**Repent, Return, Restore Rebuild**

**Sermon #2**

Here was your situation:

You were enslaved, in prison, captured, lost

How did you get here?

You rebelled/were disobedient

You went after other gods

You said that what God has for you is not enough.

What is the solution?

You need to first to Repent and then to Return

So that God can

Restore you to him and Rebuild your life.

Who is this story about?

It is about God’s people

It is about Judah

It is about each of us individually

It is about the Church

It is about any individual church

Outline of RRRR:

I. Historical Background: Deuteronomy, Jeremiah and Ezekiel

II. Ezra Part I God Uses Cyrus and Darius

III. Haggai Repent and Rebuild

IV. Zechariah Repent, Return, Restore, Rebuild

V. Esther

VI. Ezra Part II God Uses Artaxerxes

VII. Nehemiah Return and Rebuild

VIII. Malachi Repent and Restore

Deut 30:1-10 This is the theme of the post-exilic books.

**30**When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, **2**and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, **3**then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Deuteronomy+30%3A1-7&version=NIV#fen-NIV-5712a)] and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. **4**Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back.**5**He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.**6**The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.

**Historical Introduction: Ezra Ch 1:**

Ezra 1:1-3 – In order to fulfill the prophecies in Jeremiah 25, Jeremiah 29, Jeremiah 23 and 30…

Cyrus says it is time to repent, to return, to be restored to the land and to rebuild my city.

This really happened:

Cyrus Cylinder in British Museum in London -

“I returned the statues of the divine patrons of every land…to their own sanctuaries. When I found their sanctuaries in ruins, I rebuilt them. I also repatriated the people of these lands and rebuilt their houses. Finally, with Marduk’s permission, I allowed statues of the dive patrons of Sumer and Akkad to be returned to their own sanctuaries.”

This was all prophesied!!! When God decides, it happens!

Isaiah 44:6-8 Rhetorical question: Is there any god like me? Let them foretell like I do!

v. 9 The idols are nothing!!! Money is nothing! Jobs are nothing! Pleasure is nothing!

Isaiah 44:24-45:7 God says (in 710 BC) I will use Cyrus to do this!

v. 26 I will fulfill what I prophesy!

v. 26 It will be inhabited (return)

v. 26 rebuilt v. 48 Let it be rebuilt!!!

45:4-5 let my kingdom be restored! Cyrus mentioned some time before Hezekiah died in 698 (159 years before Cyrus captures Babylon)!

Is God awesome or what?

Ezra 1:1, 5, 6 - The Lord moved: the king, his people and their neighbors even helped them.

Ezra 1:7-8 Even the worldly people are helping God’s people to Return.

Get the vision! Crazy stuff will happen

Ezra 2:1 The first wave of those captive in Babylon returns. God is restoring his people to the land, as he restored us to him. Ezra 2:68-70 Time to rebuild.

Many freewill offerings. Catch the vision.

Ezra 3:1-6 Despite opposition, they begin to rebuild God’s kingdom by laying the foundation.

This is what we have done here. It is amazing. It is encouraging.

Ezra 3:7, 10-13 It was amazing. People came from Sacramento, SF, Fresno and even as far as LA to celebrate the great beginning.

But…

Ezra 4:1-5 Satan has not fallen asleep. Opposition will come.

v. 5 536-520 BC The work stopped.

Are we going to let that happen to us?

**Haggai Sermon**

Background:

As prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 39:5-7), Jeremiah and Ezekiel, God had used Nebuchadnezzar to send Judah into captivity. 586 BC

Jeremiah had prophesied 70 years of captivity (Jeremiah 25:11-14, Jeremiah 29:10)

538 BC Cyrus conquers Babylon. First return from exile. Authorizes the Jews to rebuild the temple. (Ezra Ch. 1)

536 BC. Foundation of the temple laid by Zerubbabel. (Ezra Ch. 3) A good start.

But opposition arises, the Jews get intimidated and stopped building. The foundation remained bare.

The “church” desperately needs revival.

520 BC A new Persian king, Darius, tells the Jews: Build the temple!

Ezra 6:6-12 This is embarrassing Darius is telling the Jews to finish the work that Cyrus had authorized. Get to work.

The purpose of Haggai and Zechariah is to see to the building of the temple.

Haggai a Jewish leader and a prophet (Ezra 5:1).

The Message of Haggai: Build up the house of the Lord, not your own house.

Submessage: Discouragement is not sufficient excuse to neglecting the work of the Lord.

Haggai 1:1-4

v. 1 In the second year of King Darius November, 520 BC

v. 2 “The time to build has not yet come.” We are too discouraged. We need to be strengthened first. The leadership is not what it needs to be. We do not have the budget. Covid has stopped us from sharing our faith. I am recovering from an illness. The economy is in deep trouble. I need to pay off my debts. I need to take care of my parents….

The Lord’s answer: v. 3 Hmmm…… This is very suspicious. You have been building up your own houses, yet you do not have the ability to build up my house?

When the church is doing well, we are fired up, but when things are not going so well, we use it as an excuse to attend to our own affairs.

Is it wrong to have paneled houses? Answer: Yes, if it means that the temple has no paneling!!! Yes, if it takes you away from the more important thing, which is building the temple.

“The temple” for us is the kingdom of God, but more specifically the local church.

Is it wrong to pursue an advanced degree? Is it wrong to put an addition on your house? Is it wrong to move to another city simply for a better job? Answer: Maybe. If it means abandoning the work on the temple, probably yes!

Haggai 1:5-11

v. 5 Give careful thought to your ways. How has it been going lately?

You planted much, but harvested only a little.

You eat, but never have enough.

You drink, but always seem thirsty.

You earn money, but never have enough.

Why? You sought personal wealth and gain. You received the opposite. If you want blessings in your life (Q: Who here wants blessings?) It is through giving first to the building of God’s house. “Indifference to the things of God produces calamity.”

v. 7 Again: Give careful thought to your life

Haggai 1:9 “You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little.” Can anyone relate?

v. 9 Why? “Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house.”

People are now emerging from their Covid-caves. Now is the time to get back into the action! We need to jump-start our evangelism, our outreach, our activities, our teen events, our singles events, our Bible talk events. Yes?

v. 10-11 God will withhold blessings if it will help us to repent, return, be restored and have the temple rebuilt.

So, what should we do? V. 8 “Go up into the mountain and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored.”

Application??? Share your faith. Study the Bible with people. Start a HOPE program on your own. Sponsor a Bible group in your home. Use your gifts to serve God’s people and the lost.

To the men: We are builders. We also need to take care of our families. I get it. God gets it! But… You can NEVER use that as an excuse for not building God’s house—for being involved in helping the church to grow. What have you done lately?

1:12-15. So the people set to work building the temple!

Zerubbabel: governor/royal family

Joshua: priest

Haggai: prophet Unified. Prophet, priest and “king” all worked together.

v. 13 God says to us, I am with you!!! That is what I want! That’s what I want to hear! I am actively blessing you.

They wanted blessings, but they had forgotten how to get them.

Haggai 2:1-9 and 15-23 But we will get discouraged along the way, so God provides encouragement for doing the work.

Haggai 2:1-5

God knows that doing the work can be tiring and discouraging. God knows that we can be discouraged by the size of the task and by our limited resources.

v. 3. This new temple seems puny. We remember the glory days. Our self-image is taking a nose dive here. We planted churches. Everyone was planning on going on a mission team. Sal and Lourdes share about all the Spanish studies they had.

v 4,5 Be strong, Alan. Be strong, Bella. Be strong, Sal and Lourdes. Be strong, Jamal and Maria!

v. 4 My spirit is with you just like it was in the glory days. Do not fear. Whether the beginnings are big or small means nothing to God. We can do amazing things if we will put off our materialism, do the work of the temple and rely on God. Do not be deceived by the outward circumstances.

Haggai 2:6-9 I love 2:6 “In a little while, I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry lands.”

Let’s say it together out loud!!! “In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. Do you believe it?

v. 7 All nations will come. A kingdom prophecy. If we repent, return….

v. 8 The silver and the gold….. the things you are giving up to the temple…. The things all your neighbors think is valuable. They are mine.

Oh, and I love v. 9 as well….

The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house.

We will plant a church in Merced in Fall, 2022. Who is willing to go?

We will have to raise up leaders to replace those who go! We will have to raise money to support the work. Who here will help to build the temple?

Historical side note. If you look at the temple, you might not agree, but the second temple period was far more spiritual and glorifying to God.

[Side note: Haggai 2:10-14 When a pure thing touches an unclean thing it becomes unclean, but when an unclean thing touches a pure thing it does not become pure. Sin is catching!]

Haggai 2:15-23

v. 15 Consider how you started. 42 members. No growth for many years, no campus group, no singles group, no teen group, discouraged, barely hanging in there.

Not to be negative, but…

v. 17 I was not blessing you.

v. 18 From this day on. April 25, 2021 From this day I will bless you.

v. 21 I am going to shake the heavens. Dozens at first, but then literally hundreds will come to this church. You will plant churches, not only in Merced, but also in Stockdale. You will revive the teen ministry. Your HOPE projects will be known all over Bakersfield.

v. 23 On that day, you will be my signet ring.

The end of the story:

Ezra 6:13-15 516 BC The temple was completed. Almost exactly 70 years after it was destroyed in 586 BC. God is great!!!

Listen to Haggai

Give careful thought to your ways. Have you been giving great effort to building up God’s house? Has God been blessing you as you had hoped?

Let’s go up into the hills, bring down wood, and, with the blessing of God, let’s build God’s house here in Bakersfield.