

HAGGAI

*Keep building!*

SETTING

520 BC

KEY VERSES

*"Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the Lord."* 1:8

*"But now be strong, Zerubbabel,’ declares the Lord. ‘Be strong, Joshua son of Jozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,’ declares the Lord, ‘and work. For I am with you,’ declares the Lord Almighty. ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear."* 2:4-5

*"'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the Lord Almighty."* 2:9

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Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,” says the Lord.

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## Introduction

After the Jews returned from Babylon in 539 BC, they laid the foundation of the Temple in 536 BC. After this, the work was hindered and eventually stopped. When Haggai came with his message, there had been almost no progress for 16 years. Now the people said that "The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord’s house." (1:2).

Haggai brings four messages:

* (Ch. 1) A message to governor Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua. The crops are bad *"Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house."* (1:9) Work resumes.
* (2:1-9) 1 month later. An encouragement to those who were disappointed with the new temple (Ezra 3:12). The rebuilding is still God's will, and God promises that *"The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house"*.
* (2:10-19) Approximately 2 months later. The covenant curses (bad crops) will be turned into covenant blessings since they have resumed construction.
* (2:20-23) Same day as the 3rd message. To Zerubbabel. Nations shall perish, but Zerubbabel is chosen.

Zerubbabel was King Jehoiachin's grandson and heir to the throne of Jerusalem. The fourth message is a promise that he will become the ancestor of the Messiah, and he is also one of two people who appear in both genealogies of Jesus in the NT. God's promise in 2:7-9 that all peoples' treasures/longings will fill the temple is also fulfilled by all peoples becoming part of God's temple through faith in Jesus.

Have you ever gone from having high expectations of God to being demotivated?

### The Persian kings

Cyrus II the Great: 559-530 BC

* 539 BC: Return from Babylon (Ezra 1:1-5, 2:1-2, 2:64)
* 536 BC: The foundation wall was laid, but the work was hindered. (Ezra 3:8 - 4:5, 4:24)

Cambyses II: 530-522 BC

(Gaumata (Pseudo-Smerdis): 522 BC)

Darius I the Great: 522-486 BC

### Darius the Great (522-486 BC)

522-521 BC: Put down 19 rebellions

520 BC: Was warned about the reconstruction, searched the archives, and supported the Jews. (Ezra 5:1-17, 6:1-7)

516 BC: The temple was completed. (Ezra 6:14-15)

### Important years

539 BC: Return from Babylon

536 BC: The foundation wall laid

520 BC: Haggai and Zechariah (1:1)

516 BC: Temple completed (Ezra 6:15)

### Historical situation (520 BC)

They had begun to rebuild their own houses but had not worked on the temple since 530 BC (10 years).

They had been prevented by the neighboring people in the past, but now the reason is that *“The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord’s house.”* (1:2). Perhaps they thought that the construction would be seen as a rebellion and put down by Darius?

Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the reconstruction to continue, probably because there was now peace in the kingdom at this time. God knew that Darius was not going to see this as a rebellion.

### Structure

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1st message (Ch. 1)  | To the governor Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua. The crops are bad "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house." (1:9) |
| 2nd message (2:1-9)  | An encouragement to those who were disappointed about the new temple. The rebuilding is still God's will. "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house” (2:9). |
| 3rd message (2:10-19)  | The covenant curses (bad crops) will be turned into covenant blessings since they have resumed construction. |
| 4th message (2:20-23)  | To Zerubbabel. Nations will perish but Zerubbabel is chosen. |

## 1st message (Chapter 1)

v. 4: *“paneled houses”* can mean that they built fine houses for themselves (1 Kgs 6:9, Jer 22:14) or that the work was finished. (v. 6: they were not so rich?)

v. 6; vv. 10-11: Covenant curses

* Planted much but harvested little. (Leviticus 26:19-20, Deuteronomy 28:38-40)
* Eat, but never have enough. (Leviticus 26:26)
* Drink, but never have their fill. (Deuteronomy 28:48)

v. 8: To leave God's temple in ruins was a dishonor and symbolized that God was defeated. Did they not see the return from Babylon as the work of God?

vv. 12-15: Awe, trust, and determination to finish.

## 2nd message (2:1-9)

2:1 - Approx. 7 weeks later, 26 days after they resumed construction in 1:15.

* 1st of the month of Tishrei — "First New Year's Day" - a day of rest with horn blowing
* 10th of the month of Tishrei — The Day of Atonement
* 15th to 21st of the month of Tishrei — Sukkot

**Who is this message for?**

* 2:3 - An encouragement to those who were disappointed about the new foundation (Ezra 3:12).
* Demotivated again…

### 2:1-5

**Which expression(s) is(are) repeated?**

*“Be strong!”* and *“Do not fear!”*

**What connection does v. 5 have with the exact day Haggai brought this message?**

Last day of Sukkot, which commemorated the exodus from Egypt.

**Why does God say "you" in v. 5 when he is talking about something that happened many hundreds of years ago?**

The promise still applies. They are still His people. They are part of the reason why the exodus happened, and the goal is the Messiah.

**How does God want to encourage them with this message? (vv. 1-5)**

He is with them. They do His will, even if it looks like nothing.

### 2:6-9

**When does God shake all nations (vv. 6-7)? (Heb 12:26-28)**

God shakes nations into His kingdom between Jesus' 1st and 2nd comings.

**What kind of 'treasures' or 'longing' can v. 7 be talking about?**

Perhaps also earthly treasures, but definitely salvation by the Messiah since the shaking is messianic.

**What kind of glory does God mean? (v. 7) And in what way was this temple more glorious than the previous temple? (v. 9)**

No glory is mentioned in Ezra 6:17-18. The shaking is "messianic", and the temple will lead to the coming of the Messiah (John 1:14).

**How would this encourage them to continue with the construction?**

If they keep building, it's going to take off in a surprising way. Solomon's temple will pale in light of what this temple leads to. This will touch all peoples, lead to much greater spiritual glory, and bring peace.

**What kind of "treasures" or "desire" can v. 7 be talking about?**

Literally "longing" or "desire", but often used for treasures. Physical treasures or spiritual longing? Both?

Herod made the temple one of the most magnificent buildings of antiquity, larger than Solomon's temple.

The subject is singular (*“treasure/desire”*), but the verb is plural (*“they”*). NKJV: *"* *they shall come to the Desire of All Nations..."* Some interpret this messianically.

*"what is desired by all nations"* (v. 7) was interpreted messianically by Jews before Jesus. Perhaps also earthly treasures, but definitely salvation by the Messiah since the shaking is messianic.

**“Thus saith the Lord of hosts”**

*"Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts: Yet once a little while, and I will shake the heaven and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come. The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.”* from Händel’s Messiah (based on Haggai 2:6-2:7 and Malachi 3:1)

## 3rd message (2:10-19)

v. 10: Approx. 2 months later

vv. 11-14:

* Their sacrifices became impure because the people were impure. The temple will also become unclean if they do not fully return to God (v. 17).
* Whatever touches the meat becomes holy (Leviticus 6:20), but it says nothing about something becoming holy at a third stage. (meat —> skirt —> something)
* Impurity is contagious, but holiness is not. It is easier to become impure than holy.
* Did they take this too lightly, thinking that living in the land and having the temple was enough?

vv. 15-19: The book's most difficult section.

* Can be understood as: "Now give careful thought to this (to what is happening) from this day on!"
* They are asked to consider things so that they notice the differences between before and now.

## 4th message (2:20-23)

Signet ring: Symbol of authority, identification and ownership.

**1. What kind of shaking, and what day?**

The Day of Judgment

**2. What does God mean by giving Zerubbabel a signet ring?**

That he belongs to God and has gained authority because he is chosen as David's descendant → Jesus

**3. How would this be encouraging to the people?**

God is still the Lord of the universe. The Messiah and the kingdom of God will come if they finish building the temple.

## Keep building!

**1. Seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33)**

My house remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house. (1:9)

What impression will our "neighbours" get of God if we live our lives without Him at the center, or if God is not visible in our lives except at church services? If we build our "houses" and not His "house" (the congregation, not a church building)?

**2. Look up! Work in hope and faith despite disappointing circumstances.**

That something is God's will does not mean that it must go smoothly.

The kingdom of God is both visible and invisible (the mustard seed, the leaven). We don't see the end result. It is like we only see a small part of the back of the woven picture that God is making, where all we see is a mess of loose threads.

How does this encourage you?