

Haggai 2:1-2

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The prophet Haggai receives a second message from the LORD during the second year of King Darius of Persia.

In the previous chapter, the prophet Haggai confronted the returning exiles of Judah for having neglected the temple of God while building paneled homes for themselves. Haggai urged the Judeans to reconsider their attitude toward life and rebuild the temple. Consistent with the basic outline of God's covenant with Israel, their putting God first would bring God's blessing (Deuteronomy 6:5; 28:1-14). God's desire was to restore their fortunes. This begins by putting Him first, which lays the groundwork to serve and love others (Matthew 22:37-39).

The people took the warning from Haggai to heart and resumed the building project "on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of Darius the king" (Haggai 1:15). The date here is about September 21, 520 BC. This was in spite of a rekindling of opposition to rebuilding the temple (Ezra 5:3-4).

Now *on the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet* (vs. 1). This is the second message the prophet received from *the LORD*. It begins with a title verse identifying the date, the nature of the prophecy, and the human messenger bearing the prophecy. The date here is likely around October 17, 520 BC, about a month after the resumption of the building project.

In the ancient Jewish calendar, the *twenty-first* day would be the seventh day of the Feast of Booths. According to the book of Leviticus, this festival would begin "on the fifteenth day of this seventh month" (Leviticus 23:34). During this festival, the people of God lived in temporary shelters to commemorate their departure from Egypt when they lived in booths in the desert (Leviticus 23:33-43).

In addition, the people of God were to do "no laborious work" during the time of the feast of booths (Leviticus 23:36). Such a break would allow them to present themselves at Jerusalem. Likely God chose this time to move Haggai to voice his prophecy, so the people could hear the oracle, which the narrator identified as *the word of the LORD*.

The phrase *word of the LORD* refers to Yahweh's revelation (1 Kings 6:11; 16:1). The narrator makes it clear that the Suzerain (ruler) God is the primary author of the message. Yahweh (the existent One) revealed His will to some individuals who, in turn, were to relay the divine message to others. Those individuals were responsible to proclaim God's Word to their audience faithfully (e.g. Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1). They were the spokesmen of God, so the Bible calls them "prophets."

The term *prophet* ("nābî" in Hebrew) means "proclaimer" or "forth-teller." It describes someone who received a call from God to be God's spokesman. A *prophet* was a messenger of God. That

means that he did not speak from his authority but was empowered to speak on behalf of God. The frequent prophetic formula “Thus says the LORD” (e.g. Jeremiah 11:3; Jeremiah 33:2; Isaiah 48:17) confirms this truth. It makes clear that the *prophet* spoke what he received from the LORD.

Although the Hebrew term “nābî” can apply to true and false prophets alike (Jeremiah 6:13; 26:7–8; 27:9; 28:1; Zechariah 13:2), *Haggai* was a true *prophet* because *the word of the LORD came by him*. The prepositional phrase translated as *by the prophet Haggai* is literally “by the hand of the prophet Haggai,” suggesting that he was God’s instrument.

The *LORD* not only gave the message to the *prophet*, but He also disclosed its recipients to him. Haggai did not have to guess because *the LORD* told him to *speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people* (vs. 2).

The man *Zerubbabel* descended from King David. He was a grandson of King Jehoiachin (1 Chronicles 3:17–19; 2 Kings 24). He served as governor of Judah under King *Darius* of Persia. He led a group of exiles back to Judah (Ezra 2:2; Nehemiah 7:7). *Zerubbabel* was the civic leader of Judah.

As for *Joshua*, his father *Jehozadak* was the *high priest* who went to Babylonia “when the LORD carried Judah and Jerusalem away into exile by Nebuchadnezzar” (1 Chronicles 6:15). The man *Zerubbabel* served as the political leader while *Joshua* served as the religious leader. These two men were the leading figures in the rebuilding of the “house of God” in Jerusalem (Ezra 5:2). *Joshua* the priest was the religious leader in Judah. Together with *Zerubbabel*, they led the people of Judah to follow the Lord, and return to His ways.

The divine message spoken through Haggai was not only for the leaders of Judah but also for *the remnant of the people* (vs. 2). The term *remnant* can refer to what remains from a large portion. It can refer to a portion of food, material, or a group of people. In our context, it refers to all those who returned to their homeland in Jerusalem. They were a small number compared to the population of Israel prior to its defeat and exile by the Babylonians. The Suzerain (ruler) God of Israel and Judah addressed them now after they had resumed the building project to provide them with further guidance and instructions.

Biblical Text

¹On the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet saying, ²“Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people saying.