

BOOK OF HAGGAI

Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied, you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes." Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?" declares the LORD of hosts, "Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house (Haggai 1:5-7, 9). 'But now, do consider from this day onward...from that time when one came to a grain heap of twenty measures, there would be only ten; and when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there would be only twenty. I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew, and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,' declares the LORD. 'Do consider from this day onward...Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit. Yet from this day on I will bless you'" (Haggai 2:15-19).

Size: Haggai is the second shortest book of the Old Testament. **Date:** Between August 29 and December 18, 520 B.C. **Recipients:** First wave of 50,000 Jewish exiles who returned with Zerubbabel to Judah in 538 B.C. (Ezra 2:64-65).

Theme: Cursing for disobedience and blessing for obedience to God's command to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem.

Structural Outline Consists of Four Messages: (1) God's Command to Rebuild the Temple (1:1-11), (2) God's Promise of Future Glory for the Temple (2:1-9), (3) God's Promise of Future Blessing for His People (2:10-19), and (4) God's Promise of Future Blessing for Zerubbabel (2:20-23). **Spiritual Outline:** Most of the book is concerned about cursing and blessing in this life (1:1-2:19), but ends on a high note—great blessing in the next life (2:20-23).

Benefit: Learn how to hold on to your paycheck, patch the holes in your pockets, and enjoy the fruit of your labor. A small book with a big message for today!

Inverted Parallelism of Chapter 1:

- A Israel's Disobedience (1:1-4)
- B Cursing instead of Blessing: because of the Disobedience of the People (1:5-7)
 - C God's Command to Rebuild the Temple (1:8)
- B' Cursing instead of Blessing: because of the Disobedience of the People and God's Intervention (1:9-11)
- A' Israel's Obedience (1:12-15)

It's important to note that the point of turning just past the center (B') is the new revelation that God is responsible for the hardship or cursing that has fallen upon his people for the past sixteen years ("I blow it away" 1:9 and "I called for a drought" 1:11; cf. 2:17a). The cause of this cursing is revealed in 1:2-4 and 1:9 (cf. 2:14, 17b). The argument moves from disobedience (1:1-4) to cursing (1:5-7) to command (1:8) to cursing (1:9-11) to obedience (1:12-15).

Inclusio or Literary Frame: An inclusion or *inclusio* is a literary device in which the opening word, sentence, concept, or theme is repeated again at the end of a unit—sandwiching or bracketing everything in between. The twice repeated "Consider your ways!" (1:5, 7) is a frame for the five curses in verse 6. A new paragraph should begin in verse 8 (not verse 7 as in the NKJV, NASB, and NIV). A similar twice repeated "Do consider from this day onward" (2:15, 18) frames the five curses in verses 16 and 17. These frames are emphatic. The first is literally 'Set your heart on your ways!' (RCL) and the second is literally 'Now please set your heart from this day and backward!' (RCL). In other words, give some thought to your past and present situation. Am I working hard but receiving little? Do I have holes in my pockets? Am I being cursed or blessed by God?

Inverted Parallelism of Chapter 2:

- A Glory of the Temple in the Millennial Kingdom (2:1-9)
- B Cursing instead of Blessing: because of the Uncleaness of the People (2:10-14)
- B' Cursing instead of Blessing: because of the Disobedience of the People and God's Intervention (2:15-19)
- A' Glory of Zerubbabel in the Millennial Kingdom (2:20-23)

Lessons for Living: (1) Obedience (1:12) changes cursing to blessing (2:19c). (2) God blesses when we put him first (compare 1:4-7 with 1:12 and 2:15-19). (3) Priorities are all important (Matt. 6:33). (4) Future rewards for service may still be earned after long periods of failure. Even after sixteen years of disobedience, Zerubbabel earned a choice reward. He will be a royal administrative official—the keeper of God's personal signet ring—in the Millennial (Hag. 2:23) and Eternal Kingdoms (cf. Rev. 21:24). Apparently he will write, seal, and send out royal decrees to the rulers of the earth forever (cf. Esther 3:10, 12; 8:2). The demotion of Jeconiah ("even though Coniah...king of Judah were a signet ring on My right hand, yet I would pull you off" Jer. 22:24) is reversed by the promotion of Zerubbabel ("I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you" Hag. 2:23). You can always fit back into God's plan for your life! (5) Prophets (and preachers) may bring present and future blessings to God's people: 'And the elders of the Jews were building and prospering because of the prophecy of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo' (Ezra 6:14 RCL).

Application: As a pastor I've discovered over the years that counseling, sad to say, is too often a waste of time. People seek help because *their* plan for their life is not working and they're frustrated. They want advice on how to fix *their* plan, not enter God's plan. So I tell them, "Scrap your plan! It will never work. You're not smart enough to make it successful. You'll never be happy because *your* plan is always one small step forward and two big steps backward. God is working against you! Fit into what's left of God's plan for your life. Come to church every time the doors are open so you can begin learning God's Word, become wise, and be blessed. Otherwise I'm wasting my time—and yours!" Usually that's not what they want to hear...and go elsewhere chasing rainbows. The Book of Haggai is a perfect illustration: the people who returned to build the second temple suffered deprivation, hardship, and frustration for sixteen years because they put *their* plans first. Such is the sorry fate of men who put their plan before God's plan. Get it right! "Consider your ways!" (Hag. 1:5, 7) "Do consider from this day onward!" (2:15, 18) Forget your plan and enter fully into God's plan for your life. That's the only place of blessing and eternal rewards. Do it now! And you will soon find what you're looking for and hear as they heard, "Yet from this day on I will bless you" (2:19c).