**Haggai**

**Build the House**

**What you need to REMEMBER:**

The wicked 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been taken captive and removed from the land by the Assyrians in 721 B.C. With their removal, the northern tribes end up in the dustbin of history.

The relatively faithful tribes of Judah and Benjamin, collectively known as the Southern Kingdom of Judah, eventually spiraled into apostacy as well and were removed from the land by the Babylonians in 606 B.C.

Over time, the more humane Persian Empire came into power with a different policy toward the people they dominated. Unlike the Assyrians and the Babylonians, the Persians allowed conquered peoples to remain in their ancestral homelands. This geopolitical policy set the stage for the repatriation of the people to the land.

The return to the Promised Land was of vital importance to God’s plan of redemption, as it was in the land of the Jews that the Promised Savior was destined to be born, live and die.

It’s right to view 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther as a cohesive subset within the Scriptures. The Chronicles prepared the people of Judah for their return to the Promised Land by reminding them of their special place in God’s story of redemption. This retelling of the nation’s special place in history energized and clarified the vision of the people prior to the difficult task of resettling the land. The books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther detailed Judah’s return, the spiritual renewal of the people, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the reestablishment of their society.

Their reconstruction of Jerusalem included the restoration of the Temple, which had been destroyed by the Babylonians. The rebuilt, post-exilic Temple contained only a shadow of the glory of the original. But it reestablished the sacrificial system as the centerpiece of the nation’s worship.

**What you need to KNOW:**

The book of Haggai adds another layer of understanding to this period of Jewish history. The book is organized around four messages that Haggai spoke to the people. Haggai delivers these messages during a 10-year pause in the project to rebuild the Temple. The delay happened because the people got distracted with building comfortable homes for themselves. Haggai interprets their distraction as placing their own concerns ahead of God’s priorities.

Using a series of questions, commands and promises, Haggai calls the people to action. He interprets their procrastination in finishing the Temple as an afront to God’s honor and a failure to give Him His rightful place in their lives. He says that their failure in this was the reason behind the drought that had stressed their agrarian economy. Haggai assures the people that if they turn the situation around and rebuild the Temple first that the rains would come and they would experience sustained blessing and prosperity. Fortunately, the response of the people was positive and the Temple was restored post-haste.

Haggai’s prophesies are mostly speaking-forth into the historical situation of his day, but there are hints of foretelling in this short book. Haggai begins with a negative assessment of the fortunes of the people, but ends with uplifting promises of peace and blessings that seem to suggest a future time when all will be right – a time when there will be no need for *“a temple in the city, because the Lord god Almighty and the Lamb will be its temple.” Revelation 21:22*

**GET GOING!**

**Take a leisurely walk through the second shortest book in the Older Testament.**