

The Temple Rebuilt

Key Verse: “Go up
to the mountain,
and bring wood,
and build the
house; and I will
take pleasure in it,
and I will be
glorified, saith the
LORD.”
—Haggai 1:8

Selected Scripture:
Haggai 1; Ezra 5

FOLLOWING THE RETURN of the faithful Jewish remnant to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon, the people built an altar in order to worship the LORD. They then commenced erecting a new Temple. However, their Samaritan neighbors conspired against the Jews, and King Artaxerxes of Persia decreed this work should cease. (Ezra 3,4) “In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the

month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD’s house should be built. Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?”—Hag 1:1-4

Haggai rebuked the Israelites for neglecting the rebuilding of the Temple while erecting beautiful homes for themselves. He explained to them that their crops were small and their general sense of prosperity was lacking because obedience to God should be their highest priority.—vss. 5-7

Our Key Verse directs the Jews to revive their religious interests, and to begin anew with the construction of the Temple if they desired to receive the Heavenly Father's favors and blessings once more.

In order for the Jews to understand clearly that their impoverished temporal conditions were related to their failure to rebuild the Temple, Haggai indicates that what had befallen the people was in the nature of chastisement from God.—vss. 9-11

As a result of the encouragements given by Haggai, Zechariah, and other righteous leaders in Israel, the rebuilding of the Temple was initiated. Despite opposition from Israel's enemies, the Temple was finally completed and dedicated to the LORD with much joy and the offering of sacrifices.—Ezra 5,6

An important lesson to be derived from this study is that just as the nation of Israel was carried away into Babylonian captivity and ultimately released after many years and rebuilt the Temple, the name Babylon also has spiritual significance. Following the death of the apostles, many true Christians were taken captive by sectarian religious systems described symbolically as Babylon, in which false doctrines and man-made creeds not taught in the Bible were formulated. In obedience to scriptural instructions, true Christians have had their eyes enlightened and have departed from symbolic Babylon to study and practice God's Word in all its purity.—Rev. 18:4

Faithfulness in this regard will result in the establishment of the spiritual temple represented in Christ and his body. When this class is completed, it will usher in blessings for all the world of mankind. (Gen. 22:15-19; Gal. 3:27-29) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."—I Cor. 3:16,17 ■