

## **Study Guide: Haggai 2:1-23**

### **Start Talking...**

1. What's the most recent book you've either a.) read or b.) are currently reading (*and you can't say "the Bible"!* And you also can't claim "you don't read"! If you have to remember all the way back to childhood, do it!). If you answered a.), how recently was this book read?

### **Reflect Back...**

2. What was "the takeaway" (the most important point) from Sunday's sermon and/or the sermon text, in your opinion?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What insight from Sunday's sermon did you find most helpful, or eye-opening, or troubling (pick any or all of the above)? [Note: also use this space to record your questions from the sermon *or the remainder of the study guide*]

### **The Take Away(s)...**

4. The people in Haggai had *a lot* of trouble staying the course. They were told again and again that God was with them, and that they should respond accordingly, but *several* sermons over the course of many weeks were required to poke, to prod, to goad, and to persuade them to complete the temple. *Taking comfort in the hard-headedness of God's people and his abundance of patience, what is a lesson in your life that's been particularly hard for you to learn? Perhaps you're still struggling to learn it! Explain.*
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. With that lesson in mind (#4, above), write out one S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-specific) goal *that will put you in a better position to align your life with that lesson*. Share this with your small group and end with prayer for each other directed along these lines.

### Into the Bible...

- Day One: Hag 2:1-9 is the *B'* section of the concentrically arranged book of Haggai (corresponding to the *B* section of Hag 1:12-15<sup>1</sup>). Central to both of these passages is the promise of God's presence and the encouragement that entails. Lo and behold, we find that this *B'* section is itself quite beautifully arranged! Explore the arrangement and structure of 2:1-9, *especially the central 2:3-9 (A-B-A')*, and answer the questions, below.<sup>2</sup>

*A*: Past glory and questions (3)

*B*: Divine promise (4-5)

*a*: summons to resolute activity (4a)

*b*: divine promise (4b)

*a'*: summons to fearlessness (5)

*A'*: Future glory and promises (6-9)

*a*: imminent cosmic turmoil (6)

*b*: spoiling the nations: the Tabernacle parallel (7)

*c*: divine sufficiency (8)

*b'*: contrast: greater glory than the past (9a)

*a'*: contrast: the gift of peace (9b)

*In your opinion, is it significant that the author arranged the B' section (2:1-9) more intricately than the corresponding B section (1:12-15)? What do you think he had in mind?*

*Why would the author draw attention away from the central B section of this passage (2:4-5) by arranging the A' section (2:6-9) even more intricately? What could be going on here?*

*Sum up Hag 2:3-9 in one sentence (keeping all this structure jibber-jabber in mind!):*

- Day Two: Five times in Haggai we find the command to “set your heart upon” something (all appear in the corresponding *Ab-A'b'* sermons of 1:3-11; 2:10-19). *How do the five occurrences relate to each other? Boil the “set your heart upon” commands down into a single sentence?*

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<sup>1</sup> See previous study guide (Day Three) for structure of Haggai as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> Here again for the structure I refer to the work of J. A. Motyer (“Haggai,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* [ed. T. E. McComiskey; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009], 986).

Explore the relationship of your single sentence with the message of Haggai as a whole (i.e., rebuild the temple!)? In other words, how do the “set your heart upon” commands help the overall message of Haggai?

- Day Three: Hag 2:10-19 helps us recognize the power of sin in our lives. According to the story, the people’s sin disqualifies the temple sacrifices—the very same acts designed to cover sins and enhance their relationship with God in the first place! Compare our text with the following passages: 1 Sam 15:22-23; Ps 51:16-17; Isa 1:10-20; Amos 5:21-27; Mic 6:6-8. With these passages in mind, fill out the following columns as best you can. [Hint: some passages might not pertain to all three columns]

The description of a “bad sacrifice”	God’s reaction to a “bad sacrifice”	How to offer a “good sacrifice”

Are there any areas of your life where you need to improve the quality of your sacrifices? Explain.

- Day Four: Biblical scholar Mark Boda has shown that Haggai draws on the Exodus story for background to two of his sermons.<sup>3</sup> Hag 2:4-5 recalls the exodus from Egypt, and Hag 2:14 uses same title combination found in Ex 33:12-13 to refer to God’s people (“this people,” and “this nation.” These two passages are the only two in the whole Bible to use these two titles together, so Haggai is clearly doing this on purpose). What might Haggai be trying to invoke with these allusions to the exodus stories? How does this line of thought in turn factor in to Haggai’s argument? In other words, why should we care that Haggai makes use of Exodus?

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<sup>3</sup> M. J. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 145-146.

- Day Five: How does Jeremiah's sermon to the Davidic<sup>4</sup> king Jehoiakim (found in Jer 22:13-27) help us to understand and appreciate what's going on with God's promise to the equally Davidic descendant of Jehoiakim (see 1 Chron 3:10-19) Zerubbabel? [*Hint: look for the use of the "signet ring" in both passages*] *What's God up to here, according to Haggai? [If you'd like another hint, check out Matt 1:1-17!!!]*

- Suggested closing prayer exercise<sup>5</sup>:

Looking back over these exercises (and passages), do you find something especially troubling, convicting, or perhaps encouraging? *Talk to God about it.*

Thinking back to your one sentence summary of Hag 2:3-9 (Day One), reflect carefully on what you wrote, and *thank God for this incredible truth in your life. Ask him for the "eyes of faith" to believe it and especially to live like it's true.*

Next, *ask God to grant you by the power of his enabling and energizing presence in your life to give you the courage and the will to be more obedient with the quality of your sacrifices (Day Three).*

Next, *spend some time thanking God for his Words to us, specifically for Haggai, which is indeed "useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work" [2 Tim 3:16-17]. And while you're at it, ask God to grow your love for his Scriptures all the more as you study it diligently.*

Finally, *spend time praying for others in your small group, and also the church, that we would also grow through our study of Haggai and also for our willingness to respond to it as we should.*

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<sup>4</sup> "Davidic" means in that the king was a descendent of King David. The reason this is such a big deal to be in the Davidic line is that this is the genealogical line through which the Messiah was promised to appear. It's through the Davidic line that God would establish his eternal rule! See the promise made to David by God in 2 Sam 7:12-16.

<sup>5</sup> This is for you, if you like, to direct you in prayerful reflection on the portions of Scripture that we study.