

Build The House
Haggai 2:7-11
April 28, 2024
Pastor Francis Bezzam

⁷ “Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁸ Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. ⁹ You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹ And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

My message title this morning is “Build the House for the glory of God”.

Last week we attempted to define what a church is. We said that the church is the household of God, the house of the Lord. The Church is the bride of Christ.

This morning I would like to begin my message by asking *why* does the church exist?

The Church exists for *one* purpose alone.

The Church exists for the glory of God.

Whenever we gather together in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, it is for the glory of God.

We welcome one another for the glory of God. (Romans 15:7). We eat together for the glory.

We have fellowship for the glory of God. We pray together for the glory of God. We preach and teach for the glory of God.

There is an easy way to *not* give glory to God. To make it all about ourselves, our agendas, our preferences, me, myself and I.

And that is what the exiles did after they had returned to Jerusalem. They laid the foundation of the temple in 538BC and soon they neglected the work of God. Eighteen years had passed and God sends the prophet Haggai to remind them of their ways.

So, last Sunday, we considered the prophet’s message to the exiles – Consider your ways!

And in the passage we are considering for this morning, Haggai tells the exiles to not just consider their ways but to do something about it. Haggai calls this people to action.

This call to action is seen in verse eight – *“Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord”*

There are two major imperatives or commands in this verse. Go and Build. And the rest of the verse reveals God’s purpose.

Now, before we expound verse eight, I would like for us to look at the rest of passage first and then return to verses seven and eight.

Verses nine through eleven explain why the need to build the house was urgent. I believe this is our call as well. A call to build. A call to go and make disciples.

And next week, Lord willing, we will see how the people respond to the call to build the temple.

Let’s look at verse *nine*.

⁹ You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.

Have you tried a project or a task with a goal to accomplish something of value?

I am reminded of the apostle Peter. Peter was a fisherman by trade. Perhaps an experienced fisherman. He knew where the fish were. He knew how to work with fishing nets and how to catch fish. And yet, in Luke chapter five verse five Peter tells Jesus *“Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!”*.

Similarly, the exiles looked for much. What was result? Little. The word “behold” is very intentional. They looked for much but look! Says the prophet to the people. You produced little. Haggai gives the reason why the exiles were left with so little. Verse nine “I blew it away”. God withheld the blessing. God was behind the small outcome. Why? *Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house.*

This is the explanation of what we saw last week in verse *six* – *“You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill.*

You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.”

There is a divine principle at play here. The principle of first priority. First things first. God first principle. God can give. God gives lavishly. But God can take away. God is Sovereign over all things even things like food, water and clothing. In Peter’s case, he had to know that Jesus had sovereign authority how many fish got into the net. For the exiles, they knew the house of God was in ruins and yet they neglected it. The word *ruins* is an interesting word. It could mean dry up, desolate, destroyed or wasted.

The exiles are God’s people. God’s love is for them. God’s eye is on them to prosper them but they neglected the God first principle. So God withheld his blessing.

But God also warns them with consequences if they don’t follow through on putting Him first. Look at verses *ten* and *eleven*.

¹⁰ Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. ¹¹ And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”

In the original there are *two* “therefore” statements. The word *therefore* is there in light of what the exiles ignored. They ignored the house of the Lord.

It was harvest season and they were wondering why rainfall was sparse. The crops were meagre. God withheld the abundance. And now in verse eleven, God commands for a drought.

This word *drought* is the same word “*ruins*” used in verse nine (my house lies in ruins). This is really a play on words. God tells the exiles. My house is the source of blessing. You have forgotten the source of blessing. My house is in ruins. Therefore, I am going to ruin the land, the hill, the wine, the oil, the ground. And in spite of your best efforts, you still will be lacking. See the play on words?

Makes you think who really runs the show. The rulers of the nations think they control the supply of water, oil, bread or commodities.

Look at Psalm fifty and John chapter fifteen.

- *The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.¹¹ I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. Psalm 50:1,10*
- *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:4-5*

So God reminds the exiles that He was behind all the lack of abundance. And God warns them that if they continue in this way, they will have much more lack.

However, there is a remedy. There is a way out.

Let's return to verses *seven* and *eight*.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways. ⁸ Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord.

Verse seven is a repetition of verse *five* for emphasis.

Another translation of verse seven says, “You all consider the heart of your ways”.

In these two verses God tells the people to do self-reflection and act on it. Do self-examination and get to work.

The self-reflection was to consider their ways. Paul writes to the church in Corinth to “*examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith*” 1 Corinthians 13:5

What was the call to action?

Go and Build.

For the exiles, this command meant to gather resources and build the structure for worship. The prophet Haggai tells them to go up to the hills and gather wood and build the house. In Ezra chapter three, we are told that the exiles had enough material to build the temple but lacked the willingness.

“From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. ⁷ So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from Cyrus king of Persia.” Ezra 3:6-7

As New Covenant believers, surely, in the life of a church gathering, for the purpose of worship, there is a time to build the house but building the house of God implies more than just a physical structure. The word *baith* (for *house*) from the Hebrew parallels with the word *oikos* for house in the New Testament.

How should we understand this command to build as disciples of Jesus Christ?

At least *three* considerations:

1. Build by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in light of the promise of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Covenant, God’s presence was rather limited or localized to the temple, the physical structure and perhaps to a few individuals. With the arrival of the Messiah Jesus, God himself came in the form of human flesh. And Jesus promised that God’s presence will be given to whoever believes in His Son Jesus Christ. This is an *unprecedented* change from the Old to the New Covenant.
 - a. A vital text is from John chapter four and seven. *“the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth* John 4:21, 24. Later in chapter seven, Jesus is at the Jewish festival of booths. And hear what Jesus said - *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified”*. And the implication of this is what? You become the temple of God. The Holy Spirit takes residence in you the moment you *repent* of your sin and *believe* in Jesus as your Savior and Lord. For the first century Jews, this teaching caused such an uproar that they killed Stephen for it. Acts chapter six verses eight through fourteen –

“And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹ Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰ But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. ¹¹ Then they secretly instigated men who said, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” ¹² And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, ¹³ and they set up false witnesses who said, “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us”. So they bring Stephen for questioning and Stephen preaches a long sermon. See what Stephen says in verses forty-seven through fifty-one – “it was Solomon who built a house for him. ⁴⁸ Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?” “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.” God always wanted to be with people but it was because of their rebellious heart that He put the Old Covenant in place. Since the day of Day of Pentecost, every believer Jew or Gentile is now sealed by the Holy Spirit.

- b. Another text is in Acts chapter nine. Paul is new convert but what does he do. He begins preaching. And in verse thirty-one we see *“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.* In Acts chapter twenty, Paul says to the Ephesians elders – *“And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified”* Acts 20:32. We build by teaching *repentance and faith* in Christ alone. The church was being built up through the preaching of the Gospel with the promise of the Holy Spirit.

- 2. We build by being given to Scripture reading, reflection and Prayer regularly - *“beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit”* Jude 1:20. Some of us our part of a community Bible reading. It’s not too late to begin reading your Bible if you haven’t been reading and reflecting on it regularly.

3. We build by seeking the good of others. *“We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. ² Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up”* Romans 15:1-2. This is why we have mid-week fellowships, men’s and women’s gatherings. To care for each other and the lost around us. We want to build more leaders to lead new groups.

What we build today will impact future generations. Generations not yet born will reap blessings from what we labor today for others. And we stand on the shoulders of those who labored before us.

“Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the Lord” Psalm 102:18

But all our labor will be in vain unless the Lord is in it.

Jesus Christ must be the foundation on which we build. *“..no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* 1 Corinthians 3:11

The body of Jesus was marred, bruised and ruined so that those who believe in his death for forgiveness of their sins will never face eternal destruction. And in Jesus Christ you are built and by his resurrection you are built as a new creation.

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Lastly, in verse eight, Haggai tells the exiles the ultimate purpose for building the house.

Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the Lord. We build for the glory of God. In return we receive from God an abundance of blessing that is beyond comprehension.

Is there anyone who is building his or her life without Jesus Christ? Turn to Jesus and be saved.

----- Discipleship Questions-----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Build The House. Haggai 1:7-11

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. How significant is it that the Holy Spirit is in you since the time you became a believer and you are being built up in Jesus Christ? Go around and share.

HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.

1. Do you believe you are God's temple? How should we build ourselves up and others for God's glory?
2. What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

1. For personal reflection: Is there anything in our life that needs to change to build others up?