

# Revival in the Book of Ezra - Part 2

by Roy Hession

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*The sermon is about the rebuilding of the ruined temple in Jerusalem and its application to the church, emphasizing the need for revival and a relationship with God through the cross of Jesus.*

**Duration:** 54:47

**Scripture:** Ezra 3:11, Nehemiah 8:10, Psalm 30:5, Isaiah 53:5, Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:1, Galatians 3:13

**Topics:** "Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the book of Ezra and the rebuilding of the ruined temple. The speaker begins with a prayer, acknowledging their dependence on God's revelation and assistance in understanding and explaining His word. The sermon addresses the feeling of being under a curse and the dissatisfaction that can arise when prayers go unanswered and situations are difficult. The preacher emphasizes the importance of looking to Jesus, who bore the curse on the cross, and finding joy and freedom in the removal of that curse through faith in Him.

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## Transcript

Shall we bow our heads in prayer? Lord Jesus, we thank Thee that it is our privilege to believe and rejoice, to see the curse removed, to bless Thee with our cheerful voice and sing Thy bleeding love. Thou knowest, Lord, there may be some of us who feel we've been under a curse. Things have gone wrong.

Things haven't prospered with us as we hoped. Our prayers don't seem to have been answered, and our hearts are dissatisfied, and our situations are difficult. And Lord, Thou knowest, we've endowed the thought, it seems to me, as if I'm under a curse.

We want to thank Thee, Lord. It isn't true. We want to thank Thee that our souls can look back, to see the burdens Thou didst bear when hanging on the accursed tree, and knows her guilt was there, and therefore we can believe and rejoice, to see the curse removed.

And if there's any of us who've been feeling we're under Thy disapproval, under a sort of curse, may we see that curse removed as we see Jesus hanging on the accursed tree for us. Open thy dear word again, Lord. We're quite powerless to understand it, save as Thou dost reveal the truth.

Certainly powerless to explain it to others, save as You help from heaven. Send help then, Lord, from the sanctuary, and make this Thy word precious indeed to us, this morning, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

Our subject in our mornings is a study of the book of Ezra, and a little bit perhaps into Nehemiah too, but mainly Ezra. Our subject is the rebuilding of that ruined temple. Yesterday we saw the walls of Jerusalem broken down, their gates burned with fire, and worst of all, we saw that wonderful noble structure, Solomon's temple, the house of the Lord, which he'd chosen to put his name there, reduced to rubble.

Its priceless treasures taken to Babylon, and the whole thing brought down to stones. And perhaps, if that was bad enough, even worse, the great majority of the people of Israel, extraordinary thing that's never happened to any nation before or since, when a whole nation is deported and taken to a faraway land as captives. They'd been a nation of captives once before in Israel.

They thought they'd finish with that forever, but no, they've come into a second and a greater captivity. And really, with everything brought to that place, it seemed to us, as we read it, and to those people themselves, that that was the end. But it wasn't the end.

Failure with God, no matter how grievous, no matter how serious the consequences, is never final. Grace has always got an answer for situations like that. And the very prophet, Jeremiah, who'd prophesied ahead of time this terrible calamity and destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, also had another promise, that their captivity would last, no, not two full years, as those vain prophets said, it was going to last 70 years, but only 70 years.

And he himself had prophesied, thus saith the Lord, when 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you and will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place, for I know the plans I have for you, saith the Lord, plans for welfare and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope. They could hardly believe that that city and temple could be destroyed, but it happened. And when it had happened, they could hardly believe there could be any restoration, but there was.

And it's very interesting to note that many, as I said yesterday, of the great, glorious, we call them the evangelical prophecies in, say, Isaiah, in the first place related to this people who thought it was the end. The very song we sang this morning, Our God Reigns, relates to this situation and to this people. How beautiful, Isaiah 52, upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings and publishes salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigns, no matter if the city is ruined, no matter if the temple's finished, no matter if you are a nation of captives.

Good news for you. Thy God reigns. And so it was, though they could hardly believe it, that was the situation.

And the seventy years began to run its course, and only one man noticed the clock of God, Daniel, understood by books, he says, the number of the years that Jeremiah had prophesied concerning the desolations of Jerusalem. And the time to favor Zion, even the set time had come, and no matter how impossible, their God reigns. I want to tell you that's the real application of it.

It's celebrating the omnipotence and power of God in the realm of grace, in his ability to recover lost situations. In that realm, he reigns. Nothing in that realm is too hard for Jesus.

There's nothing that he cannot do. And for those who would like to see the fact that the seventy years was running its course and coming to a close, was seen by the fact that Daniel got to pray. Having understood by books what those seventy years meant, and realized they were coming to an end, what did it do for Daniel? It set him praying.

And you have one of the greatest prayers of national repentance in the Bible, in that moving, moving prayer of Daniel's in chapter 9. It was Spurgeon, or was it Matthew Henry who said, when God plans to do a new thing, he sets his people a-praying. And then went on to say, such prayer of faith is a decree of God beginning to operate. And that surely is how it is with us.

Now all that we saw yesterday is a picture of the revival of the church. The church, the body of the redeemed, not the denomination merely, is intended by God to be a habitation of God by the Spirit. We are the temple of the Lord.

But as we said yesterday, that temple largely lies waste. The glory so often seems to have departed. This could be true individually of a life.

He's meant to be the temple of the Lord. What sort of a temple is he? Is the Lord in his dwelling place? No, alas. And it's also true corporately in our land, our churches.

What a state. How feeble their witness, how all of a sudden their message, and how few living stones, new ones, are being added to that building. But grace plans to restore the situation.

I believe this is the day and the hour of revival. The time to favour Zion, even the set time, I believe, has come. It's happening.

God has seen the desolations of Jerusalem, and he's made purposes and plans for its revival. And you have the privilege of sharing in it. Revival is not a beautiful temple being made more beautiful, but it's a temple in ruins, built again, rebuilt, revival.

Revival is not a good Christian becoming a better Christian. It's a Christian whose temple has been ruined and broken down because of some brokenness and sin, being rebuilt. Don't get the idea that if you're, well, I don't think I'd want to go in for revival.

I'm getting on pretty well. Then you're no candidate. Only they are candidates for grace.

Only they are candidates for revival who are ready to confess there has indeed been a sad declension. Things are not up with us now as they once were. And the one who's quickest to confess that state of his is the first to be a candidate for that marvellous grace of our loving Lord, grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt, yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured, there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Now we're going to look stage by stage at how this great thing was done, the rebuilding of that ruined temple. We're going to see many applications for ourselves in it. And I want to read you Ezra chapter 3. Chapter 1 tells us of the emperor whose heart had been touched by God.

And though he wasn't of Israel, he had a vision for the God of Israel and for his house. And he gave the edict that whoever of his people in Babylon wanted to return, they could. That those who didn't see fit to return, they were to back the others up with funds, gold and silver.

And he went even further himself. Those precious holy vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in Jerusalem and put in the house of his gods were to be restored to this remnant and they were to take back those hundreds of miles, these precious holy vessels to be used in the service of God. Now that's chapter 1. Chapter 2 consists simply of a list of all the people and their groupings who returned from their exile in Babylon.

It's about 50,000. They didn't all come back. Others stayed and provided funds, but here was a great remnant that did indeed return with great joy to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads.

Always remember this story when you sing those glorious passages and when you preach on them and quote them. In the first place, they're referring to this great glorious thing that God did when all was sin and shame. Ezra chapter 3. They're back now.

They've camped down in the villages as best they may. They've had to get the land a little bit under cultivation to have any food to eat. But when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

Then stood up Joshua, the son of Josedek, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God. And they set the altar upon his bases, for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries. And they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening.

They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required. And afterward offered the continual burnt offering both of the new moons, and of all the feasts of the Lord that were consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a freewill offering unto the Lord. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the Lord, but the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid.

They gave money also unto masons, and to the carpenters, and meat, and drink, and oil unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring seeded trees from Lebanon to the sea unto Joppa. They floated those logs down from Lebanon in the north, down by the coast, down to Joppa, from whence they were fetched up to Jerusalem, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia. Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedek, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem, and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and upward to have the oversight of the work of the house of the Lord.

Then stood Joshua with his sons and his brethren, Cadmeel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together to have the oversight of the workmen in the house of God, the sons of Henedad with their sons and their brethren the Levites. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang one to another, two choirs, answering one another in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord, because, and this is their great standard praise chorus, always had been in Israel, he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel.

And the fact that they were back was showing, was showing that he hadn't forgotten his mercy toward Israel. How they praised the Lord, it was true. We always sang it, but look, here's an evidence, his mercy endures forever toward Israel.

And all the people shouted with a great shout, and when they, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid, that many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, if they'd been 70 years in Babylon, some of those that were still survived, and had reached 80 years, were 10 when they left. But they still remembered,

even when they were only 10, they still remembered that first structure. And somehow they couldn't join in the joy of the others, for they remembered how glorious it was.

And by comparison with these foundations, it didn't look as if this new house was going to match that old one that had been destroyed. But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, which had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice, and many shouted aloud for joy, so the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people, for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off. And so when they got back, and got their own accommodation more or less settled, they came together with one accord on the seventh month, and that was always the holy month for Israel, the month where most of their feasts used to take place.

And so they got together, and the first thing they did was they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereof. There was no temple, there was no city, no one could even live in the city. They had to live way out in the villages, but they all came together, and before they did anything else, they built it again, the temple of the Lord, and set it on his basis.

And they did that, it says here, for fear was upon them, because the people of those countries. There were countries around that were very happy to see Israel deported, and they had made free of the empty land and the empty fields, and they didn't appreciate to see this company come back, and they were very antagonistic, and little Israel was surrounded by her enemies, and because of the fear of the Lord, the fear of those people, the first thing they had to do was to establish their relationship with God. They had to be assured that God was with them, and that would symbolize the fact that the altar was set up, and the burnt offerings began to be offered once again.

Rather, it reminds me of that revival on Mount Carmel with Elijah. The first thing that Elijah did was this, he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down, long before he started to pray for the fire to come. He said, we must get that altar built again, we must get God in the centre again, and in revival, that is always the first thing that must happen, and that does indeed happen.

The cross of Jesus is put central. The altar of the Lord, that old rugged cross, takes a central place in a way it hasn't been. And if a church has got cold, if things aren't happening, you can be quite sure the altar of the Lord has been broken down, and the first thing that must happen is that the cross of our Lord Jesus and its preaching must be put once again in the centre.

It matters not whether they like it or not, you do it! And people will have to know they're not fighting you, they're fighting the God of that cross. You can't expect God to do something about the powerless condition in which you are, or your church is, unless your relationship with God is right. That's the first thing.

Your relationship with God must be restored, and that is only possible through the cross of our Lord Jesus. Mercy there is great and grace is free, pardon there is multiplied to me, and the first thing must be the establishment of the altar of the Lord, the proclamation of the cross, and the experience of grace and mercy that comes from that cross. And that's a deep thing.

Years ago there was a wonderful movement of revival, not beyond our lifetime, I suppose I must have been alive at the time, though I didn't know much about it, but when they were celebrating some, what a centenary was it, but something or other, a few years ago, there were articles, the revival in Lewistow, just up the road, and there was a terrible industrial unrest among the fishermen, and the Baptist deacons knew

they needed God in their city. It's a wonderful story, quite extraordinary, how they felt guided to go to London. They didn't know quite what, why.

They looked at the evening papers to see who was preaching where. On Saturday they looked, and there they found that a man called Douglas Brown, pastor of a big Baptist church in London, was preaching, and they felt impelled to go to that church. And as they listened to Douglas Brown preach, they said, he's your man.

And Douglas Brown had had a new, just that very day, a new meeting with God. When he laid in dust his glory dead, he was prepared to look a fool in a fashionable church and make the all-time open invitation to sinners, if that was what God wanted him to do. That wasn't the evangelist itching to do it, he didn't want to do it, but there'd been that big surrender, prepared to be vile in the sight of anybody.

After the service these men came to him, sir, we feel God wants you to come to Leurstadt. And he came, he was ready, he wouldn't have been ready before. And Douglas Brown preached the gospel in Leurstadt, and God was with him, and the people came, and many were saved, and the conversion of one led to the conversion of another.

It was a wonderful season of revival, and the converted fishermen went in their work up to the shores of Scotland, and they gave their testimonies, and blessing came. That was a wonderful season. And around that time, Douglas Brown was invited to Keswick to take the Bible readings.

And I've read the little book of those Bible readings, they didn't really conform to the normal idea of a Bible reading, it was like a bomb going off in the middle of Keswick, as this man poured out what he'd been learning, and seeing grace in action. And he uttered these memorable words, he said, friends, revival is not going down the street with a big drum, it's going back to Calvary with a big sob. And the altar of the Lord is the first thing.

Calvary takes its place, the only place where man and God can be reconciled, the only place where the church can be revived. It doesn't get revived at Pentecost, it gets revived at Calvary. Pentecost and much else may follow, but this is the first step.

And what did they use that altar for? To offer the daily burnt offerings, as was prescribed by Moses. Morning and evening, there was always in old time, the daily burnt offering. Of course the altar's gone, and the burnt offering had long since ceased to be offered, but they began to put it back.

They got the altar erected, and they laid the burnt offering. Now this is significant. You may not know, but let me tell you, there were five offerings prescribed for Israel to offer, there in the early chapters of the book of Leviticus.

And the first, and the greatest, was the burnt offering. In this case, the whole beast was burnt, all of it. Some of the offerings, it wasn't so, apart the priest said, and the rest was burnt, and so on, all sorts of things.

But the burnt offering was unique. The whole of that beast was burnt, and it was said to be a sweet savour offering. An offering made by fire, a sweet savour to the Lord.

Well I think roast beef is very attractive, or roast lamb, my goodness. And when I smell that coming from the kitchen, I say well that's a sweet savour offering. Now the other offerings weren't all sweet savour

offerings.

The sin offering wasn't a sweet savour offering. The body of the sin offering was taken outside the camp and burnt on the refuse. It was a judgement of sin.

But the burnt offering was a different aspect. It was something going up to God, to give pleasure to God. And Jesus is the fulfilment of all these offerings, and he very specially is a fulfilment, yes we know him as the sin offering, but you know him as the burnt offering.

We read in Ephesians 5, Christ also loved us and had given us, Ephesians 5.1, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. Please turn the it's something for God. He wanted a sweet savour from you.

He's never had it, only a stench. But he said I provided me a lamb for a burnt offering, and a cowrie that went up a sweet savour to God. Yes he was bearing our sins in his body on the tree, yes something for us.

But the disposition he displayed in doing that, the humility, the willingness to bend his neck and lay aside his reputation, was something infinitely pleasing to God, something that God had never had from the sons of men. And up from cowrie there went this sweet savour offering. And you know what the offerer had to do? Ere he slew it, he was to lay his hands upon the head of that burnt offering.

Laying the hands simply means identification. When the church at Antioch laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas and sent them out, they were identifying themselves with Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas, you go as us.

That's what it means to lay the hand. And when I lay my hand on that dear head of his, I identify myself with him. I say that death is my death.

That's what I deserve. And then it goes on to say, it, it, it, the burnt offering, shall be accepted for him. And all the value of the sweet savour that pleased God so much that goes over to, up to him from cowrie is made over to you.

My faith, we sang, would lay her hand on that dear head of thine, while as a penitent I stand, and there confess my sin. But it, Christ, is accepted for me. Now we see in his acceptance, but the measure of my own.

And I tell you, I've got boldness this morning only because of that. As a sweet-smelling saviour, going up from Calvary that pleases God, and I've identified myself with him. Many a time have I had to lay my hand on that dear head of his, and there confess my sin.

And each time I know, I'm accepted, he's accepted for me. And this is what they put, bank centre again. This is always the first step to revival.

And will you notice, they did it, it says, as it is written. And I want to tell you, revival is always according to the scriptures. The Holy Spirit does not work other than along the lines of the truths of scripture.

What happens is, happens as it is written. We've got our dear brother James from Uganda, and I know a missionary, and others of you know her too, who went out to East Africa as a well-educated woman, and she became headmistress of the teacher training college. But missionary that she was, she knew not the Lord, and an African got a burden for her, and he kept on sharing with her.

He said, have you discovered what the blood of Jesus means? He could have asked her any other question, she had a very well-defined liberal theology. She didn't know what to say about that one. But the time came, when she met Jesus.

When she saw the cross, she laid her hand upon his head, and she was accepted, and Christ was accepted for her. And do you know, her theology came right overnight. And when you get a new experience of grace, I want to tell you, your theology is going to come right.

You've got all sorts of fancy ideas, reservations about this, and reservations about that. You ministers, the trouble with you, there's something lacking in your experience of grace. You've not yet taken a sinner's place deep enough.

But God, I tell you, when you do, your theology comes right overnight. And the altar of the Lord is risen up with a burnt offering offered, as it is written. But the foundations of the Lord's house were not yet laid.

And so, they proceeded to that. Having got the altar right then, they had to lay the foundations. And for us, it's not enough merely to have a new conception of the cross of our Lord Jesus.

It's not enough for us to have a new conception that there is power in his blood. If you are going to have a real experience of restoring grace, there's got to be the foundation of repentance. From dead works and from much else, there has to be foundational acts of repentance.

Especially if things have been cold and you've been away in some measure from God, there's a whole heap of things that are going to be cleared up with God and man. And the foundation of repentance must be laid. But do be sure that your repentance, may I be sure that my repentance goes deep enough.

Jesus told the story of two houses. One house went up very quick. They were content, concerned to build up.

The other house took longer. They were going down. And after that, down again.

In the case of the first house, they didn't bother too much about the foundations. They built on earth, they built on sand. But the other house, they were wiser.

They said, we must get our foundations really deep, on rock. And they haven't got to rock yet, so they went down until they got to rock. And when the bad weather came, and when the river by which those houses were built overflowed its banks, one of those houses collapsed.

But the other didn't. The one that collapsed was the house that was built, had its foundations only on sand. But the one that stood was that which had its foundations on rock.

And I've got to get down to rock. Right down to the real me. Right down to the real sinner, where I see it and I confess it.

And if I'm real with God, Jesus will be real to me. And I'm building on Christ, the solid rock. I've really got down to the basics.

I haven't been content with superficial repentance. I've let God show me the first thing, then the second, then the third. And I know in experience, and many of you do, that Jesus is real to you in the proportion in which you are real with him.

I heard of a revival amongst young people, full of joy, full of enthusiasm, new salvation. And someone said, you know they're going deeper. They're now beginning to repent of disobedience to parents.

Who ever heard of young people doing such a thing? Standard procedure. They're now beginning to repent of disrespect for authority. I said, hallelujah, they're meaning business.

And they're getting down to rock, what they really are. And there are many other subtle things that, for us, our older ones, we haven't always got down to rock. But that's where you find Jesus real.

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand. But you've got to get down to the rock. He's not there for people just a little failing.

He's there for sinners. And when I see areas in which I'm a sinner, there I find Jesus has anticipated it all in his body on the tree. And he becomes real to that man.

And that house is built on rock. What do we mean by building on sand? May I suggest ways in which we may perhaps be only building on sand. It's possible for us to be walking with Jesus as we hope, repenting of day-to-day things that go wrong and putting them right.

While all the time there's some major outstanding things in the past that have never been acknowledged. I remember years ago at Clevedon, being astonished with the way in which God dealt with a vicar's wife. She was really one of the team.

She sat with us, she got her testimony, how she was going to Jesus as it's seen for the cleansing blood. And she was so concerned about her husband that hadn't seen these things and asked us to pray for him. And then one day, things caught up with her.

Well, as she was dealing with day-to-day things, there were certain things in the past she hadn't dealt with at all. She had to confess that she was a kleptomaniac. That one of the great things she enjoyed so much was going into Woolworths and other departmental stores and coming out with things for which she hadn't paid.

And here she was repenting of many day-to-day things. But that was sad. There was that basic thing.

And I remember the agony of her soul. How can I get right a vicar's wife? I was caught once and they took me to the court. But they said I'd been overstrained and therefore it really wasn't anything very serious.

And I was released. But she said I did it just before I came here. I want to tell you Grace did triumph.

I haven't the time to tell you the whole story. But it's a possibility. Perhaps, you know, being a nice Christian, you want to be in fellowship with others, but maybe there's some basic things, deeper things.

Well, that's building on sand, that day-to-day trying to repent when there's something outstanding in the past. Or it could be that we have indeed got a testary of having put things right in the past, major things. We're glad to give that testimony, but we're not repenting of the day-to-day things.

It can be that way around. And that's building on sand. It could be that whereas we put things right with God very conscientiously, we don't always put the right with man where that's called for and obviously necessary.

It's comparatively easy to tell God what a sinner you are. Not so easy to admit that fact to somebody else who's been involved and to whom such a confession is owing. And that putting it right merely with God is building on sand.

Of course, on the other hand, we could be putting things right with everybody else, but not with the Lord. It could be a game of chess. If I confess I'm wrong there, that'll help the other person to confess he's wrong, and they'll be fine.

We'll just be so much happier. It's a game of chess. And you could be doing all that without really having been to Jesus, been to God and called it by its right name.

And therefore, that putting things right with other people can be building on sand. No, we've got to get right down to rock. And that was the second thing.

First the altar, and then they built right down on solid rock the foundations of the Lord's house. And then there's a very interesting part of the story. It was a great day when they got those foundations laid, and there was quite a celebration.

They tried to recall all the ordinances of David with regard to singing. Moses didn't say anything about singing in the temple. That was the revelation that was given to David.

He was the psalmist of Israel. He was something of a musician himself, and he set it up and got it all organized. And they recalled all that, and they put that back into operation.

And they had a wonderful time of contrapuntal singing, one choir answering another, and singing together, He is good, for his mercy endures forever. And the people gave a great shout of triumph as this foundation was laid. You can understand it.

But hello, I seem to hear another sort of note. It's pretty loud, because when orientals weep, they weep. They howl.

And next to him, with a shout of triumph, there were the groans and the weeping of the older people. They'd seen that beautiful house in its heyday. And this that was beginning again looked so insignificant, they could tell it wasn't going to be the same by the outlines of the foundation.

And they wept. And it's possible for us, yes, to shout, praise the Lord, revile the gun, hallelujah. But there may be others who may be talking about the good old days.

And you know, it's possible when we think of the good old days, for that fact to paralyze present action, and to minimize the new work of grace that God is doing. I'm not tremendously helped by histories of the spectacular revivals God has granted in the past. I compare that with what's happening today, and I'm depressed.

I want to tell you that's not according to the will of God. He doesn't want you to listen to the people, or talk about the good old days. He wants you to see the new thing.

And I know those that shouted were far nearer the heart of God than those that wept. Now, I haven't mentioned the fact, I ought to have done, that in this whole story there were two men who played a very important part, more important than anybody else, and they were the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. We'll have need to refer to that later, but it was at this point that Haggai came with one of his words of

prophecy.

If you turn to Haggai, he is the third book from the end of the Old Testament. Get to the end of the Old Testament, turn back three books, and there is Haggai. And he prophesied very directly with regard to this situation in which they were.

Haggai, chapter 2, verse 3. And this is what he had to say to those people who were weeping concerning the former house, and not praising for the new thing that was arising in their midst. Haggai, chapter 2, verse 3. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations. Who's that? It's a prophecy of Jesus.

And the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord. The silver is mine, the gold is mine, saith the Lord. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.

And in this place will I give peace. This was tremendously important, because if they kept looking back and feeling depressed, it would paralyse them. And so Haggai has given this word.

You think it's nothing compared, but I want to tell you. The glory of this latter house is going to be greater than the glory of the former. For one day, in this very house that you're building, the desire of all nations is going to come.

And he's going to tread those very pavements which you're laying. He said, I want to tell you, fellas, you're building bigger than you know. This is going to be greater.

And though maybe you've got a long way to go, much yet needs to be recovered and restored. You've got the altar in its right place, and there's been those foundational acts of repentance, and you've begun. And in a sense we can say revival has begun to come to our hearts.

But then you see somebody else, oh, I'd never be like that, you feel depressed. Instead of shouting, you almost feel like weeping. And the Lord wants to encourage you.

I want to tell you, God is the great optimist. And the man who takes the optimistic view is much nearer the heart of God than the pessimistic view. And I want to tell you, the glory of this new thing God is doing in your life is going to be greater than the glory of that former thing which got messed up and mucked up because of sin.

And grace is going to have the topmost stone, and the end of the story is going to be something for which you'll only be able to praise that God could do so much out of the mess that I presented him with. That's where grace is at its best, in a mess, amongst rubble. That's where Jesus is expert.

He's a specialist in sin. Absolutely at ease. Knows what he's doing.

If only he could get somebody to admit it. And get to the bottom of it. Lord, yes, this is how it is.

Jesus moves into his own. And I want to tell you, the glory of the later thing that God's going to do for you is going to be greater than anything you've missed. Oh, I've spoken to people who've told me something of their lives, the mess that's been made, and they were largely responsible for it.

And I've had great joy to tell that person, listen brother, your best days are yet to come. For the glory of the new thing that grace will do for the failing saint and the failing church is going to be greater than the glory

of what was messed up. In other words, dear friend, you and I are building bigger than they know, than we know.

I want to tell you, I know I'm preaching bigger than I know. I don't know what I'm preaching. Heavily intelligences do.

They say, do they realise it? Does he realise it? And we do, we're building even in Southwold, bigger than we know. They were, you are. The present you don't know.

You've got to take it on faith. But every now and then he's going to give you some evidence, isn't that right? Look, what just happened, that happened. You're building bigger than you know.

And the glory of this latter house is going to be greater. Oh, I want to tell you, God in the gospel of his son has all his mightiest deeds outdone. And under grace, when we offered him the mess, all I had to offer him was emptiness and strife, but he made something beautiful in my life, out of that relationship, out of the situation I'm in.

Is that your expectation? You'd better come up to it, otherwise you don't, you're not quite agreeing with God. Oh, the great thing these people needed was encouragement. And that was the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah.

There was challenge, yes, but supremely. Dear old Zerubbabel got so down. And so did Joshua.

In Zechariah he's pictured in filthy rags, he was real down. And God said, you're not going to remain down, take off those filthy rags. He's bigger than he thinks he is.

He's working bigger than he knows. And I want to tell you, that's a wonderful encouragement to you. And in this house, will I give peace.

Now, they'd hardly begun to alter foundations. There was much yet to do. And we shall see what happens.

And we shall see how they did not do it. And for 13 years, the revival stopped. But through the ministry of dear old Haggai and dear old Zechariah, they began again.

And many a time, people said, I began years ago, I began a new walk with the Lord at Southwold, or one of the other conferences, and then I quit. People didn't understand, I got discouraged. But I want to tell you, after 13 years, I've begun again.

Amen! And so this story is so down to earth, and tomorrow we will see that aspect of this thrilling story. Meantime, let's remind ourselves. Dear one, you're in on something bigger than you know.

Don't get discouraged. Don't get sidetracked. And that bigger thing that grace has got for you in your church, in your personal life, it'll come to pass.

You take it in faith right now. And be heartened and encouraged. Praise the Lord for that old rugged cross, the altar, stained with blood so divine.

And praise the Lord for the privilege of getting down to bedrock with Him. And we've begun. And God will show us how to continue.

Let us pray. Dear Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for this amazing picture. Dear Lord Jesus, we thank Thee for this thing You did of old, and You're just the same today.

And Lord, we're going to be amongst those people who are positive. We're going to believe that the time to favour Zion, even the set time has come. Thank You for every indication that is so.

And the mere fact of it has set us praying. It's got us excited with the glorious possibilities. And Lord, we don't want to miss it.

And if you've got something to tell us of how we've begun and then got stuck, help us there too. How we praise Thee for all that has got for us in these days as we gather round Thy holy word. All that's got for us in Jesus.

Amen. Shall we say the grace? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.

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