

**Bible Synthesis IV**  
(Bible Survey)  
**INTRODUCTION TO**  
**HAGGAI**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

We now pass to the first of the post-exilic prophets. The prophets we *have* been studying are warning of the judgment of the exile, now we turn to the conditions after the return from Babylon (dealt with in Ezra and Nehemiah).

Sixteen years had passed since the return from captivity in 536 B.C. In the third chapter of Ezra we can see that the first priority of the returned exiles was to rebuild the altar, to begin offering the sacrifices, and to rebuild the Temple. But opposition arose, and they appealed to Artaxerxes the king, who ordered a suspension of the work. The work lay until Haggai and Zechariah, prophets of God, began to speak (see Ezra 5:1–2). During the time that the work lay idle, the people became indifferent. This was accompanied by a period of failed harvest, drought, trouble and sorrow (Hag. 1:6, 9–11). Haggai interpreted these distresses to the people and urged them to resume the important work that they had begun. To see the entire story, see Ezra 4 – 6.

Haggai is written in a style that is plain, simple, and businesslike. He emphasized his message by using pointed questions which provoked thought (1:4; 2:3, 12, 13). Each of the major divisions of the book begins with “the Word of the LORD.” We can see the LORD at work in Haggai.

## 2. AUTHOR

The Prophet Haggai (“my feast” or “festal”), “a name given in anticipation of the joyous return from Exile” — (Fausset). It comes from *hag*, “a feast,” with the adjectival suffix *ai*. Some consider the name an abbreviation for “feast of Jehovah” (cf. I Chron. 6:30).

He was a prophet (Ezra. 5:1; 6:14). According to Jewish tradition he was a Levite, who returned with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem. He died there and was buried among the priests.

**Note:** Based upon Haggai 2:3, *it is thought* that Haggai was one of that very small company of those survivors of Babylonian captivity which had seen the glory of the Temple of Solomon prior to 586 B.C., before it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. If that was so, he would have been an old man, over eighty years of age when he prophesied. Haggai had returned to the land with Zerubbabel in 536 B.C. He seems to have been older than Zechariah, for when they are mentioned together, Haggai’s name always appears first. Though, this is only speculation. Not a great deal is known about Haggai, other than what is seen in the book of Ezra and in Haggai’s own prophecy.

### 3. RECIPIENTS

- (1) Written especially to Zerubbabel, the governor, and to Joshua the High Priest (Hag. 1:1; 2:2, 21). [*Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, was a descendant of David (Matt. 1:12–13), though he did not occupy the throne. Zedekiah was the last king of Israel and Judah. He was blinded and carried to Babylon a captive. The next King will be the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ.*]
- (2) Haggai also spoke and wrote to the people (1:13; 2:2).

### 4. DATE

- (1) Date of writing: In 520 B.C., during the second year of Darius, king of Persia (called in secular history Darius Hytaspis or Darius the Great) —see Hag. 1:1; Ezra 4:24. [*This is not the Darius of the book of Daniel. That Darius was a Mede (Dan. 5:31)*]. [*Note: Confucius, the celebrated philosopher of China was flourishing at this time. Israel had been around for a long time! Their Old Testament Scriptures were nearly complete.*]
- (2) Date of coverage: A little less than 4 months — actually, only 3 months and 24 days — 1:1; 2:10, 20.

### 5. PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

It was written following the return of the remnant from Babylonian captivity under Zerubbabel in 536 B.C.:

- (1) Haggai was sent to interpret their present distress—bad harvests, drought, trouble and sorrow—and to encourage them to build the Temple.
- (2) Because of opposition, the work on the Temple had stopped for some 2 years (Ezra 4). The people had grown cold, the zeal had died away in the face of the political difficulties and intrigues. They did not make any attempt to return to the work until exhorted by Haggai and Zechariah to do so. In 24 days they began to build.

### 6. THEME

Building the LORD's house

### 7. KEY PASSAGES

Haggai 1:14; 2:9

### 8. KEY TERMS

“The LORD's house” (sometimes “this house,” “mine house,” etc.) —8 times  
“Consider” —5 times

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**OUTLINE OF  
HAGGAI**

- 1. MESSAGE CONCERNING NEGLIGENCE** — **1:1–15**  
Date: 6th. month, first day (September, 520 B.C.)
- 2. MESSAGE CONCERNING COURAGE** — **2:1–9**  
Date: 7th. month, 21st. day (October, 520 B.C.)  
(The glory of the future Temple)
- 3. MESSAGE CONCERNING SEPARATION** — **2:10–19**  
Date: 9th. month, 24th. day (December, 520 B.C.)
- 4. MESSAGE CONCERNING JUDGMENT** — **2:20–23**  
Date: 9th. month, 24th. day (December, 520 B.C.)

