

Rebuilding the Temple

Haggai 1:1-11

Do you have any unfinished projects? If you do, what to they say about you? The book of Haggai is all about an unfinished project. After 70 years in exile, the Jews returned to Jerusalem. They began to rebuild the temple but then stopped. It's into that situation that the prophet Haggai steps.

When God Speaks

Israel is just a small cog in the vast machine of the Persian Empire. Yet, God still speaks, as he will to you and me, no matter how small we feel. His word has the power to change us. Haggai tells them to start rebuilding the temple. Why? And why does it matter for us?

Where God Dwells

God wants the temple to be rebuilt so he may be glorified. How would this glorify God? Because the temple was the ultimate symbol of God dwelling with his people. To refuse to rebuild the temple was like saying, 'we don't want God in our midst.' So this was more than putting God first, it was putting God at the centre of everything.

Now Christ is the one who is greater than the temple. He is Immanuel, God with us. So for us, to 'rebuild the temple' is to look at our relationship with God, and ask, is Christ at the centre of my life, influencing everything else? But it is more than just our personal relationship with God. The church is like the temple being built (Eph 2:22), so we are to give our lives for the building up of God's church and his kingdom.

How Life Thrives

The people were constantly striving for more but never satisfied. They had neglected the one thing that would satisfy them. Our god-substitutes can never satisfy. Every part of life is affected when God is pushed to the periphery. The covenant curses of Deuteronomy 28 tell us that God does not allow life to work if he is ignored. For them, life was unravelling, and their work was unsatisfying, not because their work was wrong but because their heart was wrong. Is God's response vindictive? No! It's a wake up call, so that people turn back to him, the only place where we'll really thrive.

So why weren't they rebuilding the temple? Because they had become spiritually apathetic and indifferent. Their hearts had grown cold. The same can be true for us. How can we change this?

The Man who Climbed the Hill

God tells the people to climb the hills and bring down wood. 500 years later Christ would climb one of the same hills, carrying the wood of the cross. He went to the cross for God's glory and to bring us to himself. On the cross he took upon himself all the curses of Deuteronomy 28, that we deserve for turning our backs on God.

As we consider the love of Christ for us our hearts will be warmed and we'll rebuild our lives with him at the very centre. As we know his love, that love can flow out of us and influence every other part of our lives.