

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 40 w/Answers

Haggai and Zechariah

Today, we begin our examination of the final three Minor Prophets, the three who ministered to the Jews following the Babylonian exile. Known as the "post-exilic Prophets", the messages of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi complete the books of the Old Testament and focus on the period known as the "restoration period", when God was returning the Jews from captivity to the Promise Land. Beginning with the Assyrian victory over the Northern Kingdom in 722 BC, followed by the Babylonian captivity of the Southern Kingdom in 586 BC, God's chosen people ended their captivity in 536 BC with the return of the first 50,000 people back to Jerusalem.

The books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther are the three historical books of the Bible that have the same setting as that for these three prophets. Irving L. Jensen in his book, Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament, tells us: "... the main appeal of Haggai and Zechariah was to inspire the Jews to finish building the Temple which had been discontinued in 534 BC, and the burden of Malachi was the tragic apostasy of God's people. Whatever there was of revival and spiritual restoration in Israel's return from exile had, by Malachi's time, degenerated to spiritual coldness with threat of disaster. It is not without significance that the last word of Malachi, and therefore of our Old Testament, is the awful word 'curse'. (Malachi 4:6)"

In this lesson, we will consider the two books written by Haggai and Zechariah, whose messages were to inspire the people of Israel to rebuild the Temple and to rebuild their relationship with God who would be sending the promised Messiah. George L. Robinson has called the Book of Zechariah the "most messianic, the most truly apocalyptic, and eschatological of all the writings of the Old Testament." (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Online).

Read the books of Haggai and Zechariah; then answer the following:

1. What decree ended the Babylonian captivity and called for the Jews to return to Jerusalem? (see Ezra 1:2-4)
 - a. ANSWER: The decree of Cyrus King of Persia. The Persians conquered the Babylonians in 539 BC and issued a decree that allowed the Jews to return home. Referenced in the book *Ancient Israel* edited by Hershel Shanks, it reads: "When Cyrus the Great, the Achaemenid ruler of Persia, conquered Babylon in 539 BCE, the Persians succeeded the Babylonians as the major imperial power of the Near East. In contrast to their Assyrian and Babylonian predecessors, the Achaemenid Persians presented themselves to their subject states as a benevolent power concerned not just with garnering taxes but also with maintaining peace and order throughout the empire. The territories formerly administered by the Assyrians and Babylonians were reorganized into a system of satrapies and provinces; local governments were strengthened; roads and systems of communication were developed; and-most important to the Jews-displaced and exiled peoples were encouraged to return to their ancestral homelands and to reestablish local religious and political institutions in order to play supportive roles in this new concept of empire."
2. God granted the Jews return to Jerusalem for three purposes as noted by Ezra in Ezra 9:9. What were these three purposes?
 - a. ANSWER 1: "To set up the house of our God"
 - b. ANSWER 2: "To repair its ruins"
 - c. ANSWER 3: "To give us protection in Judea and Jerusalem."
3. What was the main subject of Haggai's message?
 - a. ANSWER: The completion of the Temple.

4. What were the main subjects of Zechariah's message?
 - a. (Zech 1:2-3)
 - i. ANSWER: Bringing about a spiritual revival.
 - b. (Zech 1:16 and 4:9)
 - i. ANSWER: Inspiring the people to complete the Temple building.
 - c. (Zech 2:13)
 - i. ANSWER: Providing comfort and consolation during the severe trials that the Jews were experiencing.
 - d. (1 John 3:2-3)
 - i. ANSWER: Providing hope in the anticipation of the coming Messiah.
5. Haggai had a co-worker during this time. Who was it? (see Ezra 5:1 & 6:14)
 - a. ANSWER: Zechariah
6. Haggai delivered four messages or sermons. Over what period of time did he deliver them?
 - a. ANSWER: 4 months
7. Zechariah delivered his messianic and apocalyptic messages over what period of time?
 - a. ANSWER: He delivered these messages over the four-year period of the rebuilding of the Temple. Thus we can see that Haggai's ministry was very short but very significant, as it got the rebuilding of the Temple project restarted. Then Zechariah's ministry began and continued through the four years it took to complete the rebuilding of the Temple.
8. Complete the following timeline:
 - a. 536 BC (Ezra 2:64-67)
 - i. ANSWER: First Jews return from Babylonian exile.
 - b. 536-535 BC (Ezra 3:1-6)
 - i. ANSWER: Altar for burnt offerings is built on the ruins of the Temple.
 - c. 535-534 BC (Ezra 4:24)
 - i. ANSWER: Work on the Temple ceases.
 - d. 520 BC (Ezra 5:1, Haggai 1:1)
 - i. ANSWER: Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews.
 - e. 520 BC (Ezra 5:2, Haggai 1:14-15)
 - i. ANSWER: The Temple rebuilding project is resumed.
 - f. 516 BC (Ezra 6:14-15)
 - i. ANSWER: The Temple rebuilding project is completed.

In this study, God's Holy Word speaks to each of us about the importance of establishing and keeping the right priorities when it comes to living the life that Christ wants us to live. If we are living in God's will, Christ tells us that our first priority is to seek first the Kingdom of God. Are we doing that today? Or, have we allowed the building and improvement of our homes, family activities, jobs, careers and other seemingly important things to push God aside or somewhat removed from the top of our list of priorities? The fact is that we cannot succeed at any of those other things, including raising our family, having a successful career, or planning for the future without God being preeminent.

Let's pray this week that God will open our eyes to the right priorities and guide us in reestablishing a right relationship with Him.

Have a great week everyone, and thanks for studying with us.

In Christ,

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