

**Major Messages from the Minor Prophets
How Do We Restore Our Passion for God?
The Book of Haggai**

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Text Introduction: The Prophets of the Old Testament are divided by scholars into the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets. More precisely, we call Isaiah, along with Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel, Major Prophets. The remaining books of the Old Testament are called Minor Prophets. The terms major and minor refer to the size of these books, not the degree of their importance.¹

There are 12 Minor Prophets. We are studying through the Minor Prophets devoting one Sunday (one sermon) to each of the twelve. Because all of the prophets are somewhat similar, our goal is to discover that central core message of the book. Today, we are studying the Book of Haggai.

The last three prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all prophesied after the exile was complete. The other prophets warned of the exile unless there was repentance. In 722 B.C. the northern tribes of Israel were occupied and many sent into exile. In 587 B.C. the southern tribes were occupied and many sent into exile. Eventually, the Medes and Persians became the dominating world power and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah speak of the return of the Jews to the land of Israel under Cyrus's reign. Cyrus' reign gives way to Darius' reign. Haggai and Zechariah are prophets in the day of the rebuilding of the temple. In their own way, each is responsible for motivating the people toward moving forward with the completion of the temple. Malachi prophesied some years following the return from exile.

Text: (Haggai 1:1-9) In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, the governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:

² "The LORD of Hosts says this: These people say: The time has not come for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt."

³ The word of the LORD came through Haggai the prophet: ⁴ "Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?" ⁵ Now, the LORD of Hosts says this: "Think carefully about your ways:

⁶ You have planted much

but harvested little.

You eat

but never have enough to be satisfied.

You drink

but never have enough to become drunk.

You put on clothes

but never have enough to get warm.

The wage earner puts his wages

into a bag with a hole in it."

¹ Lamentations is considered with these books as a major prophet because it is written by Jeremiah.

⁷The LORD of Hosts says this: “Think carefully about your ways. ⁸Go up into the hills, bring down lumber, and build the house. Then I will be pleased with it and be glorified,” says the LORD. ⁹“You expected much, but then it amounted to little. When you brought the harvest to your house, I ruined it. Why?” This is the declaration of the LORD of Hosts. “Because My house still lies in ruins, while each of you is busy with his own house.

Introduction: Haggai’s ministry is brief in that the recorded messages are from the second year of Darius the king in the six month to the ninth month of his reign (1:1; 2:1, 10, 20). The primary thrust of his ministry is to encourage the returning exiles to complete the rebuilding of the temple. When the exiles returned after 70 years, work began on the temple. However, apathy and opposition caused work to cease on the temple for sixteen years. God used the prophet Haggai to exhort the people to complete the work.

Overviewing the Book—The best way to get a handle on Haggai’s message is to recognize that the book is the compilation of four messages. Introductory statements in 1:1, 2:1, 2:10 and 2:20 divide the book into four distinct messages from Haggai.

- Message Concerning the Rebuilding of the Temple (1:1-1:15)—The message here is simple: “It is time to rebuild the Temple.”
- Message Concerning the Former Glory of the Temple (2:1-9)—The message here is “Don’t worry so much about the appearance of the Temple. The important issue is that the presence of the Lord is more important than the appearance of the Temple.”
- Message Concerning God’s Blessing (2:10-19)—The message regards how God blesses. They thought that by getting close to the Temple they could get close to God. Haggai warns that obedience is the real issue.
- Message Concerning the Future (2:20-23)—The message here is Messianic. “God’s plan is advancing.”

The returning exiles had made themselves believe that they had valid excuses as to why they did not have to continue building the temple. First, they did not have the resources. The years in exile had left them a poor people. Second, as they began to rebuild the temple they realized that the temple would not measure up to the former glory of the temple before the destruction. Through Haggai’s messages, God destroys these reasons and identifies Israel’s procrastination for what it really is—excuses. God reveals to them that the problems were not too imposing if only the priorities would be right.

Then and Now! So What?—What does this mean to us? Why is it that the initial enthusiasm of yesterday gets swallowed up by the excuses of today?

How do we restore the passion for God?

Re-order our Priorities

- God shatters our excuses. The excuse of the people is that there were too many problems. The reality, as God shows them, is that they had left the passion of His kingdom for their own private kingdoms. Might we do the same?

- God shows us the emptiness of our priorities. Our priorities more times than not are focused on the temporal.
- God signals the end of where our priorities take us.

Re-Commit to God's Plan

How can we say “No” to God’s plan for our lives? The rebuilding of the temple was a specific call. They said that they were concerned about God’s glory. Obeying His call is what brings glory to Him.

Re-Discover God's Presence

God assured the peoples of Haggai’s day that He would be with them. He assures us that He will be with us.

In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, God speaks a message to the church at Ephesus. He says, “You have abandoned the love you had at first.” (You have left your first love.)

Have you? Have you left your first love—Jesus Christ? Have you lost the passion you once had? Has the spiritual fire burned out?