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JANUARY 20, 2025

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# What Would Haggai Say to D.C. Officeholders?



As our country continues to struggle, the focus on solutions and reform efforts is almost exclusively centered on political remedies. The attacks on Israel, the invasion of our southern border, increasing social unrest, a cold war with China, a deteriorating relationship with Russia, the war in Ukraine, and the reality of a nuclear Iran are no small threats, nor is our runaway national debt; America's challenges seem to be increasing exponentially. Are political solutions, policies, and elections the total answer? Are they the ultimate way to fix these problems? Are they the way to properly diagnose, remedy, and cure our increasingly complex national ailments?

We need to peer for only seconds into a tiny two-chapter Old Testament (OT) book, the book of Haggai, to catch

*Continued next page*

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*Steve Womack* AR  
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**WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES**

- Governors:** Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom  
**Former Cabinet Members / White House Senior Staff:** Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom  
**Senate Members:** Tuesdays 8am, rotating offices, hot breakfast served  
**House Members:** Thursdays 8am, AG Hearing Rm., Longworth 1302, hot breakfast served

*The views expressed in each Bible Study are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of any individual Bible Study sponsor.*



## William Wilberforce: Christian Civil Leader, Role Model

British lawmaker William Wilberforce worked indefatigably for his entire career to achieve his calling in civil government: to abolish slavery in Great Britain. Likened to the returning remnant of Judah, he often suffered criticism and mockery from those around him.



On July 26, 1833, after Wilberforce had left office and only three days before he died, Great Britain’s House of Commons voted to end the practice of African slave trading throughout its empire.

This historic legislative feat can be attributed to the steadfast perseverance and convictions of Wilberforce, a committed Christian, who wrote in his diary in 1818: “In the Scripture, no national crime is condemned so frequently and few so strongly as oppression and cruelty”; also condemned is mankind for

*Continued on page 4*

*an enormously different perspective* and analysis—a heavenly, transcendent perspective, God’s perspective—as to what the real, underlying problem is: the book of Haggai more than suggests that it is a spiritual one.

What follows is an overview of this small but very powerful OT book. This is a book you need to master if you hold political office.

Read on, my friend.

Ralph Drollinger

### I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Israel had been a very strong nation under the rule of kings David and Solomon, but even during their reigns and increasingly afterward, the people stopped obeying God. Consequently, the nation suffered great decline. This deterioration should have come as no surprise to anyone, especially the Israelites, given the “if/then” structure of the Abrahamic Covenant found in the Torah, Genesis 12 and 17, and fleshed out even more in Deuteronomy 28. If God’s chosen people obeyed God, then He would prosper them, but if they disobeyed Him, then He would chastise them (cf. Joshua 1 and Psalm 1).

Under the subsequent reign of Solomon’s son Rehoboam, in fact, the nation split into two entities: Israel and Judah. Many times God had warned them to cease from idolatry or be disciplined (cf. Hebrews 12:5–11).<sup>1</sup> In that Judah (the book of Haggai is all about Judah)<sup>2</sup> did not repent after years of God’s patience (similar to Is-

rael), God orchestrated pagan Babylon to be His surrogate of discipline and punishment. Babylon, under King Nebuchadnezzar, sacked Judah, destroyed Solomon’s Temple, and took her people into captivity.

Seventy years later, Babylon herself was sacked by a new world ruler, Persia. Under King Cyrus of Persia, by God’s design, the Jews were then permitted to return to their homeland and rebuild it. God, in His sovereignty and tough love, had arranged the sobering and humiliating conquest of His chosen people; He was at work through the pagan kings and their successors with the specific intent to wake up His people for His purposes.

### II. AUTHOR

Not much is known about the prophet Haggai other than the five prophecies recorded in this small book bearing his name. Haggai is the 37th of the 39 OT books and is named after the minor prophet Haggai (“minor” only because his written prophecy is shorter than that of the “major” prophets





VERSE OF THE WEEK



## Haggai 1:4

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



Haggai’s rebuke can be similarly applied to civil and spiritual leaders today who procrastinate or outright ignore fulfilling God’s purposes.



like Daniel or Jeremiah). The name *Haggai* means “festal one.” Perhaps he was born on a feast day. Of further insight and interest is Haggai 2:3, which states “*Who [else] is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory?*” signifying that perhaps Haggai was over 70 years old (the time of the beginning of the Babylonian/Persian captivity) and had seen Solomon’s Temple before its destruction.<sup>3</sup> The OT book of Ezra mentions Haggai twice (cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14) in tandem with the prophet Zechariah, another minor prophet with an OT book named after him. Zechariah, the 38th book in the OT, follows Haggai in the OT. In that the book of Haggai is only two chapters long, it is the second shortest book in the OT after the one-chapter book of Obadiah. Whereas the book of Ezra provides an overall historical account of postexilic Judah, Haggai provides a spiritual insight and accounting of the same time period. The book can be outlined around the five separate prophecies of Haggai:

### III. THE RETURN OF JUDAH

After the people had been held in captivity for 70 years, the Jewish civil leader Zerubbabel led 50,000 of the Judeans in the first of three waves of returnees. Joshua (or Jeshua as he is called in the book of Ezra) was the accompanying priest, and Haggai was the prophet. Later Ezra and then Nehemiah would return with more people from Persia. Think of the three (Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah) as representing a later collective of Moses, in that Moses brought God’s people out of Egyptian captivity into the Promised Land (cf. the book of Exodus). These three did the same later in the life of Judah. Each of them faced the same post-exilic problems: to build/rebuild their capital city, to reinstitute Torah-based laws, to overcome foreign enemies, and to purify the people from idolatry. Ezra, per the book of Ezra, returns after the accounts here in Haggai, only to learn to his deep dismay that Judah, after seventy years of punishment, had *once again so quickly* fallen into the same egregious sins!

Soon after Zerubbabel and the 50,000 returned from Persia to Jerusalem, the local residents became upset with the Judeans’ temple-rebuilding efforts. The flak from the locals proved effective, and the returned-from-exile Judeans soon “spiritualized” the reason they had stopped rebuilding God’s temple. Note Haggai 1:2, wherein Haggai parrots their “spiritualized” procrastination and lack of courage:

*“The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt.”*

#### Haggai’s Five Prophecies

1. **God’s Rebuke of the Two Leaders** 1:2–11
2. **God’s Reinforcement of the Remnant** 1:13
3. **God’s Revelation to His People** 2:1–9
4. **God’s Reminder of the Past** 2:10–19
5. **God’s Reinstatement of the Davidic Lineage** 2:20–23



Continued from page 2

not “using our best endeavors to deliver our fellow-creatures from them.”

The spiritual mentor behind Wilberforce was John Newton. “A wretched man” in his own words, Newton had been a slave trader who was dramatically saved by the powerful message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is no wonder he is the author of the hymn “Amazing Grace,” which includes the lamenting admission, “that saved a wretch like me.” After his conversion, Newton became a pastor who had a profound personal impact on Wilberforce, not a lobbying kind of impact, but a spiritual one that resulted in political reform that changed a nation. Rather than cower in Parliament, Wilberforce grew strong in God’s grace as his years in office rolled by. He would not be like many who return from public office a shell of the man they once were.

Newton and other ministers within the church were responsible for helping Wilberforce develop convictions born from Scripture. Their discipleship efforts led Wilberforce to become a man driven by theology and doctrine. He was a lover of God and the Bible. After he became a Christian, Wilberforce decided to spend legislative recesses studying the Bible. It was common for him to spend ten hours per day studying and memorizing Scripture. This righteous conviction rooted in biblical

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Ironically, however, the people were very much about the business of building their own homes! The “time had come” for that! God was not pleased. It was now 16 years after their return, about 520 BC, and herein God delivers the five prophecies via Haggai to once again disobedient Judah, reminding them that what was indeed presently happening in their lives was a result of their once again disobedience. But especially take note of the following point.

**IV. HOLDING LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE**

God’s rebuke was not aimed at the 50,000 returnees. Rather, God’s rebuke was specifically aimed at Judah’s civic and spiritual leader.

This important distinction appears in the opening verse:

*The word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.*

What follows in subsequent passages are numerous second-person pronouns, *you*.<sup>4</sup> *The yous* relate to just those two individual leaders. Again, Haggai’s first admonitions are centered on *these two individual leaders* who name His name.

Later Haggai will widen his remarks to include all the remnant who returned from captivity, but not until verse 12 of this first chapter.

God the Father, through His mouth-piece the prophet Haggai, first addresses His follower, Zerubbabel, the civil leader of Judah, stating that Judah is not being blessed *because of his and Joshua’s spiritual lethargy!* Notice how God couches this message in order to get their attention in 1:5–6:

*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.”*<sup>5</sup>

Haggai’s rebuke can be similarly applied to every civil and spiritual leader today who names the name of Christ while procrastinating or outright ignoring the fulfillment of God’s purposes.

Upon their return from Persian captivity, Judah was making excuses as to why, as a nation, they couldn’t devote more of their energies to God. Seemingly Zerubbabel and Joshua were going along with these pretexts, if not positing them themselves. They supposedly, outwardly at least, had journeyed to the nation’s capital to reconstruct the Temple, but in reality, *they had lost their resolve and were now spending their time paneling their own homes and were lax about God’s purposes.*<sup>6</sup> Being self-deceived, they now made “spiritualized” excuses, phony defenses, as they dragged their feet relative to communing with their God





and achieving His purposes. Note Haggai's specific rebuke in 1:4 in this regard:

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

Because of their unfaithfulness to be about God's purposes, *God Himself was orchestrating the withholding of national blessing!* In 1:11 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.”***

### A Profound Play on Words

It is interesting to note in the original Hebrew text the intentional play on words that God gives to Haggai. In Hebrew, the word *desolate* in verse 4 is *hareb*, and the word *drought* in verse 11 is *horeb*. God is instructing Haggai to use words that were very similar in order to unmistakably drive home His point! God wanted them to make the connection! The drought in the land was because of their desolation (*desolate*: “to make bleakly, depressingly empty”) of His temple! Their bleak attention to God's matters was resulting in His bleak attention to their matters! God was the one behind the over-all decline of the nation! Why? Because the na-

tional leaders—the civil and spiritual leaders—had become self-serving!<sup>7</sup>

They hadn't made it a priority to give attention to their personal spiritual vitality! It follows that this book serves not only as a vivid illustration of the violation of Matthew 6:33 in the New Testament (NT): ***“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you,”*** but also as a narrative paralleling the gist of God's message in the book of Ecclesiastes, that everything apart from the pursuit of God is all for naught, vanity.

### V. INSIGHTS FROM SODOM AND GOMORRAH VS. POST-EXILE JUDAH

As we have just seen, the Scriptures indicate that God withheld His blessings on Judah—that is to say, He withheld national blessing—due to their leader's personal spiritual laxness. This *causal* insight is very interesting when compared to the *cause* of God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 18 and 19. God was ready to reduce the cities to ashes because the debauchery of Sodom and Gomorrah was ***“indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave”*** (18:20). But prior to their destruction, note that Abraham inquires if God would ***“sweep away the righteous with the wicked”*** (v. 23) and begins to negotiate. He asks if God would spare the cities if 50 righteous people were found. God answers, ***“I will spare the whole place on their account”*** (18:26). Probably knowing there weren't that many, Abraham

James Otis



***“Has [government] any solid foundation? Any chief cornerstone? ... I think it has an everlasting foundation in the unchangeable will of God. ... The sum of my argument is that civil government is of God.”***

— James Otis, leader of the Sons of Liberty, attorney and jurist, mentor of John Hancock and Samuel Adams.

James Otis, *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* (London: J. Williams and J. Almon, 1766), 11, 98.





*Continued from page 4*

doctrine is what sustained and directed Wilberforce during his decades-long battle against slavery. They were the diet that gave him the strength of character necessary to change the face of a nation. Wilberforce changed the world.

Much could be said from a historical perspective about the providential workings of God through specific people and circumstances that brought the issue to a rolling boil in Wilberforce’s heart, but suffice to say that God raised up the right person, at the right time, for the right task.

**It was not his district constituents, the latest polls, or the fear of reelection that informed his legislative decisions; it was God’s holy precepts—which he deemed preeminent and more important.**

His deep study of the Bible taught him that one day he would give an account to his Creator, not voters, for his deeds.

Wilberforce never said, “*the time has not come*” (cf. Haggai 1:2) as it pertained to the overthrow of slavery.

Wilberforce serves as a pivotal evangelical public servant role model. His story is an exemplar for every present and future public servant. States biographer Gertz, who wrote about the life of Newton in *Pastor to the Nation*:

In 1786, Newton wrote of Wilberforce, “I hope the Lord will make him a

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reduces the number of righteous to 45, and God agrees to spare the cities for that number. Abraham continues to bargain, going down to 40, then 30, then 20 and finally, just if 10 were found! God’s patience is so generous. **“I will not destroy it on account of the ten,”** God said (18:32).

Contrast this Genesis 18 insight into the mind of God as it pertains to His determination whether to judge a city or a nation with the insight provided from Haggai 1. In Genesis 18, God’s judgment *is not enacted* if there are just a few faithful in a city or a nation! If there are just a few faithful to Him, He will not judge the whole. Whereas in the book of Haggai, God’s judgment *is enacted* when the leaders who name His name are spiritually lethargic!

### **VI. WHAT MIGHT HAGGAI SAY TO D.C. OFFICEHOLDERS?**

Given this insight into God’s way of thinking as it relates to His willingness not to pour out His judgment, it follows that Haggai would say to D.C. leaders today who name the name of Christ:

**“My blessing on your nation is primarily determined by the faithfulness of My political and spiritual leaders whom I have put into office.”**

Genesis 18:28–33 reveals that God was willing not to judge Sodom and Gomorrah if only 10 individuals were found there who were faithful to Him! America has millions of faithful and committed Christians! So the

number of faithful believers in a nation is not the determining factor relative to God’s invoking His wrath on a nation; it only takes a few to ward off His judgment.

It stands to reason:

**The often-cited cliché, “If God doesn’t judge America today, He will owe Sodom and Gomorrah an apology” is erroneous.**

Again, this insight into the mind of God is beyond value to believers in office relative to this matter! Here’s the bottom line:

**The book of Haggai indicates that it is vital for D.C. leaders who name the name of Christ to be passionate, active, and obedient to their special calling in the Capitol.**

The health of a nation is dependent on the faithfulness of believers in office. Such faithfulness leads to God’s blessings—something our nation is in dire need of!<sup>8</sup> So here is the obvious application and takeaway from the book of Haggai: What are you doing in the Capitol to keep your heart kindled for Christ and His purposes? Has adversity caused you to lose heart? What are you doing most every week while you are on the Hill that witnesses to and underscores that you are *seeking first the kingdom of God*? God is watching you, and the blessing (or lack thereof) of the nation is at stake.





**VII. OBEDIENT-TO-CHRIST LEADERS INFLUENCE THE PEOPLE AND BENEFIT THE NATION**

God desires His called-out ones to passionately love and obey Him. The great extent to which He will go in order to accomplish this obedience displays His great love. As mentioned in the introduction, the book of Haggai parallels and serves to illustrate the principle found in the NT book of Hebrews, **“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES”** (12:5–6).

How do you avoid His chastening discipline? Matthew 6:33 provides the answer: **“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”** When the prophet Haggai, post exile, 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.***

God’s leaders and His people first looked inwardly at their own sin of materialism and selfishness (1:4) and repented. This poignant, sobering short narrative of Haggai chapter one

serves to underscore and parallel the timeless truths of 2 Chronicles 7:14 and 1 Peter 4:17.

***“And [if] My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”***

***For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?***

A survey of this book would not be complete without mention of the second chapter. In addition to all that Haggai states that is related to the continuation of the Davidic line, He speaks about God’s coming splendor.

**VIII. THE FUTURE TEMPLE**

This book also exclaims the glorious Second Coming of the Messiah. The rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem in Haggai’s day would be only a foretaste of the coming millennial temple from which Christ will reign over the earth! That temple will far outshine Solomon’s temple and the one Zerubbabel and Joshua were about to rebuild. Accordingly, Haggai 2 contains prefiguring, or what is known as “eschatological telescoping.” States 2:9 in this regard:

***“The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts.”***

Haggai is motivating the remnant to

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blessing both as a Christian and a statesman. How seldom do these characters coincide! But they are not incompatible.” To Newton’s credit as a spiritual counselor and friend, few politicians have ever done so much as Wilberforce for the cause of Christ or the church.

Wilberforce found continual, decadal strength by letting the Word of Christ dwell richly in him (Colossians 3:16). Bible study was a discipline necessary for the long battle. Perhaps most telling of the primacy of his salvation over his entire life is the following statement by John Pollack in his book, *Wilberforce*:

For Wilberforce wanted to subject not merely his appetites but his politics to Christ: “A man who acts from the principle I profess,” he told a constituent three years after the conversion, “reflects that he is to give an account of his political conduct at the Judgment seat of Christ.”

Will you be a public servant who finds favor at the judgment seat of Christ?

be about rebuilding the temple by way of providing a foretaste, a foreshadowing of the coming millennial temple wherein Christ will reign with all the saints as recorded most specifically in the book of Revelation. His motivating words could be titled, “Small Beginnings Can Lead to Great Things.” To gain a more comprehensive understanding of temples throughout the Bible, note the following (and see also endnote 6):

**Temples in the Bible**

**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

In order to achieve a better understanding of The Present Temple (the fifth in the list) relative to the believer in NT times (in which we presently find ourselves living), note 1 Corinthians 6:19–20:

*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.*

This passage has profound implications for those who name the name of Christ; this magnificent truth should sober every true believer as to his or her divine calling and the urgency and necessity of fulfilling this mission—especially those at whom these Bible studies are aimed—those called to the leadership of a nation! You are in leadership because God placed you here (cf. Ephesians 1:3–14). It follows that He has expectations of you: “*From everyone who has been given much, much will be required*” states Jesus in Luke 12:48. It stands to reason that God will often remove believers in office who fail to get this. Psalm 75:7 states, *But God is the Judge, He puts down one and exalts another.* (How many times I have seen this in 24 years of ministry in capitols?)

**Zerubbabel and Joshua had become irresponsible with their temple. How about you with yours?**

**IX. APPLICATION TO GOVERNING AUTHORITIES**

As already noted, the book of Haggai has profound implications for civil leaders who name the name of Christ; it offers a sobering, hugely insightful, godly perspective on why a nation declines (cf. 2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 Peter 4:17). Don’t miss this: Haggai places the demise of a country squarely





Roger Sherman



*De profect Haggai!*  
(Haggai II, 2)

on the shoulders of the followers of Yahweh—those whom He has placed in leadership! Notice the following additional passages (from an agrarian-based culture) that so depict and parallel America’s enormous problems today (Haggai 2:16–17; 19):

***“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***



**“God commands all men everywhere to repent. He also commands them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and has assured us that all who do repent and believe shall be saved.”**

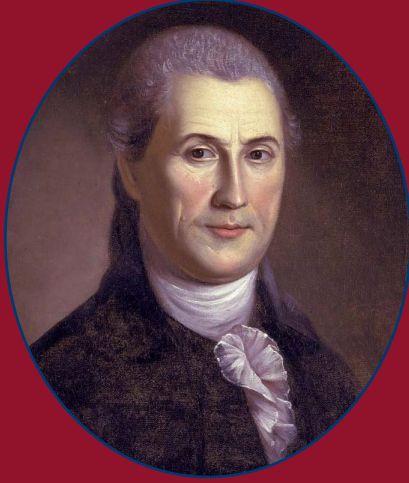
— Roger Sherman, signer of the Declaration of Independence, signer of the Constitution, “Master Builder of the Constitution,” judge, framer of the Bill of Rights, U.S. senator.

Correspondence Between Roger Sherman and Samuel Hopkins (Worcester, MA: Charles Hamilton, 1889), 9, from Roger Sherman to Samuel Hopkins, June 28, 1790.





Samuel Huntington



**“It becomes a people publicly to acknowledge the over-ruling hand of Divine Providence and their dependence upon the Supreme Being as their Creator and Merciful Preserver ... and with becoming humility and sincere repentance to supplicate the pardon that we may obtain forgiveness through the merits and mediation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”**

— Samuel Huntington, signer of the Declaration of Independence, president of Congress, judge, governor of Connecticut.

Samuel Huntington, *A Proclamation for a Day of Fasting, Prayer and Humiliation*, March 9, 1791.

***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 Judah for the country’s economic woes and overall decline. Most specifically, it was not the overall populace of the nation that He initially blamed; the responsibility was laid first on the shoulders of God’s civil and spiritual leaders: they who were not *seeking first the kingdom of God*, but rather seeking first the god of self-interest (cf. 1:4)! Today God is watching you (2 Chronicles 16:9). Will your heart ever shift to using your position and power not for the betterment of the nation, but for personal gain? Has it already? It is a subtle and privately kept temptation—you know what I mean. War against that at all times! Herein I believe is the tightest application of this book to your life:

**Your private surrender (or lack thereof) determines the course of a nation.**

**You had the guts to take the risk, to do the uncomfortable thing and run for office, to leave home, and to better your nation when many others chose to stay back. But now that you’re here, the circumstances can prove to be discouraging. Do you continually prioritize God, or do you give in and internally decide to panel your own house?**

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—that’s what triggers or withholds His transcendent blessing on a nation. Your faithfulness to continue (or suspend) serving Him now that you are in D.C. is the real determining factor as to whether He blesses or disciplines the nation. Don’t miss this truth.

How committed to Christ are you in your heart of hearts? 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 Capitol? Do you instruct your scheduler to block your appointment calendar in order to participate in Bible studies that honor Him—where the Word of God is consistently taught and there is a full-throated, exclusive Gospel of Jesus Christ? Those are just basics, a starting point, par for the course.

Will you be like Zerubbabel, who, when confronted, ***obeyed the voice of the LORD*** (1:12)? Haggai says that that is the biggest issue in the nation.





1. You will note that oftentimes a NT principle, stated in a tight fashion, is illustrated by a long narrative passage in the OT. Such is the case here: Hebrews 12:5–11 is illustrated in and by the events recorded in Haggai, chapter 1. This speaks to the analogy of Scripture—written by God via different authors at different times. You will note later in this study the same with Matthew 6:33.
2. After the death of King Solomon (sometime around 930 BC), God’s kingdom of Israel split into a northern kingdom, which retained the name Israel (also called Ephraim), and a southern kingdom called Judah. Judah and Ephraim got their names after the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Ephraim respectively, two of the twelve tribes of Israel that dominated those kingdoms. Both kingdoms would go into exile. The book of Haggai provides a spiritual insight into the kingdom of Judah right after Judah had returned from Babylonian/Persian captivity.
3. J. Vernon McGee, in his commentary on Zephaniah and Haggai, is careful to include the parallel passage found in Ezra 3:8–13. Therein revealed is the fact that the older remnant who returned to the Promised Land, those who had seen Solomon’s Temple before their exile, were complaining by making comparison. See J. Vernon McGee, *Zephaniah and Haggai* (LaVerne, California: El Camino Press, 1979) 82–86.
4. There are 12 second-person plural pronouns—*you*—that follow 1:1 and are prior to 1:12. It follows that all of them directly and only apply to Zerubbabel and Joshua. It is not until verse 12 that Haggai includes **all the remnant of the people** and states thereafter **their God**, utilizing third person pronouns. In fact, many of the 12 *yous* are supplied in the NASB English translation of the original Hebrew text for the sake of readability, but the point still stands that only two individuals are initially held responsible for Judah’s possible judgment by God (yet again!).
5. This passage serves to reveal that God continues to abide by—and expects His post exilic chosen people to continue to abide by the “if/then” promise of the Abrahamic Covenant as recorded in Deuteronomy 28.
6. The Temple represents God’s dwelling place; it symbolizes God’s manifest presence with His chosen people. It carries with it the idea of God’s dwelling glory with His people (cf. Ezekiel 8–11). Accordingly, when Haggai speaks about the people’s laxness in rebuilding God’s Temple, his words carry the idea of the exist-

ence of an overall spiritual lethargy, if not rejection of God in their lives.

7. Cf. Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Interpreting the Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic Books, 1989), 221.
8. The dual address of Haggai’s rebuke in 1:1 is not forgotten here; it is just that these Bible studies are aimed at civil leaders, versus church pastors. In Haggai 1:1, the prophet is rebuking both the civil leader, Zerubbabel, and the spiritual leader, Joshua. Our nation today is in dire need of our spiritual leaders too—church pastors—walking in obedience to God’s purposes (in addition to the obedience of our civil leaders who name the name of Christ). The primary responsibility of today’s pastors is teaching the whole counsel of God to their congregations (cf. Hosea 4:6; Acts 20:27–28) and making disciples (Matthew 28:18–20). Most churches today do not make disciples, and it stands to reason that our nation suffers as a result. There are many reasons the American church is impotent today as compared to the first century church, which “turned the world upside down” (cf. Acts 17:6). First, theologically liberal churches do not preach a salvific Gospel; rather, they teach a “Social Gospel” which is not biblical and does not lead to individual salvation nor the filling and empowering of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. See “Theological Liberalism” and “Liberal Theology’s Struggle with Modern Archaeology” at capmin.org. Additionally, many Evangelical churches are “seeker” driven, meaning they teach watered-down, feel-good messages to keep the unsaved coming back. Lastly, hyper-charismatic and prosperity church movements are, at their core, experiential and self-interest-oriented. Few churches today are biblical and committed to teaching the **“whole purpose of God”** (Acts 20:27). All those aberrant forms of Christianity stand in juxtaposition to regular expository, exegetical instruction from the spiritual leader. Biblically driven churches explain mankind’s need for Jesus as Savior, feed the saints a high-protein diet of the unedited Word of God, build spiritual musculature, and mature believers: they “make disciples,” per the command in Matthew 28:19–20. At the end of the day, “churches”—and it is the vast majority of them today—that are theologically liberal, watered down, experiential and/or self-interest-oriented do not create strong ambassadors for Christ that impact the direction of our nation. Haggai would rebuke all of those aberrant spiritual leaders today.

William Paterson



“When the righteous rule, the people rejoice, when the wicked rule, the people groan.” (invoking Proverbs 29:2 to instruct a grand jury).

— William Paterson, attorney general of New Jersey, signer of the U.S. Constitution, U.S. senator, governor of New Jersey, U.S. Supreme Court justice.

*United States Oracle* (Portsmouth, NH), May 24, 1800.





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