

HAGGAI*Consider Your Ways!***Excuses and God's Judgment**
(or "Not now...it's not God's timing...")
(Haggai's first prophecy, Part 1)

He who excuses himself accuses himself. (Gabriel Meurier)

As you begin this study, read Haggai's first prophecy in Hag.1:1-15.

1. Ezra 4:24 says that the work on the temple ceased. The book of Haggai is dated 16 years after work on the temple abruptly stopped. To review, according to Ezra 3:2-3 and 3:10, what had been done on the temple up to that point?
2. According to God (through His prophet Haggai), what was the people's excuse for not having finished the rebuilding of the temple in Haggai 1:2? Put this in words that YOU might use as an excuse.
3. Since the work had ceased on the temple, what were the people doing? Haggai 1:4?
4. Ezra describes some very real opposition that the people faced after they started work on the temple. Let's look at the first hindrance that Ezra records.
 - a. In Ezra 4:1-2, what offer did some of Judah's adversaries make to Zerubbabel?

- b. These people were the Samaritans. What do you learn about the Samaritans in II Kings 17:29, 33-34 and 41?
 - c. Why was the Samaritan offer so dangerous? What would be the result of the two groups mingling during the years it would take to rebuild the temple? (see Ex. 34:12-16)
 - d. In Ezra 4:3, Zerubbabel and Jeshua refused the Samaritans' help. The Samaritans bitterly resented that rejection. How does Ezra 4:4-5 say that they responded?
5. There was a second even more devastating hindrance to the rebuilding of the temple.
- a. A letter-writing campaign was initiated against God's people. Ezra records the letter written to Persian officials and King Artaxerxes in Ezra 4:11-17. What were some of the accusations (esp. verses 13 and 15)?
 - b. King Artaxerxes responded to to the letter of accusation with an edict in Ezra 4:21. What did it say?
6. Read the following verses and write down some other things that were going on in the lives of the remnant in Jerusalem that also contributed to the 16-year delay in completing the temple:

- a. Haggai 1:6
 - b. Haggai 1:9a
 - c. Haggai 1:10-11
 - d. Haggai 2:17
7. With the persecution from outside and the personal trials the people were experiencing, does it make sense to you that the people might lose their vision and zeal for rebuilding the temple? Why or why not?
8. God reveals His personal involvement in their trials and in the realm of nature that were affecting the people by saying “I blew it away” (1:9), “I called for a drought” (1:11), “I struck you” (2:17). As He points out all He did to get their attention, God asks them to do what? (See Haggai 1:5 and 1:7)
9. God has given His people a lot to consider. Do you think this information was eye-opening for the people? Why or why not?
10. Before this word of the Lord came through Haggai, how do you think the people had interpreted the things they were going through?
11. God reveals His will in Haggai 1:8. What is it?
12. How did the people respond to God’s word in Haggai 1:12?

13. The Lord used Haggai to stir up the spirits of the people to obey His Word, beginning with their leaders. How does Phil. 2:13 describe this work of God?

14. What was God's encouraging word to the people in Haggai 1:13?

Consider Your Ways

Is there anything that you know to be God's will that you have put on the back burner because it doesn't seem like the right time? Do you ever say "Not yet, not now" to God?

Have you experienced any of the consequences God named in the book of Haggai in your own life? Have you ever felt that you were "spinning your wheels," working hard but getting nowhere? Could God be trying to get your attention?

Can you think of a time when your "spirit was stirred" to do something for the Lord? Describe how you felt, and what God did in your life.