

Consider Your Ways

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The book of Haggai is probably not among many Christians' favorite sources of reading. Yet, this often neglected Old Testament book has some challenging 2012 lessons for us. The prophet Haggai ministered during the days following the return from Babylonian exile. It should be studied alongside the books of Ezra and Zechariah.

When the people arrived back in Jerusalem, work immediately began to rebuild the temple. The first thing to be restored was the altar (Ezra 3:1-3). In the second year, work began on the foundation for the temple (Ezra 3:8ff). When the foundation was completed, many of the people rejoiced. However, those who remembered the beauty of Solomon's magnificent temple wept (Ezra 3:12). Still, it was a wonderful start at restoring worship in the temple of the Lord.

When the enemies of the Jews heard that they were rebuilding the temple, they hindered the work and brought it to a stop. And so it was, that for many years, with a foundation laid, the work ceased on the temple of the Lord. The people needed to consider their ways.

This is where the prophet Haggai comes in. God speaks through Haggai, encouraging the people to get back to work. Notice some of what God has to say to the people, and the lessons we can learn today.

"I'll Get to it Later"

"Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'This people says, 'The time has not come, even the time for the house of the Lord to be rebuilt'' ' " (Haggai 1:2).

The people looked at the work involved in rebuilding the temple, and thought, "It can wait." Aren't we sometimes guilty of the same?

No, it may not be the rebuilding of the temple, but perhaps it is something pertaining to the work of the church. We know it needs to get done, but, we'll get to it later. The problem is unless someone reminds us, and encourages us, we keep putting it off till later. God tells the people "Consider your ways." We should do the same.

“I’m Too Busy”

Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house lies desolate?” Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, “Consider your ways! (Haggai 1:3-5).

The people were so busy fixing up their homes, taking care of themselves, that God’s work was being neglected. Imagine, every day going back and forth to take care of the day’s responsibilities, and ignoring the temple still lying in ruin.

We are busy people. However, in our busyness, taking care of the day’s responsibilities, let us not neglect the Lord’s work; be it sending a card, making a call, sharing the Gospel, spending time in prayer, or spending time in the Word. God tells the people “Consider your ways.” We should do the same.

“Why Isn’t it Working?”

“You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.” Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Consider your ways! “Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,” says the Lord. “You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?” declares the Lord of hosts, “Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own house. “Therefore, because of you the sky has withheld its dew and the earth has withheld its produce. (Haggai 1:6-10)

Life was not working well for the people. Every time they put money in their pockets, it was as if it fell through and was immediately gone. They would eat, but were never satisfied. They would work hard on their fields, but had little to show for it. Why? Because God was trying to get their attention. He wanted the people to pay attention to His work. God tells the people “Consider your ways.” We should do the same.