



This week was our final Sunday in Haggai. The third and fourth oracles (2v10-19, 2v20-23) are given to Haggai on the same day (18th December 520BC probably). This was likely a commemoration day marking the project to rebuild the temple that they had commenced three months earlier. At the heart of this passage is God's assertion, via Haggai, that because of this day *everything* has changed.

1 – Look back to your days of dirtiness (2v10-17)

God encourages his people to look back and see that because of their sin when they weren't rebuilding the temple they were a defiled people (v14). All the things that they did and all their offerings were not pleasing to God. Holiness is not contagious but uncleanness is, God demonstrates through Haggai's conversation with the priests (v11-13). Their sin had contaminated everything.

They are to look back not primarily that God might rub their noses in their past sin or reveal their current sin to them, but that they might see who they now are and how far they have come by his grace. God calls us to see that before/after in us.

2 – Look now at your days of delight (2v18-19)

With v18 everything changes. Because they have turned back to God in repentance (by rebuilding the temple, v18), God has somehow made them clean.

Yet their lives are still a struggle (v19). This oracle comes in winter-time, when there is not yet any food in the barn or fruit on the plants. Nevertheless, God promises that he will from now on bless his people (v19). Certain blessing is coming, no ifs or buts. They just need to hold tight and wait for him.

As Christians we know so much more of God's good plans. We know that it is through the cross that God could make an unclean people holy. Christ's resurrection day is the day upon which everything has changed. And in Christ we see how much bigger this promise of blessing becomes.

3 – Look ahead to your day of deliverance (2v20-23)

With this final oracle things take a strange turn. God promises that he will judge the world through his shaking of it (v21-22), and that he will raise up the governor Zerubbabel to be his royal ruler (v23).

It is hard to read this prophecy and not wonder whether God/Haggai somehow got it wrong in making such bold messianic promises about a man who seems to have been a significant but fairly small player in the story of God's people.

But of course we know that God's promises of blessing come to a point not in this Davidic leader, but in another one who would come 500 years later. Zerubbabel was never really the *point* of these promises, he was just a pointer to the one who was to come (see Matthew 1v12-13 and Luke 3v27). We have a great deliverer to look to in Jesus, as well as a great deliverance, and we can be confident that he will bring us *all* of God's blessings as he takes his seat on the eternal throne.

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. What would you say are some of the key moments that mark out our life as a church and/or your life personally?
2. Why is it important as Christians that we look back to our former pre-Christian lives and condition? Where in the Bible helps you to do this?
3. As a clean people, how does the illustration of contamination in v11-14 help us to better see, understand and repent of the sin we still commit?
4. What big blessings does God promise to us in Christ? Where might we go in the Bible to see them? Why might we not see these blessings now?
5. Did God/Haggai get it wrong in making such bold promises for Zerubbabel? (And what are we to do with biblical prophecies that don't seem to get fulfilled?)
6. Read Psalm 2. How does it link to Haggai's final oracle? How are we to feel?
7. How have you found the book of Haggai? Highlights and challenges? How do we read Haggai as Christians? What do we know that his first audience didn't? How is a Christian perspective of this book so much bigger and richer?