

# Dr. Gary Yates, Book of the 12, Session 26, Haggai

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This is Dr. Gary Yates in his lecture series on the Book of the 12. This is lecture 26 on the book of Haggai.

This session is going to focus on the ministry and the message of the prophet Haggai as we move into the post-exilic prophets that are found in the book of the 12.

Before we do that, I would like to just sort of as a conclusion to the previous section on Habakkuk, just briefly talk about some of the applications and theological principles that I think we can take away from that book. It is a book calling for us to exercise faith and trust in the Lord. It is also a book that models for us that we can bring our questions, our laments, and our complaints to God, and God will help us to grow in wisdom as we do that.

So let me just quickly run through a few of these things. Some of them remind us of things that we've already seen in the prophets. The first one is God is sovereign over all the nations and rulers of the earth, no matter how powerful they seem to be.

God ultimately uses wicked nations at times to accomplish his purposes, even when that involves violence and bloodshed. God, in turn, will also bring judgment on all nations who violate the Noahic covenant by shedding blood and doing violence. God punishes the wicked, but he often takes his time in doing so.

That's the part of this that sometimes disturbs us. God's ways are beyond our ability to understand or figure out. Isaiah said that my ways are not your ways.

Faith, which is often a struggle at times, involves us waiting for God to do what he has promised and ultimately to bring about the resolution to the circumstances in our lives as he has promised to do. The ways that God has acted on behalf of his people in the past give us confidence to trust in what God has promised to do for the future. True faith in God is believing in God even in the midst of personal or national disaster, not just using faith as a good luck charm and then abandoning that faith when you feel that God has let you down.

Habakkuk says, even if we lose everything, all of our crops are taken away, we lose our herds, the Babylonian invasion comes, we're going to trust in God in that way. And then a final idea and something that grows out of this, we never have to be afraid of coming to God with genuine questions or even our doubts. Wrestling with those doubts and questions is often how we grow in faith.

Habakkuk says, even in the midst of this, we can worship the glory and greatness of God as we express those things. In our modern context, we often view worship as simply being a joyful time of celebration. Worship is to be happy and upbeat.

But the problem with that is that those types of emotions are not always reflective of the experiences that we're going through in life. And so, the Old Testament reflects the idea that we continue to worship God even when we express questions and doubts or we're pouring out our heart to him about some disastrous situation that's going on in our life. The primary genre in the book of the Psalms is lament.

And so, worship is not just an upbeat, positive, happy experience. We can often come to God when we are wrestling with questions and doubts. God doesn't always directly answer our questions the way that he did with Habakkuk.

He certainly does not do that, for example, with Job. But what God does do is that he will give us wisdom and a deeper understanding of himself. And we never have to be afraid of coming to God with those things.

James says, if any of you lack wisdom, let him come to God. He will give it to us. Again, he will not always give us a direct answer, but he will give us understanding and wisdom.

As a final part of that, I think we need to be careful to also understand that lamenting and asking questions is often a part of genuine worship. It's a part of growing in faith. But be careful as you're doing this of idealizing doubt or buying into the idea of our culture that cynicism, skepticism, or constant questions and doubt about God and the promises of his word, be careful of buying into the idea that those things are more intellectually honest than genuine trust, faith, and confidence in God.

The righteous live by their faith, not by their doubts. Doubt can often be an instrument that God uses in our lives, but God does not want us to live in a permanent condition of doubt. God does not want us to approach our faith with a disposition toward cynicism and skepticism.

I think that's one of the problems in our culture. Often doubts that people bring to the table are as superficial as the pat answers of fundamentalism. I think we need to be careful of both of those extremes.

Chesterton said this, and it was very pressing because he said this before the time of our culture, but I think it describes us to a T. What we suffer from today is humility in the wrong place. Modesty has moved from the organ of ambition and has settled on the organ of conviction where it was never meant to be. A man was meant to be doubting about himself, but undoubting about the truth, and this has been exactly reversed.

He said we are on the road to providing a race of men too mentally modest to believe in the multiplication tables. Often, I see that kind of just superficial doubt, cynicism, and skepticism, whether it's in popular Christian literature, on blogs that are out there today, or even sometimes in sermons in the church where I am more intellectually honest because I live with these constant doubts and that skepticism has leaked through in my approach to God's word. In the book of Habakkuk, the just will live by their faithfulness.

There is a clear movement in this book where Habakkuk moves from his questions and his doubts to unshaken confidence in the power of God and in the faithfulness of God to keep his promises. Living in constant skepticism, living with a predisposition toward cynicism, will not lead you to a place where you say, even if God takes everything away that I have, I will trust in him. And so, let's take away this idea from the book of Habakkuk.

Worship often involves asking God questions and dealing with our doubts and wrestling with those things. But the ultimate goal is faith and trusting in the promises of God because we know that God is absolutely faithful to his promises. Now, I think that not only provides a conclusion for Habakkuk, but it also provides an introduction to the message of the post-exilic prophets that are found in the book of the 12.

We are going to begin in this session by looking at the message of Haggai and then in the sessions that follow at the messages of Zechariah. Haggai and Zechariah are important to the post-exilic period because they are the prophets who in the year 520 BC are called by God to encourage the people to return to the task of rebuilding the temple and finishing and completing that task. The temple is essential if the people are fully going to experience God's presence and God's blessing as they turn back to the land.

I love the fact that the Old Testament concludes and closes, basically, the historical survey of the Old Testament closes with the post-exilic period because it reminds us of the covenant faithfulness of God and the fact that God keeps his promises and that God is permanently committed to the people of Israel in spite of the terrible judgment of the Babylonian exile. I think, in many ways, the Babylonian exile is the ultimate and the greatest theological crisis in the Old Testament. It appears to the people of Israel that God has abandoned us.

The gods of Babylon are greater than our gods. What does this mean? Can God be trusted? Is this the end of the story? What about the covenant that God has with his people? Is he going to be faithful to those things? Is there a future for Israel, or is this simply the end of the story? The post-exilic period, as God leads his people back, as God brings them back to the land, is an encouragement to those discouraged people who, in many ways, had abandoned their trust and believed that God had

abandoned them. It was a reminder to them that God is permanently committed to his people.

It is a reminder to us of the grace of God that after there has been this terrible judgment, God will still bring about the restoration of his people. The end of the story of the Old Testament really concludes in the way that Moses had told it would happen at the very beginning of the story in Deuteronomy chapter 30, verses 1 to 10. When God brought the people into the land, and then they ultimately experienced the covenant curses, and when God took them away in exile as punishment for that, when they trusted in God, and when they turned to God and sought him with their whole heart, God would restore them and bring them back to the land.

That is what we see God doing. The prophet Jeremiah had said that after 70 years, the Babylonian exile would be completed. God would bring his people back and God would restore them.

God keeps his covenant promises, God is faithful, and God is permanently committed to the covenant relationship that he has initiated with the people of Israel. In the working out of the salvation of restoration and return, God is going to use the nations around Israel to accomplish his work of restoration in the same way that he used the nations of Babylon and Assyria to carry out his judgment. So, the idea in the post-exilic period of God being the one who is in control of the nations, that idea carries over.

This is how God is ultimately going to restore his people. God is going to use in the post-exilic period the Persian king Cyrus the Great to be his instrument that would bring about the restoration. Isaiah 44 talks about Cyrus being God's shepherd.

Isaiah chapter 45 talks about him being God's anointed one, his Messiaich. The relationship between Cyrus and the Lord is not a personal relationship where Cyrus is a worshiper of God or one who is devoted to Yahweh, but it's the same as the relationship that God had with the king of Assyria and the king of Babylon. God uses this king to accomplish his purposes.

Cyrus and the Persians are ultimately going to conquer the Babylonians. The Persians are going to replace the Babylonians in the same way that the Babylonians had replaced the Assyrians. When Cyrus takes possession of Babylon, he is going to issue a decree.

This decree allows the foreign and conquered people that are part of the Persian empire, we see a greater element of tolerance in all of this. Cyrus issues a decree allowing the Jews and other people to return to their homeland, to rebuild their temples, and to worship the Lord. That becomes vitally important to the history of the Old Testament.

The prophet Isaiah had prophesied this. The decree of Cyrus is listed in Ezra chapter 1 and in 2 Chronicles chapter 36. It provides the conclusion to the book of Chronicles, which is the conclusion to the Old Testament canon as a whole in the Hebrew scriptures.

God uses Cyrus and the Persians to become his instrument of salvation. Cyrus allows the Jewish people to return to their homeland, and that return will take place in three stages. Cyrus issued the decree related to the Jews in 538 and 537.

The first return takes place immediately following that. The two key and significant leaders that are part of that first return are Zerubbabel, the Persian-appointed governor of Babylon, and Joshua, who is going to serve as the high priest of the post-exilic community. The key accomplishment in that first return is going to be the rebuilding of the temple.

The second return is going to take place almost a century later in 458 BC. The leader of that return is going to be Ezra. Ezra as a scribe and as a teacher of the law is primarily going to focus on the religious and spiritual reform of the people and calling them back to the law of God.

The third installment and the third stage of the return is going to take place in 445 under Nehemiah, who becomes the governor of Jerusalem and the governor of Judah and leads the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem so that it can become a viable city. The ministry of Haggai and Zechariah is related to this first return. In the year 520 BC, God calls Haggai and then shortly thereafter calls Zedekiah.

Their job is to encourage the people, to exhort the people to get back to the job of rebuilding the temple of the Lord that they had initially started in 536 BC but had abandoned for the last 15 or 16 years. When they came back to the land, they initially laid the foundations. They wanted to get started right away on rebuilding the temple, but a lack of resources, a lack of finances, the pressures of building their own homes and just establishing a viable community, and specifically opposition from enemies within the land that were opposed to the people of Judah, rebuilding the temple and becoming a viable people once again, that ultimately led them to abandon this work.

So, they came back to the land, they energetically, they enthusiastically started the work, but then it fell by the wayside, and they began to focus more on their own homes, their own priorities, their own values. So, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah have a specific mission from God. They are called by God as a team to minister to the people and to encourage them, to rebuke them for their wrong priorities and their wrong values, and to call the people to rebuild the temple.

The book of Ezra talks about the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah and summarizes it in this way, in chapter 5, verses 1 and 2. Now the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the Lord God of Israel, who is over them. And then after they prophesied, after they called the people to rebuild, then Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

So, they exhort them to get back to rebuilding it. And then, as they are doing it, they encourage them over a five-year period, and the temple is finally completed in 515 BC. They encourage them during this time that the Lord is with them, the Lord will bless them, and the Lord will ultimately restore their community.

Ezra chapter 6, verse 14 also says this, the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah, the son of Edu. They finished their building by the decree of God of Israel and by the decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes, the king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

And so, one of the things that I appreciate about their ministry as we read and the way that they ministered and encouraged the people is that they didn't just call them to build the temple, but they were there with them throughout the entire process. And in the book of Haggai, what we have there are a series of five messages. August 520, he encourages the people to build.

And then, within three weeks, which is pretty amazing considering the resources that had to be gathered, the bureaucracy of all this, within about three weeks, the people obeyed, they responded to the prophet's message, and they began rebuilding the temple. Now, part of what we have to ask here, and I think this is important for understanding the application of this book for us in a New Testament perspective, why was the temple so important? This is not just a book that we drag out when we want to encourage the people in our church to build an \$18 million worship facility or that kind of thing. This is not simply building a structure for worship.

The temple is more than just a gathering place. The temple was more than even just a place of worship, as important as that is. In the Old Testament, the temple is the place where God had chosen to dwell among his people.

In a special way, God's glory and God's presence fill all of creation. But in a special, specific way, God's presence was mediated to the people of Israel at the temple. God's presence was there so that they could worship him, enjoy him, experience the blessings of his presence, and to offer and to present their prayers to him.

The Old Testament presents a picture of God that he is transcendent. Isaiah 66, the heavens and the earth cannot contain God. He's far greater than that.

But there is also a God who is imminent, and he is near and present with his people. And in the Old Testament, the actual literal presence of God dwells first of all at the tabernacle and then later in the temple. In the most holy place that only the Israelite high priest was allowed to go once a year, the glory of God was there as a reminder of the presence of God.

And so, the greatest covenant blessing that the Lord gave to the people of Israel was not the promised land. It was not the agricultural blessings of the promised land. It was not their kings.

It was not the military victories that they won over their enemies. The greatest blessing within the covenant relationship with God and the greatest thing that we enjoy in our relationship with God today is the presence of God himself. In Psalm 42, I believe perhaps at a time when David has been driven away from the presence of God and is not able to be at the temple, he says, as the deer pants for the water, my soul longs and thirsts for the presence of God.

Psalm 84 talks about the desire of the pilgrims as they march up to Jerusalem for the three feasts and festivals every year, where the people of God as a whole have an opportunity to be in the presence of God. The worshiper says there; I wish that I could be just like one of the little birds that make their nest up under the eaves of the temple so that I could constantly be in the presence of God. There is no greater blessing as God's people that we can enjoy than that.

And he says, better is one day in your courts, better is one brief moment in the presence of God than thousands elsewhere. The desire of the worshipers of the Psalms, it is expressed, I think, more than once in the Psalms, is that they desire to see the King in his beauty and to enjoy and to experience the beauty of God, the presence of God, the answers to his prayer. There is nothing greater than what God had given to Israel.

And so, what's happening in the post-exilic community, they have come back to the promised land, but they are not fully experiencing all that God had designed and God had intended for a relationship with them because the presence of God that Israel enjoyed and experienced at the temple could not be enjoyed as long as that building was in ruins. And so, Haggai is going to confront the people about their misplaced priorities. The temple, the building, and the structure are not the primary thing.

Their relationship with God is what is really missing. The tragedy of this and the sinfulness of what they've done is the fact that they reflect priorities that seem to say there are things that are more important to us than the presence of God. In the book

of 1 and 2 Chronicles, which was written during the post-exilic period to give us the history of Israel from the perspective of the post-exilic community, to talk about the need for renewal and restoration and the people confessing their sin and coming back to God and the hope that God had for them in the future.

Looking at the history of Israel through that lens focuses specifically on the work that David and Solomon did in rebuilding the temple. And in one passage in 2 Chronicles it says, my eyes and my heart will always be toward this place. And so until the people rebuilt the temple and until this became part of their community and a part of their worship, once again, they were not fully enjoying all of the blessings of the covenant that God had made with his people.

In fact, they were missing the most important parts. So that's why the focus on the temple is so important here. So, this is not just a message, again, that we use for fundraising when we're building a church building.

This is a reminder of the greatness of God's presence among his people and how that was supposed to be in the post-exilic community, their priority, and their value. And it's to be our ultimate priority and value as well. Now we're going to look at the five messages that are found in the book of Haggai, but there are a couple of unifying features of this book that I want us to think about first.

First of all, the Lord identifies himself in chapter 1, verse 2. The first message that's going to be delivered in September of 520 BC, as the people have still abandoned their work of rebuilding the temple. This has been dormant for about 15 years. The Lord says, thus the Lord of hosts, the Lord of armies, Yahweh Sabaoth.

And that name and that title and that designation for God is going to appear throughout the book. And I think it's significant to the message that's found here. It's a reminder to the people, even in the midst of this post-exilic period, that God is still king.

God is still on his throne. God is still the great one. God is still in charge of his heavenly army.

And even if the people in the province of Judah are still under Persian control and Persian authority, God is king, even if Israel right now does not have their own king. In many ways, when Israel came back to the land during the post-exilic period, it was a disappointing time. We're going to see that looking at Haggai, Zechariah, Joel, and Malachi.

The people had come back to the land. In many ways, they had not fully come back to God. This was not the full and the ultimate and final restoration that God had promised for the people.



In fact, the message that's going to emerge out of these prophets, and I think it's a very important part of this message, is that there is going to be a return beyond the return that they experienced in 538. In the midst of all of that, however, God is still on his throne. He is still the Lord of hosts.

There is also going to be an expression that is used four different times in the book at the beginning to cause them to think about why they haven't built the temple. And the expression there is, give careful thought or consider your ways. And that's going to show up in chapter 1, verses 5 and 7. Give careful thought and consider your ways.

Look at the disaster and the lack of blessing that has come into your life because you have not fulfilled your responsibility to build the temple and it's lain dormant for 15 years. Consider your ways. And then in chapter 2 verses 15 and 18, that same expression is used as an encouragement to these people.

They have begun to rebuild the temple. They're in the midst of this process. Consider your ways.

And what God says, I want you to notice from this point forward, I am going to bless you. I'm going to prosper you. It's going to be a complete contrast from what you've experienced in the past.

Another expression, and I think this is an important one, is chapter 1, verse 13, and chapter 2, verse 4. When the people begin rebuilding the temple, the Lord says to them, I am with you. And remember, the ultimate covenant blessing was God's presence. The thing that would make this a strong and viable community once again was the fact that God was with them.

And then finally, another expression that is used twice in the book, in chapter 2 verse 6, chapter 2 verse 21, the Lord says, I will once more shake the heavens and the earth. And the Lord is going to do powerful and mighty things that will ultimately bring about the full restoration of his people. They're not experiencing that in the present.

There is not a Davidic king on the throne, but the Lord will ultimately shake the heavens and the earth, and he will completely and fully restore the people. So these ideas kind of unify these five messages. God is the Lord of hosts.

The idea is that Israel needs to give careful thought to their ways. The promise that God is with them and the promise that God is going to once more shake the heavens and the earth. So now, in light of that, let's look at the five messages.

The first message in chapter 1 verses 1 to 12 is a call for the people to realize that they need to get back to rebuilding God's house. Again, the work stopped and it hasn't been resumed for 15 years. And so, the prophet asked them a pointed question.

What we have here, the prophetic genre that's being used, is that this is a prophetic call to repentance with primarily negative motivations of what has happened in light of the fact that they have not done what God has asked them. So, in August of 520, the prophet says, is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while the Lord's house lies in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. Think about what's happened here.

You have so much. You have harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough.

You drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourself, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them in a bag with holes.

The Lord has withheld from them a financial blessing. The covenant curses rather than covenant blessings have come into effect. And remember, Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 said that if you don't obey God, God will take away the blessings of the land.

God will take away its produce. God will take away your blessing. So give careful thought to your ways.

There are some misplaced priorities here because you dwell in your paneled houses, and the house of God lies unfinished and undone. I want to raise an interpretive question here. What is the meaning of this expression, paneled houses? The way that this is translated in the ESV, I think this is probably the correct translation.

The word for paneled here is the Hebrew word *sephonim*. And it is talking about a house that has panels in it. And the problem, however, is that this is typically a term that is used to either to talk about a royal palace or fairly luxurious accommodations or even the temple in 1 Kings chapter six.

So, are the people themselves actually living in sort of these opulent paneled houses? That seems to be kind of a problem because the post-exilic community, for the most part, was a pretty impoverished people. They had very limited resources. So, have they actually built paneled houses? Like, for example, the one that Jehoiakim remodels and rebuilds for himself in Jeremiah 22.

Another possible translation of this word *sephonim* is that it could simply be referring to houses that have ceilings on them. So, in other words, you have a

completed house. You have a house that you can dwell in, and you have protection from the elements.

God's house is still in ruins. It seems like based on usage elsewhere, paneled is probably the correct interpretation here or the correct reading and translation of this term. What may be in view here, rather than the houses and the accommodations of all the people, it may be a word that is directly addressed to the governor and to the leaders.

You have the kind of luxurious opulent houses that are befitting your position. But the question is, why have you devoted so much attention to this rather than the attention that you should be giving to God's house? And so, as a result of this, the covenant curses have come into effect once again, because they have not honored the Lord. They have not made it a priority to complete God's house.

In a sense, because of that, they're living in disobedience. God reciprocates their lack of obedience. Again, the prophets often highlight the idea that the punishment fits the crime.

God's response is the proper reciprocal response to the people and what they have done. And so what it says in chapter verses four and nine is that God's house lies in ruins, Kerev. Then, therefore, in verse 11, because God's house is in Kerev, in ruins, I have called for a drought, a Kerev, to be brought against the land of Judah.

And this has been brought on the lands and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on when the ground brings forth, on man and beast and on all their labors. And so, really, we've moved forward to the post-exilic community. But some of the same issues that we've talked about in the Assyrian crisis and the Babylonian crisis, there's constantly a focus in the book of the 12 on the deprivation of vine, wine, and grain, and those same issues are there.

They are back in the land, but that's not the final solution. They will not be fully restored. They will not experience the covenant blessings until they obey God.

And there will not be a full return or a full experience of restoration until they fully return to the Lord. And we know that, ultimately, we're still waiting for the eschatological consummation of this. So that's the opening message of Haggai, chapters one, verses one to 12.

It is time to rebuild God's house. Now, what's the response of the people? We have a second message that reflects that in verses 12 to 15. And here's what it says, "...then Zerubbabel, the son of Sheatiel, and Joshua, the son of Jozadak, the high priest, with all of the remnant of the people, they shema, they obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and they began the rebuilding process." And so within three weeks, they pull

together the resources, they formulate a plan, and they begin rebuilding the house of God.

So, what's the surprise element here? Well, if you've been paying attention to the Book of 12, the surprise element here is that we don't have very many examples of obedience, repentance, and response. The idea of the call to repent and return to the Lord is one of the unifying themes in the 12, but from the book of Hosea forward, we have very limited examples of this. We're going to see an example of repentance and return to the Lord in Joel chapter two.

That's one example. We see an example of repentance and return and sort of a surprising example in the Ninevites in the book of Jonah. But now we have another major example of this, the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah; the people respond to this, and as a result of this, God promises to bless the people.

And the Lord says, I am going to be with you, and I'm going to help you, and I'm going to be with you all the way through this process. So, there's a second message: as the people make the promise to obey God, they promise to obey God, and God reciprocates by promising to be with them. In the first part of chapter one, they have allowed God's house to lie in ruins.

God has brought a court out against them. Now God, they promise to obey, I will be with you. The final thing that I want to point out in this second message is that I think we see a beautiful example in Scripture of how human repentance and God's initiatives do not override each other, but they complement one another and they work together.

And so as we're trying to understand how divine sovereignty and human response and human freedom and how those things work together, I think the biblical idea is that there's a harmony between these two things. It says in verse 12 that the people obeyed the voice of the Lord, but it's also going to say in verse 14 that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel and the spirit of the leaders and the people to obey God. And so, there's this reciprocal relationship.

God initiates, and the people respond. When the people respond in the right way, God blesses them. If the people do not respond, God delays, and God works in another way to fulfill his promises.

But there's this just balancing act, I think, that sometimes we leave out of our theological systems or that we ignore in our theological systems between divine initiative and human response. In the third response or in the third message that we see from the prophet Haggai, there is a promise concerning the glory of the temple, the second temple that is being rebuilt. One of the things that happened as the temple was being rebuilt, when they laid the foundation back in 536, some of the

older people that were actually around and were old enough to remember the opulence and the greatness and the beauty and the splendor of Solomon's temple, they began to weep.

So, there was joy that the foundation was being laid. There was weeping because the temple that was being rebuilt was not as impressive. It did not possess the splendor and the wealth and the opulence of Solomon's temple.

And so, there's kind of that idea again as they resume the work. The prophet is going to say, be strong, all of you people, declares the Lord. Work for I am with you according to the covenant that I have made with you when you came out of Egypt.

And back in verse 3, who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? Okay, yeah, we saw it. Some of the older people remember this. And comparatively, this house seems to be a significantly lesser house.

And so, to encourage the people, the Lord's promise that is given to them in chapter 2, he says, verse 8, the silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the Lord. And the latter glory of this house will be greater than the former glory, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place, I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.

So, the question arises here, and I think it's a legitimate question. How was this promise ever fulfilled? If we're talking about the actual building and what was built in the second temple, the glory of that building was significantly less than Solomon's temple, which had stood there earlier. Are we talking here, and is the prophet promising something about the splendor of the temple that happened as a result of the extensive renovation, rebuilding, and additions to the temple that were made by Herod during the New Testament era? I don't think that's the focus.

The splendor of the building was definitely incredible during the time of Herod, but the purity of the building and what that said about the restoration of God and the relationship with his people really has nothing to do with Herod's restoration. Some people have argued that what we have in view here is the glory of this temple will be greater because the Messiah, Jesus, will present himself at the second temple before the time that it was destroyed in 70 AD. And that may be part of this promise as well.

Other people have looked at this and said this is simply an example of failed prophecy. That, you know, hey, Haggai is trying to encourage the people. He wants them to devote themselves and give themselves to this project.

He simply got carried away. And this statement should just be sort of viewed in an idealistic way. But I think the best understanding of this, in light of other scriptures and in light of some of the other prophetic texts that we have in the Old Testament,

is that this is referring to the glory of the eschatological kingdom that will be rebuilt and restored during the future eschatological kingdom.

We all know the second temple was destroyed in 70 AD. So how could that building and how could the glory of the second temple be connected with the glory of the eschatological temple? Well, look at what the prophet says in chapter 2, verse 3. Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? There is a connection in the oracle of Haggai here between the first house of Solomon and the second temple that was rebuilt in spite of the destruction of the first one. And so, I think we could have here, the glory of this house will surpass that of the former.

We could have a connection with the future eschatological temple, even though the second temple was destroyed in 70 AD as well. And so, there is a promise here of a greater glory that in light of other prophetic texts, and I'm thinking specifically of Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48, that there will be an eschatological temple where the glory of the Lord and the glory of the temple will be enjoyed and experienced in an even greater way. I believe in light of, again, passages like Ezekiel 40 to 48 and Isaiah 56 that talk about the temple being a house of prayer and a part of what God will do in the future restoration of Israel.

There is an eschatological promise in the prophets of a future temple and that this temple will be present in the eschatological kingdom. Richard Hess, in an article that he wrote, *The Future Written in the Past*, gives us some reasons why we should see this as talking about a literal temple and a literal structure. When prophets throughout the ancient Near East talked about events, the normal expectation, whether it was in Israel or in Assyria or wherever was that those events were going to be literally fulfilled.

When an Assyrian prophet talked about the king going out and winning a victory over his enemies, they expected that that was real. And so, this is just a natural way to read ancient Near Eastern prophecy. When we read the specific measurements and the details that are found in the description of the new temple in Ezekiel 40 to 43, those details lend us to the idea that we're talking about an actual structure.

The expectations of various Jewish people and Jewish groups, whether it was Qumran or the Samaritans or mainstream Jews, believed that there was an eschatological temple and that that was part of God's plan for the future of Israel. Jesus himself is going to talk about the restoration of Israel. He's going to talk about the restoration of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is going to be trampled under until the time of the Gentiles is completed. And then ultimately Jerusalem will be restored. When he talks about the temple and he cleanses the temple in Mark chapter 11, he quotes Isaiah 56, this house was meant by God to be a house of prayer.

He sees that promise of Isaiah being a part of the eschatological future for Israel. So, I know there's a lot of disagreement and discussion about this, and some would see that there's not a literal fulfillment of this. But I think the most natural reading of the prophets, as we connect it with some other prophetic texts, this is part of the prophetic vision of the future.

There will be an eschatological temple. And I don't see enough in the New Testament to set that aside or to think that there will be something less than a literal fulfillment. On the other side of that, and I want to make peace maybe with people that disagree with this, that I understand that in terms of the eschatological promises that the prophets are making, the primary emphasis is not on the temple.

I think sometimes dispensational eschatology and the way that it gets absorbed in all of these details, sometimes it puts the focus there. The primary emphasis is not on the structure. The primary emphasis is on the people's enjoyment of the presence of God.

In the New Testament, there is also going to be an emphasis that what was anticipated in the temple, as the people enjoyed the presence of God in the Old Testament, is going to be realized and fulfilled in Christ in a far greater way. There is a theology in the New Testament of Jesus ultimately being the replacement of the temple. The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory.

The glory doesn't reside in the Holy of Holies. The glory resides in the person of Jesus. Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up.

Jesus is talking about himself. He is the replacement of the temple. The people of God have become the temple.

So in a sense, the New Testament does talk about a replacement of the temple and something that is far greater than just a structure. But I believe that we can see a literal temple as part of the eschatological future along with this realization that the promises of the prophets and the glory of this house will surpass that of the former. It is not just about the structure.

It is ultimately about the deep experience of the presence of God that is now experienced in Christ and that will ultimately be experienced throughout eternity as God's people live in his presence. In the New Jerusalem, in Revelation chapter 21, there is no temple because there is no need for a temple. So there is this promise in the third message going back to Haggai and what he is saying to the people.

We have to resolve these theological issues about the New Testament and everything but understand the primary purpose of this is again to encourage the

people as they are building this temple. They are tending to look at this and say, well, this temple isn't as great as the one that Solomon built. Ultimately that is irrelevant.

It is the presence of God and God's blessing upon his people that are going to be the key thing. In chapter 2 verses 10 to 19, we have a fourth message that is given to encourage the people. This message is given three months after they have been in the process of rebuilding.

It is an illustration from the Old Testament law. It is an illustration that, for us, as we read this and as we look at the details, it is going back to the ceremonial laws of purity in the Old Testament. It is a little difficult for us to understand and figure some of this out.

But the Lord tells the prophet to ask the priest a question. Here is the question. If someone carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches with his fold bread or stew or wine or oil or any kind of food, does it become holy? Then the priest answered and said, no, it doesn't become holy.

You can look at the law in Leviticus 6.27 if you want to see the explanation of this a little bit more fully. Consecrated meat that was carried in a garment made that garment holy to the Lord. It was set apart for God because of the meat that was carried in it.

However, that holiness could not then be transformed from that garment to another object. So that is the first part of the object lesson. And the second part of the object lesson is to draw out a contrast.

And so, in verse 13, Haggai said, if someone who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these, does it become unclean? And the answer to this is, yes, it does become unclean. Again, you can look at the laws and the prescriptions of the Mosaic law that lay out these understandings of purity in passages like Numbers chapter 19 and in Leviticus chapter 22. If something was unclean and if a person came in contact with a dead body or something unclean, that uncleanness was transferred from the original object to the object that came in contact with it.

And the point of all of this is that we kind of get wrapped up in these priestly questions and discussions. The point of all of this is that Israel as a people had become unpure by their failure to rebuild the temple. And so, in the same way, that ritual impurity could be transferred to objects secondarily in a way that was not true of the garment and the way that it was unable to transfer purity, the failure of Israel to rebuild the temple and the failure of the post-exilic community to obey God had defiled the entire community.



And as a result of this, because of their unfinished business and because of their unfinished work on the temple, all of their worship, their sacrifices, their devotion, their deeds, all of those things had become defiled. There was nothing that they could do to fully please God until they completed the temple. The unfinished temple was like a corpse that corrupted their society and that had made them unclean.

But the encouragement in all of this is, hey, the people have been rebuilding for three months. God is with them. And he says, I want you to consider from this point forward, you have been defiled up until this point when you did not rebuild the temple.

And as a result of that, you've experienced the deprivation and the poverty in chapter one. Based on the Mosaic covenant, now God is going to prosper them and bless them. And he says, from this moment forward, consider your ways, notice the difference and see what God is going to do for his people.

The final word of encouragement and comfort to the people as they rebuild the temple is delivered at the same time. And this fifth and final message is a promise to Zerubbabel, who is the Persian appointed governor of Judah at this time. And here's the promise, Haggai chapter two, verse 21.

Speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth in the same way that God had acted in the Exodus and came down and demonstrated his power in the thunder and the lightning and the shaking of the ground. God is going to do that again. God is going to perform a second Exodus and God is going to overthrow the throne of kingdoms.

I am about to destroy the kingdoms of the nations and overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and the riders shall go down. Every one by the sword of his brother on that day declares the Lord of hosts. I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.

So, what are the blessings that God has in store for the people of Judah as they rebuild the temple? God is going to bless them. God is going to establish them in the land. God is going to help them to finish the work of rebuilding the temple.

And then ultimately in the midst of all of this, God will ultimately fulfill his promise and establish the throne and the family and the dynasty of David. Zerubbabel belonged to the family of David. He was a member of the Davidic family.

Although Zerubbabel never became a Davidic king or ruler in that sense, the position of authority that God had allowed Zerubbabel to enjoy under the Persians, the fact that the Persians had appointed him as a governor, spoke to the fact that one day

God would ultimately restore the Davidic dynasty and God would ultimately fulfill the covenant promises that he had made to David. Now, as we look at this prophecy, again, it looks as if we're looking at a prophecy. Was this prophecy completely fulfilled in all of the ways that God says? It sounds as if God is about to overthrow the nations, defeat Israel's enemies, and establish Zerubbabel as a king.

That didn't happen. But what we have here is a prophecy that looks at both the near and the far. And in the near future, what God is doing for Zerubbabel and the authority that he has transferred to him, and the blessing that he's poured onto him, is a reminder in the present that God has not forgotten the house of David.

And that ultimately one day there would be a future ruler and a future king that would come from the line of David, Jesus as the Messiah and as the son of David, who would be a king and he would possess the dominion and authority that is promised to the house of David here. Now, did the people in Haggai's day fully understand that? I'm not sure that they would have understood the timing of all of this. I'm not sure that Haggai would have understood.

Perhaps he seems to reflect here a more immediate fulfillment. But ultimately what is going on, we see God's abiding commitment to the house of David and God will ultimately keep his promises and God will ultimately reestablish the throne of David. Zerubbabel is confirmation of that.

Zerubbabel is referred to in this oracle as God's signet ring. A signet ring was a ring that had a symbol on it that was used to mark or to identify the authority of an official or a king or a ruler. That seal was impressed into clay and was used to seal documents or letters.

It represented the authority of that person. So, when the Lord says that he is establishing Zerubbabel as his signet ring, it refers to the special relationship that existed between God and David. God had made David his vice-regent and the authority of David was a reflection of the authority of God.

It says in the book of Chronicles that Solomon reigned on the throne of the Lord. He was God's human representative. But when God had brought judgment on the house of David, back in the book of Jeremiah, as Jehoiakim is being taken away into exile, and then remember Zedekiah is taken into exile after that.

There is a passage in Jeremiah 22 that says to this 18-year-old king, even if you were God's signet ring, he would take you off of his hand and throw you away. And so, temporarily, God was rejecting the Davidic kings. He was taking away their rule.

He was taking away their authority. He was taking away their right to represent him. What Haggai is promising for us is that God is now reversing the judgment of Jeremiah 22.

God still has a plan. God still has a future for the people of Israel, and that will include a restored Davidic king. Zerubbabel represents the initial fulfillment of that promise.

The role of Haggai in Zechariah is to call the people to rebuild the temple, not just because of the importance of the building but because of the importance of God's presence and the priority of the relationship and the worship that the people would offer to God. And when the people obey, God promises them incredible blessings. The blessings that God pours out on his people in the initial stages of the post-exilic period are a reminder of God's covenant faithfulness and the fact that he will fully and completely restore them and that God will keep his promises to ultimately establish the kingdom that he has promised for them.

This is Dr. Gary Yates in his lecture series on the book of the 12. This is lecture number 26 on the book of Haggai.