

THE GOOD HAND OF OUR GOD IS UPON US

A Study of Ezra & Esther

Big Picture

Class Outline (Chronological Study)

- First Exile Expedition: Temple from Ruins (Ezra 1-6).
- Back in Persia: Everyone almost Dies (Esther).
- Second Exile Expedition: A Return to the Law (Ezra 7-10).

Background of Ezra

- Israelites desire a restoration of the theocratic Kingdom.
 - Need a Davidic King.
 - Need Priesthood (Temple).
 - Need to keep the Mosaic Covenant.
- “The good hand of our God is upon us.”
(Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31)

Lesson 2 – Ezra 2:68-3:13

3. God leads the remnant back to show His covenant faithfulness.
 - a. The remnant arrives in Israel, and each gives according to his or her ability to finance construction (2:68-70).
 - b. The remnant gathers to start being a nation again (3:1-7).
 - a. The people gather to build the altar (3:1-3).
 - b. The people gather to start sacrifices and Festivals (3:4-7).
 - c. The remnant begins work on the temple (3:8).
 - d. The remnant completes the foundation of the temple and renews the covenant with God (3:9-13).

- a. The priests oversaw the building project as one (3:9).
- b. The priests led the nation in covenant renewal at the completion of the foundation of the temple (3:10-11).
- c. Some wept in sadness and some rejoiced; all did it loudly (3:12-13).

So What?

- Obeying God is fun.
- Obeying God does not mean we will not face fearful tasks.
- God's love endures forever.
- God valued and highlighted the unity of the people in their carrying out of tasks.
- Change is emotional. God neither condemns those who miss the old nor those celebrating the new.

Haggai Study

Background of Haggai

- We don't know much about Haggai the prophet. His name means "feast."
- Haggai prophecies to the people after they have ceased building the Temple for 16 years.

Day 1: Read Haggai 1:1-15 (First prophecy: August 29 - September 21, 520 B.C.)

1. According to verse 1, who is this prophecy primarily addressed to?
2. What does verse 2 reveal about the people's understood obligations and priorities?

3. The people have not worked on the temple in 16 years, what have they been doing according to verses 3-4?
4. Where might the people have found materials to build their own houses?
5. What warning is repeated in verses 5 & 7?
6. Have the people been fulfilled in the path they have chosen for themselves according to verse 6?
7. How does God respond to their attitudes in verses 8-11?
8. How do the leaders and people respond to the Word of the Lord in verse 12?
9. What does God say to assure the leaders and people in verse 13?
10. What happens in verses 14-15?
11. Let's live it!
 - a. How can you grow in turning from your own path when confronted by the Word of the Lord?
 - b. Pray for the Lord to stir your spirit to obedience of His Word.

Day 2: Read Haggai 2:1-9 (Second prophecy: October 17, 520 B.C.)

1. According to verses 1-2, who is this prophecy addressed to?
2. How does the new Temple compare with the old Temple according to verse 3?
3. What are the encouragements of verses 4-5? What promises are these based in?
4. What will God do that will make this Temple greater?
5. Let's live it! What promises of God can you be strengthened by to continue serving the Lord where He has called you?

Day 3: Read Haggai 2:10-19 (Third prophecy: December 18, 520 B.C.)

1. According to verses 10-11, who is this prophecy addressed to and what is the subject?
2. Did the priests answer the question in verse 12 correctly based on Leviticus 6:27?
3. Did the priests answer the question in verse 13 correctly based on Leviticus 11:28?

4. Had the people's disobedience in waiting to build the Temple made them clean or unclean?
5. God reminds the people of how He chastened them in their disobedience in verses 15-19. What promise does God make at the end of verse 19 to the people if they turn to Him and obey?
6. Let's live it! Read 1 Samuel 15:22. What principle do we learn here that is helpful for us in our lives when we serve and give for the Lord?

Day 4: Read Haggai 2:20-23 (Fourth prophecy: December 18, 520 B.C.)

1. According to verses 20-21, who is this prophecy addressed to?
2. What does God promise to do for the Davidic King in verses 21-23?
3. What does it mean that Zerubbabel will be *like* a signet ring to the Lord? Why is the symbolism of signet ring significant?
4. Read Jeremiah 22:24-25.
 - a. What did God compare Coniah, Zerubbabel's grandfather, to?
 - b. What judgment does God pass on Coniah?
 - c. How does this affect our understanding of the significance of God choosing Zerubbabel, a Davidic King, as His signet ring?
5. Let's live it! Read 2 Samuel 7:12-16. How did God show Himself faithful to King David in this last prophecy? How can you grow in your trust of God's promises?

Main Themes

1. What word is repeated in 1:8, 2:3, 2:7, and 2:9? What does this show about the importance of the Temple to God and Israel? According to this theme of Haggai, for the people not to build the Temple was the same as rejecting what from God?
2. *Yahweh* (LORD meaning "I AM"), the Trinity's name, is used 34 times in the 38 verses of Haggai. Highlight these and consider the significance for these people.
3. Read through the book and highlight all of God's encouragements and promises He made to the people.