

PostExilicProphets 21-05-20a

This is the 20th day of May 2021. We continue our study in the book of Haggai. We're going to be transitioning from Haggai to Zechariah.

We're in the last chapter or second chapter, either way you want to look at it, short book. And we are down to the final section which begins at verse 20. So Haggai chapter 2 verse 20, third book from the end of the Old Testament.

We're going to see the significance of the date of delivery. We pay a lot of attention to dates, what is the sell-by date, what is the expiration date. The dates here mean something and we're going to take a fascinating look at that tonight.

Let's begin by asking God's blessing on our study. Father we're grateful for another opportunity to spend time looking at the truth of your word, discussing it with each other and seeing its pertinence and application as the days and the times around us grow ever more strange. We pray that as we look at this portion together that your Holy Spirit will help us to see where it is pertinent and applicable in our own lives, that it will motivate us and encourage us and give us a living color version of our hope for the near future.

We ask it in Jesus name, Amen. There's a delay, we had to fix it. It should be working now.

So there were audio problems at the beginning of the program, but you put two great minds like ours together and these problems can't persist for long. Haggai chapter 2. Now let's just remember the big idea here. There were people in covenant relationship with God in the Old Testament day.

This is the nation of Israel. We are covenant people of God under a new covenant. Now God's dealings with the people of the first covenant, the old covenant, reflect in many ways the same principles, same priorities, same opportunities, and same dangers as for us as people of the new covenant.

There was a captivity for the people of Israel in Egypt. They languished in that captivity for many, many years. Then they were delivered and brought to the promised land, but they did not stay there.

They were there under the days of the judges almost 400 years. They were there under the united and divided monarchy for another 400 years. If you're talking about Judah, of course the northern kingdom didn't last quite that long.

They only lasted in the monarchy about 280 years. So do you recall from our trek through kings and prophets the nature of their loss of the land and occupancy and ultimately the temple? Do you remember how that worked? Nebuchadnezzar came and instituted the Babylonian captivity for Judah. Do you remember any of the details of that at all? If you remember, he came three

times.

The first time was in 605 BC. The cream of the crop of the Israelite nobility, the young men were taken. This is Daniel and his three friends.

605 BC. But the king is still in Jerusalem. They're under the thumb of the Babylonians, but they still have a measure of independence.

But the captivity for the people began in 605 BC. It began in 605 BC. What is 70 years? We know the captivity was predicted to last by Jeremiah for 70 years.

Daniel reiterates his knowledge of Jeremiah's prophecy in his book, right? 70 years. So what is 605 minus 70? 535, right? The decree of Cyrus is dated 538. 538.

So call it three and a half years before the scheduled return. God uses Cyrus to issue this decree, terrestrial power. I already got the divine power, but I need the terrestrial power.

So 538, significantly, this is 67 years into the captivity. Cyrus creates the paperwork that is going to allow the people to return. At the time they gather up their belongings and the first of them return and they begin to repopulate the land.

Now, going back to the days of Daniel's captivity, 605, when is the second time that Nebuchadnezzar came? 598, 597, along in there. What is 598 minus 70? It's 528, right? 528, 527, along in there. It's five years in.

After the people have returned and they have started to rebuild the temple and they lay the foundation stone, then some opposition occurs and they stop. They give up. They quit.

Right about that time. So then the third and final phase of the beginning of the captivity was 586. So I'm going to say 587, 586, right around in there.

We're going to say 586 because that's the way I learned it. You can't tell the difference from a galloping horse. 586.

What is the 70-year terminus at Quim from 586? It's 516. This second year of Darius we talked about is circa 520. So just as you had sort of a four to five year gap at the beginning of the captivity's inception, you have this four to five year gap where Haggai and Zechariah come around 520 and are lighting a fire under the people to finish the work so that the captivity and its effects of judgment can be lifted circa 516.

That is the 70-year termination of the promised judgment of God. So you can see why these dates are important. Not only are the years important because we have three phases of return under three phases of return in the Zerubbabel and Joshua days followed by the Ezra and Nehemiah days.

They correspond closely to the three phases of the inception. So God pays attention to his own

word and his own promise and this 70-year interval is important. In the same way, these months are important and we've seen in Haggai that there is an interleaving of Haggai's prophecy and Zechariah's prophecy and it begins in the second year of King Darius in the sixth month and then it continues in the seventh month on the 21st day of the month.

Remember the sixth month is the month before the seventh month which is the beginning of the year. The head of the year, if you look at your Jewish calendar, your first month is Nisan. That's when you have Passover and so on.

You come all the way down to Tishri which is Rosh Hashanah, Day of Atonement, Feast of Booths. That is the seventh month. So this prophecy began in Elul, the sixth month and then after they celebrated all those feasts, Haggai comes back and this is what we looked at last time.

I am with you. Why don't you finish this work? Well, then we saw on the 24th day of the ninth month, verse 10 of chapter 2, this is what we looked at last time in the second year of Darius. The word of the Lord came to Haggai.

Ask the priest, and you had this question about does a holy thing make a corrupt thing holy or not? Can a holy thing touch an unholy thing and sanctify it? It can't. If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment and touches bread or stew, wine or oil or any food, will it become holy? Now what's he talking about? He's been talking about the discipline and their judgment that during this past 18 years or so, they're back in the land but they have not out of their hearts struggled and tried to build the house of the Lord and God has withheld prosperity. Their crops have been meager and only fractional, right? So let's think about the New Testament people of God.

The Egyptian captivity for Israel has always been thought of as a picture of their deliverance from bondage to sin, right? We look at the Exodus coming out under the blood as a picture of salvation, right? In reality, the people who are used for that picture were already saved. They were the people of God and they left. But that picture is used, especially in the New Testament, as emblematic of salvation, right? So let's simplify this now.

Stay with me. Israel leaving Egypt under the blood of the Passover lamb, this picture is salvation. They go back into captivity in judgment.

It never says that their gradual descent into slavery in Egypt was their fault. We don't have a biblical point made out of, behold, you know, you were doing well in Canaan but you messed up really badly and so I shoved you down into Egypt and made you slaves, let them kill your men, children, and so on. There is no picture associated with the beginning of the captivity in Egypt.

It just, you have a gap between Genesis and Exodus and suddenly they're in bondage, right? And that's why it works so well as a picture of salvation. God says, I will deliver you. They say,

deliver us.

He says, claim the blood. They claim the blood and they're delivered, right? So Egypt makes good sense. The second captivity, this captivity, the Babylonian captivity, out of which they have emerged and after which they are having problems, is this emblematic of salvation? What do you think? Yes or no? Let's turn to Hebrews chapter 6. Talking about the Hebrews anyway, we'll just go to the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews chapter 6, verse 12 of the preceding chapter, chapter 5, by this time you ought to be teachers but you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God. You have come to need milk and not solid food. You got saved.

You came to Christ in salvation. You should have been learning and growing, advancing and becoming mature. Instead, you have regressed and you are back in your infancy.

You need a bottle, not a stick. Very clear, right? Everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness and is a babe. Sadly, I think that's true of a lot of our Christian fellowships today, is that if there's any nourishment at all, it is just milk.

And what we're looking at tonight is something to chew on. It's not real simple. I'll do my best to present it clearly, but it's taking me a while to chew on it.

Solid food, verse 14, belongs to those who are of full age, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil, to discern good and evil. It makes you think of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Do you want to know good and evil or do you want to discern good and evil? You don't want to be so familiar with it that you know it inside out.

You want to see it coming, choose the good and eschew the evil. So Hebrews chapter 5, verse 14, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil, avoid the evil, choose the good, right? This is what Israel should have done once they were brought to the land flowing with milk and honey. This is what Israel should have done when they were given peace through David and victories in warfare in the days of Solomon.

This was their opportunity to grow in grace, grow in knowledge, have their senses exercised, and become the shining people of God representing him on this earth. That's what should have happened, right? But it didn't. What they should have done is leaving the elementary principles and gone on to maturity.

They should have laid a foundation of change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God, Hebrews chapter 6, verse 1. They should have understood baptisms, which is the outward manifestation of an inward truth. They should have understood laying on of hands, which is commissioning for service and identifying areas of service. They should have been acquainted with their hope of resurrection from the dead, like Daniel talks about in chapter 12 of his book.

And they should have understood the inevitability and the opportunity at the eternal judgment. Old Testament Israel should have understood these things in the same way that the new covenant church should understand these things. We will do this if God permits.

It is impossible, verse 4. This is what happened to create the Babylonian captivity. Those who were once enlightened, that tasted the heavenly gift, became partakers of the Holy Spirit. Now, they did not have the Holy Spirit the way we have the Holy Spirit, but God's Holy Spirit was the means of communicating the law of Moses.

The inspired Old Testament books came through the Holy Spirit. Tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. You think about Isaiah.

You think about those pre-exilic prophets. You think about the prophecy that is in Genesis. You think about the hope contained there.

If they fall away, it is impossible, verse 6, to renew them again to repentance, to renew them to the early days in the land of promise, to renew them to the opportunities to avail themselves of the milk and honey and peace through strength that was created the first time they became a nation and entered into the land. It is impossible to get back to those days so long as they're back at the beginning. Babies can't get past in the New Testament age, can't get past the crucifixion to the resurrection, can't get past the sorrow and loss of the Lord Jesus and get to the wonderful days of the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

They crucified themselves the Son of God afresh and put into an open shame. Act as though his death has not happened. Act as though his saving work has not happened.

If you don't live in the power of salvation, it is as though Christ never came. He's got to come back and die all over again. Now, is there going to be another Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Babylon and back to the land of promise? No, because returning from Babylon is not a salvation picture.

That's why there is no Moses. Zerubbabel is not Moses. Doesn't resemble him in any way, shape, or form.

Joshua is not Aaron. You do have an interesting parallel in the sense that there is both civil leadership and religious leadership. You've got Moses and Aaron as authority, governmental, sort of channeling the divine theocracy with Moses, and then Aaron as the priest.

And here you have Zerubbabel, who is the governor, and you have Joshua, who is sort of the new line of priests. But, what is the difference? We have the reasons why the Babylonian captivity took place, and it was judgment for apathy. And as you continue in Hebrews, the earth which drinks in the rain, verse 7, that often comes upon it and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God.

Note, blessing from God. Our passages tonight are going to talk about blessing from God. But,

if that land that receives the rain falling on it, and boy have we had some rain these last few days, if that earth drinking in the rain that often comes upon it bears thorns and briars, it is not blessed.

It is rejected and nearer to being cursed, and its ultimate destiny is to be burned. Jerusalem was burned with fire. The temple was destroyed, knocked down, burned with fire.

All the wooden elements were burned. Some of the precious ornamental metals in there, the gold and the silver, literally melted in the heat of that fire. It was carried off as lumps and recast as other things.

So, as you think about these people returning to the land, where is their heart? They are building their own houses, but they are not building the house of God, and this is telling. What is it telling? What story does it tell? The question is, did they learn the lesson of history? Did they learn the lesson of not availing themselves of the grace of God? Not valuing the presence of God? So, how about the New Testament people of God? One of the reasons Paul writes this in Hebrews chapter 6 is because it is equally as important for us as it ever was for them to value the presence of God in our lives. Now, talking in practical terms, we know this, we believe it, this is why we are in Bible class tonight.

We want to be good followers of the Lord Jesus. We want to be good representatives. We want to be members of His body that are functional, fruitful.

We are looking ahead to His return. We are looking ahead to our service and function while He rules the Millennial Kingdom and ultimately our destination in the Kingdom of the Father, right? Nobody here would say, I'm not interested in that. If you're not interested in that, you're not here.

Only people who are interested are here. So, what are you and I looking for in this review of the latter days of the nation of Israel for ourselves? Well, turn back now to Haggai and look at the closing section here. We talked about the dates and how important they are.

And this last dual prophecy from Haggai that follows the inception of Zechariah, you've got a note there that says between verse 9 and verse 10, Zechariah has come, verses 1 through 6 of his prophecy, and has said, return to me and I will return to you. You can just put a circle. There's a little gap in my New King James between verse 9 and verse 10.

There's a little bit of the caption material there says something about the people are defiled. Return to me and I will return to you. This is the message Zechariah preaches in that gap between verse 9 and verse 10.

And our attention is drawn to it by these dates. You have to pay attention. If you're paying attention, you're going to hear God's message right in the middle of Haggai.

After his first prophecy and before his second dual prophecy here, what do you get? He's got

two prophecies. Haggai's got two prophecies in chapter 1 and the first half of chapter 2. He's going to have two prophecies from verse 10 to the end of the book. And right in the middle of that, sandwiched between first two prophecies and second two prophecies, is this word from Zechariah.

Return to me and I will return to you. That's Zechariah 1, 3. Right in the middle of those six verses. That's the message.

So what happens after that? Verse 10. On the 24th day of the ninth month. Now the ninth month, remember Nisan is the first month and then you got Er and Sivan and Tammuz and Av and Elul, which was the sixth month.

And then you had Tishri, which was the seventh month. Day of Atonement and so on. Then you've got this sort of silent month, Sheshvan.

Now we are in the ninth month. The ninth month. What do you know about the ninth month? What's the first thing that comes to your mind? What happens in nine months? What lasts nine months? Pregnancy, right? So if you're given birth at Passover, if you're conceived at Passover, if your life begins at Passover, when should you emerge as a functional human being? Ninth month, right? So here it is the 24th day of the ninth month, meaning all of the first eight months have transpired from 14 Nisan to 14 Kislev.

Ninth month is Kislev, K-I-S-L-E-V. It's the ninth month. 24th day of the month.

Now, what day is Passover? What date in Nisan? When do they slay the Passover lamb? 14th day, right? So exactly nine months later would be 14 Kislev, right? 14 Kislev. This is 24 Kislev. So it's exactly nine months from Passover and then 10 more days.

Now, do you remember, and this is just interesting, I'm not going to say it's significant, it's just interesting. Jesus was crucified on 14 Nisan, so that's a Thursday. Friday is the 15th, Saturday is the 16th, Sunday is the 17th, right? So 17 Nisan, early in the morning on 17 Nisan, Jesus arose.

And that night, Sunday night, he appeared to his disciples, right? Everybody except Thomas is there. Remember that? That Emmaus people and all the rest of it have happened, the women have come and gone from the tomb, Peter and John ran to the tomb, all that happens on that Sunday. And then that night, Jesus appears among them, but Thomas is not there.

And Thomas says, what? Unless I put my finger in the holes, I'm not going to believe. Exactly one week later. Now, what day would this be? If it's a week after the 17th, what is the date of the next Sunday? 24th.

So this is exactly nine months after. Now, of course, Thomas and all that hasn't happened yet, but it's just interesting to me that Thomas, doubting Thomas, I won't be convinced until I see it, Thomas, finally comes to faith on the 24th day of Nisan. This is the 24th day of Kislev.

And what I think is the 21st day is the day of challenge. It's the day of challenge. Remember, you have Passover, and then you have the Feast of Firstfruits, and then the Days of Unleavened Bread, and that runs for eight days, that runs for that whole week.

And so right after Unleavened Bread, now you've got a chance to stop and think. Well, in the same way, they have been challenged on the 21st day of the seventh month, that was the beginning of chapter 2. And remember, in the seventh month, this is after all of the feasts are over. All of the feasts are over, and God comes back and says, look, I'm with you, my spirit remains among you, I can fill the temple with glory, but nothing has changed.

Now we're in the ninth month, 24th day of the ninth month. And as long as we're making notes about the significance of these dates, it doesn't exist in these days, but there will eventually arrive on the scene another Jewish holiday called Hanukkah. Remember Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights? It's going to come about in the days of the Maccabees.

It starts on the 25th of Kislev. So this is Hanukkah Eve, if you will. And it's interesting to me that these dates seem to look forward.

They look forward to the time of Christ, they look forward to the time of even the intertestamental period, when once again, why is there Hanukkah? It was an attack on this very building, right? It was a defiling of the altar and trying to re-sanctify it and trying to light candles and return to formal worship of God in this very place, this temple. And so there's a look forward to Hanukkah. This is Hanukkah Eve before there is a Hanukkah.

Anyway, let's read his prophecy. Still the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet saying, thus says the Lord of Hosts, ask the priests, if one who is unclean touches any of these, will it be unclean? It shall be unclean. So corruption spreads, holiness doesn't spread by contact.

This is an important application and that's what we concluded with last time. Just because you're in a good church doesn't make you a good believer. Just because someone is in the periphery of a godly person or a faithful follower of Christ, it doesn't rub off.

What does rub off is what Paul quotes, bad company corrupts good morals. Bad spreads, bad metastasizes. Corruption, contact creates more corruption.

That was the point of 10 through 14. So is this people and so is this nation before me says the Lord. So is every work of their hands and what they offer is unclean.

This is in the ninth month. This is after they've gone through all of the review feasts and the atonement feasts and the anticipating God with us feasts. Two months later, they're still under this condemnation.

This people is unclean. What they touch is corruption. And he's going to say carefully consider this period of days.

From the time that you laid the foundation stone and this is not salvation now. This is return. This is let me learn from my judgment.

This is the point of application. We're going to close with this in our first session. The point of application is we're not talking about getting saved.

We're not talking about a salvation commitment. This return from Babylonian exile is the aftermath of divine discipline. God has chastened his people.

And the question is, have you learned from the chastening? What was the chastening? Captivity. When they came back and still didn't do what they were supposed to, they suffered economic, financial, agricultural discipline. Their animals have not been very, they're not multiplying.

Their crops are not growing very well. There's mold and mildew setting in and they're busy building their homes. And they haven't stopped to think why are things the way they are? They have not considered their ways.

They have not factored in the presence of God. I am with you says the Lord. My spirit is with you.

Return to me and I will return to you. It's the opposite of the old reformed Calvinistic view. Well, if God returns to you and galvanizes you, then you're going to come to him.

That's not what the Bible says. God says, Zechariah 1.3, you return to me, then I will return to you. You have returned to the land, but I have not yet returned to you.

That's why there's no glory in this partially constructed temple. Why is there no glory? Why is there no presence? You can say, well, because they haven't built the temple. Why haven't they built the temple? It is a heart problem.

Why is there a heart problem? We're just following this chain of logic backwards. Why are the people apathetic? Why are they more interested in building their homes than building the temple? Because they're more interested in themselves than they are in God. When we examine ourselves, when we consider our ways, we have to ask ourselves some hard questions.

What is my objective in any given day? Do I want to end the day satisfied with myself, that I got some things done that I really wanted to do, that I am comfortable, I am pleased, I am gratified? Or do we wake up in the morning thinking ahead about opportunities to live in a way that is pleasing to God? And when we get to the end of the day, look back and say, did I accomplish that objective? Is God pleased with the way I used my words today? Is God pleased with the attitudes that I expressed today? If I have been brought to justice and to judgment and to discipline, if my attention has been called to mental attitude sins, or sins of the tongue, or, God forbid, overt sins, if the Word of God and the Spirit of God have convicted me of failure in these areas, have I made it an objective, day by day, to fix that and to be different, to be transformed by the renewing of my mind? Well, how will I know? How do you know if you've

learned the material or not? Well, you grade the test. Did I pass the test or fail? At the end of the day, looking back, was I less angry and more patient? Was I less harsh and more forgiving? Was I more joyful and less cranky? Was I more looking out for the needs of others and less looking at the needs of myself? Did I accomplish that today or did I not? If you do not consider your ways, you can't know the answer to those questions. We have to take stock.

The Word of God commands us to evaluate ourselves, examine ourselves. We don't have the luxury of a prophet of God stomping up the driveway, banging on our door, and coming in and saying, thus saith the Lord. It's in the Bible.

It comes out in our Bible studies. It comes out in our devotions. It comes out in the voice of the Holy Spirit within us of where we are failing and where we are succeeding.

But we don't know how well we're doing if we do not take stock. If there's a single message to derive from Haggai and Zechariah, it is that in the wake of problems being pointed out, and it was really pointed out to Judah, they spent 70 years in captivity in Babylon and under the Persians because they were failing the grace of God and ignoring the Word of God. So now God has brought them back to the land and given them another opportunity to not make that same mistake.

And they're starting to make it. They're falling back into the old ways. It's actually the previous generation or two, but they're acting like the people that God censored for ignoring God.

And so he sends Haggai and he sends Zechariah and he says, Wake up. Consider your ways. I've already given you some warning discipline.

You notice your crops and your animals are not very proliferationous. They're not proliferating. They're not very multitudinous.

They're not very fecund. You're not prospering. Have you stopped to think that maybe the reason you're not prospering and the reason you're having troubles even getting the house built is your heart's not in and your heart's not right.

This is the lesson for us. Consider your ways. Return to me and I will return to you.

And if the glory of God is not shining in the temple of our hearts, radiating outward and blessing those around us, this is our message. We're going to see when we come back from the break. Notice verse 15, carefully consider this period of time.

Consider, consider your ways, consider the history. Then there's going to be a second message specifically for Zerubbabel starting in verse 20. And this is really fascinating.

That's what we're going to pick up when we come back from the break.