

# **International Bible Lessons Commentary**

## **Haggai 1:1-15**

**International Bible Lessons**  
**Sunday, June 1, 2014**

**L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

The [\*\*International Bible Lesson\*\*](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 1, 2014**, is from **Haggai 1:1-15**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the [\*\*International Bible Lessons Commentary\*\*](#) website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is usually posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught.

### **International Bible Lesson Commentary**

#### **Haggai 1:1-15**

**(Haggai 1:1) In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest:**

Since Israel used a lunar calendar, some commentators say God spoke to Haggai on August 29, 520 B.C. We know little about Haggai. When he gave this prophecy, he may have been a priest and prophet or only a prophet. As a prophet, he declared “the word of the LORD” (Yahweh or Jehovah). Zerubbabel was a governor in Jerusalem. Appointed by King Darius, he was of the line of King David. His grandfather had been taken into exile in Babylon. Because of Zerubbabel’s leadership qualities and his loyalty and obedience to God, with limited understanding the peoples’ hopes ran high that Zerubbabel might become the Messiah. As a type of the Messiah, he is listed in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1:12 and Luke 3:27). His name means “seed or shoot of Babylon.” The name of the high priest, Joshua (or Jesus), means “Yahweh is Savior.”

**(Haggai 1:2) Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the LORD’s house.**

God expected the political and religious leaders of Judah to work together to motivate those who had returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon and the remnant that had remained in Judah to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (which they had neglected). “The LORD of hosts” is the Creator and God of all creatures in heaven, earth, and under the earth. He is the Almighty King over His angelic army of angels, the heavenly host, some

of whom appeared to the shepherds the night Jesus was born. Before the LORD of hosts spoke to the people through Haggai, both leaders and people had made excuses for abandoning the temple that the Babylonians had destroyed in 587 B.C.

**(Haggai 1:3) Then the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying:**

God told Haggai exactly what to say to the leaders so God could work through them. God knew the excuses the people were making for not rebuilding the temple and God knew how to answer those excuses. God gave them good reasons to rebuild their temple and God's Spirit worked upon the people to move them to do the work. God spoke, God acted, and the people rightly responded.

**(Haggai 1:4) Is it a time for you yourselves to live in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?**

God began by sending Haggai to the leaders of Judah and asking them a question that God expected them to answer "No!" after they considered that they were living comfortably while God's temple remained in ruins. Haggai first went to Judah's leaders so they would fulfill their God-given responsibilities and lead the people to do what was right. Notice: God did not demand that they build His temple first before they met their own real needs for housing and shelter; God is not selfish. But after they had met their real needs, they continued to improve their own homes while ignoring the fact that the temple lay in ruins. They focused on their own comforts first and foremost, instead of putting God first and making God and His priorities of prime importance.

**(Haggai 1:5) Now therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared.**

Since their behavior indicated their selfishness, God first appealed to their selfish hearts to move them to do what was right. God is the Lord over all, and God wanted the leaders and people to consider how they had benefitted and also suffered by selfishly putting themselves first and ignoring the place of worship that God had established in Jerusalem so they could meet with Him.

**(Haggai 1:6) 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 you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes.**

After building their homes, no matter what they had done after that to succeed or rest securely in this life, they had not prospered. They had given God a small place in their lives, but they had not benefitted very much materially by spending less time with God so they could work harder and longer for themselves. The Lord over all creation can make crops grow and protect the wages of a worker, but God can also withhold rain and create enough costly troubles so some people will turn back to Him. If the people had done so, putting God first would have made all the difference in the world.

**(Haggai 1:7) Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider how you have fared.**

God respects our God-given ability to think and reason, and God reasons with us through the Bible and through God-sent preachers, prophets, teachers, and evangelists. God spoke through Haggai because God wanted the leaders and people to consider the consequences of their choices. By ignoring God and their need to worship God rightly, they remained in both material and spiritual need. If they put God first, God would meet all of their real needs.

**(Haggai 1:8) Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD.**

God told them what to do in order to demonstrate that they honored Him as He deserved. The ruined temple must be rebuilt. The ruined temple had scattered stones on the ground for rebuilding, but they needed to bring wood to complete the rebuilding, wood similar to the wood that they had used to add paneling to their homes. The Lord of hosts deserved a temple as beautiful as any of the homes of the leaders and people of Judah.

**(Haggai 1:9) You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the LORD of hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while all of you hurry off to your own houses.**

To discipline His people, God refused to give what their crops needed for a bountiful harvest. God could withhold needed rains or give too much rain at the wrong times. God could send unwanted hail storms or withering heat out of season. Furthermore, God blew away what they brought home from their fields. Literally, high winds can quickly level barns and blow away their content. God's people were not suffering from misfortune. They were suffering because they were doing only what they wanted to do while God's house, the temple in Jerusalem, lay devastated and abandoned.

**(Haggai 1:10) Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce.**

God was not saying through Haggai that seasonal rains had not been favorable in a climate cycle or that the earth had not produced abundant crops because the farmers had misused their land. Rather, because His people had not given God the honor, service, and worship due Him in the ways He prescribed, God had withheld what they needed to prosper. Their work had been done in vain. By living apart from God they were not close enough to God to receive His manifold blessings.

**(Haggai 1:11) And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the soil produces, on human beings and animals, and on all their labors.**

God declared that they were suffering loss because He was punishing them (disciplining them like a father or mother needs to discipline a child when they persist in misbehaving or ignoring their parents' good guidance). The answer to their financial, physical, and spiritual needs was to turn back to God and obey God.

**(Haggai 1:12) Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, and Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of the prophet Haggai, as the LORD their God had sent him; and the people feared the LORD.**

Unlike with Jeremiah, the weeping prophet that the leaders and people in Jerusalem ignored and persecuted before God proved Jeremiah a true prophet by sending the people into exile into Babylon and destroying the temple, the leaders and people immediately heeded the Word of God that Haggai preached. They feared the Lord, perhaps because they remembered how God had punished their parents and grandparents and some of them when He sent them into exile, so they obeyed the Lord immediately.

**(Haggai 1:13) Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, saying, I am with you, says the LORD.**

Because the leaders and people returned to obedience, and because they feared the LORD, the LORD wanted to assure them of His forgiveness and encourage them to do His will always. He gave them reassurance and courage by telling them, "I am with you." Since God would be with them as they obeyed Him, they would prosper and successfully complete the tasks God had called them to do. He would bless their rebuilding efforts, and they would lose nothing from the time they would spend rebuilding the temple instead of tending to their fields or working for wages.

**(Haggai 1:14) And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God,**

Because the people obeyed the voice of the LORD, God encouraged them through Haggai's preaching and renewed them spiritually. He inspired them, He stirred up their spirits, He removed any discouragement they might have felt as a remnant of the kingdom's former glory. From deep within they felt moved to serve the LORD and rebuild His house as a house of worship and praise.

**(Haggai 1:15) on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month.**

Because September included feast days and harvest days, the leaders did not organize and the people did not gather together and begin their actual rebuilding of the temple for twenty-one days. They had to gather wood from the hills. They had to organize and refinish the stones that lay around the temple where it had been torn down; then, the actual work of rebuilding could begin.

## **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further**

1. What three leadership roles do the three leaders in Haggai 1:1 fulfill? Which of these roles did Jesus fulfill?
2. What name, title, or description of God does the Book of Haggai use the most? What does this title tell us about God?
3. How is Haggai described?
4. How is Haggai's message described?
5. Why did God send Haggai to the leaders and people in Jerusalem?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

— © Copyright 2014 by L.G. Parkhurst, Jr. Permission Granted for Not for Profit Use.