

Haggai

2020-02-23

Phil Kayser

Introduction - misapplications of this passage to building programs

I was once a member of a church that took on huge debt in order to have a very attractive and welcoming building. And I will admit that it was a gorgeous building, but the amount of debt scared me. And it scared some people enough, that they left the church. Well, that put even more pressure on the church. Since this pastor had previously preached against tithing as being unbiblical and that people needed to give out of love, he couldn't count on a tithe for his budget, so he started preaching on love - a lot. How much do you love the Lord? Only 10%. Jesus said our love should be so great that we should be willing to give away half our savings. He got that misapplication from the place where Christ told the person with two shirts to give one shirt to the one who had none. Well, that is quite a far stretch from giving 50% of what you own to a destitute naked person to giving 50% of what you own to a very wealthy church that is in a bind simply because of poor stewardship. Another time he preached on Haggai and implied that until the church was paid for, we shouldn't be focusing our own houses. That is such bad exegesis.

And what that church did is being done all across the states. And pastors justify it by saying, Haggai 1:4 does after all say, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" Build the temple, then you can build your homes. And my response is, "Hey, your church is not the temple." One website declared "The Prophet Haggai Should be Patron Saint of Parish Fundraising."

And I say, "No. He should be the patron saint of kingdom vision." Haggai chapter 1 is not about making God's kingdom the top priority and then treating everything else as if it is outside the kingdom. The temple was the symbol of God's kingship over everything. Haggai is about seeing everything we do as being a kingdom stewardship. And yes, Haggai 1:8 says, "Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, *that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified.*" The application Haggai makes is that God's glory must be our passion, not our glorious pursuits. God's pleasure must be what we seek, not our own pursuit of independent pleasure. God's kingdom and righteousness must be sought and Jesus guarantees that when we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then He will bless us with everything that we need just as Haggai guaranteed that these people would be blessed when their passion was to lift up God's glory, His pleasure, and His kingdom. And as we go through the whole book, I think you will see that. There is no sacred secular divide.

Historical background (Ezra 4-6)

Sometimes it is helpful to look at the historical background. If you turn to Ezra 4 I will show you what that is. Ezra 4:1 begins,

1 Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the descendants of the captivity were building the temple of the LORD God of Israel, 2 they came to Zerubbabel and the heads of the fathers' houses, and said to them, "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do; and we have sacrificed to Him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assyria, who brought us here."

Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest seem almost rude in rejecting this help, but they realized two things. First, these Samaritans were theological liberals who were trying to infiltrate and undermine. It was a demonic desire to join. And second, God was a mascot for them, not their Lord. If they served God, maybe God would serve them. They did not see all of their life as needing to be subject to God's kingship. So the leaders said, No.

3 But Zerubbabel and Jeshua and the rest of the heads of the fathers' houses of Israel said to them, "You may do nothing with us to build a house for our God; but we alone will build to the LORD God of Israel, as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us."

When infiltration did not work, the same people sought to oppose the building of the temple very overtly. And this opposition showed where their hearts were really at. They were not really interested in serving God and being stewards of His kingdom. Verses 4-5 says,

4 Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, 5 and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

So this opposition came from 536 BC all the way up to 520 BC, when Haggai and Zechariah came on the scene. That is 16 years of opposition. Ezra 5:1-2 says,

Ezra 5:1 Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. 2 So Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.

Overview of the book

Those two verses from Ezra pretty much summarize the entire first chapter of Haggai, and Haggai expands on how it happened. Let's look at Haggai 1:2. And by the way, the English pronunciation is usually Hag-ay-ai and the Hebrew pronunciation is Hag-ai. You will hear it pronounced either way, and either way is appropriate. Verse 2:

"Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: "This people says, 'The time has not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.' " "

In this verse God calls Himself Yehowah of hosts. What a great name to stir up the post-exilic community. Yehowah is His covenant name, reminding them that they are not saved to pursue their own interests. God saves us to serve *Him*. We are His bondslaves. We are in covenant with Him and everything we do should be kingdom oriented, whether it is brushing our teeth, building a house like the younger Jesus the carpenter did, or engaging in admin work like the patriarch Joseph did. It's not that the temple is more important than their houses. It's that the temple represents God's Lordship over everything - over their houses, their marriages, their food, and every other area of their lives. So by refusing to

build the temple they were in effect saying that life was divided up into the spiritual and the secular. We'll eventually get to helping out God's temple, but in the meantime we must tend to our own interests. They thought it was a matter of timing and priorities. God said, "No. It's a matter of focus. You've lost your kingdom focus."

The rest of His name, "Yehowah of hosts" means Yehowah of armies. Though there were formidable foes who had gathered to stop their work, they should remember that God has armies that can back up His people if they are willing to obey His orders. But they had come up with spiritual sounding excuses. "The time has not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built." They claimed that it was an issue of timing, not an issue of disobedience. And with all the enemies opposing them, and even the emperor opposing them, they thought it was obviously not the right time to devote themselves to this project. "Just be patient; we'll get around to the temple eventually." In effect they were being pragmatists. They planned to obey God when it was feasible to obey God.

We have similar spiritual sounding excuses for why we don't obey God in politics and in other areas. It won't work in our context. It's not the right time to apply the Bible to politics. We don't outright disobey God. We delay, or put it off to a theoretical future, or use spiritual-sounding excuses. But Haggai is about to show that when our focus is upon God's kingdom, nothing takes precedence over God. He says in verses 3-6,

Hag. 1:3 Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" 5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways! 6 "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

Part of their prioritization had to do with money and time. And God was taking away both. They told themselves that they would get around to serving the Lord when they could afford it. Haggai said that they had it all backwards. The reason they were not prospering in the work of their hands was because they were not seeking first God's kingdom and His righteousness, but were seeking their own kingdom. He pits God's house and against their houses as a test of their stewardship. If they are unwilling to obey God on building *His* house, then it is unlikely that they are obeying God in building their own houses. And since they were not stewards, God could not trust them with further blessings.

Since we aren't commanded to build the temple today, let me give you a modern equivalent. We are commanded to tithe as a test of our stewardship, and Haggai's contemporary, Malachi uses tithing in the same way that Haggai uses the temple. I have talked to people who have told me that they would get around to tithing when they could afford it. I have told them that they have this all backwards. The tithe is a test of whether we see all that we own as belonging to God. It's not a statement that 10% belongs to God and 90% can be wasted in any way that we want. If we don't tithe, it is unlikely that we are godly stewards of any of our money. Malachi will bring the same message, saying that because the people refused to tithe, they were cursed. He concluded, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse... and prove Me now in this, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room

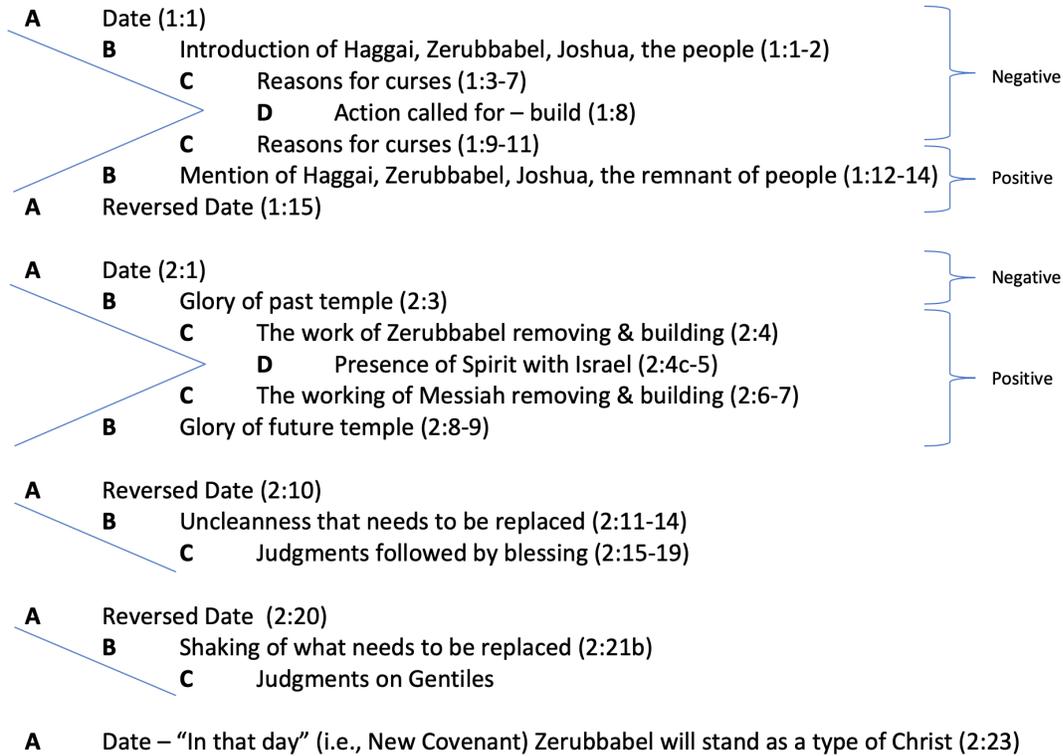
enough to receive it.” (Mal. 3:9-10) He is saying that when you pass the tithing test, God will prosper you financially.

The Sabbath is another test of whether we have a kingdom orientation. Last Sunday Gary quoted from Joey Pipa’s Sabbath book. Pipa had said, “Sabbath keeping promotes stewardship of time in the same way that tithing promotes stewardship of money.” Both are simply tests of whether everything we own is being used as a stewardship trust for the Lord. The essence of chapter 1 is an accusation that these Jews were not acting as stewards; they were not seeking God’s kingdom; they were building their own independent kingdom, centered on their own independent pleasure, and seeking their own independent glory. And Haggai’s message is powerful and to the point (reading verses 7-11):

Hag. 1:7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the LORD. 9 “You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?” says the LORD of hosts. “Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house. 10 Therefore the heavens above you withhold the dew, and the earth withholds its fruit. 11 For I called for a drought on the land and the mountains, on the grain and the new wine and the oil, on whatever the ground brings forth, on men and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.”

Well, this powerful message struck home to the hearts of everyone in that society, and they instantly adjusted their attitudes. God’s Word has a way of doing that. It brings conviction; but it also energizes us in ways that nothing else can do. It gives us a holy enthusiasm for the kingdom. And in verses 12-15 it says,

Hag. 1:12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the LORD. 13 Then Haggai, the LORD’S messenger, spoke the LORD’S message to the people, saying, “I am with you, says the LORD.” 14 So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, 15 on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month, in the second year of King Darius.



This whole chapter is arranged as a chiasm starting and ending with a date (and when you get into the Hebrew, it is a rather detailed and beautiful chiasm). I've put the Hebrew text on the back of your outline so that you can see it. And I forgot to fill out the Christology and keys of the book, but I will put that onto the online version.

- A—בשנת שמיים לרדת הפלך
 B—בחדש הששי
 C—ביום אתר לחרש

D { Four characters (1:1-2):
 1. חצי הנביא
 2. זרבבל בןשלתאל פחת יהודה
 3. יהושע בןיהוזבק הפהן הגדול
 4. העם הזה
 The people don't work: להבנות יהנה להבנות לא (1:2)

- E - 1:4—שבבתיכם ספינים
 F—והבית הזה חרב

G { 1:5a: פה אתר יהנה צבאות
 1:5b: שימו לבבכם על־דרכיכם
 1:5c: הרבה...מעט
 1:6: Fivefold description of futility

G' { 1:7a: פה אתר יהנה צבאות
 1:7b: שימו לבבכם על־דרכיכם
 1:8: fivefold verbal instruction to rebuild
 1:9: הרבה...למעט

- F' - 1:9—ביתי אשר־הוא חרב
 E'—לביתו

D' { Four characters (1:12-14):
 1. חצי מלאך יהנה / חצי הנביא
 2. זרבבל בןשלתאל פחת יהודה
 3. יהושע בןיהוזבק הפהן הגדול
 4. כל שארית העם
 The people work: בבית־יהנה צבאות אלהיהם מלאכה בבית־יהנה (1:14)

- C'—ביום עמקים וארבעה—¹⁵
 B'—לחדש בששי
 A'—בשנת שמיים לרדת הפלך—

Anyway, if you go back to your chiasm chart, you will see that the center point of it is verse 8: Seeking God's kingdom, God's glory, and God's pleasure. That is what should consume our life. That is what we should be passionate about. That is what should bring us the greatest delight.

And this message of chapter 1 is not a message just to individuals. Verse 1 says that it is a message to church and state as well. It says,

In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying,

Zerubbabel was the governor the state and Joshua was the high priest representing the Old Covenant church. The point is that God's Word must govern all of life and all people. When civil magistrates are consumed by God's glory, seek His kingdom, and take pleasure in bringing God pleasure, God will prosper the work of their hands. But when they are seeking their own glory, building their own kingdom, and have self-centered pleasure, God can blow away the work of their hands. It gives you a totally different perspective on politics. It makes you no longer satisfied with conservative victories - if God is left out. Seeing God left out of anything should grieve our hearts. We must long for more of God's kingdom and law in politics and work for more of God's kingdom and law.

The same goes for churches and families. Each government is accountable to live their lives to God. So chapter 1 is really a call to stewardship of all of life (which, as you have been noting from Gary's sermons, is our focus for this whole year), and the command to build the temple was simply a test of whether they really had steward's hearts and were willing to be kingdom focused.

Chapter 2 begins about one month later. It would be another four years before the temple would be finished, but already (just one month later) there were people who were discouraged and ready to give up. But worse, they were trying to get others to give up. They were old people who remembered what the temple of Solomon had looked like before it was torn down, and they were saying that this one would never be as good; it's not going to be the same; I don't think this is going to work; what's the point; we're too small to undertake this project. As Zechariah worded it, they had "despised the day of small things" (Zech. 4:10). So Haggai prophesies again to encourage the people that not only will this temple be better and more glorious (and in some ways it was), but the physical temple they were building will foreshadow the even greater spiritual temple of the Messiah. And so their labors in the Lord were not in vain.

You will notice that verses 1-9 of chapter 2 are *almost* a complete chiasm. It's missing the second A (the date). But really, the second A is simply the beginning of the next structure. And many times Hebrew structures are interconnected that way. So there is a sense in which it is complete. So the parallel to its first A section (the date) is actually the first point of the next section (another date). But otherwise it is a typical chiasm with the glory of Solomon's temple in verse 3 being compared with the glory of the future Messianic temple in verses 8-9, and the work of demolition and reconstruction for the current temple in verse 4 being compared with the universal deconstruction and reconstruction that Messiah

will do in connection with His future temple in verses 6-7. And the encouragement to persevere is given in the heart of the chiasm in verses 4c-5, where God says,

Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; "and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the LORD of hosts. 5 "According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!

If God is with them, they have all that they need to accomplish the task. As Haggai's contemporary, Zechariah, worded it, it is "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD of hosts." In effect both prophets were telling the people, "Don't worry about how weak you are. Don't worry about how overwhelming the rubbish and work might be. If God is for you, nothing can stand in your way." And it was true. Amazingly, when they were willing to return to the work, even without the permission of the emperor, God blessed in miraculous ways. For example, when their enemy, Tettanai, complained to the emperor that they had started rebuilding the temple again, it backfired on him. The emperor, Darius, not only told Tettanai to leave them alone, but guaranteed that if he or anyone else interfered, they would be killed and their houses confiscated. And the emperor not only funded the temple, but he also commanded all the governors to fund it. And the work that had been opposed miraculously went forward so fast that what took Solomon seven years to build took the post-exilic community four years to build. God accomplished the miraculous when the people stopped looking at their own weakness and begin thankfully obeying based on God's strength. He can do miracles. Is the task of Christianizing politics in America just as impossible? Yes it is. But God wants the entire church to simply obey, not fear, and watch Him do the impossible.

So let's look at verses 1-9 because the second half is a promise of the Messiah's kingdom that is quoted in Hebrews 12. He is comparing their work on the temple to an even greater work that the future Messiah will do. And the promises in this section are very encouraging promises - especially when you are faced with the demoralizing setbacks that we are facing in America at the beginning of our century.

Chapter 2:1-3.

Hag. 2:1 In the seventh month, on the twenty-first of the month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying: 2 "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, saying: 3 "Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing?

So that was the discouragement that I've already mentioned. To the old guys, what was currently being accomplished seemed like nothing in comparison to what Solomon's temple looked like. They were seeing the glass half-empty and taking the wind out of the sails of those who had been excited to do this work. It is very easy for arm-chair critics to discourage the efforts of workers. And God does not appreciate the comments of these people. They were not comments that flowed from faith. They were comments that questioned the value of doing anything. And if you tend to be a glass-half-empty kind of nay-sayer, I would encourage you to take to heart God's words in this section. When you

kill the faith of others with your negative statements, God holds you accountable for holding back the kingdom. Build faith in others, don't rob it.

In verse 4 God restores faith to the remnant with words that we should take to heart:

Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the LORD; "and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the LORD, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the LORD of hosts.

That's all that really matters in the work of the Lord - that God is with us. There is no point in even having a ministry that is absent of God's presence, empowering, and blessing. But if God is with us, the obstacles are irrelevant. And as I read earlier, He promised His Spirit's presence to be with them, and based on that assurance they had no need to fear. Fear kills faith. And when fears arise in you, start meditating on the promises of God and the greatness of God and the irresistible growth of the kingdom of God. It will restore your faith.

The two Cs of the chiasm compare the huge task of clearing away the rubbish of the previous temple and building the second temple with the far greater task that the Messiah will have of getting rid of all the old rubbish of the Fall and replacing it with the new things of His temple building program. Both Cs deal with deconstruction and reconstruction. Let's look at the second C in verses 6-7.

Hag. 2:6 "For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they [in other words, the shaken nations] shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the LORD of hosts.

There is debate on whether the "Desire of All Nations" is a name of the Messiah or whether it should be translated as the wealth of all nations pouring into the temple. But the fact that Hebrews 12 quotes this passage and even emphasizes the words "once more" (that appear only here) and then applies it to the New Covenant times, demonstrates that this section is a prophecy of Christ shaking the entire universe and gradually making all things new. Let me read Hebrews 12, beginning at verse 25:

Heb. 12:25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth [that would be a reference to God's shaking the earth at Mount Sinai when He spoke his revolutionary words of the Pentateuch], much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, 26 whose voice then shook the earth [So we are not talking about destroying the earth when He shakes the earth - Sinai didn't destroy planet earth, but it did change it. He goes on - "whose voice then shook the earth"]; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." 27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken [that is in the present tense - the shaking was already happening in the first century - "that are being shaken"], as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Heb. 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving [that also is in the present tense - "since we are receiving"] a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Just as Haggai called upon the people to work and build the kingdom, Hebrews calls upon the first century saints to work and build the kingdom. Don't give in to discouragement. Hebrews assures us that God is with us, and our God is still a consuming fire. Now, there is

a bit of warning there as well. Hebrews 12 is saying was that certain judgment faced them if they proved themselves (like Tattenai and the other Samaritans) to be part of the non-new-covenant-things that needed to be removed. You are either part of the shaken things [the rubbish] that Christ is in the process of removing or you are part of the New Covenant kingdom things that will remain forever. There is no neutral in between.

So with the inspired commentary of Hebrews 12, we may not interpret this (as James Jordon and some others do) as referring to anything prior to Christ. It clearly refers to the New Covenant. And in the New Covenant Christ claims ownership of everything, including your gold and silver - everything. And since the temple is the symbol of Christ's kingdom, Yehowah of Armies promises that this future kingdom or future temple will be far more glorious than anything in the earthly temples. Verse 8:

8 "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," says the LORD of hosts. 9 "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts. "And in this place I will give peace," says the LORD of hosts."

And that ends the first snapshot of chapter 2 that was designed to give encouragement to the postexilic community to build. He was giving them the reasons why their labors in the Lord were not in vain. What they were building was a symbol of the Messianic kingdom. Indeed, the Spirit would be poured out in the symbol on the Day of Pentecost and produce a non-literal temple of living stones that would eventually fill the earth. I want you to turn to Ephesians 2, and I will read some sample Scriptures that give a tiny peak into what the New Testament describes about this glorious temple. Ephesians 2, beginning to read at verse 19.

Eph. 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

Chapter 3 goes on to show that this temple, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles, was a mystery that was not totally understood by the Old Testament prophets. Chapter 4 speaks of the wealth of gifts that God pours out in this temple, which is the body of Christ. 1 Peter 2:4 says, "you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

And as you trace out the various Scriptures that allude to this New Testament temple you begin to realize that Christ is the temple, His body is the temple, and individual members filled with the Spirit are the temple. It is the New Covenant kingdom that is invading earth, shaking out of it everything that smacks of Adam's rebellion, or smacks of Satan, and smacks of sin, and will eventually produce a world in which only righteousness dwells and God abides with man forever in His temple; His house.

The last three snapshots also begin with a date, but commentators point out that it is a reversed date. I don't have time to get into it, but the way the dates are used symbolically in both chapters (along with a couple other reversals) shows the reversal in time of humanistic dominance that previously existed moving towards Christ's universal kingdom. Let me give two examples of how that works.

First, in verses 11-14 he uses a common-knowledge fact to make them realize that holiness of a priest's garment can't make what it touches holy, but the unholiness of a person or garment can make everything he touches unholy. In other words, during Old Covenant times the power of defilement was much stronger than the power of cleansing. The leaven of sin was much more defiling than the leaven of the kingdom. Everything tended to go downhill to the cross. But the cross reverses history. From the cross on, the leaven of the kingdom will be dominant and will eventually replace the leaven of sin. So when everything under the Messiah becomes holy, it can only be because of God's supernatural power producing it.

Then he gives a second illustration - he points out that they had repeatedly sowed grain and barely gotten anything in return. God had cursed their previous efforts. But now that they had started building the temple and had thereby gained a renewed kingdom focus, God was going to show a complete change in the way the ground miraculously would produce a huge harvest. This too is symbolic of Christ's kingdom reversing things on earth and producing more and more blessings.

But there are things we can learn even on the literal level. They still had to plant, but God said from this day forward you are going to see a blessing in the crops. Again, his point was that they should not attribute these things to chance. Blessings come from heaven. In the Transformations videos we saw examples in Guatemala and other countries that when regions become pervasively Christian and start following God's laws, God astonishingly makes the soil more productive, and makes other blessings flow. God providentially ensures a connection between kingdom orientation and being prospered. He loves to do that.

And his concluding application is that the Messianic promise that He had earlier given in verses 6-9 could not be attributed to human goodness or human effort. Though God blesses our efforts, the Messianic kingdom is the supernatural work of God Himself removing the Old Covenant curses and messes of sin and replacing them with the New Covenant kingdom realities that cannot be shaken. This is the trajectory for planet earth. It takes faith to believe it.

In any case, He starts with a reversed date in verse 20 to show that he is still talking about the reversal of sin. But he only mentions the shaking that he had described and not the rebuilding. But I believe the rebuilding is implied since this is just a shorthand way of referring to everything in verses 6-9. So he is returning to that subject. Reading verses 21-22.

21 "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: 'I will shake heaven and earth. 22 I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots And those who ride in them; The horses and their riders shall come down, Every one by the sword of his brother.

Again, the fact that Hebrews 12 merges phrases from verses 6-9 together with phrases from verses 21-22 shows that we are still talking about the Messianic kingdom's shaking work. Haggai is guaranteeing that all enemies will be purged from the earth before Christ's work is finished. That's what 1 Corinthians 15 promises too, doesn't it? That Christ must

remain on His throne until all enemies are placed beneath His feet. All evil kingdoms will be brought to nothing, and all that will eventually will be left will be the Messiah, who is symbolized by Zerubbabel the governor, referenced in the last verse:

Verse 23 says, "In that day." In what day? Context and Hebrews 12 dictates that we are still talking about New Covenant times:

"In that day," says the LORD of hosts, "I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel," says the LORD, "and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you," says the LORD of hosts."

Many evangelical commentaries take this purely as a symbol of Jesus because it obviously goes beyond Zerubbabel's lifetime. But we have seen over and over that Biblical symbols are still historical realities that point to Christ. So you can't dismiss the literal when looking at the Christ it symbolizes. Yes, Zerubbabel is clearly used as a type of Christ in both Haggai and Zechariah, but this is still saying that something will happen to Zerubbabel (the symbol) in the New Covenant times. How do we recognize that? Well, we saw in our Revelation series that the Old Covenant saints were indeed resurrected in the first century in what Revelation 20 calls the "first resurrection." So this could be taken literally of Zerubbabel. God assures Zerubbabel that he would be as tightly connected to God as a signet ring is to its owner. God had chosen him and God would finish the work that he had begun in him. So you could take this as referring to the fact that Zerubbabel would be resurrected in the first century and be a part of the advance of Christ's kingdom.

But even in that, he still stands as a type. And several evangelical commentaries point out that the language of verses 6-9 and verses 20-23 is very Messianic in nature - so much so that even ancient Jews realized that this had to be referring to someone way beyond the lifetime of Zerubbabel. So these commentaries conclude that this must be referring to Jesus in some way. Just as David was a symbol of the Greater David, Zerubbabel was a symbol of the Greater Zerubbabel, Jesus. O. Palmer Robertson points out that the references to Zerubbabel as God's servant, God's signet ring, and God's chosen one all have Messianic overtones, and since Zechariah (Haggai's contemporary) clearly uses him as a symbol of the Messiah, this too should be taken as a symbol of Jesus.¹ Jesus would be the greater Zerubbabel. As Achtemeier worded it,

¹ "Haggai's three designations of Zerubbabel as God's servant, his signet ring, and his chosen one (Hag. 2:23) all point to messianic expectations. Isaiah's first servant song introduces this messianic figure as "my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight" (Isa. 42:1). The Lord vigorously rejected Jehoiachin, the last scion of the Davidic line prior to Judah's exile: "Even if you ... were a signet ring on my right hand, I would still pull you off" (Jer. 22:24). But Zerubbabel is now singled out as the one who will be God's signet ring, bearing in himself the full designated authority of the Lord himself (cf. 1 Kings 21:8). Because of the breadth of the connotations of these messianic designations as applied to Zerubbabel, it seems highly unlikely that Haggai's contemporaries thought of a realization of these expectations within the person of Zerubbabel himself. This conclusion is supported by Haggai's prophetic contemporary Zechariah, who also casts not only

God always keeps his promises. And so, when the Kingdom of God began to come among us in the person of Jesus Christ (Mark 1:1, 14, 15), that One born of the house and lineage of David came as the descendant of Zerubbabel (Matt. 1:12; Luke 3:27) and as the beginning of the fulfillment of this word to Haggai the prophet. He introduced God's Kingdom which has no end (Luke 1:32–33), which will overthrow every rule and authority and power (1 Cor. 15:24–26) and which cannot be shaken or ever pass away (Heb. 12:28). The word of God spoken by Haggai the prophet began to find its fulfillment in Jesus Christ our Lord. When the Lord returns to complete his Kingdom, may he find us working to build up his church.²

Further applications

And I say, Amen, and Amen! So that is the theology of this book. But let me end with ten more applications that David Noor brought to my attention as my research assistant. Praise God that I have him for three more weeks.

Verse 1 shows the importance of addressing God's Word to both church and state. There is no area of life that is exempt from the authority of God's Law Word. And we completely miss the purpose of stewardship when we exempt the state or any other aspect of life from God's Word. The humanism of American politics and law is part of what is being shaken and we need to make sure that we do not cling to what Christ is in the business of shaking and blowing away. Psalm 2 tells us that God's call is for the state to submit to King Jesus and come into covenant with Him, and obey His laws.

Second, verse 2 of chapter 1 shows how easy it is for us to rationalize and to make excuses for clear disobedience. I regularly ask God to reveal any self-deception within me. I want to be pleasing in His sight, and I know how easy it is to deceive ourselves. We just need to be aware of that. So pray that God would unravel anything within you that needs to be shaken and blown and that He would replace it more and more with His kingdom focus. May His kingdom come more and more into our lives and His will be done more and more in our lives.

Third, verse 4 shows that God puts tests of our stewardship into our lives. When we pass the test, we are blessed. When our disobedience proves that we have lost our kingdom vision, He does not bless. And especially since this year is our focus on stewardship, take advantage of the resources we recommend on stewardship and keep pressing into your upward calling. But also get used to looking for providential tests that the Lord brings your way, and determine to pass those tests.

Fourth, the twice repeated phrase "consider your ways," is a good reminder that we do need to occasionally do self-examination to see if our lives have drifted. It is easy to be

Zerubbabel but also the high priest Joshua into a messianic role." O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Prophets*, Abridged edition (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 304–305.

² Elizabeth Rice Achtemeier, *Nahum–Malachi, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1986), 105.

blind to what is out of accord with God's Word, and doing a spiritual check up occasionally is a good thing.

Fifth, verses 9-11 shows God using discipline by evaporating their budgets, making their crops not turn out, etc. Like Deuteronomy 28, Haggai assumes that God's providence relates to every molecule, every germ, every virus, our cattle, money, adversaries, skin, bones, children, and politics. And God is creative. He can humble us and get our attention through any of these things. As Christians we need to get better at reading God's providences and seeing if any of them are disciplines that we need to heed. There are certain physical afflictions that remind me that God is getting my attention and I need to press into Him. Kathy has her own reminder.

Sixth, in verses 12-13 God gives the central promise of the previous covenants, "I am with You." That is a promise that continues today where Hebrews says, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Bank on that promise when you are fearful.

Seventh, in verse 14 and again in chapter 2:4 we see the command to work and God's blessings on manual work. If Jesus devoted most of his life to the manual labor of carpentry, you can see how much God values physical labor and blesses it. None of us should be beneath physical labor. But make sure you do even your carpentry with a kingdom focus - even if you do it for relaxation. And by the way, you can relax to God's glory. Relaxing appropriately and strategically can definitely be a part of seeking God's kingdom.

Eighth, in chapter 2:4-5 we have God encouraging us that we should not get discouraged by small beginnings. If God is in it, our small beginnings can be used to leverage large things. People might be tempted to think that nothing will come of the March 12 conferences on ending abortion in Nebraska now and making it a Sanctuary State for Life. According to your faith, be it unto you. But I would encourage you to have faith and to not despise the day of small beginnings.

Ninth, chapter 2:7-9 gives the goal for all of our lives - to glorify God and bring Him pleasure. My heart's longing is that God will say to me, "Well done, though good and faithful servant." I want the smile of His approval. I want to experience His pleasure.

And though there are other applications, I'll just end with one more. This may be an iffy one based on the Hebrew (which can be translated two different ways), but if the New King James is correct that Jesus is the Desire of All Nations, it speaks to the Postmillennial hope that all the earth will become jealous of our Gospel glories and will stream to Christ from every part of the globe desiring Him. He is certainly *our* desire and vision. Paul said in Philippians 3 that he was willing to "count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He said, "I... count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." His life passion was stated in the next verse: "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." Certainly Christ was the Desire of Paul's heart. And may He have the same magnetic pull upon our hearts that Haggai says He will eventually have upon the nations. May our faith and vision be consistent with Christ's goal to shake off from planet earth anything that comes in competition with Jesus, leaving nothing but His kingdom and His glory. Amen. Let's pray.