

## The Time is Now – Week 1

Today we are starting a brand new message series. It's on the Old Testament Book of Haggai. If you want to turn with me there in your Bibles, go ahead and grab Haggai. Some of you are sweating right now going, "Uh-oh. Where is Haggai?" I'll tell you where it is. It's after Zephaniah and before Zechariah. That help? There's another reason to thank God for the YouVersion Bible app. We're going to be in Haggai today and before we get into it, I wanted to start by acknowledging I know so often you can wake up in a certain stage of life and have this real unsettling and sinking feeling. You think by this point in my life, I just expected more. I thought by the time that I reached this whatever this is, that there'd be something different or something better. I'm kind of surprised that this is where I am.

It could happen really at any stage. You don't have to even wait until you're older. It could be that you're in college and you think by this time in college, I thought I would know what I wanted to do with my life and I don't have a clue. It might be that you're out of college and you got a degree and you thought since I have a degree, I'd have a real job with real benefits and instead, I'm doing something that seems to be way beneath my capacity. I thought there'd be more. It might be that you're such and such age and you just thought I certainly would've been married by now and I'm not married or you are married and you thought I would've had a good marriage and you don't really like your marriage the way you should. Then you thought we'll have kids and that will fill the void and now you have kids and you're simply busy and broke. You're thinking I thought there would be something more.

I know some people who would say, "I'm going to try religion." and so we try to do the religious thing and then life doesn't really change and they wake up and think, I really thought that by this point, there'd be something more, something better, or something different.

This, quite honestly, was the mood during the time when Haggai was written. The people were saying, "I really, really thought we would be in much different shape than we are now," .... and so before we dive into the Book of Haggai, what I want to do is I want to give you the backstory before we look at the main story. We'll look at the prequel and then we'll look at the main movie, if you will.

Let's go back to the reign of King Solomon is where we'll start and I'll give you the real quick overview. During the fourth year of King Solomon's reign, King Solomon started construction on the most magnificent temple for God. This temple was more glorious than you could ever imagine. People from all over the world traveled just to see this temple and offer their worship to God. It was completely amazing, but after King Solomon died, the people's hearts turned away from God. They got distracted, like people often do, and they started worshiping idols. God allowed a series of events to take place in order to pull the people's hearts back to Himself.... Just to make it easy to follow, I put in your notes three bullet points to give you the high points. If you want to look at those, we'll just look at them briefly.

**In 587 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar and his army crushed the Southern Kingdom of Judah, destroying the temple.** Not only was it completely humiliating, they destroyed the whole city, grabbed all these people, but to add insult to injury, they destroyed the house where God dwelt, stripping away the spiritual identity of the Jewish people and they're completely devastated. The next bullet point says that **the Jews were taken into captivity for decades**, specifically, 50 years. Technically 70 because they were already in captivity for a while before the destruction of the temple, but for 50 years after the temple and on they were in captivity.

Now we often read this and it just doesn't quite register in our minds, like yeah, they were taken into captivity. Let me try to bring up modern context to you. Imagine this... some enemy nation develops massive nuclear power and they say, "We're going to take out five major US cities and we're going to take out ten cities of your ally countries unless your government surrenders to us." The president and the council leaders meet and they think, "Well, we can't retaliate. This will start massive global nuclear war and so the only thing we can do is surrender." All of the government leaders step down and suddenly, we're all no longer citizens of our nation. Now we're captives to somebody else. We can't worship as we want. We can't go anywhere we want. We're completely in bondage for 50 years, okay. I'm not even 50 years of age, so all my children would've been born in captivity and that's essentially all we know, so that's the state of what's going on here. If you can put yourself in their minds, this is our worst nightmare come true and it just doesn't end.

Then you could only imagine the relief and the good news when **in 538 BC, about 50,000 people are allowed to travel back to Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, to rebuild.** Finally, after five decades, we get to go back to our home. We get to rebuild a house for our God. We get to have our own place again and you could only imagine the relief and the excitement. The Jewish people went back and they started to rebuild the temple for God. They built the foundation and they built the altar. Then the Samaritans came in and opposed their work and suddenly, they're like, "Oh, no. This just got hard. This just got difficult. It must not be the right time because this is not easy for us to do." Okay.

That is the backstory, so for 14 years, people didn't work on the temple. For five decades, that's all they thought about and when it got difficult, for 14 years they put the project on hold and instead of working on God's house, guess what they did? They actually started building their own houses and they built very, very nice houses and they forgot about God's house, so what God did is he raised up the prophet Haggai to call the people back to rebuild the temple for God. Does that make sense?

Good. The rest of you, if you're confused, sorry, we're moving on! We're going to dive in.

**Haggai 1:2**

I find this kind of humorous, because almost everywhere else in the Old Testament, when God talks about His people, He calls them My people.

In this case, He does what my wife does to me when our kids do something wrong. I don't know if this happens at your house, but God's not saying, My people, like these people. These people did this and that's what Jen does when I come home and our kids do something wrong. She's like, "You're not going to believe what your kids did today." I'm like, "If my memory serves me correctly, you were there with me when these kids were conceived.

God's like, "These people, they're not My people, these people are saying the time is not now to build My temple. The time is not now." Now why did they think the time wasn't now? They thought the time wasn't now because they received opposition. The Samaritans were opposing them. What's so funny is so often, whenever we receive opposition, we think must not be God's will. It just got hard. This is difficult.... We need to understand that the closer we get to doing something that matters to the heart of God, the more likely we are to face opposition.

You see, receiving opposition isn't a sign that God's against you. A lot of times, it's a sign that you're doing what God wants you to do. That's why I always tell people, "I don't really worry when people are opposing me. I worry when no one is," right, because then I'm not doing much for the glory of God. The moment you start to move forward and do something and be obedient to what God called you to do, mark it down. There's very likely spiritual opposition on the way. When you find yourself being obedient to God it gets difficult and it gets challenging.

One simple thought if you're taking notes is this. With God's help, **Choose the hard right over the easy wrong.** Over and over and over again, just tell yourself, "God, with Your help, enable, empower me to choose the hard right over the easy wrong."

It would be so easy to quit focusing on God and start focusing on myself. It would be hard and right to continue building the temple... **Choose the hard right over the easy wrong.** It would be so easy, when someone hurts your feelings, to hold a grudge, to be angry at them, but it's hard and right to forgive others as Christ has forgiven you. It's easy to continue to spend more than you have and just buy whatever you want and to go into debt. It's hard and it's right to begin to climb out of debt, live beneath your means, and live in such a way you can be massively generous with other people. It's so easy to give up. It's so easy to not make a difference, but we, as followers of Jesus, with the help of God, we'll choose the hard right over the easy wrong. This is what the prophet is going to help empower the people to do. He essentially tells them... **the time is now!**

Now for many of you, I want you to think, just for a moment, and ask yourself, "Is there some unfinished assignment in your life." I want you to think and then I want you to experience the rest of this message through the lens of what might be an unfinished assignment for you, so just think back. It could've been yesterday. It could've been a month ago. It could've been 14 years ago, or 50 years ago, where you believe God put something on your heart.

I'm supposed to reach out to this person and share my faith with them. Oh, but that would be hard and difficult, so you chose the easy way out. I am supposed to really work on honoring God with my body and getting in shape, but it was hard and so you didn't do it. I felt like I was supposed to serve somewhere in church. I was supposed to start a ministry. I was supposed to give something away to somebody. There was something that I felt like I was supposed to do. I was supposed to start journaling. I felt like I was supposed to start writing a book.

There's something on your heart that you really felt like it was a burden, most likely from God, but you didn't do it. Think about that for a moment and if God shows you something, I want you to listen to the rest of the message through what might be that unfinished assignment. For many of you, God may speak to you in the very same way He spoke to the people in the time of Haggai. He's going to say, "The time is now. The time is now."

### Haggai 1:3-5

According to some commentaries that I read, basically, this was high-end living. This was like your granite countertops. Your crown molding. You got the best TV in the house. You've got all this kind of stuff and God is not against us having nice things. He's against us putting nice things ahead of Him.

At this point, the people are putting their own comfort ahead of God's house and God's priority. He says, "Give careful thought to your ways," and so I would just raise the question right now as you look at, maybe, an unfinished assignment and ask yourself are you putting your own comfort ahead of His calling? Are you trying to make a name more than you're trying to make a difference? Are you putting your house before His house? Are you consumed with yourself instead of being consumed with God and showing His love to other people?

Is there something that you're putting ahead of God? Give careful thought to your ways. **God wants us to choose the hard right over the easy wrong.**

Some of you right now, there will be something in your life where you know you're supposed to do it. God's called you to do it and you're taking the easy wrong when God say, "Hey, choose the hard right. The time is now."

I want to show you a verse that to me, is haunting, to imagine that things have changed so little from 500 years before Christ. This is what God says and I guarantee you there are many of you here who say, "I feel exactly like this."

## Haggai 1:6

### Does that strike you like it does me?

Let me give you the modern translation. You're working your tail off and you still don't feel like you have anything. You're pouring your life into some career and it just feels empty and hollow. You have more than you've ever had before and you still don't feel satisfied. You entertain yourself. You go to games. You go to movies. You eat out. Yet there's still a longing for something more. Dr. Phil may look at you and say, "Now how's that working for you," right?

Give careful thought to your ways. Think about it. Are you putting your house ahead of God's house? Is there some unfinished business? God led you to do something and you did not do it.

### Haggai 1:7

He gives us another reminder! This must be important if he mentions it 2 times!

### Haggai 1:8

Basically, what He's doing is He's breaking it down into three simple steps to build the temple.

**#1 Go up into the mountains.**

**#2 Bring down the timber.**

**#3 Build my House.**

Let me say it again in case you missed that. This is what God said to do. "Go up to the mountains, bring down the timber, and build My house."

Now I know that was overwhelming and you probably didn't have time to take it in, so let me just say it again, I want you to ... "This is how much I love you. I'm going to make it this simple. Okay, ready? Here's what I want you to do. Go up to the mountain, bring down the timber, and build My house." Do I need to say it again because I will!

Go up to the mountain. Now wait a minute. Going up to the mountain, that's kind of hard. That's like have you seen that mountain? That's hard. **Choose the hard right over the easy wrong.** Bring down the timber. Oh, no, that's hard again. **Choose the hard right over the easy wrong.** Come down and build the temple.... step by step, God says, step by step...Here's one, two, three.

Here's a problem. So many of us are going, "God, what about steps four, five, and six? I need the details, but who's going to pay for this and how is it going to happen and where are we going to go and what's going to go on and who's going to be there? Am I going to get a tax write off for this? I need to know details, God. How much time is it going to take and how long do I have to do this and how's it going to work out? Am I going to get my name on the little temple because if I don't get my name on the temple, then I'm not going to feel good about it. I need steps four, five, and six."

God says, "Don't worry about steps four, five, and six, just do one, two, and three. My word is a lamp unto your feet, a light unto your path." If His word is a lamp unto our feet, He may show us steps one, two, and three and we won't see four, five, and six until we take one, two, and three.

You see, you have to do what God showed you first before He reveals more to you. Sometimes you say, "I want the details." God says, "You can't handle the details. I'll give you what you need when you get there, but you need to take the first step."

\*I really want to get in better shape, but I don't even know where to start?... Start eating healthy. Get eight hours of sleep. Start exercising.

\*I want to get out of debt, but I don't even know where to start?... Get some help from somebody who knows what they're doing. Spend less than you earn. Start paying down your debt.

\*My marriage isn't really very good and I'm not quite sure what to do about it?... Humble yourself. Apologize for what you've done wrong. Do what you used to do, date, write love notes, buy flowers, kiss, blah, blah, blah, do whatever. Do what you used to.

**What do I do? "Go up to the mountain. Bring down the timber. Build My house. Step by step, step by step."**

You see, this is what it means to walk by the spirit. That's what we're commanded to do as followers of Jesus. We want to walk by his side. I want to know details. I want God to show me everything. God's not going to show you step four, five, and six until you take steps one, two, and three, so there's an unfinished assignment. What do I do?

If you're taking notes...very simply **The way to get started is to quit talking and start doing.**

That's it. Just quit thinking about it, quit talking about it, and go up to the mountain today. Do something today. Do the next thing that God has showed you and do it today. Be faithful to God today.