

# WEEKLY CHRISTIAN FOCUS

## SOWN MUCH, REAPED LITTLE! A LESSON ON SPIRITUAL PRIORITIES AND OTHER THINGS!

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### LESSONS FROM HAGGAI CHAPTER 1!

I once knew an elder of a Caribbean church in London. Dear Elder Warden and his entire Gospel Assembly were very precious to us, who were on the mission fields of Asia. An unassuming, yet faithful and diligent Elder and Deacon. I visited his church about 10 times over many years and actually heard him read this same passage of text here below two times! Perhaps it was just coincidence, that four years apart I arrived on a Wednesday evening and heard him read the same text! Or perhaps it was that something deeply resonated with him about this passage of scripture from the rather obscure Old Testament prophet Haggai. God bless dear Elder, who has now passed into Glory.

Let me share the whole chapter, and **I have put in italics** the thoughts and comments that I feel the Lord was telling me

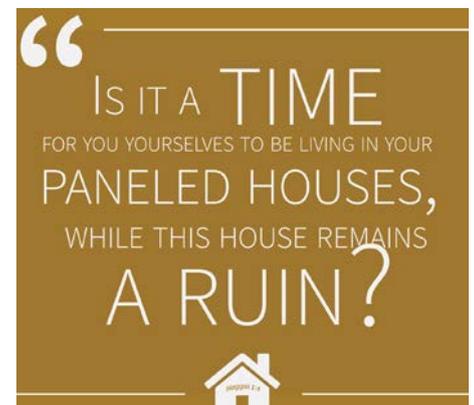
this week as I spent several hours reading this one chapter over three days. It was such a blessing to me.

### LESSONS FROM HAGGAI CHAPTER 1 for today!

1 In the second year of Darius king [of Persia], in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by means of Haggai the prophet [in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity] to Zerubabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, *This chapter starts like many prophets recording the exact day the Word of the Lord came to them. Its always good for us to record when we hear something from the LORD. THE TIMINGS ARE SOMETIMES CRITICAL.*

2 Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say, The time is not yet come that the Lord's house should be rebuilt

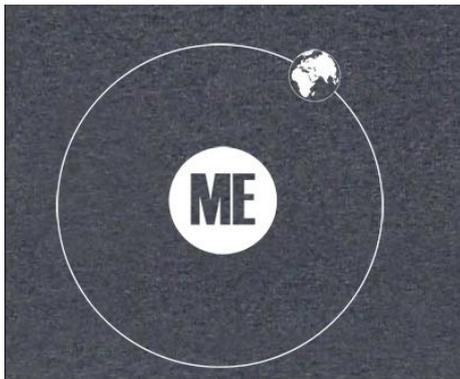
[although Cyrus had ordered it done eighteen years before]. *Haggai gives the*



*problem from the Lord, that 'people are saying' it's not the right time to build the house of the Lord. Although the commandment had been given by Persian King Cyrus to build it 18 years before! How come people were saying that? Who knows? But at least God was not interested in what they were saying as Haggai continues God's message*

3 Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4 Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses while this house [of the Lord] lies in ruins? Yes, a good point from God of course. Why were people willing and able to build their own houses and furnish them with good wood and furnishings and so on, but they had not even begun to build God's House? The answer is because we humans usually



take care of ourselves first and God last or later.

This skewed priority is common, and God explains the consequences for the people:

5 Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways and set your mind on what has come to you.

**6 You have sown much, but you have reaped little; you eat, but you do not have enough; you drink, but you do not have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages has earned them to put them in a bag with holes in it.**

7 Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways (your previous and present conduct) and how you have fared. (got on!)

*This is the part dear Elder Warden used to always read! Are you in a similar situation? Do you feel you have been sowing much and reaped so little? **The Lord is explaining it very well as always, and always***

**seems to ask us to take a good look at ourselves, our priorities and get our eyes off ourselves and put them first on God.** Just like Jesus said in 'Seek you first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and (then) all these (material) things shall be added to you'. Matthew 6:33

8 Go up to the hill country and bring lumber (Wood) and rebuild [My] house, and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord [by accepting it as done for My glory and by displaying My glory in it]. So, get busy, God says, start TODAY go and get the 'Lumber' and **build God's house**. As I read this, I thought for a while, well what does this really mean to me in my situation? Should I build a brick and stone or wooden church here in my local village? I asked the Lord for an application for me on what I could do to put God first and build His House. In my case, God told me clearly, your church is to build the Underground Church in this country, and that is 'God's House' for you. A spiritual house not made with hands but of living stones. So, I was very satisfied with God speaking to me. And that's what I will try to do by God's Grace and everyone's prayers

9 (The Lord continues) You looked for much [harvest], and behold, it came to little; and even when you brought that home, I blew it away. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of My house, which lies waste while you yourselves run each man to his own house [eager to build and adorn it]. God blows on our wealth for our benefit and to teach us a lesson that we should be more consecrated. How much we love God and His Work is often reflected in how we use our finances.

I remember visiting a Nigerian couple many years ago, they were wonderful Christians and givers to missions and tithers to their church. I went outside to a new patio they had built, and it was about 7 steps by seven steps wide. The slabs of concrete were already becoming uneven in a couple of places, even though they had only been put in the month before. As I passed later through the kitchen I saw the bill on the kitchen table for the work of the patio, it was £7,000! Having recently come into the UK from India, my heart sighed at the expense of this tiny patio. I thought, 'My God, that is about a third of our annual income for several mission teams. (1998-99).

**I am sure I have wasted a great deal of God's money'**. Let me cast no stones at anyone else on this matter. I knew a single African woman who has seemingly countless dresses, jackets and pairs of shoes and is a sincere Christian earning a reasonable salary. I do understand these are all types of 'comfort buying' that make us feel better about ourselves or our lives, but when we do that, we are just like the people here in Haggai chapter 1.

10 Therefore the heavens above you [for your sake] withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its produce. That's why you have (financial) problems, God is saying to us.



11 And I have called for a drought upon the land and the

hill country, upon the grain, the fresh wine, the oil, upon what the ground brings forth, upon

men and cattle, and upon all the [wearisome] toil of [men's] hands. Even more problems. *It's time to stop and amend your ways, the Lord ends His helpful Message.*

12 Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people [who had returned from captivity], listened to and obeyed the voice of the Lord their God [not vaguely or partly, but completely, according to] the words of Haggai the prophet, since the Lord their God had sent him, and the people [reverently] feared and [worshipfully] turned to the Lord. *Well, this is brilliant. The people responded to the message of God through Haggai and wholeheartedly too! As the Lord saw their reaction look what happened then:*

13 Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people saying, I am with you, says the Lord.

14 And the Lord aroused the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people, so that they came and laboured on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God,

15 On the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month.

*After the repentance of verse 12, the Lord was then able to pour out His Spirit in Power on the people and He Stirred up the leaders and also everyone who accepted His Message! How great. A new wonderful beginning, and you can be sure the Lord was also going to bless them for giving to His Work first. Then they would be sowing MUCH AND reaping MUCH! The rains would come, the crops would grow.*

*How often I think we try to put ourselves first, our own houses, furniture, cars, lands and even desires, not even needs, but God is always watching for the man or woman and children who have a heart for God and winning the World to Him or at least getting the Word of God to the nations.*

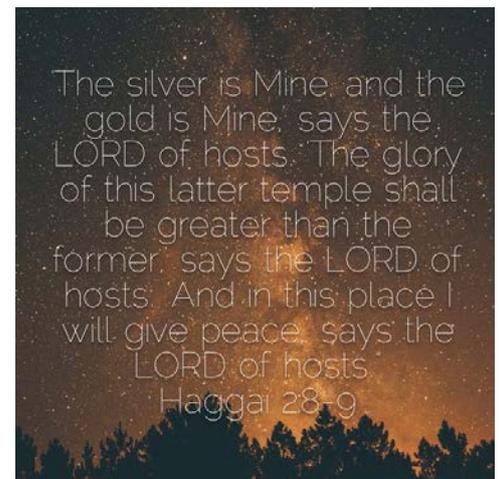


WHAT IS YOUR PRIORITY

*Man is saying like these people in verse 2, 'no no, there's a cost-of-living crisis (we are being told) it's going to get worse, fuel is going up, how are we ever going to heat our homes this winter*

*(we are told), it's food or heating (we are being told). This is not the right time to give into God's work, to help missions to print tracts, to help our church witness the Gospel, we have to look after ourselves first, our mortgage, our something and the other thing. '*

*I pray this week we will scrutinise our own finances, and give to God's work, and also ask God what is 'His House' in our situation? What is the 'Lumber' (verse 8) He wants us to get from the mountain? I believe the Lord has great blessings for all of us if we do that. Give in the right direction, in God's Direction. Give in the direction you are sure God is telling you to give for His Glory. Amen! God bless you.*



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