

Sunday Morning Message

April 7, 2019

The Greatest Days are Yet to Come

Topic – Giving; Future Generations

Text – Haggai 2:1 – 9; Ezra 3:10 - 13

Congregational Reading – Haggai 2:3 - 5

Introduction

From Notes on Minor Prophets

Historical Background for the post-exilic prophets:

Timeline:

722 BC – Israel taken into Assyrian captivity (2 Kings 17)

Three Invasions of Judah

605 BC – 1st invasion of Judah by Babylon – Daniel taken into captivity.

597 BC – 2nd invasion of Judah by Babylon – Ezekiel taken captive.

586 BC – 3rd invasion of Judah – Jerusalem & temple destroyed. (2 Kings 25)

539 BC – Persian Empire conquers Babylon

Three Returns to Judah

536 BC – 1st Return to Jerusalem – Zerubbabel - temple work begun

516 BC – Temple is rebuilt

458 BC – 2nd return – Ezra (Ezra 7:1 – 8)

445 BC – 3rd return – Nehemiah – walls of Jerusalem rebuilt

The post-exilic Books of the Bible are:

Prophetic Books:

Daniel – 537 BC

Haggai – 520 BC

Zechariah – 520 – 518 BC

Malachi – 450 – 400 BC

Historical Books:

Esther – 465 BC

Ezra – 450 - 444 BC

Ezra records the history from the beginning of the return from captivity.

Chapter 1 – Cyrus becomes king over all of the Persian and Babylonian Empires, and decrees the release of the captives and the rebuilding of the Temple. (538 BC)

Chapter 2 – Approximately 50,000 Jews return to Jerusalem. (536 BC)

Chapter 3 – The temple rebuilding is begun (536 BC)

Chapter 4 – Opposition forces the construction to cease. (535 BC)

Chapter 5 – 6 - Haggai's & Zechariah's ministry – temple completed (516 BC)

Chapter 7 – Ezra's return to Jerusalem (458 BC)

Nehemiah – 445 BC

Introduction to Haggai

Haggai's name means festive or celebration, and appears only two other times in the Bible besides in this Book. (Ezra 5:1 & 6:14) Haggai writes little about himself. His prophecy contains some rebuke, but it also contains commendation when the people obeyed the Lord. Haggai not only preached, he also practiced what he preached:

"Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them." (Ezra 5:1-2)

Haggai and Zechariah were both contemporary to one another and companions to each other; but their writings were very different. Haggai's main theme is the rebuilding of the temple. The construction of the temple had begun in 536 BC, but because of opposition it was put on the back burner. The people continued to live their lives, however, building their homes, etc., but they were neglecting God and God's house. God wanted them to put Him first.

The Book of Haggai is the second shortest Book in the Old Testament, the shortest being Obadiah. The Prophecy is made up of four messages, which are all dated. You will notice that this prophecy and Zechariah's are dated according to Gentile kings, because there are no Hebrew kings at this time in their history. This is the "times of the Gentiles" that was referred to by the Lord in Luke 21:24:

"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." (Luke 21:24)

These messages, or prophecies, were given by God through Haggai to Zerubbabel, the governor, and to Joshua, the high Priest. Notice that this is a theocracy - the government, and the religious system were both on the same page.

Haggai is made up of three messages, which are all dated for us in the Book.

I Message One – September 1, 520 BC (Chapter 1)

"Seek Ye First"

Compare this passage to Malachi 3:8 – 12

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

A The Problem (1:2 – 3) "It's not time yet"

The people claimed that it wasn't the right time to build the temple. They had attempted to build before, and they experienced opposition. They weren't ready to try again. You will notice

that they faced no opposition from the devil or the world while they were putting themselves first.

B The Preaching (1:4 – 11) “It’s about time”

God’s blessings upon the people had ceased because they had ceased to put Him first. God said it was time for them to get busy with the building of the temple. God’s message was very simple. He told them to carefully consider what they had already done (v. 7), and what they were to do. (v. 8)

- 1 Go (v. 7)
- 2 Gather Wood (v. 8)
- 3 Get to Work (v. 8)

The real problem with the people in Haggai’s day (and today), is they were lazy. God’s solution was not difficult to understand, but it did require some effort.

C The Product (1:12 – 15) “I am with you”

Twenty-three days later, God pronounced the greatest blessing that He could upon the people. This is a postscript to the first message.

The people obeyed (v. 12), feared (v. 12) and worked (v. 14); and Haggai and Zechariah worked right alongside of them. (Nehemiah 4:6 – “the people (of Nehemiah’s day) had a mind to work”) Before they obeyed, God was not with them. They spent all of their time trying to better themselves, but got nowhere because God “blew upon it”. Now, even though they were spending their time advancing the work of God, God advanced them personally.

Some of the most valuable people in a church are people who are willing to work.

II Message Two – October 21, 520 BC (Chapter 2:1 – 9)

“Keep Going”

According to Ezra 3:10 – 13, there were some people that were discouraged due to the fact that this temple was not as physically glorious as Solomon’s temple:

Solomon’s Temple

70,000 men to bear burdens

80,000 men to hew in the mountain

3,600 supervisors

The Holy Place contained an overlay of 600 talents (approximately 75 lbs.) of gold

Most of the vessels and furniture were overlaid in gold

It is estimated that Solomon’s Temple had 135,000 pounds of gold in it. (1,968,000 troy ounces – selling today for \$1,380.00 per troy ounce – \$2,715,840,000 in gold alone)

The temple that they would be building was more glorious for a couple of reasons:

- 1 God was with them, and He certainly wasn't with them for many of the later years of Solomon's Temple.
- 2 God in the person of Jesus Christ would physically enter into this new temple many times during his lifetime. (v. 7 – the desire of all nations)

Note – in v. 5 “when ye came out of Egypt” (see Exodus 29:45; 33:14)

Vs. 6 – 9 refers to the Millennial Temple; “shake” – see Hebrews 12:25 – 29

Conclusion

Haggai 2:3 – 5; 9

It is easy to get discouraged sometimes when we see the world around us changing, and we also see our own little world – our paradigm – changing as well.

The older generation looks back and wants to say, “this is nothing compared to what we had in our day;” or “it will never be the same again.”

The younger generation might get discouraged and be tempted to quit before they even get started.

It seems that we are entering into the very last of the last days. Ministry today and tomorrow will not be the same as it was yesterday.

Back in the 70's, the independent Baptist churches were the largest churches in every state. It's not like that today. The evangelical churches typically are much larger than ours are; but, the number of church members overall are dropping every year.

We must embrace the changes, and do what we can do to reach this generation with the gospel.

To the Older Christians here:

1. Stop trying to hold on to yesterday, and try instead to embrace what God is doing now.
2. Stay excited about the prospects for the younger generation.

This world is getting crazier and crazier, but that just means that more and more people are going come to Christ.

Don't compare what God is doing today with what God did yesterday.

To the Younger Christians here:

1. Learn whatever you can from the older generation. Don't throw away all that they can give you. Learn from history.
2. Take what they have given you and build upon it.

Illustrate – There is not much left of Zerubbabel's temple today. But, someday soon, God is going to build on top of what remains a new temple.

3. Seize every opportunity God gives you to serve your generation. God is not finished.