

“CONSIDER YOUR WAYS” – HAGGAI 1:1-11

INTRO: Myopia (nearsightedness)

We can so easily get our eyes off of God’s greater plan & get focused on our own issues. We become self-absorbed (our world), self-oriented (my comforts), and we end up neglecting what’s most important in our lives (His Kingdom, His glory).

When Priorities get neglected, problems arise...so God sends His word to bring us back to Himself and get us going in the right direction

BACKGROUND:

– Israel carried captive to Babylon (606 BC)/ Babylon overthrown by Medo-Persian empire...Cyrus King of Persia’s proclamation: rebuild Temple (**Ezra 1:1-4**)/ 536BC – 50,000 Jews head back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

– 1st work was to build the altar (most important part – sacrifices, feasts, offerings) (**Ezra 3:2**)/ 7 months later foundation was laid (joyous celebration/ weeping of remembering old temple) (**Ezra 3:8**).

– **Ezra 4**: Enemies come – disrupt, discourage, frustrate work – false claims to the king... he stops the work...15 years later (new ruler: Darius – Hystaspis) (even after enemy calmed for awhile, people became indifferent, neglected God’s priority)

– **520 BC – Haggai** (festive) sent by God to prompt the people to do the right thing... re-prioritize their lives...rebuild the Temple. (back to important... back to calling/ purpose...back to God’s ways, worship rightly...set the nation right with God) People obeyed message (24days later set to work) and in 4 years (516 BC) they would finish the Temple completely

– Haggai’s contemporaries: Ezra & Zechariah

5 messages in book (spanning 3 ½ months): 1) Rebuke – not working/ 2) Encouragement – back to work 3) Encouragement – future glory 4) Rebuke – serving rightly 5) Encouragement – final victory of God over Gentile kings.

I. THE CONDITION: (V. 1-2)

A. PROMPTING THE PROPHET, RULER, AND PRIEST (1)

– **Haggai – prophet** (foretell God’s future & forth-tell God’s will)

– **Zerubbabel – governor (chief administrator)**

Zech. 4:6-10 (by God’s Spirit he would oversee building & lay the foundation)

So he answered and said to me: "This [is] the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts. 'Who [are] you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel [you shall become] a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"' "Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying: "The hands of Zerubbabel Have laid the foundation of this temple; [fn] His hands shall also finish [it]. Then you will know That the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. For who has despised the day of small things? For these seven rejoice to see The plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the LORD, Which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth."

Picture of Jesus: laying the foundation, building God’s temple, raising it from the dead by the power and grace of God.

Matt. 1:12 – listed in the genealogy of Jesus....God’s handiwork!

– **Joshua – high priest**

*Important – priestly line preserved during captivity/ important prophetic word by Zechariah to him (**Zech 3**)cleaned, reappointed in service, BRANCH (Messiah) raised up.

(Prophet, Priest, Royalty (KING) involved in building God's temple...Jesus fulfills all & builds God's temple – body of Christ)

– God sends a word to the leaders regarding the people:

B. PROBLEM WITH THE PEOPLE: (2)

- people are saying, “Not time to build God's house.”
- Why? 1) fear of King – new King prohibited building city & didn't want to be accused of insubordination (not forbid temple though...or houses too) 2) fear of the enemy:

Ezra 4:23–24 *Now when the copy of King Artaxerxes' letter [was] read before Rehum, Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem against the Jews, and by force of arms made them cease. Thus the work of the house of God which [is] at Jerusalem ceased, and it was discontinued until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

- **Fear is acrippler of faith** (the enemy uses circumstances, attacks – all designed to keep you from doing God's work) **Any work of God will have opposition – expect it!**

- Is the enemy keeping me from doing God's work? Started well, but what's happened since?

- It wasn't that they didn't see the need to have it built, but they were convinced it wasn't time... “ everything has it's season – not yet...right now is not good **for me.** “ (warning to God's people – watch out!)

*always a “not now, not today, not yet” in enemy's plan (distracts you, deceives you, discourages you...tomorrow never comes!) Reason not based in God's Word, but man's comforts...it doesn't fit my schedule, doesn't sound comfortable, and it doesn't get done!

*God's word stands above popular opinion: obedience disregards enemy's threats, my feelings, what others think, and focuses on God's purpose at hand.

(PS. 95 –Today if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts!)

II. THE CONSIDERATION: (V. 3–6)

A. PRIORITIES MISPLACED (3–4)

- comparison: my home: comfortable, secure, luxurious... God's home: ruins (foundation, but no walls/structure). Absorbed in material interests – no time for God.
- Self-focused = misplaced priorities, unbalanced life, neglecting spiritual need. Had material comforts, yet nothing for the Lord's house
- Condemnation was not that they had houses, but that their hearts were not in tune with God (seeking His kingdom above own). God is always thinking heart 1st!

*Why so important to God?

Temple: 1) place of worship (God's people to interact intimately with Him – relationship)

2) place of welcome (all peoples/nations come – House of prayer for all nations)

3) place of witness (this is our God, His ways, His standard, His truth, mercy & kindness, forgiveness here...)

*This was not just for their sake, but for the world's sake! Highest priority – His glory, His Name!

* What's import to God should be important to me.

B. PROBING MESSAGE (5)

“consider your ways” = “lay it to heart” (step back, observe your lives, what you have done...what you have suffered, inventory time!)

*Always good to stop and consider my path. Ask God to search me: Are my priorities out of place? Does God’s way have 1st place in my life? Am I neglecting duties/ responsibilities in my relationship with God and others?

Ps. 119:59 *I thought about my ways, And turned my feet to Your testimonies.*

Prov. 4:26 *Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established.*

Lam 3:40–41 *Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the LORD; Let us lift our hearts and hands To God in heaven.*

- Consider your ways: “What have you gained seeking self over God?”

C. PRESENT MESS (6)

- Naturally sow much= reap much. God’s hand in this (not getting what’s expected).
- All their efforts in self-sufficient living left them lacking, empty, famished, and unfulfilled. It was useless/ wasteful.

* When our lives are directed by selfishness – we will find emptiness. Why? Not how God intended life.

- God was dealing with the nation of Israel on a physical level for their spiritual state (promised curse to them when they came into the land of Canaan for disobedience):

Deut. 28:38–40 *“You shall carry much seed out to the field but gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. You shall plant vineyards and tend [them], but you shall neither drink [of] the wine nor gather the [grapes]; for the worms shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint [yourself] with the oil; for your olives shall drop off.*

III. THE CORRECTION: (V. 7–11)

A. DIRECTION (8)

- gather wood (Lebanon mountains) and build...amend what is amiss (reform your ways, set your hands and hearts to build). Why? Pleasure and glory of God! He wanted hearts more than the wood!
- When we obey God’s voice (doing His priorities) then we know that we please Him. Our glory is in His glory. Our purpose is His pleasure! To be well pleasing in His eyes!

2 Cor. 5:9 *Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.*

**Where does rebuilding start? When I go to the mount of Calvary, gather that wood (cross), and start to rebuild.

B. DISTRESS OF NEGLECT (9)

- reminded of physical situations connected with spiritual neglects. Not only neglecting God’s temple, but lacking in daily life...no fruit to their labors.
- “I blew it away” (God’s displeasure – labor was fruitless and wearisome)
- Here they “ran” to take care of their homes, yet left His home desolate (ruined).

C. DROUGHT (10–11)

- no rain (heaven shocked @ disobedience)...no fruit (scorched)...necessities of life effected (mountain pastures dry/ grain, wine, oil/ livestock)...drought physically was due to spiritual neglect. Agricultural society...God used drought to get attention.

- NOTE: **SOMETIMES** our physical problems are a result of spiritual neglect. So focused on personal gains, God shows us its emptiness of it all. God is trying to get our attention (loves us)...chastening hand of God.

Questions:

2 Cor. 6:16 "...you are the temple of the living God..." (personally individually)

Have I ceased building up this temple? Is this house in ruins?

1) personal relationship with God...prayer, reading, fellowship, sin, etc.

2) family temple... parents primary builders of homes to honor God...priests to household,

(Am I building up my children as a part of God's temple?)

3) marriage temple... husbands loving wife, washing her in Word...wives respecting husbands building them up in Lord?

4) Body of Christ temple... am I effectively working to build up HIS LIVING CHURCH....