

**HAGGAI OVERVIEW**  
**THE LORD ALMIGHTY CALLS!**  
**WHY GOD IS NEEDED!!!**

**IMPORTANT DATES!**

Jerusalem falls to the Babylonians	-	July 586 BC
Babylon captured by the Persians	-	October 539 BC
Cyrus' decree (2 Chron Ch36:22-23 + Ezra Ch1:1-4 + Jeremiah Ch25:1-14)	-	March 538 BC
First attempt to rebuild the Temple	-	April 536 BC
Foundation laid in the Temple	-	Dec 520 BC
Temple completed	-	March 515 BC

***NAME – God's presence among His people is secured by making His name dwell among them in the Temple!***

The year 520 B.C. was an epic spiritual watershed moment!! It would not appear so to most secular historians or even to many biblical historians, but it was important enough for God to have sent a prophet to deal with it and to record what happened in the Word of God.

Sixteen years earlier, in 536 B.C. the Persian emperor Cyrus had issued a decree permitting the Jewish exiles in Babylon to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple (Ezra 1:2-4). In response to this decree, about fifty thousand people returned under the leadership of the newly appointed governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, also called Sheshbazzar (Ezra 1:11; 5:14,16), and Joshua, the high priest.

These people settled in or near Jerusalem and began the restoration. They cleared the Temple Court of rubble and replaced the altar of burnt offerings on its base, thus making it possible for the daily sacrifices to begin again. This was in the fall of 536 B.C. By the spring of the next year they had laid the foundations of the Temple.

Then troubles began! The people experienced hostility from various neighbouring tribes, especially the Samaritans, whose help in rebuilding they had earlier declined. Moreover, Cyrus died in battle, and his successor Cambyses, also called Ahasuerus (Ezra 4:6), was pushed to stop the work.

When the work ceased, the people turned to private affairs and gradually became used to worshipping among the ruins of the once great Temple. Desire to rebuild died out, and fifteen years passed! The people were on their way to

becoming merely the secular occupants of an impoverished land. Then came the year 520 B.C. In that year God sent the prophet Haggai with his challenge to the people to get on with God's work and build the Temple.

That they listened to Haggai and started rebuilding was a significant turning point in their history, as important in its own way as the building of the Temple in the first place or the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon.

We know very little about Haggai himself, as has been true with others of the prophets. His name is based upon the Hebrew word *hag* (“festival”) and means “my feast” or “my festival.” It may indicate that he was born on a feast day, but we cannot be certain. We do not even know who his father was, since he is merely referred to as “the prophet,” both in his own book and in Ezra (Hag 1:1; Ezra 5:1).

Haggai is one of the three last prophets of the Old Testament period, the prophets of the restoration: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The others came to Israel or Judah before the fall of those nations, the former to the armies of Assyria in 721 B.C., the latter to the armies of the Babylonians in 586 B.C. The earlier years saw great giants of prophets whose words were spoken mainly against the gentile nations: Obadiah, Jonah, and Nahum. There were prophets to the northern kingdom: Hosea and Amos. Others carried on their ministries in the south: Joel, Micah, and Zephaniah. During the exile, Ezekiel and Daniel had made their contribution. But those periods were past now, and it was a radically different age that confronted these last spokesmen for God in the Old Testament. Gone was the glory of the former kingdom and Temple. Gone was the great population. All that was left was the rubble of Jerusalem, the remnant of the people, and the task of restoration.

Initially, the start looked good, Ezra records that the first thing the people did when they arrived in Jerusalem was to take up a freewill offering toward the rebuilding of the Temple. According to their ability to give (Ezra Ch2:69) the equivalent value raised in today's estimations would be around £5, 000, 000!

Ezra tells us that on the first day of the seventh month of their first year back, the exiles built an altar on the ruins of the old one and celebrated the first Feast of Tabernacles since the Exile (Ezra Ch3:1-6). In the second month of the following year, 536 B.C., they laid the foundations of the Temple (Ezra Ch3:8-11). However, when the Book of Haggai begins in 520 B.C., we find the Temple is still a ruin!

The people had lost heart!

So the people to whom the prophet Haggai spoke, were the right people, living in the right place, trying to do the right work for the right reasons. Yet, the years had gone by and sadly they started to pursue their own needs, neglecting the work to which they had been called!!!!

Thus through the providential care and control of God, the Jews were restored to their land. But that in itself did not mean an end to their problems. God had again shown them mercy, ***but God's restored people had to learn how to live out a proper response to that mercy!***

Haggai's first message (Ch1:1-11) exposed the double standards that prevailed in the community. The people were prepared to exert themselves for their own comfort, but were quite happy to delay work on the Temple – and then wondered why God was not blessing them in the way they expected! Haggai called on them to give careful thought to their ways (Ch1:5+7).

The second message of the Book (Ch1:12-15) tells how the people responded to this call for repentance. There was a united recognition that the delay had been wrong and they resolved to resume the long postponed work.

But this did not mean that all the problems immediately vanished. The people had to contend with their own memories of how splendid the first Temple had been and how lacking in splendour the replacement would be. In Ch2:1-9 Haggai challenged them to be strong in what they were doing. The Lord promised that He was with them and that He would bless their endeavours.

The prophecy concludes with two messages delivered on the day the foundation of the Temple was laid. The first message (Ch2:10-19) encouraged the people with the prospect of divine blessing on obedience and the second (Ch2:20-23) addressed to their governor, Zerubbabel, showed that the Lord's intention to raise up the Messiah from the House of David was still operative. The blessing to be anticipated extended beyond better harvests to the inauguration of His Kingdom!

***“THE LORD ALMIGHTY”*** - Meaning ***“Lord of Hosts”***, presents the Lord as the one who has complete authority and control over all powers that exist!!!!

The above phrase appears 14 times in 38 verses!!

Ch1:2, Ch1:5, Ch1:7, Ch1:9, Ch1:14, Ch2:4, Ch2:6, Ch2:7, Ch2:8, Ch2:9, Ch2:9, Ch2:11, Ch2:23 + Ch2:23.

**5 IMPORTANT DATES!**

Ch1:1	-	1 <sup>st</sup> day of the six month	-	29 <sup>th</sup> Aug 520 BC
Ch1:15	-	24 <sup>th</sup> day of the six month	-	21 <sup>st</sup> Sept 520 BC
Ch2:1	-	21 <sup>st</sup> day of the seventh month	-	17 <sup>th</sup> Oct 520 BC
Ch2:10	-	24 <sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month	-	18 <sup>th</sup> Dec 520 BC
Ch2:20	-	24 <sup>th</sup> day of the ninth month	-	18 <sup>th</sup> Dec 520 BC

**5 TIMES "GIVE CAREFUL THOUGHT"**

Ch1:5

Ch1:7

Ch2:15

Ch2:18

Ch2:18

**5 TIMES - "WORD OF THE LORD"**

Ch1:1

Ch1:3

Ch2:1

Ch2:10

Ch2:20