



## Major Lessons From Minor Prophets Lesson 10 2Q 2013

### First Things First (Haggai)

#### SABBATH

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Haggai – prophet of the OT. It is believed by most scholars that Haggai was a child when Israel went into captivity and he saw the first temple. He was approximately 80 years old when he wrote his prophetic message. His entire prophetic work occurred in a span of four months from late August to mid December of 520 BC. His book was written to inspire a distracted and disengaged Israel to resume its reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The message is essentially: consider what you are doing – you are spending wealth, time, energy on building for yourselves but you are neglecting rebuilding the house of the Lord.

Thoughts about this?

Haggai's message stimulated the people in such a way that they reprioritized and fully reengaged the building project and the Temple was completed very quickly thereafter.

Many of the stories of the OT are not only historical, but chosen by God for incorporation into Scripture because they have object lesson application. In other words, the stories teach a larger truth. Any larger truth in the history of Israel and Haggai that applies to us today?

After Christ's victory 2000 years ago, after his resurrection, the first fruits taken from the grave and into heaven with Him, the gospel freeing minds on earth...after all this, did the people of God experience an attack and were they taken into captivity in any way? How?

Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. <sup>4</sup> He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. 2Thes 2:3,4

What do you hear in this passage? Could we say the "temple" had been run down? Corrupted? Contaminated? What temple is Paul speaking about?

When did this man of sin arise? In the first century or after the first century? After, thus it is not referring to the physical temple in Jerusalem that was destroyed by Rome in AD 70.

What temple is being referred to? The temple of the mind, the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells – and Paul says this man of sin will set himself up there. How?



Could it be the man of sin caused so many lies about God, God's character, methods, law and principles to be accepted that the minds of the people became darkened, distorted and the Spirit temple was defiled and broken down?

Is it possible that today God is waiting for a people to stop building for self, stop promoting self, stop acting primarily to advance self, and instead to humble themselves before God for the renewing of their minds, the cleansing of the Spirit Temple?

Haggai is a lesson book, calling us to return to the worship of the true God, but have we gotten our priorities right? Jesus said,

Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' MT 7:22,23

Paul said:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. <sup>2</sup> People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, <sup>3</sup> without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, <sup>4</sup> treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— <sup>5</sup> having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. 2Tim 3:1-5

Notice, these people are religious, claiming to be followers of Christ, Christians, yet their minds are not renewed, their "temples" have not been rebuilt into Christlikeness! They use religion for their own purposes to advance self!

What is the core that underpins such distorted religion? A distorted view of God as a Roman emperor who must impose laws and punish the disobedient! A God who requires legal payment to propitiate sin.

When this view of God was accepted into the church, the church began to use the power of the state to enforce its way. Instead of sacrificing self for others, the world saw people using the name of Jesus to:

- carry out crusades
- burn people at the stake
- conduct the inquisition
- conduct witch trials
- engage in slavery and burn crosses in the yards of people of different color
- shoot abortion doctors
- harass, persecute and murder homosexuals
- in many other ways use Satan's methods attributing them to God and thus misrepresent the divine character.



The Spirit Temple is broken down and God is calling for a people, at this time in earth's history to cleanse the temple. To present the truth about God, which destroys the lies, to experience the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit and to live lives that love God and others more than self. We practice His methods of presenting the truth in love and leave everyone else free to decide for themselves.

Do we see a lesson in Haggai for us today? What can we do to advance this final message of mercy?

## WEDNESDAY

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Read last paragraph, "God promised that the..." we went over this last week, so this week can someone from the class review the evidence for us, why is the second smaller temple more glorious than Solomon's?

Read bottom pink section, "Read Heb 8:1-5..." thoughts?

Heb 8:1-5:

The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,<sup>2</sup> and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.<sup>3</sup> Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, and so it was necessary for this one also to have something to offer.<sup>4</sup> If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already men who offer the gifts prescribed by the law.<sup>5</sup> They serve at a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: "See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."

Thoughts? What does it mean that Jesus serves in the true tabernacle set up by God?

What is He doing in the true tabernacle?

Is He cleansing the sanctuary? What does this mean?

What is it that defiles the sanctuary in heaven?

Where did sin begin? In heaven, with whom? Lucifer, who occupied what position? Covering cherub, where? In the Most Holy Place in heaven. So, before man ever existed, what contaminated the heavenly sanctuary? Lies about God!

And, this gives insight into why Colossians says, "and through him [Christ] to **reconcile** to himself all things, whether things on earth or **things in heaven**, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." (1:20)

Before any earthly sin, heaven was contaminated with lies about God and Christ came to reveal the truth to cleanse heaven from those lies.



After God made human beings, what was the first thing that contaminated the Spirit Temple, the mind, character and soul of our first parents in Eden? Lies about God! The exact same defiling agent, lies about God, contaminated heaven and the minds/characters/souls of humanity.

What then is needed to cleanse the Spirit Temple? The truth about God, and Jesus said, “you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” Jn 8:32

I found this quotation in my reading and really liked how it amplifies Christ’s words that truth sets free:

“The leaven of *truth* works a change in the whole man, making the coarse refined, the rough gentle, the selfish generous. By *it [the truth]* the impure are cleansed, washed in the *blood of the Lamb.*” (Christ’s Object Lessons 102).

What do you think of the blood of Jesus being a symbol of the truth about God? Do you remember any symbolism with blood being taken into the sanctuary in order to cleanse it? Where did Jesus, in John 6, say His blood was to be applied?

So what is Christ working in the heavenly sanctuary to cleanse? Could it be His people?

One of the founders of our church thought this was exactly it. Here is from the book *The Great Controversy*:

“The coming of Christ as our high priest to the most holy place, for the cleansing of the sanctuary, brought to view in *Daniel 8:14*; the coming of the Son of man to the Ancient of Days, as presented in *Daniel 7:13*; and the coming of the Lord to His temple, foretold by *Malachi[3:1-3]*, are descriptions of the same event;”(p. 426).

And what does Malachi 3 describe?

“...The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his *temple*...behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a *refiner’s fire* or a *launderer’s soap*. He will sit as a *refiner* and *purifier* of silver; he will *purify the Levites* and *refine them* like gold and silver.”

Who are the Levites? The Priesthood of believers, the faithful people, those who trust God!

“*You* also, like living stones, are being built into a *spiritual house* to be a *holy priesthood*, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1Pet 2:4) What is another name for a “spiritual house”? A sanctuary! “*You* also, like living stones, are being built into a sanctuary...” And just a few verses down Peter repeats this reality for emphasis, “But you are a chosen people, a *royal priesthood*...” (1Pet 2:9).



What is Jesus doing in the heavenly sanctuary? Cleansing His people from the lies about God and from the infection of selfishness and fear that result from believing those lies and leads to destructive behavior. He is writing His law upon the tablets of the heart, which means He is restoring His law of love as the operating motive into those who trust Him. Thus, those who are ready to meet Jesus when He comes are described in Revelation as “they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” (12:11)

This morning I was reading a daily devotional book, *That I May Know Him* and read May 24 and May 25, here is an excerpt:

The **Word of God** has served as a mighty cleaver to separate the children of God from the world. [what is another way to describe the Word of God? Truth, the blood of Christ, which is to be taken into the heart] As they are taken out of the quarry of the world **they are as rough stones**, unfit for a place in the **glorious temple of God**. But **they are brought into the Lord's workshop**, to be hewed and squared and polished, that they may become precious, accepted stones. This work of preparation **for the heavenly temple** [what temple?] is going on continually during probationary time. We are naturally inclined to desire our own way and will, but when the transforming grace of Christ takes hold upon our hearts the inquiry of our souls is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When the Spirit of God works within us, we are led to will and to do of the Lord's good pleasure, and there is obedience in heart and action.... {TMK 150.2}

**We are to occupy some place in the Lord's spiritual temple**, and the important question is not as to whether you are a large or a small stone, but whether you have submitted yourself to God that He may **polish you and make you emit light for His glory**. **If we are in the Lord's temple we must emit light**. Are we permitting the heavenly Builder to hew and square and polish us? Have we faith to rest in Him? {TMK 150.4}

The Jewish Temple was built of hewn stones quarried out of the mountains, and every stone was fitted for its place in the Temple, hewed, polished and tested, before it was brought to Jerusalem. And when all were brought to the ground, the building went together without the sound of an ax or hammer. **This building represents God's spiritual temple, which is composed of material gathered out of every nation and tongue and people**, of all grades, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant. **These are not dead substances**, to be fitted by hammer and chisel. **They are living stones** quarried out from the world by the truth, and the great Master Builder, **the Lord of the temple, is now hewing and polishing them and fitting them for their respective places in the spiritual temple**. When completed, this temple will be perfect in all its parts, the admiration of angels and of men, for its builder and maker is God. Truly, those who are to compose this glorious building are "called to be saints." {TMK 151.5}

What is the temple in heaven constructed out of? What is Christ doing in the heavenly temple?



## MONDAY

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The lesson points out that the people had lost sight of God and their mission, and Haggai came with a message, to which the people responded. The lesson states, “They ‘feared the Lord’ (vs. 12 NIV) and showed this by worshipping Him and giving Him due attention.”

Thoughts?

What do you think of this idea of fear of God and worshipping God based on fearing Him?

Some criticism of my new book has come in and one of the criticisms is that I downplay fear and suggest God doesn't want us to be afraid of Him. The critics point out that the Bible says “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Ps 111:10, Pr 1:7, 9:10) Thus they conclude God is the source of fear and wants to instill fear in us.

What do you say?

When Adam and Eve sinned they ran and hid because...why? They were afraid – from where did that fear arise? Was God threatening them? Was God their enemy? Did God want them afraid of Him?

The Bible says, perfect love casts out all fear – what does this mean? God is love, so if we come into a relationship with God in which love rules, what happens to fear? It goes away.

But the Bible does say that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom how can we understand this?

Two ways – first, fear can be understood as awe, admiration, respect, and if we have awe and respect for God then we begin to esteem, admire, follow, listen, learn and then emulate the Lord thus we grow in wisdom.

Second, if we are behaving in self-destructive ways, like the Jews at Sinai, and God thunders, then like Israel we may be afraid, and if the fear leads us to stop the destructive “orgy” of sin and begin listening to God then wisdom begins. But, if we listen and come to know God what happens to fear? It goes away, as evidenced by Moses standing there when God thundered saying, “There is no reason to be afraid.”

So, from where does fear come? Does it come from knowing God or from not knowing Him and being alienated and separated from Him?

Who wants us to be afraid of God?

It is a sad commentary when well meaning Christians actually attribute to God motives and methods of the enemy!



So, if God doesn't want us to be afraid, then why does God act in ways, like thundering at Sinai, that He knows we will respond to with fear?

Because, like a loving parent, He won't sit by quietly and watch us destroy ourselves. Before it is too late He will do all in His power to get our attention and attempt to bring us to repentance and salvation, even if at some point our rebellious ways are so loud we cannot hear the "still small voice." Then, in love, He will thunder, hoping it will get through to us. Very much like a parent giving their small child vaccines, knowing the child will not understand, might even be afraid, but never wanting the child to experience such, yet giving the vaccine anyway to protect the child.

## TUESDAY

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And when the people responded to Haggai's message with fear, Haggai told them, "Do not fear!" Just like a parent who comforts their child who has just received vaccine telling them, its okay, they don't need to be afraid.

But, if we fail to understand this truth about God, and instead promote the idea that fear is what God wants, what is the problem? What does fear lead to?

What happens if we respond to God and obey Him out of fear?

Fear and Love are inversely proportional. Let's use the integrative evidenced based approach and test this:

**Scripture:** "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." 1John 4:18

**Science:** In the brain, the ACC is the part where we experience altruistic, other-centered love – and when the ACC is active it actually calms the brain's fear circuitry. But when the fear circuitry is active it impairs the ACC and higher cortical functions.

**Experience:** What is your experience? When you have been in a moment of genuine love, when you cared and loved another more than self, what happened to your fear? Then, when you have been terribly fearful, worried, anxious, what happened to your ability to put others first?

What happens in the heart of those who worship out of fear and never transition to love?

Such worship actually destroys love, incites rebellion, results in legalistic attitudes, we become hard hearted religionists who become judgmental and intolerant of others who deviate from the strict code we have established. The liberty of others threatens our fragile false security and our fear leads us to seek to enforce on others what we believe is right.



Does God want us to be afraid of Him or love Him? Then does fear come from God? No, fear comes from alienation from God, from not knowing Him!

The lesson states, in regard to how the people responded to Haggai's message, "The godly response of the leaders and the people testified to the spiritual reformation that had taken place."

Thoughts? What is a godly response? Does it matter to which "god" one believes?

For instance, when calls went out for commitment to the Lord's cause at approximately 1000 years after Christ, how did the people respond? With the Crusades. Did they think theirs was a godly response?

Any examples of people responding to "god" but their behavior and actions reveal that they are worshipping a different "god" than you do?

What is the point of bringing this up?

Remember the text we quoted earlier where Jesus warned that in the last days people will think they are following Him but He never knew them.

Is it possible to be a Christian, to attend church faithfully, to be a regular tithe payer and offering giver, to be a teacher, deacon, elder, bishop, pastor, priest and dedicate your life to serving Christ and still not know Him and actually be working for the enemy?

How can this be? What are the roots of it and how can we ensure we are not among that group?

The Integrative Evidence-Based approach

- Scripture, Science and Experience harmonized, provides testable truths that are reproducible, reliable, and transformational
- Go to Scripture putting God at the center, what does the Scripture teach about God
- Make Jesus Christ the lens through which we require our conclusions of God to harmonize, while holding steadfastly to the other two threads of evidence
- Put into practice the principles of love
- Think for yourself, let every person be fully persuaded in their own mind, Rom 14:5

## THURSDAY

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Read first paragraph, "The final message..." thoughts

What do you understand the God's judgment to be?





Do you see God through the lens of natural law, the law of love, the design parameters upon which He constructed life to operate or do you see God through the lens of imposed law, like a Roman emperor?

If God is seen through the lens of the law of love – then how do we understand His judgment?

- It is the accurate diagnosis of what the actual condition of each person is
- It is also the therapeutic intervention to heal and restore, and
- The final judgment or diagnosis of the wicked that they are terminal and nothing more can be done. “Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone!” Hosea 4:17
- God in the end judges that, for some, they are beyond healing, they have destroyed the faculties that respond to love and truth and there is nothing more than can be done. Thus, He sets them free to reap what they have chosen, eternal separation from Him, who is the source of life. He grants them the most merciful outcome, not eternal existence in sin, but the freedom to be separate and pass from all suffering.
- Christ in this view was God’s means of revealing the truth and providing remedy to cure the terminally deviant human condition
- Thus those who accept Christ are judged, diagnosed, by God as having been healed and restored to righteousness

But, if we see God through the lens of imposed law how do we see judgment?

- A legal verdict found for or against the sinner
- A penalty, determined by God, is externally inflicted upon the unrepentant to make them pay for their disobedience, either inflicted torment and then execution, or eternal torment inflicted by God
- Christ in this view is punished by His Father in our place
- Christ’s blood is a commodity to be obtained and bartered with the Father to appease His anger and wrath at sin and pay our legal debt to the heavenly government
- Those who accept the blood of Christ are legally declared not guilty and the Father is legally prevented from tormenting and executing them

Which view do you find more reasonable?

## SUNDAY

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Read first paragraph, “For over a year...” thoughts? How do you understand what is described here?

God actively sent suffering, pain, hardship, disease OR God actively set them free to experience what they persistently chose, life without Him?

Does it make a difference how we understand it? What difference does it make?

Is God’s action punishment? Or, is it loving discipline? Is there a difference? What is the difference?



In *People Magazine*, March 18, 2013 p 94, there is an article about Pat Summit – the famous and incredibly successful coach of the Tennessee Lady Vols basketball team.

For those outside the US, Pat Summit is the all time winningest coach in NCAA basketball history, men or women. She won 8 National Championships and the only coach in NCAA history with over 1000 wins.

As many of you know she has sadly been diagnosed with Alzheimer's dementia. *People Magazine* quotes a section from her recent book, "I know that Alzheimer's has brought me to a point that I was going to arrive at someday anyway. With or without this diagnosis, I was going to experience diminishment. We all do. [And] I know God doesn't take things away to be cruel. He takes things away to lighten us. He takes things away so we can fly."

Thoughts?

Now this is a very tricky idea to consider – will a loving parent take away things for our blessing?

Does God ever take things away?

- Nebuchadnezzar's sanity for 7 years
- But then God restored his sanity and the king was converted

While God may therapeutically intervene to bring conviction and a person to repentance, should we conclude that sickness and disease are from God? Is God the source of disease? Does disease occur in harmony with God's will? Or is disease the outworking of deviations from God's design, will and purpose?

Should we attribute to God's account the numerous birth defects, diseases and sickness with which humanity suffers?

Does that mean then that sickness is because a person is due to an individual sinning? Not necessarily! But because nature is out of harmony with God's design. Certainly, one could abuse themselves with tobacco, alcohol, drugs and cause disease, but the disciples asked Jesus, "who sinned that this man was born blind, him or his parents." And the answer was neither. Also, the case of Job makes it clear that disease can happen to the righteous. But, is disease brought directly by God? Does God act to cause it?

Where would you draw the line?

How do we understand God using everything for good if we trust Him? Not everything is good, but if we trust God He can bring good out of evil.

Read last paragraph, "The Lord used..." thoughts?



Why could God not be honored when His house sat in ruins?

What about the end of the day's lesson, the observation that the people lost a sense of their divine mission as a remnant of God – and the question if there is any lesson for us?

What is the lesson for us? Do we have a divine mission?

How would you state our mission? What is it?

- To spread the gospel? What is this?
- To lighten the world for Christ's return, or prepare the world for the Second Advent – what does that mean, what does it look like?
- To tell the truth about God's character of love, how do we do that? What do we say that will be heard? How many Christians currently believe that the God they worship is not love?
- Others?

## **FRIDAY**

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Read and discuss question 3