

# CONSIDER YOUR WAYS (PART 1)

## Haggai 1

Haggai preached in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC after the Persians defeated the Babylonians. Haggai 1.1 gives us the precise date of 520 BC. The Babylonians destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem and carried Judah off to exile. After Cyrus permitted Judah to return to Israel in 538 BC, they began rebuilding the Temple, but they lost motivation.

The work on the Temple stalled because of opposition (Ezra 4.1-6) and God's people became distracted.

Many people start things but fail to finish them. Starting things and driving a mission forward are different tasks. Similarly, coming to faith in Christ entails lifelong growth in faith in Christ.

### **Haggai calls Judah from indifference (vv. 2-11)**

The Temple represents the right worship of God. Judah's failure to rebuild the Temple shows their indifference in matters of faith. Haggai contrasts Judah's well adorned personal residences with the ruins of the Temple (Haggai 1.4). This undermines their excuses (Haggai 1.2). How could they build their own homes and neglect God's?

In asking them to "consider their ways", Haggai wants the people to see that there is a way of being active that is unproductive. We can busy ourselves yet be unfulfilled. We can have a lot without doing any good. What is missing is the blessing of God (Haggai 1.9).

Let's recall Psalm 127.1 "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain". A Godless life ultimately lacks meaning. The commentator Maclaren spoke of the life of "vain toil".

We need satisfaction for our hungers, protection from the storms of life, and a hope for lasting investment (Haggai 1.6).

Judah "looked" for the wrong things (Haggai 1.9). The work was not the problem, but rather the narrow aim, or compartmentalizing of the work.

### **Judah responds to the voice of God (v. 12-15)**

When Haggai preaches, the people hear not the man, but "the voice of the LORD" (Haggai 1.12). They realize their wrongdoing and begin to "fear God" (Haggai 1.12). To fear God means to make Him first in all things.

Haggai tells us "God stirred up the spirits" of the people (Haggai 1.14). God granted Judah's leadership a desire to carry-out the work on the Temple. He moves among the people in a fresh way.

The people obeyed God's charge. They acted on what needed to be done. They laid aside their excuses, put their heads down, and made the worship of God a priority.

God's Word stirs hearts, prompts obedience, and reassures the people of His promises.

We should be encouraged that when our lives feel stale, God can recharge us with a sense of mission.

**Key Point:** The church must always reform to the biblical ideal.

**Small Group Application Questions:**

Describe the priorities of the Jews in Haggai 1. What were their consequences? What are present day similarities?

What gospel work is the church neglecting? In what ways do we feel hindered?

What does this chapter teach about the need to meet regularly with the church family?

What difference does the promise of God's presence make for our daily responsibilities (Haggai 1.13)?