

Restoration of Exiles: The Book of Ezra
The Book of Haggai

Here are the dates and key events of three kings of the Persian Empire:

Cyrus (550-529). The return from exile happened under him, around 538 BC. The altar and foundation of the Temple were rebuilt, but opposition stops the work from around 536-520.

Cambyses II (529-522). No work on the Temple during his reign.

Darius I (522-486). Haggai and Zechariah prophesy fairly early in the reign of Darius to urge the people to begin rebuilding the Temple. They restart about 520 and finish in 516

Haggai 1:1 indicates the time of his book. Notice the references to Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest. We have seen these men in Ezra (Ezra 3:2, 8 etc.)

Haggai's First Message (1:2-15): Your crops aren't being blessed because you have left my (God's) house in ruins.

1. What excuse were the people making for not building the temple? (v. 2). What was really going on? (vv. 3-4).
2. What was God doing as a result of their not working? (vv 5-11). Do you believe God still does this sometimes today?
3. How did the people respond this message? (v. 12-15)
4. How would you apply this section to yourself?

Haggai's Second Message (1:15b-2:9) (a couple months after the first): Encouragement for those who are disappointed that the new temple doesn't compare well to Solomon's original temple (btw, this is why it is often referred to as the "second temple"). God's message through Haggai is that the glory of the second temple will outshine the first.

5. Notice the concern that it may not be as glorious as Solomon's original Temple (vv. 2-3). God addresses the two key leaders and the people of the land and encourages them to be _____ and _____ because ____ ____ _____ (v. 4). What does God add in v. 5?

6. As a result of God being with them, what glory would this new temple they are building have? (vv. 7, 9).
7. How would you apply this to the work at NorthWest?

Third message (2:10-18)(a couple months later). This one goes with the first one and tells what the problem has been but that from now on your crops will be blessed.

8. Verses 10-13 are illustrations to make the point of v. 14, that the people aren't right so nothing they do will be acceptable to God.
9. Verses 15-19 call on the people to notice the difference between how bad things were going while they refused to work on the temple (15-19a) to how things will go now that they have restarted (19b). Have you ever noticed your life going worse when you were disobeying God and better when you were obeying?

Fourth message (2:20-23)(at the same time) as the previous one): Encouragement to Zerubbabel himself, heir to the throne of David, to bolster his confidence.

10. Verses 20-22 are describing the fact that God is at work among the nations, determining who will reign and who will fall. Do you believe God does this still today?
11. This message (20-23) was directly addressed to Zerubbabel the Governor (v. 21), apparently to encourage him to step up and lead. How would these verses bolster Zerubbabel's confidence?
12. Do you think church leaders today need to have their confidence bolstered? If not or if "sometimes," please explain. If yes, how could their confidence get bolstered?