

Haggai 2

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 April 2022

Preacher: Paul Levy

[0 : 00] Do you turn to Amharai, chapter 2. Amharai, chapter 2, which is on page 791.! And dreams of diverse cultures of this earth.

Sport, perhaps. The Olympic Games likes to think it could. Don't know whether you know the theme tune to the Rugby World Cup. Let me read it to you.

I won't sing it to you. The world in union, the world has won. As we climb to reach our destiny, a new age has begun. Who thought rugby could achieve so much?

500 years before Jesus was born, Haggai wrote to a bunch of returned exiles. Their world had collapsed and they were trying to rebuild it.

They were trying to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. But nothing could compare with the good old days. The good old days of Solomon and David. And God says to these people, in a little while, look at verses 6 and 7.

[1 : 22] In a little while, he says. Just wait a little while. And I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all the nations so that the treasure of all nations shall come into me.

And I will fill this house with glory. It's a remarkable little promise, isn't it? In a little book that no one reads in the Old Testament. God says, I'm going to shake the nations in this place.

I'm going to fit this place out with glory. Haggai. Haggai, you might have noticed, is really particular about dates. I'll look at verse 1 and then look at verse 10. There are four prophecies in these chapters.

And one of them is dated really accurately. And you notice in verse 1 he gives the date. It's the 21st day of the seventh month. It's around about October in the Jewish calendar. And it's a very significant time for Jews.

Three major festivals took place during that time of the year. The Feast of the Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. If you think of Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, but all rolled together in one month.

[2 : 34] High point after high point after high point. At least that's what it should have been. But there were some people around now who were late into their 70s. They were into their 80s.

And they could hardly raise a smile, let alone a hallelujah. They remembered the good old days, the glory days of Solomon. Some of them had seen as children with their own eyes the beauty of Solomon's temple.

It was one of the ancient wonders of the world. And what is being built now doesn't compare with it. As far as they're concerned, this piddly little tin tabernacle that is being constructed, it doesn't even deserve to be called a temple.

And they thought to themselves, how can we celebrate these great festivals in something as pathetic as this? And it just reminded them of how much they'd lost and how little they'd gained. What's the point of going on, they said to themselves? It's never going to be like it used to be. It's never going to be what it was. It's never going to be like it was in the good old days. Call that a temple?

[3 : 38] I remember Solomon's temple. That's a temple for you. Do you get the picture? And so Haggai is sent by God to address that attitude. In chapter 1, he's been sent by God to get the people working.

They've been distracted by their own affairs. But now they've started and got going, and yet they've got discouraged. And so God sends Haggai again. And he's going to challenge them to rethink what they're doing biblically.

It's true, things aren't what they used to be. But just hang on in there, God says, because you ain't seen nothing yet. Look at verse 9. The glory of this present house. Yeah, this house that you're trying to build now, which doesn't look very impressive. The latter glory of this house should be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place, I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts. Now, he says three things to the people of God tonight.

[4 : 41] First of all, he says in verse 4, you can see it really clearly. There's one message there, isn't there? And it is be strong. That's the first point. Be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord. Be strong, O Joshua, a son of Jehoshaphat, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work. You see, morale has taken a bit of a bashing. And this is something that we've got to be careful about. Comparisons, can't they? They can be so demotivating and so demoralizing to a younger generation. And so what often happens, isn't it, is people's memories start to go and people's memories in church life get very selective. Actually, when you go back to the good old days, they were never as good as people imagined them. God did some pretty remarkable things in some pretty grim situations. And he's still doing that. He's still at work. And so we've got to be really careful about that, haven't we? We've got to not beat ourselves up with unhelpful comparisons. We feel that, don't we?

[5 : 46] Sometimes we read Christian biography. And there's no talk of just how difficult a husband the subject was. Or how painful the marriage was. Or how impossible the guy was to work with. And it can be hagiography. You know what hagiography is? Because hagiography is when you take an ordinary person and you make them into a saint. There's never been anyone like them. There'll never be anyone like them. And when we read it, we feel such an underachiever, don't we? So we think of someone like Martin Luther. He was a great reformer. He did a remarkable work. We thank God for him. But he had feet of clay. There are things that Martin Luther said and did that we're embarrassed to talk about. So we mustn't make him into something that he wasn't. It's so easy, isn't it, to get discouraged in the Lord's work. And God comes to these people and he puts his arm around them in verses 4 and 5. And he reassures them. And he says, I'm still with you. You are still my people.

[6 : 47] And he reminds them of the covenant that he'd made with them. And he reassures them that that covenant he set up with the nation of Israel at Sinai. At the beginning of their national history. When he rescued them out of Egypt. And he brought them to himself. And he made them his people. And he's saying to them in verse 5, isn't he? I've not forgotten that covenant. My covenant still stands. This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. So be strong. Get on with the work. I know it's tough. I know it's not easy. It doesn't look like very much. But looks can be deceiving. Don't judge by appearances. Be strong and work because I am with you. It's the only thing that really matters. My spirit remains on you, he says. So don't be afraid. And then in verses 6 to 9, he goes on to tell them what he's going to do. These people are involved in something that is literally world changing. Earth shattering. But they don't realize it. And it can be like that with us. But these people don't understand what they are involved with.

[7 : 56] They thought it was nothing much. And so God comes to them and says to them, just wait and see. Verse 6, in a little while. In a little while I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. I'll do it again, once more. In a little while. Just wait and see. I'm going to do what I did when I took you out of Egypt. Remember the plagues? The world's superpower? I shook Egypt to its core. And I released you from slavery. And I brought you to myself and made you my people. I'm going to do it again. In just a little while. Hang on in there. But this time I'm not just going to shake Egypt. Can you see what he says? He says I'm going to shake the nations. It's like a man shaking an apple tree. And all the fruit falling out of it. In just a little while I'm going to do that. God says in verse 7, I will shake all the nations so that the treasures of all the nations shall come in.

[8 : 59] And I will fill this house with glory. Says the Lord of hosts. What does that mean? That the people and the treasures will come. I'm going to shake the nations.

And all that I want from all the nations will come streaming into this house. This little tinned tabernacle. I'll fill it. And when the nations come.

The nations will not come plundering and looting. And ransacking the temple like they did in the past. And you won't be carried off into exile. They won't carry off the treasures of the temple. When they come. They will bring their treasures with them. Into this house. And so what on earth? When on earth is this going to happen? When you read the whole of the Bible. What is happening right now. At this very moment. In this very room. Every Sunday. When God's word is preached.

[10 : 02] What is happening? God is building his temple. And God is shaking the nations. And God is bringing people from every culture. From every part of the world. To the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ. Because. You see. Jesus Christ. Is the fulfillment of this. Jesus is the temple of the Lord. He is the temple that is being built. Jesus said to the authorities of his day. Didn't he? Destroy this temple. And I will. Raise it again in three days. Jesus said to the Lord. And they thought he was talking about the bricks and the mortar.

On the holy hill. The temple on the mount. But John says no. He wasn't talking about that. He was talking about his own body. And it wasn't until after the resurrection.

That the disciples understood that. He's not talking about a building of bricks and mortar. He's talking about himself. Because Jesus is where you go to meet with God. And so if you want to meet with God.

[11 : 02] You don't go to Jerusalem. You don't wait for them to rebuild the temple. And then take a pilgrimage. Because it will never happen. You come to Jesus. Jesus says no one comes to the Father except through me.

So it's not like different routes up a mountain. All different ways to God. That in the end reach the same location. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Destroy this temple. And the temple was his body. Given for us. Broken for us. On the cross. He died the just for the unjust. To bring us to God. That's the fulfillment of Haggai 2.

And so do you see. This is the work. God is doing in the world. This is the work that God is doing in the world. That you and I are now involved in. And John at the end of the Bible.

In Revelation 21 and 22. Gives us a glimpse. Doesn't he. Of the completed project. He sees the new Jerusalem. Coming down from heaven. From heaven.

[12 : 11] You see. We're not going to heaven. The Christian hope is. Is heaven coming down. So heaven now. It's the waiting room.

If I can put it like that. The real deal is still to come. Of course. Those saints who have died before us. They are with Christ. Which is far better.

But they are waiting. And we are waiting. For the real deal. For heaven to come down to earth. And John sees. The new Jerusalem. Coming out of heaven. He says.

The kingdom of God is with man. And he says something really strange. In Revelation 21 and 22.

He says about this new Jerusalem. He says. I didn't see a temple in that city. That's odd isn't it?

That's like going to London. And there not being a houses of parliament. It's like going to Sydney. And there not being an opera house. It's like going to New York. And there not being a statue of liberty. How will Jerusalem be Jerusalem.

[13 : 11] Without a temple? Do you remember what he says? He says. The Lord God almighty. And the lamb are its temple. And then he goes on to say.

That the kings of the earth. Will bring their splendor into it. And the glory and honor of the nations. Will be brought into it. That's what's going on here. And that's what God is doing right now.

What is God doing? He is shaking the nations. So that those whom he desires. Among all the nations will come. And on that day. There will be every tribe.

And every tongue. And every culture. And every nation. And every kind of dress. Will be part of the church of Jesus Christ.

Part of the challenge for us as a church. Isn't it? People from all over the world. And God is shaking the nations. People are often in London. Because of turmoil at home. They live on our doorstep.

[14 : 13] They come into this place. And they hear the gospel. And God is building his church. There's the mythical story. Of the rebuilding of St. Paul's Cathedral.

After the Great Fire. What was it? 1666. And although it's not true. Never let the fact that story isn't true. Get in the way of a good illustration. The architect Christopher Wren is visiting the building site.

And as he makes his way around the building site. He gets into conversation with three of his workers. There are three stone cutters. Building that great St. Paul's Cathedral.

And he asked each of them. What are you doing? The first one. When he said. What are you doing? He said. I'm cutting stone. What do you think I'm doing? He went to another man. And he said. Well what are you doing?

And the man said. Well I'm earning six months a day. And then he went to the third man. And he said. What are you doing? And he said. Well I'm helping St. Christopher Wren. Build a great cathedral.

[15:10] There are three very different ways of looking at things. One man just doing a job. One man just doing a living. But the third man is helping to create something greater than himself.

Helping to create something that will be standing long after he's gone. And I wonder if that's how you view your involvement in church.

In the life of the church. You see. We're tiny. We're insignificant. We're mocked as Christians.

According to the media. Bible believing Christians are dying out. They're a spent force. This is a day of very small things. And it's easy for us to get discouraged.

And to lose sight of the big picture of what God is doing. Amongst us. And in us. And through us. To forget why we do what we do. To imagine that we're not really building anything here.

[16:21] Little stars. Sunday school. The language class. Inviting your friends to church. Serving behind the scenes. Helping in the kids club. Serving tea and coffee. Doing the greeting.

It doesn't seem very much. It doesn't seem very spectacular. Let me ask you this. Is there anything more important?

Look at your diary this week. You probably know roughly what your diary is this week. Think about your diary this week. Is there anything? Is there anything more important than helping someone meet Jesus?

Know Jesus. All of the things that you're doing this week. What will last into eternity? What is going to be still standing when everything else is removed from your life?

And God is shaking the nations. And he's bringing people to himself. And it's happening here. Only one life. Will soon be passed.

[17:37] Only what's done for Christ will last. And so God says be strong. Be strong. Realize what is happening right now.

That I'm shaking the nations. And God is doing exactly what he promised to do. He is building his temple in the world. Look where it leads.

Verse 9. He says, It's the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.

It's a beautiful picture of the church, isn't it? So people who previously hated each other will come together to Christ and find peace. So Arabs and Jews sit at the Lord's table together.

People who if it wasn't for Jesus would have nothing to do with each other sit around the Lord's table together. National differences put aside.

[18:43] All one in Christ Jesus. The gospel does what the United Nations will never be able to do. The gospel does what NATO would never be able to do.

Peace on earth. I think that's inspiring. I think that's encouraging. I hope that makes you want to get involved. In this effort.

In this gospel work. This is God's great purpose. God's great plan. That every nation. Out of every nation. People will come streaming to the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not what the media sees.

But remember the media sees. Only what it wants to see. Look at verse 19. It's the second section of this chapter.

Is your seed yet in the barn? Indeed the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have yielded nothing.

[19:50] But from this day on. From this day on I will bless you. There are red letter days in everyone's life aren't there?

Aren't there? 24th of August 2000. My life changed forever. The rest is history. Sitting on the front row. It's the day I got married.

My wedding day. I hope you're impressed that I remember it. My life changed forever. 3rd of September was it? 1939. Britain declared war on Germany.

Our world changed. 9-11. 2001. There are days aren't there? Red letter days that change everything.

Some of those days don't just change individuals and families. They change nations. Some of them change the world. Dates that stick in our mind. Haggai is really specific about dates.

[20 : 47] And he refers to one particular day in verse 19. He says on this day. From this day. I will bless you. What date is he talking about?

He's talking about the 24th day of the ninth month, the second year of Darius, the first 10. And I think, if you translate into our calendar, that is December the 18th, 520 BC.

And that doesn't mean very much, does it? Anybody's birthday, December the 18th? December the 18th, 520 BC. What happened on that day? Something of earth-shattering importance happened.

Something that changed the world forever happened on that day. Here's what happened. God's people got serious with God. God's people got serious with God.

And they laid the foundation of the temple. And God says, now. Now you're talking. From this day, from this day on, I will bless you.

[21 : 55] Up till now, they've not been blessed by God. That's what we're told in this section. And verses 15 and following. Up till now, they have not taken God seriously. And they've only experienced the curses of the covenant.

They've gone through recession. They've had huge inflation. They did not have enough food in their barns. They struggled to make ends meet. And in verse 15, God says, think about it.

Think about it. Haven't you read Deuteronomy? Haven't you seen that actually God curses disobedience? And there are blessings in the covenant? Let me paraphrase it.

Eugene Peterson says this. Think back till before you laid the first foundation. Stones for rebuilding the temple. Think about how it went for you. Think back.

How did it go for you? Isn't it true that your foot-dragging, half-hearted efforts at rebuilding the temple of God were reflected in a sluggish halfway return on your crops? Half the grain you were used to getting.

[22 : 55] Half the wine I hit you with drought and blight and hail. Everything you were doing got hit. But it didn't seem to faze you. You continued to ignore me. And so, God comes through this preacher and he wants to challenge them.

He wants them to reflect in verses 1 to 9. He addresses the morale of the people. But in verses 10 to 19, he questions their morality. He says, think about your life. Think how you've lived up till now. How consecrated, how all in are you as a people to this job of building the temple? And he's challenging them. He's going for their morality.

Look at verse 10. And onwards. There are some people, aren't they, that think as long as you're in a holy place, as long as you're in contact with religious people, then spiritual blessing and change is going to somehow rub off on you.

Regardless of what else is happening in your life. Well, at least I was in church. At least they're in church. At least they've got a few Christian friends. But we know, don't we, when you think about it, it doesn't work like that.

[24 : 13] God says to them, just because you think that you're building a temple, that makes you holy? Think about that. Don't just float through life without thinking. So he asks the priest in verse 11, what does the Bible say at that?

Look at verse 11 and 12. If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy?

The priest has to do. Then I say, well, what about the opposite happens? If somebody who's unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean? The priest answered and said, it does become unclean.

I like green bananas. You know, they're kind of, they're just about turning yellow, but I like them green. I don't like ripe bananas. So if someone, for chance, puts green bananas in a bowl with brown bananas, what happens to the green bananas?

They go brown, doesn't it? Never in 22 years of marriage have I seen it work the other way. That you put green bananas into a bowl with brown bananas and the brown goes green.

[25 : 29] It doesn't work like that, does it? And so don't think that simply by coming to a church or by mixing with Christian people that somehow it will make you acceptable to God. Because it won't.

It will not. Lots of people think like that, isn't it? Sitting in a church will not make you a Christian in the same way, isn't it, that going into a garage will make you a mechanic.

It doesn't. Something's got to happen in your heart. Holiness doesn't happen by osmosis. Holiness comes from a relationship with the Lord Jesus.

There's a love from him and a love to him. And so if you want God's blessing in your life, and I'm sure you do, that's why you're here tonight, you have to take him seriously.

And God says from this day on. A red leather day. Build your foundation on me.

[26 : 28] Build your foundation on me. Build your foundation on me. And God promises that if you do that, he will bless you.

And so God comes to these people and encourages them. And he says, be strong. Don't be afraid. I'm with you.

I've not forgotten you. I've not forgotten my covenant. Be strong. And then he challenges them. Be consecrated. I don't think I give you that second heading. Be consecrated.

Make sure you understand what you're doing. And then lastly, be encouraged, he says. Zerubbabel must have been asking himself, who is going to build this temple?

There's a breathtaking vision, but how is it going to happen? How is it going to come about? Who's going to make it happen? Is Zerubbabel going to do this? He's the project manager.

[27 : 30] He's the governor of Judah. But it's an embarrassing name. What does it sound like? Zerubbabel. What does it remind you of?

This man belongs to the royal line of David. His grandfather was the last kosher king of Judah, who was carried off into exile.

But Zerubbabel was conceived and born in Babylon. And so every time his name is mentioned, every time his name is called, the people are reminded he belongs in Babylon.

Is Zerubbabel going to build this house? Is he going to make this happen? Well, look what God says in verse 23. What a massive encouragement that is.

On that day, he declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant. You're not Darius' servant, Zerubbabel.

[28 : 41] You're not the civil servant. You're not some puppet king. You are my servant. You work for me. And I will make you like a signet ring.

For I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts. God is saying there, isn't he, to Zerubbabel, you are going to be my signature in history, guaranteeing I complete this project.

A signet ring was worn by a king to authenticate documents. The kings of Judah, they were called literally God's signet rings.

They were symbols of his authority in the world. But there hasn't been a king in Judah since Jehoiakim, Zerubbabel's grandfather, was hauled off into exile. He was the last of the line.

He was the last of the kings. The line is broken. And so come with me to Jeremiah chapter 22 and verse 24. And this is how the exile is described.

[29 : 50] As I live, Jeremiah 22, 24. As I live, declares the Lord. Though Cuneah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my hand, yet I would tear you off.

That's how the exile is described in Jeremiah. Even if you were a signet ring on my finger, God says, Jehoiakim and his son, even though you're the last of the line of the kings, I would pull you off and I would throw you away.

And now he comes to his grandsons, Zerubbabel, and he says, I take you. And I take you to be my signet ring. And I will reestablish you, and I will reestablish the covenant that I made with David.

The story is nowhere. And I will build David's house, David's dynasty, just as I promised to do. So, Zerubbabel, I'm going to pick you up, and I'm going to use you for that purpose. And so you go to the New Testament, and you go to the first page of the New Testament, to Matthew chapter 1, or you go to Luke chapter 3, and the genealogies of Jesus, and guess whose name is there?

Zerubbabel. What is the likelihood of that happening? Here is this man, Zerubbabel, standing in the ruins of the temple, and everyone is laughing. The people are demoralized.

[31 : 10] It's so unlikely. All the odds are stacked against him. The Samaritans are crazy mad because the Jews are trying to rebuild the temple. It's so unlikely. It's so hostile.

Will this house ever get built? Will this kingdom ever come? Will great David's son ever arrive? Will it happen? Look at verse 20.

I will shake the heavens and the earth, and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms. And I'm about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms and the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders and their horses.

And the horses and the riders shall go down, and every one by the sword of his brother. It's Zerubbabel's Aslan moment, if I can put it like that.

Do you remember Aslan in The Lion in Narnia? He's the Christ figure. And there's a moment in the silver chair when Aslan appears on the scene. And Jill, she's not one of the main characters.

[32 : 11] Jill has not met him before. And she's absolutely terrified of this lion. She's absolutely terrified. And she says, do you eat girls? Do you eat girls, she said.

I have swallowed up girls and boys, women, men, kings and emperors, cities and realms, said the lion. It didn't say this as if it were boasting, or as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry.

It just said it. And God says, to Zerubbabel, this is what I'm going to do. God just said it. This is his Aslan moment.

And Jesus is saying to us, despite all the turmoil, perhaps in your life, certainly in our world, Aslan comes, Jesus comes to us. Great David's greatest son, he comes to us.

And what does he say? He says, I will build my church. And the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And Jesus, our king, our messiah, great David's greatest son.

[33 : 18] And he says, I will make you, you and you, you and you, my signet ring. Because all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me.

Therefore, you go. And make disciples of all nations. And I'm shaking the nations. And the ones that I desire from all the nations will come. And the glory of this house that I am building will be greater than the glory of the former house.

Let's pray. Thank you.