

The Book of *Haggai*

Imagine that you've been saving for months for a new stereo system. Just when you are about to purchase it, a good friend's family has a major house fire. Unfortunately, they were not insured—so the community is taking up a collection to help them rebuild. Now, you are faced with a decision: will you buy the new stereo or help your friend's family? The Jews at the time of the prophet Haggai faced an even more difficult decision: returning to Jerusalem after the Babylonian Exile, which would they rebuild first—their homes or God's Temple?

### In-Depth

When the people of ancient Judah lost their Temple in 587 B.C. and were deported to a strange land, they experienced a crisis in faith. Had God abandoned them? Were they no longer God's people? Was God punishing them for their sins? Some of them dreamed of a time when they could return to their land and rebuild God's Temple. However, when they finally were able to return in 538 B.C., things weren't as easy as they had hoped. Suffering from poverty, droughts, and crop failures (Hag 1.10–11), they put off rebuilding the Temple. Into this scene came the prophet Haggai. He told the people that God was still with them, and life was so difficult because they didn't seem to care that God's house was in ruins (verse 4). They had to get their priorities in order!

The people heard God's word spoken through Haggai, and immediately began working on the Temple. In their minds, they knew the new Temple would never be as beautiful as the original one (2.3). Haggai used this opportunity to prophesy about a future Temple that would be filled with God's splendor

(verse 7), a time when God would again bless these people and make their offerings holy. God would establish Judah as a powerful nation, and Zerubbabel (a descendant of David's) would be its anointed king.

### At a Glance

- **Chapter 1.** a command to rebuild the Temple
- **2.1–19.** a description of the future glory of God's Temple and the future prosperity of God's people
- **2.20–23.** a message about the future nation of Judah and its king

### Quick Facts

**Period Covered**  
approximately 520 B.C.  
**Author**  
Haggai  
**Theme**  
rebuilding God's Temple