

Haggai Week 4
You Build More Than You See
October 8, 2017

The story is told of a passerby who saw some men digging a very large hole with pick axes.
He stopped one man and ask,

“What are you digging?”

The first man whipped the sweat off his brow, sighed and said,

“I’m digging a foundation,”

then stooped back over and continued his toil.

Then he asked a second man, “What are you digging?”

this man looked up and responded proudly, **I’m building a cathedral!**”

He glanced heavenward as if imagining the splendor of that cathedral,
and then returned with a smile to his work.

This is the message of God through Haggai in today’s Scripture.

I hope you’ve been tracking with the story of Haggai
since we began our study the beginnings of September.

The story opened with a group of frazzled people,
who just couldn’t seem to get ahead. (*Nothing like us in the NE*)

Enter Haggai who says,
Does it seem like you’re working, working, working,
but putting your money in a bag with holes?

That’s *my* doing.

I’m trying to get your attention.

You’re running after your own pursuits,
but neglecting me!

Put me first in all things,
Your time, your money, your affections.
I’ll take care of you!

AND THEY DID!

But then enters a great demoralizer – the demoralizer of negative comparisons.
Negative comparison is the birthing room of a critical spirit
A critical spirit always undermines the very work that God is initiating.

The naysayers had their point.

Take a look at Solomon's Israel with a population of over 1,000,000 people
Compared that to the dot of red in Jerusalem,
area now inhabited by the remnant – a few thousand people

Take a look at the size of Solomon's temple

Compared to the size of Zerubbabel's temple.

Yes, the older people who remember Solomon's temple had a point.
Would be easy for Zerubbabel to conclude . . .

Maybe this is a foolish endeavor.

No matter how hard we work, we'll never measure up to their expectations.
So what's the use?

Have you ever been negatively compared to someone else?

Sibling perhaps?

Do you know what it's like to feel you'll never be quite as good as

Last week we heard how God through Haggai gave them two good reasons
not to let these negative comparison discourage them

1. The Lord is the one who said, "Get to work!"

This isn't about perceived success by you or anyone else.

This is about obedience.

God requires one thing from us.

Not that we succeed

But that we obey.

I came across this quote which captures their inner turmoil well.

"Our gracious God is pleased if we do as well in his service,
but our proud hearts will scarcely let us be pleased unless
we do as well as others whose abilities are far beyond ours.

God does not measure our success (by the standards of others.)

He measures our obedience.

So reason 1 is for getting to work is cause "I said so"

2. I am with you and my spirit remains among you.

My spirit is with you – let that be enough

But in *today's* reading, The Lord is going to offer a third reason not to pack it in, and it is a most fantastical of reasons –

Haggai 2:6-9

“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.

I will shake all nations,

and the desire all nations will come,

and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the Lord Almighty.

‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the Lord Almighty. ‘

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.”

This is great stuff here, but to understand what’s being said

you need get into the heads of a Jewish audience in the ancient world.

People who just read Scripture only from own cultural and language

can come up with the most bizarre interpretations of Scripture.

Let me give you the cultural and linguistic key that will unlock the meaning.

Let me illustrate.

If I say to you,

I pray we never have another 9/11.

What do you understand as my meaning?

Am I hoping that that will take September 11th out of the calendar?

No. 9/11 means the unleashing of evil in our country in catastrophic proportions.

There are two such phrases in this portion of Scripture.

One is “shake the heavens and the earth”

Gen 1:16-17) the sun to rule the day and the moon to rule the night
celestial bodies are symbols of rulership;

Gen 37:9-11

Joseph has a dream that the sun moon and 11 stars will bow down to Joseph
He's father gets the message clearly!

**What do you mean? You think that your mother and I and brothers
are going to bow down to you?**

He got that the dream was about authority and power.

Ezekiel 32:2, 6-8 A prophecy against Egypt –

When I snuff you out, I will cover the heavens and darken their stars;
I will cover the sun with a cloud,
and the moon will not give its light.

⁸ All the shining lights in the heavens

I will darken over you; I will bring darkness over your land,
declares the Sovereign LORD.

That Egyptian Empire fell in 480 BC.

Isa 13:6, 9-10 A prophecy against Babylon

See, the day of the Lord is coming

—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—

The stars of heaven and their constellations
will not show their light.

The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins.

I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty
and will humble the pride of the ruthless.

The Empire of Babylon fell in 539 BC

In fact, every empire will fall.

The writer of Hebrews in the New Testament alludes to this when he quotes Haggai

Hebrews 12:25-28

“Once again I will shake not only the earth but the heavens also.”

This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed,
so that only unshakable things will remain.

Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable,
let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe.
For our God is a devouring fire.

Holy fear is the right response to the shaking of the nations.

So, the point of all these illustrations is that
when Scripture talks about the shaking or catastrophic changes in celestial bodies,
perhaps someday this will have a literal translation,
but to date, it has always been symbolic language
to describe a tremendous socio-political upheaval
that would change the course of history.

So God through Haggai is telling Zerubbabel and the people that another
socio-political upheaval is coming.

Of course, we know from our vantage point in history, we know what happened.

Alexander the Great conquers the Persian empire in 331 BC

Then some 300 years later, in 27 BC the Roman empire seized power
would remain in power at the time of Jesus.

So why is this important for Zerubbabel to know?

I'm thinking its perhaps to spare him disillusionment?

Remember, King Cyrus of Persia (King of the empire currently in power)
is the one who liked Zerubbabel
and chose him to be the governor of Judah.

But, King Cyrus is not long for this political world.

And once King Cyrus is gone, Zerubbabel's favored status will go with him.

In fact, when the people finally get around to dedicating the temple, Zerubbabel
isn't mentioned.

He just kind of disappears from history.

Now, if I were Zerubbabel,

if after all your hard work, you just kind of fade away,

you'd probably conclude that you'd been a failure.

Unless of course, God told you ahead of time what was coming . . .

But there's *another* phrase in this passage that is pregnant with meaning:

“the desire of nations” will come and I will fill this house with glory.

What or Who is the desire of nations?

Of course, what the nations *think* they desire power.
But power will never answer the deepest cry within man
captured by Paul in **Romans 8:19-22**

Against its will, all creation was subjected to God's curse.
But with eager hope, the creation looks forward to the day
when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay.
For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth
right up to the present time.

Who is the one who brings the hope and promise of that human longing? –
Jesus

So Haggai is saying that this desire of nations will come and fill this house with glory.

This is the part that is so fantastical.

Guess who, some 400 years later,
will literally walked through the portals of Zerubbabel's temple!
Jesus of Nazareth!

Now the glory of God had graced and filled the other tabernacles of God

Exodus 40:34-35

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

1 Kings 1:10-11

As the Ark enters the temple . . .

It happened that when the priests came from the holy place,
the cloud filled the house of the LORD,
so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud,
for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

But, though, Zerubbabel and his contemporaries would not see this day.
The glory of God's only begotten Son will fill this house with glory.

It was even an understatement to say that
the glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,
and in this place I will give peace.

And if that's not a reason to not give up, I don't know what is.

There is one more amazing irony in this passage.
Haggai, speaking for God says,
'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty.'

For Herod the tetrarch who ruled during the time of Jesus,
hoped to ingratiate himself to the Jews and glorify himself,
made elaborate enhancements to the temple.
He literally poured gold and silver into the refurbishing efforts.

The size of the temple was greatly expanded.
Here's the size of Zerubbabel's temple now.
Now who's feeling small?

The total sum of gold and silver contributed annually
by worshipers and visitors from all the neighboring lands
at the time of Jesus has was estimated at over \$500,000 per year.

The combined value of the temple was 10's of millions of dollars.

Zerubbabel and his contemporaries could only see this with the eyes of faith.

So when I ask you,
"What are you doing?"

Will you answer . . .

Running a food pantry
Relaunching a men's ministry
Running the media for the Worship Team
Building a small church at 80 Jefferson Blvd.

Or will you answer:

I'm building a big, expansive, unshakable kingdom – the Kingdom of God.

So what will YOU see . . .

YOU ARE BUILDING MORE THAN YOU SEE

BENEDICTION

Psalm 24:8

Lift up your heads, O gates,
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!
Who is the King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
The LORD mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O gates,
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
That the King of glory may come in!...