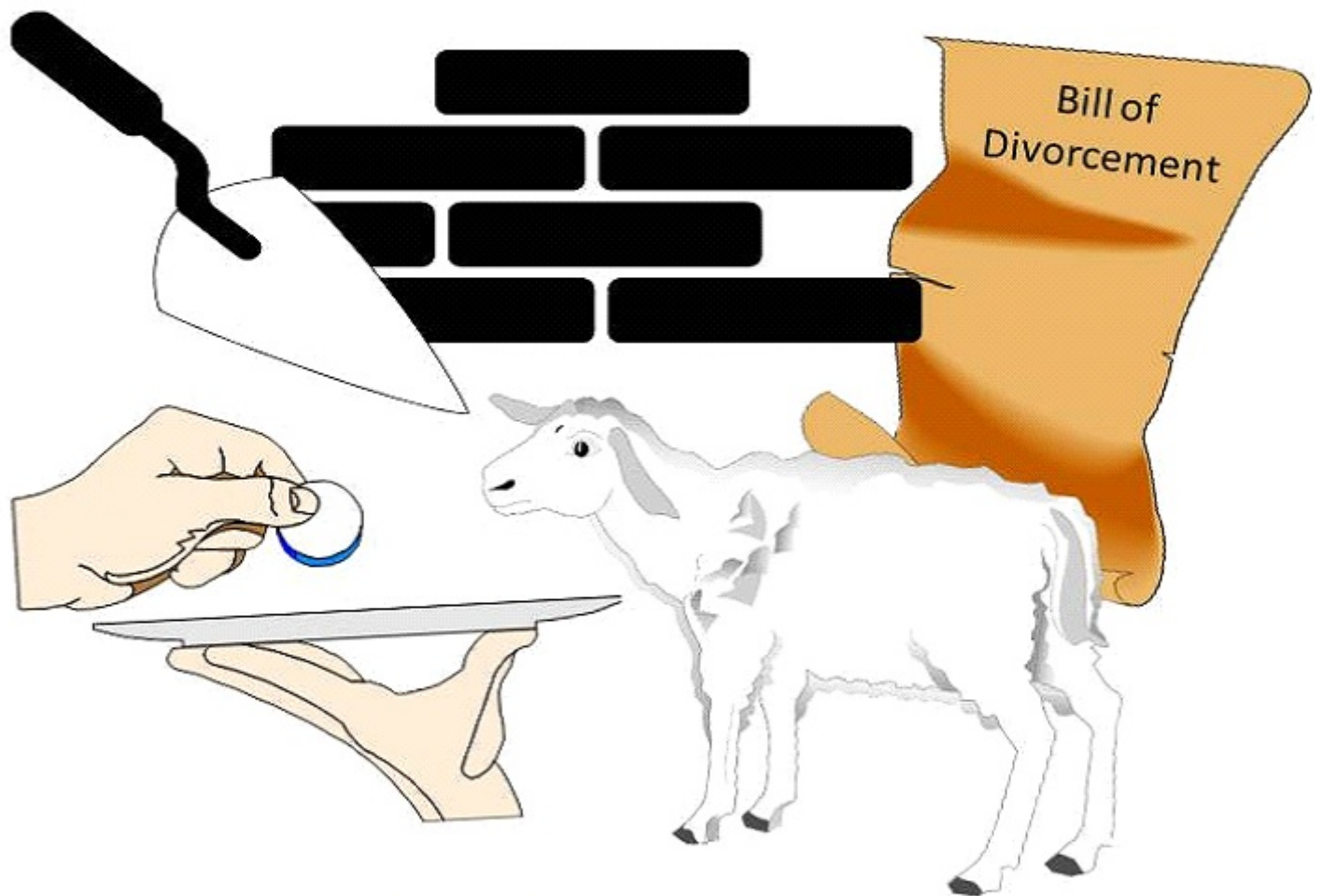


The Minor Prophets

Haggai & Malachi



The Forum Terrace Church of Christ

Adult Wednesday Night Bible Class Summer Quarter 2024

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Introduction to Haggai: Rebuild the Temple

Haggai 1:1

Authorship

No doubt Haggai is the author of this prophecy. Four times in the first chapter and five times in the second chapter Haggai is the recipient of *“the word of the Lord”* (1: 1 , 3, 12, 13; 2: 1 , 10, 13,14,20). Little is known of his personal history. Like other minor prophets there have arisen many traditions surrounding Haggai. Based on chapter 2:3 it has been conjectured that he had witnessed the temple of Solomon. Since it was destroyed in 586 B.C. and Haggai dated his book at 520 B.C. he would had to have been at least eighty years old at this time. However, chapter 2:3 provides no real evidence for this claim. It is just as probable that he was born in Babylon and returned with his parents under Zerubbabel. Similarly, Epiphanius describes him as a young man on the return from Babylon. Some of the Septuagint manuscripts attribute the authorship of Ps. 137; 144-148 to Haggai and Zechariah. Other traditions have these two contemporary prophets taking the lead in singing “Hallelujah” and “Amen” in Zerubbabel’s Temple. According to the Midrash and Talmud Haggai was on the founders of the “Great Synagogue” (Aboth R. Nathan 1; Bab Bathra isa). This Great Synagogue was a body supposedly responsible for the preservation of the Jewish scriptures and traditions. The final unsubstantiated legend is that he was buried in the sepulcher reserved for priests.

Date

Nearly a hundred years had past since Habakkuk warned of the Chaldeans being raised up by Jehovah to render judgment on Judah by God. The period of the exile has passed and the remnant has returned to Palestine. Haggai is the first of the Post-Exilic prophets. The other two to follow him are Zechariah and Malachi. All worked in the Persian Period of Bible History. It is believed by rabbinic tradition that after these three prophets died the Holy Spirit departed from Israel.

Few prophets so accurately date their prophecies as does Haggai. In chapter 1: 1, Haggai informs us that he began this prophecy in the second year of Darius, King of the Medo-Persian Empire. Darius I ruled from 522 to 486 B.C. This makes 520 B.C. the uncontested date for Haggai’s prophecy. Each of his four messages are dated to the precise day: the first message came on the first day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius; the people began to rebuild the temple on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month; the second message came on the twenty-first day of the seventh month; and the third and fourth messages on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Thus, this prophecy covers just four months in the life of Haggai in the year 520 B.C. between August and December.

The Man, Haggai

■ His Name

This minor prophet is the only man to wear this name in the Bible. It may be related to the forms Haggi (Gn. 46:16); Haggiah (1 Chr. 6:30), and Haggith (2 Sm. 3:4). The Hebrew name “Haggai” means “festive”, “festal”, or “joyous”. It is translated in Latin to “Festal” and in Greek to the name “Hilary”. It is probable that “Haggai” is but a shortened form of the name “Haggiah meaning “festival of Jehovah”. Some suggest he was so named because he was born on some feast day. Indeed, when Haggai’s

message did its work and the temple was completed years later it was a festive occasion (Ezra 6:13—18).

■ **His Occupation and Residence**

Nothing is known with any certainty as to Haggai's occupation or residence. In Hag. 1:1; Ezra 5:1; 6:14 he is designated "the prophet". No other occupation is even hinted at. The assumption is that he would have naturally lived in or around Jerusalem since his main message is the rebuilding of the temple.

■ **His Contemporaries**

According to Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 Zechariah was his immediate contemporary. It appears they worked together especially in the last month of Haggai's prophecy. Zechariah gave his opening address in the eighth month of 520 B.C. (Zech. 1:1-6). Another contemporary prophet to Haggai was Daniel who at this time may still have held a high position in the Medo-Persian Empire (Dan. 6:1f).

Historical Background

Before Haggai had begun his work the northern tribes had been carried into Assyrian captivity nearly two hundred years before. Other peoples were transplanted in their stead by the Assyrians to form a mixed race of Israelites and foreigners known as the Samaritans.

About one hundred years before his ministry the Babylonians began their campaigns to conquer the world. In 612 B.C. they destroyed Nineveh and later destroyed the rest of the Assyrian army at Haran in 609 B.C. At the Battle of Carchemish, King Nebuchadnezzar defeated and repelled Egyptian forces from Syria and Palestine. In 606 B.C., the Babylonians first entered Judah taking away captives to Babylon, including Daniel and his three friends. King Jehoiakim of Judah brought back the Babylonians by revolting in 597 B.C. King Jehoiachin reigned in the place of his dead father, Jehoiakim. After a three month reign Nebuchadnezzar had him taken to Babylon with other captives which included the prophet Ezekiel. Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, was installed by Babylon as its puppet Judean ruler. A revolt by Zedekiah brought the Babylonians back to Judah in 586 B.C. This time all of Jerusalem including the temple was destroyed and the bulk of the remaining Jewish population was carted off into exile.

After Nebuchadnezzar's death in 562 B.C. the Babylonian Empire began to weaken due to ineffective leadership. So from the throne of the tiny Elamite state of Anshan was to come the founder of the next world empire. In 559 B.C. Cyrus not content with being king of Anshan attacked Astyages, King of the Medes, and entered the capital city of Ecbatana. Not wasting any time he advanced his army against the rich kingdom of Lydia in Asia Minor. In rapid succession Cyrus moved down the Tigris—Euphrates Valley through Assyria toward Babylon. The Nabonaid Chronicle, a clay tablet now in the British Museum, relates the activities of the last King of Babylon and the capture of his capital city. Nabonidus, king of Babylon, had actually turned over the rulership to Belshazzar. On October 13, 539 B.C. Cyrus entered the city of Babylon as a liberator to the populace. The Medo-Persian Empire would rule the world for the next 200 years, from 559 to 358 B.C.

God raised up the Medo—Persian Empire to serve His purpose concerning the Jews. In an amazingly precise prophecy, Isaiah had foretold of one named Cyrus who would restore the Jews to the land and allow them to rebuild the temple (Is. 44:28; 45:1). Cyrus was more humane than his predecessors of Babylon and Assyria. He made a point of reversing particular policies of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Cyrus issued a decree which would permit all the peoples who were removed by the Assyrians and Babylonians into exile to return to their homeland. The returning people would be permitted to rebuild their ancestral temples. Cyrus hoped by this policy that prayer to all the gods would be offered for him. Cyrus was not a believer in the One True God. His decree was for all peoples under his domain. The Cyrus Cylinder, a contemporary inscription to the book of Ezra, records the following: "...the gods who live in them (the cities) I return to their places. All of their inhabitants I collected and restored to their dwelling places." Daniel prayed (Dan. 9:1f) for God's mercy upon the ruins of Jerusalem noting Jeremiah's prophecy that the Jews would return after seventy years of exile (Jer. 25:11,12; 29:10). Two years after Cyrus' decree, the first return from exile began in 536 B.C. From 606 B.C. when the first captives had

been carried off into Babylonian Captivity to 536 B.C. when the first groups of Jews returned a total of seventy years had passed. Ezra chapters one through six provide us with excellent background information for this period. In response to Cyrus's decree the people prepared to return. They received the items which Nebuchadnezzar had removed from the temple sixty years previous to their return. They also received contributions from those staying behind in Babylon. For these Jews had built houses, married, and gone into business during the period of exile (Josephus, Ant. 11.1.3; Jer. 29:5,6). According to Ezra 2:64,65 a total of 42,360 plus 7,337 menservants and maidservants returned with Zerubbabel, the grandson of king Jehoiachin. In the seventh month of 536 B.C., they set up the Altar and offered sacrifice (Ezra 3:1f). In the second year after they returned work began on the temple. A joyous celebration marked the completion of the foundation of the new temple (Ezra 3:8f).

When the neighboring people heard of the Jews' progress on the temple they offered to help. Zerubbabel, the prince, and Jeshua, the high priest, rightfully turned them down (Ezra 4:1-3). These were Samaritans who didn't worship Jehovah according to the Law and also mixed paganism into their religion. If they could not help, these Samaritans and the rest of the people of the land decided to hinder (Ezra 4:4f). They wrote a letter to Cambyses (the "Ahasuerus of Ezra 4:6) who had succeeded Cyrus to the throne. Complaining that the Jews were a rebellious people. If the Persians allowed them to rebuild Jerusalem, they warned, the Jews would take away all the territory west of the Euphrates River (Ezra 6:16). Cambyses reviewed the letter and decreed that the work should stop (Ezra. 4:17-23). The foundation would remain neglected for the next sixteen years.

Six years after issuing the decree which allowed the Jews to rebuild their temple Cyrus died. His son, Cambyses (530-522 B.C.), failed to uphold this decree. Under his leadership, the Empire did continue to grow. He defeated the Egyptian Pharaoh, Psamtik, at Pelusium and sacked Memphis (525 B.C.), thus adding Egypt to the sprawling Medo-Persian Empire. During his campaigning in Egypt one named Gaumata claimed to be Cambyses's brother Smerdis. However, Cambyses had already secretly killed his brother. In route to Persia Cambyses apparently committed suicide. Pseudo-Smerdis ruled only seven months before he was executed by the Persian army. A period of confusion existed in the Empire. At this time it seemed the Empire was about to fall apart. Darius I (522- 486 B.C.) son of Hystaspes, stepped in and saved the Empire by putting down one rebellion after another. "In Babylonia a local revolt brought Nidintu—Bel (Nebuchadnezzar III) to the throne. On his defeat Darius gained control there for almost a year. Then Araka (Nebuchadnezzar IV) led another rebellion, and it was late in 521 B.C. before Darius could restore order there. Darius was such a effective ruler that he won the title of "Darius the Great" (NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY: REVISED, p. 781). He took the weakened empire and consolidated it. He campaigned in Europe adding Thrace and Macedonia. At Marathian (490 B.C.) His hopes of conquering Greece were defeated. "Darius was an efficient organizer and his rule left nothing to be desired from the administrative standpoint. Legal and fiscal reforms promoted commerce and industry. A postal system facilitated communication throughout his vast empire. Roads were built everywhere. Engineers of Darius designed a canal to be dug in Egypt linking the Nile River with the Red Sea and serving the same purpose as the modern Suez Canal" (Charles F Pfeiffer, BAKER'S BIBLE ATLAS, p 174).

When Darius I first took over the throne there was little change in Judah. After all it was only a tiny dependency in the two million square mile Medo-Persian Empire. It wasn't until the Persian governor of Samaria, Tattenai, complained about the Jews that Darius considered Judah (Ezra 5:6-17). Darius made a search of the royal archives and found Cyrus's decree which allowed the Jews to rebuild their temple. Darius then renewed this decree placing heavy punishment on anyone who hindered the Jews (Ezra 6:1-12).

Sixteen years after the work on the Temple had begun a major obstacle had been removed. However, the Jews didn't begin work on the temple again solely on the renewal of Cyrus's decree. God had to send in His prophets Haggai and Zechariah to spur the people on to rise up and build. The conditions in Judah were not very favorable at the time. The period of confusion in the Medo-Persian Empire had left a great deal of economic chaos in its wake. This condition was worsened by a series of famines. Archeological evidence supports the fact that there was a great deal of poverty in this region.

The people had returned in hopes of entering a land flowing with milk and honey. Instead all they found was cities in ruin, non-productive fields due to fifty years of neglect, and hostile neighbors. They began to view the ruins with complacency. To the Jews this was not a time to rebuild the temple, instead they spent their energy on building themselves homes and lamenting their poor conditions. Haggai probably grew up witnessing these conditions and the bare foundation of the temple. On Sept. 1, 520 B.C., he begins his ministry shaming the people for their negligence. Twenty-four days later the people begin to build the temple. Four years later on March 3, 516 B.C. the temple was completed (Ezra 6:13f). Its completion came exactly seventy years after Solomon's Temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Ezra returned with a second group composed of about 2,048 people (Ezra 8:1ff) in 547 B.C. approximately sixty years after the temple was completed. Ezra, who was a priest and scribe, read the Law to the people and began some much needed reforms. Thirteen years later in 444 B.C. the Persian King Artaxerxes allowed his cupbearer, Nehemiah, to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls.

Content

- **Major Theme: Rebuild The Temple**

Like many of the minor prophets before him Haggai's message is centered upon one objective. That objective was the rebuilding of the Temple. Like Isaiah before him, he sees the temple as a place of not only national, but international significance. Furthermore, it was not of merely past or present importance, but vital to the age to come (Hag. 2:6-9; Is. 2:2-4). He shows to the Jews that failure to rebuild the Temple would result in a failure to regain God's returned favor. The restoration of the Jews and the completion of the Temple was imperative because the physical building held great spiritual significance. Its rebuilding would demonstrate their reliance on God, serve as a token of God's renewed covenant with them, and demonstrate their enthusiasm and faithfulness to the One and Only Holy God of their forefathers. This reconstruction would stand as a monument to the lessons they learned while in exile.

- **Absence of Denunciation Of Immorality**

Unlike his predecessors, Haggai's prophecy is devoid of denunciations against immorality, idolatry, and social injustice. These had been prevalent sins denounced by pre-exilic prophets. Apparently, the seventy years of captivity had taught them a lasting lesson. The sin of idolatry along with the gross immoralities which often accompanied it would never become such a national problem as it had been previously. However, social injustice would become a problem in the land in the times of Nehemiah (Neh. 5:1f) and Jesus Christ (Mt. 23:1f). His contemporary, Zechariah, would be left to make a direct call for repentance. One thing that must be noted is that Haggai did denounce their sins of selfishness, improper priorities, procrastination, complacency, etc. The result was repentance in a mere twenty-four days.

- **Four Prophetic Messages**

Haggai received four (some say five) messages from God to give to the people. He claims Divine origin for all of them. Twenty-six times he repeats this claim of divine origin of these oracles with such phrases as : *"Thus saith Jehovah of hosts"*, *"...saith Jehovah of hosts,"* *"saith Jehovah"*, and *"the word of Jehovah came unto him"*. In this short prophecy consisting of just 38 verses he consistently and persistently pursues the problems surrounding the rebuilding of the temple.

On the first day of the Jewish month Elul in 520 B.C., Haggai gives his first message. With it he heads straight to the leadership of the people: Zerubbabel, the prince, and Jeshua, the high priest. Then he sternly rebukes the indifference of the people. They had become content with building their own houses while neglecting the Lord's house (1:4). They were apathetically learning to live and worship God without a temple. Their attitude was that their comfort and luxury came first and then God's work and worship fit in if possible. Haggai quickly demonstrates with a clear example (1:6) how God feels about their failure to put first things first. God's Will and Ways must always take priority (Mt. 6:33). Due to their

neglect of God's Temple, Divine chastisement in the form of unfavorable economic conditions resulted. The Law taught that such conditions of national adversity resulted from national disobedience to God (1:11; Dt. 11:17; Am. 4:7). The people properly responded by getting to work. Then Haggai promised that God would be with them (1:13).

The second oracle came on Tishri 21, 520 B.C. Here, the builders are given encouragement to continue God's work. Some who had seen the old temple soon began to realize that it was a poor replacement. These Jews were simply not as wealthy as those of Solomon's day (I Kgs. 10:27). Haggai informs them that its glory will be greater than that of the former. Perhaps this is referring to the spiritual temple that Christ would build after this one had served its purpose (2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21). Furthermore, even though this temple would lack the ark, breastplate of gems, cloud of glory, fire from heaven and spirit of prophecy, it would be visited by the Son of God.

Two months after the second oracle Haggai receives a third on Kislev 24, 520 B.C. He answers the problem that some obviously raised about the delay in receiving God's blessings. Haggai demonstrates that indifference pollutes all work. He teaches that while holiness is not contagious, unholiness is (2:10-19). This is taught by asking them whether holy flesh is made so by contact with that which is holy. The answer is obviously no (Lev. 6:27). On the other hand, that which is holy is made unclean by contact with the dead. To give a modern illustration, a well man does not spread health; but a sick man may certainly impart and infest others with his disease. Thus, their man-wrought economic troubles would be replaced with God given blessings in due time. Their discouragement was not a sufficient reason to neglect the work.

Also on this day came the fourth and final message of Haggai from God. This prophecy closes with a Messianic hope. The nations are to be overthrown. Zerubbabel is to be given divine protection. He is to be like a signant ring before God. This idea may be reminiscent of Jeremiah's words when he pronounced fate upon Zerubbabel's grandfather, Jehoiachin (Jer. 22:24). This may signify that the despair of the exile under Jehoiachin has turned to hope and glory under the leadership of Zerubbabel. The full meaning of this fourth oracle would not be unveiled until the coming of the Messiah. In Mt. 1:12; Lk. 3:27 note that Christ's genealogy is traced through Zerubbabel.

Literary Style

Haggai's style of writing is in great contrast to the excellent poetry seen in Nahum and Habbakuk. Haggai "employs a rhythmic prose style rather than a common poetic form often characteristic of the prophets" (New Bible Commentary: Revised, p. 782). Though he may have not achieved, expressed or developed the poetic talents of others, his place among these prophets is unshaken. Though his messages rarely rose above the level of ordinary prose, Haggai demonstrated himself as an effective and forceful preacher. He had an aim and a mission. This he initiated in twenty-four days and completed in four years.

Haggai in the New Testament

The phrase "*shake the heavens and the earth*" is used by the Hebrew writer in Heb. 12:26 demonstrating that the Messiah's Kingdom cannot be shaken.

Questions

True & False

1. T F There is very little internal evidence to support Haggai as the author.

2. T F There is a great deal of evidence indicating that Haggai had seen Solomon's Temple.
3. T F The messages in the book of Haggai took place over a four month period.
4. T F Haggai was a contemporary of Zechariah and possibly Daniel.
5. T F Jehoiachin was carried off to Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C.
6. T F After Nebuchadnezzar's death, the Babylonian Empire continued to strengthen.
7. T F Cyrus continued the Assyrian and Babylonian policy of relocating inhabitants of conquered territories to foreign lands.
8. T F Cyrus was a monotheist, that is, he believed in the One True God.
9. T F Jeremiah prophesied that the exile would last seventy years.
10. T F Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin.
11. T F The Samaritans and other people in Palestine refused to help Zerubbabel and the Jews rebuild the temple.
12. T F Darius was a strong and effective leader in the Medo-Perisan Empire.
13. T F Four years after Haggai exhorted and encouraged the people to rebuild the temple it was completed.
14. T F Haggai denounces the idolatry, immorality, and social injustices of the people.
15. T F The book of Haggai consist of four messages which are given on four different days.
16. T F The people became discouraged because this temple was not as grand as Solomon's Temple.
17. When did Haggai receive this message? Give the year B.C.
18. Give background information about Zerubbabel.
19. Give background information about Jeshua.

First Message: Consider Your Priorities

Haggai 1:2-15

1. What excuse do the people give for not rebuilding the Temple?
2. What had they been doing while the Temple went neglected?
3. What are they called upon to consider?
4. What is wrong with their harvest, hunger, thirst, clothing and wages?
5. Where are they to go to get wood?
6. What reason is given for the rebuilding of the Temple?
7. Who was causing their shortage of goods?
8. Why were they in economic distress?
9. In what ways did God use nature to afflict them?
10. How did the people respond to the Lord's message?

11. How is Haggai described in verse 13?
12. What encouragement did the Lord send upon their noble response to His message?
13. What does it mean that *“the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel...Jeshua...and the people”*?
14. Give background information as the use of the term *“remnant.”* Why is it used and to whom does it apply?
15. When did they begin work on the Temple?

Application & Discussion:

1. What things hindered the rebuilding of the Temple? Discuss how these same things hinder the building up the God’s House today.
2. What motivated the people to get busy rebuilding the Temple? Discuss how these same things should motivate Christians today in building up the House of God today?

Homework: Consider what you can do this week to help build up the House of God.

Second Message: Temple's Greater Glory

Haggai 2:1-9

1. When did this second message come to Haggai?
2. Were their people of the remnant who had seen Solomon's Temple?
3. How does the Temple they are building compare to the former one?
4. Why are they to take courage and work?
5. What promise is God referring to in verse five? Give passages.
6. What is God going to do in a little while? What does this mean?
7. What will result from God shaking the nations?
8. To whom does all gold and silver belong?
9. Which Temple will have greater glory?

10. Of what was this Temple to be a source?

Application & Discussion:

1. What things discourage the people from rebuilding the Temple? How do these same things discourage Christians today?

2. What things in chapter two and verses one through nine motivated the people to keep working? How do these motivate us to keep working today?

Homework: Overcome the things which discourage you from working on the House of God.

Third & Fourth Messages

Haggai 2:10-23

1. When did this message come to Haggai?
2. Why was he to ask for a ruling from the priests?
3. How did they answer Haggai's first question? Was their answer scripturally correct?
4. How did they answer the second question? Was this answer correct?
5. To whom is this example of uncleanness applied?
6. What did God consider unclean among the people? Why?
7. What period of time are they called upon to give consideration?
8. What was their problem during this period of time?
9. How did God smite the works of their hands? How did the people respond?

10. What period of time are they called upon to give consideration to in verse eighteen?
11. How would they have answered the question in verse nineteen?
12. What was God going to do for them in the future?
13. When did God give the fourth message?
14. To whom is this message specifically addressed?
15. Who is God going to overthrow? How?
16. Who was God going to make like a signet ring? When?
17. What was a signet ring?

Application & Discussion:

1. What are the consequences of an unholy life?
2. Show how God overthrew the nations in order to prepare the way for the coming of Christ and his church.

Homework: Be encouraged by God's promise of hope for us.

Introduction of Malachi & God's Love is Doubted

Malachi 1:1-5

Imagine being a Jew in the post-exilic period. You are used to reading the poetic prophecies by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Haggai, Obadiah, etc. and the apocalyptic literature of Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah. Then God finally sends a prophet who is more of a preacher than a poet. His simple concise a straight-forward style is very easy to understand compared to that of Daniel 7-12 and parts of Ezekiel and Zechariah. It is filled with debate using rhetorical questions and logical refutations, making it the most argumentative books in the Bible. As was true then, so it is today. Malachi's unique style aptly deals with the same indifference to God's commands, lethargic ritualistic and empty worship, rejection of the marriage covenant, and lenient morals.

The Author

The man, Malachi, is shrouded by anonymity. No one knows who his father was or when and under what circumstances he was called by God to prophecy. Although Josephus mentions all the major characters from this period of history, he fails to mention Malachi. The only thing we can know for certain is that he must have lived during the time of post-exilic Jews when zeal for God had waned and religion was a mere ritual. However, some Jewish traditions provide more details. He is believed to be a Levite from Sopha in Zebulun. Others state that he died when he was young. Whether we know the particulars of this prophet's life is not as important as knowing the truth found within his prophecies.

Malachi's name means "my messenger." Some scholars hold the view that Malachi is not a proper name of a man but is simply a symbolical term indicating the calling of the unnamed author. The term also appears in 3:1 but not as a proper name. Further evidence that this may not be the name of the author is found in the fact that "Malachi" does not appear as a proper name anywhere else in the Bible. The Septuagint translates it: "by the hand of his messenger" (1:1). However, this really does not prove anything since it uses "Malachi" as the title for the book. The Targum adds the phrase: "my messenger whose name is Ezra the scribe." Both Calvin and Jerome had used this to show that "malachi" was really a pseudonym for Ezra. Yet, the literary style and phraseology of both Ezra and this prophecy are quite diverse. Others have identified the author as Zerubbabel, Nehemiah or Haggai because he is called "the messenger of the Lord" (Hag. 1:13). In the Talmud (Megillah 15a) Rabbi Nabman said that Malachi was really Mordecai.

Because angels are messengers and *malachi* means "my messenger," Origen held that the book was written by an incarnate angel. "To take the view that Malachi is an official name one must change the pronoun 'my' ('my messenger') to 'his' ('his angel'), a change for which there is no Hebrew evidence" (Kaiser 432).

Despite all of these arguments against Malachi being the author, there is plenty of reasons for us to accept him as the author in fact. The name Malachi is an abbreviated form of *mal'akiyah* meaning the "messenger of Yahweh," as Abi is a shortened form of Abijah. (2 Ki. 28:2; 2 Chr. 29:1). Since all the other prophets are named at the beginning of their prophecies, why would Malachi be written anonymously? As far as this study of the last prophetic book of the Old Testament is concerned, Malachi will be regarded as the author.

Canonicity

Does the book of Malachi belong in the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God? Does it meet the standard to be a part of the Old Testament canon? In fact, the canonicity (the quality of being a genuine work of inspiration) of Malachi has not been called into any serious question by ancient or modern scholars. Whenever this book is referenced with the New Testament, it is quoted as inspired prophecy. Once, it is quoted along with a passage from Isaiah and both texts are treated as if they came from the prophet Isaiah. A fragment of a manuscript found among the Dead Sea scrolls at Qumran contained part of this prophecy from Malachi 1:13,14. Foremost is the prophet Malachi's claim that this is not his personal opinions as a man but the words of the Lord. Of the prophecy's fifty-five verses, forty-seven are recorded as if they came directly from the mouth of the Lord. In fact, twenty-one times the book uses the phrase "saith Jehovah of hosts."

Date

Fixing an exact date for the book of Malachi is not an easy task. He cites no datable occurrences or individuals. Perhaps the mention of Edom (1:1-5) is the only allusion to a historical event that could help identify a date for this book. Although Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed much of Edom by 587 B.C., it was not until 440 B.C. that the remaining Edomites were driven out of the land by the Nabatean Arabs. According to traditions among the Jews, Malachi has always been last among the Minor Prophets, placing it in the post-exilic era. A Jewish work (Ecclesiasticus 48:10) written about 180 B.C. quotes Malachi 4:6. Malachi must fall between 537 B.C. and 180 B.C.

Yet there is plenty of internal evidence to help us date the time of his writing. Obviously, the Temple had been rebuilt. After all, the priests were offering up sacrifices upon the altar. This book could not have been written prior to 515 B.C. However, the enthusiasm of the rebuilding of the Temple and the wall around Jerusalem does not fit in with the apathy and slackness of the spiritual disposition of the people Malachi is rebuking. Enough time had to pass for their fervor to lapse. Mention is made of a Medo-Persian governor in 1:8. The same term *pelah* is an official title for governor which was also applied to Zerubbabel and Nehemiah (Hag. 1:1,14; Neh. 5:14). Nehemiah probably was not the governor at the time of this prophecy. As governor he did not accept the revenues or animals for his table from the people that was due him as governor (Neh. 5:14-19). Both Malachi and Nehemiah deal with the same transgressions. They both faced the same problems with tithing, mixed-marriages, and maltreatment of the poor (Neh. 13:6-31). It must be noted that Nehemiah did not deal with these issues during his first term as governor (444-433 B.C.). Thus Malachi prophesied just before Nehemiah's second term in 430 B.C. or during his second term as governor (430-425 B.C.). However, evidence may even support a date later than the governorship of Nehemiah. First, the lack of tithing in Malachi is due to a famine (2:11). Whereas tithes were not brought in during Nehemiah's second term in office because Tobiah was given residence in the Temple. (13:49). Second, Malachi does not focus on mixed marriages alone but the rejection of their first wives in favor of others. Perhaps, they had taken Nehemiah's command to divorce foreign wives as approval to divorce for just any reason. The time of Malachi's prophecy must have occurred between 432 B.C. and 410 B.C.

Historical Setting

Although the ten tribes of Israel were carried away into captivity by the Assyrian Empire in 722 B.C., it was not until the rise of the Babylonian Empire that the Temple was destroyed, the city of Jerusalem laid waste, and the remainder of the Jews were carried off into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. This lasted for seventy years until the defeat of the Babylonians by the Medo-Persian Empire. It was at

that time that Cyrus decreed that all the people of the captivity could return to the homeland and rebuild their cities and their temples in 538 B.C. (2 Chr. 36:22,23; Ezra 1). In 536 under the leadership of Zerubbabel as governor and the high priest Jeshua, a remnant of the Jews returned to Jerusalem. They quickly set up an altar and laid the foundation of the Temple. Nonetheless they failed to complete the Temple because of political intervention by their enemies. To encourage the leaders and the people to continue to rebuild, God sent the prophet Zechariah and Haggai. By 516 B.C. the second Temple had been built. About sixty years later in 458 B.C. the King of Persia sent a priest/scribe named Ezra with funds from the royal treasury to complete the setting up of the Temple service and worship. Then in 444 B.C. Artaxerxes sent his cupbearer Nehemiah with access to the royal funds to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. During his first term as governor, he and Ezra led the people in a great spiritual revival (444-433 B.C.)

After his first term of twelve years, Nehemiah was called back to Susa to report to the king. Some of his enemies took advantage of his absence. Ezra had most probably either died or was also recalled to Susa. The revival of his first term disintegrated into apathy and abuses of God's Temple, His worship and His Law. The prophecies of Zechariah and Haggai of a glorious Messianic golden era had not materialized. The Jews remained under the control of a foreign power and were suffering with poverty, futility, and indifference. When Nehemiah returned for his second term as governor, he had to deal with the abuse of the Temple, the failure of the people to tithe, the lack of Levites to serve, disregard for the Sabbath day regulations, and marriages to pagan women. Perhaps a reading of Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah would best represent the Jewish perspective of the historical background to Malachi.

Literary Style and Structure

Among the prophets, Malachi is unique in that he does not use any synonymous parallelism which is the most prominent feature of Hebrew poetry. Instead he uses prose with a few examples of figurative language to teach the people. The reason for this change in style among the prophets may be due to the spiritual needs of the day or due to the revival work of Ezra the scribe and Nehemiah a cupbearer-turned-governor. The question-answer formula used by Malachi is related more closely to the teaching and writing style of a scribe and not the preceding prophets. Some have compared Malachi to the Greek philosopher of the same period, Socrates. Because of this, Malachi has been called the "Hebrew Socrates." It should be noted that this style is not exclusive to Malachi. In the Old Testament the question/answer approach was used by some prophets and many times in the New Testament it was used by scribes, rabbis, Jesus and His disciples.

It is further observed by Homer Hailey that Malachi begins with an assertion, then from the lips of his audience forms an objection followed by a refutation from the Lord. He calls this the "didactic-dialectic method" (Hailey 402). Jack Lewis calls it "a style unique in the prophets. Dialectic is a method that might be compared to that of the scribes: 1) an assertion is made. 2) a question that the assertion provoked is raised. This question is introduced by 'yet ye say' in eight occurrences. 3) There is an elaboration of the original assertion with additional facts and illustrations" (Lewis 83). Malachi used this style of teaching by means of debate most effectively to rebuke the sinful attitudes of the people.

The book of Malachi can be divided into six sections or oracles. These are hemmed in by a superscription (1:1) and concludes with a prophecy that contains a warning, a blessing, and a curse. The six oracles are identified as:

- I. God's Undeniable Love for Israel, 1:2-5
- II. God's Corrupt Priests Offering Unacceptable Sacrifices, 1:6-2:9
- III. God's Marriage Covenant Being Severed, 2:10-16
- IV. God's Judgment Coming in the Day of the Lord, 2:16-3:5
- V. God's Robbers Losing their Blessings, 3:6-12
- VI. God's Justice True and Swift, 3:13-4:3.

“The book is arranged around the theological statements at the beginning of each section. The flow of the message is “I love you (1:2) but you do not honor me (1:6) and are not faithful to me (2:10); therefore I will show my justice (2:17). If you return to me, I will return to you and bless you (3:7), for I will distinguish between the wicked and the righteous who serve me (14,18)” (ISBE Smith 228).

Malachi in the New Testament

The book of Malachi is referenced several times in the New Testament. Not only do these quotes authenticate the canonical authority of Malachi but they show the fulfillment of his prophecies.

- Malachi 4:5,6; with Matt. 11:10,14; 17:11,12; Mk. 9:10,11; Lk. 1:17;
- Malachi 3:1 with Matt 11:10; Mk. 1:2 combined with a prophecy from Isaiah 40:3
- Malachi 1:2-3 with Rom. 9:10-13

With the end of Malachi is the cessation of prophecy until the coming of John the Immerser. Some ancient Jewish scholars called Malachi “the seal and end of the prophets.” This is only true concerning the Old Testament. Between his prophecy and the words of John crying out in the wilderness “Prepare the way of the Lord” was 400 years of silence. Malachi may only be fifty-five verses long, but it is well suited as a closing prophecy in the Law and the bridge to the New Covenant.

Questions:

1. What does Malachi’s name mean?
2. T F The name “Malachi” was really a pseudonym for Ezra.
3. What proof is there that the book of Malachi is a genuine work of inspiration?
4. What is the date for Malachi accepted for this study?
5. List three things mentioned in Malachi which help to identify the date of this prophecy.
6. List the historical event associated with the date.
722 BC -
586 BC -

538 BC -

516 BC -

458 BC -

444 BC -

430 BC -

180 BC -

7. Why do some refer to Malachi as the “Hebrew Socrates”?
8. T F Malachi is consider a excellent example of poetry among writing prophets because of his abundant use of synonymous parallelism.
9. Explain Malachi’s use of the “didactic-dialectic method”.
10. How much time would pass between the final prophet of the Old Covenant and the first prophet of the New?
11. Is God showing respect of persons when He says, “*Jacob I have loved; but Esau I have hated*” (Gen. 25:23; Rom. 9:8-13)? Explain.
12. What animals would live in Edom’s heritage?
13. What will God do about Edom’s plans to rebuild?
14. What will Edom be called?
15. Explore the history of Edom from a dictionary or encyclopedia or the internet and explain what has happened to the ancient nation of Edom (Jer. 49:16-18).

God's Name Dishonored

Malachi 1:6-14

Questions:

1. In what two relationships does God say that honor is due (v. 6)?
2. How did the priests defile God's name?
3. What did they say about the table of the Lord?
4. What did the Law of Moses say about the quality of sacrifices the Jews were to offer to God? (Lev. 22:17ff; Deut. 15:21).
5. Would the Persian governor be pleased with the kind of offerings they were using to worship God?
6. Would God accept the prayers of those who offered us unacceptable sacrifices?
7. Why did God desire one who would shut the door to the Temple?
8. What would one day happen among all the Gentile nations? When did they take place (Jn. 4:21-24)?

God's Truth Demoralized

Malachi 2:1-9

Questions:

1. What will God do if the priests will not hear His commandment? Why has God already done this to their blessings?
2. What was to be done with the dung of sacrificial animals (Ex. 29:14; Lev. 4:11,12; 16:27)?
3. What would God do with the animal dung? Why would the priests have to be led away?
4. With what priest did God make a covenant of peace (Num. 25:10-13)? Who was he and what had he done that honored the name of God (Num. 25; Ps. 106:28-31; Mal. 2:6)?
5. Why should the people seek the law from the priests?
6. What three charges of unfaithfulness is leveled against the priests in verse 8?

7. What is the consequences of these corrupt practices of the priests in verse 9a?

8. What two additional sins are the priests guilty of in verse 9b?

Application & Discussion:

1. As messengers of God's truth what must we do and not do (1 Tim. 5:21; Rom. 15:6; Eph. 3:21; 4:25; 1 Tim. 2:7; (Matt. 23:34; Mark 16:15; Rom. 10:14; 1 Tim. 3:9; James 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:15)?

2. What responsibilities did the Lord give the priests and Levites with regard to the Law of Moses (Deut. 33:8-11; 17:8-13; 21:5; Lev. 10:11; 2 Chr. 17:8-9; 30:22; Neh. 8:7)?

Homework: Fulfill your responsibility to stand up for and proclaim the Truth.

God's Covenant of Marriage Divorced

Malachi 2:10-16

Questions:

1. What do the two rhetorical questions in verse 10a have to do with “dealing treacherously”?
2. Why was it wrong to be married to the daughter of a foreign god (Ex. 34:11-16; Dt. 7:3; and 1 Ki. 11:1,2)?
3. What would happen to the man who married these women?
4. What were the men of Ezra and Nehemiah’s day instructed to do about these marriages (Ezra 9:2-6; 10:18-19,30; Neh. 13:23-27)?
5. While married to these women what were the Jews continuing to bring to the Lord?
6. How do the husbands who have divorced their wives cover the altar with tears?
7. Will God accept their worship?
8. What three phrases does Malachi use to describe the divorced wives in verse 14?

God's Justice Defamed

Malachi 2:17-3:6

Questions:

1. How have they wearied the Lord?
2. Who would God send? Who were these two (Matt. 11:10,14; 26:26-30; Heb. 9:15; 13:20)?
3. In whom do the Jews delight? What will be the manner of His coming?
4. How would you answer the two rhetorical questions asked in verse 2a?
5. What two occupations are used to describe the coming one?
6. Who are the sons of Levi and why will they be purified?
7. List the sinners that will be judged. Why will they be judged?

8. Why is it a good thing that the Lord will not change?

Application & Discussion:

1. What does the justice of God require (2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Heb. 13:15,16; Rom. 12:1; Acts 17:31; Jn. 12:48; Js. 1:17; 1 Jn. 1:9; Jer. 32:19)?

2. Who were these saints and how were they questioning the justice of God (Job 21:7-13; Ps. 73:1-10; Jer. 12:1,2)? How do you reconcile the Justice of God with the prosperity of sinners (Dt. 32:15; Neh. 9:28; Ezk. 16:49; 28:5; 2 Pet. 3:9; Ps. 37:1-11)?

Homework: Appreciate the justice of God in an unjust world.

God's Treasury Defrauded

Malachi 3:7-12

Questions:

1. How long have the Jews been rebelling against the commandments of God?
2. What is promised if they return to God?
3. Did the Jews think they had any need of returning or repenting to God?
4. How have they robbed God?
5. What is a tithe?
6. Why do they need to bring the offerings into the storehouses?
7. If they obey, what might the Lord do for them?

8. Who or what is the “*devourer*” of verse 11?

9. Why will all nations call them blessed?

Application & Discussion:

1. How do we rob God Mat. 7:21-23; Acts 17:30; Acts 5:1-11)? What are the consequences of robbing God Gal. 6:6-10; 2 Cor. 9:6-8; Matt. 5:13-15)?

2. What were the rules and regulations regarding tithing in the Old Testament (Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21, 26-28; Deut. 12:6,7; 17-19; 14:28,29; 1 Sam. 8:15,17)? Have Christians ever been commanded to tithe? If not, how should Christians determine what to give to the Lord (2 Cor. 9:1ff; 1 Cor. 16:1,2)?

Homework: Give God of your time, money, praise, life, etc.

God's Service Despised

Malachi 3:13-18

Questions:

1. How were they harsh with the Lord?
2. What two things did not bring profit in the view of the Jew?
3. Why do they call the proud blessed?
4. To whom did the Lord listen?
5. What was written before the Lord?
6. For whom was it written?
7. What two things will God do for them on *"that day?"*
8. Discernment will be made between what two groups?

God's Judgment Declared

Malachi 4:1-6

Questions:

1. What would the coming “day” be like?
2. What will happen to the proud?
3. Who will raise up for those who reverence God's name?
4. What will he do for them?
5. Who do you think this represents?
6. Why will the faithful trample the wicked?
7. What is the last commandment in the Old Testament?
8. How is Moses described by God?

9. What and where is Horeb? What great event took place there?

10. When will God send Elijah the prophet?

11. What will this Elijah do?

12. What will the Lord do if they fail to keep the Law of Moses?

Application & Discussion:

1. What does the coming Judgment involve (Prov. 16:18; 18:12; 2 Thess. 1:7b-9; Matt. 25:23,34; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 2:10)?

2. Prove for the Scriptures that the Messenger of Malachi 3:1 and the Elijah sent in Malachi 4:5 is John the Baptist (Matt. 3:3; 11:10,14; 17:3,10-13; Jn. 1:21-25; Lk. 1:17; 3:4; 7:27; Mark 1:2,3; 9:12).

Homework: Prepare to meet your God.

Review of the Minor Prophets

Test to be given with multiple choice and True/False questions on a Powerpoint.
Please review the Introduction to the Minor Prophets along with the message of the
twelve minor prophets.