

Consider Your Ways

Haggai 1: 1-15

The setting for the book of Haggai comes at a crucial time in the nation of Israel's history. He lived and prophesied just after the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity. In 538 B.C., Cyrus, King of Persia, allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. Zerubbabel was appointed the governor of Judah and Joshua, the son of Josedech, provided spiritual guidance as high priest. About 50,000 Jews returned and quickly began rebuilding the Temple in 536 B.C., but strong opposition from the outside and indifference within caused the work to be abandoned. (Isn't it amazing how little it takes for the children of God to abandon His work?)

We have picked up some 16 years later, around 520 B.C. God had called Haggai and Zechariah to challenge the people to continue the work of the Lord in building the Temple and to consider their ways before Him. It is apparent that the people had quickly forgotten the captivity, already growing complacent with their newfound freedom and prosperity, [v.4](#).

The church has not endured the suffering Israel did, but we too have grown complacent with our freedom and the prosperity we enjoy. The call has been given, but we seem to have ignored the work we have been left to accomplish. I have no doubt, we are not faced with the severity of opposition Israel faced and yet we are lacking in our service to the Lord.

Two times in these verses the word of the Lord came saying: [Consider your ways](#). He wanted them to consider the lack of effort in regard to the Temple and the lack of spiritual fervency. This challenge is relevant for our day as well. I want to consider the life of Israel at this crucial time, as it relates to us, as we think on the [challenges](#) to: [Consider Your Ways](#).

I. The Neglect of the People [\(2-4\)](#)

A. They Neglected the Time [\(2\)](#) – [Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.](#) Keep in mind, they had been back in Jerusalem for 18 years. It has been 16 years since any productive work had taken place toward rebuilding the Temple. The people were without a place to worship the God who had brought them home and away from bondage. There seemed to be no urgency in getting the house of God repaired and ready for worship. They felt as if the time had not come yet.

- It is clear that a lot of Christians today are neglecting the time. They just can't sense the need to be productive for the Lord. Apparently they feel that the time will come, but it hasn't arrived yet. There is no time like the present. We can't regain time lost. We are drawing closer to

the Lord's return with each passing day. You don't have to pray about serving the Lord. I can assure you that He desires us to be diligent in labor today! God will judge us for putting off what we know to do for a future generation.

B. They Neglected the Temple (2) – Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built. They weren't just neglecting the work of God, they neglected the house of God. There was no cooperative desire to see the house of God reestablished. Apparently there was no concern for a place to worship. The one place that God had ordained to meet with them in OT days was neglected and abandoned.

- It is dangerous to neglect the house of God. Many in our day will come when it is convenient, but really they neglect the house of God. They do not support it with their presence as they should; they do not support it with their tithes and offerings, and many do not support it with their prayers. There is no desire to see the church grow and expand, reaching lost souls for the glory of God. Listen, if we are not obedient and committed to the vision, we are neglecting the house of God. You can sit on these pews every Sunday and still neglect the house of God!

C. They Neglected the Truth (3-4) – Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, ^[4] *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house *lie* waste?* The people were not invisible to God. He saw the lives they lived and the desires they possessed. They were unconcerned about His house, but they were diligent in obtaining ceiled houses of their own. They failed to see the need for God amidst all their newfound prosperity. They had lost their focus. God had not brought them out of bondage to simply grow wealthy and prosperous. He had brought them out so that they might worship Him and live for Him.

- I fear many today are living in ceiled houses, living lives of luxury and complacency, and have no desire for the things of God. If you feel that God has left you here to satisfy your flesh and obtain material wealth beyond measure, you are neglecting truth! I am not saying God doesn't want us to prosper, but we are here to serve the Lord. We have not been called to indulge ourselves with pleasures, but to live for God and fulfill the work that He has called us to do. If your life is consumed with material possessions, you have neglected the truth!

II. The Need of the People (5-11) – God called for them to consider their ways. He never points out a problem without offering a solution. He addressed their neglect and now He addresses their need.

A. The Need to Conform (6) – *Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.* This is simple enough, isn't it? They were putting forth a lot of effort with little favorable results. God wanted them to take inventory of their lives. Were they really being profitable? Was all that effort really paying dividends? They had labored tirelessly and yet there was no real satisfaction. They needed to conform to the ways of God.

- You can put forth all the effort you can muster, but if you have not conformed to the ways of God it will be of little profit. God wants us to examine our lives and make the most of them for His glory.
- Are you sowing abundantly and reaping a meager harvest? Are you continually feeding the flesh and yet never finding satisfaction? Are you consumed with material gain and it seems as if the money is being placed in a bag with holes? What of all that effort is pleasing to God? Is any of it for Him or all for self? Conformity will bring peace and satisfaction.

B. The Need to Comply (8) – *Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.* God was saying the Temple was in ruins and the mountains were filled with the resources needed to rebuild it. That was what He desired. He would only be pleased with an obedient effort. He simply wanted the people to comply with His will for their lives.

- We often make life much harder than it has to be. God has not asked us to perform some monumental task alone. He simply wants us to comply with His will. He has not changed. He supplied the resources for them to rebuild the Temple and He will supply the same for us. He just wants us to take what He has already given and get busy. We know what we need to do and we know how to do it. We just need to get busy working for the Lord!

C. The Need to Confess (9) – *Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.* Basically their abundant efforts had profited little. It may have looked good on the surface, but in the end it was of little value. God asks a simple and yet very profound question: *Why?* He knew the answer. He had blown away that which seemed profitable and precious to them because their hearts were not right. They were unconcerned about their spiritual needs. God wanted them to understand and confess their sin.

- God will not bless if we are unwilling to confess. I have no doubt many know that God is not pleased with their lives and yet they refuse to admit it and get right with Him. We must see

ourselves as God does. I'm sure if we would look at ourselves as He sees us, we would be much less proud and consumed with our wants and desires. Could it be that our lack is not just misfortune, but rather God trying to get our attention and turn us to Him?

D. The Need for Concern (10-11) – Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. ^[11] And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that* which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands. The situation in Jerusalem was not good. Their pride and unconcern led to drought and lack of abundance. These trials were a direct result of their disobedience. God wanted them to realize that He would not bless a rebellious people. There was a genuine need for them to be concerned about the situation of their lives.

- At times I wonder what it will take to get our attention. I have seen the church lose much of her power in my lifetime. The world is getting farther away from righteousness. We have experienced unprecedented droughts and uncommon weather patterns. These things are not just coincidences. The world has rejected God and He has brought judgment. Who will become concerned in our day? Who will cry out to God and lift up the Gospel banner. It is time to wake out of sleep and face reality. We need to get to God!

III. The Newness of the People (12-15) – The message from God brought about change in their lives. It ought to change us as well. Notice the change.

A. They were Submissive (12) – Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the LORD. The people **obeyed** the voice of the LORD their God and the words of Haggai. This means “*to hear, listen attentively, give heed, and to yield.*” The people did **fear** God. This carries the idea of “*reverence, honor, respect, to stand in awe of.*”

- We need to learn to obey the Word of God. It is the sole authority for all of life. I am no better than any of you, but God has called me to proclaim His Word. We need to develop a holy fear of God in our day. Submission will result in the blessing and attendance of our Lord.

B. They were Supported (13) – Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message unto the people, saying, *I am with you, saith the LORD.* This reveals a simple truth that we need to grasp

and live by. When God's people get right with Him, He will be with us. I don't know about you, but I want to have God in my life and among us.

C. They were Stirred (14a) – [And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people.](#) When the people's hearts were turned toward God, He stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and Joshua. He began to work in their hearts, giving them a fresh touch. He also stirred the hearts of the people. God began to work in their lives again.

- More than anything else we need a stirring of God. We need Him to move in a mighty way among us. Are you tired and weary? Do you feel that my preaching is lacking? Get a touch of God on your life and He might begin to stir my heart. He did for them and I am certain He will for us.

D. They were Sincere (14b) – [and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.](#) After this encounter with God the people were changed. They determined in their hearts to build the Temple, obeying God, and they did just that. Four years later the Temple was completed. [Ezra 6:15 – And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.](#)

- Getting in touch and in tune with God will change your life. It will take a life that is unconcerned and complacent and make it sincere and productive. What Fellowship and this world needs is sincere Christians. We need those who are committed to fulfilling the work of God no matter the cost or effort involved. I pray that God will do a work in our hearts and we will get sincere in our efforts or Him.

Conclusion: I want to get personal for just a moment. Have you considered your ways? Is there anything that needs to be addressed in your life? Are you living much like the Jews in Haggai's day? Has God spoken to your heart? If so, why not come and submit yourself to Him and begin anew with Him. He can change your life if you will only let Him.

Maybe you can't serve the Lord because you have never believed on Him for salvation. If that is the case, why not heed the call of God and be saved today? Allow Him to take a life of misery and confusion and make it anew in Him!