

Series: Haggai	Reference: Multiple	Title: The Building of a Kingdom	Date: 4.23.17
Website Writeup:			
In the exciting short book of Haggai, we see God's call on Israel to get back to the building of his HOUSE. And in it we see parallels to ourselves in 2017, how we are called away from building our own kingdom, and back to the building of God's. Join us as we explore this vital short story in the history of Israel, and what it means to us now as the Church of God.			

Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

The background to the book of Haggai is that the Jews had been under Babylonian captivity for decades, but God's moving to bring them back to Jerusalem. About 50,000 Jews returned at the time now under the rule of Cyrus the Great of the Persian Empire; one of them being Haggai, who was possibly old enough to have seen the destruction of the Temple of Solomon beforehand (587/586bc). They're return under the Jewish leadership of Zerrubabel & Joshua to the Temple destroyed. Cyrus had given permission to rebuild it so they started, but soon waned under social pressure, and the work stopped - and for another 15-16 years the Temple lay with only its foundations built. Then enters Haggai, a prophet called by God, to give four quick sermons to this remnant of Jews calling them back again to rebuilding the Temple.

Haggai starts out in Chapter 1, verse 2 addressing the civil governor & the religious head: Zerrubabel & Joshua, voicing the excuse they've used to leave the Temple in ruins: *2This is what the Lord Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built.' 3Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: 4"Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" 5Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways."*

So, the Jews had been brought back to Jerusalem, started rebuilding the Temple, but then backed off under a storm of social pressure, using it as an excuse to disincline themselves from this responsibility for 16 years. And in doing so they'd become more interested in themselves, than the Kingdom of God. Words reminiscent for us today in Philippians 2:21, *"Everyone looks out for his own interests, not that of Jesus Christ."*

Their 'Paneled houses' reveal they'd been diverted from God's kingdom purpose. Their comforts & desires overriding Gods' Kingdom call for them to bring his message to the nations through the vehicle of the Temple. Now he's exposing their sin of indifference. *5Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways (a phrase he uses over & over). 6You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."*

An ambitious people, much like us. We see ourselves in them. Indifference to God's call is often prevalent in us. But we come to realize what they did. That is, even though we may get some of the things we want, it leaves us empty, unsatisfied & wanting more.

The American pursuit of comfort & pleasure is out of control. Porn sites get more regular viewers than Netflix, Amazon, & Twitter combined each month! Food proportions in American restaurants are gargantuan. There's an insatiable & unsatisfied appetite in us, not just in the area of food or sex. Some call our excess harmless, or even progress, but it's a mask for destructive gluttony, pride & greed. Satisfaction eludes us. We end up lonely, afraid, despairing, or depressed, because life has no purpose but for the pursuit of pleasure; and pleasure was never meant to fulfill the role of our purpose.

Life becomes like the blanket the boy in "Dead Poets Society" talked about in his free form poem. A blanket meant to keep you warm, but it's too short. No matter how much you kick & pull at it, it'll never be enough to cover every inch of you. These people felt that & at times we feel it too. But now God gives them this charge: *7This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. 8Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD.*

A call to build His House; go up into the mountains, bring down timber, chop down cedar logs, hew stone, mix mortar, sharpen tools. Sweating to harvest the materials needed. But the question is, what are the logs, mortar & stone of the church? Aren't they human hearts? Because the church isn't a building, but the living body of Christ made up of his followers. Expending time, money, sweat, sacrifice & commitment, we climb the mountains of Indonesia, Tibet, Afghanistan taking the timber there; the Nepalese, the Javanese, the Lampungese, the Tajik, the Turk & all the other people groups still waiting to hear the Gospel. As well as here in the Delaware Valley, what opportunities lay just beyond our door....but the problem is evangelism's awkward in a live & let live society...

In a recent article to CNN, Ed Stetzer, a missiologist wrote that, "Comedian Penn Jillette, a well-known nonbeliever, explained how he responded to someone sharing a Bible with him: "I don't respect people who don't proselytize. If you believe that there's a heaven & hell...and you think, 'Well, it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward'... how much do you have to hate somebody not to proselytize?" Stetzer elaborates, "I get that Christians who are proselytizing seem out of step in modern live & let live America, but when you are a Christian, you don't get to pick & choose which of his commandments to obey."

Ours is an un-churched America. On average, 8-10 churches a day close their doors forever. In 1990 there were 27 churches for every 10,000 people, now there are less than half that for the same amount. We aren't setting stone, placing windows & leveling foundations. We're gathering souls, loving people, sharing the Gospel, driving forward in sacrifice & love, for the sake of building Gods' House in this community.

I'm a well intentioned guy. Came to Christ on fire, wanted to take on the world. The best of intentions & inclined to serve the Lord...until...I see no results, am met with opposition, or it gets awkward. Or the world woos me away into safety & comfortability. This story of 50,000 Jews is like a mirror reflecting my own propensity for indifference. The house of God sits partially built & I'm only concerned about my retirement account.

We need only to read vs 9-11 to realize it was a lack of heart driven action, which brought about their condition. *9 "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. 10 Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. 11 I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."*

This was a wake up call. How did they respond? 12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD.

They answered the challenge. Unlike so many of God's prophets, Haggai wasn't killed, or run out of town. His message was embraced; even by leadership! This is humble wise leadership which will confess its sin & embrace rebuke. Leadership I'd follow. I'm well intentioned like them & started out on the right foot. But at times I've fallen into indifference too. Now I need to be wise, and heed the call once again taking the Kingdom to the next level in the Eastern Main Line. Do you hear Gods call on you? Because those he calls, he stirs & enables to serve.

13 Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: "I am with you," declares the LORD. 14 So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius.

God says, *"I'm with you."* Stirring their hearts. It's not up to us to answer the task out of our flesh. To begrudgingly force ourselves into obedient service to the Lord; if He calls us, He'll stir our hearts & go with us. Are you stirred? Does it excite you to let it all go to the Lord? To lay your life down letting him have full reign of every aspect of your life? It's scary & wonderful at the same (Kita rasa gugup!).

So, they came and began work on the Temple – Kudos to them. But people are people, let's see what happens next: *21 On the twenty-first day of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: 2 "Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, 3 "Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?"*

Did you ever start a project, only to get it half done. Painting a room maybe. Maybe you run out of paint & intend to get to the store, but don't - other things take priority. Then a relative wants to come visit, 'Man, gotta finish that room!' You begin again, you start sanding, then remember you have to go get more paint, 'Oh, what a pain!' And the work goes unfinished yet again. That's kind of what's happening here.

After 15-16 years of nothing, they begin work for 3 weeks, and then it ground to a halt again. And, God says these words to them in 2:1-3. Why is this happening? Apparently there was some opposition again, but worse yet, there are some nay-sayers in their *own* crowd who were old enough to have seen the first Temple & they don't like what they're seeing now! In Ezra 3:12 we get a picture of what they are saying: *"But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former Temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid"*. So, again at the first sight of trouble they want to stop. But worse yet, they look upon their work & listen to those older folk who were saying what they were building was not as good as the original! Sound familiar? Older folks have to remember Eccl 7:10 which says: *"Do not say," Why were the old days better than these?"*

Carly Fiorina served as president of Hewlett-Packard from 1999-2005 reinventing the business to compete in a new market. Under her tenure, HP improved drastically. She described coming into the company with new ideas & people would say, "It's not the HP way, we can't do that." The company had been labeled as a stodgy old organization, an image she reversed over time with her willingness to take risk & make strong decisions.

We could have the same attitude not wanting to adapt. Or we could succumb to despair, "The church was great then, but oh look at it now, it's dying!" No, this is the bride of Christ, she can't die! She only gets better! There may be times of purging & purification, but the Church will always emerge better than before since we're directed heavenward. God's building this!

Six:Eight's taking the Gospel into the future, breaking new ground in the current cultural landscape, building a Temple more glorious than the first. We'll always need openness to embracing new forms of ministry, allowing them to flourish; not sacrificing content, but forms do change, allowing God to recreate something even more glorious than the first. **It continues...**

4But now be strong, O Zerubbabel,' declares the LORD. 'Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares the LORD, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares the LORD Almighty. 5 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.

He repeats the command *be strong* three times. Be strong, because He's with you. His Spirit remains in you. Don't fear, it's the Lord who'll win the day; it's not up to our wittiness, knowledge, greatness, pocketbook, or anything else. The world can't overcome the Church. The weight of the office we bear, as ambassadors of Christ, depends on who we represent, not ourselves & opposition will never prevail over the gospel.... Then God gives a stirring promise:

6 "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. 7 I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the LORD Almighty. 8 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the LORD Almighty. 9 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,'

says the LORD Almighty. `And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the LORD Almighty."

As they stood there looking at what they regarded now as their paltry, cheap, imitation of a Temple, God launches into this wonderful picture of what was to come. He assures them, their work isn't in vain, they're *not* just placing stone upon miserable stone. They're building the house of God.

Three stonemasons were building a church. The first was asked, what are you doing? He said, "I'm cutting this stone to build this archway." The second said, "I'm mortaring this stone into this wall." And the third stopped & said proudly, "I'm building the House of God!" It's all in how you look at it. Does your menial task have kingdom purpose or not? (greeters, teachers, admin assistants, CG leaders, etc.)

They're going to see that house filled with God's Glory more so than the first. Imagine their hopes, their excitement, as to what the Lord would do *before* the criticism of the older generation rang in their ears. But, now they stand looking at this pitiful pile of rocks, and have to answer in faith that it'll be great despite the negativity of their own people. He's foreshadowing the coming of Christ. Christ will fill the Temple with Glory. Christ, the desired of all nations. But he's also foreshadowing what he'll build with in the future. He'll shake the heavens & the earth, the desired of all nations will fall into his hands. Christ will inhabit the Temple of souls. As we labor in faith laying stone upon stone, heart upon heart, the desired of all nations fall into His hands – the Uzbek, Tajik, Lampungese, and the people of the Eastern Main Line, as he builds, and fills his Temple with his wonderful radiance!

That's the image we must give careful thought to; whether we're working for ourselves, or for His Kingdom. Building His house, or our house? Just cutting a stone, or building the Temple of God? Now, God gives a grim reminder of their former condition:

10On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Haggai: 11"This is what the LORD Almighty says: `Ask the priests what the law says: 12If a person carries consecrated meat in the fold of his garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, oil or other food, does it become consecrated?' " The priests answered, "No." 13Then Haggai said, "If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?" "Yes," the priests replied, "it becomes defiled." 14Then Haggai said, " `So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,' declares the LORD. `Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.

He's basically saying it's easier to become defiled than it is to become holy. It's easier to ruin the work of your hands with your sin, than it is to be diligently committed to holiness. If consecrated meat touches something, that other thing doesn't become consecrated. If an unclean thing touches something, that other thing becomes unclean. Isn't that true? Gods Temple is holy, and should be treated as such. If we're living our life by the sinful nature concerned only for ourselves it affects the community of faith derailing the task of Kingdom building. If the majority of us are more concerned about ourselves, the House of God remains unfinished. They're building the Temple, it doesn't

matter what's on the outside, but what's in their hearts. Are they still living in sin, but just going through the motions? Have they given their lives to him truly, or just playing the game now to get crops? Are we just living in religiosity, going to church feeling good & safe about ourselves but not really committed to the change needed to build his Kingdom? Galatians 5 says *"God cannot be mocked; a man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life."*

He reminds them now in verses 15-19 of their indifference: 15" *Now give careful thought to this from this day on--consider how things were before one stone was laid on another in the LORD's temple. 16When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. 17I struck all the work of your hands with blight, mildew and hail, yet you did not turn to me,' declares the LORD. 18`From this day on, from this twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, give careful thought to the day when the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid. Give careful thought: 19Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit. "From this day on I will bless you."*

They've rededicated themselves to the task, but they must remember how easily they're diverted by desire, how their ambition in life got them nothing but emptiness, and their stomachs were never filled. Sin's an effectual thing which has consequences in life, and comes in the form of indifference; it's not just sleeping around, or looking at porn; it's attitudinal, a condition of our heart attitudes. And, what God is saying is, "I know you're your hearts, I know when you're serious, and when you're just playing me for a fool." And he says, mark this day, the day you laid the first stone, the day of your rededication, because *"from this day on I will bless you"*. This phrase reminds us of the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12, which is echoed from Genesis to Revelation; we're blessed to be a blessing. Blessed to bring God's glory to the nations. Made to be a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, drawing people back to right relation to God in the cross of Christ. And, God has plopped us right here in the Main Line for that very task.

In conclusion: What's the message here? [1] Like them, don't kill your prophets! Specifically your pastor! [2] Seek first his Kingdom, and all else will fall into place for us. If we've grown indifferent, we should accept the call, turn from our indifference, and start building the house of God right here. How can you do that? Well if God has stirred your heart, and you have answered the call, it starts here by not just feeding ourselves. [3] Are we developing a culture of discipleship? [4] Six:Eight has a heart, a plan, and a strategy to reach out through our Community Groups, but you must engage with it. [5] And finally pray the 'Nations' (unreached people groups) would be reached!

So, give careful thought to your ways. What you will seek. Will you give your talent, time & treasure? Will you realize you're blessed to be a blessing, bringing about the Kingdom? Or, will you live a predictable, mediocre, unsatisfying life, building your own house? Since, just as Israel had left the Temple unfinished, the Temple now, which is the Church, is yet unfinished. *We have work to do, there are thousands of people groups like the Central Khmer & thousands of neighbors in the Eastern Main Line who don't yet*

know Christ! Let's gather the timber since how much do you have to hate someone not to proselytize?

Questions for Community Group Leaders

1. Let's cut to the chase, and be honest...are you more concerned about your own house rather than Gods? Why? And if so, how is that seen in your life? What is more important, and why?
2. What do you spend the most time thinking about, or concerned about? Are those around you who don't know Jesus on your mind?
3. As we are concerned about the unreached nations & our local neighbor who don't know Christ, we are equally concerned about each other... Therefore, are you in a discipleship relationship? Do you give your faith away, not only in evangelistic ways, but also in building the faith up of your brothers or sisters? If so, how is that done? List some practical things you can do to encourage each others faith.
4. Read Ed Stetzer's article together (on the next page), is it awkward for you to share Christ with others? Why? And how can you change that? How can you learn to share without being invasive or inconsiderate? How can you show your true concern for others that they understand the Gospel message in Christ? Are you simply invitational to others? Or embarrassed of your faith?
5. Do you utilize Joshua Project & pray for the unreached people groups of the world?
6. Do you tithe willingly & regularly seeing the importance of it in the building of Gods Kingdom?
7. How would your life look differently if you were fully devoted to building the house of God? Through evangelism & discipleship? Through your own personal resources of time, talent & treasure?

WHY DO CHRISTIANS KEEP INVITING YOU TO CHURCH?

by Ed Stetzer, special to CNN April 14th, 2017

(CNN)"Hey, do you want to come to church with us on Easter?" You may have heard this or something similar from a friend, co-worker or family member. Depending on where you live, perhaps you've already received a mailer or two about a local church service. Maybe you've wondered why Christians like me won't just leave you alone. I assure you, it's not because we like imposing ourselves on others. In fact, for many of us, it's just the opposite.

On a recent Sunday, I stood up at Moody Church, an evangelical church in Chicago where I am interim pastor, and encouraged people to invite their friends to our Easter services. I reminded the congregation that Christians should be committed to the task of evangelism, that Jesus commanded it.

But I also know that, to atheists or adherents of other faiths, it can be confusing to know how to respond to such outreach. Understanding our motivation may help.

The great commission

The fact is churches are gearing up for Easter like pizza places are for the Super Bowl. They know this will be the biggest Sunday attendance of the year, Christmas included. Many members will have brought guests, and pastors want to be sure to preach a compelling sermon.

For many churches, including mine, we actually prayed over cards with names on them -- the names of people to whom our church members were reaching out -- so they might have open hearts.

I imagine some react in horror to that statement thinking: How dare anyone try to convert someone to another religion?

That makes sense in a world where spirituality has been Oprah-fied, and in a culture that says it's fine to believe what you want as long as you don't try to convince anyone else to believe differently.

It works great, if not for one reality: the words of Jesus.

You see, Christianity is a missionary faith because of the life and teachings of Jesus. Sure, you probably know the teachings of Jesus that fit in our culture: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," for example. And the world would be a better place if we all did those things.

But Jesus had many other teachings as well -- and they're just as important. After his resurrection, but before his ascension to heaven Jesus said some things that explain why Christians are still evangelizing.

Christians call these commands commissions, and they include: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19); "You will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8); and "As the father has sent me, I am sending you" (John 20:21).

These are the last earthly words of Jesus before his ascension. That gives them an even greater weight to many who believe his last words should be our first priority.

The 'P' word

Some people may think "proselytize" is a dirty word, but that depends on how you define and practice it. Proselytize means to convert someone to another belief or opinion. And the truth is, we all do it -- or at least try to. We try to convince our buddies that our sports team is better, our wives that this restaurant serves tastier food, our children that smartphones aren't actually as interesting as adults make them seem. We proselytize because we deeply believe what we are sharing is important enough to expend our energy and enthusiasm. For Christians, they share because they truly believe the founder of the faith told them to, and that his message changes people.

And some people -- even atheists -- appreciate our efforts.

Comedian Penn Jillette, a well-known nonbeliever, explained how he responded to someone sharing a Bible with him:

"I don't respect people who don't proselytize. If you believe that there's a heaven and hell ... and you think, 'Well, it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward' ... how much do you have to hate somebody not to proselytize?"

I get that Christians who are proselytizing seem out of step in modern, live-and-let-live America, but when you are a Christian, you don't get to pick and choose which of his commandments to obey.

I understand that some non-Christians think Christians who share the good news are being intolerant.

Admittedly, some Christians have been intolerant at times throughout history, seeking conversions through unethical means. However, sharing our faith itself is not intolerant, but in fact is something that shows we really believe what Jesus said and we care about those around us.

Tolerance means more than acceptance of different people's beliefs, sometimes it also means listening to them. And when a whole lot of people believe there was a guy who was dead on Friday, and alive on Sunday, that's something worth explaining, particularly at Easter time.

So, please don't be offended.

Your Christian friends, neighbors, family members or co-workers are mustering up some courage because they care enough to reach out to you. They believe they've seen lives changed and are following a person whom they believe guides them toward faith and good works.

Don't be shocked that your friends think Jesus' last words should be their first priority -- particularly around Easter, the day when they believe he came back from the dead. Their sharing with you means they care enough to get uncomfortable.

Trust that it comes from a good place and take a moment to hear them out.