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**Bible Study**  
**The Book of Haggai**

***Background***

The book of Haggai is one of the twelve minor (lesser) prophetic books of the Old Testament. These twelve books are called minor or lesser, because of their relative size to the major prophetic books (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Daniel).

The name ‘Haggai’ is Hebrew. It means the man who was born on the day of a great feast of the Jews, the Feast of Tabernacles.

Haggai lived in the sixth century B.C. In 576 B.C., Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians. The temple of Solomon was burned and the holy vessels and treasures of the temple were carried off. The source of Jewish pride was destroyed. The temple was known for its beauty, splendor, and magnificence.

A great slaughter took place as many of the inhabitants were killed. The majority of those who were not killed were taken into captivity and exiled to Babylon. These captives labored, groaned, and wept as they remembered their glorious days in Jerusalem and at the temple.

Fifty years later, another king named Cyrus signed a decree that allowed a significant number of captives (42, 360) to return to Jerusalem. Haggai was among them. The sight of their city moved them to tears, especially the older inhabitants who remembered the glory and grandeur of Jerusalem when they were children and youth. Where was the temple? Where were the places? Where were the squares and the streets? Everything had been destroyed. The once great city was now deserted. They now had to rebuild, and they had to rebuild the temple first.

***Two Obstacles in Rebuilding the Temple***

As they rebuilt the temple, two obstacles appeared. The first obstacle was the unwillingness of many to rebuild. Many said, “The time has not come,

the time that the Lord's house should be built" (Haggai 1:2). Therefore, the construction proceeded very slowly.

Who were the people saying this? They were the rich! The rich had even succeeded in keeping their wealth during the time of captivity. But when they returned to Jerusalem, they were not concerned with reconstructing the temple first, but started to build their own houses. These houses were paneled with wood, which was rare at the time. Their walls were covered with wood and relief work. But there was nothing for the temple of God. So not only did they not give anything, but they justified their behavior saying that it was not the suitable time to reconstruct the temple.

Therefore, Haggai appeared at this time, and God spoke through his prophet to criticize the people and to stir them to build:

*"Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! You have sown much and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes." Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD (Haggai 1:4-8).*

Haggai raised everyone's spirit for work. He rebuked the people for their indifference, their unwillingness, their negligence, and their incredulity (lack of faith) that paralyzed them. They came to their senses and began to build. However, as they built, they ran into a second obstacle.

As they built, two factions arose. The Samaritans appeared and wanted to offer money and material for the reconstruction of the temple. Because the Samaritans were the offspring of a mixed race (the people of God and married their idolatrous conquerors), they did not have a pure faith that was free from idolatry.

One faction said that they should accept the money from the Samaritans in order to finish the reconstruction, while another faction said no. Haggai said no. Haggai wanted to rebuild the temple from the pure gifts of pious Jews, and not from others. Why? Because, there was a danger that friendships

would develop with the Samaritans and negatively influence their faith, their worship, and their lives. Haggai exhorted them to remain pure.

### ***The Reconstructed Temple***

After about twenty years, the new temple was built, but not everyone was satisfied. The elders who had seen the glorious temple of Solomon worried because the new temple was inferior in appearance. Haggai soled them saying:

*‘According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!’ “For thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,’ says the LORD of hosts (Haggai 2:5-7).*

Who is the ‘Desire of All Nations’ but Christ Himself, who would gather all people to Himself and create a glorious Church?

### ***Contemplations and Lessons Learned from the Book of Haggai***

As we draw lessons from the Book of Haggai, we do not want to talk about the physical construction of temples and churches, but let us turn our mind inwards to our hearts as temples of the Holy Spirit and the dwelling place of Christ. Sin often tears down this temple. How do we rebuild and reconstruct?

First, we must have the willingness to reconstruct our spiritual lives and to restore the relationship with Got that has been torn down by sin.

Second, we must seek purity.

Third, we must trust that Christ can restore the relationship fully, to be assured of His forgiveness, and allow His glory to fill and to touch every aspect of our lives.