



The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

Haggai

Chapters 1-2

“Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?” –Haggai 1:4

Get to Work!

The prophet Haggai had a very simple message for the people of God during the days of the early restoration period (520BC): “Get to work!” The task of rebuilding the temple of the Lord was monumental and overwhelming. The people were putting it off (1:2)

The people who had returned to Jerusalem from exile were not to be complacent with a half-hearted rebuilding effort. So far they had focused on their own homes and economic livelihoods to the exclusion of the house of the Lord and his holy worship. So not only was there a construction project to complete, there was also heart work to be done. The concern of Haggai is that so long as the people do give the Lord’s house and its Holy worship the attentive focus and work that the Lord demands, their lives would continue to be marked with futility:

Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. 6 You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes. –Haggai 1:5-6

The prophet’s words not only give a warning against inattentiveness to the task, they also inspire a vision of the LORD’s abundant blessing. He would shake the heavens and earth and release its wealth! (2:6-8) The Lord promised that the “latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former!”(2:9).The call to the people was not only to work on the physical temple, but also to work on their internal lives. The people’s work was marked with futility because they had become unclean. (2:10-19) The LORD promised that he would bless them with abundance (2:19), destroy their enemies (2:20-22) and restore the Davidic monarchy “like a signet ring” (2:23).

Literary Structure of Haggai 1-2

Futility in Not Rebuilding the House of the Lord	Hag. 1
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Abundance in Rebuilding the House of the Lord	Hag 2
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Zechariah

Chapters 1-14

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Return to me, and I will return to you!

Zechariah and Haggai were both preaching following the Cyrus Edict (536BC), which freed the Israelites from their Babylonian captivity and allowed them to return Jerusalem to rebuild their capital city and the temple of the Lord. Haggai and Zechariah both began their preaching ministries in 520 BC during the governorship of Ezra.

The foundation of the Temple had been laid in short order. However, opposition and personal discouragement had led to an abandonment of the effort to rebuild the Temple of the Lord. Zechariah’s message of apocalyptic visions and signs is to encourage the people to see the grand plan of The LORD of Hosts. God is sovereign and will restore and bring his glory back to Jerusalem through his messianic king.

The call to the people is to draw near to the Lord of Hosts:

Therefore say to them, Thus declares the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. –Zech. 1:3

Literary Structure

Zechariah	Chapters 1-14
Eight Visions and Four Messages	1-8
The Shepherd-King Comes and is Rejected	9-11
The Shepherd-King Comes and Conquers	12-14

Eight Visions and Four Messages (1-8)

The prophet begins his work with eight apocalyptic visions and four messages. These visions provide needed perspective to a small beaten and discouraged people of God. The visions and messages serve to provide hope and vision to the people.



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And say to him, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord. It is he who shall build the temple of the Lord and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."' --Zech. 6:12-13

Zechariah's Eight Visions⁴²

#	Subject	Lesson
1	The 4 Horsemen among the Myrtle Trees (1:7-17)	YHWH's Sovereignty over Israel's Restoration
2	The Four Horns and the Four Smiths (1:18-21)	The Triumph of Israel over her enemies
3	The Surveyor (2)	Preparations for Israel's Renewal
4	The Cleansing and Restoration of Joshua (3)	The Renewal of Israel's Priestly Ministry
5	The Gold Lampstand and the two Olive Trees (4)	Israel's testimony under Messiah as Priest and King
6	The Flying Scroll (5:1-4)	Judgment on Israel for Covenant Disobedience
7	Woman in the Basket (5:5-11)	The Return of Evil to Babylon
8	The Four Chariots (6:1-8)	Judgment on Israel's Enemies

While the visions all provide needed perspective of God's sovereign power and authority over all nations, visions 4 and 5 provide the messianic hope in a renewed messianic priesthood and monarchy. These two visions will be combined in a powerful sign in chapter 6:9-15 where Joshua the priest is given a king's crown. The prophet declares that this is a sign of the coming "Branch" who will be a temple building messianic priestly-king.

Chapter 7 of Zechariah is the call to faithfulness to the covenant of the Lord. The remainder of the book focuses on the promise of the messiah who will be first rejected (9-11) and then will reign (12-14).

⁴² Dr. Constable's Notes on Zechariah (2013 edition) p. 42



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Malachi

Chapters 1-4

A Message of Warning!

The prophet Malachi’s name means “my messenger”. His words stand as a message of warning against personal sin and corruption. The call is to repentance.

As a prophet speaking after the rebuilding of the temple (516BC), Malachi addresses the same concerns voiced during the governorships of Ezra and Nehemiah. His message specifically addresses sin within the restored people of God. He attacks corruption of the priesthood (Mal. 1:6-2:9), of divorce and marriage to idolaters (2:10-12), of abuse to the poor and needy (3:5) and a failure to bring the full tithe into the Lord’s temple (3:8-10).

Literary Structure

Malachi’s Sixfold Message of Renewed Covenant Fidelity

1	1-2-5	Quit the Gripping: Hypocrisy in the face of God’s Love	Remember the Law of Moses
2	1:6-2:9	Quit Violating the Covenant: Priestly Corruption	
3	2:10-16	Quit being Faithless: Divorce and marriage to foreigners	
4	2:17-3:5	Quit Grumbling: “The Messenger of the Covenant” is Coming	Remember the Promise of Elijah and the Day of the Lord
5	3:6-12	Quit Holding Back from God: Give the Full Tithe	
6	3:13-4:3	Quit Grumbling: Evil Doers will be Punished	
End	4:4-6	Remember the Law, remember Elijah and the Day of the Lord	