

FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

September 25, 2011

“Time to Go to Work”

Focal Passages: Haggai

Cross References: Deuteronomy 28:15-48; Ezra 5:1-2; 6:13-15; Hebrews 12:25-29; Matthew 6:33; 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Ephesians 2:10

Central Idea: Haggai told the people to get to work building the Temple. As they were obedient, God promised to bless them.

Lesson Idea: As we obey the Lord’s leading, He brings blessings to our lives--the greatest one being His presence with us.

Background:

Haggai preached to the remnant of Jews who returned to Jerusalem after the Persian King Cyrus set them free. He ministered during the same days as Ezra the priest and Nehemiah the builder. His messages were so powerful that the people responded obediently to rebuild the Temple.

Bible in a Year Readings

September 18-25, 2011

Sep 18: Ezra 1-3

Sep 19: Ezra 4-6; Ps 137

Sep 20: Haggai

Sep 21: Zech 1-7

Sep 22: Zech 8-14

Sep 23: Est 1-5

Sep 24: Est 6-10

Sep 25: Ezra 7-10

Haggai 1:1-11

Consider Your Ways

1 In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, **2** "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'This people says, "The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt.'"**3** Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, **4** "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?"**5** Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, "Consider your ways!**6** "You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes."

7 Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Consider your ways!**8** "Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified," says the Lord.**9** "You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?" declares the Lord of hosts, "Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house.**10** "Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce.**11** "I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on what the ground produces, on men, on cattle, and on all the labor of your hands."

DISCUSSION:

- Cyrus had issued the decree that allowed the Jews to go back and rebuild the Temple in 538 BC. (Ezra 1:1-3) Haggai 1:1 gives the exact date he preached this message which places it in 520 BC. Why had the people allowed 18 years to pass without rebuilding the Temple?

- NOTE: Although the book of Ezra indicates that they faced opposition from surrounding tribes and nations, what does Haggai blame for preoccupying them?
- How do people today neglect the work of the Lord to pursue their own interests?
- In v 5-7 the Lord tells His people to “consider your ways” (literally “put your hearts on the road”). Even though they had planted and eaten and drunk and been clothed and earned wages, they never had enough. What was God wanting them to understand? (see Deuteronomy 28:15-48 for what God said would happen if they didn’t obey Him).
- What does Christ teach about how we receive the things that we need in Matthew 6:33?
- What two reasons does God give in v8 for desiring them to rebuild the Temple?
- How are these reasons the same ones that should direct how we live our lives today?
- What else has God withheld from them according to v9-11?
- How should our recent drought lead us to seek and serve the Lord?
- Is there anything God has called you to that you haven’t done?

Haggai 1:12-15

Do the Work

12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, 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 showed reverence for the Lord. **13** Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke by the commission of the Lord to the people saying, " 'I am with you,' declares the Lord." **14** So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, **15** on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king.

DISCUSSION:

- The leaders and all the people chose to obey the voice of the Lord and the words of His messenger. Why is it important for us to study God’s Word and obey it?
- Haggai is called the “messenger of the Lord.” How are all Christians today also “messengers of the Lord?” (see Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).
- What was the short but beautiful message that Haggai got to proclaim in v13?

NOTE (from the Expositor’s Bible Commentary: *The message itself is brief: "I am with you." Few though they are, these words were comforting and encouraging to a people oppressed by enemies and depressed by failing crops. The Hebrew words are different from "Immanuel," but their message is the same. Without God we can do nothing; with him all things are possible. By his divine aid this poor rabble could reconstruct a magnificent temple, repulse their enemies, seek and receive aid from an unbelieving monarch, and see dry ground bring forth food.*

- How did Jesus share this same message in Matthew 28:20
- How did the leaders and people respond to Haggai’s message?
- How should knowing the Lord is with us spur us on to do the work He calls us to?

Haggai 2

Reap the Benefits

1 On the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet saying, **2** "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people saying, **3** 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?' **4** 'But now take courage, Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord, 'take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land take courage,' declares the Lord, 'and work; for I am with you,' declares the Lord of hosts. **5** 'As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!' **6** "For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land. **7** 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord of hosts. **8** 'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,' declares the Lord of hosts. **9** 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts, 'and in this place I will give peace,' declares the Lord of hosts."

10 On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Haggai the prophet, saying, **11** "Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Ask now the priests for a ruling: **12** 'If a man carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and touches bread with this fold, or cooked food, wine, oil, or any other food, will it become holy?'" And the priests answered, "No." **13** Then Haggai said, "If one who is unclean from a corpse touches any of these, will the latter become unclean?" And the priests answered, "It will

become unclean."**14** Then Haggai said, " 'So is this people. And so is this nation before Me,' declares the Lord, 'and so is every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.'**15** 'But now, do consider from this day onward: before one stone was placed on another in the temple of the Lord,**16** from that time when one came to a grain heap of twenty measures, there would be only ten; and when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there would be only twenty.'**17** 'I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,' declares the Lord.**18** 'Do consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month; from the day when the temple of the Lord was founded, consider:**19** 'Is the seed still in the barn? Even including the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree, it has not borne fruit. Yet from this day on I will bless you.'"

20 Then the word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying,**21** "Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, 'I am going to shake the heavens and the earth.'**22** 'I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.'**23** 'On that day,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,' declares the Lord, 'and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,'"

DISCUSSION:

- After about a month of work the Lord sent another message through Haggai to the leaders and the people. What was His message this time?
- He repeats the phrase "Be strong" three times and promises His presence to assure them that they would possess enough power. And even though they could not afford to build the Temple to its former glory (it was originally built with the wealth of King Solomon), they were not to get discouraged. The most important thing was not what the Temple looked like, but the fact that God promised to be present with them there.
- God also reminded them that HE owned all the silver and gold and that He would "fill this house with glory" and that its "latter glory" would be greater than the "former." He also promise to grant them peace. How would you have felt if you received that message?
- When was a time in your life that God sent a message of encouragement to you, and how did He let you know that He was with you?
- How could God use you to encourage someone else in their walk with the Lord?
- In v10, exactly three months after they started the work, the Temple was finished and able to be used. God uses a series of questions in v10-19 to get them to realize that the reason they had endured such hardship was because they failed to be holy. God said that He had "smote" them and their works before that time. What was His desire in doing that according to v17?
- What is God's promise to them in v19?
- What was God's promise to Zerubbabel in v20-23?

APPLICATION:

- How does Ephesians 2:10 teach us the same message as Joel?
- What is God calling you to do this week to accomplish His work?
- Will you obey?