

Haggai - Rebuilding the House of God

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:01] Could I add a short word to this and read a few verses from the Prophet Haggai, Chapter 2.

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?

And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes, in comparison of it, as nothing? Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord, and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedek, the high priest, and be strong, O ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work. For I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts, according to the word that I covenanted with [00:01:03] you, when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you, fear ye not.

Verse 9, The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.

And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts. So far a few words.

I'm sure we all have been impressed by what Scripture tells us about this city, Jerusalem.

Looking at this earthly city, looking at what God tells us about it in the New Testament, and turning our eyes into the future of this city, Jerusalem.

And this place was so important for the people of God, because it was the place where God wanted to dwell, where he wanted his name to be, and where there was the house of God [00:02:06] in this city.

And these Jewish people, the exiles, which we have mentioned a few times, they were longing for this city, and for this house.

Even Jonah, the prophet, disobedient prophet in the belly of the fish, he was saying, I will again worship in thy temple.

And these exiles, they were longing for this city, they were longing for this place. And today, there still is a place where God wants to dwell among his people, which is precious and valuable in his sight.

And the question for us is, if we give this place, this house, the same value in our hearts that it has in the hearts of God. The exiles, we have mentioned them before, they came back to that earthly city,

Jerusalem. And they started again to build the house. [00:03:03] We have already seen that very often, in all they did, they failed as far as responsibility of man is concerned, so that at the end the Lord could only speak this lament over Jerusalem. And when they came back, these exiles, they started again to build the house of God, but suddenly they stopped.

The work at the house of the Lord stopped. Why did it stop?

We could find three answers in the Bible to this question.

We could, of course, say, well, it was forbidden to build this house. There was a hostile king who said it's no longer allowed to build this house.

But there's no full stop in the Bible after this, never in the history of the people of God, in the Bible and in church history, never was opposition, outward opposition, [00:04:03] the reason that the work of the Lord stopped.

Just the opposite. In countries where there is open opposition to the work of the Lord, it's growing. And in countries where wealth and prosperity and freedom is, we see the opposite. So that wasn't the right reason. The second reason given why the work stopped is in Haggai chapter 1 verse 2. These people say the time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. That was their own reason, or may I say their own excuse. Well, it's not the time.

Are we not in danger of having the same arguments? Well, it's not the time. You can't do these things. They may have been right in biblical times, in the times of the early brethren, but today things have changed so much, it's not the time no longer. There's no way of keeping up a testimony to the Lord's name. [00:05:02] But this was not the real reason at all.

God told them in chapter 1 verse 4, is it time for you or ye to dwell in your sealed houses and this house lie waste?

Consider your ways. The priorities were wrong in their lives.

They put all their energy and all they did into their own interests and they forgot about the Lord.

Isn't that precisely the danger in our time, in our countries? That we put our own interests first, put all our energy into our own things and forget about the things of the Lord.

But we see that this message of Haggai, the prophet, the Lord's messenger, as he's called, stirred them up again after he has shown them that all their efforts in their own things didn't really bring them any rewards. [00:06:02] And then it says, first of all, about the people, they obeyed the voice of the Lord, their God, it's verse 11, 12, and they feared the Lord.

Godly fear and obedience to the word of the Lord was the only and is the only thing we need to come back to set our priorities right.

And when the Lord saw in the exiles this attitude of obedience to the Lord's word and godly fear, he sent Haggai at once with a second message which only consisted of one sentence, I am with you, says the Lord.

It was the only sentence of Haggai's second of his five messages.

When he sees obedience, when he sees godly fear in our heart, turning back to him, he would encourage us. He would say, yes, I am with you.

[00:07:02] Because he had told them before, go up into the mountain and bring the wood and build the house.

Oh yes, there is work and energy needed to build the house of God, but didn't they go up into the mountains and bring wood for their own houses? I don't think that they had any problem in doing this effort for their own things. And Satan didn't hinder them in that. He will never hinder us as long as we are occupied with our own interests. And now he says, go up to the mountains, and then he says, I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified.

Oh brethren, do we need any other motive for what we do than that the Lord says, if you do this, I will be glorified, I will take pleasure in it.

Taking up, keeping up the testimony of the house of God, this place where he wants to put his name, he assures us, I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified. Do we need anything more to go back to build the house of God?

[00:08:05] And then in this second chapter, he turns the eyes of the people in three directions. First, he tells them to look back.

He says, who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? How do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? When they looked back to the first temple in Solomon's days, oh, how beautiful that had been at now, what they were building, how weak it was.

This look backwards to the first glory of this house is a very humbling one, but a very necessary one.

They realized that what they were doing was not something great and big, compared with the beginning, with the first glory, it was very weak. And we need this point of view as well. [00:09:04] It mustn't be the only one, we will see this later on, but it is the first one, the necessary one.

If we see the first glory of this house, the church of God, if we look into the first pages of the book of Acts, where they all were one heart and one soul, where the spirit was working mightily, mustn't we say, oh, how weak are all the efforts today? Are we even, don't have to go that far back.

Are we even, don't have to go that far back.

Going back some centuries, we read about things, and the older ones perhaps know, situations where the Lord was working mightily, where God lived here, and obedience to the word of God was seen in the Christian company, in the assemblies, and we say, oh, how few [00:10:02] things do we see of this today.

And this will keep us humble, if we see the first glory of this house. But then, the Lord turns their direction to the present, and tells them what things were left to them even.

Three things, he mentions in verse four and five. I am with you, the personal presence of the Lord, my word is with you, and my spirit remaineth among you.

And, beloved brethren, these are the three things we still have today. The personal presence of our Lord, as long as we really want to give him the place of authority which he alone deserves in the midst of his people, even if there are only two or three gathered to the name of the Lord.

I often wonder what the early Christians have thought about this sentence, when they were [00:11:02] gathering with hundreds and thousands, but the Lord was seeing a situation where there may be only two or three gathered to the name of the Lord. We have the assurance of his presence. We still have his word in our midst.

He says the word that I covenanted with you when you went out of Egypt.

Some Christians today say, well, God could still work in the same way as he did at the beginning, and they think that miracles and wonders and speaking of tongues and power and all these things are still there today. They say, well, God can do the same thing as he did in the beginning. Well, surely he can, but it's a question if he does.

The word that I covenanted with you when you went out of Egypt, when the people of Israel went out of Egypt, God worked wonders and miracles. The plagues of Egypt, he divided the Red Sea and all these things.

[00:12:02] When the exiles went back in Haggai's day, there were no wonders and miracles. God used a king to give them permission to go, and they went there and started very simply to build.

It was the same word. God is not acting in the same way in days of weakness than in days of power, but it is the same word we have, and we may be obedient to that word.

It is still the only thing we need, and his spirit, my spirit, remaineth among you. The spirit of God, if we still let him work among us, he's still there, this spirit, to distribute his word, to work among us. All this may be very weak, but these things are there.

Do we want to say, well, things have become so difficult, there's no use anymore? No, we still have his presence, we still have his word, and we still have the spirit. Two things that impressed me greatly over the last time, I might tell you, two brothers.

[00:13:08] One experience I had was on a brother's meeting in Germany.

One brother got up and spoke very forcefully about some unscriptural principles which he wanted to force on the brethren.

His father was sitting there, over 90 years old. When he had stopped talking, his father got up. It was not easy for him to get up, he must put himself at the table, and then he got up and he said only one sentence. He said, I don't agree with what my son has said. Well, then he sat down.

Everybody was quiet, and nobody got up to, in any way, bring forth such things again. We were all impressed that this old servant of the Lord said, I will hold fast what I've learned from my youth, even

if my own son is speaking against me.

[00:14:05] Some weeks ago, at a conference, another brother, who is also over 90 years, came into my room where I lived. He wanted to speak to me, and in the course of our conversation, he said, well, Michael, I'm tired of fighting.

I've done it all my life. Shall I give up?

Shall I say, Lord, I'm tired of this? I'm 90 years and more, I give it up. No, he said, I can't do this.

As long as the Lord will give me the strength, I will stand for the truth that is so precious to the heart of my Lord, his assembly, the place where he wants to dwell in the midst of his people.

And I thought, well, Lord, if you give this brother the strength, he will be caught home on the battlefield, I'm sure.

He said, well, everything was weak, and he had really a lot of trouble in his life. But he said, these things remain. [00:15:02] He is in the midst of his people. His word is there. His spirit is there. Well, and then the prophet says, now look into the future, as we have done before in the case of Jerusalem. The glory of this latter house, well, which is not very accurate. It should be the latter glory of this house, because it's always the same house. The first temple was Solomon's temple. The second one was in the days of Haggai, and this one is the one in the millennium, but three different buildings, but it's only one house, the house of God. There is only one assembly, if it is in the past, present, or future. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than of the former. He says, think about the future of this assembly.

It will even be greater than everything that we saw in the days of Acts or in any revival time of history, when the Lord will have his assembly with him, before himself, without [00:16:03] wrinkle or any such thing.

Everything will be glorious and perfect.

This new Jerusalem, he will have it with himself.

And even in eternity, even on the new earth, when there is no more Israel and no more any other nations, only men, there is still this house of God with men.

It's not called a house, it's...

How is it called?

Yeah, thank you. The tabernacle of God with men, this assembly. It will have a special place in the council of God in all eternity, when all other distinctions will have been gone. There is still this place, this assembly, so special to the heart of the Lord.

I suppose that's what the Lord wants to tell us, simply to go on with this in faithfulness.

[00:17:05] Let's not forget, what the Lord is rewarding is not the great of our gift, is not the amount of

work we've done, it's faithfulness to that which he has entrusted to us.

Well done, thou good and faithful servant. It is not that what we want to hear from the mouth of our blessed Lord. Looking back, as we've done to the beginning, will keep us humble.

Looking at what we have in the presence, his word, his person, his spirit, will encourage us. And looking into the future, what will happen will comfort us.

And so, let's encourage each other to be faithful to this place of which the house of God speaks. Where the saints, in glory flying, where they feed on life's blessed tree, there is stilled [00:18:18] each earnest longing, satisfied our souls to be, object of eternal pleasure, perfect in thy work divine, Lord of glory without measure, worship, joy, and praise are thine.

Three hundred and eighty-seven.