

Priority Number One

Haggai 1:1-15



Introduction

Haggai focused on a single goal. He wanted to rally his people around the building of the temple. He felt passionately about the temple, not because the structure was that important, but because worship was that important. The center of their community had been the place where they worshipped God. At first, it was a tent called the tabernacle that moved with them in their journey from Egypt to their homeland. Then it was the temple. This place symbolized God's presence among them. Throughout the history of God's people, their care for the temple served as an indicator of their faithfulness in worship. Haggai knew this. He knew that for the Hebrews, rebuilding the temple was an important part of rebuilding their faith.

Discussion Questions

- The opening statement in the book deals with the people feeling like it was not time to rebuild the temple (v. 2). God examines their excuse and asks if it is acceptable that his house is in ruins while their houses are luxurious (vv. 3-4). They have found time to invest in themselves, but not in God. What reasons do you find most often justifying our tendency to focus on ourselves instead of others? Which do you struggle with most?
- They are asked to consider how their efforts never seem to satisfy (vv. 5-6). No matter how hard they try, God will not allow them to succeed in living for themselves. In what ways do you see people seeking to find satisfaction and fulfillment? Have you found a lack of satisfaction or frustration as you have pursued those things? When do you think you would have enough to be happy?
- As the leadership and the people obey God, he stirs their spirit and renews their desires to serve him and work on the temple (vv. 12-14). Have you ever half-heartedly done the right thing, and found that your willingness to do it increased as you went about doing it? What are the things you know you should be doing but are half-hearted about? What is God stirring your spirit to do something about?

Think About It

In many ways, we often make our comfort the number one priority. Yet, God frustrates our efforts to find satisfaction in serving only ourselves. It is only when we live for things beyond ourselves that we find true satisfaction for our souls. God stirs the spirits of those who obey and serve him in faithfulness.

What Will You Do?

Identify the excuses that are most common in your own life for not doing what you know you should. Confess that you often neglect loving others so that you can better serve yourself. Look for opportunities to build God's house, by serving people and seeking the renewal of their lives.

Renewing Your Mind

These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord... Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? ... Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. (Haggai 1:2-4, 7-9)

Prayer Requests