



The next three prophets we will cover are Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Their prophetic ministry takes place after the remnant of God's people returned to Judea from Babylonian exile. Haggai delivers this prophecy in 520 BC.

Some historians believe that up to 50,000 Jews returned in the first wave back to Judea. Many of them resettle in Jerusalem and begin to rebuild the society, the commercial infrastructures, and the foundation for a new Temple. But such a return is difficult, resources are scarce, they are not wealthy, and soon their focus turns to their own personal well-being and they abandon the rebuilding of God's Temple.

Haggai confronts the people of Jerusalem over this marginalization of God and challenges them to resume rebuilding the Temple and focus on worshipping God. Unlike the audiences of many of the other prophets, Haggai's listeners come together and rally to reconstruct the Temple. God then restates His central covenant promise with His people, "I am with you," a promise of comfort and power (1:13). The Temple's reconstruction is completed some four and half years later in 515 BC.

The people work diligently to rebuild the Temple, but they simply did not have the resources to build an impressive structure as their forefather Solomon had originally built. Some become dismayed but God, however, does not seem to be bothered by this and exhorts them to be strong, restating, "I am with you" (2:4). Soon after the Lord declares, "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house" (2:9).

Four times in Haggai God tells the people to "give careful thought to your ways" (1:5, 7; 2:15, 18) because they had their priorities mixed up. They were more concerned with their own well-being and their houses than with the Temple and the ensuing worship of God.

Haggai's powerful message applies to us today... *Are we giving careful thought to our ways? Is the Lord our top priority or are we allowing circumstances to marginalize Him?*