

Post-Exile and the Restoration of the Temple
The Role of the Prophet Haggai
8 October 2017

Review of Events (Ezra 1-6)

- Return to the Land in 539 BC
- Feast of Tabernacles: gathered to read Torah; built altar and offered requisite sacrifices
- Preparations for re-building Temple on foundation of previous Temple
- Increasing opposition from “people of the land,” Samaritans, hired counselors, and later the governor Tattenai and his associates
- Building halted until **Haggai and Zechariah** pressed Zerubbabel and Jeshua to recommence the work
- Exchange of letters between Tattenai and the court of Darius; appeal to the edict of Cyrus; Darius decreed that full support was to be given to the rebuilding effort
- Temple completed in sixth year of Darius (516/515 BC)

The Roles of the Prophets as Covenant Enforcement Mediators [characterized all prophets; specific references for Haggai below]

- Affirm the absolute sovereignty of God [2:6-7]
- Remind God’s people of their covenant history [2:5]
- Pronounce judgment for disobeying the covenant [1:7-11; 2:15-19]
- Encourage the faithful [2:4, 8-9, 21-23]

Relationship of the Messages of Haggai and Zechariah vis a vis Work on the Temple

- Haggai began prophesying before Zechariah –
 - Haggai - second year of Darius (520 BC), first day of the sixth month (Hag 1:1); 24th day of sixth month (1:15); 21st day of seventh month (2:1); 24th day of ninth month (2:10)
 - Zechariah – second year of Darius, eighth month (Zech 1:1); 24th day of eleventh month (1:7); fourth year (7:1) and beyond
- Haggai’s messages had practical focus; Zechariah’s were visions for immediate and eschatological future

“Get Your Priorities Straight”

- The LORD’s challenges (1:1-11)
 - People were making excuses
 - They had put their own well-being ahead of God’s honor
 - As a result, their material well-being had suffered, notably in keeping with covenant sanctions—no rain, drought, no *grain, new wine, oil* (the triad of crops)
- The people’s obedience (1:12-15)
 - What characterized their response?
 - And what did the Lord promise—and do?

Getting Beyond Appearances (2:1-9)

- The former Temple had been more imposing, but the glory of this Temple would be greater
- Binding together the deliverance from Egypt, the covenant, and the Spirit [the Spirit will also be prominent in Zechariah]—a recipe to conquer their fear

- The LORD Almighty (“of hosts”) would shake all of creation and all nations – this anticipates God’s cataclysmic intervention, perhaps to be read eschatologically [cf Jer 4:23-26]
- Meaning of “desired of all nations would come”¹ – a reference to riches that would be brought to the eschatological Temple
- “And I will grant peace” (*shalom – yerushalayim*)

Defilement is Contagious (2:10-19)

- Multi-layered questions
 - Were the priests properly prepared to serve? Did they know the purity regulations? And why was this important?
 - At a deeper level, were the people still spiritually defiled by uncaring contact with the pollutions of the culture around them? And how would that affect their forthcoming worship if not addressed?

Promises to Zerubbabel (2:20-23)

- promise of God’s radical intervention—again shaking heaven and earth; overturning sources of human power [remember how small Judah was]
- God chose Zerubbabel (and his descendants) –the ring with the seal meant ownership and was a precious possession

What Lessons Can We Learn?

¹ Some commentators had thought that this referred to a coming individual, along the lines of the use of *hemdah* in 1 Sam 9:20 with regard to the anticipation of a king. If that were the case, then this would point ahead to the messianic era. Because, however, the verb is plural and the word can mean treasure and wealth, it may rather connect with the following verse—silver and gold.