

The Time is Now **Haggai 1:1-11**

Introduction:

1. Many times windows of opportunity will open and present themselves, but then the window closes. The great enemy of opportunity is procrastination.
2. Here in our text there was a window of opportunity for a group of people that had returned to Jerusalem from their Babylonian captivity. They had the opportunity to do something spiritually impacting and great, but they were not seizing their opportunity.
3. They had been allowed to return to Jerusalem by decree of the Persian king and they returned for the purpose of rebuilding God's house (the temple) that had been burned and destroyed by the Babylonians. There were about 42,000 people who had returned.
4. They had worked on the temple for two years, but had quit. God's work had come to a screeching halt. They just decided that it wasn't **time** to build God's house (vs. 2). For 16 years nothing had been done and God's house laid waste.
5. Haggai was a prophet that God raised up to give them God's Word. The word from God was, "The time is now!" The time to accomplish God's work is now. Seize the opportunity you've been given and get this train moving again. vs. 8
6. What wonderful application we can make to our lives. We live in an unprecedented time of opportunity in which God is dispensing His grace freely to people everywhere. Christ has made a complete sacrifice for the sins of the world and we are ambassadors for Christ. Paul says we should redeem the time because the days are evil. **Ephesians 5:16**
7. We don't know how much longer we will have this window of opportunity. Just like in Haggai's day, the time to accomplish God's work is now. We cannot wait!
8. How can we as God's people accomplish God's work NOW?

First, by putting away all excuses. vs. 1-2

1. The temple was half built. It had been 16 years since anything had been done to it. Haggai came with a message to the two leaders in Jerusalem (vs.1):
 - Zerubbabel - the civil leader of the people
 - Joshua - the high priest and religious leader of the people
2. The temple in the Old Testament was a symbol of the person, presence, and power of God. It was to shine as a light to the sin darkened nations of the true God. But instead, God's house lay waste. It was a disgrace and reproach to God.
3. You would think that this would really bother these Jews who had returned from Babylon. But notice verse 2. They had rationalized "...*the time is not come...*"
 - It wasn't that they said, "We aren't doing it. We're never doing it." They simply said, "We'll do it later - some other time." It had been 16 years!
4. Isn't it amazing how when we make excuses in our Christian walk, days have a way of turning into years? Let's look at God's Word. **Romans 13:11; James 4:13-14**
5. One of Satan's greatest strategies is to fill you with good intentions. Did you know that good intentions don't accomplish God's work here on earth? Satan knows this.

6. Good intentions won't build Bethlehem or build the LIFE building. Good intentions won't get you in your Bible or get you serving in a ministry and impacting lives.
7. This remnant said, "We know we need to build God's house, but it's not time." Haggai came with a message for the leaders and the people - "Put away your excuses. It's time!"

Second, by placing God's priorities first. vs. 3-4

1. Haggai is now going to address **all** the people with the word of the Lord (vs. 3). Haggai is about to get real personal. Let's read verse 4.
 - "*Cieled houses*" carries the idea of elaborate and beautifully decorated.
2. While God's house laid waste, the Jews had been building themselves beautiful homes. Haggai brings a scathing indictment and reveals to them their spiritual indifference. Haggai was saying in essence, "It's not time to build **God'** house, but it sure is time to build **yourselves** nice homes to live in."
3. He says, "You've taken the wealth, resources, time, and energy that was meant for **God's** work, and you've used it all on yourself. God's work has come to a halt while you're doing remodeling projects at your own house."
4. By the way, the problem was not that they had nice homes. The problem was that they had placed their own self-interests above God's interests. Their apathetic attitude towards God's house was indicative of their inward spiritual condition. They were self-consumed.
5. This is so applicable to 21st century America. We enjoy more prosperity and comforts than any people in history. Unfortunately, most believers today have used this unprecedented prosperity as an opportunity to enrich **themselves**.
6. Our material gain has created an insatiable thirst for more. But God's Word doesn't change and it warns us of the slippery slope of materialism. **1 Timothy 6:9-10**
7. God entrusted this remnant of Jews with material resources and expected them to handle them in a way that would honor God and His priorities on earth. They blew it and they were paying the price for their bad stewardship, as we will see later.
8. God has entrusted us all with material resources. What does He expect? It's very simple - He expects our handling of those resources to reflect **His** priorities, not our **own** self agenda (**1 Timothy 6:17-19**). Eternity will reveal how we did.

Third, by considering our ways. vs. 5-11

1. After Haggai brings to light their misplaced priorities, he says in verse 5, "*Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; consider your ways.*"
 - The idea of considering is a theme of this little book - 1:7, 2:15, 2:18
 - The word "ways" simply means "a road, course of life, mode of action."
2. Haggai says, "Stop and ponder the course of your life, the road you are on."
3. They were clearly on the wrong course and God had tried to get their attention in many different ways, but they obviously were not catching on.
4. They had been working and laboring like crazy for their own self-interests, but it seemed like they never had quite enough. The more money they made, the more they spent. It was as if they were putting their money in a bag with holes (vs. 6).

5. Why was this true? Because God made a covenant with the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. "If you put me first, honor me above all else, I promise you that I will bless you materially in a way that you can't contain it all."
6. "But on the other hand, if you forget me and don't put me first, I will withdraw my blessings, and you'll be putting your money in a bag full of holes." vs. 9-11
7. Israel was an earthly people, with earthly blessings, and earthly promises. Today we don't operate under the terms of that old covenant.
8. Today, God has blessed members of the body of Christ with all **spiritual** blessings in **heavenly** places in Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**). Our affection should be on things above, not on things of the earth. **Colossians 3:1-2**
9. As we do this, it is to remind us that this earth and the things of the earth is not what it is all about for us. Everything we do should be lived out in the context of eternity. We should ask ourselves, "What is the eternal value? What is the eternal impact?"
10. Like Israel, we need to consider our ways. When we live for ourselves and invest our resources in ourselves and the things of this earth, spiritually speaking, we are putting it in a bag with holes.
11. There are many people who know the Lord but will one day stand before Him on Judgment Day empty handed. They never considered their ways. They lived their life like this earth would be their home forever.
12. They didn't invest their time, talents, and resources in things that would impact eternity. So when they get to heaven, it is as if they put it in a bag full of holes. They will stand before Jesus Christ with nothing of eternal value to show for their brief life on earth.
13. Just like Israel looked for much but had little, there are members of the body of Christ whose works on this earth will all be burned up at the Judgment Seat. **1 Corinthians 3:13-15**
14. Christian, the time to consider your ways is now! God has a work He wants to accomplish on this earth through the church and He invites you to be a part of it. Invest in things of eternal value. Don't be consumed with yourself like Israel.
15. God says, "The time is NOW!"