



BIBLE STUDY

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L&CFUM Int.

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Philemon

- The letter to Philemon is a message from God to people of all times and ages on how to eliminate all issues that divide men's hearts. - **FORGIVENESS, RECONCILIATION, BEGINNING A NEW & BETTER RELATIONSHIP.** The letter to Philemon reminds us that God's revelation to humanity is intensely personal.
- *Fellowship among Christians.* Through Paul's ministry, Philemon has come to know Christ ([Philem. 19](#)), as has his former bondservant Onesimus (v. [10](#)).
- *Unity in mind and action* ([Philem. 2](#))
- Paul wanted Philemon to forgive Onesimus, to accept the slave as a brother in Christ, and to consider sending Onesimus back to Paul, as the apostle found him useful in God's service (1:11-14).
- Paul did not minimize Onesimus's sin. This was not some kind of cheap grace that Paul asked Philemon to offer. No, there was sacrifice required in this request, and because of that, Paul approached the topic with gentleness and care (1:21).
- His letter to Philemon presents in full color the beautiful and majestic transition from slavery to kinship that comes as a result of Christian love and forgiveness.

1st Thessalonians

- The redemptive work of Christ. Jesus “delivers us from the wrath to come” ([1 Thess. 1:10](#)). He “died for us” to bring us back to God ([5:10](#)). In [1 Thessalonians](#) as elsewhere, Paul views Christ’s death and resurrection as the climax of all human history, *Our glorious hope*.
- *Pray against Satan’s hinderances Chapters 1 & 2*
- *Glory in Oppression Chapter 3*
- *Christian Life Chapter 4 (comfort each other)*
- *Children of Light*

2nd Thessalonians

- False teachers had been presenting fake letters as if from Paul and telling the Thessalonian believers that the day of the Lord had already come.
- Amid suffering, we have grace in Jesus Christ.
- Paul was very concern as these believers were trying hard to stand amid false teaching.
- Paul connected his teaching on Jesus with some practical growth that is expected to be visible sign of a deep faith in God.
- Discipline and self-control
 - Being focused material things & forgetting spiritual realities that should dictate their lives.

Nahum

- The Assyrians had brutally conquered and terrorized large areas of the Near East in the eighth century B.C., destroying the Northern Kingdom of Israel and deporting its inhabitants in approximately 721 B.C. and later laying siege to Jerusalem in 701 B.C.
- The book announces the destruction of Assyria and reveals that God will protect his faithful people and punish all arrogant, violent, and evil nations
- God cares deeply about His people and will not let their oppressors go unpunished.
- God will fight the battle - two side to God - Love & Wrath
- Engage the enemy - Sometimes we need to start the fight.

Haggai

Build Back Better
Let's Make the Temple Great Again

- Haggai—along with Zechariah and later Malachi—preached to the post-exilic Jewish community who had returned to the land of promise after 70 years of expatriation ([Ezra 5:1; 6:14](#)). The Babylonian captivity was one of the lowest points in Israel's checkered history. Almost every prophet before Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi warned the nation that this judgment would come unless they repented and turned back to the Lord. They did not repent, and the judgment came, resulting in a ruined city and razed temple. But now the 70 years of retribution had been accomplished, and a new day was dawning.
- In 537 BC Zerubbabel, a descendant of David and ancestor of Jesus, led the first wave of expatriates back to Israel in response to the decree of Cyrus, the Persian king that God used to reverse the curse of the captivity and restore the people to the land of their inheritance ([Ezra 1:1-4](#)). Cyrus even subsidized their journey and plans for revitalization. Hope was high that God would bless with restoration and revival.
- The physical restoration of the city was a crucial component in the development of God's unfailing purpose of redemption in preparing the way for the coming Christ. According to prophecy, there had to be a Jerusalem and temple in place when the Messiah came ([Mal 3:1](#)). Therefore, the first order of business for Zerubbabel and the hopeful remnant was to rebuild the fallen temple. The book of Ezra records that at first progress on the project was good. The people were excited, unified, and hopeful. But soon there was external opposition, beginning with misunderstandings, and escalating to rumors, accusations, and threats. The opposition became so intense that the work ceased. That led to internal problems as apathy and carelessness replaced the initial enthusiasm and diligence. The work had ceased, and worse yet, nobody seemed to care. Involvement with the issues of life took precedence over work for God's kingdom.
- In 520 BC (the second year of Darius, the Persian king) God raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to address the apathetic and self-absorbed community, inspiring them to a renewed dedication and resolve for the work of the kingdom. Haggai, whose name means "festal one," was anything but festive as he preached to this people with skewed priorities. His reference to the glory of the pre-exilic temple ([Hag 2:3](#)) suggests that he was among those who had seen it, thus putting him most likely in his seventies when God used him to preach this short series of messages.
- Nothing is known about Haggai or his ministry before this occasion, but in fulfilling this divine commission he wasted no time and minced no words. In four short sermons, he got right to the point. These sermons, that he dated, spanned a period of four months, and nothing is known about him or his ministry after this occasion. His sermons were dated, but they are not outdated. Haggai impressed upon his congregation who had lost their vision that there is nothing more important than kingdom work. That message remains relevant today. He, indeed, "spoke to the people with the LORD's message" ([Hag 1:13](#)).

Haggai

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Let's Make the Temple Great Again

- Without a temple celebrations was impossible because sacrifices could not be offered. So, on a days when the temple was needed, Haggai rebuked the people because there was no temple. A reevaluation of priorities was in order. **Twice in this short sermon, Haggai told the people, “Consider your ways” (Hag 1:5, 7)**
- Work on the temple had ceased through no fault of their own, but the forced delay gradually caused the people to lose their vision and sense of mission. With his prophetic insight, **Haggai identified two errors that marked this loss of vision.**
- **First**, the people reinterpreted God’s Word by saying it was not time to rebuild the temple (1:2). A common and comfortable resolution when experience clashes with creed is to tweak the creed to make it consistent with experience. They assumed that if God really wanted them to build the temple, opposition could not have hindered the project. Since nothing can frustrate God’s will (their creed), the only feasible explanation was that it was not God’s will—**notwithstanding how clear the evidence (their reinterpretation; see Isa 44:28; Ezra 1:1-4).**
- **Second**, they redirected their efforts to personal survival and comfort (**Hag 1:4-6, 9-11**). The Lord’s house remained in ruins, but they had paneled their houses with cedar planks, perhaps even with the planks that had been stockpiled for temple construction (1:4). Priorities shifted from kingdom work to personal concerns. Verse 6 vividly describes the consequences of these misplaced priorities. Investments were not profitable (much sowing, but little harvest); the necessities of life (food, drink, and clothing) were never enough; they lived “paycheck to paycheck” (wages were put in bags with holes).
- Note: They were residing in the Promised Land with all of its potential blessing, their disobedience subjected them to the curse. The conditions of drought described in verses 10 and 11 echo **Deuteronomy 28:38-40** in detailing the kind of chastisement inflicted upon covenant breakers. Not having God and kingdom-work as the main priority in life is serious. Putting God first equates to obeying the greatest of all the commandments to love God totally (**Deut 6:5**). Not putting him first equates to the greatest sin.

Haggai

Build Back Better

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1st Sermon

- Zerubbabel, the civil leader, and Joshua, the religious leader, led the people to respond positively to Haggai's pointed sermon in three ways:
- **First**, they obeyed. They equated Haggai's words with the very words of the Lord just as the Thessalonians later regarded the words of Paul ([1Thes 2:13](#)). Obeying God equates to loving God, and loving God evinces correct priorities. With their priorities realigned, self-interests would give way to the kingdom work.
- **Second**, they feared the Lord. Consciousness of the Lord's presence ([Hag 1:13](#)) warranted their fear. Fearing God is living in the reality of God and factoring him into all the issues of life. It affects both attitude and action.
- **Third**, they became doers of the word.

Haggai

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Let's Make the Temple Great Again

2nd Sermon

The main point of the second sermon is that God has a purpose for his people greater than their perceptions and expectations.

The second temple would have greater glory because it would be the temple to which the Prince of Peace would come. Having a vision of the coming Christ would keep their focus sharp.

- [Haggai 2:1-9](#) records the prophet's second sermon on the twenty-first day of the seventh month, almost a full month after the commencement of the temple reconstruction.
- The people's response to Haggai's first sermon was positive and prompt.
- Happily, the work was progressing, but discouragement began to overshadow the progress.
- Although the people retained their vision for the temple project, the vision had blurred and needed refocusing.
- *Haggai's first message to this congregation was a rebuke, but this a time a word of encouragement.*

Haggai

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2nd Sermon (continued)

Three thoughts sum up this reassuring message-

Initial Reaction (2:1-3)

- According to [Ezra 3:11-12](#), the initial reaction to the laying of the temple's foundation was mixed: some rejoiced, and others lamented.
- That was the dual reaction before the Samaritan opposition that led to the cessation of the work, and the discouragement component apparently resurfaced once the work resumed—at least among those old enough to remember what Solomon's temple looked like.
- That this encouraging sermon dates to the seventh month is appropriate since it was in the seventh month that Solomon dedicated the first temple ([1Kgs 8:2](#)).
- That anniversary coupled with the sight of what was obviously an inferior structure exasperated the sense of disappointment—it was nothing in comparison. Instead of looking forward they were looking backward, and everything became out of focus.

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Initial Reaction (2:1-3)

- Whereas Haggai's first sermon concerned the problem of skewed priorities, he now addresses the problem of a skewed view of service.
- They estimated the value of their service by comparing it with someone else's: Solomon's.
- Undisputedly, what they were doing would not come close to matching the grandeur of what Solomon had constructed.
- When they put themselves first, the work suffered; when they put themselves down, the work seemed pointless.
- God's will for them was to build this second temple; that needed to be the point of focus rather than what used to be.

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God's Promise (2:4-5)

- God encouraged and exhorted the people to **fix their focus on the work of rebuilding** by twice pledging his presence with them. In verse 4, the Lord says, *"I am with you."*
- The second assurance of his presence suggests the same thought. Verse 5 says literally that "my Spirit is standing in your midst." The Lord backs up this promise with the thrice repeated statement in verse 4, "the utterance or oracle of the Lord"
- God reinforce his abiding presence base on the covenant he initiated with the nation at its inception when he delivered them from the bondage of Egypt ([Hag 2:5](#)). See [Exodus 29:45-46](#) - God assured the generation commissioned with building the Tabernacle (itself a symbol of God's presence) that he would dwell among them. Now, many years later, the Lord confirms to the generation commissioned with rebuilding the Temple (a symbol of God's presence) that nothing had changed. He is still with his people. That the New Testament refers to believers as the temple of God ([2Cor 6:16](#); [1Cor 6:19](#)) should encourage the church that God is still with his people.
- **"be strong, work, and do not fear"** - Consciousness of God's presence affects both attitude and actions. **The first command, "be strong"** occurs three times, personally to Zerubbabel and Joshua and then to all the people. Referring to mental rather than physical strength, the idea is to be courageous or to have courage. This attitude is not the expression of self-confidence but of faith that God's presence would guarantee success.
- **The second command was to work.** They were to be doers of the word; God expected them to act in response to his promise. **The third command was a prohibition against fear.**
- Invariably, when God tells his people not to fear, they are in circumstances that are dangerous or threatening; from every natural perspective they would have every right to fear. But faith is not a natural response.
- In one way or another what is feared determines behavior. Fearing God or being aware of his presence dispels every other reason to fear. Focusing on the Lord blurs everything else.

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Looking Ahead (2:6-9)

They assumed the best was behind them; Haggai declared the best is yet to be. In appearance, the temple-under-construction was not going to match the splendor of Solomon's, but the glory of the rebuilt temple was going to surpass the former ([Hag 2:9](#)). **The declaration of the Lord of Hosts guaranteed it.** This title of the Lord puts in bold his power and authority; he is Commander-in-Chief of all the armies of creation that are at his disposal to do his will.

Indeed, he was about to interrupt all of creation to accomplish his special purpose of filling this temple with glory (2:6-7). Such cataclysmic events often accompany special manifestations of God's presence (see for instance [Isa 64:1-2](#)). Nothing remains the same when God appears. [Hebrews 12:25-28](#) provides a divinely inspired clue as to the specific expression of this divine presence when it alludes to verse 6 in the context of rejecting Jesus. Indeed, Haggai is about to reveal the most stupendous descension of God in history: the incarnation of the Son of God. Nothing remained the same when Jesus came.

Haggai links God's filling the temple with glory with the coming of "the treasures of all nations" ([Hag 2:7](#)). The interpretive question is whether the word "treasure" or "desire" refers to the desirable things or wealth of the Gentiles or to Christ. Parallel texts reveal that Gentile wealth will indeed come to the coffers of God's kingdom ([Isa 60:5](#); [61:6](#); [Zech 14:14](#)). But it seems that in this context, the glory that fills the temple has nothing to do with silver or gold. Verse 8 says that all the silver and gold belong to the Lord, so he doesn't need help to bankroll the project.

It is better to see Christ as the desire, whose presence will come suddenly to this temple ([Mal 3:1](#)) and who will fill the house with glory. The Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple were engulfed in the Shekinah glory cloud of God's presence. But this temple, though outwardly inferior, would be graced with the physical presence of Immanuel. That would be incomparable glory and accomplished peace ([Hag 2:9](#)).

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3rd Sermon

Renewal of the Vision: Reasons for Rebuilding (2:10-19)

Haggai preached his third and fourth sermons on the same day (2:10; 2:20). These sermons marked the end of his inspired career and the beginning of a special administration of God's blessing. Construction on the temple recommenced in response to Haggai's first sermon, but there were a couple of things that Haggai wanted them to consider (literally, "to set the heart upon," 2:15, 18) as reasons to keep on building.

Haggai describes the infectious nature of sin by referring to some of the Levitical laws of cleanness and uncleanness (see [Lev 11-15](#); [Deut 14](#)). These laws, though complicated, taught the vital lesson that fellowship with God demands purity. To be unclean precluded participation in the ceremonies of worship. Therefore, God's people were to be vigilant in avoiding whatever would produce uncleanness. Haggai focuses particularly on the contagious consequences of sin. Something clean that touches something unclean does not render the unclean clean ([Hag 2:12](#)) but something unclean contaminates the clean (2:13). His principal application is a warning to deal with sin before it spreads to others.

In verses 14-17 Haggai applies this sin principle to the experience of the nation before his first sermon as a reminder to how bad things were before they obeyed. Verse 14 should read, "So *was* this people, and so *was* this nation before me . . ." to make it clear that this refers to their previous status. The similarities between 2:16-17 and 1:6-11 are too close to be coincidental. Everything they did to get ahead proved to be futile (2:16), and their failed labors traced directly to God's chastisement (2:17) in keeping with the covenant curses ([Deut 28:22](#)).

The message is clear that it does not pay to disobey. Happily, they responded well to the first sermon. But human nature is such that it is easy to revert back to the old ways when things do not go as expected. Remembering how bad sin and its consequences are was a key reason for renewing the vision to continue the work.

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The Anticipation of Blessing (2:18-19)

Construction of the temple was not complete, but it was in progress ([Hag 2:18](#)). In the light of that progress, the people had every right to expect things were going to get better. If disobedience brought God's curse, then certainly obedience would bring his blessing. Enjoying God's blessing was their expectation as much as enduring the curse had been their experience ([Deut 28:1-14](#)). Haggai reinforced that expectation with the closing words of this third sermon: "from this day on I will bless you" ([Hag 2:19](#)).

What blessing looks like, however, is sometimes contrary to expectation (see [Hab 3:17-18](#)). [Haggai 2:19](#) describes a barren condition. There was neither seed in reserve to plant nor fruit on vines or trees to harvest. But in the midst of what appeared to be barrenness, the Lord declared the certainty of blessing. Divine blessing is not to be defined in terms of tangible things, but rather with the assurance of the Lord's favor. The announcement itself commenced the blessing: to know that God is pleased is beyond words to express. What makes the blessing good is the Lord himself.

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4th Sermon

Reality of the Vision: Assurances about the Future (2:20-23)

Haggai's final sermon ([Hag 2:20-23](#)), the second of the day, sounded a note of triumph. His first sermon of the day announced the beginning of blessing; his final message declared its consummation, the ultimate reality. The prospect of blessing was good, and the best was yet to be.

Up to this point, Haggai's focus has been on the completion of the temple, a crucial component in God's redemptive plan leading to the fulness of time when Christ would come in what we know to be his first advent. In this last address, he details events that we know accompany Christ's second advent. We have a time advantage over Haggai's congregation enabling us to make that distinction. But awareness of the time gap was not essential to grasping the significance of the message: The success of Christ's kingdom was certain.

Like his other sermons, this last one was short and to the point. Unlike the others, this was addressed directly to Zerubbabel (2:21). Zerubbabel was the civil leader and the chief supervisor of the temple reconstruction. He was the civil authority and even of the tribe of Judah and descendant of David, but he was not the king. David's throne was still vacant, and there was no immediate prospect of a sitting king as the nation was still under foreign domination even though the exile was past. Babylon gave way to Persia, and then there would be Greece and Rome. It appeared there was no hope for a messianic kingdom, and that situation potentially could jeopardize the temple construction yet again. So, God gave them a look at the future to encourage them for the present. Haggai declared that the kingdoms of this world would fail, and that the kingdom of Christ would prevail. Two thoughts prove his point.

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Divine Conquest (2:21-22)

Repeating the divine declaration from 2:6, Haggai points to that time when God will shake the heaven and the earth. This is the language of theophany, when God interrupts the normal course of circumstance. The meaning and form of

the verb indicates that God with unhindered and uninterrupted activity will cause all of creation to shudder. The consequences of this shaking are unavoidable and inescapable. The Lord will turn upside down the thrones (authority) of the nations and with irresistible determination destroy their strength. He will decimate their armies (horses and chariots), causing such panic and confusion that they fight against themselves. The bottom line is clear that when God fights against his enemies, they cannot stand. God's people should take courage, knowing they are on the winning side.

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Divine Conquest (2:21-22)

The Divine Certitude (2:23)

After announcing the fall of earthly kingdoms, Haggai pointed to the certainty of the coming Messiah. The reign of Christ was the guarantee of the fall of every other kingdom. This certitude is heightened because it comes from the Lord of Hosts, the Commander of all armies who has all of creation at his disposal to accomplish his will. There could be no doubt: Messiah was coming.

Haggai makes the point, however, by referring to Zerubbabel whom God designates as a type or picture prophecy of David's greater Son, the Messiah. In his capacity as God's servant in the role of leadership, Zerubbabel pictured the Ideal Servant to come.

The signet was a symbol of authority and privilege belonging to the royal office. When God removed the signet from Jehoiachin ([Jer 22:24](#)), it appeared that hope for a Davidic kingdom was gone. God stripped Jehoiachin of honor and excluded any of his descendants from inheriting the throne ([Jer 22:30](#)). Since Zerubbabel was a descendant of Jehoiachin ([1Chr 3:17-19](#)), he could never himself sit on the throne. But the Lord's making him a signet was the guarantee of the unconditional certainty of God's covenant promise that David's greater Son would rule. Kingship was transferred to another line of David, vouchsafing the promise that was realized in Jesus.

There could be no better way for Haggai to end his series of sermons than with the assurance that Christ was coming. Over 500 years remained before he would come, but he was coming, and the best was yet to be.