

From Babylon to Jerusalem - (Haggai) ch.1 & 2

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon emphasizes the importance of moving from spiritual complacency to actively building the body of Christ as illustrated in the book of Haggai.

Duration: 1:00:45

Scripture: Deuteronomy 28:8, Proverbs 3:9-10, Haggai 1:5-6, Malachi 3:10, Matthew 6:19-20, Matthew 6:33, Acts 3:6

Topics: "From Babylon To Jerusalem"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the power of speaking the word of God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. He emphasizes that even a few minutes of speaking the burden of the Lord can accomplish more than years of preaching without the anointing. The speaker also highlights the importance of speaking words given by God in counseling and helping others, rather than relying on clever ideas and thoughts. The sermon also addresses the issue of having knowledge and engaging in religious activities, but lacking victory and blessings in one's life. The speaker encourages the audience to consider their ways and seek a deeper connection with God.

Transcript

Let's turn today to the Old Testament, to the book of Haggai, which is the third last book of the Old Testament. Haggai, chapter 1, verse 1. In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, 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 Jehoshadak, the high priest, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, this people says, The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt. Now, we have been taking a study to consider the movement of God's people in the Old Testament from Babylon to Jerusalem.

We saw that there were two movements of God's people in the Old Testament, from Egypt to Canaan, which is well known. The second one is from Babylon to Jerusalem, which is not so well known. And since in the book of Revelation that we have studied we read of Babylon, the harlot, and Jerusalem, the bride, it's important for us to understand something of this Old Testament movement from Babylon to Jerusalem, to understand something about moving out of harlot Christianity to be part of the bride of Jesus Christ.

And we began with the study of Daniel, because the movement from Babylon to Jerusalem really began with that one man. One man who was a man of prayer, a man of integrity, a man who would not compromise, a man of faith, and around him God gathered three others, and thus began a movement that

brought God's people out of Babylon back to Jerusalem. And then we studied the book of Ezra, where we saw two batches of people moving out of Babylon to Jerusalem, two different generations of people.

And in connection with that first generation that moved out 70 years after Israel had gone into captivity, we saw that they came back to Jerusalem, and they laid the foundation of the temple. And we saw in our study of Ezra that the foundations referred to the foundations referred to in Hebrews 6.1, which is the basic message of the elementary aspect of the gospel, which is repentance, faith, water baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, healing and spiritual gifts, and the return of Christ, the resurrection, and eternal judgment. And once this foundation was laid, we read that the enemies of the Jews were all stirred up.

They were not stirred up as far as laying the foundation went. They allowed them to lay the foundation in peace. We find an exactly similar situation today, that the devil allows various Christians to lay the foundation of God's house in peace.

But when it comes to building the superstructure, when it comes to pressing on to perfection, we saw there in Ezra 4 that the enemies of the Jews stopped them from building in Ezra 4.23. You remember that? And verse 24, we read in Ezra 4.24, Then work on the house of God in Jerusalem stopped, and for sixteen years nothing happened. And then chapter 5, verse 1, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews, and then we read further down that they prospered. Chapter 6 and verse 14, they were successful, the elders, in building through the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah, and they finished the building.

So we see that Haggai and Zechariah did not prophesy about the foundations, they were prophesying about the building. And if you inquired as to why Haggai and Zechariah had no burden about the foundations, they would say, well, the foundation's already laid. We're concerned about all these people who are not building the superstructure.

So we see there in the Old Testament that God raised up two prophets who had only one burden. You find very often in the Old Testament the prophets mainly had one basic burden. Jeremiah had a burden to prevent God's people from going to Babylon, and Ezekiel, who was in Babylon, had a burden to stir up God's people to return.

Haggai and Zechariah had a burden to see that the house of God was completed, of which the foundation was already laid. That was their only burden. And that's the background to this book, that what God's people could not do for sixteen years, when God raised up two prophets, He accomplished in a very short time.

In three or four years, the house was completed. And so what we read in the book of Haggai, and once we finish Haggai, we'll move on into Zechariah, is really the message of the Lord which stirred up these lazy people to press on to perfection. So in that connection, it has a very important message for us, because that's what we are doing today.

That's the burden the Lord has laid on our hearts as a church, to say to people, the foundation is not enough, brothers and sisters. We have to build a superstructure. That's what we are preaching.

People accuse us of not being interested in evangelism, and I say, well, there are many other people doing evangelism. There are many people laying foundations all over the place. The trouble is, these people are not completing the house.

So our burden is to complete the house, where others have laid a foundation. That's important. And so, we see here something that has a particular relevance to the ministry that the Lord has committed to us, particularly in these two books, the book of Haggai and Zechariah.

And there are many lessons we learn from this, which are applicable to the building of the body of Christ in these days. Because that house of God, which these two prophets labored and encouraged people to build, is representative and symbolizing the body of Christ which we are building today. And we cannot build the body of Christ unless we preach the message of pressing on to perfection.

You cannot build the body of Christ with just the foundational messages. And so we see here, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai, and that was on the first day of the sixth month. See, these Old Testament prophets, you couldn't just get them any day to come up and give a prophetic message.

They would give you some teaching from the Old Testament, but prophecy, in that Old Testament sense, they could give only when God had spoken something to them. They waited on the Lord. And I can imagine that Haggai, the prophet, waited on the Lord perhaps for many, many months.

Waited on the Lord for his word, and then one day God spoke to him. That was the first day of the sixth month. And then he spoke what God had told him.

And then we read that the Lord gave him another message in chapter 2, verse 1, on the twenty-first day of the seventh month. And then he spoke that. And then verse 10 of chapter 2, the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, he got another message from the Lord, and he spoke that.

And then a second time, verse 20, on the same day, he got another message. So basically it's about four messages that there are in this book that he got on different days as he was waiting on the Lord. And as you see, the substance of the message is very brief, just a few minutes.

But it's amazing how these few minutes that this man spoke the burden of the word of the Lord accomplished fantastic things, which all the other preachers among the Jews could not accomplish in sixteen years. There were preachers among the Jews, even in those sixteen years, preaching messages. Nothing happened.

But when God raised up a prophet who just spoke a few words under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, it accomplished in a few days what could not be accomplished in sixteen years. There's a lesson there for us, that those who are called to minister the word of God, much more is accomplished through a few words spoken under the anointing of the Holy Spirit than so much of good thoughts that we can communicate to people. That also applies to us when we speak to people individually.

A few words, words given by God, can accomplish far more in our counseling and helping people and sharing with them than a whole lot of clever ideas and thoughts that we can give to them. That's just by way of introduction. And we see in verse two this phrase coming, which comes very often in these two books.

It's very significant. I wonder if there's any Old Testament book where this phrase comes so often as in these two books. I think there are no two books in the whole Bible where this phrase, the Lord of hosts, where this phrase comes so frequently.

There are no two books in the whole scriptures. In the book of Haggai it comes fourteen times, and in the next book, the book of Zechariah, it comes fifty-two times. And these two prophets were prophesying at the same time.

Haggai was probably the older prophet, Zechariah we know was a young man. And the two together used this phrase in their short prophecy sixty-six times. Haggai, just a couple of pages, is prophesying, and he uses this phrase fourteen times.

Now remember, we are considering this Old Testament passage in relation to building the body of Christ, moving God's people out of Babylon, out of spiritual Babylon, into Jerusalem in the New Testament. And it's very significant that the two prophets who spoke about building the superstructure used this one phrase sixty-six times, the Lord of hosts. And the word hosts means armies.

We could translate it as the Lord of the armies of heaven. You see, these people were scared of the earthly armies of the Persian king. And I think that was one reason why they used this phrase, that there are armies in heaven who are there to support you.

Therefore you need not fear. All these people are trying to oppose you. Why is it that people hesitate to come out of Babylon and build Jerusalem and become a part of it? Basically because of the fear of men.

Like it says in John chapter twelve, verse forty-two, they love the approval of men more than the approval of God. And the fear of what people can do, the way people can harm us, if we take an uncompromising stand for God. That's why we need to know the Lord is the Lord of hosts.

I want to just give you an Old Testament verse in 2 Kings chapter six, where we read of Elisha, surrounded by the armies of a king who wanted to kill him. And it says here of a heathen king, the king of Syria, sent his army to capture Elisha. And verse fifteen of 2 Kings chapter six, 2 Kings six, verse fifteen, the servant of the man of God had risen early and gone out and he saw all these horses and chariots circling the city.

And his servant said to him, Alas, my master, what shall we do? And Elisha replied in verse sixteen, saying, Don't fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them. It's an amazing statement. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.

Therefore we don't fear. But the servant couldn't understand because he was spiritually blind. So Elisha prayed and said, O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.

And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw what Elisha saw all along, that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. The armies of the heaven, the armies of the Lord, were there to surround his servant. But they were invisible to the natural eye.

And Elisha's spiritual eyes were open, and therefore he wasn't scared of all these armies there, because the armies of heaven were going to fight for him. That's what we mean by the Lord of hosts. I've often said the greatest truth that we need to understand as God's people in these days, particularly in our country and particularly at this time, is the truth of the total sovereignty of God over all circumstances, people, things, everything.

And the Lord of hosts is a phrase that has connection with the sovereign rule of God over this universe. And if I want to build the body of Christ, one of the first things I need to know is that the Lord who controls

all the armies of heaven is one hundred percent behind me. He's going to support me.

Then who do I need to fear? We don't need to fear religious rulers, we don't need to fear high priests or bishops or archbishops or anybody, or all the things that religious people can seek to do to hinder the building of the body of Christ, if the Lord of the armies of heaven is going to support us. We see here, the Lord of the armies of heaven says, these people say the time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt. You see, the heathen king had tried to stop the city from being built.

If you look carefully, we consider that in Ezra, that the order that the king had passed was that the city should not be built. But the people took advantage of that and stopped the Jews from even building the temple. But the Jews submitted to that.

And then year went by, year after year after year after year after year, and you ask them, well, why aren't you doing something about building the house? They'd say, well, we're waiting on the Lord. We're waiting on the Lord for the right time. That sounds like a very spiritual answer to give, you know.

The Lord's time has not yet come to build His house. But the Lord says, verse 4, you don't seem to wait upon the Lord to find His will when it comes to building your own houses. You see, that's the nature of man, that that which concerns our own convenience and comfort, we find the will of God pretty quickly to suit our own convenience.

But when it comes to something where I have to sacrifice and give, then I have to wait on the Lord, you see. I haven't got God's guidance yet. Such is the deceitfulness of the human heart, the deceitfulness of the lusts of the flesh.

And essentially what the Lord was saying to these people through Haggai the prophet, it was a word of rebuke, basically what He was saying is, you fellows are just seeking your own. All seek their own. Paul said in Philippians 2, verse 21, he said, All seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

But he said, Timothy is an exception. Timothy was an exception, because in his life he was not seeking his own. So what do we see right there in the book of Haggai, right at the beginning? You cannot build the body of Christ if deep down in our hearts we have not been delivered from seeking our own.

We live in the world seeking our own in so many ways, our own name, our own gain, our own honor, our own comfort, our own convenience, and so many things. We can say self is at the center and everything revolves around self. We get converted and God also revolves around self.

Now God can bless me, heal me, answer my prayers, do so many things, but self is still at the center of my life? You can't build the body of Christ like that. You can sit on the foundations. Forgiveness? Yeah, that's good.

God can give me forgiveness. Healing? God can give me healing. God can give me spiritual gifts.

God can give me this. God can give me that. And in seeking God like this for all that God can give me, I don't realize that self is still at the center of my life.

I'm just making God someone who can bless me. And such people can never build the body of Christ. It was that self-centeredness and seeking their own which Haggai hit at first of all.

He says, don't use all this pious religious language of saying it is not yet time, we are waiting on the Lord to find out His will when to build His house. It's just a lot of garbage, he says, because you don't seek God's will when it comes to build your own house. You are practical minded there.

There you say, we need a house to live in and we build it. But when it comes to the Lord's temple, you have any silly excuse for not doing something about that. And that was quite a strong word when you consider that there were all these rich fellows who were living in their, verse 4, panelled houses and he was pretty fearless to tell them the truth.

I mean, if he was interested in that type or anything, he wouldn't have spoken such a word. He'd just tell them straight about all their panelled houses and you're just not bothered about the Lord's house? Is it time for you, yourselves, verse 4, to dwell in your panelled houses while this city, this house lies desolate? No, therefore, thus says the Lord, consider your ways, think about your ways. Think how, though you call yourself religious and my people, deep down you are seeking your own.

You're just interested in how things affect you and your house. All your thoughts revolve around you and your family. How will things affect me and my family? And brothers and sisters, as long as my thoughts revolve around how will this decision affect me and my family, I'm disqualified.

I don't have the basic qualification to build the body of Christ. The basic qualification to build the body of Christ is, I couldn't care less how this is going to affect me and my family. I'm only concerned how this is going to affect God's name, God's purpose and God's glory.

That's why Jesus taught us to pray, be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Lord, my name, I couldn't care less for that. My will, I couldn't care less for that.

My family, I couldn't care less for that. That is being delivered from self-centeredness. Consider your ways.

And he says now, you have sown much, but harvest little. You eat, but there's not enough to be satisfied. You drink, but there's not enough to become drunk.

You put on clothing, but no one is warm enough. He who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes. And there the Lord says, if you think about your ways in your life, just think about it for a moment, you will see that there's a lack of my blessing upon your life.

But you don't seem to realize that. You see, in the Old Testament, I want to just tell you one fundamental difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament when it comes to the blessing of the Lord. The blessing of the Lord, we read in Proverbs 10.22, makes rich.

The blessing of the Lord makes rich. That is true in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, but with one fundamental difference. In the Old Testament, it made you materially rich.

In the New Testament, it made you spiritually rich. Who are the great men in the Old Testament? Abraham, he was a millionaire. Job, another millionaire.

David, another millionaire. Great men. Not all were millionaires, but the blessing of the Lord made them financially rich.

And the blessing of the Lord was in their life too. We don't know much of the details about the prophets, but we see that in the Old Testament, in the book of Deuteronomy and the book of Proverbs, you see that when the Lord blessed them, their barns overflowed. But when you come to the New Testament, the spiritual giants of the New Testament and the New Covenant, beginning with the Lord Jesus, were poor.

Peter and John said, silver and gold, I have none, they told the lame man. But they were spiritually rich. Paul, there were times when he didn't have enough to eat, not enough clothes to put on.

But they were spiritually rich. In the Old Testament, Haggai said, see, if you examine your ways, you find that there is a lack of the blessing of the Lord in your life, that you are sowing so much and you are harvesting so little. In the Old Testament, that was a literal harvest.

You are eating, but you are not satisfied. You are earning so much money, but you don't seem to have much savings. It's all going down into a purse full of holes.

Now, we can apply this in a New Testament way too, where the Lord says, if we were to paraphrase it into a New Testament language, you seem to read the Bible so much, your head is so much filled with knowledge, but you still don't have the victory over those bad habits that have ruined your life for so long. You seem to be going to so many meetings, but things are not still too good between you and your wife. The blessing of the Lord seems to be absent in some way.

You are increasing in so much knowledge. You are perhaps also engaging in so much activity, so much of sowing, evangelism, that goes on today. And yet, how many disciples are coming out of all that? Think of that.

Consider your ways, he says. Right. Now, we can apply that in many other areas in our life.

Thus says the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways. Verse 8. Now go up to the mountains and bring wood and rebuild the temple. That causes a little inconvenience.

It means a little sacrifice to take time apart from your regular work to go to the mountain, cut the trees, get the timber to build God's house. That takes time, inconvenience. We have to sacrifice some of our convenience in order to do that.

And Haggai says, do that. In the Old Testament, David said, I will never offer to the Lord my God that which costs me nothing. And it's very interesting to see, when you compare 2 Samuel 24 with 2 Chronicles 3.1, that the house of the Lord--maybe we can turn to 2 Chronicles 3.1. The house of the Lord, it says in 2 Chronicles 3.1, was built at the place where the Lord appeared to David on the threshing floor of Hiran the Jebusite.

That God's house was built where David had said, I will not offer to the Lord that which costs me nothing. It also says in that same verse that it was built on Mount Moriah, where Abraham offered up Isaac. Why are those two incidents linked with the place where the house of God is built in 2 Chronicles 3.1? Teaching us one simple truth, that the body of Christ is built only where people have learned the principle of sacrifice.

Of sacrificing their own convenience, and their own gain, and their own profit, and their own name, and say, Lord, I will never offer to you that which costs me nothing. Christianity is full of people who give offerings to the Lord, but the offerings do not cost them anything. The offering is a matter of convenience.

When it is convenient, I make an offering to God. But David said, it must cost me something, otherwise it is not fit enough to sacrifice to the Lord. And that is the principle we need to bear in mind.

Go to the mountains, sacrifice some of your convenience, time which you could have used for yourself, use it for God. Money that you could have used for yourself, use it for God. Don't seek your own.

Rebuild the temple, and I will be pleased with it, and I will be glorified. And then he repeats again this rebuke of the lack of the blessing of the Lord, because they have not sought His glory first. You look for much, but behold, it comes to little.

When you bring it home, I blow it away. Why? The blessing of the Lord is not on your life, because of my house which lies desolate. While each of you runs to his own house, each of you seeks his own.

Therefore, because of you, the sky has withheld its dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I call 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 all the labor of your hands. Therefore, I say, the reason why there is lack of blessing in your lands is because you are seeking your own gain.

And that is why we teach in the New Testament that when things are not going well in our life, it is good for us to judge ourselves and see whether there is some area where I am puffed up with pride, where I am seeking my own, and whether there is some area where I am seeking my own. Whether that is why this sickness has come, whether that is why this financial difficulty has come, whether that is why this particular thing has come, is there something here where I can get some spiritual profit in learning through this, as to why has this happened? It's an amazing thing that for sixteen years God tried to speak to these people through drought and lack of blessing, and they wouldn't understand what God was trying to speak to them. And that's a terrible thing, when God can try to speak to a believer through one problem after another coming into his life, and the person appears to be deaf, till a prophet arises and says, Consider your ways.

Why in the world do you think you are having problem after problem after problem after problem, and you are depressed and gloomy? Now, if you are using the problems and converting them to glory and it's not affecting your spiritual life, wonderful. But if those things are depressing you and ruining your spiritual life, that can never be the will of God. Then you have to seek God about it.

The Christian life is full of problems and trials, but never does God allow something which is meant to depress us and crush our spirit, so that the devil sits on top of our head. That's never the will of God. There we have to sit down and consider our ways.

Maybe we are a bit too puffed up because God had blessed us a little bit in previous days, and therefore we got a little too high thoughts about ourselves, and now God is trying to humble us all over again. Well, he shouldn't have to do that all the time. If we remain in the place of humility, he won't have to crush us and humble us.

He can continue to give us grace. So, consider your ways. If we sought the kingdom of God first, the word of God says, all the other things will be added to us.

That's something that comes through to us in this passage. Because you have not sought the kingdom of God and His righteousness first in your life, therefore these other lacks can come. It is impossible for a person to seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first in his life and find that the other necessities of

life are not added to him.

That's impossible. God will always add the necessities of life for anyone who seeks God's kingdom first. So that was basically Haggai's message.

And then it says, as a result of hearing that message, Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, the son of Jehoshaddak, the high priest with all the remnant, the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet as the Lord. That is really the ultimate aim of the preaching of God's word. The ultimate aim of the preaching of God's word is that people will come to obedience and will fear the Lord.

They obeyed the word of the Lord itself and they feared God. And where the preaching of the word of God does not produce obedience and the fear of God, like we see here in verse 12, we can say, well, that's not the prophetic word then, and it will not result in the building of the house as the body of Christ. Then we see a very beautiful phrase in verse 13 that describes Haggai himself, and in the King James Version it says like this, Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke in the Lord's message.

Now notice those two phrases, the Lord's messenger and the Lord's message. And it's one thing to speak the Lord's message, it's another thing to be the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message. And to be the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message means basically that that message has first done its work in our own life, that in Haggai's own life he had first applied the word to himself to see whether he was seeking his own somewhere, to cleanse himself from seeking his own, for he too was a child of Adam.

Then he could be the Lord's messenger, speaking to others about not seeking their own. That's how it was with Jesus, says in Acts 1.1, he did and he taught. And God's call for us in the body of Christ is that every one of us not only give the Lord's message, but are the Lord's messengers in the Lord's message.

When we seek to build the body of Christ by exhorting one another in the meetings, what's the intention? That each person is the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message. In other words, he's not speaking something which he has not judged himself in. There's no place for speaking to others what's not been applied first in one's own life.

And he spoke the Lord's message. He said to the people, I am with you, declares the Lord. In Haggai's message there was rebuke and there was also encouragement.

Two aspects of any true prophecy. Rebuke and encouragement. Rebuke and encouragement.

You see that right through the prophecy of Haggai. And to build the body of Christ, there must be a ministry of rebuke and a ministry of encouragement. A ministry of rebuke and a ministry of encouragement.

And we see as a result of this, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and the spirit of Joshua, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked in the house of the Lord of Hosts, their God. It's very interesting that it says here that the Lord stirred up their spirits.

Now, some of you have heard this before, but I just want to say a few words here about soul and spirit. Our human personality, which the Bible calls the soul, has got three parts. Mind, emotions, and will.

Thinking, feeling, and deciding. These are the three parts of our personality. And the will is the most important, because the will is the door to the spirit.

If the will says no, you can't enter the spirit. If the will says yes, you can touch the spirit. Now, when we preach the word of God, it's not enough to instruct people's minds.

It's not enough to stir their emotions. The door to the spirit can still be shut. The door to the spirit is opened only when the mind is instructed, the emotions are stirred, and finally the man decides to open the door and says, yes, I'll do that.

That's how we build on the rock. You know, Jesus spoke about the man who built on the rock. That is the yielding of the will.

Now, I'm not going into psychology here, I'm just trying to tell you something that is very important for us to remember. Because when we look at the world today, in Christendom, we find among those who have come out of various denominations and who think that they are leaving Babylon to build Jerusalem, we find three types of assemblies, or three types of churches, among those who have come out of the various old-line denominations. I don't want to mention names, but you'll easily understand which category each falls into.

You find some assemblies where the main emphasis is on the knowledge of the Word of God. And you go there and you study about Old Testament types, and about this thing in the New Testament, and the other thing, and your mind is filled with knowledge by the time you have spent a few years there. You know everything.

You know where even the commas and the full stops come in Psalm 119. Your knowledge is fantastic. All this useless knowledge is being stuffed into your head when you go there.

Your mind has been gripped with knowledge, but the Spirit's door is still locked. Now there are people who react against what they call this dry intellectualism of these assemblies, and go to the other extreme, and say, we must be a happy people. But what they mean by happy is the stirring of the emotions.

So you go to their meetings, and there's not much feeding of the mind there, because they don't believe in all that. It's the whipping up of the emotions. It's like you whip the cream, and the pastor is an expert at that, and everybody is stirred up to get excited.

I mean, even if you were not very excited when you came to the meeting, if you're submissive to the pastor in five minutes, you can get excited. And you'll be saying hallelujahs and amens, and you'll be shaking, and your whole body will be moving up and down, and you think you're spiritual. That's the stirring of the emotions.

The door of the Spirit is still closed. Now here's another type of assembly. Here's one where the mind is instructed.

Here's one where the emotions are stirred. And the door of the Spirit is still closed in both. Nothing's happening.

That is how the devil deceives so many people. And here, the people whose emotions are whipped up are very often thinking this is spirituality, and reacting against dry deadness in that intellectual assembly. And

the intellectual people look at these people and say, this is all dead emotionalism.

And we've got the word. But what both don't realize is that when you look at the lives of these people, there's just as much immaturity, and quarreling, and strife, and fighting, and everything else in both groups. Which means the Spirit is not being touched.

It's all in the soul. And then we come to the third type, which I believe is the way God wants it. Where there is the instructing of the mind, by the word of God.

We don't despise it, because the devil didn't create the mind, God made it. There is the stirring of the emotions, because God made the emotions too. But all with the ultimate purpose of getting people to obey.

So the ultimate aim of this assembly is obedience. Not just the mind and the emotions, but the will. What are you going to do about it, brother and sister? Are you going to obey? Are you going to obey? And in my own mind, it's very clear.

The type of church that's going to be the body of Christ is that where obedience is preached. And it's constantly preached, not just as a subject once in fifty-two Sundays, but the subject for fifty-two Sundays, and for fifty-two Wednesdays, and fifty-two Fridays, and for every other day, whenever we have a meeting. Obedience.

Through the mind, through the emotions, to obedience. Then the Lord can stir the spirit of people. Otherwise, very often what happens in many of these assemblies is a stirring of the soul.

And so they live in a shallow spiritual condition. It's obedience that makes us spiritual. And so we see here the Lord stirred up, and that's mentioned three times.

The spirit of Zerubbabel, the spirit of Joshua, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. God got through, through his prophet, to bring them to obedience, and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of Hosts on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. Now we come to chapter two.

Just one thing I want you to notice. It took twenty-three days for them to move. Because it says in the first verse, the first day of the sixth month the message started, and the last verse of chapter one, it says the twenty-fourth day they came.

So you can imagine how Haggai really had to let them have it for twenty-three days. The word of God stirred them up, rebuked them, encouraged them, and finally at the end of these three weeks, something happened. God got through.

It didn't happen in one day. It took twenty-three days for that faithful man to proclaim the word of God, the gist of it, of which is given us in chapter one. And the result of that was, the work began.

Then on the twenty-first day of the seventh month the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua, and to the remnant of the people, saying, Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? How do you see it now? Doesn't it seem to you like nothing in comparison? And there was a message to encourage them in their discouragement. They looked at the state of affairs, and they compared it with Solomon's temple in all its glory, and here the whole temple was in a shambles, and that was easy to be discouraged. And that can

be with us too.

Very often when we point Christians to what we read in the word of God, they say, Well, that was in the first century. Things were also simple in the first century. There were no denominations way back then.

They could do it like that. But it's not possible now. And that's their excuse for not obeying God's word.

But if we can have faith and say, Well, God's word was not written only for the first century. God's word concerning how he wants his church to be run is for all centuries. It's for all centuries that all of God's people are to be priests, for example.

No special class of priests in the New Testament. That's an Old Testament concept. That's just one example.

No special buildings to be called God's house in the New Testament. That's an Old Testament concept. And to come back to that simplicity, the message the apostles preached, is something that many people would say that's not possible now.

But it's only those who have faith, yeah, that is possible, who will build the body of Christ. Now the Lord says to Zerubbabel, Take courage. Zerubbabel, take courage, Joshua, and take courage all you people.

Be strong, for I am with you. I, the Lord of hosts, am with you. That was the message of encouragement that Haggai brought to those people to build the house in those days.

And we want to compare that verse with Matthew chapter 28 and verses 18 to 20. Where we find the Lord saying the same thing to us. You have seen this verse, I'm sure, in different houses hung up on the wall.

I am with you. The same thing which the Lord told through Haggai in Haggai 2.4. In fact, it's a message he repeated many times. He said it earlier in chapter 1, and now he says it in chapter 2 more than once.

I am with you is the message we find in Matthew 28 verse 20, which we have probably seen hung up on the walls of many houses. Lo, I am with you always. And whenever we see a verse, it's always good for us, if we are really going to be disciples of Jesus, to try and read it in its context.

You know, for example, this verse, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If you read it in its context, in 1 John 1.7, you'll find you get an entirely different understanding of that verse than if you just see the phrase, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Exactly the same way, when you see a word hanging on a wall, Lo, I am with you always, you go back to the context and read it, and you find, what is it speaking about? Whom is he with? That's an important question.

Whom is he saying that to? Is he, Lo, I am with you always? Is that for the cheating businessman? Is that for the thief? Is that for the prostitute? Lo, I am with you always? For whom is it? How can I say, that's for me? How do I know it's for me? Go to the word of God and see the context. Then we find out. The Lord says, All authority has been given to me in heaven and earth.

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, teaching them to do everything that I have commanded. You and Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Whom is he with? You get an entirely different understanding there than from that part of a verse hung up on a wall.

He is with me always, if my ambition, verse 19, is to make disciples wherever God places me. We can't go to all the nations, but in the nation where I am, in the locality where I am, if my ambition is not to make converts, but disciples, not to just bring people to Christ, but make them follow Jesus Christ in their life, to make disciples, and not to be interdenominational on baptism, but to be, according to the word of God on baptism, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, after they are converted and born again, getting rid of all that old traditions that they have acquired before, of infant baptism and all the other type of garbage they've accumulated from Babylonian Christianity, and then, after that, to teach them to do every single thing that Jesus commanded. If that's my ambition in life, to make disciples, baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teach them to do every single thing that Jesus commanded, to bring them to obedience, then the Lord says, here's a promise for you.

I am with you always. I, the Lord of hosts, and all the armies of heaven are there to back you up in this ministry, and you can have all the hosts of hell and all the religious forces on earth opposing you, but they won't win, because I'm on your side. That's the meaning of that verse.

Much misunderstood verse. He begins it with saying in verse 18, all authority has been given to me in heaven and earth, or in other words, all the armies of heaven are in my command, and I am with you. So we find there's a very close connection here between Matthew 28, 18 and 20, and what Haggai says here.

I am with you, says the Lord. Verse 5 of Haggai 2, As for the promise which I made, when you came out of Egypt, my spirit is abiding in you. Do not fear.

There is no place for fear. The Lord and the armies of heaven are supporting me, because I'm here to make disciples. I'm here to baptize them.

I'm here to teach them to obey everything that Jesus commanded. Every one of us can be engaged in that ministry. And then the Lord says, I'll support you.

You need never fear any situation on the earth. In every situation that the devil tries to bring into your life, to harass you and trouble you and make life difficult for you, I and the armies of heaven will support you. I'm abiding in your midst.

It's by God's Spirit that we're going to do this work, not by any other way. Now, the Lord says, this is what I'm going to do once more in a little while. He's speaking about the end time now, the days in which we are living.

I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. That's coming. That time is coming.

The sea and also the dry land. And I will shake all the nations. And they will come with the wealth of all nations and the glory, says the Lord of Hosts.

The church is going to be filled with the glory, the New Testament glory. In the Old Testament glory, it was gold and silver. The New Testament glory is what we read in John 1.14. The word was made flesh and we beheld his glory.

The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of not gold and silver, but grace and truth. That's the glory of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant, it was gold and silver.

That gold and silver has been replaced by grace and truth, manifested in the life of Jesus Christ, who did not have gold and silver, but he had grace and truth. And now he calls us to share that glory. This house is going to be filled with this glory, because it is the body of Christ.

Now, I want you to turn a verse, turn you to a verse in Hebrews 12, where we have a New Testament parallel verse to this Old Testament verse about shaking the nations. In Hebrews 12, it says, verse 26, Hebrews, this is a quotation from the book of Haggai. It's very important for us to look at this New Testament quotation.

If I remember right, it's the only quotation from the book of Haggai in the New Testament. And his voice shook the earth then, but now he has promised, this is speaking about the future, in the book of Haggai, in chapter 2, verse 6, quoted in Hebrews 12, verse 26, Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven. And this expression, this is a commentary now on Haggai chapter 2, yet once more denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken.

That means if you don't have a proper foundation, it's going to be removed which cannot be shaken. What is that foundation which cannot be shaken? The wise man who built his house on the rock, which could not be shaken. What is that? Jesus said, He who hears my word and obeys it.

Obedience to God's word. That's the foundation which cannot be shaken. What about the foolish man who hears God's word and doesn't obey? That's the foundation that can be shaken.

That's going to be removed. The people who got the word of God who paid the price, penetrated through the sand of mind and emotions, penetrated right down to the will, used the dynamite on the will and blasted the rock and done the will of God. There, that's going to remain.

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and fear for our God is a consuming fire. And so we come back to Haggai chapter 2. We see here that the Lord is going to shake everything. So I've got to make sure that we're built on an unshakable foundation of obedience to the word of God.

Haggai 2 verse 8. We see here, The silver is mine and the gold is mine declares the Lord of hosts. A very important principle in building the body of Christ. We learn two things there in the body of Christ that all the gold and all the silver belongs to the Lord.

It's not 10%. The Lord did not say 10% of the gold and silver is mine. The gold is mine and the silver is mine.

It tells us that in building the body of Christ money should not be our major concern. But the glory of the Lord must be our major concern. The thing mentioned in verse 7. I will fill this house with my glory.

It's as if where the Lord is saying you concentrate on the glory of God in the house. Don't worry about the money. I'll take care of that.

I'll tell you something brothers and sisters. The Lord spoke to me years ago as one who sought to serve the Lord. And I thought, you know, I'm always bothered about money.

And in the Lord's work in the world today the major thing that people are always talking about and writing in their prayer letters writing in their magazines is money, money, money, money, money. And I remember

once the Lord spoke very clearly to me and said I have no shortage of money. I have a shortage of yielded people.

That's the shortage which the Lord has of people who are 100% yielded to him. Money, he has plenty. You think the Lord is hard up? He's not.

A lot of believers and full time workers talk as if the Lord is pretty hard up. But the word of God says the silver is mine, the gold is mine. You don't have to worry about that.

And that's a very important testimony that we need to have in the church that money is not God's problem. It is sin among God's people. It's lukewarmness among God's people which is his problem.

That's what we've got to get out of people. Not their money. The money the Lord will take care of he'll provide it as we seek the kingdom of God first.

So if we want to build the body of Christ we must never major on money. But we must major on the glory. And then the Lord says the latter glory of this house will be greater than the former which means the glory of the church is going to be greater than the glory of that old covenant Solomon's temple.

The new covenant church which is the house is going to have a greater glory than that house. The glory of the character of Jesus much greater than that glory of gold and silver. And a very important mark of the body of Christ.

In this place I will give peace. Peace is the mark of the body of Christ. Just like the human body each member lives at peace with the other.

That's a mark of a normal human body. And it's the mark of the body of Christ. Where there is no peace we can say there's something fundamentally wrong in that congregation and that group.

God gives peace. In this place I will give peace. And if we have followed his principles to build the body of Christ there has to be peace.

That's clear. That's a good test by which we can find out whether we are moving in the circles of the body of Christ or just congregations which call themselves Christian. And then on the 24th day of the ninth month the second year the word of the Lord came to Haggai and said ask now the priest for a ruling.

This is a very interesting question that the Lord asks Haggai to find out. If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches bread with his fold or cooked food, wine or oil will it become holy? The priest said no. In other words if you're carrying what they called in the Old Testament holy dedicated food and with that you touched other cooked food and all it doesn't become holy that way.

What is the point? The point is holiness cannot be communicated by one person to another person. I cannot give you holiness brother. You've got to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling to get it.

My touching you, your hanging around near me is not going to make you holy. You coming and sitting in the meeting and touching all the good brothers and sisters is not going to make you holy. You can be a downright humbug and hypocrite and the worst hypocrite in the whole of Bangalore in one particular assembly.

That's the message. You can touch and sit very close. Is it communicable? No.

Because holiness is not infectious. You can't catch it. You've got to work out your own salvation.

But now another thing. Another question, the opposite question, verse 13. If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these things will it become unclean? That means if a person has touched a dead body and is unclean and touches some of this food will it become unclean? That is infectious.

In other words if you sit with sinful compromising people you will catch the infection. Now this is a very important principle for us to understand. That you can sit with holy people and you don't catch the infection but you sit with sinful people and you catch the infection.

Holiness is not infectious. You've got to work out your own salvation and fear and trembling. But sin and compromise is highly infectious.

Just a little cough or something and you get it. See it's so easy to catch it. And that's why we've got to be careful about our company.

Important principle for us to understand. Verse 14. Then Haggai answered and said so is this people and so is this nation before me.

Every work of their hands what they offer is unclean. There is iniquity in their holy thing. They are doing my work they are bringing their sacrifices but there is sin in their holy thing.

They need to judge themselves and cleanse themselves if they are to be really holy in my sight. Now the Lord says I'm going to bless you if you seek to build my body. Consider from this day onwards before one stone was placed on another in the temple of the Lord.

How was it in the past days? There was no blessing on your life. You came to a grain heap looking for twenty measures there was only ten. Everywhere you were disappointed in the hands of blessing wind willed you and hail you didn't come back to me.

Now consider from this day onwards it's as it were the Lord is saying Philippians 3.13 forgetting the things that are behind alright forget it now I've forgiven you all that I've cleansed you now let's make a new beginning from this day onwards that's a tremendous word for people who get discouraged because of their past failure is the seed still in the barn even including the vine, the fig tree the pomegranate, the olive tree it's not one fruit from this day I will bless you because of what because it says they came to work on the house of the Lord they decided no longer to seek their own but to seek the kingdom of God first do you know what is the opposite of seeking the kingdom of God first many people when they talk about seeking the kingdom of God first what does it mean to seek the

kingdom of God first we can find out by finding what is the opposite the opposite of seeking the kingdom of God first is seeking our own as long as I'm seeking my own I'm not seeking the kingdom of God first if I'm seeking my name what are people thinking of my name and I'm disturbed when people say something bad about me I'm seeking my own if I'm concerned about me, my family I, me and my family no matter how much money I give to God's work my fundamental aim in life must be Lord, your church first the building of your body and the glory of your name in this land you know, you come like that and the Lord says I'll forget about your entire past self-seeking life from this day I'll bless you and you'll be a different person your life will be transformed because the blessing of the Lord

will make you spiritually rich and then the word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai at the end of the month saying speak to Zerubbabel I'm going to shake the heavens and the earth that's the picture of his total sovereignty what a wonderful picture of the sovereignty of God here I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms on the earth and the evil forces in the heavenlies destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations I will overthrow their chariots and their riders and their nuclear bombs and everything else and the horses and riders and on that day I will take you Zerubbabel my servant and I will make you like a signet ring that means one who rules with authority that ring is a mark of authority for I have chosen you it's like the Lord's promise to the overcomer in Revelation 2.23

remember when we studied it we saw he who overcomes I will give power over the nations and he will rule them with a rod of iron the final authority when Jesus comes again is going to be handed over to the overcomers to those who have wholeheartedly lived for God on this earth to build the body of Christ and that day when everything is going to be shaken and the Lord comes to establish his kingdom that day Zerubbabel and those who have followed in the spirit of Zerubbabel now will have authority there's one final word I want to say about Haggai and that is Haggai was a true prophet he spoke he encouraged Zerubbabel and said you're going to be an authority in that day and he disappeared he didn't want the honor to himself he was a self effacing humble man of God and it is through such

people that the body of Christ is built

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