs building up. It needs building up, this Temple of God, because it's a Temple of people. It needs building up in it's most holy faith. Every believer needs building up. But it doesn't just need building up. It needs adding to. Are we a people who have forgotten that? Are we a people who do nothing about it. Have we got used to the Church being like it is. Have we got used to waste and ruin in our souls? Of the souls of those around us?

Have we said to ourselves, “The time is not yet. Not now. All in good time. We'll get round to to building other people up. We'll get round to making a definite effort to add to the Church. Sometime. But not now!” Are we people like that? Am I? The work of God is suffering, but I'm not!

<sup>4</sup> <sup>3</sup> Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, <sup>4</sup> “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses, while this house lies in ruins?”



Are we a people who have spent time and money, talent, initiative and ingenuity on our own affairs, homes and so on. All is in good trim. But the time, money, talent, initiative and ingenuity spent on God's dwelling – the living Temple of believers – bears no comparison.

Should this be so?

<sup>5</sup> *Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways.*

Consider your ways!

Following the rebuke comes the explanation: Verses 6 – 11<sup>5</sup>

Here for emphasis the same principle is indicated several ways.

“You see”, says God through the prophet, Haggai, “this is why certain things have been happening to the Nation. It's because the house of God is laying waste, that these things are happening in your lives”.

He explains in verses 6 and 9.

This is why the people of the land have become materially frustrated:

They never seem to have enough of anything; they put in loads of seed into the ground, but they seem to get very little return; they don't seem to have enough food; they don't seem to have enough to drink; their clothes don't seem to keep them warm; and when they bring home their wages it was as if they were putting their wages into a bag (or was it a pocket) with holes. The money seems to go nowhere at all!

There's this longing for more. They constantly feel that they could do with more. And when they've got more they still feel that they need even more.

Now it's not because they are poor! Let me say that again. It's not because they are poor. If they were poor they wouldn't have any homes, but they have. Not only have they got homes they've got these ciled or panelled houses. It's not because they are poor. This is not an economic thing that has happened to them. This is something which God is doing. From the latter part of verse 9 we read quite clearly this is God's doing! He is bringing this material frustration. This longing for more. And even more and more, but no satisfaction with any of it. Don't we see this in our society?

This feeling in their hearts, the life they are now living, is an act of God. He makes them feel like this to wake them up!

---

<sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> *You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.*

<sup>7</sup> *Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways.* <sup>8</sup> *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.* <sup>9</sup> *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 his own house.* <sup>10</sup> *Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.* <sup>11</sup> *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 labours.”*

They're feeling this frustration, so that they can be brought to "consider their ways". They're feeling this frustration, so that they will stop; pause; consider and think about the needs of God's house which is laying in ruin.

You see, what we can learn from Scripture is that the God, who cares for the poor, also brings the comfortable to feel that they can't manage. This is a judgement. It's part of God's mercy to us. It's part of God's plan to waken us up to our proper priorities. God is here speaking to comfortable people who can't manage.

What is happening is this:

A man (or woman) neglects the work of God. He puts that work as of secondary importance. He doesn't do much about it. He never gives himself to the building up of God's Church, or even the building up of his own soul. He never gives himself to Biblical evangelism. He neglects God's Church! He neglects the Temple. And so it's not long before he begins to feel a frustration in the material realm.

"I can't manage. I must have more." He feels this because God is trying to wake him up.<sup>6</sup>

God's solution is found in verse 8 of Haggai chapter 1:

*<sup>8</sup> 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.*

God's solution is not that the man should sit down and make financial plans, because his sense of financial and material frustration is God's gift of mercy to a back-sliding person.

Well that's the situation of the neglected Temple. There's the rebuke to people who have put their own wants above the work of God. And we see the explanation for why so many people feel frustrated, because they have neglected the work of God, having turned their eyes inward on themselves.

God's solution: Start building the Temple and the whole thing will sort itself out.

Now finally, let's look at the response which the people in Haggai's time made to this

---

<sup>6</sup> Now one man reacts to this in one way and another man differently:

This man says, "It says in the Bible, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you!'" Having had the feeling of material frustration, he recognises God's leading and he starts seeking God in a way that he never sought before. He starts Seeking the Kingdom of God. Seeking God's righteousness. He starts giving himself to the work of God. He starts to build up his own soul; and the soul of others in the Church of God; He starts trying to add to the Temple. And that frustration goes. He may be poor in many ways, but God's blessing breaks through.

But here is the other person: He also feels the same material frustrations. But his response is to plot and plan how he will get more and more money.

Maybe a change of job. Or an extra job. Or someone else in the family must get an extra job. Drop everything else, seek promotion. Be a 'workaholic'.

While he is making plans to bring more money into the household, he is piercing and ruining his soul. 1 Timothy 6:10

<sup>10</sup> *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.*

message: (verses 12-15)<sup>7</sup>

The head of civil government, the high priest and that small remnant of the people came together with the unanimity of oneness of mind. They said, "If these things be so, there is only one thing we can do. We must give ourselves to the building up of the Temple."<sup>8</sup>

And the moment they make that decision, God's 'word' changes. The moment they each say, "I'm going to stop all this and put God's work first." God's 'word' changes. It's a simple 'word'. Four words actually. At the end of verse 13: "I am with you".<sup>9</sup>

So God gives this assurance to the people who have set themselves to the work of the Lord. That 'word' of comfort and assurance is what they needed.

They know that all their needs will be met. They know that all their inadequacies will be overruled. And they know, best of all, that the presence of the 'living God', that had forsaken them for 16 long years, will be once more found amongst them.<sup>10</sup>

Is there anyone here that will make a similar response? As we continue to examine the book of Haggai over the next two weeks, four times we will find that God says, "Consider your ways".

---

7 <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup> Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, declares the LORD." <sup>14</sup> 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, the 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, <sup>15</sup> on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king

8 There is a fear in their hearts: There is a fear because of the rebuke of God has hit them. Hard! There's a fear because there's always a human fear over things like this. There's a fear of putting God first because it is so adverse to the human heart. There's a fear that God is judging them and they don't like to be under his judgement. There's a fear that God had to send a prophet to tell them these things that they should have recognised for themselves. There's a fear now because every time they walk past the wasted ruin they will think of the 16 years when they could have done something about it. There's is fear! Yet there is this unanimity of purpose, which means that should set themselves to the work of building up the Church.

9 Remember when Moses thought he couldn't cope.  
What did God say to him? "I am with you".  
Remember when Joshua thought he couldn't cope.  
What did God say to him? "I am with you".  
Remember when Jeremiah, at the beginning of his ministry thought he couldn't cope.  
What did God say to him? "I am with you".  
Remember when the disciples were commissioned by Jesus to go into the world.  
What did He say? "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age".

10 So we see God at work in His people. We see Zerubbabel stirred up; Joshua stirred up; and the spirit of all the remnant of the people stirred up.

And we read that they did come and they did work in the house of the Lord of Hosts, their God: <sup>15</sup> on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month,

That is, twenty three days after they were stirred up and received God's assurance to be with them, the work began. During that 23 days they considered the message from God; they paused; they weighed everything and then acted.

It therefore was no hasty decision. Not a decision made on the spur of the moment, which would result in them backing down later. Not a course of action where they might begin just because of some warm feeling inside, that would cease when the warm feelings subsided. As is inevitably the case!

No! They'd heard God's 'word'; taken note of it; gone home and thought about it; seen the truth of it and 3 weeks plus two days later have all come back together to begin the work. Above all, they were not seeking to achieve this turn around in attitude and action through their own strength and resolve, for their own glory and self congratulation. They had the evidence of 16 years to tell them that they had all the inadequacies of human nature. Their hope was firmly in the strength of the Lord and his oft proven assurance to be the strength they lacked. To be with them.

Should you have to admit that you are not building up your soul as a part of God's living Temple. Then God says, "Consider your ways".  
Should you have to admit that you are not building up the soul of others who are a part of God's living Temple. Then God says, "Consider your ways".

Should you have to admit that you are not seeking to extend Christ's Church, increasing God's living Temple. Then God says, "Consider your ways".

But the moment you take up that firm resolve to surrender to God's love and reforming power. To do everything that God has planned for you to do in building up the 'living' Temple of Christ's Church, you will know that He says to you, personally, "I am with you".

[2239 ]

**May this understanding of the certainties of God's Word be with all the saints gathered here today.**

**Delivered Sunday 21<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

Sermon preached by Rev Darrell Thatcher was not recorded.

**Delivered Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

Haggai 2:1-9 MK 2

Per S Olyott

Chapter 2:1-9  
(review of last week)

This message is not a message to people who won't work. It's a message to people who have begun to work.

God's word is sometimes rebuke. As in Chapter 1. God's word is sometimes to encourage, comfort and promise. And that's the message we now consider.

So this is a word to workers. This is a word to those of you who are seeking to build up your own souls; seeking to build up other people's souls and are seeking to add to the Church of God. This is a word for you.

The first 5 verses show the sort of encouragement which God gives to people who are building the Temple.

It was the 7<sup>th</sup> month (of a 13 month Lunar calendar) and the 21<sup>st</sup> day of that month. Now on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of the month they began the “feast of tabernacles”

At the feast of tabernacles they had a tremendous time of joy. They gathered in the sheaths from the fields; they gathered in the fruit from the vineyard and the trees. Most of the people came from their proper homes and dwelt in make-shift structures called 'booths'. Living in these temporary shelters was to remind the people of God that they had been brought through the wilderness. They remembered two great things: The Redemption by which God brought them out of Egypt and the Providence by which God gave them their daily needs.

Now, the festival is coming to an end, Haggai has a message from God: The harvest that year hadn't been very big. Part of God's judgement for the disobedience we read in Chapter 1. They had come to the Temple.

The people had been working on the Temple for a month, but it was still a ruin to look at. The harvest wasn't big. There were only 50,000 in the Nation. The whole picture was really depressing.

Some were able to look back to what they knew about the old times before the exile. This made them even more depressed and discouraged. “we can never make a Temple like Solomon's Temple.”

They had been 70 years in Babylon, praying towards Jerusalem, with minds filled with memories and stories of that great, golden Temple of Solomon and now all they had was this ruin!

But God brings a message.

You see Satan is discouraging them. Satan is making them feel very depressed. This is why we often feel this way when we ARE doing God's work. Satan leaves us in peace when we are doing his work!

This then is God's message to people in this situation: A specific message, look at verses 2/3.<sup>11</sup>

Now God speaks to that downcast crowd. He says, “You look at this new Temple and you say to yourself, 'It's nothing compared with the old Temple.' You remember the old days when everything was going well. There was tremendous glory and you look at the present ruin and you get very down-hearted about it.”

Why is God reminding them of former days?

---

<sup>11</sup> <sup>2</sup> “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, <sup>3</sup> ‘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?’

Well He wants them to see the size of the task which is ahead of them, AND He wants them to see that they can't get on with this task without help from Him. God wants them to seek help from Him. So He reminds them of former days and what has been. To stir them up, to see what yet could be, but only through His help. So that they will get on their knees and will seek the Lord and ask for His help in the work in which they have been called.

You know God is very kind to His people. The very people who were being rebuked in Chapter 1 are now about to be empowered and encouraged. Haggai had drawn the sword, as it were, and plunged it into the guilty hearts of Zerubbabel, Joshua and the residue of the people of God. They have been wounded by a rebuking word. But now Haggai, with God's grace is taking the ointment and is rubbing it into their wounds. Where there was rebuke and pain there is now to be comfort, encouragement and healing.

That is often the way of "God with us" as we know. That's how we came to be saved. God wounded us with the Law and then He saved us with the Gospel. God pricked us and cut us to pieces with the spirit of the 10 Commandments and then He healed us with the Gospel. This is what God is doing here.

The Lord then continues the message. (verse 4)<sup>12</sup>

"Yes, you're very down and you're thinking of the past and what had been and the present is nothing like it, but pull yourselves together, take courage, take heart and be strong and work. Give yourselves to the task and the moment you do that", says the Lord, "I am with you. You've already begun (a month ago). Well don't be discouraged carry on the work. Work, for I AM with you. Obey me on this point, by not giving up, by carrying on, and you will come to know something very special: You'll know my presence with you!"

But not only God's presence: Note verse 5.<sup>13</sup>

"It might look like, because of your sins and my recent punishment," says God, "that I have given up on you altogether. It might look that way. But I haven't! I covenanted, centuries ago, that I would never desert you. My Spirit's still with you. Therefore give yourselves to making a dwelling place for me. Give yourselves to the work. Hold nothing back. I am with you and my Spirit is still among you. Fear not. You have nothing to fear. You can count on my Spirit being with you, if you continue the work of building up my Temple."

This message was like water to a thirsty man. They'd been a month on the job after 16 years of laziness and sin. They felt down and felt like giving up. After only a month! How many thousands of times could this story be repeated down through to ages even to us? Well here's a word from God to us: maybe you are overwhelmed by the size of

---

12 <sup>4</sup> Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, 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,

13 <sup>5</sup> according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not.

the task. You can see how weak the Churches are, throughout the Western world. You know how weak you are yourself, spiritually. You see how desperately superficial many Christians are. You see how few inroads the Church is making on our Society and on the community. It looks a very depressing picture to you. You're overwhelmed.

BUT God says, "Give yourself to the work. You'll know my presence. You'll know that I am with you. You'll know my Spirit is still amongst you. You'll find out, before long, you've got nothing to fear. You will know the abiding satisfaction that God IS with you, His people."

You will personally experience His presence if you will but give yourself to the work! You have God's assurance of this.

This then is the first part of the message. This 'word' from God. And it's very encouraging. We can see how it applies to our own situation very easily.

Now let's look at the second part of the message:

Haggai didn't just bring words of encouragement like this, but he brought with him a promise of future glory.

Read verses 6-9:<sup>14</sup>

Here God tells them the reason to build the Temple. Here's the reason not to down-tools. Here's the reason above every other reason to go on with the work, with zeal and diligence.

"The reason lies with what I am going to do here", says God. "Just a little while" (it turned out to be 570 years – but God's reckoning is not ours!) "Just a little while", says the Lord Almighty, "and I am going to do something that will shake this Earth in a way which it will never forget. I'm going to shake all Nations."

We now know what that meant. You know and I know that the coming of Christ resulted in physical and metaphorical shaking's.

"I will do something," says the Lord Almighty, "that will amaze the Universe and amaze the Earth. I'm going to shake up the old order and change the system, because the 'desire of all Nations' shall come." And every Jewish scholar (at least to the time of the Apostle Paul) knew this was a reference to the Messiah. Here is the reference to our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the 'desire of all Nations'. He's the light to lighten the gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel. The 'desire of all Nations' and the desire, spiritual longing and quest of hearts that from eternity has been placed in every man's heart and can only be satisfied and fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. He's the 'desire of all Nations' He's coming! "And when He comes to this Temple that you are building, I will fill it with glory, like has never been seen before!"

---

<sup>14</sup> <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. <sup>9</sup> 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."

The Lord Almighty is saying that, on this very spot, in the very place where you are building, in the very walls that you are raising up will come the Messiah. This very spot! And that's the very reason for building this Temple and getting on with the job.

“In the days in the wilderness I filled the Tabernacle with glory. As Solomon prayed and dedicated the first stone Temple I filled it with glory – the priests couldn't even stand up in that place to minister.”

“And this house you are building will be filled with glory.”

Is it to be a glory of smoke and fire like the others, which leaves God invisible? No. Not like that.

It's the glory when Mary brings a little baby and we see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And Simeon takes the baby up in his arms and says, “Here is the light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of my people Israel.”

It's going to be the glory when a 12 year old boy comes into the courts of the Temple and disputes with the doctors of the Law and leaves them wondering.

It's going to be the glory when He cleanses it. When He works miracles there. As they put questions to Him, only to go away amazed at His doctrine.

It's going to be the glory when He goes from this spot to Calvary and to His grave and to His glorious resurrection.

Ah this is the reason to be getting on with the work. It's for the glory that's going to come to this place.

“The silver is mine, the gold is mine”, says the Lord Almighty. “You'll never lack resources to build this place, if you just obey me and get on with the work. I'll provide the materials.” (And so they were. A forgotten edict of Cyrus was found in the archives at Babylon that caused Darius to provide significant resources to the building of the Temple over the next four years.)

“Build the house. Not only will it be glorious, but in this place I will give peace”, says the Lord Almighty.

What is God's greatest sign of peace? The split veil. Isn't that so?

As long as there is a veil hanging up in the Temple you know that Man is man and God is God and never the twain can meet! But once that veil is broken, you know that man, through the mediation of a Saviour, may come to the very throne of God. He is able to be at peace with God and may approach. We have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.



When He died that Temple's veil was split in two. After He ascended, in but a few short years the Temple was obliterated, but these Spiritual truths still stand!

In the very place where the Temple was being built, He gives peace, peace to all who believe on Him. And now we who receive that peace are now the new Temple of the Lord Almighty.

Such a good reason for Haggai to stir up the people to continue to do the work!

“Oh very well”, says someone. “That's very good, I can see that. If I lived in Haggai's day and they said Christ was going to come to the place. Well, I'd roll up my sleeves and I'd get on with the work and nothing would hold me back.” Then someone says, “But that's all over. It's already happened. It's all very well for you to say there are Spiritual applications from these Old Testament times. But what's the Spiritual application of this, here and now.”

Someone, this morning may say, “We can't expect any future glory for the Church.”

Can't we? Did you know that this Temple of which you and I are the 'living stones' is destined for a future glory? You did know that. Then give yourselves to building it up! It's a future glory on Earth as well as in heaven.

Not everyone agrees with the variety of interpretations on the last days, but if you read Habakkuk 2:14 it may surprise you.

*<sup>14</sup> For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.*

Has that been fulfilled? NO. But it must be!

The day will come, some time, when the knowledge of Christ, through the Gospel, will extend to the very ends of the Earth. You can see it happening. More people in Africa, Asia and South America know about Christ (and very many call themselves Christians) than in the traditional Christian cultures of Europe and North America. Did you know that South Korean Christians have been sending Missionaries throughout the world in greater numbers than we ever have!

The Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ is imperishable and will never stop growing as long as there is an Earth, The Kingdom of Christ will extend, and extend, and extend. And nothing can stop it. Nothing! There are better days for the Church ahead, Christian people.

So take up the work. It's worth it. It's worth everything. Build up the Temple of your own soul. Build up the Temple of the souls of others around you and build the extent of this Church of 'living stones' throughout Bunbury and beyond.

God is with you. His Spirit is among you. Amen, so let it be.