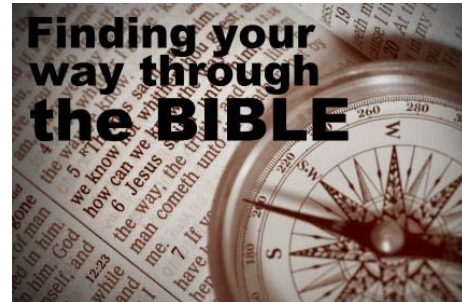


# Haggai



**Author** Haggai ([1:1](#)) was a prophet who, along with Zechariah, encouraged the returned exiles to rebuild the temple (see [Ezr 5:1–2; 6:14](#)). Haggai means “festal,” which may indicate that the prophet was born during one of the three pilgrimage feasts (Unleavened Bread, Pentecost or Weeks, and Tabernacles; cf. [Dt 16:16](#)). Based on [2:3](#) (see note there) Haggai may have witnessed the destruction of Solomon’s temple. If so, he must have been in his 70s during his ministry.

## Background

In 538 b.c. the conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus king of Persia, issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (see [Ezr 1:2–4; 6:3–5](#)). Led by Zerubbabel (but see note on [Ezr 1:8](#), “Sheshbazzar”), about 50,000 Jews journeyed home and began work on the temple. About two years later (536) they completed the foundation amid great rejoicing ([Ezr 3:8–11](#)). Their success aroused the Samaritans and other neighbors who feared the political and religious implications of a rebuilt temple in a thriving Jewish state. They therefore opposed the project vigorously and managed to halt work until 520, after Darius the Great became king of Persia in 522 ([Ezr 4:1–5,24](#)).

Darius was interested in the religions of his empire, and Haggai and Zechariah began to preach in his second year, 520 b.c. (see [1:1; Zec 1:1](#)). The Jews were more to blame for their inactivity than their opponents, and Haggai tried to arouse them from their lethargy. When the governor of Trans-Euphrates and other officials tried to interfere with the rebuilding efforts, Darius fully supported the Jews ([Ezr 5:3–6; 6:6–12](#)). In 516 the temple was finished and dedicated ([Ezr 6:15–18](#)).

## Date

Haggai’s messages are among the most carefully and precisely dated in the entire OT. They were given during a four-month period in 520 b.c., the second year of King Darius. The first message was delivered on the first day of the sixth month (Aug. 29), the last on the 24th day of the ninth month (Dec. 18). See notes on [1:1; 2:1,10](#); see also Introduction to [Zechariah](#): Dates.

## Themes and Theological Teaching

Apart from Obadiah, Haggai is the shortest book in the OT, but its teachings are none the less significant. Haggai clearly shows the consequences of disobedience ([1:6,11; 2:16–17](#)) and obedience ([2:7–9,19](#)). When the people give priority to God and his house, they are blessed rather than cursed (cf. [Lk 12:31](#) and note). Obedience brings the encouragement and strength of the Spirit of God ([2:4–5](#)).

In ch. 2 God gives great encouragement to those laboring under difficult conditions to rebuild his temple by assuring them that the future glory of the modest temple they are able to build will be greater than that of the temple Solomon had built in the time of Israel’s greatest wealth and power. The Jews in Judah may now be a much reduced community and under the hegemony of a powerful world empire, but the Lord will shake up the present

world order and assert his claim to all the world's wealth so that the glory of his future temple will be without rival. "The desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory" (see [2:6-7](#) and notes).

## Literary Features

Like Malachi, Haggai uses a number of questions to highlight key issues (see [1:4,9](#); [2:3,19](#)). He also makes effective use of repetition: "Give careful thought" occurs in [1:5,7](#); [2:15,18](#), and "I am with you" in [1:13](#); [2:4](#). "I will shake the heavens and the earth" is found in [2:6,21](#). The major sections of the book are marked off by the date on which the word of the Lord came "through" (or "to") Haggai ([1:1;2:1,10,20](#)).

Several times the prophet appears to reflect other passages of Scripture (compare [1:6](#) with [Dt 28:38-39](#) and [2:17](#) with [Dt 28:22](#)). The threefold use of "Be strong" in [2:4](#) (see note there) echoes the encouragement given in [Jos 1:6-7,9,18](#). (For chiasm see Outline below.)

## Outline

- First Message: The Call to Rebuild the Temple ([1:1-11](#))
  - The People's Lame Excuse ([1:1-4](#))
  - The Poverty of the People ([1:5-6](#))
  - The Reason God Has Cursed Them ([1:7-11](#))
- The Response of Zerubbabel and the People ([1:12-15](#))
  - The Leaders and Remnant Obey ([1:12](#))
  - The Lord Strengthens the Workers ([1:13-15](#))
- Second Message: The Temple to Be Filled with Glory ([2:1-9](#))
  - The People Encouraged ([2:1-5](#))
  - The Promise of Glory and Peace ([2:6-9](#))
- Third Message: A Defiled People Purified and Blessed ([2:10-19](#))
  - The Rapid Spread of Sin ([2:10-14](#))
  - Poor Harvests because of Disobedience ([2:15-17](#))
  - Blessing to Come as the Temple Is Rebuilt ([2:18-19](#))
- Fourth Message: The Promise to Zerubbabel ([2:20-23](#))
  - The Judgment of the Nations ([2:20-22](#))
  - The Significance of Zerubbabel ([2:23](#))