**Haggai Part III for SD North County**

**Historical Introduction: Ezra**

Ezra 1:1 538 BC “In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia – In order to fulfill the prophecies in Jeremiah 23, 25, Jeremiah 29 and 30…

Cyrus says it is time to return to the land and to rebuild the temple.

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 3:1-6 In the 7th month (536 BC) the foundation for the altar built, despite opposition.

Ezra 4:1-5 Satan has not fallen asleep. Opposition will come. Compromisers who are not devoted to God want to join the work. People get discouraged and stop building.

Read Ezra 4:4-5 536-520 BC The work stopped.

Are we going to let that happen to us?

Maybe some of us have felt that we, as a church, largely stopped building.

This is the background to both Haggai and to Zechariah.

Fast forward 16 years. The “church” desperately needs revival.

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

Ezra 6:1-12 This is embarrassing Darius is telling the Jews to finish the work that Cyrus had authorized. Get to work.

Illustration: When John Eule came to church he said, “I thought Christians share their faith.”

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

The Message of Haggai: It is time to build up the house of the Lord, not your own house.

Haggai 1:2 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. I am saving up for retirement.

Haggai 1:3 Is it time to live in your paneled houses? Hmmm…… This is very suspicious. Do you think I am that stupid?

You found time to earn a masters degree to build your career.

You found the money and time to remodel your kitchen.

You have time to spend 3.5 hours watching the superbowl!

We can fool ourselves on such things, but we cannot fool God!

Haggai 1:5 (for the first of three times) “Give careful thought to your ways.”

You plant but have harvested little.

You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.

Maybe you can relate. God cannot be mocked.

Haggai 1:7 Give careful thought to your ways again.

I did and I said to myself: After I retire, then I will really serve you. I would go on that mission team, but I need to live near my grandchildren, so maybe not even then.

I would study the Bible with a lot of students at CSUSM, but I am really busy with my degree. I just do not have time to build up the church right now.

“Indifference to the things of God produces calamity.”

God: Haggai 1:8 Stop!!!!! Here’s what I want you to do: Stop working on your remodel, stop putting your education, grandchildren, etc. first and let’s do this:

“Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build my 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.

Jan and I can relate to this. We were in SD, owning two homes, set up for retirement. Comfortable. Our son here, our daughter in LA, our other daughter and grandkids reasonably close by.

But then I got the call to go to Bakersfield.

Joke: By the way, that was a great plan for us to finally become true empty-nesters.

We did not go there for the scenery, the food, the weather. We went there to build God’s house. Great for sharing your faith.

Then 2-1/2 years ago we decided someone needs to start planting churches in California again. Time to choose leaders. Guess what.

Sold our house, and moved to Merced.

Our children are not thrilled. Do we regret getting as much time with grandchildren as we like?

Haggai 1:12-15 Cool stuff about Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest, as well as Haggai the prophet working together. The form a plan.

Haggai: God says “I am with you,” so let’s start building. They began the work. The put together a mission team to Merced or to Stockton, or started a new ministry in the local high school.

Our text:

Haggai 2:3-4 We move to Merced, expecting to put together a bit mission team. What did we get? 3 people!!!!

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.

God says: Do not worry about the amount of resources you have. Be strong, John, Be strong Jan. Be strong, Zane, Be strong Monica. Big or small beginnings mean nothing to God.

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?

When? Later this year. I am going to shake things up!

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. The money will be there. We will have a building soon.

Story about us having a place to meet for $50.

Oh, and I love v. 9 as well…. God has great plans for you.

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

We will plant a church in Stockton in 2025. 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?

Haggai 2:10-14 .

“parable” of consecrated and defiled flesh.

Does coming into contact with clean meat make you clean? No!

Does coming into contact with defiled flesh make you defiled? Yes!

Defilement is a thing. Holiness is a lack of a thing. Holiness is purity and lack of defilement. (heat is a thing, cold is not a thing)

The message: sin in general, but especially materialism are contagious. Holiness in not contagious. We need to deal with materialism before God will bless our work. Get the greed and selfishness out of the church!

The good news: If we will repent, then GOD WILL BLESS US! (2:19)

Haggai 2:15-19

v. 15 “Give careful thought to your ways” 3rd time! Consider how you started. Four members. No baptisms for 9 months. Eight at church. No singles group, no teen group, discouraged, barely hanging in there.

Not to be negative, but…

v. 17 Things were not going well. I was not blessing you.

v. 18 From this day on. Feb 11, 2024, From this day I will bless you.

Haggai 2:20-23

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 Stockton, Modesto and Visalia. You will build a teen ministry, a singles ministry and a marrieds ministry. Your HOPE projects will be known all over the Central Valley. You will take that singles ministry which is not doing that great, and make it into an amazing ministry.

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!!!

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 San Marcos.Will you join us in the work?