



## Overview for Haggai

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**Purpose:** The prophet gave his messages to motivate the people of Judah to complete the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem.

**Author:** The prophet Haggai

**Date Written:** 520 B.C.

**To Whom Written:** The newly returned exiles from Babylon, and the remnant living in Jerusalem.

**Key People:** Haggai, the first of the prophets to minister to the post-exilic community in Jerusalem; Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah and the man who led the first group of exiles back to Jerusalem; and Joshua, the first high priest after the restoration.

**Setting:** Five interrelated Old Testament books were written after the Jewish people returned from exile: Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The events recorded in the Book of Esther also took place during this period.

After spending seventy years in captivity in Babylon, the decree of Cyrus in 538 B.C. gave permission for the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem. Around fifty thousand had done so. They had begun rebuilding the Temple in 536 B.C., soon after their arrival, but when they faced opposition from hostile neighbors, the work halted.

In 520 B.C., at the direction of God, Haggai challenged the people to resume work on the Temple. He pointed out that during the approximately ten years since the rebuilding efforts had stopped, the people had built and beautified their own houses while neglecting the rebuilding of God's house. For that reason, the blessing of God had ceased to be upon them, and their lives were unsatisfying. Haggai instructed the people to consider their current economic and spiritual circumstances and to renew their efforts to complete the work of restoring the Temple.

The prophet Zechariah joined Haggai in exhorting the people of Judah just two months after

Haggai's first message (see Haggai 1:1 and Zechariah 1:1).

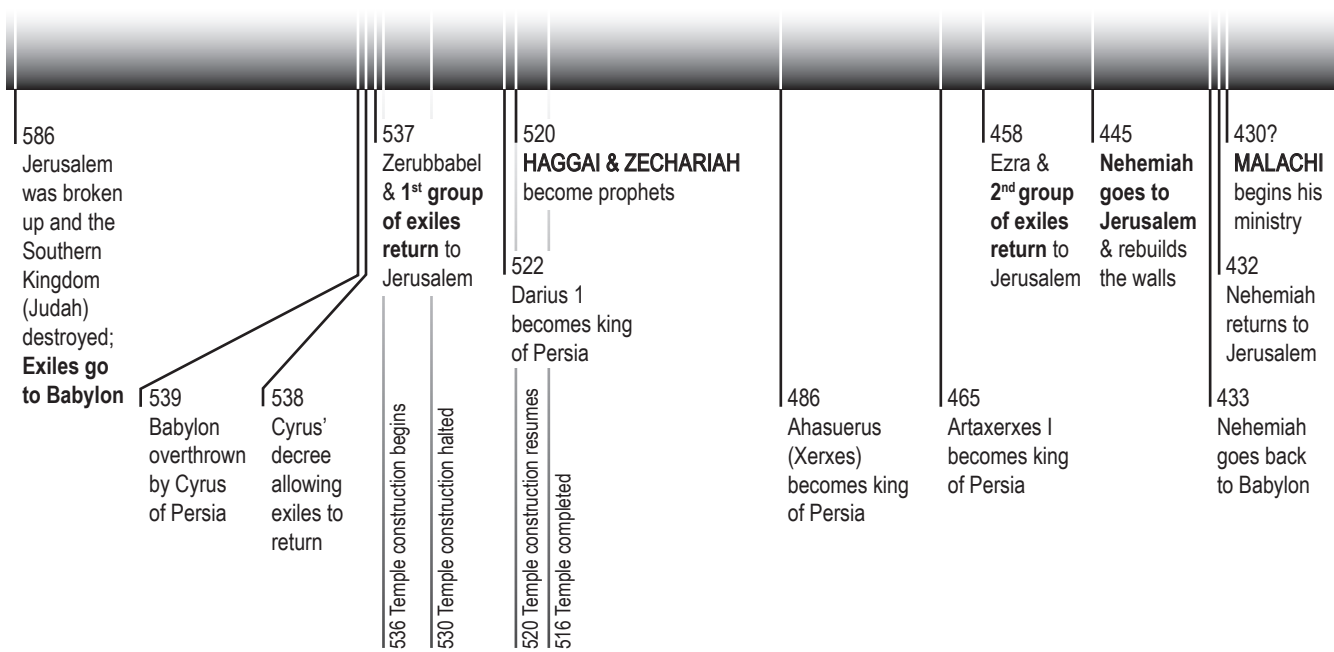
**Unique Features and Style:** The Book of Haggai is unique among Old Testament prophetic books for one key reason: the people of Judah listened! A mere twenty-three days after the "word of the LORD" came to Haggai, the people began again to build (see Haggai 1:14-15).

Next to Obadiah, Haggai is the shortest book in the Old Testament; it contains just two chapters and a total of thirty-eight verses. Haggai delivered his prophecy using simple prose, rather than the customary poetic form. The book's straightforward style is characterized by questions, recurring expressions, and commands. Variations of the instruction to "consider your ways" are issued five times in the two chapters.

**Summary:** Haggai's passionate and simple prophecy to the people of Judah was delivered in the form of four short messages, each of them precisely dated. The first message (Haggai 1:1-15) contained a rebuke for the people's failure to finish rebuilding the Temple and a call to renew their efforts and complete the task. The second message (Haggai 2:1-9) compared the present Temple with the earlier Temple of Solomon. Though the difference between the two was disheartening, the people were encouraged to be strong because of God's presence. The third message (Haggai 2:10-19) contained principles regarding holiness and God's commitment to bless and prosper Judah in the time to come. The final message (Haggai 2:20-23) was addressed to Zerubbabel alone. It promised the destruction of Judah's enemies and revealed that Zerubbabel had been chosen as the "signet"—a seal, stamp, or ring symbolizing the authority of the Messiah from David's line, who would one day come as the divine Deliverer and overthrow all earthly kingdoms.

# Timeline

Some dates are approximate, as reference materials differ.



# Outline

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A complete amplified outline of this book is available on our website at [www.apostolicfaith.org](http://www.apostolicfaith.org).

- I. The first message—To rebuke (1:1-15)
  - A. Date: August 29, 520 B.C. (1:1)
  - B. The building ceased (1:2-4)
  - C. The blessing ceased (1:5-11)
  - D. The building continued (1:12-15)
- II. The second message—To encourage (2:1-9)
  - A. Date: October 17, 520 B.C. (2:1)
  - B. The people's discouragement (2:2-3)
  - C. The Lord's encouragement (2:4-9)
- III. The third message—To bless (2:10-19)
  - A. Date: December 18, 520 B.C. (2:10)
  - B. The illustration of contamination (2:11-13)
  - C. The application to the nation (2:14-17)
  - D. The abundance in the nation (2:18-19)
- IV. The fourth message—To promise (2:20-23)
  - A. Date: December 18, 520 B.C. (2:20)
  - B. The destruction of the nations (2:21-22)
  - C. The choice of Zerubbabel (2:23)