

# San Juan Church of Christ

1414 Hawk Parkway, Unit C  
Montrose, CO 81401 | (970) 249-8116

## What Does God's Word Say About... Lessons From the Minor Prophet Haggai

Life can be like an unknown number of coins inside a slot machine and each day the machine issues us a new coin. It may be the last coin we get, or we may have many more. All we know is that the average person gets between 70 to 80 year's worth, but some get far less; a few may get more.

We take each day's coin and exchange it for something: a day at work or school, shopping, church, leisure, etc. Once spent, you can never retrieve a coin to spend it differently. The art of living wisely is a matter of spending your coins on the things that really matter in light of eternity and not frivolously. Paul wrote, "be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:15-17).

The book of Haggai, second shortest in the Old Testament, has a potent message. It was written to people, like us, who would have told you that God must be first. God's chosen people at that time believed it; we who are in Christ and are Christians believe that. But, they had drifted into a way of life where their intellectual belief in the supremacy of God was not reflected in the way they were living. They gave lip service to God, but in fact they lived with other priorities. God sent this minor prophet, Haggai, to help His people to get their priorities in line by placing God first in everything they did.

The book of Haggai was written in approximately 536 B.C. when a remnant of about 50,000 Jews had returned from Babylon to Judea under the decree of Cyrus, King of Persia, to rebuilt the temple. Two years after returning they had laid the foundation of the temple, but their Samaritan neighbors threatened the workers and sent men to Persia to lobby against the Jews, bringing the work to a halt (Ezra 5:1-2).

At least 14 years had passed and God's people got caught up in the routine of life: farming, building houses, raising families, etc. During this period of time they got used to life without a temple. God then raised up the prophet Haggai so that the people would understand that God should hold the supreme place in their lives. As Jesus put it, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). In other words, God will supply our needs if we place Him first in our lives.

All of us who have trusted Christ as our Savior know that it is foolish and vain to live for the things of this world. We know that the things of the world never deliver the satisfaction that they promise. We know that we will not find true happiness apart from God. And yet, like in Haggai's day, we keep drifting towards loving the world because we are distracted from the promises of God. As Christians who are in Christ there was a time when we made a personal commitment to be a disciple of Jesus. We were once zealous for "good deeds" and we were once "careful to engage in good deeds" (Titus 2:14, 3:8). We read and studied our Bibles every day, and were involved in serving the Lord's church. Then our efforts met with difficulties such as personality clashes with other Christians, disillusionment because of disappointing results, personal trials that we thought were not being removed from our lives even after much prayer.

During the time of disappointment, we started a career and family. We had bills to pay and other demands on our time. Serving in the church and doing the Lord's work drifted into the background. We still attended church services but it became just a portion of our life and not the center. Without deliberately rebelling against God we put our house above God's house (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16). The people of God were all for rebuilding the temple but the timing did not seem right to them. We use the same excuses today. "Everyone is pinched for money and there are not enough good jobs." "It's all we can do to provide for our families, but when it gets better we will rebuild the temple." In Haggai's day they sowed plenty of seed but there was a drought and the crops did not yield as much as they had hoped. No matter how hard they tried it was like putting money into a bag with holes (Haggai 1:6). Because of these hard times they did not have extra money to give to the temple building fund.

Just like this the people today slip into putting our prosperity above God's kingdom and lose the spiritual perspective we need to get out of the quicksand we have fallen into. Jesus said "do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life" (John 6:27). Haggai prophesied, "we work long and hard but behold, it comes too little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. 'Why?' declares the Lord of hosts, Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house." (Haggai 1:9). We forget that if our ways are pleasing to the Lord, He will give us all that we really need.

Send any comments, questions, or requests for a Bible study to:  
[info@sanjuanchurchofchrist.org](mailto:info@sanjuanchurchofchrist.org)