

Lessons From Characters In Old Testament
Zechariah & Haggai
Lesson 54

Intro:

- A. **Ezra 5:1**
- B. Daniel was the prophet during the fall of the Babylonian Empire and the rise of the Medo-Persian Empire under the rule of Cyrus and Darius. (**Daniel 9:1; 10:1**)
- C. By the time of Zechariah and Haggai, Judah has returned to Jerusalem with permission from Cyrus to rebuild the temple.
 - 1. Cyrus even gave them what they needed to rebuild and ordered those who remained in Babylon to contribute to the building of it. (**Ezra 6:4; 1:4**)
 - 2. He even returned the vessels of the first temple. (**Ezra 1:7-11; 6:5**)
 - 3. Zerubbabel was their leader and Jeshua (Joshua) was their high priest and they constructed the altar and began offering sacrifices. (**Ezra 3:2**)
- D. The construction of the temple was halted due to the Samaritians. (**Ezra 4**)
 - 1. They wrote letters to Ahasuerus (succeeded Cyrus) saying the Jews were going to rebel when they had finished the work of rebuilding and the king ordered the work to stop.
 - 2. The work stopped until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.
- E. Haggai encourages the Jews to get busy with rebuilding and God would bless them.
- F. The book of Zechariah contains the visions which were given to him.
 - 1. The book of Zechariah contains many signs and symbols like parts of Daniel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah but more so.
 - 2. For that reason, the book of Zechariah is somewhat difficult to understand like the book of Revelation.
 - a. For this reason, the book of Zechariah is heavily used by Premillennialist to advance their false doctrine especially the last three chapters.
 - 3. One of the truly interesting things about Zechariah is that at the time the physical temple is being built, God has in mind a spiritual building.
 - a. As the Jews were returning from captivity, they are thinking of resuming a normal way of life by rebuilding their city, the temple, and their nation.
 - b. God through Zechariah is showing something much greater: a spiritual temple and kingdom.
 - c. God has always wanted a holy people in the children of Israel and in His people today!

Zechariah:

INTRO: (1:1-6) A Very Clear And Understandable Lesson!

- A. The lesson? Repent and do not be like your ancestors who didn't. Benefit from their example by remembering what the Lord did to them!
- I. **Summary Of The Book:**
 - A. Visions: 1:7-8:23
 - 1. **The Vision Of The Horsemen: (1:7-17)**
 - a. Zechariah sees a man on a red horse among myrtle trees who walks to and fro on the earth.
 - b. The angel of the Lord pleads for mercy for Jerusalem and Judah, and the Lord answers with assurance that Jerusalem will be restored and "*spread out through prosperity.*"

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- c. God always watches and is fully aware of what happens!
2. **The Vision Of Four Horns and Four Craftsmen: (1:18-21)**
 - a. Zechariah sees four horns, and the angel informs him that those horns scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, but will now be used to strike down those nations who scattered the people of Judah.
 - b. “Horns” are a symbol of power and may represent the nations that have oppressed Israel such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia.
3. **The Vision Of A Man With A Measuring Line: (2:1-5)**
 - a. Zechariah sees a man with a measuring line in his hand, who is going to measure Jerusalem.
 - b. Two angels command the prophet to inform the man that he doesn’t need to measure Jerusalem for a wall because the Lord will protect the city with a wall of fire.
 - b. The Jerusalem God has in mind will not be the same as the physical Jerusalem.
 - 1) There will be no walls to stop her growth and she need not fear for the Lord will be her wall.
4. **The Call To Flee From Babylon To Spiritual Zion: (2:6-13)**
 - a. While there has already been a large number of Jews to leave Babylon, the Lord is now calling His people to leave the sinful world to dwell in Zion God’s spiritual realm.
 - b. The Lord’s people will only be “*the apple of My eye*”, when it deliberately and consciously withdraws themselves from the wickedness of the world around them!
5. **The Fourth Vision: (3:1-10)**
 - a. Zechariah sees three figures: Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan.
 - b. The Lord rebukes Satan.
 - c. The high priest is dressed in filthy clothes and the angel of the Lord reclothes Joshua with rich clothes and a new turban promising to restore him.
 - d. Then the angel of the Lord says to Joshua, (**vs. 7-8; Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5**)
 - e. This vision looks to the Messiah when men shall dwell in peace and security in Zion!
6. **The Vision Of The Candlestick And Two Olive Trees: (4:1-14)**
 - a. Woke up by the angel, Zechariah sees a golden lampstand topped by a bowl which has seven lamps, each having seven pipes.
(NOTE: If Zechariah could not understand the meaning of the visions without the angel interpreting them for him then we certainly cannot know and interpret the parts of the visions that are not explained to him!)
 - b. This part of the vision was “*the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel*”.
 - 1) He had laid the foundation of the temple and he would also finish it.

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- c. Also in the vision, Zechariah saw on each side of the lampstand two olive trees with branches pouring out oil representing the “*two anointed ones who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth*”.
 - d. For what must have appeared to be an impossible job, the Lord would provide light/guidance which would encourage Zerubbabel and those working with him.
 - 1) In other words, Zerubbabel, the job can be complete because the Lord is with you!
7. **The Vision Of The Flying Scroll: (5:1-4)**
- a. The previous visions which give promise are now being followed by judgment - wickedness must be removed.
 - b. The flying scroll in this vision represents a curse against those who steal and those who swear falsely.
 - c. Their houses will be destroyed because the Lord does not tolerate wickedness.
8. **The Vision Of The Woman In The Basket: (5:5-11)**
- a. Again, the Lord has not and will not tolerate wickedness either in physical Israel or in spiritual Israel!
 - b. For either to put away wickedness, the Lord can have the holy nation/holy people that He wants!
9. **The Vision Of The Four Chariots: (6:1-8)**
- a. They are “*four spirits of heaven,*” patrolling the earth on behalf of the Lord.
 - b. The many details of this vision are not the most significant thing: the most significant thing about this vision is that the Lord’s Spirit is aroused by the injustice and wickedness He sees and the judgment He sends accomplishes His will and satisfies His wrath.
10. **The Crowning and the Branch: (6:9-15)**
- a. The crowning of Joshua, the high priest, is symbolic and points to Christ.
 - b. High priest under the law of Moses were not crowned nor were they kings but verse 13 says of the “**BRANCH**”: “*He shall be a priest on His throne*”. Christ is both our High Priest and King!
- B. **The Lord’s Instructions And The Renewal Of The Covenant: (chapters 8-9)**
- 1. These two chapters continue to be “*the word of the Lord came to me*”.
 - 2. Rather than mournful fasting and abstinence the Lord instructs the people to attend to how they treat each other: Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, or the poor....Speak the truth...love no false oath (**7:9-10; 8:16-17**).
 - 3. When people harden their hearts to the law, wrath will come.
 - a. On the other hand, when the people obey the Lord, God will dwell in Jerusalem, and there will be joy in the city, with “*boys and girls playing in its streets*” (**8:5**).
 - 4. It ends with a picture of people coming to Jerusalem to seek the Lord’s favor and the Jews being the envy of all nations (**8:20-23**).

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- C. **The Judgment, The Coming Ruler, And Restoration: (chapters 9-11)**
1. The declaring of judgment on Israel's enemies – Hadrach, Damascus, Hamath, Tyre, Sidon, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod, Philistines, and the Jebusites.
 2. The Lord, as we have seen so often with the prophets, will defeat the nations which stand against Him and don't do His will.
 3. The Lord will defend Zion and give her victory over her enemies.
 - a. **(9:9; fulfilled in Christ - Mt. 21:1-5)**
 4. The Lord will redeem them, and though they have been scattered, He will gather them up and bring them home.
 5. Another prophecy of the Messiah: **(11:12-13; Mt. 27:3-9)**
 6. The Lord is telling what He will do: When people rejects the Good Shepherd God provides, He will abandon them to worthless shepherds who will care nothing for them.
 - a. But the worthless shepherds will be judged.
- D. **The Holy And Indestructible Nature Of Spiritual Jerusalem: (chapters 12-14)**
1. "*Israel*", in these verses, is the "true Israel" - the righteous who belong to God.
 2. The "*Jerusalem*" here is not physical Jerusalem but the new Zion, the spiritual city of God.
 3. These three chapters are all describing the coming establishment of God's kingdom which was fulfilled by the work of Christ, through the preaching of the gospel, and by the redemption of people from all nations of the earth. **(Mt. 28:18-20; Col. 1:23)**
 4. **(13:7)**
 - a. Jesus quotes this and applies it to Himself in **Mt. 26:31** and **Mk. 14:27**.

II. Lessons From Zechariah:

- A. **God is Faithful!**
1. People give up on marriages, personal relationships, their hopes, jobs, and sometimes on their faith but God is long-suffering toward us not willing that any should perish! **(2 Peter 3:9)**
 2. He is ready to forgive if we are willing to repent and turn back to Him.
 3. **(Zechariah 1:3)**
- B. **What God Requires From His People!**
1. Sometimes, we get more than a little consumed with what God can do for us.
 2. Indeed, He does great things for us because He loves us so much but there is an expressed statement of what He requires from us: **(Zechariah 7:9-10)**
 3. A closer look at these four requirements:
 - a. We are to render true justice. That means we examine all the facts – not just the ones we like.
 - b. We are to show mercy and compassion.

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- 1) That means we don't treat others with harshness and we are willing to forgive.
- 2) Compassion is one of the truest expression of mercy.
- c. We are not to oppress and the prophet specifically mentions four groups of people that are often oppressed:
 - 1) Widows and orphans are often ignored.
 - 2) The foreigner (NIV) or alien is one who does not fit in. More times than not, he is viewed with suspicion and distrust.
 - 3) The poor are all around us. They are often ignored and blamed for the condition they are in.
- d. We are never to plan evil against anyone.
 - 1) How often have we wished some misfortune on someone in our hearts.
 - 2) It's easy to do and it feels natural when we have been hurt but we must never do it.

When we busy ourselves with these four requirements our world will change!

HAGGAI:

INTRO:

- A. Remember **Ezra 5:1**
- B. **Haggai 1:1**

I. The Temple: (1:1-2:9)

- A. The people had built their houses but when they gave consideration to the Lord and His house, they said, "*The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.*" (1:2)
 1. The Lord's answer to them was: (1:4-11)
- B. With that being said, the people, led by Zerubbabel and Jeshua, restarted the building of the temple to which the Lord spoke by the prophet His approval: "*I am with you.*" (1:13)
- C. Somewhat less than two months later, the Lord spoke through Haggai, to encourage both the people and leaders. (2:3-9)
 1. All the promises of these verses are quoted in **Hebrews 12:26-29** where the Hebrew writer shows the difference between the kingdoms of men (including Judah with Jerusalem and its temple) and the kingdom of God.
 2. God shaking the heavens and the earth would reveal the kingdom which cannot be shaken.

II. The Clean And The Unclean: (2:10-23)

- A. The lesson contained in **verses 10-19**:
 1. The unclean is not made clean by contacting the holy; instead the unclean defiles that which is clean.
 2. The people had been unholy because they had not finished the temple, therefore their service was also unclean.

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- B. That same day God speaks again to Haggai: **(2:21-23)**
1. The shaking of heaven and earth happened when God established His kingdom.
 2. The quote we saw earlier in the book of Hebrews of Haggai 2:6 is to make the point that the shaking has already taken place and we have received the kingdom that cannot be shaken.
 3. It was in Haggai's day that the word was, "*Yet once more*".
 - a. That "*once more*" occurred with the overthrow of physical Israel, and especially with the overthrow of the nations that sought to prevent God from establishing His kingdom.

III. Lessons From Haggai:

1. **God Does Not Bless Idleness!**
 - A. At the beginning of the book, God said He was not blessing His people because they were not active in His work.
 - 1) He said, **(1:4)**.
 - B. The people themselves had nice houses, but they allowed God's house to go unfinished.
 - C. God did not bless their idleness but instead refused to bless them.
 - D. God does not and will not bless our idleness.
 - E. He expects us to be active in His work (**Eph. 2:10**).
2. **The Lord Deserves To Be First!**
 - A. **(1:9)**.
 - B. God's house had been destroyed, yet His people were busy with their own affairs.
 - C. The people were not putting God first.
 - D. God deserves to be first.
 - E. Our lives need to revolve around God and not expect God to revolve Himself around us!
3. **There Is Power In The Word Of God!**
 - A. **(1:12)**.
 - B. After Haggai spoke to the people, they obeyed the voice of the Lord.
 - C. Haggai didn't need to be a great orator, but the people obeyed because his message was from the Lord and the people feared the Lord.
 - D. Today, the gospel is powerful (**Rom. 1:16**), and can lead people to repentance.
4. **One Can Be Strong When God Is With Him!**
 - A. The Lord encouraged those in charge of building the temple to "*be strong*" **(2:4-5)** for He was with them.
 - B. They had reason to be strong—God would help and support them.
 - C. Even when things became difficult, they could know that God would provide.

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- D. Today, we can be confident because God has promised to provide (**Mt. 6:33**).
5. **God Blesses Those Who Do His Will!**
- A. "...from this day I will bless you" (**2:19**).
 - B. When the people refused to honor God, He refused to bless them.
 - C. But when they began again to build the temple, God blessed them.
 - D. Today, we cannot receive all of God's blessings when we are not obedient; especially the spiritual blessings we have in Christ.
 - E. Yet, when we are obedient God promises to take care of us.
 - F. He doesn't promise things will always be easy, but He does promise our needs will be provided (**Mt. 6:25-33**).
6. **God Controls The Nations!**
- A. (**2:21-22**).
 - B. God always has and always will be the Ultimate Ruler of the universe.
 - C. Every nation must bow before God.
 - D. If God decides to overthrow a nation, no amount of military might will keep it in power.
 - E. God is more powerful than military strength.
 - F. Remember what Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar: (**Dan. 4:25**).

CONCLUSION:

- A. The book of Haggai, though it is a short book, is an interesting book.
- B. It tells the story of the rebuilding of God's temple.
- C. But it also tells us God deserves to be first, blesses the obedient, and has dominion over the kingdoms of men.

Lesson 55

EZRA
(The Book of Ezra)
&
ESTHER
(The Book of Esther)