

Haggai's God Of Encouragement

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The prophet Haggai was called by God to deliver a message of encouragement to the Jews. A remnant had returned to Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity and began right away the task of rebuilding the temple. But the task was daunting. The city was devastated and in ruins. The crops wouldn't grow. The work was hard. The neighboring peoples were opposed to the rebuilding of the temple and sought to stop the work by any means possible. The people were soon discouraged and stopped work of God's house. They turned their attention to their own comforts for the next 14 years.

But God had plans for there to be a second temple. Down the road, this second temple would be adorned with the presence of the Messiah Himself. As Haggai prophesied, "*For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts*". (Haggai 2:6-7.) He went on to point out that the latter glory of the second temple would be greater than Solomon's. While wealth might have poured in from the nations, it is the filling of the temple with God's glory that should be focused on. Now how was God to do that? There was no ark of the covenant. No mercy seat. No throne of God located therein. To me, there is an obvious reference to the time when the son of God would physically be there. That would make the temple glorious.

Because God had plans for this second temple, and even though the old-timers who remembered the first one was sad this new one didn't measure up, God was going to fill it with glory through His Son. That is why the people needed to get to work and through Haggai, God is encouraging the work to be finished.

There is much to learn from this. For one, opinion and popular acceptance of the outward appearance of a building doesn't make a church acceptable to God. Authority for what we do as a church is not established by the wants and wishes of people. What man sees as a total disaster; God sees otherwise. God has plans and when we are careful to carry out His wishes, those plans get done. A church will become more spiritual in nature and worship of the God of heaven will be true and in spirit. After all, that is what God is seeking (John 4:23-24.) And when each Christian carries out the will of God, becoming more righteous in the process, God has a temple to dwell in (Eph. 2:19-22.) God had a plan for the second temple and He encouraged the people over and over to get busy. He said plainly, "*Yet 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. Work, for I am with you*" (Haggai 2:4.) What words of encouragement. When folks are about doing God's work, it can be done for He is with those who are doing so.

And what a great time for this lesson. Our congregation has suddenly had several options that have presented themselves to us for the future. The building we looked at yesterday is a blessing from God. So, let us not be afraid to move ahead. Let us not fear the obstacles before us. There is work to be done for the Lord in this community and for the small number we have and the large building, we can do it for God is with us. Be strong!!