



Haggai

Living as God's people for his glory

Introductory note

These studies on Haggai will use a different method than our usual ones. Each study will revolve around the same set of five questions; these are five questions that can be used to study any passage of the Bible.

The questions can be used by themselves without any extra help, but I have also added some thoughts and questions of my own (particularly after the first question) to point out things that seemed interesting or important to me.

If I've included extra notes for any of the questions, I encourage you to have a go at answering the question first before you read my notes.

These are the five questions you will use for each study:

1. What did you notice? What sticks out?
2. Is there anything you didn't understand? Discuss your questions
3. What do we learn about God?
4. How does this passage help us appreciate Jesus?
5. How should we live our lives based on what we have read?

I hope you're enriched as you study God's word.

All for Jesus!

Luke P

The First Word: Challenge

Prologue

The events of Haggai happened after the Jews had returned from exile. The temple had been destroyed in the exile, and now the time had come to rebuild it.

For context, read Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-3; 4:24; 5:1-2

There is a 14 year gap between the end of ch 4 and the start of ch 5. If you have time to prepare, skim through the whole of Ezra 1-6.

It's worth asking if all this temple building is relevant to us as New Testament Christians. Read the following passages to see how the idea of the temple carries over to the New Testament:

- Ephesians 2:19-22
- 1 Peter 2:4-5
- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

The temple is God's dwelling place with people. Because of Jesus's saving work (See all of Ephesians 2) we are now living bricks that make up the temple.

Read: Haggai 1

1. What do you notice? What sticks out?

Some observations:

1:2-4. This is the challenge at the heart of this passage. What is wrong with the people's attitude?

1:8. God tells them the reason for all the work; to please and honour him. Is this the way you think about church and life?

1:9-11. God deprives the people until they start building the temple. We'll think about this more later in the series. For now, why do you think God would do this? Does he ever treat us like that?

1:12-15. The response is amazing! Notice that the people listen to Haggai because "God had sent him." Also, they get to work because the LORD stirs up their spirits. Should this affect how we work with and for the church?

2. Is there anything you didn't understand? Spend a few minutes discussing your questions.

3. What do we learn about God?

4. How does this passage help us appreciate Jesus?

5. How should we live our lives based on what we have read?

Some suggestions:

- Do we ever "live in panelled houses" and neglect God and the church?

- What would it mean to live to please and honour god?

- If we need God to stir up our spirits, how should that affect how we approach church work and life?

Prayer

The Second Word: Encouragement

Skim over Haggai 1. Was there anything that particularly challenged you from the previous study?

Read: Haggai 2:1-9

1. What do you notice? What sticks out?

Some observations:

2:1 - look at the dates here and in 1:1 and 1:14. How much time has passed? Why might they need this message now?

2:3 - why would the people be disappointed or discouraged? Read Ezra 3:11-13 for a suggestion. Can you think of other reasons? Have you ever felt like this as you follow Jesus?

2:4 - God tells the people to be strong, and the reason is because he is with them. In the New Testament, God promises us the same thing. (For example: Matthew 28:20, Romans 8:38-39, share your favourite passages as well!)

2:5 - this is an amazing statement: God tells the people that this new temple is part of the great story that began with the Exodus out of Egypt. Far from being disappointing, this work is part of God's great plan of salvation. Do you think our little church in Bathurst is also part of that great story? Why?

2:6-9 - God tells the people that there is more to the story: he is coming to bring peace. With hindsight, how do we see this prophecy fulfilled?

2. Is there anything you didn't understand? Spend a few minutes discussing your questions.

3. What do we learn about God?

4. How does this passage help us appreciate Jesus?

Some observations:

- God makes amazing promises about this temple (2:6-9). It's worth noting the way that Jesus fulfills the temple in John 4:14.
- The temple is God's dwelling place with people. In this sense, Jesus is the ultimate temple (John 1:14)
- Also, God promises that the temple will bring peace. Ephesians 2:14-22 shows how Jesus's death brings peace and makes us into a new temple! How does this change your perspective of our church family?

5. How should we live our lives based on what we have read?

Some suggestions:

- Do you ever feel like the things you do for Jesus are too small; do they ever "seem like nothing to you" (2:3)? How does this passage encourage you?
- BPC is part of God's great story of salvation. How does that make you feel? How should it shape our attitude to our church family?
- God, in Jesus, has brought peace. How would it look to live that out as a church family? How should we live in the world?

Prayer

The Third Word: Blessing

Quickly skim through Haggai up to 2:9. What has struck you so far?

Read: Haggai 2:10-19

1. What do you notice? What sticks out?

Some observations:

- This section, 2:10-19, is perhaps the trickiest for a modern reader to grasp. There's a lot going on, but the overall message is still clear.
 - 2:14 - What is the state of the people? (What reason is given? 2:17)
 - 2:15-17 - what was the past reality?
 - 2:18-19 - what future change is coming?
 - What brought about this change? (2:15,18)
- "Seek God and he will give you material blessings." Is this the lesson of this passage? Why does God deprive the people?
- Read Matthew 6:31-33. Why is God so insistent that we seek him and his kingdom first?

Read: Haggai 2:20-23

1. What do you notice? What sticks out?

Some observations:

2:20 - notice this is the same day (2:10)!

2:21-22 - even though the nations seem powerful and irresistible, God is more powerful and will one day overthrow them. How would this encourage Haggai's hearers? How can it encourage us?

2:23 - Read Jeremiah 22:24-30. In the exile, God rejected King Jehoiachin, descendent of David. The rejection is symbolised as taking off a signet ring. Why is this prophecy in Haggai such a big deal?

2. Is there anything you didn't understand? Spend a few minutes discussing your questions.

3. What do we learn about God?

4. How does this passage help us appreciate Jesus?

Some observations:

- The people were defiled because they hadn't turned to God, and they didn't have a temple. How is our situation different because of Jesus?

- How does the coming of Jesus help us fill in the blanks of the prophecy of 2:20-23?

5. How should we live our lives based on what we have read?

Some suggestions:

- Is God your first priority in everything?

- What would it look like to "seek first his kingdom and his righteousness?" Are there any changes you need to make to your life?

- One day God will overthrow the world and Jesus will rule unchallenged. How would it look to live in light of that day?

Prayer