

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey Lessons 57 and 58: The Books of Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINES TO THE BOOKS OF HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, AND MALACHI

We will close out our study of the minor prophets and the Old Testament with the study of the last three prophets who were contemporary with the Prophet Jeremiah: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. **Refer to Prophet Chart, Lesson 41, Intro. to the Prophets** Haggai and Zechariah were contemporaries and Malachi ministered about 100 years later.

Since the Book of Zechariah is both long and complex, it will take us two weeks to conclude our study. We will then have a brief study of the intertestamental period and an introduction to the New Testament and Gospels which gives you a perfect opportunity to catch up with us on your Old Testament reading and start the New Testament.

INTRODUCTION/OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

Introduction:

The Prophets Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are known as "post-exilic" because they prophesied the return of a remnant after the end of the Babylonian captivity.

Haggai is mentioned in Ezra 5 and 6 as the first of the two who encouraged the people to return to finish rebuilding the Temple after its completion was delayed for over 15 years by fierce opposition. Little else is known.

Remember, in Ezra we had the record of a proclamation from Cyrus of Persia allowing Israel to return to Jerusalem in 538 BC. Only about 50,000 Jews returned. Two years later they started to rebuild the Temple, but opposition from their neighboring enemies caused them to abandon their task. This was a bad testimony to the surrounding heathen and a sign of spiritual bankruptcy in the lives of God's people. **See Chart**

Not only was the work on the Temple stopped, but its foundation was overgrown with weeds while the people who had gone to build it were building great and ornate houses for themselves.

Sixteen years later Haggai accompanied Zerubbabel from Babylon to Jerusalem and wrote primarily to him, the new governor, and to Joshua, the high priest. But, the message was also to encourage the returning captives to keep their priorities straight and put the Lord first in their daily lives. These prophecies were given between August and December in the year 520 BC. The Temple was completed four years later.

I. A CALL TO BUILD August 29, 520 BC. (Chapter 1)

Haggai saw the rebuilding of the Temple as an invitation to the reestablishment of the presence of God among His chosen people. You remember, the Lord left the desecrated Temple before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.

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A. Background (1-2)

Darius I became the third king of Persia and appointed Zerubbabel, the grandson of Judean King Jehoiachin, as governor of a reformed

Judah and Joshua, the high priest to lead the people and oversee a renewed Temple building project.

The people responded by saying, *"The time has not come, . . . for house of the Lord to be rebuilt."*

B. Burden (3-11)

God's response through Haggai was, *"Is it time for you to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?"*

Their spiritual lack is shown, as it always is, by where their treasure is. They are pouring their wealth into fancy homes which, I believe, were being built using the cedar meant for the temple. The result was rich housing but cursed living. They were living in opulent want, with crop failure and drought caused by their ignoring of the covenant. They must reorder their priorities.

C. Blessing (12-15)

Was Haggai's message taken seriously? Obviously! The people immediately arouse and began to work, and God immediately began to bless with the pronouncement, "I am with you." (v. 13)

II. A CALL TO BEHOLD October 17, 520 BC. (Chapter 2:1-9)

A month later, on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the day of thanksgiving for God's provision and blessing with the building going full bore, the Lord sent a strong word of encouragement.

A. Present (1-3)

It is possible that Haggai was one of "those left among you" (v. 3), the old folk who had seen the glory of Solomon's original Temple. This temple is not as magnificent a building.

B. Past (4-5)

But the building isn't the important thing. Remember, there is no inherent power or value in the stuff, be it the temple, the ark, the rod of Aaron. Nothing has changed. The importance, the power, the value of the temple is that God is there (v 4), He keeps His promises (v 5), and . . .

C. Future (6-9)

He has ultimate plans for a more glorious temple!

By the way, God's people never did have to worry about the financing of His temple. Cyrus decreed its support and gave back the temple implements taken by Assyrian and Babylonian kings. Darius later ordered the surrounding peoples to pay for the work on the temple they had tried to stop, and Axtaxerxes later ordered even more generous support.

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III. A CALL TO BEHAVE December 18, 520 B. C. (Chapter 2:10-19)

Two months later the Lord announced a turning point when the first stones were actually laid for the temple foundation.

A. Blessing Withheld (10-17)

This is a parable given in two questions relating to meat consecrated for sacrifices:

Question: "Can a man transfer sanctification to things he touches? Answer: No! Question: Can a man transfer defilement to a thing he touches? Answer: Yes!

The point is cleansing cannot be transferred but contagion can, just as you cannot pass on good health but can disease. The sin and disobedience of the people was contagious, contaminating them all and causing God's to withhold His blessing.

B. Blessing Released (18-19)

As a result of their obedience, God promised to restore His blessing from that day forward.

IV. A CALL TO BELIEVE December 18, 529 BC. (Chapter 2:20-23)

The last message came on the same day as the previous one. It calls for the people to renew their faith and trust in God to keep His covenant.

A. God's Power (20-22)

God's power will be shown as He overthrows the kingdoms of the world and established His Millennial Kingdom. *"The kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ!"*

His kingdom will be established, His son, the Messiah will reign on the Throne of David.

B. God's Prince (23)

In verse 23 it says, ". . . I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, . . . and will make you like a signet ring; . . ."

The signet ring represented the authority of the king. Remember Pharaoh giving Joseph his ring, and Artaxerxes giving Mordicai his ring. I believe God was presenting Zerubbabel as a representative of His reinstatement of the Davidic line leading to the Messiah. Interestingly, he appears on both Mary and Joseph's side in the line of the Christ.

Lesson:

Much as James does, Haggai teaches us that our actions will reveal whether or not God is the top priority of our lives. God expects us to honor Him, use our gifts for Him, trust Him, and realize that true success only comes from Him.

INTRODUCTION/OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Introduction:

The historical setting of the book of Zechariah is the same as that of Haggai since they were contemporaries. In 538 BC., during the reign of Cyrus, over 50,000 Jews returned to Judah from their captivity in Babylon. They laid the foundation in 536, but physical, political, and spiritual opposition caused the work to stop for over 15 years.

Darius Hystaspes, the third Persian King came to power in 521 and confirmed Cyrus' decree and Zechariah, Haggai, the Governor Zerubbabel, and the High Priest Joshua led the people in finishing the Temple by 516 BC.

Zechariah (520-489 BC.) like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, was a priest as well as a prophet (Neh.12). His grandfather, Iddo, was one of the priests who returned from exile with that group as well. He began to prophesy two months after Haggai and while Haggai concentrated on the rebuilding of the temple, he had a much wider vision. He saw Israel in a context of world significance and power.

Zechariah predicted more about the Messiah than any other prophet except Isaiah, including predictions of His first and second advent. Jewish historical documents including the Targum and writings of Josephus claim that Zechariah was killed in the Temple, between the temple and the altar, and many believe this is the same man mentioned as a martyr in Matt. 23.

The book begins with a call to repentance and ends with the Millennial reign of Christ. The visions resemble those in Daniel and Revelation. Only Zechariah, of all the prophets, was in the land of Israel when he wrote his apocalypse. His was a bright message of hope to a ragged remnant and he certainly lived up to the meaning of his name, "the Lord remembers."

John MacArthur makes an interesting observation: "Prophecy was soon to be silent for more than 400 years until John the Baptist, so God used Zechariah to bring a rich, abundant outburst of promise for the future to sustain the faithful remnant through those silent years."

I. WARNING (Chapter 1:1-6)

These opening verses call for repentance of the people by reminding them that God had been very angry with their ancestors. They acknowledged their parents' sins and God's consistent and just judgments. The point is to always follow the word of God because prophets die but the Word lasts and its promises always happen.

II. VISIONS (Chapters 1:7-6:15)

Zechariah received his first "Word from the Lord" in the form of eight visions given for the comfort of the returned remnant who have returned home to rebuild the Temple.

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A. God Sees (1:7-21)

Nothing misses the watchful eye of the Lord.

1. Horses and Riders (1:7-17)

Four horsemen, from the four corners of the kingdom, report to the Lord that they found, "*all the earth is peaceful and quiet*" (v. 11). Persian rule had overcome the nations of the known world and brought an end to war among them.

This time of law and order will make possible the next step in God's plan for Judah and signifies the end of the current period of judgment.

2. Four Horns and Four Workmen (1:18-21)

The second vision details the judgment of the nations who persecuted the Jews showing the four horns that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem and four workmen who will demolish them.

These horns could be the immediate thorns in their side: Egypt; Assyria; Babylon; and Medo-Persia, or the view I tend toward, the four horns are those from Daniel's prophecies: Babylon; Medo-Persia; Greece; and Rome. The four workmen or craftsmen, ones who shape materials with hammers, obviously represent those nations God will use to crush the four horns.

B. God Speaks (2-4)

God observes as the nations of the earth bring about His plans. Now He speaks words of comfort and of soon and future promises for His people.

1. Surveyor (2:1-13)

The building of Jerusalem has begun. The measuring is in progress laying out the dimensions of the future city that will expand far beyond its present borders. The restoration of the present Temple is only a preview of the one in the Millennial Kingdom when Messiah will reign and the walls won't be necessary for safety.

2. High Priest (3:1-10 and 6:9-15)

Zechariah saw a vision of a court scene similar to those in Kings 22 and Isaiah 6 in which God's chosen, in this case High Priest Joshua, is accused of high crimes and misdemeanors by Satan himself. Joshua represents a nation unworthy of this new favor shown by the God they deserted.

The Lord refuses to hear the charges, because He Himself chose Joshua, and He personally will cleanse him and make him fit. Salvation and sanctification always has been and always will be an act of God, not of works, "*least any man should boast.*"

The actual crowning of Joshua in chapter 6 with a royal crown reaffirms his fitness to preside as High Priest and the movement of the crown from an earthly King, previewing the coming of a priest/king, the Messiah.

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3. Candlestick and Olive Trees (4:1-14)

The fourth vision focused on Joshua. This one looks at the civil leader, Zerubbabel. His faithful completion of the building of the Temple will enable Israel to again be the lamp stand (light or testimony) of God's grace to the entire world.

This work will be accomplished, "*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord*" (v 6). Not even the mighty mountains of obstacles could keep him completing the job, because it was God's job.

C. God Stirs (5-6)

The Lord Himself will stir things up in the new land by cleansing the land and pouring out His gifts to the people.

1. Flying Scroll (5:1-4)

The large scroll symbolizes the written standard (God's Word) which judges the sins of the people and brings punishment to those who break its law, probably the Ten Commandments.

2. Woman in Basket (5:5-11)

The previous vision dealt with the purging of sinners from the land. This one deals with the removal of the entire system of sin. Iniquity is banished from the land. This, of course, must refer to the Millennial Kingdom when justice will reign.

3. Four Chariots (6:1-8)

The last of this series of visions is one which shows four chariots driven by spirits emerging from the presence of God to do His will throughout the world. They swiftly carry out judgments necessary just prior to the setting up of His final Kingdom.

Carrying on in the Book of Zechariah we find ourselves just beyond the first eight visions which the Lord gave to his prophet with the main purpose of preparing them for and encouraging them to rebuild the Temple.

His encouragement went far beyond the present project by including visions of the final and ultimate Temple in the Millennial Kingdom where the Messiah will sit on the Throne of David and rule the world fulfilling all the yet unfulfilled portions of His Covenant promises. This has caused many people to refer to Zechariah as the Revelation of the Old Testament.

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ZECHARIAH CONTINUES:

There is a two-year gap in the dating from chapter 6 to chapter 7. The Temple was well on its way to completion (two years down and two to go) and a delegation from Bethel, previous center of worship in the Northern Kingdom, came to ask a logistical question of the leaders in Jerusalem.

III.MESSAGES (Chapters 7-8)

The question has to do with whether they should continue the rituals of fasts and mourning since the Temple is now being rebuilt. This indicates that the prophecies of Micah that many people from Bethel would come to worship in Jerusalem would be fulfilled.

A. Fasting (7:1-3)

The fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple were commemorated by four different fasts. The most important one was the fast memorializing the burning of the Temple in 586 BC. by Nebuchadnezzar. This makes a good test case. Should they continue to mourn since the captivity is over and Temple is rising?

B. Failure (7:4-14)

God's response was, *"Was it actually for Me that you fasted?"*

The motive for the fasts was basically good. To remember the sad day the Temple was destroyed was noble, *but* these fast days were man-made, not commanded by God.

In fact they would never have been necessary if the people had been obedient and faithful because then God would never have left the Temple and it would not have fallen and the captivity never would have happened.

Not only that, they were observed self-righteously. *"Do you not eat for yourself and not drink for yourself,"* (v 6) They are putting on an outward show to make themselves feel better, but God wants righteousness and obedience rather than ritual and sacrifice.

Remember I Samuel 15:22, *"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."* Fasting is only good as an outward sign of an inward reality, in this case the confessing of sin.

C. Future (8:1-23)

During the Maccabean period, which we will see in next weeks survey of the inter-testament period, some of the glory of the Temple as described in chapter eight was restored by the sheer will power and human effort of the religious leaders. However, it is obvious that the final fulfillment of this vision has to wait for the future greatness of the Millennial Kingdom.

Worshippers in Jerusalem will be safe and all the fasts will be transformed into feasts, joyous festivals to celebrate love, truth, peace, and justice brought under the mighty hand of the Messiah Himself. And, miraculously, we see in verse 23 that there will be ten gentiles for every Jew saying, *"Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."*

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IV. BURDENS (Chapters 9-14)

The word translated "*burden*" in 9:1 is another word for oracle which, you remember, is a strong message from God.

Using the prophetic phrase, "*in that day*" 18 times Zechariah zeros in on the final downfall of the nation, God's provision for the salvation of Israel, the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom with the Messiah as King.

A. Messiah's Rejection (9:1-11:17)

This first oracle deals with the destruction of the enemies of Israel

brought about either by Cyrus, the Medo-Persian King (present), or Alexander the Great (future), the Greek general, as they march through Palestine defeating the long standing enemies of the Jews but leave Jerusalem alone.

The great military leader foreshadows the coming of the Messiah in power to set up His final kingdom. However, he also stands in contrast to the first coming of the Messiah when He comes in humility, peace, and salvation, as opposed to arrogance, power, and destruction. He comes the first time as a humble and riding on a donkey (9:9). But this lowly One becomes a mighty ruler (14:8-11). The Messiah in all His might shall put all His enemies under his feet and establish His kingdom in Jerusalem and sit on the Throne of David. ". . . *And His dominion will be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.*" (9:10)

Chapter 11 reveals the Shepherd, Jesus of course, who seeks to save Israel but is rejected, sold for the price of a slave.

B. Messiah's Acceptance (12:1-14:21)

The second oracle describes the ultimate deliverance and salvation of Israel. This is a final message of encouragement as:

1. As the enemies of Israel and all that is holy mass to come against Jerusalem. The Jews repent (12:12) when they see the one they had pierced. and the hopeless situation will be turned to victory at the Battle of Armageddon as the Lord's Anointed leads in a supernatural campaign, protecting and re-establishing Jerusalem as the capital of His Kingdom. (Ch.12)
2. The compassionate Messiah/King will cleanse and reclaim His people who will reject false prophets and love Him in spirit and in truth. (Ch.13)
3. The Messiah/King will return to the Mount of Olives, which will tear apart and He will claim the Throne of David. (Ch.14)

Lesson:

Zechariah, like Haggai, called God's people to attempt great things for God, namely the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. But, his bottom line message was not the rebuilding of a monolith for show, but a place where man will meet God. The Temple has only been important as a symbol of the truth that God is with them.

God does not glory in a place, or a ritual, but in obedience and a relationship.

INTRODUCTION/OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF MALACHI

Introduction:

About 100 years passed since the return of the remnant from captivity to Jerusalem. The city and the second Temple had been rebuilt and revival had come under the leadership of Nehemiah. It obviously didn't last.

Malachi (436-416 B. C.) wrote, as his name which means "messenger of God" indicates, to rebuke and warn them that they are pushing the longsuffering Lord to the limit and tell them they there would come a day of His final rejection and silence.

We know little else about him other than from Jewish traditional writings which name him among the members of the Great Synagogue, a group of men who collected and preserved the Scriptures. Some believe this group was the pattern for the 120 man Sanhedrin in the New Testament Temple.

The priests and people had returned to a legalistic practice of the law as opposed to worship in spirit and in truth. This external practice with no heart reality led to sacrilege, profanity, witchcraft, adultery, perjury, fraud, oppression of the poor, and the breakdown of the family.

It also foreshadows the spirit of the Pharisees and Sadducees who would bring about the rejection and murder of their Messiah.

Four hundred years of silence from God are coming and Malachi's will *"be the last friendly words they'll hear."* Hosea began the message of the minor-prophets with a message of the Lord's persistent love for His chosen nation, even when they rejected Him. Malachi begins with the same theme but warns that continued rejection of the Lord will bring a curse.

I. THE LORD'S COMPLAINTS (Chapters 1 and 2)

The book is a series of dialogs between the Lord and the people of Jerusalem.

A. Spiritual Sins (1:1-2:9)

God confronts His people with a number of areas in which they are short fallen and have sinned against Him.

1. Denying God's love (1:1-5)

The first failure is acting like a spoiled brat.

In verse 2 God says, *"I love you,"* and they respond, *"How have you loved us?"* God's response is to review the story of Jacob and Esau. God proved His love to them in that **He chose them.**

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2. Despising God's name (1:6)

The second sin is showing disrespect to the Lord.

They are treating God as no servant would his master and no child would his father and then they say, "so what," how do you figure that. His response is to giving them the examples below.

3. Defiling God's altar (1:7-14)

Their disrespect is shown in their approach to worship.

They are breaking the laws of Lev.22 and they have been presenting flawed sacrifices to God. Lame, blind, unclean animals, things they would not even dare to pass of on the tax collectors.

God would rather close the doors of the Temple than have them make a sham of the symbols. They are looking for the easy way to fulfill their duty rather than to come with a pure heart.

4. Disregarding God's law (2:1-9)

Last, God confronts the priests for not doing their ministries.

1) They are not looking out for the peoples interests by instructing them in righteous living and proper worship.

2) They are not looking out for the Lord's interests by being an example of obedience and worship themselves.

B. Special Sins (2:10-17)

This disregard and disrespect led to two specific sins.

1. Detestable worship (2:10-13)

Most all of the Jews tended to recognize God as the Creator of the Universe, and their Father and bowed to Him as powerful personal, but few were living as if GOD WAS LORD OF THEIR LIVES. This allowed them to live lives of sin and to worship idols right along side of worshipping God.

We have this same problem. This Jesus who is Savior needs to also be JESUS THE LORD!

2. Deserted wives (2:14-16)

Spiritual adultery leads to physical adultery. When they were able to "put aside" their God for idols, it was easy to *"put aside the wives of their youth"* (v 14) in order to link up with pagan women.

We have the same problem. Divorce may be lawful and easy or, in some cases necessary, but *"God hates divorce."* (v 16)

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3. Detestable whining (2:17)

The Lord is weary of the people griping about Him treating the evildoers as well as they, even though they have not been righteous either. He makes it quite clear that they are far from deserving special treatment. They have learned nothing from their ancestors and thus still need constant discipline.

We have the same problem. We see ourselves as being some how deserving of special treatment, less trouble, more reward. We need to glory in the spiritual blessings He pours on us.

II. THE LORD'S COMING (Chapters 3 and 4)

All of the above debate becomes moot as Malachi addresses the final chapters to the returned remnant in Jerusalem and the Jewish believers from that time until the final consummation of God's plan.

Many will die, many will become indifferent, but a few (the remnant) will faithfully believe and follow the Lord.

A. Judgment for Sinners (3:1-15)

First the Lord must judge the sinner and purify the righteous.

1. Actions (3:1-5)

Verse 2 introduces God's messenger to come, John the Baptist, who will introduce the Messiah who will deal with sin from the Temple, His judgment will be searching, effective, and final. **Read 3:1-3**

2. Attitudes (3:6-12)

Their sinful actions came from their sinful hearts.

What is the evidence sited to show the state of their hearts? They are not giving to God what is rightfully His. They were robbing God financially. Was that the worst sin God could state. No, but it is the most telling, for *"where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

3. Arguments (3:13-15)

These sinful priests and people have despised God's name (1:6), defiled His altar (1:7), disobeyed His laws (2:9), violated His covenant (2:11), and questioned Him (2:17). Now they have the nerve to ask, "What's in it for us, why should we bother?" (v 14)

The proud and arrogant put God to the test, pushing the envelope to see how far they can go and get away with it. God ignores them and speaks to the faithful, the remnant.

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B. Justice for Saints (3:16-4:6)

Justice will prevail because God is holy and just.

1. Remembered (3:16-18)

To encourage the true and righteous worshipers God says, *"a book of remembrance (perhaps the Book of Life) was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and esteem his name . . . They will be Mine," says the Lord of hosts, 'on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.'"*

Now the difference between the good and evil will become apparent to everyone.

2. Rewarded (4:1-4)

The demarcation will be made between the righteous and the wicked. Justice will be done, at last.

3. Revived (4:5-6) *Could be Reversed*

The very opposite of what happened at Christ's first advent, (Matt. 10) where the hearts of the fathers were turned from their children, will happen now. The curse is reversed and righteousness, peace and love reign in the Millennial Kingdom.

Lesson:

Malachi teaches us that God's love, which makes Him long suffering, also causes Him to hold us accountable. However, the ultimate reward for our righteous response of obedience and worship are eternal and glorious.