

# Joyful Life Bible Studies

## HAGGAI

### Introduction and Background

#### Lesson 1

We have chosen to study the important and timely truths in the Book of Haggai. Although it is brief, the powerful messages in this Old Testament book of prophecy contain many practical instructions and applications for us today.

In 536 BC Cyrus, King of Persia, signed a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland after seventy years of Babylonian captivity. Under Zerubbabel's leadership a remnant of fifty thousand Jews returned to Jerusalem where they began to rebuild the Temple, their center of worship.

Severe opposition from secular leaders in Judea and political resistance in Babylon halted the rebuilding project. The Jewish people lost their determination and zeal for the reconstruction of their Temple. Have you ever started a God-given project and become so discouraged that you quit? Have you ever become so involved in personal pursuits and activities that you lost or ignored your spiritual priorities? This is what happened to the Jews in Jerusalem. In 520 BC God used the prophet Haggai to speak to His people and ignite their hearts to return to the work and finish rebuilding the Temple.

Haggai spoke in a direct, concise and effective way. Even though there are only thirty-eight verses in the Book of Haggai, its inspired messages have changed countless lives throughout history. The study of Haggai will enrich your spiritual life and strengthen your devotion and commitment to the Lord.

*Then spake Haggai the LORD'S messenger in the LORD'S message  
unto the people, saying,  
I am with you, saith the LORD.  
Haggai 1:13*

## Background of the Book of Haggai

### AUTHOR:

- Haggai was the first prophet that ministered to the Jewish exiles in Jerusalem after they returned from Babylon
- Haggai aided in the rebuilding of the Temple

### WRITTEN TO:

- Jews living in Jerusalem who had returned from exile
- All believers everywhere

### DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING:

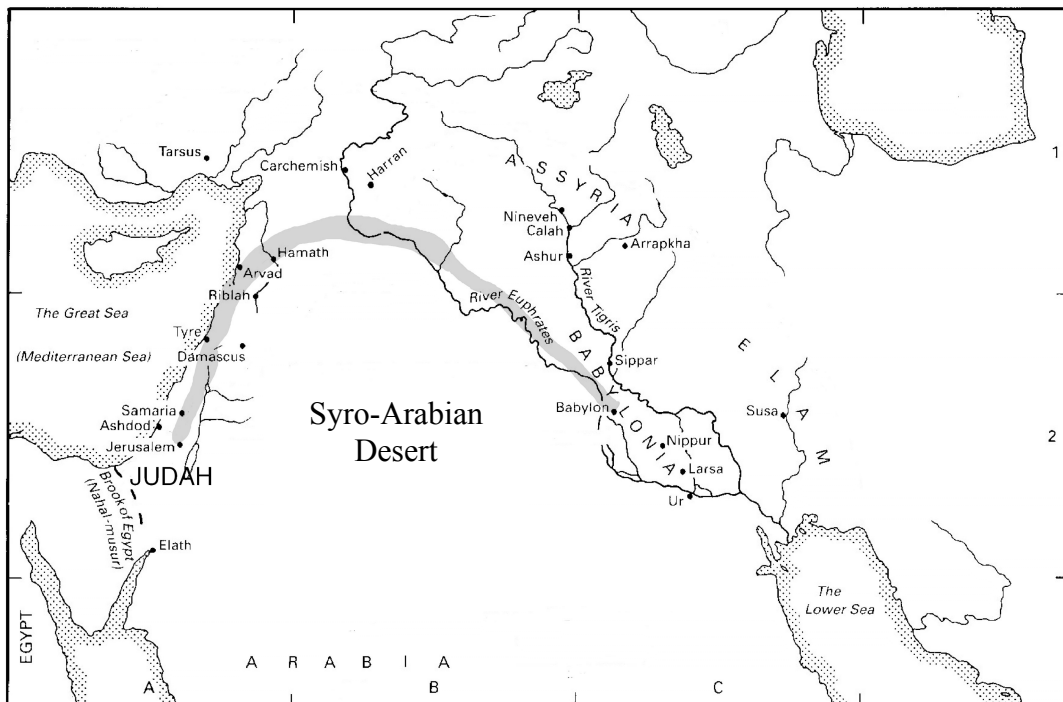
- 520 BC
- Jerusalem

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

- The Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed in 586 BC
- In 536 BC the decree was given by Cyrus allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem after 70 years of captivity
- A remnant of 50,000 Jews returned to Jerusalem from Babylon and began to rebuild the Temple
- The foundation was laid, but then the project was abandoned when the Jews encountered opposition
- Haggai was written 16 years after the work was halted

### PURPOSE OF THE BOOK:

- To motivate the Jews to return immediately to the work of rebuilding the Temple
- To convict and correct the people concerning their priorities
- To encourage and reassure the people of the Lord's presence
- To inspire them to complete the Lord's work



## **FIRST DAY: The Introduction**

1. Review the Introduction on page one of this lesson. In what specific way does it affect your desire to study Haggai?
2. Write the phrase, sentence or thought that especially caught your attention.
  - a. Share why.
3. With the Introduction in mind, what do you feel is your greatest need or desire in relationship to your study of Haggai? Write your answer as a prayer here.

*Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.  
Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God:  
for unto Thee will I pray.  
Psalm 5:1,2*

## **SECOND DAY: Author, Date, Place of Writing, and Recipients**

1. Review the Background information on page two. What do you learn about the author?
2. Use the Background information to record one fact about:
  - a. the date and place of writing
  - b. the recipients
3. Find and circle the cities of Babylon and Jerusalem on the map printed on page two.
  - a. Consider the exiles' journey from Babylon back to their homeland. Try to imagine what this long journey would have been like for 50,000 men, women and children. Share your thoughts.

### **THIRD DAY: Historical Background**

1. Review the Historical Background information on page two. What particularly interests you?
2. If someone were to ask you to give a brief background to the Book of Haggai, how would you answer?

Advanced Students: Why had the Jews stopped their efforts to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem? Support your answer with scripture.

### **FOURTH DAY: Purpose for the Book**

1. Recall the purposes for the Book of Haggai by recording them here.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e. Which of these do you look forward to studying the most? Why?
2. Choose one of these purposes and share why it is relevant for Christians today.

*Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.  
Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.*  
Psalm 119:105,111 NIV

## **FIFTH DAY:** The Book of Haggai

1. Acquaint yourself with the Book of Haggai by reading it in one sitting. Notice the repetition of the word, *consider*. How many times is this word used in Haggai?
  - a. What is your first impression of this book?
2. Observe the following themes from the Book of Haggai. Write a comment about each one:
  - a. *Consider your ways* (Haggai 1:5)
  - b. *Go . . . and build the house . . . and I will be glorified* (Haggai 1:8)
  - c. *I am with you, saith the LORD* (Haggai 1:13;2:4)

## **SIXTH DAY:** Review

1. Note one interesting fact, thought or discovery from the Introduction and Background lesson.
2. Why is considering our priorities a vital issue for us today?
3. In what way do you expect to be spiritually enriched through your study of the Book of Haggai?

*Jesus, be the center; be my source, be my light, Jesus.  
Jesus be the center; be my hope, be my song, Jesus.  
Be the fire in my heart; be the wind in these sails.  
Be the reason that I live-Jesus, Jesus.*

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