

## Haggai 1:1-6 – Is it Time Yet?

God, by the mouth of Jeremiah the prophet, told the people of Judah that they would be exiled to Babylon and that Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC. In time, Babylon was also judged and overthrown by the Medes and Persians as God predicted by the prophet Jeremiah. In about 538 BC, Cyrus the Great decreed that the Jewish exiles should return to Judah and Jerusalem and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel. Zerubbabel the governor and Joshua the high priest led a group of about 50,000 people back to Judah. Within two years of returning to Judah, they had rebuilt the altar in Jerusalem and had laid the foundation for the temple. Opposition arose and they stopped rebuilding the temple. For about 16 years, no work was done on the temple. God was not pleased with this building delay. God chose Haggai to deliver his message which was “build my house!”

### **Read Haggai 1:1-6.**

Who was Darius the king? Who was Haggai? Who was Zerubbabel? Who was Joshua? (1:1)

The sixth month of the Jewish calendar covered late August and early September. This was the beginning of the harvest season. How do you think the people would react to a message of “stop what you are doing”? (1:1)

What were the people saying about rebuilding God’s house? What excuses do you think the people gave for not rebuilding the temple? What was a key part of Cyrus’ decree? What did the temple symbolize? After the exodus, why did God want the people of Israel to build the tabernacle? See Exodus 25:8. (1:2)

If today was not the right time to rebuild the temple, when was the right time to rebuild the temple? How do you think the people would have answered this question?

Who had primary responsibility for rebuilding the temple?

How did God communicate his message to the people of Judah? Notice that God chose a prophet to deliver his message as opposed to choosing the governor or the high priest. What was the role of the prophet? (1:3)

What question did God have for the people of Judah? Where did the people get the wood to panel their houses? See Ezra 3:1-7 for a possible answer. (1:4)

What principle did the people of Judah violate by working on their own houses before working on God's house? How did Jesus state this principle? See Matthew 6:33.

God wanted the people of Judah to restart the work of rebuilding the temple. In verse 5, what did God tell them to do?

What were the consequences for the people of Judah when they put their own interests before the work of God? (1:6)

What are the economic implications? Many assume that through hard work and sound economic principles, the economy will thrive. Is this always the case? Based on 1:6, what can cause the economy to be depressed? On the other hand, does obedience and strong faith in God guarantee a good economy?

Does this mean that we should ignore our own households and give all our money and time to the church? What is the balance? What does God expect of us?

### **Food for Thought**

- Did the people of Judah learn their lesson from the exile?
- What is the symbolism of having an altar without a temple?
- How do we neglect the building of God's church?
- Be on the lookout for "Lord" in small caps (LORD) or "God" in small caps (GOD). For reasons we don't need to get into, this is the convention of many Bibles to refer to the covenant name of God, Yahweh (or Jehovah). This is the unique name that God used to reveal himself in Exodus 6.
- Some translations have "temple" instead of "house". The word used for God's house and the people's houses is the same word. The difference in translation depends on who lives in the house.