

BE STRONG AND WORK, FOR GOD IS WITH US

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Haggai 2:1-9 (Revelation 21:22-27)

A few weekends ago, I decided to replace the rusted drain in our master bathroom sink. As most of you know, I am not a handy guy, and what stirred my spirit to embark upon this task remains a mystery to me. Either way, I was ready and willing to get to work. Then, as I saw all the different pieces and parts, I got discouraged. It was more difficult than I expected. I doubted I had everything I needed, and my confidence in my ability to complete the job plummeted. As I was about to abandon the project, Salina came in and encouraged me. Having her accessible helped me to continue working with renewed confidence. Her presence and perspective reminded me that I had all I needed to complete this project despite my current difficulty and discouragement. While it took longer than expected, we now have a nice new drain. Now, I understand that for most folks, replacing a drain is not that big of a deal. For me, it's pretty huge, but even I realize that was nothing compared to what God's Returned Remnant faced with rebuilding the temple. If I needed encouragement for such a simple repair, just think of these Jews and their situation in 520 BC.

We examined God's first message to these Jews who recently returned to the Land from their Babylonian Exile. They were to rebuild God's temple. God, through Haggai, rebuked them for being preoccupied with their misplaced priorities of decorating their own houses rather than working on God's house. God exhorted the People to consider their ways. We then saw how the Jews, after giving careful thought to their ways, wisely responded in obedience to God's Word. We recognized that God's presence among His People enabled this favorable response.

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Despite there being no temple, God was with His Remnant People as He had promised. This is Good News.

In chapter 2, the People are evaluating the task of rebuilding the temple, and it is daunting. While the spirit of this remnant of God's people was stirred to begin working on the house of the Lord in October 17th, 520 BC, they soon needed a reminder of God's faithfulness to His promises; a reminder that He is with them and that their work is for a more glorious temple with greater blessings than they could presently imagine. God, knowing His People because He is with them and hears them, speaks to them again for their encouragement. In this second message from the LORD through Haggai, God encourages His People to press on in His work by assuring them of His *continuing presence* and *future glory* according to His promises. These promises of God through Haggai are intended to encourage God's People, both then and now, to **Be Strong and Work, for God is with Us.**

1. The Former Glory of God's House (READ Verses 1-3)

a. For some additional context, 16 years earlier: **READ *Ezra 3:7-13***

- i. In Haggai 2, God's remnant of the people is looking at the same unfinished temple foundation 16 years later still with no structure on it. Needless to say, many were discouraged with the little progress.
- ii. How easily we can get discouraged when we see little to no progress, especially when it comes to God's building projects. Yet, relying on our own abilities and resources will leave us even more discouraged, and that is certainly what the Jews were when seeing...

2. ...The Present Appearance of God's House and the Task At-Hand AND This is so relevant for our own small, yet faithful, congregation. (READ Verses 3b-5)

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- a. “Seems like Nothing”
 - i. Present Discouragement for Engaging in God's Work
 - ii. Future Difficulty of Completing God's Work
 - b. But God has already said, “I am with you” in **1:13**. So, where there's apparent nothingness, God, the only resource we truly need, is there as He promised.
 - i. This has been God's promise for His People since the Patriarchs, since the Exodus and since the Conquest of Canaan. God is with them and stirs their spirit to give them the strength to do His work (**READ 1:14, 2:4** NOTE the threefold repetition of “spirit” and “strong”)
 - ii. So, in case we forget and become discouraged, God is present and accessible, and He speaks His Word to encourage us and remind us of what He already promised in Haggai 1:13 (**READ 2:4b, 5b**). God will never leave us. He will never forsake us. It is God's promised and continuing presence with us that guarantees our work for Him will reach His desired goal, despite the present appearance of nothingness that may discourage us from building His House, and what a glorious House it will be!
3. **The Future Glory of God's House (READ verses 6-9)**
- a. The “shaking of the heavens and the earth and sea” is the LORD's coming that brings cosmic upheaval and that will lead all nations, all peoples, peacefully into His House, which will be filled with His glory, and this house will have a greater glory than even Solomon's temple.
 - b. Ezekiel saw this future glory of God. **READ Ezekiel 43:1-5**
 - i. Ezekiel saw the glory of the LORD depart from the temple and Jerusalem prior to its destruction by the Babylonians, and the glory of God and the splendor of the temple did not return with Zerubbabel's, or even Herod's temple, as it did with Solomon's temple.

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- c. The visions of Haggai's prophetic contemporary, Zechariah, also point to something greater than the current temple building project under both Zerubbabel, who was the Governor from the line of David, and Joshua the High Priest (**Ref. *Zechariah 2:1-5; 3:8-9; 4:6-10; 6:11-13, 15* for alter study.**)
 - i. Zerubbabel started the work of rebuilding the temple. Zechariah records that it was "Not by might nor by power, but by [God's] Spirit" that Zerubbabel completed the temple. Zechariah speaks of a time when GOD will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem, and His glory will be within the entire city. We also learn from Zechariah's visions that Joshua and his associates are symbolic of things to come, and that God Himself will bring forth His Servant, the Branch, Who will build His temple with those who are far away that will come and help; seeing God's faithfulness to His promises and rejoicing. This is realized in Jesus Who is BOTH the Anointed Governor from the line of David AND the Great High Priest. Jesus is The Branch Who is also the Suffering Servant of God.
- d. **READ *John 2:13-22; John 4:19-26***
 - i. With the first coming of Messiah Jesus, temple worship in Jerusalem gave way to something greater in glory that includes, not only the Samaritans and their second-rate temple on Mt. Gerizim but, all peoples; because, Jesus, Himself, is the new Temple, and His Body, through us as His Members, is the means by which the abiding and empowering Spirit of God will complete this present greater temple building project.

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- e. Despite our own current self-assessment, we have all we need to be about the work of our King Jesus; building His House by making disciples through proclaiming the Gospel that He died so we may have God with us always. Because of Jesus, we can **Be Strong and Work, for God is with Us.**
- f. So, when will the future glory of God's House be restored as promised? When will Jesus' Kingdom advancement, temple building and housing construction be gloriously accomplished? What will that be like?
 - i. **READ *Revelation 21:22-27; 22:20b-21***