

Haggai

A Study in Haggai 4 weeks

1 – Consider Your Ways 1:1-11

2 – Set Your Heart To Serve 1:12-15

3 – Be Strong And Work 2:1-9

4 – Give Careful Thought 2:10-23



Haggai

This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

The words and activities recorded in the book of Haggai - occurred in the Jewish community after many of the Jews had returned from captivity. Haggai seems to be so well known as to need no special introduction. He is called "the prophet" several times in the book of Haggai and a couple of times in the book of Ezra.

The time of these events was the year 520 B.C. To date the events of Haggai is quite easy. Each of his "Words from God" recorded in this book are identified with precise dates.

The Bible mentions two men called Darius. The first was Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, a Mede by descent; recorded in Daniel 9:1. The second and the one recorded in Haggai is Darius Hystaspes. This Darius ruled the area from 521 B.C - 486 B.C. (about 34-35 years).

When the text tells us it was in the second year of Darius' reign, then we know it was 520 B.C. The Jews prior to the Babylonian captivity - reckoned the year as starting in fall and running from fall to fall. After the Babylonian captivity, - they accepted the Babylonian calendar which started the year in the spring.

Referring to calendars of the New Moon: -

1st day of 6th month = 29 Aug (on our calendar)

24th day of the 6th month = 21 Sept

21st day of the 7th month = 17 Oct

24th day of the 9th month = 18 Dec

All of these "Words" and events took place in the span of about 4 months.

Some have pointed out the short time covered by the events recorded in the book of Haggai - and point out how short Haggai's ministry was. From the book of Ezra we get information to say that Haggai's ministry - continued through the spring of 515 B.C, - so it was a little longer than the dates recorded in this book.

There is no specific word as to what happened to Haggai after this point, but we do have Scriptures to indicate Zechariah continued the work of Haggai. This could mean Haggai was of old age during the time recorded in the book of Haggai.

Since Haggai needed no special introduction, it is reasonable to believe he was a familiar prophet, and probably had been bringing the Word of God to the people for several years. I personally believe, Haggai had a ministry of a great many years among the Jewish peoples, but this is the only portion that God had recorded for us today.

The name Haggai means "festival" or "celebration" - which has led some Bible scholars to suggest Haggai may have been born during one of the designated Jewish feast. This is only speculation, since the Bible nor any civil document identifies the time or date of Haggai's birth.

With this general information, let's look at the message for us found in this small book:

Haggai 1 – Consider Priorities

Read Haggai 1:1 and make notes:

This verse gives us the date of the first Word from God. The second year of Darius would be 520 B.C. The 1st day of 6th month would be the New Moon and would = 29 Aug 520 B.C.

There is something else significant in verse 1. The Word from God was addressed to "Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah", and to "Joshua, the high priest." God had something to say, and He addressed it to the "civil leader" - and to the "spiritual leader" of the people.

Read Haggai 1:2 and make notes:

This verse identifies what the people are saying in the heart. "These people say"...."The time has not yet come, the time for rebuilding the house of the Lord." "These people" in the original text was a word used in a judicial setting - referring to the people on the other side of a lawsuit (legal opponent).

It is significant, God did not refer to them as "His people" - "my people" - or the "people of the covenant"; - but referred to them as those who are opposed to Him. This tells us right up front that God is displeased with the people as a whole. The phrase "The time has not yet come...for rebuilding the house of the Lord" - is also significant.

The perfect tense of the words in the original text - indicate it was not just something they had said in the past; - but it was something they are still saying at present. This had been the prevailing attitude for a long time and is the current attitude of the people in Haggai's day.

It doesn't read that the people doubted the necessity to someday rebuild the temple. It doesn't read that the people were opposed to the temple being rebuilt. It doesn't even read as though the people doubted their obligation to rebuild the temple. It reads as though the people see it as "inconvenient at this time" to rebuild the temple.

Let's try to see it from their point of view. They had been held captive and used as slaves in a foreign country. Many of these present at this time had actually been born in captivity. The people who were allowed to return to Palestine, had returned as poor people. They did not have capital with which to start businesses or to build homes.

Haggai 1 – Consider Priorities

The people were having to work to re-establish themselves in their homeland. All of the necessities of life - had to be obtained and provided for their families. The economy of Palestine was in shambles. There weren't any "good jobs" to be found. There weren't any great business opportunities - except perhaps selling to these returning exiles the building materials and everyday utensils of living - but no one had that kind of means to provide such a service.

With the great need of providing absolutely everything needed for everyday living - with the great shortage of finances among the people - with the extensive labor required in the land to provide their family with something to eat and drink - how could anyone justify the expenditure in time or resources to rebuild the temple?

These people were just like you and I are today. We find it inconvenient to put time or money into the Lord's work - when our family doesn't seem to have all they need - or sometimes just "want."

These considerations and arguments among the returned exiles didn't seem to impress God very much. I would like to draw your attention back to the earlier covenant relationship God had established with this people: "If you obey - you will be blessed; if you do not obey - you will not be blessed."

Do you remember the relationship called for - do you remember the parts about the blessings and the curses? A people who had acted as these were acting - and a people who had argued against God as these were arguing - simply could not be called - "my people" by God in this covenant relationship.

This people who had been taken captive because of their unfaithfulness to God - this people who had lost everything because of the violation of the covenant - this same people had now been blessed of God in that He allowed them to return to their homeland - and they were living their life and acting - just as though they had never heard of their ancestor Abraham who believed God - they were acting as though they had forgotten the Word given by Isaiah 7:9, "If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all."

Perhaps they had also forgotten or ignored 30:15, "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength." These people were all confused about their priorities as the people of God. They had drawn up the wrong conclusions as to what needed to be attended to first.

The people in Haggai's day, - just like many in our day, - decided they needed to ensure their family had all of it's needs met, - and then it would be time to see to the needs of God's house and God's work.

They made a devastating choice. The message for us today from this text is clear to those who will look: **When we get our priorities out of order, we will work much harder and have less to show for it.** Do you know anyone who is working more and enjoying it less?

Haggai 1 – Consider Priorities

When we get our priorities out of order, we unplug ourselves from the blessings and protection of God. At this point I ask that you remember to whom this was addressed. Both to the civil leader and to the spiritual leader. You can easily see how the civil leader would be encouraging the people to put a great deal of effort into building businesses and homes around the city. The quicker the communities are re-established, as for as homes and businesses - the quicker the civil leader has something to be leader of.

How can the spiritual leader have been silent in this issue? It would appear that he was simply taking an attitude of just waiting on the people to finally get what they wanted - and then hope they would return to the work of God. It seems clear in God addressing the civil leader and the spiritual leader - that He expected a whole community to respond to the issue of rebuilding the Lord's House.

Read Haggai 1:3-4 and make notes:

Verse 4 begins the challenge to the attitude of the people; "Is it a time for you to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" The Word from God challenges the people's priorities.

The people had attributed their lack of concern for rebuilding the temple to their adverse economical situation. God challenges them with this simple question - "is it time for you to live in paneled houses?"

The houses of that area were predominantly adobe type houses. A nice house would be one in which wood paneling had been attached to the interior walls. The people wanted a house for their family - we would all probably agree with the necessity for a family to have a house to live in. It wasn't wrong in that day, - and neither is it wrong today, - to want a nice house for your family to live in.

The question God posed to this people, - and quite frankly He is posing the same question to us today,- "is it right for you to build for yourself a really nice house while you leave the House of the Lord in shambles?" This challenge is not that the people built a house for themselves first - before rebuilding the temple - the challenge is that they were taking the time and money to decorate their house - and provide all the nice amenities for it - before performing even the most basic rebuilding activities to the temple.

After God poses the question to the people - He then gives them some data with which to consider the proper answer to this question.

Haggai 1 – Consider Priorities

Read Haggai 1:5-6 and make notes:

Verse 5 asks the people to Consider you ways. Alright, if we are going to consider our ways - how have we been living our lives? What kind of attitude have we maintained toward ourselves, our family, and the House of the Lord? What has befallen us as we have lived our life with the attitude we have?

Verse 6 points out that they have invested much and brought in little – they eat without being satisfied - drink without getting full - clothe themselves without being warm – and their earnings go into a purse with holes. Remember, Haggai was addressing the people on the 29th of August - the disappointing harvest would be fresh on their minds.

For us today, it might help – to think about the first of the year. The financial earnings of the previous year is still fresh in our mind. Over the next few weeks, we will be receiving forms that state just how much money we were paid the past year. Many of us will look at the total, and will look at our personal and family financial situation - and will ask, where did it all go? Many of us today, know exactly what it feels like to put our earnings into a purse with holes in it.

The people in Haggai's day had worked hard - the spring crops came in - meager - the summer harvest was small - and now the fall harvest wasn't looking any better. They had so very little to show for all the hard work they had put in.

Read Haggai 1:7-8 and make notes:

Verse 7 - Consider your ways – verse 8 go into the hills - get timber - and rebuild the house - "Then I will again take pleasure in it and will reveal my glory," says the Lord. Please don't overlook God's mercy and graciousness towards this people who had to this point been insensitive towards His house.

Haggai 1 – Consider Priorities

God gave specific instructions to:

- #1- go into the hills,
- #2- get timber,
- #3- build the house.

God knew of the difficult economic times - even though He had already pointed out these hard times were primarily their fault - He was sensitive toward their condition. He did not ask them to furnish the temple with it's former exquisite furnishings. He didn't even ask them to decorate it with the former elaborate and expensive decorations. He simply ordered them to get wood - and build the wooden structure. Isn't God reasonable?

These disobedient and ungrateful people did not deserve this kind of gentle consideration from God. However, because He is a loving and merciful God, - He never asks more of us than we are capable of performing. He gave a wonderful promise, - if they would just do this simple task of getting wood and building the wooden structure - He said when you do this, "I will again take pleasure in it and will reveal my glory."

Now surely, no one would say that the building of a simple wooden structure would be worthy of God revealing His glory. After all God had previously had an exquisite and ornate temple which caused people from around the world to marvel.

A simple wooden structure would cause God to reveal His glory and take pleasure in it? Yes, absolutely, - because that is the best the people were capable of doing!

God takes pleasure when we give Him our best efforts. God takes pleasure in revealing His glory to the people who give Him what they can - even if it is meager in comparison to some former effort - God rewards those who give Him their best - whatever that may be.

These exiles had not been giving God their best. Maybe we should ask ourselves from time to time, "have I given God my best?" Or have we bee more like the exiles in Haggai's day? Have we decided that since we do not have all that we need or want - God and His work will simply have to wait - until we are better equipped financially and materially?

The promise is still in effect today. If we will give God the best that we have - He will reveal His glory to us. If we will give God the best that we can - He will take pleasure in us.

Read Haggai 1:9-11 and make notes:

Haggai 1 – Consider Priorities

If for some reason we just don't feel we can yet get involved in building the House of the Lord - verse 9 asks again; - Consider your ways - You have expected much but received little - what you brought home, I blew away - "Because my house lies in ruins, while you are running on behalf of your own house."

Verse 10-11 explain - this is the reason God has called forth a drought upon every aspect of man's means of making a living among that people. After He describes several specific means of making a living, - He says clearly, "upon all the fruits of labor."

This is a very important Word for the people of today - Our land is filled with people who are constantly changing from one job to another - people are frantically trying one investment after another - people are jumping into one business opportunity after another - always hoping that this one will be the "big one" - the one that fulfills all of their financial dreams.

God allows a drought to come upon "all the fruits of labor" – of the disobedient and unfaithful people. **There isn't going to be a big financial watershed for the Christian who has their priorities out of order.**

Even if you could make "a lot", it would not make any difference. I have watched in my life - and in the lives of others who have their priorities out of order - even if they get to making more money - the hole in the purse just enlarges so that more money can fall out.

To the person who has placed other things before serving God and building His house - there will be ever increasing expenses, repairs, medical bills, etc. But to the person who places God, serving Him, and building His house before everything else - they will always have enough - even when they seem to have very little - God just miraculously extends, expands, and multiplies it to meet their needs.

I would like to point out to you that God's House today is not a building of stone and wood. Today, God is desirous of building a House for Himself out of "living stones" - each one of us cemented together by the covenant bonds of love - our walls painted over with the lamb's blood - a house of praise, wherein it pleases the Holy Spirit to abide.

Each one of us needs to hold firmly to the covenant bonds of love - this is what holds the house together when we do, it makes it easier for others to remain in their place in the walls of the House of the Lord. But when one of us turns loose of the covenant bonds of love, and falls out of our place - we make the wall weaker - and it makes it more difficult for others to maintain their place in the walls of the House of the Lord.

The House of the Lord in America today is pretty much in ruins! I am talking about the House built with "living stones." Is it right for us to be so busy building our lives of pleasure and comfort - when we allow the House of the Lord to remain in ruins?

Haggai 1 – Consider Priorities

Some 500 years after Haggai – God's people would hear Jesus say, “seek first the things of God's kingdom – and then all the things you need will be supplied.” The religious leaders of that day and some of the people thought this was radical! It was simply the message from olden days – and it's still a relevant message today.

To be about the work of "rebuilding the House of the Lord" today - means we will be about the work of building up one another - it means we will be about the work of protecting one another - it means being there for one another.

In the light of the prophet Haggai's words - let us re-evaluate our lives and circumstances in the light of God's Word, - and seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, - and walk with a knowing that He will provide us with what we need.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

The Lord had given this inconsiderate people a 3 part instruction:

- 1 - go into the hills
- 2 - get timber
- 3 - build the house of the Lord

Read Haggai 1:12-15 and make notes:

Verse 12 tells us Zerubbabel the civil leader, Joshua the spiritual leader, and the whole remnant of the people gave heed to the Word of the Lord. The impact of Haggai's message to the civil and spiritual leaders - was such that the leaders and the people decided unanimously to build the temple.

The two operative verbs in verse 12 are the words "**obeyed**" and "**feared**". Before the people of Israel were taken into captivity - they "would not listen and were stiff necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the Lord their God" as we read in 2 Kings 17:14. But here we see the people "feared" the Lord - and "obeyed" His instruction.

This phrase - "fear" - does not have the words that mean they "reverenced and respected" God - but these words in the original text means the people stood in holy awe of God - and were afraid of His wrath toward a disobedient people. Some of these adults were children when they were taken captive and transported to a foreign land. They remembered how it felt and looked to have the wrath of God to fall upon disobedient people.

The other adults had been born in captivity and had heard the stories of how their parents and grandparents had disobeyed God and He had then sent into slavery because of disobedience. These people had first hand knowledge - and were aware of the wrath of God toward disobedience.

When they heard the message through the prophet - that it was God who had brought the drought upon all their means of making a living - they knew this same God was still able to pour forth His wrath upon a disobedient people - many of them were too afraid of what He might do next if they didn't obey His Word. They knew they were guilty of putting their own personal interest ahead of doing God's Work.

I have observed, when people are guilty - and maybe they are the only one who knows they are guilty - they will have a fear of God - they will go about their daily task with a certain amount of dread - just because of the guilt that is within them. We might say when the people heard the Word from God - "they headed for the hills".

Haggai 2 – Set Your Heart To Serve

Verse 13 - The prophet Haggai brought another "Word from the Lord" and this time it was addressed to "the people" - it was simply, "I am with you, declares the Lord." The Hebrew words used here are different from "Immanuel" - but you cannot help but remember that one of the names of God is "Immanuel, God with us."

In the midst of this fear stricken people - a comforting word was sent to them through the prophet. God didn't want the people to build the house out of fear. God wanted the people to build the house in a spirit of trust and consolation in God Jehovah.

This phrase "I am with you" was the same assurance God had given to Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah, and others. This is the assurance Jesus gave to His disciples as they would go about His Work. No matter where you go or what happens - "I will be with you !"

I suggest to you that there was a reason God said this to the people at this time, instead of waiting until they were finished. Try if you can, use your imagination, and picture in your mind, the way it might have been if the people had built the House of the Lord - while in an attitude of fear of what God might do to them if they did not. Just think of what kind of attitude they would take to work with them each morning - Just think of how they might inter-act with one another during the day, especially when things didn't go quite right.

Imagine how they might have responded if someone came and gave them a negative "prophetic word" about the success of the building project. Now, try to imagine how they would have gone about the Work knowing that "God is on their side" with the assurance that they had God's personal support in this project - and they had God's personal blessing upon their work.

There would likely be no apprehension about going to work today. There would likely be consolation for one another when things didn't seem to go quite right. And there would likely be a quick rejection of any "negative prophetic words" about the success of the project.

I have observed - the difference in the way people respond to disappointments - or negative so called prophetic words. When we aren't sure that we are doing what God has called us to do - when we don't have the assurance we are on God's side - when things don't seem to go well - we immediately get angry and frustrated and want to give up and maybe abandon the work – we usually find someone to blame - but we give up and leave hurt and frustrated and discouraged.

When we aren't sure God is with us on this - and the negative words come from someone who claims to be giving us a Word from God - the immediate response is to get very angry - we typically raise our voice - our words are spoken with harsh tones - we are very impatient with those who bring the negative word. Basically, we want to fight them right there on the spot.

How different I have responded - and so have others - when we just "KNOW" this is what God said to do - this is where God said to go - this is the way God said to do it. When things don't seem to go well - we don't want to give up - we don't become discouraged - we might say things like "I don't know why it seems to be floundering - but I know God said to do this" - and we remain faithful to what God calls us to do - with a continual eye looking for the results God will bring about.

Haggai 2 – Set Your Heart To Serve

When we "KNOW" God is with us - and the negative prophets come with their words from God that we are supposed to be doing something else instead - we don't want to fight them, we don't become impatient with them - we just quietly and confidently continue doing what God has called us to do.

If you had a personal word from God - that He was on your side - that He would help you - that He would protect you - that He would strengthen you - would you have any doubt that you could do the job, - even though it might look like one of those monster tasks?

Without God, we can do NOTHING! With God, ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE !

There may be other reasons God wanted the people to build the temple in an attitude of confidence - and consolation rather than an attitude of fear - but these few reasons are enough to show us how differently the approach and response of the people would be.

Today, in the churches of America, we have a large number of people trying to be "a Christian" - and trying to be "a part of the church" just because they are afraid of going to Hell if they don't. These people are trying to build the Lord's House in an attitude of fear and apprehension. This is NOT the attitude we should have as we go about the work of building the Lord's House.

Verse 14 says the Lord "roused" (or stirred up) the spirit of the civil leader, the spiritual leader, and the people - and they came and set to work on the Lord's House. It may have been the Word from God of His promise to be with them - or that He is now on their side - that stirred up their spirits. Or it may have been a divine action on His part in addition to the promise and assurance.

In whatever manner He did it, - God stirred up the spirits of the people - so that they went about the work with a great zeal and enthusiasm.

I have heard people say "let's stir up the Holy Spirit." They usually say something like this when they feel the meeting is going a little too slow - or maybe it's just not as exciting as they think it should be. There are a number of Scripture passages like this one where God stirs up the spirit of a person or the spirit of a people. But you can't find a single text where a person or a people was able to "stir up God."

Sometimes God stirred up the heart of one of His servants - or the leader of His people. Sometimes God stirred up the heart of a pagan to come and do damage to His disobedient people. It is God who stirs the hearts of the people! It is God who will stir our spirits into revival! If things are not as exciting as we would like them to be - we should pray and ask God to stir up our spirit and the spirits of the people around us. What might happen if two or more of us were continually asking God to stir up the spirits of the people here?

I don't know if this will bless you like it did me, but I'm going to share it with you just the same. God pointed out to me the difference He wanted in His people from the peoples of this world. In every nation around the Israelites, - it was accepted and believed to be the responsibility of the King - and the royal treasury to build the temples.

Haggai 2 – Set Your Heart To Serve

Among of the pagan nations, if a temple was to be built, then it was sponsored by the royal treasury. The people of other nations were often used as slave labor, but the royal treasury paid.

Among the Israelites, among God's people, - God said it was the responsibility of the people to build the temple. It is still God's plan today, for His people to build the temple from their own resources.

If we read this passage quickly, we might say - "Well that's good, they starting doing what God told them to do." But there is a significant fact revealed here - and I encourage everyone to slow down and make sure we see it. If you remember from the previous lesson - the Word from God with the instruction to build the House of the Lord came on the 1st day of the 6th month.

(1st day of 6th month = 29 Aug) Verse 15 tells us they actually started work on the temple on the 24th day of the 6th month. (24th day of the 6th month = 21 Sept) They started to build the temple just 3 weeks after God gave the instructions to build. (23 days to be exact) In three weeks time - the people had made the trip to the mountains - they had cut down trees - they had cut them into beams and into planks - and they had hauled this lumber back to town.

Considering they had to do all this by hand - even if it were not a long trip to the mountains - it still takes time to cut a tree down by hand and to cut it into lumber by hand. These people had wasted no time at all in obeying the Word of God - or they would not have been able to begin the construction 3 weeks later. Perhaps before they could go to the mountains to cut down the trees - it may have taken a few days just to get the equipment ready.

Verse 12 doesn't tell us when they "gave heed" to the Word of the Lord - but verse 15 makes it clear, they must have responded immediately - in order to accomplish the making of lumber in just 3 weeks. With this information in mind - it brings some significance to verse 13 The Word from God through the prophet Haggai - "I am with you, declares the Lord." This is like God saying to the people, "I am on your side" - or "I will help you" - or "I will be there for you" - or "you can count on me."

Many of us may have used this expression ourselves - or maybe someone has said it to us. When someone explains what they feel they just have to do - and then their friend or companion says, "I'm with you" - maybe they say "I will help you in whatever you decide to do." God said this to the people - WHEN "they gave heed to His Instruction." God did not wait until they finished the house. God didn't even wait until they actually started putting the temple back together. God told the people "I am with you" - as soon as they set out to fulfill His instructions.

We see this same attribute of God in the New Testament - Jesus gave some lepers the instruction to go and to show themselves to the priest at the temple. The text tells us "while they were on their way" they discovered that they were healed.

As soon as this people set out to do the work God had commanded them to do - as soon as it was evident it was in their heart to obey God - God gave them the assurance that He was on their side. God no longer saw them as "legal opponents" - they were no longer enemies to God - they were now on the same team as God Almighty.

Haggai 2 – Set Your Heart To Serve

The Churches in America today have a great number of people who profess to be Christians - but are waiting on God to prove Himself to them before they commit themselves to His work.

The message from this short passage in Haggai is of great significance for the people of today:
If we will commit ourselves to the work of God - then He will be on our side and make His presence known to us.

For all those people who are waiting for God to reveal Himself to them before they commit themselves to His work - the message is, "You may never have God reveal Himself to you!"

To all those people who are trying to serve God just to keep from going to hell - the message is, "If you set your heart to serve God and not just your mind and your rationale, and He will reveal Himself to you!"

There is another thing to point out from this passages: The 1st Word of the Lord came to the people on Aug 29 - the people responded immediately and began to prepare lumber - and actually began the building on Sept 2. As already pointed out, - they had to get pretty busy in order to go to the mountains, cut trees, turn them into lumber, and get it back to town in order to begin the work in just 3 weeks!

How important is our time, during the 3 weeks of Aug 29 through Sep 21, - if we are a farmer? If we are trying to make our living from the raising of crops and the growing of orchards - these are very important weeks! This is some of the most important weeks of harvest time. These people came to see serving of the Lord - to be of greater importance than the harvesting of their meager crops.

It is important for us to work and to make a living for ourselves and our families. But, serving God, and building His house,- is more important than you or I making a living. Regardless of what job we have, it is temporary. If we don't loose or give up that job before our physical body dies, - we surely will give it up at that time. However, our spiritual relationship with the Heavenly Father - is one that is affecting an eternity for us.

The average Church going Christian today believes it is more important to serve their employer or their business than it is to serve God. Anyone who believes that is dangerously wrong!

God was fully aware of the time of year - and of the importance of harvest time - when He instructed the people to build the temple. God is fully aware of our financial needs, - the demands upon our time, - and the important task we have waiting on us - when He instructs us to serve Him in some area.

God is the one who gave the people initiative through the message from the prophet Haggai. God is the one who gave the people the promise of His gracious and abiding presence. God is the one who gave the people stirred up spirits. It is still God today who gives the people instruction, assurance, and brings revival by stirring up our spirits. The New Testament reminds us of this fact: *Philippians 2:13 For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

Haggai 2 – Set Your Heart To Serve

The response God is looking for in His people today, - is exactly the same He was looking for in those people of Haggai's day. God is looking for a people who believe it is more important to be obedient in building the House of the Lord than it is to provide for themselves.

The encouragement of this passage from Haggai is significant. If we will just set our heart and spirit toward doing the work God has asks of us - God will assure us of His personal presence and blessing upon us and the work. And God will give us this assurance as soon as our heart and spirit are committed to do the work. We don't have to wait until the work is complete.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

When we began with the very first lesson from Haggai - I said God had a message for us today. This isn't just "a series of good teachings on Haggai." This is a specific Word to US, today, right here in America. Please pay attention to this lesson - and recall the previous two lessons from Haggai. This series is like a multiple course meal - each course can stand alone as a teaching - but together, they will be filling. This lesson is like the main course to which the other 2 have been leading.

Read Haggai 2:1 and make notes:

This WORD came about 4 weeks (or one month) after the work on the temple actually began. It appears to be a word of encouragement to a people who has become discouraged.

The text doesn't tell us what has happened to discourage the people; - but there are a couple of possibilities that come to mind. First, this temple has been in ruins for over 60 years. There had to be quite a mess to clean up at the work site before actual construction could take place.

This seventh month of the year would pose a slow down of work because of the religious festivals required within it. On the 1st day of the seventh month was the Feast of Trumpets. On the 10th day of the seventh month was the Day of Atonement. On the 15th day of the seventh month, the Feast of Tabernacles began and it lasted for 7 days.

With the mess to clean up including the large stones to be moved without any mechanical aids such as we have today - it would be easy to deduce that there wasn't much in the way of actual construction that could take place the first month. Then with the people looking at their seventh month of the year - with all of its required religious festivals which forbid work - it's easy to see discouragement setting in.

Perhaps, during the last week of the sixth month, - a great many Jews had arrived in the city - just to be there to celebrate the upcoming festivals. Perhaps during their stay they saw the mess instead of a mighty temple being erected, - there may have been some negative comments about the lack of progress.

Read Haggai 2:2-3 and make notes:

Haggai 3 – Be Strong And Work

This WORD came on the 21st day of the 7th month. The Feast of Tabernacles began on the 15th day and lasted for 7 days. The 21st day of the 7th month would be the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This is a very important day in the Feast of Tabernacles. During the Feast of Tabernacles, - the people were to move out of their houses - and live in booths made of branches. The people were out in the streets in great numbers.

This was a time for the people to remember the great deliverance and provision of the Lord Most High after He delivered them from Egypt. Many years earlier, Solomon dedicated the Great Temple during the 7th month. Perhaps the people could not help but remember the glory of the former temple during this month - which was the anniversary of that glorious, beautiful, and grand temple - the people had once been able to visit and worship within it's ornate walls.

Haggai uses the phrase "this house" - which gives us an idea the people are assembled at or near the temple site. Here in the very month when their minds would naturally turn back to the great temple - perhaps more than any other time during the year - when the people are living in the streets - where they cannot help but see the ruins of the temple - and notice the meager progress of rebuilding – while the crop failure was still fresh in their minds - and no doubt when the negative comments began to roll in.

I can see how I would become discouraged. Oh, thank the Lord for Divine Words of encouragement in times like these. We will return to the 3 questions the Lord asked the people in a moment.

Read Haggai 2:4-5 and make notes:

Don't be moved by what you see! Don't be moved by what you hear! **BE STRONG - AND WORK!** What a timely message for the Church to hear today.

When we hear of so many around us who are truly struggling to meet the daily needs of their family and home. Go into any local church on a Sunday morning- and there will likely be several families in that congregation who are concerned about having enough finances to meet this month's demands. Maybe some who need medical attention, but do not have have the finances to pay for it.

When we look at the economy of our nation - and see the decisions being made by our leaders which many believe will surely make things worse financially - it can be discouraging! When we look at the social problems that are ravaging our nation - like one of the heinous and contagious plagues that have killed millions - and when we see the decisions being made by our leaders - which will surely fuel the plague instead of bringing healing to our land - it can be very discouraging !

Haggai 3 – Be Strong And Work

When we see the lack of concern among the people regarding the things of the Lord - and when we hear of the perverse and wicked things Church Leaders are found guilty of committing - instead of leading the people to live Holy lives - it is extremely discouraging – and it can make us want to cry out in the night with an anguished voice - “Oh, Dear God, what hope is there left for us?”

To those Civil Leaders who will listen to God's instruction - and to the Christian Leaders who will listen to God's instruction - and to the people who will listen to God's instruction - this is what they will hear from God in the midst of all this discouragement - Be Strong and Work!

If we are going to assess things based solely upon the things we can see with our physical eyes - and upon the things we can hear with our physical ears - and upon the understanding of man - then we will have very little encouragement in this life. Our Hope is in the Lord Almighty! Our Help comes from the Lord! Nothing in this world is a sure thing - but God's Word is True and Trustworthy!

The best you or I can do concerning the things of this world - is to say "if things don't change, then this is how they will turn out." But, Glory to God, we can do better than that concerning the things of God's Kingdom. We have His promises of how things are going to turn out - and we can rest assured - regardless of what men do or don't do - God's Word is coming to pass exactly as He has said it will. Nothing in this world is a sure thing! But God's Word is a sure thing!

Now, let's look at the three somewhat rhetorical questions Haggai posed to the people in verse 3:

Question #1:

Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory?

The people had been exiled for 70 years - the temple had lain in ruins for over 60 years - but it is possible there were some who as young children had seen the former temple. A child 10 to 15 years old at the time of the exile - would have been old enough to remember details of the former temple - and they would only be in their 80's at the time of Haggai. There may not have been many who survived the harsh times of slavery and the great physical struggle - but it is realistic to believe there were some among them who could remember the former temple first hand.

If we go back and read the accounts of the kings, - we will see the temple suffered several attacks and plunderings. In the 5th year of Rehoboam, - Shishak of Egypt took treasures from the temple. Then later Hazael of Aram took sacred objects from the temple. King Ahaz performed a similar plundering in his time. Then at a later time Hezekiah took even the gold from the door's decorations - and gave to an attacking king in an effort to redeem the city from destruction.

In the 8th year of his reign (597 B.C.) Nebuchadnezzar took all the treasures from the temple. By the time the temple was destroyed, the temple no longer had the lavish furnishings it had when dedicated by Solomon - but the Temple was still an impressive and imposing complex of buildings - no doubt the elderly still remembered the magnificence of this former temple building.

Haggai 3 – Be Strong And Work

The comparison Haggai is asking the people to make is not between the former temple and a new one they will complete some day. How will it be? He is asking them to consider "this house" - he is asking them to compare "the temple" in it's former condition to the condition it is in today. (What is the condition of the Church in days gone by, and what is the condition of the Church today?)

Question #2:
How does it look now?

Haggai asks them plainly, "How does it look to you NOW?" If you remember the former temple - or if you have heard of the grandeur of the former temple - how does this temple, which is still in a mess, look to you today? (How does the Church in America look to you today?)

Question #3:
Does it not seem to you like nothing?

This third question is a real beauty. People in 520 B.C. were just like people today. Can't you imagine, there were a great many people who were looking at this mess - and were thinking things like, "This is nothing!" - "This is not temple!" - "This is certainly nothing compared to Solomon's temple"- "This isn't even in the same league with the Great Temple."

Perhaps, they wouldn't dare say it - but the Lord through Haggai puts the thoughts of the people - right out into the open. The people WERE thinking it - God knew they were thinking it - why not be honest and say it?

These 3 questions have now brought the discouragement into focus - where it can be dwelt with. It was after things had been brought into focus that God gave the 3 point instruction:
BE STRONG AND WORK !

The work had hardly begun and they seemed to be already frustrated to the point of giving up. Well, let's be practical and honest - there simply is no comparison to the magnificent temple complex - and this pile of huge stones and rotting beams all in a heap.

Perhaps some of the people had come to the realization, - that even if they did complete the physical construction of the temple - they would not have the "ark of the covenant" to place within it as before - these people simply didn't have the resources with which to furnish the temple like it was before. And after a month of hard work, there was very little evidence of the temple going up. The people needed to be encouraged!

Today, we see the Church - and if we are honest, - we must admit she is weak, sick, disoriented, polluted with sin and perversity of many kinds. The Church in America is in shambles today - and some of us remember the former condition of the Church in America. Some of us may remember it personally - others may have only heard about it or read about it - but we think back to a time when the Church was strong, virile, focused with purpose, and was pure through and through.

Haggai 3 – Be Strong And Work

Today the Leadership of the Church is raping the congregation in one way or another - instead of feeding them and caring for them - instead of leading them to Christ where the people will find light, liberty, life, and victory - they are leading people into spiritual back rooms where they simply find greater darkness, bondage, death, and defeat.

When we look further at the reality of the way our government is responding to the Church - it looks so hopeless that we will ever again be able to raise a real Church out of this sickening mess of rubble and drought. Please hear the Word of the Lord - Don't be moved by what you hear or what you see! BE STRONG and WORK !

The greatest mistake of the Church at large has not been the sin of it's leaders - this has been the error of individual spiritual leaders and God will deal with each one of them. The greatest mistake of the Church is not the bad laws that have been passed and are being considered - this is an error of our civil leaders and God will deal with them. The greatest mistake of the Church at large - has been that we have been moved more by what we see and hear - with our physical eyes and ears - than we have been moved by the Word of God.

If the Church in America had not let go of the Word and Promise of God Almighty - then we wouldn't be in the mess we are today. We wouldn't be weak, anemic, and disoriented! We've got to get hold of God's Word and let go of this World! Regardless of how things look - "I am with you, says the Lord." BE STRONG and WORK !

Look at verse 5 - "My Spirit will always remain among you." God reminded the Israelites of His promise to always be there for them. This is the promise He gave them when He delivered them out of Egypt. They needed to be reminded - they had obviously forgotten - because they weren't living like a people who believed God would always be with them. Jesus renewed the promise and made it effective to those of us in the New Covenant relationship. Matthew 28:20 "*.... And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*"

When I look at the way most American Christians are living today - apparently we need some major reminding of this promise - because as a whole, we are not living as though we believe Jesus will be with us. The Church is acting and responding in despair and discouragement to the ruins and droughts, and negative words we hear.

Please listen and pay attention to what we are about to read. I believe God has said this is for America today as surely as it was for the Israelites 2500 years ago.

Read Haggai 2:6-9 and make notes:

Haggai 3 – Be Strong And Work

The temple needs to be rebuilt today as surely as did the one in 520 B.C. Today we need to rebuild the temple which is built from "living stones."

This passage announces what the Lord intends to do on behalf of the rebuilding of the temple. He is going to harness His sovereign powers over nature and nations to provide His people with the resources needed to accomplish the task. The considerations of the lack of wealth on the part of the Believers is totally irrelevant - all the gold and silver in the universe already belongs to God. He can have it delivered to whomever and wherever He so chooses.

Those seemingly irrepressible rascals - who say they can do away with all these Christians, - Christian practices, and Christian freedoms - are completely non-intimidating in light of this text.

God has said He is going to shake the "heavens and the earth." That means those in power in the heavenly realm - as well as those in power on the earthly realm - are in for a real shaky ride from the Lord Most High. Many of them are going to find themselves so busy just trying to keep from falling out of the cart - that they are going to have very little time or effort to attack God's people.

There have been some well known Christian leaders who have stated publicly - they believe God is saying there will be a major catastrophic occurrence in America very soon. They may be right that a physical shaking is coming. I am thoroughly convinced God is saying, "He is going to shake the heavens and the earth." He wants you and I to be encouraged to continue the Kingdom Work right now - and not to be caught off-guard when the shaking comes. Whether it is a physical, financial, or spiritual shaking - it will be for the benefit of the Believers.

Verse 7 is one of those few verses where I believe the KJV allows us to miss an important point. In the KJV it says "the desire of the nations will come." This has led many to interpret this verse as Messianic - thinking this verse is saying the Messiah will come.

The original text indicates plural here. Several of the modern translations, including the NIV lead us to a better interpretation of this verse - "the desired of the nations will come." I am convinced the proper interpretation of this verse - keeping things in context - is not Messianic but is referring to the Believers whom God had in other nations - will come and be a part of the community there.

As for as the Word for us today - the Messiah HAS ALREADY COME - and this is the proper interpretation for our generation – and “all of the desired ones” - from every nation will come and place themselves in this present temple.

The Glory of this present temple will exceed the glory of the former temple. Part of this greater glory will be in the very persons who are currently trying to destroy God's people - will come to call upon God's people for help and deliverance. Another part of this greater glory will be in the greater outpouring - and presence of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Haggai 3 – Be Strong And Work

We have not yet seen the kind of revival that will come about in this present temple. Those ministries who think they now have a powerful ministry - will be ashamed in light of what God is going to do.

What is it that most of the world is crying out for today? Peace! Take a look at verse 9 - "In this place, I will grant Peace." The very thing so many nations and people are striving for - we already have a promise from God that we shall have it.

Think of how little had been accomplished by the Israelites after a month in their rebuilding project. Isn't this passage from Haggai encouraging?

Where are those who will BE STRONG and WORK - as though the Word of God shall come to pass - regardless of what we see or hear?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Haggai 3 – Be Strong And Work

(this page for additional notes)

In light of the previous lessons from the Book of Haggai – this lesson is important. We will see the rest of what God is saying about our nation and what is being planned for us. First, let's look at the text:

Read Haggai 2:10 and make notes:

We are now 2 months after the "last Word from God" – given through Haggai. This is 3 months after this people began to work on building the temple. This "24th day of the 9th month" would be December 18, 520 B.C. The Lord, through the Prophet Haggai, asks the Priest a question about the Law.

Read Haggai 2:11-12 and make notes:

The question being asked of the Priest - is concerning second-degree contact with sacred meat by other items. The legal background for this issue is found in Exodus. Exodus 29:37 speaks of a newly anointed altar having the power to sanctify whatever meat touches it.

The question posed to the Priest is this: can this Holiness be transmitted a second time from this sacred meat onto another item. Does the consecrated meat then consecrate the garment which it touches? If it does, then can this garment consecrate other food items it may touch?

In verse 12, the Priest gave a resounding "NO!" They DID NOT believe that such consecration could be passed on. **They did not believe that Holiness was catching or contagious!**

It is sad, but there appears to be people in our generation who DO believe that Holiness is catching. There are people in our day who act and talk as though they are Holy - because of the parents they had - or because of the Church they attend, - or the people they hang around with. Some claim they have received "holiness" - because they went to a specific place where a Holy Consecrated person is located.

Read Haggai 2:13 and make notes:

Haggai 4 – Give Careful Thought

The opposite question is the substance of verse 13. The question asked here, "Is Defilement contagious?" If a person who has become defiled, touches stew, bread, oil, wine, or any other food or drink – does this food become defiled?

The background for this question is found in Leviticus 22:4-6. Not only touching a DEAD body - It says "If anyone touches something defiled by a dead body the one who touches any such thing will be unclean." There is some expanded detail about uncleanness and contagious things in Numbers 19:11-16.

To this question the Priest answered with a loud "YES!" **The Priest believed that defilement is contagious.** The priest believed that something or someone would become defiled just by touching a defiled thing.

Read Haggai 2:14 and make notes:

What a heartbreaking thing to hear - "**So it is with this people and this nation in my sight.**"

It may have been only a few with the "bad attitude" in the beginning - but it had surely spread throughout the community. When attitudes are wrong, then nothing given to God is really acceptable to Him. Whatever this people offered to God, was unacceptable.

Here they are "building the temple" just like God had told them to do. Surely, you would think, God would be happy with them. Do you remember in an earlier lesson, we were told by the Bible, - these people were "afraid of what God would do to them if they did not do what He asked." They were doing the right thing - but they did not have a right heart about doing it.

From the earliest of times recorded in our Bible - God has made it clear, He wanted sincere worship first and foremost - then performance was to come later. God desired to have the hearts more so than the hands - "Obedience is better than sacrifice."

What God wanted from the people - had not changed from the earliest of times to this people who had returned from exile - **and it has not changed today.** God still wants you and me to seek His Kingdom and righteousness before we strive for anything else.

The Lord has given us a word in Hebrews - that the people of that day would have done well to have heard when they returned from exile:

Hebrews 12:15, *"See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."*

Haggai 4 – Give Careful Thought

A small side note: Haggai's messages seem to alternate between "accusation" and "encouragement." I have noticed this is somewhat characteristic of true messenger of God's Word. If you find someone who is always "accusing" without any words of encouragement or words of hope - I would advise you to have serious doubt about their authenticity of being an "authorized dealer in God's Word." If you find someone who is always "encouraging" or always giving you a "feel good about yourself message" without any warnings - I would advise you to have serious doubt about their being an "authorized dealer in God's Word." This is just another way you can judge the likely hood of a preacher or teacher being a Genuine God appointed messenger.

Read Haggai 2:15-19 and make notes:

Two times in this short passage God says, "Give careful thought" - it is important. This particular message began with a two-fold illustration - Is holiness or defilement contagious? Can you catch Holiness just from coming into contact with a Holy object or Holy person? NO! Can you catch Defilement just from coming into contact with a Defiled object or Defiled person? YES!

Verse 14 gave us the interpretation of this illustration - the people are defiled. Verse 15 begins the other half of this message. This is the 3rd time in the book of Haggai we have the phrase "give careful thought" - but this one is slightly different. It says "give careful thought...from this day on." It does not say to give careful thought for so many days or so many years - it says "from this day on"

Regardless of how many years you may yet live - in all of them, give careful thought to how things were before you committed yourself to My Work, says the Lord. This is a turning point in the life and the situation of the individual and / or the nation.

In the days of their disobedience, lethargy, discouragement, and concern with selfish comforts - the people never quite had enough in their pantry or their barn to meet their needs. The message is summarized, "You expected much, but you got very little."

The disastrous harvest and disappointing crops were not merely freaks of nature - there had not been just a happenstance series of droughts in the land. God was trying to get the people to be mindful of Him - and their expected duty to worship Him and give Him first place. The blight, mildew, and hail all had the intended purpose of effecting change in behavior among the people.

Haggai 4 – Give Careful Thought

God's purpose was to get this people to turn back to Him. The people seemed to be so caught up in fighting their hard times that they just couldn't make the connection. Verse 17 says, "Yet you would not turn to me."

God had to send a Prophet to spell it out for them in plain words - before they could see the connection between the way they were living their lives and their lack of resources. It wasn't that the people had simply not paid attention for a few weeks or even a few months - God had been trying to get their attention for a long time - (years).

Verse 18 poses a problem for some people - it refers to the laying of the foundation. The foundation had been set some 16 to 18 years earlier in Ezra's time. This verse is not a problem if you are paying attention to what God is saying to the people. This verse fits in quite nicely with the whole chain of thought.

What He is saying in verse 18 is something like this - give careful thought to how things have been over the last 16 years - you people put down the foundations, - then you quit and put forth all of your time, effort, and meager resources into your own comfort and pleasure. During that time, don't you see how your resources were never enough to meet your needs? Don't you see how your resources have in fact dwindled and become even less available to you - since the time you left the Lord's Work and attended solely to your own interest?

On the basis of your past 16 years experience, - from this 18th day of December 520 B.C. and onward into the future - keep in mind how things turned against you when you left me - and keep in mind how things worked for you when you returned to my work. The turning **from** God's Work was one turning point for the people – turning to loss and destruction. The returning **to** God's Work was another turning point for the people – turning to blessing and restoration.

This text points out they had come literally to the point of having no seed left - with which to plant more crops. You would think that any half-reasonable person - that any half-intelligent person - would come to God before absolutely everything is lost. But they didn't back then - and unfortunately, very often, people don't today either. How often today do we hear someone who is experiencing hardships say, "maybe I need to make something right with God"?

It was difficult to lose the fruits to eat or those that provide drink - but the loss of the olive was a major blow to survival for the people. The olive and it's by products provided fuel, lotion, medicine, and cooking oil. The people, through their selfish ambition and self-interest - had come to a place of having a shortage of food, drink, medicine, and fuel for light, - and even a shortage of the lotion with which to soothe their burning chaffed skin. They were hungry, thirsty, and in physical discomfort. And think about it - they didn't have to be in this situation.

After the rather scorching accusation - here comes the wonderful promise from God. At the end of verse 19 - "From this day on I will bless you." In the past it was touch and go, - and there was always concern whether the supplies would last or could be stretched to the next harvest. But now that they were putting the Lord first, - they would begin to enjoy the blessing of the fruitfulness of their land.

Haggai 4 – Give Careful Thought

So, what is the message for us in this text:

Read Haggai 2:14 and make notes:

Hasn't anyone noticed? Whatever our nation sets out to do goes bad. Whatever our nation offers up goes rancid. Just look at our efforts to reach out and help other countries - things just go sour, we wind up having some of our young men and women killed, and things don't necessarily get better.

Just look at the efforts within our country to help with various needs. Every effort put forth by our civil government has gone bad. All of our civil government plans are into an ever increasing devouring of finances - and the very things these programs were intended to alleviate - are getting worse in logarithmic proportions.

It hasn't been just that our civil leaders have touched "dead bodies" - they have chosen to live with them, spend a great deal of time with them, - and to continue to lie down with "dead bodies". I am referring to those who are "spiritually dead."

During Old Testament times, it was sometimes necessary for a person to touch a dead body. If a member of your immediate family died - someone had to take the body from the home, prepare the body for burial and to bury it. There were no funeral homes as we have today - someone in the family had to take care of it.

When a person became defiled by having touched a dead body - there was a way provided to become clean again. The person would live outside the camp for a specified time - then they would go through a ceremonial cleansing. **They did not have to stay in a defiled state!**

Our national leaders today have become like one - who didn't just touch a dead body in the course of doing what had to be done - they have taken pleasure in trying to spend as much time with these spiritually dead people as they can. It seems they would rather be with the spiritually dead than with the spiritually alive. The leadership of America has become thoroughly defiled. This nation, along with the majority of it's people has become completely defiled. It hasn't always been this way! It doesn't have to be this way today! Certainly, it doesn't have to remain this way! Are you ready for this ? **It will not remain this way forever!**

God has made many efforts to get America's attention! So far, very few are paying any attention to God. America is still "A nation under God." It might be easier for America if we were not "under God." It might be easier for America if we were somewhere other than in the presence of God Almighty. Maybe somewhere He did not look very often - maybe a nation that had not been given His blessing, favor, and grace.

Haggai 4 – Give Careful Thought

However, we are a "Nation under God" - and we have received His blessing, favor, and grace! We are a nation in full view of God, - and He does see and hear what is going on among us.

If you paid attention to the last lesson from Haggai, - then please pay attention to this one also: There is coming a time of cleansing for our Nation. Our nation stands before God today completely dirty - soiled - and stained. We can voluntarily present ourselves for cleansing - and avoid the coming cleansing that God is planning for America. But if we do not voluntarily present ourselves to the Lord and ask to be forgiven and cleansed - we will go through a time of cleansing and no one will enjoy it.

Think of the washing machine and what it does to clean your clothes - and you will get a real good picture of what God is planning for America. God is planning to place the very fabric of America into a place to be soaked for a time in His cleansing solution - after a time of soaking, - He is going to place America and the cleaning solution - into a place and time of great agitation to thoroughly remove the soil and stains from the fabric of our nation and it's people.

After what He feels is a sufficient agitation, - He will spin America out - to throw the cleansing solution along with the soil and stains it now contains from America's presence. After this time of cleaning, some will repent and call upon the Lord, - but a great many will not. Those who still do not repent, will be placed outside His presence and hung out to dry.

Those who repent and call out to God in repentance will be placed into His "tumbling and fluffing dryer"- but will never leave His presence. Those in the dryer will be tossed about some, but they will never be outside God's residence. Those who are hung out to dry, will be "outside" God's residence - they will be "outside" and in an area where He will not look upon them for a time.

Those in the dryer will certainly feel the heat of the drying process, - but they will not fade nor will they be damaged in any way. They will also be placed back into their place in God's house more quickly than those who are hung out to dry. Those who are hung out to dry will be exposed to the harsh environment of this world. They too will eventually be dry, - but will have faded and will have lost some of their beauty and brilliance. They will be brought back into the Lord's house after a much longer time.

The cleansing process God is planning for America is not going to be a pleasant experience - and the choice remains ours for the time being - we don't have to go through it, if we would just turn back to God as a nation at this time. Even after the cleansing time begins, we can choose to go through the more gentle and shorter drying process by turning to God - we don't have to be placed outside God's house, out of His sight, and exposed to this world - but many will be!

Where will we be? The choice is ours as an individual. The choice is ours as a nation.

The closing 4 verses are a personal encouraging Word to the civil leader. Our Civil leaders would do well to heed this message of the Book of Haggai - and they too could hear a blessing from God as did Zerubbabel. Pray that more and more of our civil leaders would take on a heart's desire to do what is right.

Haggai 4 – Give Careful Thought

God will bless the civil leaders who will not stand in the way of His people - God will bless the civil leaders who will make a way for His people to bless God first. Oh, for America's sake, I wish our civil leaders would grasp this message and believe it - and act on it.

Instead of falling down in despair and giving up - I call your attention to a verse that some feel has been worn out in recent years; 2 Chronicles 7:14 *“if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”*

The New Testament teaches us that we should pray for our civil leaders. America's civil leaders have never needed prayer more than the current ones we have. We do not have to go through God's cleansing cycle - but we will if we do not repent and turn back to God!

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Haggai 4 – Give Careful Thought

(this page for additional notes)