

PostExilicProphets 21-04-15a

Good evening. Welcome to the Thursday night study at Grace and Truth Bible Church. This is April the 15th of 2021.

And we resume a study that we began a few weeks ago and then broke off to have our Passion Week special or our run-up to the Resurrection Sunday and extended that a little bit so that we could complete it. But we're back now in our post-exilic prophets. This is our second double session for that.

And we're in the book of Haggai. Not a place that gets creased very often in the Bible, but Haggai is a great, great book. It is so pertinent for our time and our lives and the situation in which we find ourselves.

And we have a lot to cover tonight, so we'll get right to it. Let's pause for a moment, ask God's blessing on our fellowship and on our study, and we will dive in. Father, what a privilege to have the full revelation of your word and your will to us in the pages of scripture.

We have it in our language. We have multiple copies, multiple versions. We have so many resources and references at our disposal.

And never in history has there been a greater opportunity to avail ourselves of the truth that you have revealed to us in your word. We pray that as we look at this portion of it this evening, that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, impress it on our hearts, draw it to our attention and to our minds at the point of pertinence and application so that we can redeem the time, even though our days are by default evil. We can lay up treasure in heaven.

We can equip ourselves through your grace for every good work and be anticipating future opportunities for reflecting your glory and serving in your plan and purpose. We pray these things in Jesus' name, amen. By now you have found the book of Haggai.

And in chapter one, we didn't get past the first verse last time because this is so fraught with weight and meaning. And when you look at it, you can see that immediately. In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Jehoshaddak, the high priest saying.

And that occupied our whole two sessions last time, why? This is your pop quiz review. Think about the meaning in those names. I am not going to review it.

Go back and read it in your notes or go back and listen to the first two sessions. These individuals that are being addressed, the meaning of their names and their father's names. And in particular, what I am going to review quickly is the day.

This chapter is all about time and the times. And so we have a specific day that is given to us.

What do you remember about this day? It is the first day in the sixth month.

That's what I thought. That's why I'm reviewing it. So this is the month Elul.

Now remember that in the Hebrew calendar, and especially after the chastisement that they received by the captivity and the 70 years away and so on, this is not the civil calendar sixth month. This is the religious calendar sixth month. And at Passover, God changed the new year, right? So there are two calendars.

There's a religious calendar and there's the spiritual calendar. When does the spiritual calendar start? This shall be the first of months to you. What month is it? It is Nisan.

It is the month of Passover. It's in the spring, right? We just passed Passover here in the last couple of weeks. So this is the sixth month after that.

And so on the civil calendar, it's the 12th month, but on the religious calendar, it is the sixth month. And we've already talked about Darius and so on. And the year after the inception of the captivity and so on.

But Elul is the last month before Rosh Hashanah, which is the fall, the beginning of the fall feast, the beginning of the civil calendar. So the religious calendar begins with the month that contains Passover. The civil calendar begins with the month that contains the Day of Atonement on the 10th, right? Got Rosh Hashanah, Feast of Trumpets.

10 days later, Day of Atonement. Five days after that, you have the Feast of Tabernacles or of Booths, a thing in which you dwell. What kind of a thing in which you dwell? Do they gather rocks and build huts? Do they gather ice blocks and make igloos? What do they make their booths out of? It's the most temporary of shelters.

It's branches, right? Well, we just talked a lot about palms and branches and things here recently. But what goes on in the month Elul? You don't have to take notes on this because I'm gonna read it to you straight out of Wikipedia. Go to Wikipedia and look up Elul, E-L-U-L.

Tell you all about it. Elul was brought from the Babylonian captivity, originated from the Akkadian word for harvest, hence the fall feast time. In Jewish tradition, the month of Elul is a time of repentance in preparation for the high holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur or Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

The word Elul is similar to the root of the verb search in Aramaic. Jewish sources from the 14th century and on write that the Hebrew word Elul can be understood to be an acronym for the phrase, Ani l'dodi v'dodi li, I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine. Well, if you remember our recent study of the song of Solomon's girlfriend, you know where that comes from.

But more pertinently, Elul is seen as a time to search one's heart and draw close to God in preparation for the coming day of judgment, Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement, Yom

Kippur or Yom Kippur. There is a special set of rituals that are observed in medieval and modern Judaism during this month. So it is customary to blow the shofar every morning except on the Sabbath from Rosh Chodesh Elul, which is the first day of the month, coincidentally, the day that our book starts with, it's the first day that the trumpet is blown, the shofar is blown, the ram's horn trumpet.

Until the day before Rosh Hashanah, the blasts are meant to awaken one's spirit and inspire him to begin the soul searching, which will prepare him for the high holy days. As a part of this preparation, Elul is time to begin the sometimes difficult process of granting and asking for forgiveness. Obviously, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Forgive one another, if you don't forgive one another, your own sins are not forgiven. This concept is enshrined in the traditions associated with the month Elul. It is also customary to recite Psalm 27 every day from Rosh Chodesh, which is the day we're looking at, the day that this prophecy was delivered, until Hashanah Rabbah on Sukkot, which is in the next month.

Sukkot, this is your feast of booths, right? So for a month and a half, every day, they're reading Psalm 27. It would be pertinent and helpful for us to look at Psalm 27, and we're going to, but not just yet. Just write it in your note, we're gonna be looking at it.

It's important, it is pertinent. But let me just finish talking about the month Elul. The other significant ritual practice during Elul is to recite Selakot, which are penitential prayers, either every morning before sunrise, during the entire month, Ashkenazi Jews begin the recitation of Selakot with a special service on Saturday night between solar midnight and morning light on the first day of Selakot.

Many Jews visit the graves of loved ones to remember and honor those people in the past who inspired them to live more fully in the future. Another social custom is to begin or end all letters written during this month with wishes that the recipient have a good year. This is kind of like in December, you send all your cards out, happy new year, same thing.

Well, we're interested primarily in this recognition of the upcoming Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and Sukkot, those three fall feasts. Now, what I want to look at before we go to Psalm 27 is a little bit further into Haggai. So while you're still here, on this day, the word of the Lord comes by Haggai to the individuals that we spent a great deal of time looking at in our last study, saying, verse two, Haggai 1, 2, thus speaks the Lord of hosts saying, this people says, the time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.

This people says, the time has not come, what time? The time that the house of the Lord should be built. The word time here is the Hebrew word *eth*, E-T-H. You are familiar with it from Ecclesiastes.

There is a time, season, to every purpose. The word time there is this word, time to every purpose, season, and so on under heaven, same word. This is not the word season, which is a

late word.

Solomon is the only one to use it before it's used. That word season is only used four times in scripture. And the other three times are in Nehemiah and Esther, which are, as you know, post-exilic.

And this is one of the reasons people question Ecclesiastes and Solomon's authorship, because they say, look, it's got some of these late words in it. The reason it's there is Solomon was so cosmopolitan and had so much concourse with the Aramaic speaking world and the Egyptian speaking world. You know, the Queen of Sheba comes up.

He's on wonderful terms with Cyrus up in Lebanon, not Cyrus, but Hiram, the King of Tyre, up in Lebanon to get the cedars and so on. And because he is so widely conversant with these other languages, he's the wisest guy that lived in those times. He got this word early and it didn't come into common use until after the exile when everybody else became as familiar with the Aramaic speaking world as Solomon was.

But it is a tribute to the widely conversant Solomon that he uses this word in Ecclesiastes and several others. And it's kind of comical that people say, well, Solomon couldn't have used that word. Oh, sorry, he's only the wisest man who ever lived, but he couldn't use a word that other people weren't yet using.

You either believe the Bible or you don't. Well, this is the word time. And it is referenced here on three separate uses.

Look at it. The people use it twice. The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.

We've been talking about this in our run-up to the crucifixion study, where is it time for the people to acknowledge Jesus as King is it time for there to be the crown without the cross? What is God's timing? There is a time to everything, but not every time is the time. We've seen it in Psalm one, the man who meditates on the law of the Lord day and night shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his time, his season. Not every time is a fruit bearing time.

There's a time for renewal. There's a time for pruning. Jesus told his disciples this in John, I'm the vine, you're the branches.

Abide in me so that you can bear much fruit. Every branch that bears fruit, my father is going to prune so that you can bear more fruit. And anytime we start feeling the pruning or feeling that we're in a winter time, we say, oh no, I'm not able to bear fruit.

There's something wrong. There is a time. So the question here is the people think that it's not the time to build God's house, but what does God say? Thus speaks the Lord of hosts.

This people says the time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. But the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet saying, and notice the emphasis in verse three. We're already listening to the word of the Lord, but in case you missed it, this is God talking.

We've got a whole verse here to remind us. Here's what the people say. Here's what God says.

The word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet saying, is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses and this house to lie in ruins? Now, therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. So the people say it's not time to build God's house. God says, is it time for you to be dwelling in your house, your cedar paneled house? So if it's not the time to build my house, is it time for you to be dwelling in yours while my house lies in ruins? It's all about time.

So there are two big issues here. One is what is the time? And the other is these paneled houses versus the house of the Lord. Now, this goes way beyond Haggai and the people knew it.

They have had 70 years to review the prophecies of Jeremiah. They've had 70 years to listen to Ezekiel by the river Kabar. They have had 70 years to think about the prophecies of Daniel.

They have had 70 years to review the law, the prophets and the writings. Seven decades, a lifetime to think about these things. They've been planted by a river, the river Kabar in exile.

What should they be doing? Meditating on the law of the Lord day and night so that they can be built up, so that they can bear fruit. Now that they have been taken back to the land and put back in the capital city, what time is it? Is it time to keep dwelling in your dwelling or is it time to use the respite and the reflection and the building up to perform God's will? Well, there's so much here. I've really got to get to it.

Turn back with me to 2 Samuel 7. We're talking about God's house and building a house. What was the first occasion where it seemed to be time to build God a house? Well, we'll find it in 2 Samuel 7. I could go all the way back to the tabernacle, but we're just going to dip our toe in the water here. 2 Samuel 7. David has been anointed king of Judah.

The ark has been brought to Jerusalem in chapter six. You remember David dancing. And now in chapter seven, it came to pass when the king... Now see if this rings any bells.

It came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies all around that the king said to Nathan the prophet, see now I dwell in a house of cedar. If you go back and look at the descriptions for the house of the Lord, it is when Solomon builds it, it is the very same word for paneling is going to be used. It's cedar paneling that the cedars that came from Lebanon that Hiram sent down are going to be used to panel the house of God.

David says, I'm dwelling in a paneled house now, a cedar house now, and God doesn't have a

house at all. Contrast the heart of David with the heart of the people in Haggai chapter one. I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside a tent.

Nathan said to the king, go do all that is in your heart for the Lord is with you. Put a star, put a circle and put Haggai 1.13 in the margin. We'll look at it when we get back to Haggai.

Do what is in your heart for the Lord is with you. But it happened that night that the word of the Lord came to Nathan saying, verse five, second Samuel seven, go and tell my servant David, thus says the Lord, would you build a house for me to dwell in? I've not dwelt in a house since the time I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but it moved about in a tent and a tabernacle. Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel saying, why have you not built me a house of cedar? It wasn't the time then, was it? The question is, is it time to build God a house? It's not always the time to build God a house.

We've seen in our Matthew study on Sundays and looking over at Luke and what Matthew leaves out and that Luke includes when Jesus is talking to the Pharisees and the Sadducees and they're asking for a sign. And he says, look, not in Matthew, but in the other gospels he says, you look at the sky in the morning and predict the weather. You look at the sky and you can predict the seasons.

Can you not discern the signs of the times? Do you not know what time it is in the plan of God? It is so critical for us as God's people to be sensitive to what time it is, what time it is in history, but more particularly and more pertinent for us, what time is it in our lives? We are a tree planted or a plea tranted, either way you want it, by the rivers of water. We bring forth our fruit in our season. Elijah was not always prophesying.

He wasn't always up on Mount Carmel. There's an old gospel song, you see it on Gaither videos, that the God of the mountain is also the God of the valley. What mountain was Elijah on? Mount Carmel, spectacular display of the power of God in support of Elijah and his cause to call the people back to the God of their fathers, the God of the covenant.

What valley was Elijah in? A little thing called the Brook Cherith, crows dropping food on his head until the thing dried up. Elijah is not always on the mountain. He's not always running and powered for 40 days in the strength of the food that God supplies.

It's not always our time to be fruitful. Sometimes it is time for us to sit by the brook and wait for God's time. The Lord Jesus knew what time it was in his father's purpose, and it takes reflection.

It takes meditation. It takes soaking ourselves in the word of God and in prayer and asking for wisdom to discern the signs of the time of our life, the time of history, in which we dwell. So when David says, I want to build God a house, God says, you know, it hasn't always been time.

I've never asked anybody to build me a house, why? People of God were on the move, so God was on the move. If they built God a temple in the wilderness, then the people of God would

have had to stick around in the wilderness for all that time. The wilderness was a time of testing.

It was a time of challenge. It was a time of preparation of the younger generation who would cross the Jordan with Joshua and conquer the land. Not a time for God to have a house, notice of cedar.

Cedar figures largely in this whole thing because cedar is an import. Cedar doesn't grow in Israel. Cedar grows outside the land.

It is a resource you get elsewhere, and yet it becomes an integral component of the permanent house of God. It's a very interesting thing to think about. Why isn't the temple furnished with olive wood? You see people getting Bibles and pens and all kinds of things.

Oh, it's olive wood from the Holy land. You don't ever get cedar from the Holy land. In fact, you can hardly get cedar from Lebanon anymore.

The thing's been deforested. Go and tell David, my servant, 2 Samuel 7, 5, thus says the Lord, are you going to build a house for me to dwell in? Let's think about the times. First, I haven't dwelt in a house since the time that people came up from Egypt.

In David's day, this is 400 years earlier, right? David's circa 1000 BC, Moses 1430. It's been over 400 years and God hasn't dwelt in a house. Wherever I've moved about, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, these are the elders of the tribes.

Notice God respects the chain of command. Why have you not built me a house of cedar? Verse eight, notice the word now. Now, therefore, thus shall you say to my servant, David, thus says the Lord of hosts.

I took you from the sheepfold from following the sheep to be ruler over my people over Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone. Notice the parallel.

I was with my people Israel wherever they went during the 40 years of wandering and on into the land. I was with them. I moved about in a tent and a tabernacle.

I moved about with the children of Israel. I have been with you. Verse nine, circle it.

Remember verse three, the Lord is with you. Look at verse nine. I have been with you wherever you have gone.

I've cut off all your enemies from before you. I have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth. Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more.

When they are planted and moving no more, this is when this permanent house is built. Not

always the time to build a permanent house. Nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore as previously, since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel and have caused you to rest from all your enemies.

Also, the Lord tells you, he will make you a house. The Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled, verse 12, and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you.

Very pregnant word there, seed. Goes all the way back to Genesis chapter three. Seed after you who will come from your body, I will establish his kingdom.

He shall build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. He will build a permanent house for me. I will establish a permanent throne for him.

Your throne, he will sit on it. I will be his father. He shall be my son.

Verse 16, your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever. This is what Nathan spoke to David.

So this is the first time the issue of a house for God came up. David raised it. And God said, interesting that you bring this up because the time is near, but it's not going to be you and it's not going to be now.

It is going to be your son. And it's going to be once the people are planted, planted, firmly established on a foundation, then the house will be built. Your son will build it.

And in the meantime, I'm building you a house. So God builds David a house. David makes preparation for his son to build God a house.

So back to Haggai very quickly before we go to our break. The people say the time has not come that the Lord, this is the opposite. David thinks it's time for a house to be built for the Lord.

And God says, well, that time is pretty close, but it's going to be your son. God says, this people says the time has not come. Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, your cedar paneled houses and this house to lie in ruins? Remember I had you scratch out temple and put house.

It's the very same word. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, consider your ways. And once again, these people have been listening to the word of God for 70 plus years in captivity.

What else should they know? Well, we're ready to pause and take our break. But as I suggested in the first installment of this study, as goes Israel in the old Testament as a nation, so goes the individual believer in this age. The things that pertain to national Israel, the lessons learned, the observation and the interpretation we make back there has application for us as individuals.

So here's the question. Is it time for us to build the house of the Lord? I can assure you it is. And

we're going to see the New Testament passages that talk about that.

So the second question is, what is that house? Are we going to get brick and mortar? Obviously not, because the material things and the circumstantial and visible signs and rituals of the old Testament are harbingers and shadows of the spiritual reality. It's so typical of God that he would use visible and concrete things in the old Testament as shadows of an invisible reality in this age. You would think, well, why wouldn't you have invisible stuff for invisible realities and then visible stuff for visible realities? God does it just the opposite.

So the clothing and the feasts and the observances, the sacrifices and the rituals of the old Testament are physical representations of spiritual truths that are manifest, evident and pertinent for us today. So building a physical house for God in the old Testament foreshadows building the spiritual house of God in this age. Is it time for that house to be built? Yes, it absolutely is.

Scripture tells us so, and we're going to see it. So the two questions we want to answer when we come back are, what is that house? Where is that house? And I think you already know the answer. You can think of a couple of memory verses that are pertinent.

And more importantly, since we pretty well know where it is, I might say who it is, how do we build it? How is it built? That's where the rubber meets the road. What is the way that we get this done? It's one thing to recognize it and see it and say, it's time. How do we do it? Well, we're going to see that from Haggai and from copious amounts of New Testament scripture when we come back from our break.