

CHAPTER 13

Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

We have almost finished our journey through the Old Testament. In our travels we have already met 36 books. Only three books remain: Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. All three of these books were written **after** the Babylonian Captivity (after the Exile—see chapter 9).

The last **history books** found in the Old Testament are:

Ezra Nehemiah Esther	We studied these books in Chapter 6
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The last **prophetic books** found in the Old Testament are:

Haggai Zechariah Malachi	We are going to study these books in this chapter.
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All six of these books were written **after** the Babylonian Captivity.

Historical Background for Haggai and Zechariah (Getting the Jews to Go Back to Work on the Temple)

Whenever you think of Haggai you should think of Zechariah, and whenever you think of Zechariah you should think of Haggai. These two men are both mentioned together (see Ezra 5:1 and 6:14). They belonged to the same period of history and they spoke their message to the same group of people. Also they both had the same objective: to encourage the Jewish people to finish the great work of rebuilding the temple (God's house in Jerusalem).

The history of this time period was discussed when we studied the book of Ezra (see Chapter 6). Let us now refresh our memory as to what happened after the Babylonian Captivity.

After the 70 year Babylonian Captivity, God stirred the heart of a Persian king and this king to allow the Jews to return to their homeland. What was this king's name (Ezra chapter 1)?

_____ About 50,000 Jews (Ezra 2:64-65) returned under the leadership of Zerubbabel (the governor) and Jeshua or Joshua (the High Priest). This was not a very large group of Jews (see Chapter 6). It was only a **small remnant**. They were few in number compared with the great masses of Jews who once lived in the land.

When this small remnant of Jews returned to Jerusalem they found the city and the temple in ruins. Solomon's great temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians and nothing was left except ashes and heaps of stone (2 Chronicles 36:19). When these Jews returned to the land of their fathers their first job was to rebuild the temple. They were very small and their task was

very great! They were puny and their job was gigantic. How could it be done? Also the Jews faced another problem. They were surrounded on every side by enemies who did not want the temple to be built (see Ezra chapter 4). Their situation could be described as follows:

- 1) The Jews were undersized.
- 2) The task was enormous.
- 3) The enemies were abundant and fierce.

Everything seemed to be against them, *but God was not against them*. "If God be _____ us, who can he _____ us?" (Romans 8:31) What is the answer to this question?

In Ezra chapter 3 we read that the work on the temple began. The work of rebuilding the temple got off to a good start (this was about 536 B.C.). The people worked hard and finally the F _____ was laid (Ezra 3:10). The people rejoiced greatly and praised God (Ezra 3:10-11) but some of the older Jews wept. They remembered the greatness of the first temple that was built by King Solomon and they knew that this second temple would not be nearly as great (Ezra 3:12-13).

The work on the temple was moving along well until we come to the events recorded in Ezra chapter 4. Here we learn that the enemies of the Jews "weakened the hands of the people of Judah and T _____ them in building" (Ezra 4:4). Because of this the work stopped until the time of King Darius (see the list of Persian kings in Chapter 6). For about 15 years nothing more was done on the temple. The Jews had put down the foundation, but that was about all!

Finally in Ezra 5:1 the names of our two prophets are mentioned: "Then the prophets, _____ the prophet, and _____ the son of Iddo prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the _____ of Israel." The year was now 520 B.C. God raised up these two prophets to encourage the people so that they would get back to work! Did the people resume the work of building God's temple (Ezra 5:2)? _____ With the help and encouragement of these two prophets the people were able to complete and finish the temple-building project (Ezra 6:14-15). The temple was finished in 516 B.C., about four years after the work was resumed!

Now we are ready to see how God spoke to the Jewish people through His prophet Haggai:

Haggai—Be Strong and Work!

As we read this short book we need to remember that Haggai was the man God used to encourage the Jews **to get back to work!** The temple needed to be finished. God's message to the people was very simple: Arise and build! God used Haggai to stir up the people so that they would do this great work of building and finishing God's house.

God was the One who sent Haggai! Haggai, like all the prophets, was just God's mouthpiece. God was speaking to His people through the mouth of Haggai. It was not Haggai's message. It was God's message! As we read through the book this becomes very clear. The book has only two chapters in it; yet see how many times you read such phrases as:

"Thus saith the LORD..."

Or

"then came the word of the LORD..."

God Must Come First

Haggai gave the people this very important message from God: **Put the Lord first!** (not second, third, fourth or last!) If you neglect God you are in trouble! If you put God first He will bless you (Matthew 6:33). God wanted His people to rebuild the temple! How can God's blessing come if God's people allow the temple to lie in ruins?

Did the Jews think that the time had come to build God's temple (Haggai 1:2)? _____ Were they correct?

The Jews had their priorities all mixed up (see Haggai 1:4). They were not putting first things first. They were living in nice, comfortable, paneled houses and God's house was in ruins!

If people do not put God first, can they be truly blessed (Haggai 1:6)? _____ Not giving God the rightful place is like putting money into pockets with holes in them! It does not pay!

What did God want the Jews to do (Haggai 1:8)? "B _____ the _____." Did the people do what Haggai told them to do (Haggai 1:12-15)? _____ Would God be with them and bless them (Haggai 1:13)? _____ About three weeks after Haggai began preaching to them the work of rebuilding the temple was resumed (compare Haggai 1:1 with 1:15)!

In Haggai 2:4 we find Haggai giving the people words of encouragement. How many times do you find the expression "**Be strong!**" ? _____

The last verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 would have been a good verse for the people living in the days of Haggai and is a wonderful verse for believers living today: "always _____ in the _____ of the Lord." Today God has not told us to build Him a temple in Jerusalem! But God does have work for us to do today. God wants His believers to do "the _____ of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:12). This is the work of serving Jesus Christ wherever we are (at home, at school, at work or wherever). What work does God have for you to do at home? at school? at work? elsewhere?

Three Temples

In the second chapter of the book of Haggai we read about three temples:

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| FIRST | 1) Solomon's great temple (Haggai 2:3)—This was the first temple and it was a glorious and great temple. |
| SECOND | 2) The second temple that was rebuilt in the days of Zerubbabel and Haggai (Haggai 2:3)—This temple was as nothing when compared with Solomon's great and glorious temple. |
| LAST | 3) The glorious future temple that will be on earth during the Kingdom (Haggai 2:7,9)—Ezekiel spoke of this temple in the last chapters of his book (see Chapter 10 of these notes). This future temple will be even more glorious than Solomon's temple. |

Let us now compare these three temples in their order of greatness (not in chronological order):

- GREAT!** *Zerubbabel's Temple* was built by only a small remnant of Jews who returned to the land after the Babylonian Captivity. They did the best job they could with the minimal people and the resources which they had.
- GREATER!** *Solomon's Temple* was much greater than Zerubbabel's temple. Solomon had more money and more manpower and he was able to build one of the greatest buildings that has ever stood on planet earth.
- GREATEST!** *The Kingdom Temple* will be the greatest temple of all. Its glory and greatness will even surpass that of Solomon's temple (Haggai 2:9). Jesus Christ will be the earth's King when this temple is constructed! He is the One that Haggai describes as "the _____ of all nations" (Haggai 2:7).

Should the Jews living in the days of Haggai have been discouraged because they were not able to build a temple as great as the first temple? No, God did not want them to be discouraged, He wanted them to "BE _____" (three times in Haggai 2:4). The message of the book is this: Put God first, be strong, work hard, do the best you can with what you have to work with, and **the great and glorious God will be with you to bless you** (Haggai 1:13)!

Zechariah—God Delights in Small Things

Zechariah began his ministry two months after Haggai (compare Haggai 1:1 with Zechariah 1:1). The year was 520 B.C. Zechariah was a Jewish priest. God took this young priest and made him His prophet!

God uses different kinds of men to bring forth His message. For example, in the New Testament Paul and John did not write in the same way. Paul would often write very long sentences. For example, Romans 1:1-7 is all one long sentence (compare also Ephesians 1:3-12)! On the other hand John often wrote in very short and simple sentences (1 John 4:19). Paul and John had different styles of writing but God used both of these men to bring forth His message!

Zechariah and Haggai were both used by God to help the Jews to resume and finish the work of building the temple. But these two men also had different styles of writing. Haggai was very practical and down to earth. He had both feet on the ground and his message was very simple to understand:

"Build the house!" (Haggai 1:8)
 "I am with you, saith the LORD." (Haggai 1:13)
 "Be strong" (Haggai 2:4)

On the other hand, Zechariah had his "head in the clouds." Zechariah was a visionary. This

means that his book is filled with visions, some of which are difficult to understand. There are about eight of these visions (see chapters 1-6). For example there is the vision of the rider on the red horse (chapter 1), the vision of the four horns (chapter 1), the vision of the man with the measuring line (chapter 2), the vision of the golden lampstand (chapter 4), the vision of the flying scroll (chapter 5), the vision of the four chariots (chapter 6), etc. In many ways the book is similar to the book of Revelation.

God used Zechariah and God used Haggai. These men were different and they wrote differently, but they both gave God's message! In fact, both of these men wrote down exactly the words that God wanted them to write! God wanted Haggai to give a message that was clear and simple and only two chapters long! God wanted Zechariah to write about the visions which he saw and his book contains 14 chapters! Every person is different and God uses different people in different ways. This is true even today. If you are a believer you need to remember that you are different from every other believer! There is no one exactly like you! And God wants to use you in a very special way!

More Encouragement for the Workers!

Like Haggai, God used Zechariah to encourage the Jews to go back to work on the temple. In Zechariah 1:3 God told the Jews this: "Turn ye unto Me, saith the _____ of hosts, and I will _____ unto you." God was saying, "If you honor Me, I'll honor you!" (See chapter 5.) As in the book of Haggai, God was telling the Jews to honor Him and put Him first.

In Zechariah 4:6 God had an important message for Zerubbabel: "Not by _____, nor by _____ but by my _____, saith the _____ of hosts." This is perhaps the key verse in the book. Certainly the small remnant of Jews did not have very much might or power! They were small and puny! But although they were small, they had a very big God! Do you remember the three problems that the Jews faced?

1. The Jews were undersized.
2. The task was enormous (building the temple).
3. The enemies were abundant and fierce.

How could the work ever be done? The answer is found in Zechariah 4:6: "by my _____, saith the LORD!" They could not do it, but they had a mighty and powerful God who could! The same thing is true today. Have you ever faced a problem that seemed much too big for you? Remember, the problem is not too big for God! "I can't, but **He can!** I am unable, but **God is able!** I can do all things _____ which (who) strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

Another word of encouragement is found in Zechariah 4:9. Remember, about 15 years had passed since the foundation of the temple had been laid. Since that time hardly anything else had been done. The work had come to a standstill. To the Jews it must have seemed like an endless delay. Would the work of rebuilding ever be resumed? Would it ever be finished? According to Zechariah 4:9, who laid the foundation of the temple?

_____ Who would finish the temple (same verse)?
 _____ God assured the people that the temple would be built and that the same man who started this building project would also finish it!

Finally the question is asked, "For who hath despised the day of _____ things?" (Zechariah 4:10). To the Jews this second temple seemed small and insignificant. Compared with Solomon's great temple it seemed as N _____ (Haggai 2:3). But to God it was not "**nothing**," it was **something** very important! "*Little is much if God is in it!*" God is not impressed with size and bigness. God is more concerned about the heart and spiritual condition of the builders. God delights in the "little things" that are done to please Him. God wants every believer to be "faithful in that which is _____" (Luke 16:10).

The Great Messiah

The book of Zechariah has more to say about the Messiah (Jesus Christ) than any of the other minor prophets. Even though the remnant of Jews under Zerubbabel was very small, God wanted them to know that a **great Messiah** would come out of their nation. The book of Zechariah looks down the road of time and sees both the first and second coming of Jesus Christ:

His First Coming

The greatest prophecy of Christ's first coming in the book of Zechariah is found in Zechariah 9:9. This verse clearly predicted that the *King* of the Jews would come to Jerusalem, "lowly and riding upon an _____" (Zechariah 9:9). Did this really happen (Matt. 21:1-11)? _____ About half a millennium later (about 500 years later) Jesus literally fulfilled this prophecy at His first coming.

His Second Coming

Zechariah 9:10 speaks about a time when there will be P _____ on the earth and when the King will rule from sea to sea. This prophecy has not yet been fulfilled, but it will be fulfilled when Jesus comes to earth the second time. We learn about Jesus' return to the earth in Zechariah 14:4.

Another amazing prophecy is found in Zechariah 12:9-14. When Jesus came to earth the first time the Jewish people rejected Him (John 1:11) and crucified Him (Matthew 27:22-25). When Jesus returns to earth the second time the Jewish people will "look upon Me whom they have _____, and they shall mourn for him" (Zechariah 12:10). The Jewish people will be in deep grief for what they have done and they will repent and receive Christ as their Messiah and Saviour (compare Romans 11:25-27).

As believers living today, we are looking forward to Christ coming again for us (John 14:3). The key question at that time will be something like this: "Have you been faithful in doing those **small things** that I have commanded you to do in My Word?" May we hear His "**Well done!**" on that day! *Live the present in light of the future!*

Malachi—God Deserves Our Very Best

Malachi probably lived during the time of Nehemiah which means that he gave his message about a century (100 years) after the time of Haggai and Zechariah.

Man's Sad Response to God's Love

God's message to the Jewish people is very simple: "I have _____ you, saith the

LORD" (Malachi 1:2). But as we learn from the book of Malachi, the Jewish people did not love and honor their God.

Instead....

They despised His Name (Malachi 1:6).
 They brought polluted sacrifices (Malachi 1:7-8).
 They profaned God's Name (Malachi 1:11-12).
 They wearied God with their words (Malachi 2:17).
 They did not fear God (Malachi 3:5).
 They robbed God (Malachi 3:8).

The format of the book is interesting. Here is the general pattern:

1. God makes a statement:
 "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words" (Malachi 2:17).
2. The people question the statement and do not see how it could be true:
 "Wherein have we wearied Him?" (Malachi 2:17)
3. God then gives the answer:
 "When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" (Malachi 2:17)

As you can see from Malachi 2:17, the spiritual condition of the Jews at this time was not very good at all! They were drugged to an unconsciousness of sin! Their spiritual condition was like the story of the two frogs. One frog was dropped into a pan of boiling water and as soon as it hit the hot water it jumped right out. The other frog was placed into a pan of lukewarm water. This water was gradually heated until it became hotter and hotter. This frog seemed oblivious to the fact that the water was getting hotter and hotter and it never jumped out. The water became its grave. This second frog is like the children of Israel in the days of Malachi. These people were surprised that God should even find fault with them! They were spiritually **NUMB** and spiritually **DUMB**!

God Deserves Our Very Best!

The Jews living at this time were not giving God their very best. In fact they were giving Him their very worst! Notice the kind of animals they were sacrificing to God (Malachi 1:8). They were bringing animals that were blind, lame and sick! These were animals that they did not want anyway! Instead of bringing the first of the flock (the very best) they brought the very worst of the flock!

Today God wants our very best as well. As the hymn says, "Give of *your best* to the Master!" Discuss the following and explain how a person can give their very best to the Lord:

- a. The clothes we wear on Sunday
- b. The way we sing hymns
- c. The use of our talents, gifts and abilities
- d. The language we use in prayer

Not all of the Jews living in Malachi's day were in a terrible spiritual condition. There was a

small remnant of Jews who...

Feared the Lord (Malachi 3:16)

Spoke often to one another about the Lord (Malachi 3:16)

Thought upon God's Name (Malachi 3:16)

These Jews were very precious to God (Malachi 3:16-17). God will honor those who honor Him!

The Sun of Righteousness

As we have seen again and again, the prophets looked beyond their own day. They were able to look into the future and see the coming of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Malachi calls the Messiah "the _____ of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2). The world is experiencing the "nighttime" of sin. But there is coming a future day when the **SUN** will rise and a new day will dawn! Jesus Christ will come to this earth and with Him He will bring healing and light and righteousness. He will heal this "sin-sick" planet and the earth will be flooded with light and righteousness. The **SON OF GOD** is the **SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS!**

My Messenger

The name Malachi is a Hebrew word which means "my messenger." The word messenger is used three times in the book of Malachi:

1. Malachi 2:7--the priest is called the messenger of the Lord.
2. Malachi 3:1--John the Baptist is called "My _____" (compare Mark 1:2-4).
3. Malachi 3:1--the Lord Jesus is called "the _____ of the covenant."

Also the book of Malachi tells us who will come before the Lord Jesus Christ at each of His comings:

1. JOHN THE BAPTIST will prepare the way for Christ's first coming (Malachi 3:1, and compare Mark 1:2-4).
2. ELIJAH will prepare the way for Christ's second coming (see Malachi 4:5-6).

The Last Word in the Old Testament

Notice how the Old Testament ends: "lest, I come and smite the earth with a _____" (Malachi 4:6). Man is cursed because of sin! The Old Testament began with the curse (Genesis 3) and ends with the curse (Malachi 4:6). The New Testament begins with the Person who will remove sin's curse (Matthew 1:1). Jesus Christ took the penalty for sin and became a "curse for _____" Galatians 3:13) so that we might be blessed (Galatians 3:14)!

Malachi wrote his book about 400 B.C. This is the last Old Testament book that was written. For centuries the Jews had no word or message from God. There were no more prophets. Finally, 400 years later when God's Son came into the world, God broke the silence! The coming of Jesus was announced by John the Baptist just as Malachi had predicted approximately 400 years earlier (Malachi 3:1). These 400 years from Malachi to the time of Christ are known as the 400 silent years (the time from Malachi to Matthew).

After Malachi's book, the Jews did not need any more messages from God. They had all that they needed. They had 37 inspired books of the Old Testament. The New Testament revelation would come later in God's good time.

THE MESSAGE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT: *The Saviour is coming!*

Since the completion of the New Testament (about 100 A.D.) we have had nearly 2000 silent years. The Bible is now complete and God does not have to speak to us by prophets today. God has given us all that we need to know and this information is found in the Old and New Testaments (the 66 books of the Bible).

THE MESSAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT: *The Saviour has come and He is coming again!*

Today we can rejoice in what the Saviour has done and we can look forward to the Saviour coming again. In the meanwhile we can *give Him our very best!*

NOTE: The Middletown Bible Church also has a set of notes (13 Chapters) entitled **New Testament Books** in which the 27 New Testament Books are discussed.

Rating of Available Forces

