

# Haggai

## Original Historical Setting

**Author:** Haggai

**Written:** 520 B.C.

**Audience:** Israelites after they returned from exile

**Occasion:** At first there was Persian opposition to building the Temple and resuming proper worship. But inertia set in and the people just used this as an excuse until Haggai stepped in.

### **Timeline:**

538 BC – King of Persia decrees exiled Jews may return home

536 BC – Jews complete the foundation of Temple then stop

520 BC – Haggai urges Jews to complete the Temple

516 BC – Temple is completed

### World Events that occur simultaneously

539 B.C. –Cyrus of Persia conquers Babylon

534 B.C. –Actor Thespis wins first prize in a tragedy competition in Athens

522 B.C. –Darius succeeds Cyrus as king of Persia

521 B.C. –Buddha, in India, is said to have preached his first sermon

### Features and Structure

Haggai's structure centers around the four occasions in which "the word of the LORD came by Haggai..." (1:1, 2:1, 10, 20)

Haggai also dates precisely these four occasions.

### **OUTLINE**

**1:1-15** Arousing the people to build the Temple

**2:1-9** Encouraging the people with a Word from God

**2:10-19** Confirming future blessing from God

**2:20-23** Encouraging Zerubbabel with prophecy from God

### Genre/Literary style

Prophetic sermons all written in a mixture of Hebrew prose and poetry

### Key text(s)

**1:4** – Is it right for you to live in expensive houses while My Temple is in ruins?

**1:8** – Go up and build My Temple and I will take pleasure in it

**1:13** – I am with you.

### What to look for

- Notice that Haggai affirms the divine authority of his message 25 times in this short, little book.
- Note how Haggai emphasizes his points by raising questions and repeating important phrases:  
Critical Question: **1:4**  
Repeated Phrases: **(1:5, 7; 2:15, 18)** and **(2:6, 21)** and **(1:13; 2:4)**

### Interesting facts

- If this book reports all of the prophecies of Haggai, then his prophetic career and ministry lasted about four months.
- Haggai is the second shortest book of the Bible behind Obadiah
- Since Haggai dated his prophecies so precisely, we can pinpoint them to our equivalent dates of (1) August 29, 520; (2) October 17, 520; and (3) and (4) December 18, 520.
- King Darius, King of Persia during the time of Haggai, had the story of his rise to power inscribed in three languages on a cliff wall in Iran. One can go to see the Behistun inscription today in the Kermanshah Province near the town of Jeyhounabad.

**Memory Verse: Haggai 2:5b**