

# **International Bible Lessons Commentary**

## **Haggai 2:10-23**

**International Bible Lessons**  
**Sunday, June 15, 2014**

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The [\*\*International Bible Lesson\*\*](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 15, 2014**, is from **Haggai 2:10-23**. **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 2:10-23**

**(Haggai 2:10) On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying:**

Scholars believe King Darius was born in 550 B.C. He began his reign in Persia, now Iran, in 522 B.C. King Darius died in 486 B.C. Haggai wrote that he shared the word of the LORD with the priests on December 18, 520 B.C. The fact that Haggai dated his prophecies according to the dates of King Darius reign in Persia enables us to know the dates according to our ways of reckoning time.

**(Haggai 2:11) Thus says the LORD of hosts: Ask the priests for a ruling:**

Some commentaries argue from this verse that Haggai was a priest. Others argue that if he had been a priest he would not have asked these questions; however, the LORD of hosts asked Haggai to ask these questions so he could have been a priest. The Bible does not tell us if Haggai was a priest; we only know that Haggai was a prophet. Asking the questions was a teaching tool that God used to reach the priests and people. God respects our God-given abilities to reason and make intelligent choices.

**(Haggai 2:12) If one carries consecrated meat in the fold of one's garment, and with the fold touches bread, or stew, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, does it become holy? The priests answered, "No."**

Consecrated meat is holy because it has been offered to God and ceremonially set apart for sacrifice or service to God according to God's law. It would usually be carried in a

consecrated or “holy” garment worn by a priest and either become a whole burnt offering to God or be eaten by the priests and their families following its sacrifice. The consecrated meat will not make anything it touches holy: it is a physical object with no power to set apart other objects for God’s special use. A holy robe worn by a priest will not make the priest holy or what it touches holy. Holiness is a moral quality and the result of God’s choice or God’s command to set apart something or someone apart for undefiled service to God. A person set apart for service to God can become defiled by their choice to sin and disobey God. Holiness cannot be transmitted to anything or any person on the basis of physical touch. Touching a person who has consecrated themselves to God or who has set themselves apart from sin to serve God will not make an unconsecrated person a holy or consecrated person. The priests answered and officially ruled “No” on the basis of good, sound reasoning.

**(Haggai 2:13) Then Haggai said, “If one who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean?” The priests answered, “Yes, it becomes unclean.”**

According to God’s law, a person who contacted or touched a dead body must ceremonially wash themselves and wait for a specified period of time to become clean. We know today that avoiding contact with a dead body may keep some diseases from spreading, especially if the animal or person died from a communicable disease. God did not reveal to the Hebrews what we know about germs and the spread of disease. The Hebrews needed to trust God that what He commanded them was best for them. A person might spread a disease in many different ways, so they themselves become ceremonially unclean and may actually become physically unclean after they contact or touch a dead body; therefore, they then need to become clean as the law prescribed. The priests answered “Yes” according to the Law of God (see Numbers 19:11-13).

**(Haggai 2:14) Haggai then said, So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, says the LORD; and so with every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.**

God wanted Haggai to explain to the people that when they were disobeying God they were unclean inside (spiritually), and merely touching something that was clean or consecrated to God would not make them clean. Merely going to a religious ceremony without consecrating themselves to the Lord’s service and setting themselves apart from sin (repenting) and committing themselves to serve God would not make them holy or spiritually clean. Because they were living in disobedience to God, what they gave God in offerings and religious works with their unclean hands was unclean. Their bad example of disobedience while appearing to be religious spread to others, and when others followed their bad example they became unclean too. In a similar way, the scribes and Pharisees appeared to others as very consecrated and holy people, but Jesus declared to them: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean” (Matthew 23:25-26).

**(Haggai 2:15) But now, consider what will come to pass from this day on. Before a stone was placed upon a stone in the LORD's temple,**

Once again, God wanted to reason with His people and through Haggai God encouraged them to think about how they had fared when they were living in disobedience to God; when they were putting their physical desires first and ignoring what was best for their spiritual life and the spiritual interests of others. God wanted them to think about how their lives had changed once they began to obey Him and began rebuilding the temple.

**(Haggai 2:16) how did you fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty.**

Before they consecrated their lives, time, and work to God and began to live in obedience to God, they never realized their expectations from their work. They never received what they expected to receive from their reaping or wine making or from their storage bins and wine vats. To teach them to obey Him, God had withheld from them the blessings that He wanted to give them. God had also punished them financially for putting material possessions ahead of their spiritual needs and the needs of others.

**(Haggai 2:17) I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and mildew and hail; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD.**

What little they harvested and what they lacked to meet their real physical needs was not the result of unfortunate natural disasters, bad luck, bad timing, or the consequences of poor farming methods. God intervened in their history and used natural causes to strike their products with blight, mildew, and hail, and God wanted Haggai to explain that what they suffered was God's discipline for their disobedience.

**(Haggai 2:18) Consider from this day on, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider:**

One of God's favorite words to speak through Haggai was "consider." God wanted them to consider or think about how their lives had changed and would change since they had begun to obey God. From the first day they had taken the first steps of obedience, the LORD of hosts had blessed and would continue to bless them beyond their expectations.

**(Haggai 2:19) Is there any seed left in the barn? Do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing? From this day on I will bless you.**

When they returned to obedience, God promised to bless them spiritually and materially. In the coming days and months, they would be able to observe the consequences of their return to obedience and God's blessings upon them. God would bless the work of their hands as they planted and reaped and stored their grain in their

barns. As they tended their grape vines and fruit trees and reaped their produce, they would see the results of their labors and God's blessing upon them.

**(Haggai 2:20) The word of the LORD came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month:**

The same day Haggai was obeying God by speaking to the priests, the word of the LORD came to Haggai again. Haggai revealed God's words to the people whenever God wanted Haggai to speak to them for Him. Because Haggai obeyed the LORD immediately, the LORD spoke through him and the LORD blessed the people through Him.

**(Haggai 2:21) Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth,**

These last three verses will be fulfilled completely when Jesus the Messiah comes again. They were fulfilled to a lesser degree in the days of Zerubbabel, who became a hero in the eyes of God's people. As a grandson of King Jehoiachin, he was a descendant of King David and an important leader who obeyed the word of God. Zerubbabel is listed in the genealogy of Jesus. Throughout the reign of King Darius there were many wars of conquest, but God promised that He would shake the heavens and the earth someday.

**(Haggai 2:22) and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders; and the horses and their riders shall fall, every one by the sword of a comrade.**

Someday, God will be the One who will bring all the nations of the earth into visible subjection to Him, but we do not know when God will do this. Jesus explained, "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet" (Matthew 24:6). According to Haggai's message, many nations will fall because of fighting within themselves "everyone by the sword of a comrade," by insurrection or civil war. And Jesus explained, "When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately" (Luke 21:9). God said through Haggai that unbelievers will fight among themselves and destroy themselves, but we do not know the date of Christ's return and when He will establish His kingdom visibly over the whole earth.

**(Haggai 2:23) On that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, son of Shealtiel, says the LORD, and make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you, says the LORD of hosts.**

As governor in Jerusalem, Zerubbabel became a representative of God and His authority on earth, as the signet ring on the hand of a king is the symbol of his power that he uses to imprint covenants, decrees, letters, and other important documents as being approved, commanded, and endorsed by him. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, and when Jesus Christ walked upon the earth He demonstrated the love, power, and wisdom of the invisible God: "He is the reflection of

God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3; see also Colossians 1:15). Those who follow Jesus are also being transformed into the image of God, and true Christians will represent Jesus Christ as the signet ring of their King: "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

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

1. Why do you think God told Haggai to ask the priests questions? How can asking questions be a teaching tool?
2. From your study of Haggai, how does God sometimes discipline His people? Why does God discipline His people?
3. When did God begin to bless His people?
4. How can someone become holy?
5. How do God's people recognize one another?

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

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