

## #27. MINOR PROPHETS - GROUP FOUR HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, AND MALACHI

### 1. Key Themes of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi

- *“He Who Began the Good Work in You Will Be Faithful to Complete It.”*
  - **Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi** - The Old Testament story ends with a trio of prophets affirming loudly that God is able to do everything He has promised! The Temple will be reconstructed, the Messiah is coming, and the backslidden citizens of Israel are being called home!
- **Haggai** experienced the return of the Exiles back into Jerusalem. He was there during the beginning of the rebuilding of the Temple. Haggai and Zechariah rallied the people to continue the building project even in the face of severe opposition (Ezra 4; Hosea 2). Because the rebuilt Temple did not rival the majesty of Solomon’s Temple, some residents thought it an unworthy project. However, in response to their criticism, the prophet assured them that glory of the latter temple would be greater than the former temple (2:2-9). This was fulfilled in two ways. The Temple built by the returning Exiles would be greatly embellished under the direction of Herod, hundreds of years later. More importantly, the very personification of God’s Glory would visit the Temple in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:1-12). Some feel this is also a reference to what is called the Millennial Temple as envisioned by Ezekiel.
- **Zechariah** recognized that the political leaders of the times were trying to keep true faith from taking hold in Jerusalem. Zechariah encouraged Zerubbabel and the other workers to complete the task. “You have started it, and God says you will finish it!” (4:6-9). The Spirit would empower him to complete the task (4:6, 7).
- **Malachi** admonished the people to do their part (giving, working, believing) and know that God would do His part. Malachi is written in a legal form containing seven accusations against the people of Israel. Each charge is responded to with sarcasm or defensiveness by the people. Malachi assures them Messiah would come, preceded by a forerunner (John the Baptizer), and it was Israel’s responsibility to be ready!

### 2. The Book of Haggai

- **The Author:** The writer is Haggai, who ministered alongside Zechariah to encourage the successful completion of the rebuilding of the Temple during 520-516BC. He is mentioned briefly in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14, and both references are in connection to

Zechariah. Along with Zechariah and Malachi, he is known as one of the Post-Exilic Prophets. Haggai 2:3 may indicate that he saw the Temple of Solomon in early life. If so, he was probably at least 70 years of age by the time his prophecy is recorded.

- This book was written in 520BC, about 18 years after Cyrus' decree allowing the Jews to return to their land. The book was written within a four month period of that year (1:1; 2:1; 2:10; 2:20).
- Haggai means *my holiday, festive one* or perhaps *to celebrate*, indicating he may have been born on a holiday.

- **Key Verses**

- "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house *lies desolate*?" Haggai 1:4 NASB
- "Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, 'I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. <sup>22</sup>I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, everyone by the sword of another.' <sup>23</sup>On that day,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,' declares the Lord, 'and I will make you like a signet *ring*, for I have chosen you,'" declares the Lord of hosts." - Haggai 2:21-23 NASB

- **Key People**

- **Haggai** - the aged prophet from Jerusalem.
- **Zerubbabel** - the governor of Judah who was responsible for the Temple project.
- **Joshua** - the High Priest.

- **Key Place**

- Jerusalem

- **The Themes of Haggai**

- **Priorities** - the people were putting their own interests ahead of the business of God's Temple.

- **Encouragement** - God knows how discouraging a difficult task can be, so He went to great lengths to encourage the people in their project to complete the Temple.
- **The Contents of Haggai**
  - The Call to Complete the Rebuilding of the Temple (1:1-15)
    - The rebuke for disobedience (1:1-11)
    - The response of the remnant who rebuild (1:12-15)
  - The Encouragement to Complete the Task Quickly (2:1-23)
    - God's Glory returns. (2:1-9)
    - Haggai teaches the priests about true righteousness. (2:10-19)
    - Messiah will reign! (2:20-23)
- **Worth Remembering**
  - Haggai consists of four messages to Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the people of Israel. The messages will be more meaningful if you also read Ezra 1-6.
  - His writing is not poetry, but does have a sort of rhythmic prose typified by repetitive phrases such as *consider your ways* or *give careful thought*.
- **When Reading Haggai**
  - Remember this book is simple and direct; a *no frills* message to get your priorities in order and complete the job God gave you to do.

### 3. The Book of Zechariah

- **The Author:** Zechariah, who wrote the most apocalyptic and Messianic message of all the Minor Prophets.
  - The chronology of writing is different from other prophets. It appears chapters 1-8 were written in 520-518BC. The material in 9-14 is considered to come from a later period of ministry. References to Greece and subtle stylistic differences indicate the later chapters were composed around 480-470BC.

- Zechariah means *Jehovah has remembered*. There are nearly 30 men in the Old Testament known by this very popular name. Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was a priest. According to rabbinic tradition, Zechariah was a member of the Great Synagogue, a council of 120 elders originated by Nehemiah, and presided over by Ezra. This council later developed into the Sanhedrin, the governing body of New Testament fame.
- Along with Haggai, who was the first of the Post Exilic Prophets, Zechariah encouraged the Returnees to complete the rebuilding of The Temple in order to fully restore the proper worship of Jehovah.
- Zechariah was martyred between the altar and the temple (Matthew 23:35).
- **Key Verses**
  - Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. <sup>10</sup>I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; and the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations; and His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth. Zechariah 9:9, 10 NASB
  - "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. Zechariah 12:10 NASB
- **Key People**
  - Zerubbabel - the Governor of Judah
  - Zechariah - the Apocalyptic Prophet
  - Joshua - the High Priest
- **Key Places**
  - Zechariah is preaching to the citizens of Jerusalem.
- **The Themes of Zechariah**

- **The Temple** - proper worship in God's House is a priority.
- **Messiah** - both His First and Second Advents are revealed in Zechariah (9-14).
- **Protection** - God will preserve Israel no matter what danger she faces.
- **The Contents of Zechariah**
  - Rebuild the Temple (1:1- 8:23)
    - The call to repentance (1:1-6)
    - The eight night visions of Zechariah (1:7-6:15)
      - ✓ The man among the myrtle trees (1:2-4) - The Lord will be merciful again to Jerusalem.
      - ✓ The four horns and four craftsmen (1:18-21) - Those who scattered Judah will be judged.
      - ✓ The man with the measuring line (2:1-13) - God will be a protective wall around Jerusalem.
      - ✓ The cleansing of Joshua the High Priest (3:1-10) - Messiah comes to save.
      - ✓ The gold lampstand and the two olive trees (4:1-14) - The Lord empowers Israel by His Spirit.
      - ✓ The flying scroll (5:1-4) - Dishonesty will be judged.
      - ✓ The woman in a basket (5:5-11) - Wickedness will be removed.
      - ✓ The four chariots (6:1-8) - Heaven will bring judgment on the whole earth.
    - The anointing of Joshua the High Priest (6:9-15)
  - The Four Messages of Zechariah (7:1-8:23)
    - Commentary on fasting (7:1-3)
    - Four responses (7:4-8:23)
      - ✓ Purify your motives (7:4-7)
      - ✓ Repent with fasting (7:8-14)
      - ✓ Restoration of favor will result. (8:1-17)
      - ✓ Restore the feasts (8:18-23)
    - Two burdens of Zechariah (9:1-14:21)
      - ✓ Messiah's rejection at the First Advent (9:1-11:17)
      - ✓ Messiah's acceptance at His Second Advent (12:1-14:21)

- **Worth Remembering**

- The two sections of Zechariah may be separated by several years, though it is not a certainty. If Zechariah is composed of two sections, it does not imply there are two authors. Both sections complement each other. Separating them would serve no good purpose as we study this valuable apocalyptic book.

- **When Reading Zechariah**

- Remember the highly symbolic nature of the book makes Zechariah a potentially difficult read. A suggestion would be to read each vision as a whole vision that is a smaller part of a greater vision. The book points toward the two great images concerning Messiah in 9-11 and 12-14.

#### 4. The Book of Malachi

- **The Author:** Malachi, whose name means *my messenger*, or *God's messenger*.

- This book was written in about 430BC, during Nehemiah's return to Persia (433-424BC). Sacrifices were being made in the restored Temple, which was completed in 516BC. The use of the word *governor* is clearly a Persian reference. So we feel confident Malachi wrote almost a century after Haggai began to preach.
- While Haggai and Zechariah admonished the people to complete the Temple, Malachi rebuked the people for their neglect of the completed Temple and its accompanying worship.

- **Key Verses**

- "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts. <sup>2</sup> "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. <sup>3</sup> He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the Lord offerings in righteousness. <sup>4</sup> Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. Malachi 3:1-4 NASB
- "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup> You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! <sup>10</sup> Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will

not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. <sup>11</sup> Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes*,” says the Lord of hosts. <sup>12</sup> “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the Lord of hosts. Malachi 3:8-12 NASB

- “But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. <sup>3</sup>You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the Lord of hosts.<sup>5</sup>“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. <sup>6</sup>He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”Malachi 4:2, 3, 5, 6 NASB

- **Key People**

- Malachi - the final canonical prophet of the Old Testament.
- The Priests - who were generally unfaithful to their calling.
- The worshippers in Jerusalem

- **Key Places**

- Jerusalem and the Temple

- **The Themes of Malachi**

- **God’s Demonstrated Love** - The Hebrew word for *love* in verse 2 means a demonstrable love that can be observed and proves the intent of the one loving. God. Reminded them that He had not loved in word only, but by the loving action of His deeds toward Israel.
- **The Sins of the Priests** - The priests were guilty of shallow, casual performance of their duties, and they were not instructing the people in matters of true righteousness.
- **The Sins of the People** - The lessons of the Exile had been lost, and the people were not heeding the voice of the prophets.
- **Messiah** - The Great Healer of all Israel was coming! He would be preceded by one

who came in the power and spirit of Elijah. This concept set the stage for the appearance of John the Baptizer in the early pages of Matthew, who would in turn introduce Messiah Jesus to the world (John 1:6-34).

- **The Contents of Malachi**

- The Sinful Priests (1:1-2:9)
  - A reminder of God's great love for Israel (1:1-5)
  - The priest's willful disregard for the Altar of the Lord (1:6-14)
  - The priests had forgotten God's Glory. (2:1-3)
  - The priests disrespected God's Law (2:4-9)
- The Sinful People (2:10-3:15)
  - Messiah is coming to save His people. (2:17-3:5)
  - The people are called to repent. (3:6-12)
  - The people are dissatisfied with Jehovah. (3:13-15)
- The Remnant and the Coming of Messiah (3:16-4:6)

- **Worth Remembering**

- Remember that completing a task isn't the stopping point. It is simply part of the process of faithfulness. The Temple was completed, but Temple worship was the next step.
- Only about 50,000 Exiles had returned from captivity, and they were still rebellious, but the day of repentance and acceptance of Messiah would eventually come to Israel.

- **When Reading Malachi**

- Remember Malachi points to John the Baptizer (Elijah) and Messiah in his closing thoughts (chapter 4).
- Between the time of Malachi and Matthew, many new groups and institutions were established in Israel. These will be discussed in the next chapter.

- The Temple in the Old and New Testaments:
  - The Tabernacle (15th century BC) is revealed in Exodus 25-30 and 35-40.
  - Solomon's Temple (966-586BC) is discussed in 2 Samuel 7, 1 Kings 8, and Jeremiah 32.
  - Zerubbabel's Temple (constructed in 516BC; desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes in 169BC). It was remodeled by Herod and served as the Temple from 19BC-70AD when it was destroyed by the Romans.
  - In this present age, the Temple is found in the heart of each Believer (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18).
  - Ezekiel's Temple (Ezekiel 40:1- 42:20) may be a literal Temple during the Millennial Kingdom, or it may be a descriptive picture of Heaven itself. If the latter is true, it would parallel Revelation 21:22; 22:1-21, which is the Eternal Temple, perhaps synonymous with Heaven.
  
- Malachi's prophecies concerning Messiah are corroborated in the New Testament:
  - Messiah's coming will bring judgment (cp. Malachi 4:1 with Revelation 20:11-15).
  - The Son of Righteousness will bring healing to His people (cp. Malachi 4:2 with Matthew 12:15 and Revelation 21:4).
  - A forerunner (John the Baptizer) will prepare the way for Messiah (cp. Malachi 3:1; 4:5 with Matthew 11:10-14).