

March 6, 2022 - Haggai 1:1-7 - “Consider Your Ways”

### Introduction:

Last week’s sermon was the precursor to this new preaching series. The challenge of the message was ‘Keep choosing to do the good’.

It is estimated that in America 4,000 churches close their doors each year. Barna Research Group has tracked a gradual movement away from regular church attendance over the years, particularly among the younger adult generations in the U.S. Data shows that, as of September 2020, about one in five of those who would normally be defined as churchgoers (22% churching adults, 19% practicing Christians) they have “not” attended a service in person during the pandemic, or digitally.

The reason for these closures is that the members have abandoned the church. They seized to do the good that God has called them to do. Some have abandoned one church and gone to another we too have experienced this. Some have forsaken the church and stay home and watch “live stream”. Others people do attend the church services but they don't support the leadership, they don't encourage the member, they don't give, they don't participate and they don't serve and the sad thing is that they are the most critical.

This falling away is not new and in fact the Bible teaches this truth in **II Thessalonians 2:1-3**. What is God responds to this callous attitude. We can answer that question with a review and study of Haggai the prophet during his post-captivity ministry. Their story is a great illustration of the modern church and the environment within. We will examine these 4 messages of Haggai through the lens of our own situation and the atmosphere today. For a proper perspective of this history let’s begin with...

### I. The Background vv. 1

1. First we note that King Solomon of Israel had built a magnificent Temple in Jerusalem. People from all over the world came and saw this wonder and the Jewish people treasured the Temple because it was the place where the Shekinah glory of God dwelled. The Jewish people began to turn from God and worshipped the pagans false’ gods. The result of this turning from God was Judah’s captivity by Babylon. God used the rod on His people by sending King Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians to invaded there country and they destroyed the Jewish Temple. They were taken into captivity for 70 years.

50 long years passed and then, God raise up King Cyrus of Persia who allowed the Jews to return to Judah. About 50,000 people went back to Judah and when they arrived, the land was in shambles. God’s people began to rebuild the Temple and they re-laid the foundation during a great celebration; however they encounter opposition and trouble. The Samaritans (who hated the Jews) did not want to see the Jews prosper so they kept “hampering the work” until finally the Jews siege rebuilding the Temple.

Years passed and slowly Jerusalem came back to life once more. Its fields were planted, crops harvested, homes were built, commerce begun, business and stores reopened. However, the Temple of God still lay in ruins and it became overgrown with weeds. Every time the Jews passed it, it stood as a reminder of their failure to take care of God's House. For 16 years they abandon God's house and expected His blessings. So God sent the prophet Haggai who preached 4 powerful messages over a five month period. Haggai and Zechariah came to challenge God's people to restore God's Temple and priorities in their hearts.

In verse one we note that on August 29, 520 BC, the Lord called Haggai to challenge the people of God. The bible mentions the official leaders of his time. Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor (King) of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.

Haggai the prophet is the first prophetic voice heard since returning from the Babylonian exile. He was the first among the post-exilic Minor Prophets. The prophecy is dated as occurring in the second year of king Darius. We notice the dates are reckoned by a pagan king because there is no king over Israel. Therefore a Jewish king is not used to determine the time frame. The time of the gentiles had arrived.

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi each spoke to those who returned from the 70-year exile. "Gone was the glory of the former kingdom and temple. Gone was the great population. All that was left was the rubble of Jerusalem, the remnant of the people, and the task of restoration." (Boice) They needed a push a challenge a rebuke from...

## II. The Excuses vv.2

1. In verse #2, **"This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'These people say, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the Lord's house.** If we look closely at the church today, it seems that the same thing is happening all over again. Instead of building the Lord's church, people are quickly abandoning it. The pandemic cause people to retreat and their attitude is much the same as the Jewish people back in Haggai day. "This people say, the time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built..." They may have said this because they thought that the 70 years of captivity mentioned in Jeremiah 25:11-13 and 29:10 had not yet been fulfilled. According to Usher's chronology of these events, they were in the 69<sup>th</sup> year since the last siege of Jerusalem.

2. God spoke to His people this way- saying, **"This people"** instead of **"My people."** He said this because He saw their excuses and poor priorities and noticed that they were not living like His people.

3. The people were making excuses; sound familiar. I can hear their excuses now. "God wants us to take care of our own families, doesn't He?" "The job is too big." The time just isn't right." "It is not our fault" and I am sure they had their own Freddie Prinze among them, "it's not my job man." If you ever watched the short-lived, funny sit-com, "Chico and the

Man” in the Seventies, you met a young actor/comedian named Freddie Prinze, whose character, Chico, had a comical catch phrase, “It’s not my job, man” which he would wisecrack to his boss “the man” whenever asked to do a hard task. It’s always easy to make excuses when you don’t want to obey God. God does not want to hear our excuses.

### III. The Rebuke vv.1:3-7

1. They lived in such personal comfort and luxury while the temple of God was in ruins. Their problem was that their priorities were out of whack. They were content to let the cause of the Lord suffer at the expense of their comfort. This isn’t an attack on riches or big houses. At that time most people lived in tiny stone houses, but the Jews were building large paneled homes. They had completely forgotten about God while they improved their own things. God does not want to see us doing our own thing and ignoring His plan. The Lord rebukes this altitude and Haggai using the Hebrew figure of speech “*Consider your ways!*”

The Hebrew phrase is literally "put your heart on your roads." Haggai asks God's people to consider what direction their life is headed, and if they really want it to continue that way. I think another way we would say this today is “Where are you headed”? Without God blessing your paths will not be easy...Verse 6 tell them that God was withholding blessing because their priorities were wrong, so nothing will satisfy, nothing will be enough.

2. I can't help but think of how many who profess to love the Lord have forsaken the opportunity to praise Him today. Why are they not in church today? Many would say that they just didn't have the time. This is a common factor in abandoning the Church. People no longer can offer their time to the lord. An old cliché says "if you're too busy for God...you are too busy!!" - Many people who claim to be followers of Christ apparently don't have time for Him.

It is amazing what people can find the time for... It is even more amazing how many insignificant things can hinder people from offering the Lord what He truly deserves.

God called on Israel to "Consider their ways" ... did they listened and obeyed...

### Conclusion:

Some of our brethren are facing some devastating circumstances as we speak. Life is hard... troubles are many. They are hurting, discouraged and depressed. They need us. Can I tell you, if you are facing difficult days the last thing you should do is abandon your church family. There are people here who love you and care for you and will encourage you.

### Communion