

Bible Synthesis IV
OVERVIEW OF HAGGAI

This little book is the first of the post-exilic prophets. The prophets we have been studying up to this point warned of the judgment of the exile in Babylon (for Judah). Now we turn to the conditions following the return from that captivity. These are the events recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah.

Haggai was a contemporary of Zechariah (and also of Confucius in China). Read Ezra 5:1-2 before beginning the study of Haggai.

The "Times of the Gentiles" were in progress, in their second stage—that of the Medo-Persian Empire. The decree of Cyrus was in 538 B.C. (see Ezra 1:3). The post-exilic Temple was started in 536, but opposition brought the building to a halt.

Haggai's purpose in writing was to interpret their present distress. They were suffering from bad harvests, drought, trouble, and sorrow. He encourages them to build the Temple. Its completion had been delayed for 15 years (from 535 – 520 B.C.). God's blessing had been withheld because they had not returned to this work. The Temple was completed 520 – 515 B.C.

You will notice that the dates given in Haggai are according to the reign of a Gentile (Persian) King, Darius I (Hystaspes), who ascended to the throne in 521 B.C. Haggai's writing begins in his second year, around 520 B.C. This book covers a little less than 4 months in that year (see 1:1; 2:10, 20). Haggai appears for just a short moment in the history of Israel. The Temple was completed and dedicated just 4 years after the call of Haggai.

Haggai ("my feast"), so called in anticipation of the joyous return from Babylonian exile. Haggai not only joined with Zechariah in prophesying to them, but both men also helped with the work of building (Ezra 5:1-2). This little book containing but 38 verses is all that we have of his prophetic message, and that was enough!

This little book is addressed as follows:

- 1. To Zerubbabel ("seed of Babylon"), the governor (who was of the line of David – see Matt. 1:12-13) — 1:1; 2:2, 21.
2. To Joshua ("the LORD is salvation"), the High Priest — 1:1; 2:2.
3. To the people — 1:13; 2:2.

Haggai and Zechariah should be read along with Ezra and Nehemiah, in order to get a good picture of the times as well as of the situation in general for the returned exiles.

"Salting the Oats"
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