



*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, 2 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. 3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? 5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. (Haggai 1:1-5)*

Haggai opens his prophecy with a call to labor. Good works and perseverance in labor are evidence of the abiding Presence of Christ in the heart – the Temple of the Soul. It is not the MEANS of salvation, but rather the proof of it.

Just as in the time of Haggai, men procrastinated in putting their hands to the labor of God's work, men do the same in our time in questioning the value of faith and trust: *3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. 5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. (2 Peter 3:3-5)* Men today, as then, live their lives as if there will be no end – but, believe me (or rather, believe God) there shall be an end: *6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: 7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (2 Peter 3:6-7)* Just as there were scoffers taunting and ridiculing Noah for 100 years while the Ark was being constructed, so were there in the day of Haggai – and in our own day as well.

God named His anointed, Cyrus, two hundred years before his birth, to be the king to liberate the Children of Israel in exile in Babylon. *24 Thus saith the LORD, thy*

*redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself; 25 That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; 26 That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers; that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof: 27 That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers: 28 That saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. (Isaiah 44:24-28)*

This prophecy was written in 712 BC; Cyrus was not born until 576 BC Jerusalem and its inhabitants were carried away captive in 607 BC. So, imagine how the prophecy of Isaiah must have sounded to a people who were still living in security in Jerusalem. It would not have seemed sensible to them to hear Isaiah say to Jerusalem, "Thou shalt be inhabited" when Jerusalem was already then inhabited. It is for this reason that we must place our trust in God and not in man or his princes. Perhaps we read of prophecies in Holy Scripture today that are yet to come about, and are bewildered by them since we only can see the middle of the fish. To identify the fish, we need to see the head and tail as well. We live in a brief instant of history and cannot know the state of our next hour, day, week, or year upon this earth; so how can we understand the prophecies of God without a true messenger? His Word is the MESSAGE, and His ministers the messengers if they are true to Scripture.

I have had the awe-inspiring privilege to stand in the ruins of the home of Cyrus at Pasargadae, and to view his tomb nearby; and to see the tombs of Darius the Great on the Mountain of Mercy overlooking Persepolis in old Persia. Because of our weakness of faith, we are strengthened at the visible evidence of the veracity of God's Word. Darius freed Israel to return to Jerusalem. He was a good and great king because God had anointed him for a purpose. So is every man and woman whom God anoints for a purpose. Now, the son of Cyrus, Darius by name, saw through the decree of his father to allow the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem under Zerubbabel. This is the historic context for the prophecies of Haggai – the first post exilic Minor prophet.

In order to grasp the dire need of the Redeemer, those men must exert themselves to the full limits of their potential in building a physical Temple to God's honor. He commanded it! God does not need idle hands, and He never calls such hands in His work. Each of the Apostles was busy at work when Christ called them. Without question, they dropped their secular pursuits and followed the Master. When Haggai wrote, the Temple had been under construction previously, however, work had ceased for a time. Jerusalem was in ruins, there was no sovereign ruler over the people, and the people themselves were few, being only a remnant of the former population. When there is only a remnant of the church to persevere, as in our own day, the road is fraught with hardships, but abundant hope as well.

Ezra writes Haggai had been used of God to stimulate resumption of the Temple construction. *1 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. 2 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)* Interesting to note the prophets themselves labored with the people in building the Temple. I wonder how many fancy-pants ministers of our day would lift a single stone in building the church? *14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king*

of Persia. (Ezra 6:14) By the way, Xerxes and Artaxerxes are also buried in the Mountain of Mercy alongside Darius the Great.

We in the church often hear the call of God to undertake a great work, but we say, "Well, let's take our time and be certain that the time is just right before we begin to perform that work." But when God commands a thing, His commandment is in the present tense! The people to whom Haggai prophesied did not feel it was the 'right time' to renew work on the Temple. *This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.* When God's timing does not coincide with ours, what will be the result? *Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? 5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.* It is high time for the modern church, as well, to 'consider' her ways. If our way is not that of Christ, we better change directions in a hurry, for He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Our ways are revealed in our heart-driven labors for the work of the Lord. Israel slept while God prodded. But He will quit prodding if we are obstinate.

God exhorts the people to build the Temple – PERIOD! He reminds them of their materialism – a materialism that is perhaps dwarfed by that of the churches of our day. (Verse 5-5) God points out, through Haggai, the abject misery of the people in Verses 6 & 9-11. But God always proffers a blessing for obedience: *7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways. 8 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.* (Haggai 1:7-8) The Fountains of Joy in Heaven always flow downward to those who obey God.

God not only speaks, but ACTS, through His anointed ministers: *12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, 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 did fear before the LORD. 13 Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD. 14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, 15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.* (Haggai 1:12-15)

When we look upon the God-blessed mountains and plains of America, we must ask ourselves, "What happened to make her heart a wilderness, and her name a mockery, among the nations?" I believe with all of my heart that her ministers have failed to do their duty in preaching the word, and admonishing those in high places to follow that word. We do not hear a loud and persistent outcry from our worldly ministers of today against abortion, Christian liberty to pray, homosexuality and other sins of the flesh; but rather we hear that many churches have become accomplices to these sins. The false Gospel they preach from their false bibles, and the welcoming of the values of the world into the place of worship, has rendered the churches sterile and impotent. We need a Haggai of our time to call us back to God and to speak things of the Lord that may be hard for us to bear. Only then may we revive from our long sleep and our spirits be renewed to serve in Holiness. *Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD. 2 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD. 3 And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. 4 And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.* (Jeremiah 23:1-4)