

Haggai 1:1–15 — A Call to Put God First

Haggai's prophetic ministry took place in the second year of King Darius, around 520 B.C. This is not the same Darius who appears in the Book of Daniel as the Persian general at Babylon's fall. This Darius came later, and Haggai's entire recorded ministry spans only a couple of months. Yet in that short window, he fulfilled the calling God placed on his life. Scripture often reminds us that when God appoints a moment, He can accomplish great things in a very short time. Esther fulfilled her purpose in two days; Haggai fulfilled his in two months. God is able to do much through a willing heart.

As we begin Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, we shift gears historically. Zephaniah ministered just before Judah fell to Babylon, warning of the coming judgment. During the captivity, Daniel and Ezekiel spoke God's word to His people. Now the exile is over. A remnant has returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest. Their goal was to rebuild the temple that Babylon had destroyed.

At first, the people worked with enthusiasm. But when the Samaritans—who had settled in the land during Judah's absence—offered to help and were refused, they responded with hostility. They accused the Jews of planning rebellion and pressured Persia to halt the construction. Eventually, a decree was issued stopping the work, and even though that decree was later reversed, the people had lost heart. Their focus shifted. They began building and beautifying their own homes, investing in their personal comfort rather than the work of God.

It is into this situation that God sent Haggai—a prophet called to rouse His people to action, to call them back to their true purpose, and to remind them that God's work must not be neglected.

1. A Word from God to His People

Haggai chapter 1 verses 1–2 NKJV

"In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 'Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: "This people says, 'The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.'""

The people had convinced themselves that "now" was not the right moment to rebuild the temple. Their delay was wrapped in religious language, but it was nothing more than procrastination. They were not rejecting God outright—they were simply postponing obedience. God calls it what it is: misplaced priorities.

2. Consider Your Ways

Haggai chapter 1 verses 3–5 NKJV

"Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?' Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Consider your ways!'"

God confronts them directly:

"You say it is not time to rebuild My house—yet you have found plenty of time to rebuild and upgrade your own."

Haggai uses the word “consider” repeatedly. It is a call to stop, reflect, and honestly evaluate the direction of one’s life. We live in a world overflowing with information but starving for reflection. We know a little about everything and almost nothing in depth. Yet God calls His people to think deeply about their choices and their priorities.

3. The Consequences of Misplaced Priorities

Haggai chapter 1 verse 6 NKJV

“You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes.”

Life was not working. They were busy but unfulfilled. They worked harder but had less. Their efforts evaporated like wages slipping through a bag full of holes. God allowed this—not to harm them, but to awaken them. He loved them too much to let them drift into spiritual indifference without consequence.

4. The Call to Action

Haggai chapter 1 verses 7–11 NKJV

“Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,’ says the LORD.”

God’s instruction was simple, practical, and clear:

1. Go
2. Gather materials
3. Build My house

They had been looking for abundance, but it never came. God explains why:

“Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.”

Their spiritual neglect had produced physical drought. Not because God delights in scarcity, but because God loves His people enough to get their attention.

Jesus summarized it perfectly in Matthew chapter 6 verse 33 NKJV:

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

When God is first, the rest of life finds its place. When God is pushed aside, nothing satisfies.

5. The People Respond in Obedience

Haggai chapter 1 verse 12 NKJV

“Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak... with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD... and the people feared the LORD.”

This is one of the most encouraging moments in the Old Testament. The people listened. They took God’s word seriously. They obeyed. And the Lord responded with a message overflowing with comfort.

6. God’s Word of Encouragement

Haggai chapter 1 verse 13 NKJV

“Then Haggai, the LORD’s messenger, spoke the LORD’s message to the people, saying, ‘I am with you, says the LORD.’”

What a simple message. What a life-changing promise.
When they obeyed, God assured them of His presence.

The same promise is given through Jesus Christ today. Because He shed His blood on the cross and rose again in victory, He promises to all who follow Him:

“I am with you always.” (Matthew chapter 28 verse 20 NKJV)

7. God Stirs Their Hearts

Haggai chapter 1 verses 14–15 NKJV

“So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel... and the spirit of Joshua... 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, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.”

In just twenty-three days, the entire nation shifted from apathy to action. God stirred their hearts, and they responded with renewed purpose.

Practical Application for Believers

Haggai chapter 1 invites us to look honestly at our own priorities.

Are we putting God first—or are we postponing obedience until a “better time”?

- Are there callings you once felt strongly but have neglected?
- Have the responsibilities of life overshadowed your spiritual commitments?
- Have you ever felt like your efforts produce little fruit—like your wages fall through a bag with holes?

The message of Haggai is not one of condemnation, but invitation:

Return to what God has called you to do.

- Seek Him first.
- Put His work in its rightful place.
- And trust Him to take care of your needs.

A Challenge to Believers

Just as God told Israel, He tells us today:

“Consider your ways.”

Let the Holy Spirit search your heart.

- Is there an area where God is calling you to step out in obedience?
- A ministry to begin?
- A relationship to restore?
- A habit to surrender?
- A step of faith you have delayed?

Do not postpone obedience.

Do not wait for a more convenient time.

The joy of God’s presence is found on the path of obedience.

Invitation to Non-Believers

If you have never given your life to Jesus Christ, Haggai’s message applies to you in a deeply personal way.

God is calling you to consider your life—to look honestly at the emptiness that no achievement, possession, or pleasure can fill.

The One who calls you is the same Lord who:

- Loved you enough to shed His blood on the cross
- Rose from the dead to declare His victory
- Offers forgiveness, new life, and the presence of God forever

He stands ready to receive you.

Turn to Him.

Trust Him.

Ask Him to save you—

for He is God, Savior, and Lord.