

LESSON TEXT: Haggai 1:1--2:23

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INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

The apostle Peter wrote that Christians are living stones...built into a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:4-5). The apostle Paul wrote that Christians are joined together and grow into a holy temple in the Lord...for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:21-22). Paul also wrote Let each man take care how he builds upon it (1 Cor. 3:10-17). You get the idea, don't you! **GOD WANTS US TO BUILD HIM A TEMPLE--A DWELLING PLACE HERE ON EARTH--AND IT IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST--WE ARE IT!**

Haggai, the prophet, was sent by God to the Jews who had returned from their exile in Babylon, to admonish and encourage them to quit worrying about building their own houses, and **get busy, immediately, building the Lord's house**. In Haggai's day the Lord's house was a literal temple of stone and wood and precious metals. Now if God was so emphatically concerned about getting his house of physical materials built--**DO YOU SUPPOSE HE IS ANY LESS CONCERNED ABOUT GETTING HIS SPIRITUAL HOUSE--THE CHURCH--BUILT, AND HOW IT IS BUILT TODAY?** You know the answer to that one!

Jesus was speaking of the physical temple when he called it My Father's house. He said it was intended as a house of prayer for all people, where souls find God. That temple had been turned into a den of thieves. Jesus fixed the responsibility for that--**You** have made it a den of thieves he said. **Each** of **us** has some responsibility for building Christ's church! We make it, for better or for worse. Its morale, its friendliness, its spirituality, its attendance record is made by **us**. If church attendance falls off--**we** have made it fall off. If church income falls down--**we** have made it fall down. If there are less people baptized and become active members this year than last--**we** have made it less.

Obviously, we do not need Haggai to stand in our midst and remind us of our responsibility to build the Lord's house today! **We have the Bible--we have preachers and teachers--we have a multitude of blessings and advantages the first century Christians did not have.** Those first century Christians permeated the entire ancient Roman empire with the gospel and established churches in every major city. So, let's get with the program and get the Lord's church built!

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would the formerly exiled Jews say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the Lord? 1:1-6. Would there ever be a better time?
2. What was the Lord's response to the people's lethargy? 1:7-11
3. What moved the people to finally obey the Lord's demand? 1:12-15
4. Why were the people discouraged; how did God encourage them? 2:1-5
5. How and when would the Lord shake the heavens and the earth? 2:6-9
6. Why did the question of what is holy and what is unclean come up?
7. What was the prophet's answer to that question? 2:10-19
8. When and how was the Lord going to overthrow the throne of kingdoms? 2:20-23

Gypsy Smith, the famous evangelist, once remarked that he rejoiced over numbers. "I was sitting at a table with some preachers," he said, and one, a Scotsman, said, "How did you fare at your gospel meeting?" I said, "Well, 100 answered the invitation." He said, "Is it safe to count?" I said, "Well, they counted at Pentecost, and put it down at 3000." He changed the subject. Later on the Scotsman said, "Are you married, Mr. Smith?" I said, "Yes." "Any family?" "Yes." "How many?" he asked. I replied, "Is it safe to count?" When the laughter had subsided Gypsy Smith added: "You count your children and the Lord counts His. You made enough fuss when your first babe was born. The Church doesn't fuss half enough when sinners are converted."

A preacher in a NY church recently chose a unique way to show up the absurdity of most excuses for non-attendance at church.

He published in his church bulletin:
"WHY I DON'T GO TO THE MOVIES:"

Because my parents made me go when I was a boy.

Because no one speaks to me when I am there.

Because they always want money.

Because the manager never visited me in my home.

Because the people who go there never live up to what the movies teach, anyway."