

Haggai

A return – but without the Glory

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 ... The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, says the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts. HAGGAI 2:7,9 (AV)

Chapter 1-2:5

THE NATION RETURNS TO THE LAND

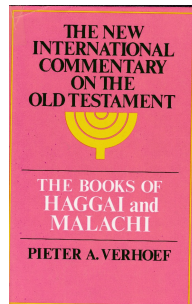
1:1-5 Why did YHWH give Israel the land? [Jer.25:1-12; Dan.9:1-5,16-19]

The world situation between 538 and 522 B.C. was not encouraging. Cyrus was succeeded by his son Cambyses (530-522), whose outstanding achievement was to add Egypt to the Persian empire. On his way back from Ethiopia Cambyses died, probably by his own hand, in July, 522 B.C. In the absence of a direct successor, Darius, son of the satrap Hystaspes, an officer in Cambyses entourage and a member of the royal family by a collateral line, claimed the throne. [Pieter A. Verhoef The Books of Haggai and Malachi (NICOT) 27]

[1:1] The date given in verse 1 is in harmony with the statement recorded in Ezra 4:24. There we learn that, owing to the opposition of the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin, the work of rebuilding the house of the Lord ceased “unto the second year of Darius, king of Persia.” As the letter which resulted in the reign of Artaxerxes, several years had elapsed in which nothing had been accomplished. A period of lethargy had set in, which only came to an end when a God-appointed ministry was given to stir up the consciences of the people. [Harry Ironside Notes on the Minor Prophets 329]

Ask JW: How does YHWH view the Jerusalem temple – even though Israel is disobedient? [2:15; 1 Kings 9:3]

[1:4] When the conscience is not active people readily interpret circumstances to suit themselves; and at such times it is often amazing the amount of energy that will be expended on that which ministers to one's own comfort, whereas utter indifference



characterizes that which is connected with the Lord's glory ... No Persian decree hindered their providing warm and even expensive houses for themselves; but it was readily made the excuse for indifference to what should have had the first place in their thoughts (vers. 3,4). [Ironside 328]

1:6-11 Though the land covenant is perpetual, what of the blessing? (Judges 2:1-3; Jer.25:5)

[1:4-11] The cattle also would suffer as a result of the people's unfaithfulness. Throughout the Bible it is clear that the nonhuman creation suffers because of the sin of man. Ecology has biblical support. From the beginning, when thorns resulted from Adam's disobedience, to the end, when we read of a new heaven and a new earth with harmony between natural enemies in the animal world, it would appear that the happiness and productivity of the entire creation depends on the relationship of man to God and man to man. [Robert L. Alden Haggai (EBC) Vol.7 582]

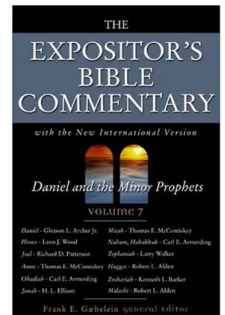
The covetous spirit of the age is eating the very life out of many companies of the Lord's people. The grasping avariciousness everywhere prevalent in the world is making dreadful inroads among Christians. Alas, how much is sacrificed for money! Christian fellowship, the joys of gathering at the table of the Lord, gospel work, and privileges of mutual edification and instruction in divine things -- all are parted with often simply because the opportunity arises of adding a few paltry dollars to the monthly income and savings. Brethren with families even will leave a town or city where the spiritual support and fellowship of their brethren are found, and where their children have the privileges of the gospel meeting and the Sunday-school, simply because they see, or fancy they see, an opportunity to better their earthly circumstances. Alas, in many instances they miss all they had hoped for, and lose spiritually what is never regained! [Ironside 329,330]

1:12-2:5 Does failure to render true worship break covenant or communion?

[1:12-15] Calvin finds in this passage support for his doctrine of the human will. God, he says, did not merely confirm a free volition, but produced the willing mind among the people. Baldwin rightly endorses this point of view: “Behind the willing response of both leaders and people was the silent working of the Lord, creating a willing attitude by his Spirit,” with reference to Zech. 4:6: “Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord Almighty.” [Verhoef 87]

[1:12-15] The full emphasis is on God's initiatives. He spoke to the people through his messenger, the prophet Haggai. He promises them his gracious and abiding presence, counteracting their sense of fear and guilt. He activates them to engage themselves to work on his temple, thereby endorsing the word of the apostle: “For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13, NIV) [Verhoef 90]

[2:5] Undoubtedly fear gripped many of the returnees -- fear that God had written an eternal “Ichabod” over Jerusalem, fear that no amount of praying or piety would induce him to bless them again, fear that the whole endeavor was in vain, fear that the political enemies would in fact win, fear that all was lost. [Alden 585]



Chapter 2:6-23

ISRAEL'S CONDITION NOT DECISIVE AS TO HER STANDING

2:6-9 How were Gentiles like Darius blessed in connection with Israel? (Jer.25:5-7)

[2:7] ... a messianic view of v.7 should not be wholly dismissed. NIV has left the question open by not capitalizing the word "desired" and by not rendering the word as a plural noun. [Alden 586]

[2:9] Although the terms of the prophecy do not allow their application to the first coming of Christ and to the Church, this application may be implied. In Christ the very essence and purpose of the OT temple is fulfilled, "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things" (Col. 1:19-20). In and through Christ, the Church and believers became the temple of God (1Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:21,22). [Verhoef 37]

[2:9] "The latter glory of this house" refers undoubtedly to the millennial splendor of the temple depicted prophetically in Ezekiel 40 to 48. Men may speak of temples or houses of God, He speaks but of the temple, or the house. Whether the building erected by

'The time has not come' – in what sense?

Cyrus, the Persian king, had ordered the rebuilding of the temple initially (Ezra 1:2,3; 4:4), but according to Ezra 4:5 it seems that he had refrained from interfering when the Samaritans and other groups had frustrated the people's plans to rebuild the house of the Lord. This situation persisted during the entire reign of Cyrus and down to the reign of Darius (Ezra 4:5). In the ancient world the building of temples was the prerogative and responsibility of kings, and Israel shared this point of view. The time for rebuilding the temple, therefore, had not yet come, especially because the Persian king had not yet ordered the work to be done (so Koole) ... The people could even have ventured a theological argument, with reference to Ezek. 37:24-28;40-43, suggesting that they had to wait for the coming of the Messiah, whose task it would be to restore the temple and the worship (so Van Hoonacker). It has even been suggested that a miraculous provision of a new temple was expected, because Ezekiel was "shown" the temple he described, without mentioning the necessity of its reconstruction. "Rebuilding was a betrayal of the eschatological hope." Other exegetes (Jerome, Rashi, Kimchi) have pointed out that the prophesied seventy years (Jer. 25:11-14) may have been a consideration for not commencing work on the temple, because the end of that period, reckoned from the time of the destruction of the Solomonic temple (587 B.C.), had not yet come in 520 B.C. [Verhoef 55,56]

The people were claiming that the time had not yet come for the Lord's house to be built. The Hebrew phrasing of the popular sentiment is somewhat cumbersome ... Exactly what lay behind this remark of the people is not certain. Perhaps they thought that the seventy years of predicted captivity were not yet up and that they would be out of God's will if they built the temple before those years were past. If they counted the captivity from 586 B.C., then only sixty-six years had passed. If, however, they counted from 605 B.C. (the first invasion of Nebuchadnezzar), then the time was well past. [Alden 579]

Solomon, Zerubbabel, or Herod, be contemplated; or whether that to be rebuilt by unbelieving Judah in the coming tribulation, or the millennial temple succeeding -- all are denominated "the house" and "the temple" of God. It is one in His eyes. In that temple of old every whit of it uttered His glory. To that temple He came in grace only to be rejected. In that temple the Man of Sin shall yet sit. Cleansed, that temple shall be the centre of earth's worship and thanksgiving for the Millennium. At present, in this interval of "the dispensation of the mystery," God owns no material building as His abode. Believers in the aggregate, through the whole church period, are growing into a holy temple in the Lord. All saints on earth at a given time form the house of God, composed of living stones, who have come to the Living Stone. [Ironsides 336]



2:10-19 Despite her subjugation, by which divine title would Israel be encouraged to contemplate her God's supreme sovereignty? (v.11)

While the people were putting themselves first, they suffered the agonies of drought and consequent famine. But when they put the Lord first, they began to enjoy his blessing on the fruitfulness of the soil. Our view of God's economy must not degenerate into one of crass materialism. Many people do not hear God till he touches them where it hurts. This was merely one way God chose to remind the people of his sovereignty over them. He who was concerned with the temple was also in control of the rains. He insists on having first place. [Alden 590]

2:20-23 Why can Israel be sure of the "mercies of David"? (KEY: the seed; cf. 2 Sam.7:8-29; Isaiah 55:1-5)

The seal or signet ring ... was a symbol of authority. All official documents were authorized with the king's seal (cf. Esth. 8:10). In 1 Ki. 21:8 Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, thus endowing them with the authority of the king himself. It is important to note that the Judean king Jehoiachin was designated to be the signet ring attested to the renewed election of the Davidic line, represented by Zerubbabel, the person in whom God had again invested the authority, promised to David and his dynasty. Thus, the historical governor of Judah is elevated to fulfill his God-appointed destiny within the context of the coming and imminent future dispensation. [Verhoef 147]

[2:23] God's promise is expanded in v.23 to include Zerubbabel. Notice that he was not called by his title of "governor" (cf. 1:1,14; 2:2,21) but by the title "my servant." This was Isaiah's favorite designation of the Messiah (41:8; 42:1; 49:5-6; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11). Also, the word "chosen" recalls references to the chosen people and the chosen One from among those people (cf. 1 Kings 11:13; 1 Chron 28:4; Neh 9:7; Ps 135:4; Isa 42:1; Zech 1:17; et al.). This promise to Zerubbabel must be understood messianically, for the Persians simply would not tolerate a man laying claim to the promises here stated. Zerubbabel was no more the Messiah than Moses, Joshua, David, Solomon, or Isaiah. But Zerubbabel was in the genealogy of Christ (cf. Matt 1:12-13). [Alden 591]