



*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 . . . 20 And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month. (Haggai 1:1 . . . 2:20)*

Thus begins, and ends, the prophecies of Haggai in his Book by the same name. The importance of God's counsel to man was always centered on the unerring message and NOT the messenger; therefore, Haggai does not fail to credit the Word of the Lord as being sent by God and not his own opinion. Thus it is with all Holy Scripture – the Message is always central and not the messenger. *21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:21)*

It is unfortunate men of today have lost the talent of applying logic and reason to the fact it is forever the Message and not the messenger. They have it backwards today – they attempt to credit the messenger and disown the Message. Worship has become man-centered and personality oriented – too many shameless men of presumption stand in the pulpit and propagate false gospels – such as Osteen and Hinn. But Haggai was neither of these – he only spoke the words the Lord gave him. He did not attempt to make profit from new copyrighted versions of God's Holy Word, but preached the pure and undiluted Word.

Haggai and Zechariah arose as protégés of the final prophet before the four hundred years of abject silence from Heaven – Malachi who uttered the last word that summarizes the effect of the Law to mankind, CURSE! The Law is a CURSE to us, but salvation is found in the Grace of Christ!

You will recall that we pointed out three salient points revealed in Haggai in our Introduction at the beginning of our study of this remarkable Book:

1. A message to the hands for labor;
2. A message to the heart for wisdom;
3. A message to the mind for knowledge.

Just as knowledge is not acquired through the heart, neither is wisdom gained through the mind of men – everything to its proper order.

It goes without strong reminder that salvation is not of works, but singularly of GRACE. But those who are called and chosen as the children of God must, by nature and character, be motivated to exert every effort in propagating the good news of the Gospel that awakened them to the reality of God's redemption to all around them. Good works is evidence of salvation, not the means thereof. So we must not stand idly by while the Temple of God stands in ruins ... "*which Temple ye are!*" Each soul reached by missionary zeal is yet another spiritual stone in the Holy Temple of God. So the first point of Haggai is satisfied in our exertions on behalf of the Kingdom.

Haggai reminds us of the majesty of the first Temple of Solomon's anointed labors; and then of that which Zerubbabel built under the sanctions of God. But this latter Temple was far inferior to that of Solomon. There are several reasons for this difference. One reason was the lack of lavish resources that King Solomon was able to marshal in the Temple construction. Another reason was the lack of an abundant supply of labor since the returning exiles constituted a far smaller contingent upon which to rely. These are all human reasons; but there were also Divine reasons that God was imparting to the primitive minds of the people – a primitivism that has little abated from that day until now. This center point deals directly with the heart and the way in which it endeavors to draw interpretations and conclusions not consistent with the Will of God. Man has always attached a higher meaning to material manifestations than those of the heart and spirit. The Temple of Solomon, Zerubbabel, and Herod Antipas are examples of man's attempt to confine the boundaries of God's sovereignty to stone walls, temples, and church buildings alone. Though a decent church building enhances reverent worship of God and provides a venue whereby one can draw close to the Lord, it is unfortunate that man attempts to visit Christ at the Church or Temple, and leave Him there for the next six days out of seven.

The Temple has always represented the presence of God with His people; but there was a far greater Temple than those made with hands and of stone and plaster – that which Emmanuel represented in Christ. He is the true Temple of which the others were mere shadows.

The Tabernacle of the Wilderness journey more accurately, even than the Temple of Solomon, portrays the nature and presence of Christ among us. Though opulently adorned within with golden plates, furniture, and woolen drapes, it was covered with goat's hair on the outside – very unpretentious except to those who entered into that Presence within. *1 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? 2 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.* (Isaiah 53:1-3) Jesus had the appearance of a common man as one born to commoners, but His inner man was of great beauty and sinless. He was the Temple of God with all of the accoutrements of candles (light), shewbread (Bread of Heaven), incense (worthy of worship), and a Throne of Grace at the Holiest of Holies which He was.

It is the heart nature that goes neglected in the modern Christian. There is a great public pose of love and charity, but there is no true sacrifice of love to give evidence of that inner beauty of the Christians. All today seems to be based on fad and fashion

instead of love and sacrifice. There are few Livingston's, Mary Slessor's, Stamm's, etc. today. Few dandies of the pulpit would lay their neck on the line to carry the Gospel to foreign lands, and fewer laity.

The heart is the root of the soul and spirit. We are reminded of the words of the psalmist: *12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; 15 To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.* (Psalm 92:12-15) The palm tree is among the tallest of trees. It thrives where others wilt and die – the desert sands. It seems so tall when we view it from a near vantage point, but we never can see even half of the palm tree for its root system goes much deeper in the soil than its trunk and leaves above it. There are some spiritual similarities between the palm and the righteous elect of God. The baby Christian may waver in faith when early in his Christian walk just as a palm tree can easily be uprooted while a small and tender plant.

But the palm tree grows over an extended time, all the while its roots delving deeper and deeper into the ground. Those roots search for the water of life, and find it. Once mature, such a tree cannot be moved. *1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.* (Psalm 1:1-3) Those rivers of water which the palm tree seeks are the hidden rivers deep in God's green earth. So the sickness of the modern church is a heart and root sickness. The modern church spreads shallow roots far and wide, but at the least winds of the storm, are uprooted and destroyed. The ways of the world have invaded the church instead of the faith of the church spreading out as a sweet savor unto God. Instead of the truth of the Gospel, the humanistic values of man are more commonly preached. Instead of the grandeur of the great German and European classic hymns, we are treated with the gutter music and lyrics of the street. Unless we are sorely tried by the fires of God's wrath, there may be no reformation or revival of holy sentiment.

Lastly, the Book of Haggai directs us to CONSIDER the things of God. Not only will the love and sentiments of our heart give strong testimony of God, but also our intellectual facilities testify of it in every direction in the natural law and in true science as well. So, we are to love God in our hearts and KNOW Him there; we are to allow His labor to become ours through the service of our hands and bodies; and we are to be mindful of Him in every conscious endeavor. Paul and Timotheus sum up the matter well: *7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. 9 Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.* (Phil 4:7-9)

So, Haggai is the brief summation of the prophecies of the past concerning the Temple, but also of the future concerning the true Temple of God – not that which stands in the violent city of old Jerusalem, but rather new Jerusalem. It is a prophecy which helped to satisfy the yearnings of the faithful who waited in silence those 400 years in which no word came from God until the True Word came which was with God in the beginning and which WAS God – our Lord Jesus Christ!