

Haggai 2:1-23

The Glory of the True Temple

Haggai 2:1-2 - "In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet Haggai, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,"

This message given through the prophet Haggai came on the 21st day of the seventh month Tishri - during the time of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) and the Feast of Tabernacles. Both these festivals involved ceremonies and rituals in the Temple. Only some of them could be fully experienced because the Temple was still unfinished.

Haggai 2:3 - "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?"

Haggai was probably among the aged men who had seen Solomon's Temple before it was destroyed. He had probably "wept with a loud voice" with them 16 years previously when they had first seen the Temple in its ruined state. (See **Ezra 3:12-13**).

The Temple they were rebuilding would not match the majesty of the first Temple.

But as in the previous word, God offered comfort to His people.

Haggai 2:4 - "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:"

"I am with you" is the ultimate word of comfort. Jesus was prophesied to be "Immanuel", meaning "God with us."

Jesus told the disciples that when the Holy Spirit would be poured out on them...

- **John 14:16-17** - "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

With this understanding, they (and we) could be "strong."

- **Ephesians 6:10** - ""Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might"

Haggai 2:5 - "According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not."

This is almost the same exhortation Moses gave to Joshua:

- **Deuteronomy 31:23** - "And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I sware unto them: and I will be with thee."

Shaking the Heavens and the Earth

Here Haggai leaps into a vision of the kingdom of God and the spiritual Temple.

Haggai 2:6-7 - "For thus saith the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts."

This passage is quoted in Hebrews 12 and serves to explain the shaking:

- **Hebrews 12:26-29** - "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire."

This is like the shaking on Mount Sinai at the giving of the Law.

- **Exodus 19:18** - "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly."

- **Psalms 68:8** - "The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel."

... And in David's song of deliverance from Saul:

- **2 Samuel 22:7-9** - "In my distress I called upon the LORD; I cried out to my God. And from His temple He heard my voice, and my cry for help reached His ears. Then the earth shook and quaked; the foundations of the heavens trembled; they were shaken because He burned with anger. Smoke rose from His nostrils, and consuming fire came from His mouth; glowing coals blazed forth."

Also the shaking of Gog and all Israel's enemies "in the latter days."

- **Ezekiel 38:19-21** - "For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping

things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother."

As believers, we must only trust in things that cannot be shaken, that are eternal, and a "kingdom that cannot be moved."

- **2 Peter 3:11-12** - "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?"

'The Desire of all Nations'

"the desire of all nations shall come" - this phrase is controversial because it can be interpreted in two ways.

"Desire" can mean treasure. Haggai was saying God will shake out the nations so that they will bring their treasure to beatify the new Temple. "Shall come" is in the plural - "they shall come."

This is similar to Isaiah's vision:

- **Isaiah 60:5** - ""Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces (*hayil* = soldiers, wealth, abilities) of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."

But the Hebrew word *khemdah* "desire" can also be understood in a singular superlative sense, meaning "the most desired one." Christians have traditionally seen this as a reference to the Messiah.

Both explanations can be correct.

The next verse adds another layer of interpretive mystery.

Haggai 2:9 - "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, saith the LORD of hosts."

The rabbis, while acknowledging that the Temple lacked the five important things - the Ark, the fire of heaven, the Shekinah glory, the Urim and Thummim and the Holy Spirit - explain this verse to refer to the expanded Temple of Herod centuries later, which indeed was larger and more magnificent than Solomon's original Temple. It was so beautiful that the Romans hesitated before destroying it.

But all this is also linked to a supernatural shaking of the universe, which is usually set in an apocalyptic end-time event like the Last Judgment.

In fact, when Jesus was born, His kingdom broke into the world of our reality and began shaking the kingdoms, the powers of this world, fulfilling Daniel's vision of the stone "cut without hands" striking the image of the world's kingdoms:

- **Daniel 2:44** - "In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will shatter all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, but will itself stand forever."

But God's kingdom is of a different nature:

- **Luke 17:20-21** - "And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

The "latter house" is the spiritual Temple in which we are living stones - the Temple of His body that was raised up in three days (**John 2:19-21**).

- **John 2:20-21** - "Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body."

Although this "latter house" lacked those five significant things for most of its existence, it received them during the ministry of Jesus. The Messiah taught and performed healings and miracles within its courts. He contained within Himself all the missing components. Then when the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost, the disciples exhibited prophecy and saw the holy fire above their heads, and the Shekinah glory filling the Temple - both the old and new Temples at the same time.

The Unfinished Temple was like a Corpse

But, back to the circumstances of Haggai's day. A few months after the prophecy above, Haggai puts a question to the priests.

Haggai 2:11-13 - "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean."

The uncleanness from touching a dead body could only be cleansed through the waters of cleansing made from the ashes of the Red Heifer.

Haggai 2:14 - "Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they

offer there is unclean."

Just being back in the Promised Land didn't make them holy. Only repentance could do that. The unfinished Temple was like a rotting corpse, a dead body decaying and contaminating everything.

For years they had turned a blind eye to the unfinished work, even while God struck them with drought, and hail. But since now they had changed their direction, repented and started work on the Temple again, God could say "from this day will I bless you."

Haggai 2:18 talks about the Temple foundations being laid on the 24th of Kislev.

Haggai 2:18 - "Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it."

The 24th of Kislev is the eve of the Hanukkah festival (which begins on the 25th of Kislev). Haggai's call to reflect on the temple's foundation sets the stage for the Maccabean rededication of that exact same temple centuries later. Many scholars consider this time period was when Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit - the laying of the foundation of Jesus' own body which He identified as the true Temple.

One More Shaking

Haggai 2:20-23 - "And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts."

"every one by the sword of his brother" - See **Ezekiel 38:21** above regarding Gog and Israel's enemies: "every man's sword shall be against his brother."

This scene of victory is similar to Gideon's band, who simply showed up and God turned the enemies' weapons against each other. The evil one loses his power when we find out our idols contradict one another. For instance, one idol may push me toward greed and covetousness, while another insists I project piety and good character so I can accuse and look down on others. That's a shaky platform that will eventually fall.

Zerubbabel as a Type of Messiah

Zerubbabel is included in the ancestry of Jesus, as the grandson of King Jeconiah, the descendant of Solomon. In Haggai's vision, he becomes a type of the Messiah. A signet ring was a token of royalty.

This typology appears also in Zechariah's prophecies.

This focus on Zerubbabel was for a reason.

The last legitimate king of Judah was Jeconiah, the descendant of Solomon. But God had placed a curse on the seed of Jeconiah (also known as Coniah or Jehoiachin) as recorded in Jeremiah 22:30.

- **Jeremiah 22:30** - "Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man (Jeconiah) childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah."

So as far as the Jews knew, the royal line was cut off. But Haggai now gives them hope.

Zerubbabel was descended from David through both parents, his mother through Nathan down to Neri, and his father (Salathiel) in the royal line. He (and his descendants) would then also be in the royal line, but avoiding the curse on Jeconiah's offspring.

Zerubbabel is listed in the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph.

Although Zerubbabel was never king of Judah, Haggai sees in him the type of Messiah.

Haggai 2:23 - "On that day, says the Lord of Hosts, I will take you Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, my servant, and wear you like a signet ring; for it is you whom I have chosen. This is the word of the Lord of Hosts"

Haggai uses the phrase "my servant" which was associated with King David.

In contrast to Jeremiah's statement about Jeconiah....

- **Jeremiah 22:24** - "As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;"

....God speaking through Haggai now sees Zerubbabel as that signet ring, signifying authority and power.

The Prophet Zechariah also sees Zerubbabel as a Messianic figure. But we'll look at Zechariah later.