



*19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matt 6:19-23)*

*1 In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, 2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, 3 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? 4 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: 5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not. 6 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; 7 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. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts. 9 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. (Haggai 2:1-9)*

Through the prophet Haggai the Lord reminds those still living, who remember the grandeur of the first Temple that Solomon built, to compare that of Zerubbabel with that former great Temple. What does He mean by those terms? See what Ezra says about this latter Temple of Haggai's day: *10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And*

*they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.* (Ezra 3:10-11) If you read these words out of context, you might be convinced that the second Temple was majestic, but you would be wrong. Those ancient fathers who were present at the building of the second Temple remembered, in great sorrow, the first Temple with its beauty, grandeur and furnishings of gold and silver. This latter Temple was a much lesser edifice than that of Solomon.

This tells us something of the prideful hearts of modern churchmen in their unbiblical innovations in worship and revelry. They believe that they have done well to leave off following the old paths wherein their fathers walked and launched off into the untried and darkened trails of worldly and debased orgies and their wicked cavorting with golden calves. *1 And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. 2 And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. 3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. 4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 5 And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. 6 And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.* (Ex 32:1-6) Men of today still consider playing at worship more important than a serious and reverent regard for God and His Holy Word.

Now see how the old priests and Levites viewed this new-fangled Temple: *12 But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: 13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.* (Ezra 3:12-13) It reminds me of my early life growing up in the Blue Ridge. I learned from mostly older men and ladies of faith the meaning of Scripture. I remember a time when the vulgar sins of the flesh so common in our day seemed to be simply exaggerated rumor, and every matter of dispute could be settled by a quote from Holy Scripture. It was a time when everyone read from the same Authorized King James Bible or else its sister text of the Geneva Bible. You didn't have to wonder what verse was being read because all had the same Bible. It had the power of God in its expressions, and was written in a meter that enabled easy memorization. Its words could easily find entrance into the heart and settle there to bear fruit. But those days have gone glimmering. Now all matters of character and truth seem clouded with doubt and are branded everywhere with the grimy soil of men's hands.

We can clearly decipher God's plan in the words of Haggai and Ezra: *3 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? This latter Temple was built with meager resources and failing hands. This is true of all of the works of man – they lack permanence and durability. But God is working His plan through the construction of this inferior Temple. Four hundred years of silence following the prophecies of Haggai Zechariah, and Malachi magnified the astonishing power of that Temple to which Haggai refers: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7 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. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith*

*the LORD of hosts. 9 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.* That Temple is the Temple of our hearts – the Lord Jesus Christ. The darkness of ages and of false glory enhances the glory of the true and majestic which Christ personifies. Even the second Temple was a wonderful structure as long as the Lord dwelt therein. “. . . be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts.” Our work will be blessed and fruitful as long as that work is the work of the Lord’s supervision and presence.

When we truly love God and His Word, we cannot help loving His creatures as well – both human and animal. His Creation – all of it – is a thing of abiding beauty. The only thing that stands between us and eternal ruin is a Heart Temple in which the love of Christ resides forever. We certainly can never do a single good work on our own merit. In fact, all of our good works are as filthy rags. *6 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. (Isaiah 64:6) 10 As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Romans 3:10-12)* This presumably includes you and me, unless we are visited by an angel unawares. So that only leaves One who can stand on our behalf and pay for our transgression – the sinless and unblemished Lamb of God who loved us ere we could ever love Him even before the foundations of the earth were laid.

Do not take the term “LOVE’ lightly because it was love that bought us, and love that will bring us through the Wilderness and beyond Jordan Banks. So how can our righteousness be sufficient before a just God who will not countenance sin? *2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: 3 Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. 4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. (2 Cor 3:2-5)* There is a timeless secret hidden in the words of Paul above and that secret is LOVE. It is the love of Christ that imparts righteousness to the elect of God. We have no merit whatsoever, but His imputed righteousness is sufficient for us. Love enables us to keep God’s Law – not by letter, but by spirit.

God’s promise to the builders of temporary temples is this: It is the Hand of God that shall build the true Temple; and I do not refer to some clay and stone structure in old Jerusalem with which the modern church seems enamored. It is the Temple of Holy Jerusalem on high. His only chosen people are those who have received and believed the promise of a Redeemer made to Abraham – of all races, tribes and nations.

This is the message of Haggai to the heart. Do you worship at the altar of that Holy Temple, or are you still cavorting with golden calves?