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Model of Herod's Temple (a renovation of the Second Temple) in the Israel Museum, created in 1966 as part of the Holyland Model of Jerusalem.

WHEN NATIONS SUFFER A MORAL DECLINE and national leaders continue the bad practice of deficit spending which leads to a staggering national debt and eventual insolvency, and when erupting social turmoil creates wide-spread instability, most often the remedy offered is a change in political leadership.

However, one need only peer for seconds into a tiny two-chapter Old Testament book to catch an enormously different perspective of the real problem: It is a spiritual one. Just what do I mean?

God blamed ancient Israel's decline on the spiritual lax of His remnant—the seemingly most zealous of individuals who had the gumption to leave their surroundings and go to rebuild the capital city! Sound similar? Talk about a different perspective.

If the prophet Haggai were on the Hill today, would he blame the decline of America on the spiritual temperature of the Christian legislators in our nation's capital?

Read on, my friend!

Ralph Drollinger

WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

CABINET: 7:00 AM Wednesdays, location undisclosed, refreshments served.
 SENATE: 8:00 AM Tuesdays, rotating offices, hot breakfast served.
 HOUSE: 7:30 AM Thursdays, The Capitol Hill Club, hot breakfast served.

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Capitol Ministries® International Conference



Capitol Ministries® global directors and ministry leaders from around the world will gather in Washington, D.C. the first week of December at the highly acclaimed Museum of The Bible for CM’s annual Leadership and Training Conference.

Established CM leaders and many new candidates will travel from Africa, Peru, Europe, South Pacific Islands, and the Caribbean, as well as numerous U.S. states and cities to hear speakers and attend seminars on leading ministries to political leaders.

We ask for prayer as these men and ministry teams of husbands and wives assemble to pray and further their training in how to successfully plant and sustain discipleship Bibles studies in political arenas, the value of discipleship and relationship building, and the importance of leading public servants toward maturity in Christ, among many other topics.

Books of the Bible: Haggai

I. NAME

This 37th book of the 39 books in the Old Testament (OT) is named after the minor prophet Haggai. The name Haggai means “festal one.” Perhaps he was born on a feast day.

II. AUTHOR

Not much is known about the prophet Haggai other than the five prophesies recorded in this book. Ezra mentions him twice in tandem with the prophet Zechariah (5:1; 6:14) and this book is only two chapters long, making it the second shortest OT book (Obadiah being only one chapter).

Haggai 2:3 states *“who [else] is left among you who saw the temple in its former glory?”* signifying that perhaps Haggai was over 70 years old and had seen Solomon’s temple before its destruction.

III. BACKGROUND

God had warned Judah many times to cease from her idolatry or be disciplined (cf. Hebrews 12:3–11)! In that Judah did not repent after years of God’s patience, He orchestrated pagan Babylon to be His surrogate of discipline and punishment. Babylon sacked Judah and took her into captivity. Seventy years later, by God’s design, Babylon was sacked by a new world ruler, Persia. Under King Cyrus, by God’s design, the Jews were permitted to return to their homeland and reconstruct it. The Jewish civil leader Zerubbabel led 50,000 Israelites in the first of three waves of returnees. Jeshua (or Joshua) was the accompanying priest and Haggai was the prophet. Later Ezra and then Nehemiah would return with more people from Babylon. The three (Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah) represent a collective of Moses, in that Moses brought God’s people out of Egyptian captivity into the Promised Land. Each of them faced the same post-exilic problems: To build/rebuild their capital city; to reinstitute biblically based laws; to overcome foreign enemies; and to purify the people from idolatry. When one thinks about it, these are the same issues that face America’s political and spiritual leaders today. God in His sovereignty had orchestrated the sobering and humiliating conquest of His people. He was at work through the pagan kings and their successors with the specific intent to wake-up His peo-

ple for His purposes. Important to remember is this: God’s administration of and raising up ungodly rulers over a nation—even today—is for this reason:

God wants to revive his people spiritually. He will take care of replacing the repressing leader.

This principle is distilled in Matthew 6:33 *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* When the prophet Haggai brought this perspective to those who had taken-up the challenge to return to the capital city of Jerusalem and rebuild it, they responded appropriately (1:12):

“Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for the LORD.”

Importantly, God’s people first looked inwardly at their own sin of materialism and selfishness (1:4) versus saying “Let’s overthrow the King of Persia!”

IV. EMPHASIS AND THEMES

A. TO THE COURSE OF A NATION

God, through His mouthpiece/prophet Haggai, first addresses the civil leader of Israel, Zerubbabel, stating that the reason Israel is not being blessed is because of his spiritual lethargy and that of Joshua, the high priest! Notice how God couches this in order to get their attention in 1:5–6 and 9a:

“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.’”

“You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away.”



This rebuke is aimed at every governing authority today who names the name of Christ in our nation's capital. They were making excuses as to why they couldn't devote more of their energies to God. They outwardly journeyed to the nation's capital to reconstruct it, but in reality, spent their time there lax about God's purposes. Instead they paneled their own homes, making excuses as to why they couldn't achieve His purposes. Note 1:4:

“Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?”

Because of their unfaithfulness to be about His specific purposes, it was God Himself who orchestrated the withholding of national blessing! Note 1:11 where God states this very thing:

“I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands.”

God was the one behind the economic depression of the nation! Why? Because the most moxie Israelites who had journeyed back from Babylonian captivity had become self-serving.

That's what happened during the failed 1994 American political “revolution.” Will it happen again with you?

They hadn't the time because of their selfish pursuits and more “important” things to give attention to personal spiritual vitality, let alone the nation! This book is not only a vivid illustration of the violation of Matthew 6:33: *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you,”* but a narrative paralleling the gist of the book of Ecclesiastes which exclaims that everything apart from the pursuit of God is all for naught—vanity.

What are you doing in the capital to keep your heart kindled for Christ?

B. TO THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL

This book speaks about the glorious Second Coming of the Messiah. The rebuilding of the temple is only a foretaste of the coming Mil-

lennial Temple where Christ will reign over the earth. That temple will far outshine Solomon's temple and the one Zerubbabel was about to rebuild. States 2:9:

“The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,” says the Lord of Hosts.”

There are many temples and dwelling places of God recorded throughout the Bible. Note them here:

The Mobile Temple – Exodus 25–30

Solomon's Temple – 2 Samuel 7:1–29

Zerubbabel's Temple – Ezra 3:1–8

Herod's Rebuilt Temple – Matthew 24:1

The Present Temple – 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

The Antichrist Temple – Matthew 24:15

The Millennial Temple – Zechariah 6:12–13

The Eternal Temple – Revelation 21:22

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

This is a magnificent truth that should sober every true believer as to his divine calling and the urgency and necessity of fulfilling his mission.

C. THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE DAVIDIC LINE

After King David, Solomon and Rehoboam/Jehoiachin, Israel and Judah respectively fell into Assyrian and Babylonian captivity. It is here in the Book of Haggai at the return to the land that the kingly line of David is restored. States 2:23:

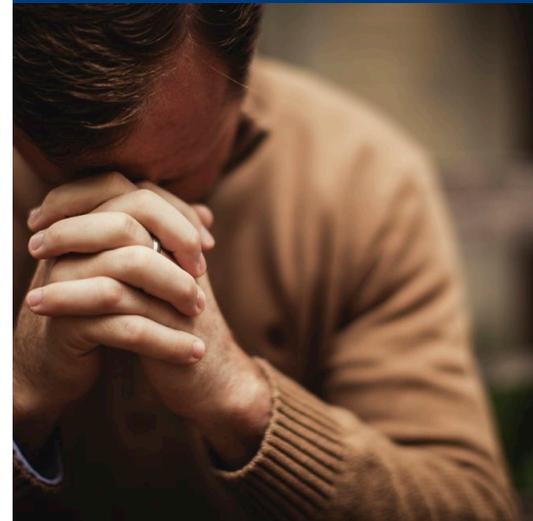
“And I will make you [Zerubbabel] like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,” declares the LORD of hosts.”

The signet ring was a symbol of authority and power comparable to a king's scepter. This book reveals the restoration of the Davidic line after the interruption of it in the exile—a lineage that will culminate in the second coming of Christ!

♥ VERSE OF THE WEEK

Haggai 1:5

“Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘Consider your ways!’”



What are you doing in the capital to keep your heart kindled for Christ?





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V. OUTLINE

The book can be outlined around the five separate prophecies of Haggai:

- Prophecy No. 1 – God’s rebuke of the leaders: 1:2–11
Prophecy No. 2 – God’s encouragement of the remnant: 1:13
Prophecy No. 3 – God’s empowerment of His people: 2:1–9
Prophecy No. 4 – God’s reminder of the past: 2:10–19
Prophecy No. 5 – God’s reinstatement of the Davidic lineage: 2:20–23

VI. APPLICATION TO GOVERNING AUTHORITIES

As already noted, this book has profound implications for civil leaders who name the name of Christ. It is a sobering, godly perspective on why a nation declines (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:14). It places the demise of a country on the shoulders of leadership! Notice the following additional passages that so depict and parallel America today (Haggai 2:16–17; 19a):

“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.”

“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.”

God blamed the civil and spiritual leaders of Israel for the country’s economic woes. They were not seeking first the Kingdom of God; rather they were seeking first the god of self-interest (cf. 1:4). Today, God is watching you (2 Chronicles 16:9a).

You had the guts to leave and go reconstruct your capitol when many others chose to stay back. But now that you’re here, do you prioritize God?

As Haggai sees it, the solution to a nation’s woes is not political—it is first spiritual; that’s what’s most important to God. Therein He determines to bless or discipline a nation.

Accordingly, how committed to Christ are you in your heart of hearts? Really? How are you manifesting those commitments? Do you prioritize your church when in the district? Do you prioritize the Body of Christ when in the capital? Do you instruct your scheduler to block your schedule in order to attend the Members Bible Study or other studies where the Word is preeminent and fellowship strategic? Who runs your life and determines your priorities? What does Haggai diagnose to be the real problem in our nation? Are you like Zerubbabel who when confronted, obeyed the voice of the Lord (1:12)?

“Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him. And the people showed reverence for the LORD.

Amen. cm

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