

Minor Prophets, Major Messages | Haggai: Get Your Priorities Straight

Use with the full teaching and a Bible. Read or watch first, complete the questions, then discuss and apply. For family study, an adult can select suitable portions and accept spoken answers.

Test the teaching's explanations against the cited passages. Keep the answer key and facilitator notes separate when distributing learner pages.

[Open the full teaching](#)

Teaching summary

This teaching examines Haggai's call to align daily priorities with God's will. After Babylon destroyed the temple and exiled Judah, Persia conquered Babylon and Cyrus permitted the exiles to return and rebuild. Construction eventually stopped amid severe hardship. Haggai confronted the people's willingness to invest in their own paneled houses while leaving God's house in ruins. Their neglect, rather than merely their lack of resources, lay at the heart of the problem.

Haggai linked the people's poor harvests, drought, and unsatisfying labor with their disobedience. He urged them to consider their ways and resume building so that YHWH would be honored. The people responded and returned to the work. When the modest appearance of the new temple discouraged them, Haggai called them to be strong because God's Spirit remained among them. He promised greater future glory and peace. The teaching relates the nations' treasures to Persian support and later renovations funded with resources from the Roman Empire.

Haggai then questioned the priests about ritual purity. Holy food carried in a garment did not make other food holy through subsequent contact, while uncleanness associated with a corpse could spread. He used this distinction to picture the defiled condition of the people's work and offerings during their neglect. Their renewed obedience marked a change: they could now look forward to blessing. The lesson connects repentance with actively doing the work God had commanded, rather than relying on religious offerings alone.

The book closes with a promise to Zerubbabel, Judah's governor, that God would overturn kingdoms and make him like a signet ring. Since a king's ring authenticated his authority, the image identifies Zerubbabel as a representative of YHWH's authority and points toward a future ruler. The teaching connects this promise with Yeshua, the ultimate Davidic king, who received all authority in heaven and on earth. His authority grounds the command to make disciples and teach them to obey his instruction.

Haggai's call to build God's house is applied to the building of God's spiritual temple. In 1 Peter 2:4-5, believers joined to Yeshua become living stones in a spiritual house. Making disciples and teaching God's ways therefore take priority over the distractions that consume ordinary life. Yeshua's zeal for the physical temple also affirms its importance: calling himself greater than the temple does not mean he regarded it as worthless. He honored it as his Father's house.

The teaching extends Haggai's hope by comparison with Ezekiel's vision of a future temple filled with YHWH's glory. Haggai originally compares the rebuilt temple with its former glory; the further application to a future temple belongs to the teaching's interpretation. This hope should encourage present faithfulness. We can examine neglected responsibilities, build up YHWH's people, and make disciples while awaiting the Messiah's return, without deriving a date or a complete future timetable from this comparison.

Summary points

- Haggai confronted people who improved their own homes while neglecting God's temple.
- Judah's economic hardship was connected with its disobedience in Haggai's message.
- The people responded to God's rebuke by resuming construction.
- God's continuing presence encouraged them when the new temple seemed unimpressive.
- The promised greater glory gave hope beyond present appearances.
- The purity illustration exposed the defiled condition of work and offerings during disobedience.
- Zerubbabel's signet-ring image represents authority given by YHWH.
- Yeshua's authority supports the call to make disciples and teach obedience.
- Believers build God's spiritual house as people become disciples and walk in his ways.
- Hope for the future kingdom and temple should strengthen faithful work today.

Fill in the blank

Use the teaching and the cited Bible passages. Equivalent wording is welcome when it expresses the same meaning.

Basic

1. Haggai urged the people to consider their _____.
2. The people had neglected God's house while investing in their own _____.
3. After hearing the rebuke, the people resumed building the _____.
4. God assured the discouraged builders that his _____ remained among them.
5. Believers are described in 1 Peter 2 as living _____ in a spiritual house.
6. Building God's spiritual temple includes making _____ of the nations.

Challenging

1. The Persian king who permitted the exiles to return was _____.
2. Haggai compared earned wages to money placed in a bag with _____.
3. In the purity illustration, contact with a dead _____ made a person unclean.
4. YHWH promised to make Zerubbabel like a _____.
5. The prophet whose future temple vision is connected with Haggai's hope is _____.
6. Yeshua announces all authority in heaven and on earth in Matthew _____.

Group discussion

Discuss respectfully and support answers from the passages. Use these lines for brief notes or a notebook for longer responses.

1. How did the people's use of time and resources reveal their priorities?

2. Why did Haggai address their spiritual neglect when they were facing economic hardship?

3. How did God's presence and promises answer discouragement over the temple's appearance?

4. What does the purity illustration show about offerings made while neglecting obedience?

5. How does the teaching connect Zerubbabel's signet ring with Yeshua's authority and the mission to make disciples?

6. What would prioritizing the building of God's spiritual house look like in your present responsibilities?

Answer key

For the leader or parent. Answers follow the teaching and the passages. Accept equivalent wording that expresses the same meaning.

Basic

1. ways

Haggai 1:5, 7

2. houses (also: homes)

Haggai 1:4, 9

3. temple (also: house of YHWH, house of God)

Haggai 1:12-15

4. Spirit

Haggai 2:5

5. stones

1 Peter 2:4-5

6. disciples

Matthew 28:19-20

Challenging

1. Cyrus (also: Cyrus of Persia)

Ezra 1:1-4

2. holes

Haggai 1:6

3. body (also: person)

Haggai 2:13

4. signet ring (also: signet, seal)

Haggai 2:23

5. Ezekiel

Teaching Interesting Connections; Ezekiel 43:1-4

6. 28:18 (also: 28:18-20)

Matthew 28:18

Facilitator notes

These responses give direction for discussion. They are not a test of identical wording. Invite participants to explain the passages and consider a faithful practical response.

1. They invested in paneled houses while YHWH's house remained ruined. Haggai asks them to consider that contrast and then gives a concrete task: bring wood and build. We can examine our own priorities without assuming that every ordinary household responsibility is a distraction from serving God.

Haggai 1:3-9

2. For this community, Haggai explicitly links drought and frustrated labor to neglect of YHWH's house. The proper response was the work he had commanded. This specific prophetic explanation is not a license to diagnose every poor person's hardship as disobedience or promise wealth for religious activity.

Haggai 1:5-11; 2:15-19

3. YHWH calls the builders to be strong and work because he is with them and his Spirit remains among them. The promise of greater glory and peace gives hope beyond present appearances. Their small beginning is meaningful because of his presence and purpose.

Haggai 2:3-9

4. The priests distinguish how holiness and corpse-related uncleanness operate in the stated examples. Haggai uses that distinction to expose the defiled work and offerings of a disobedient people. Religious offerings cannot make neglect faithful. The analogy does not mean every case of ritual uncleanness is a moral sin.

Haggai 2:11-19; Numbers 19:22

5. A signet authenticates authority, and the teaching reads Zerubbabel as pointing toward the Davidic Messiah. Yeshua declares that all authority has been given to him, then commands the nations' discipleship. The mission rests on his authority and includes teaching what he commanded.

Haggai 2:20-23; Matthew 28:18-20

6. We can identify a neglected responsibility and one practical way to strengthen another disciple through teaching, encouragement, hospitality, or help. First Peter places the spiritual house in relationship with Yeshua. Our examples should fit our circumstances and should not become compulsory programs or demands for money.

1 Peter 2:4-5; Matthew 28:19-20; Haggai 1:7-8

Facilitator reminders

Haggai's explanation of drought is a specific prophetic judgment on that community, not a universal diagnosis of financial hardship. Do not turn the study into a fundraising promise that donations buy blessing.

Ritual uncleanness and moral guilt are distinct categories; Haggai deliberately uses one as an analogy for the other. Believers as a spiritual house does not cancel the teaching's expectation of restored earthly worship or supplement Yeshua's atonement.

Put it into practice

Choose one response to the passages. What will we do, and when will we revisit it? Share only what you are comfortable sharing.