

Haggai

Key message of the book: 'Build the temple, for the Lord is with you.'

Background information:

'The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Babylonian armies in 586 B.C. marked the end of an era in Jewish national and religious life. As exiles in Babylon, the Jews were without a temple and without their sacrifices...It was only under the generous policies of **Cyrus the Great**, king of Persia, that almost **50,000** Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem with (Ezra 1:2-4...), accompanied by Joshua the high priest and the Prophets Haggai and Zechariah. Levitical sacrifices were soon reinstated on a rebuilt altar for burnt offerings (Ezra 3:1-6), and in the second year of the return the foundation of the temple was laid (Ezra 3:8-13; 5:16). However, Samaritan harassment and eventual Persian pressure brought a halt to the rebuilding of the temple. Then spiritual apathy set in; and for about 16 more years – until the rule of the Persian king, Darius Hystaspes (521-486 B.C.) – the construction of the temple was discontinued. In the second year of Darius (520 B.C.) God raised up Haggai the prophet to encourage the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 5:1-2; Hag 1:1). His task was to arouse the leaders and the people of Judah from their spiritual lethargy and to encourage them to continue working on the temple. The initial success of Haggai in his mission...was supplemented by the continued efforts of **Zechariah** until the temple reconstruction was finished in 515 B.C.' (F. Duane Lindsey, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary; Old Testament*, edited by Walvoord and Zuck)

The exiles returned to Israel in **three** stages. Haggai and Zechariah ministered to the **first** group of exiles, who returned in 538 B.C.

Daniel was either a very old man at the time that Haggai and Zechariah started prophesying, or had just recently died. Either way, it is most likely that they both knew him, and looked up to him as a mentor and example.

Haggai prophesies in the second year of Darius, over a space of about **4 months** (520 B.C.).

Key words and phrases:

'The LORD of hosts': Occurs 13 times. He is the powerful commander of the mighty hosts of angels, and of all the natural forces of the universe, with which He is able to mightily chasten and punish His people, or mightily bless them.

'Consider': Occurs 5 times. To put or set the heart or the inner man.

Interesting fact:

See 2:23: 'Zerubbabel's name is found in both the genealogical lists of Joseph (Matt. 1:12) and Mary (Lk. 3:27). He continued the royal line of David through whom Christ must come and, as such, he joined together both branches (Joseph and Mary) of the Messianic line.' (*Old Testament Bible History*, p. 295, H. Hester)

Four messages:

1. Rebuke: Build the house! (1:1-15)
2. Encouragement: God is in this! (2:1-9)
3. Observation: God can bless now that the contamination of disobedience is removed. (2:10-19)
4. Promise: Victory and privileged position await. (2:20-23)



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