

GOD'S FIXER UPPER

In Real Estate terminology a run down house in need of repair is labeled "a fixer-upper". Nobody is going to purchase a "shack", or a "dump", or a "condemned building" - but put out an ad using the term "a fixer-upper" - and some energetic, young handyman might just look on it as a challenge, and take it off your hands.

That said, at the time of Haggai and Zechariah, the temple in Jerusalem was a *real fixer-upper!* For two centuries the grand and glorious temple built by Solomon was the center of Israel's national life. Now it's become a patch of weed and rock.

In 586 BC the Babylonians demolished the city, *toppled the temple*, and took the people back to Babel. As the Jews served out a 70 year sentence in captivity, what was left of the temple lay in ruins. The temple was reduced to rubble.

The captivity came to an end, though, in 536

BC when the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon. The new Medo-Persian administration was headed by the Median King Darius, and the Persian emperor, Cyrus. Both men knew the Hebrew prophet Daniel, and became fond of the Jews. And true to Scripture, as well as the promises of God, Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return home.

And that's when God could've said... *anyone interested in a real fixer-upper?* It was God's desire that the Jews return to their homeland and rebuild their temple.

There was an ambitious, young handyman who accepted God's commission. *Rubble* was right up *Zerubbabel's* alley. Governor Zerubbabel and the High Priest, Joshua, led 50,000 Jews - eager and energetic, patriotic and pioneering - to pull up stakes, and return to Judah to reconstruct the city and rebuild the temple.

TOSSING IN THE TROWEL

Zerubbabel's construction project got off to a good start. They took an offering, built an altar, offered a sacrifice, and celebrated the Feast of Tabernacles. Over the next 7 months they hired craftsmen and bought materials. They laid the foundation for the temple in the 2nd month of the year 535 BC. But that's as far as they got! Sadly, the work came to a screeching halt.

The Samaritans, who had moved into the area during the Jewish captivity, didn't like Jewish progress. They got an injunction from the Persians to shut down the construction. The whole issue got cleared up, but in the meantime the Jews gave up. They got distracted, and became more interested in building their own homes and businesses. They forgot about God's temple. Note Haggai 1:2, "Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built.'"

Usually the Lord speaks of the Jews as "My people", but here's the first clue He's angry with these returnees - He calls them "this people". And *this people* lived by a motto, "Always put off until tomorrow what you can do today."

They were procrastinators.

It reminds me of the pastor's son. He was just 8 years old, but having been raised in the church he'd heard all the biblical terms - *justification, sanctification, revelation* - all these "ations". He had heard them countless times, but he didn't know what they meant. All he knew was that these words were *church words*.

One day in class his teacher asked him if he knew the meaning of the word "procrastination".

He thought a while about it, then answered, "No, I'm not sure, but I know our church believes in it!" Sadly, most churches do believe in procrastination - it's their *modus operandi* - it characterizes all they do.

If you've been around the church awhile you'll hear some righteous sounding excuses, "You know brother, God's timing is not our timing. Let's not strive. In God's time it'll all come together." But what if the Lord's time is right now, and His means are you? What if you are the answer to your prayer? I believe we need to trust in God - but we need to *trust*, not *rust*.

For the next 15 years the rebuilding of the temple was neglected. The Jews gave up the work. *They tossed in the towel* - or you might say, *they tossed in the trowel*.

This grieved God's heart, and in response He raised up two men, Haggai and Zechariah, to light a fire under the Jews to recommence construction. To this end, Haggai preaches four sermons, over a four month period, in the fall of 520 BC...

Haggai's first sermon deals with the people's *self-centeredness*. His second sermon shows the people's *short-sightedness*. The third sermon their *self-righteousness*. The fourth sermon, speaks to their tendency to *second-guess* themselves.

These are the same problems the Church must battle to avoid similar setbacks. Today, God is building a spiritual temple, the Church - and Haggai's sermons are just as relevant to us as they were to the Jews...

THE GREATER GLORY

Zerubbabel resumed construction on the temple on September 21. Haggai's second sermon was given a little more than 3 weeks later on October 17. Understand though, what went on over those 3 weeks. At least 13 of the 26 days were holy days. The Jews celebrated the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles - all in that time period.

As a result very little work got done.

But here's what happened - there arose a group of cynics. These were old men who remembered the majesty and beauty and grandeur of Solomon's temple. They could tell this rebuilt temple was going to be a shack in comparison. And these old geezers voiced their impressions. Imagine the result - the people are pumped, fired-up, ready to do a great work for God - when along comes these old-timers who douse the fire. Their pessimism throws a wet blanket over the people's enthusiasm.

That's when God intervenes with a promise, Haggai 2:9, "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former"

According to the Babylonian Talmud there were five items missing from Zerubbabel's temple: 1) *the Ark of the Covenant*, 2) *the holy fire on the altar*, 3) *the Shekinah glory in the Holy of Holies*, 4) *the Spirit of prophecy, or the Holy Spirit*, 5) *the Urim and Thummin - the tools the priest used to discern God's will*.

In addition, Zerubbabel's temple was smaller and built with cheaper materials. How could this second temple ever be considered more glorious than the first?

The answer is in verse 6, to this second temple God will send "the Desire of all Nations" - a name for Messiah. Jesus walked the halls of this second temple. He taught in its porticos, and worked miracles on its porches. The presence of Jesus more than made up for the trimmings this temple would lack.

The problem with the pessimists who hindered Zerubbabel was their *short-sightedness*. Their evaluation was superficial. They looked at only the brick and mortar, they didn't see the purpose God had in store for this second temple.

We too can make similar judgments. We think the church with 15,000 people is more glorious than the church with 50 - or the spacious, new facilities have greater glory than the one that meets in the warehouse. Don't be deceived. God has a wonderful plan and purpose for every church.

The church is where Jesus dwells - and the splendor and size of the building don't mean a thing to Him. In Matthew 18:20 Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." Jesus has a purpose for every church - large and small.

Devotion Box - Putting God's House First

Haggai 1:9, "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little..." When you live for yourself life is a letdown. "When you brought it home, I blew it away." The little bit they accumulated God refused to let them keep. "Why?" says the LORD of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house."

It's sad that folks will let a thousand issues keep'em from church. "Sunday is my only day off. Sunday is our family day. I use Sunday night to get ready for the work week..." But the best way to keep your household together is to keep it coming to God's house.

Kids as well as adults need to know there's something their family values greater than themselves - *greater than the next ball game, or an escape to the mountains, or a run to the lake*. They, too, need to be a part of a great work of God.

A CHURCH OF NOBODIES

Haggai's first sermon begins in 1:3, "the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" Notice Haggai's sarcasm. The Jews said it wasn't yet time to build God's house, but it was certainly time to build their own houses. The Jews had not just built *houses*, but "paneled houses". They were living in luxury.

Rather than put God's concerns before their own, they retreated into a self-absorbed existence, where all that mattered was their own little world.

Let's apply this to ourselves. Have we gotten so wrapped up in work, school, the new house, the front lawn, the boat, and the Little League that we have no time leftover to contribute to our church? We all want and expect a strong church when we need one, but what are you doing to make it strong? Listen to the following...

"This is the story about four church members named *Everybody*, *Somebody*, *Anybody*, and *Nobody*. All members of the same *Body*. The church had financial responsibilities and *Everybody* was asked to help. *Everybody* was sure that *Somebody* would rise to the occasion. *Anybody* could've done it, but you know who did it? *Nobody*. It ended up that *Everybody* blamed *Somebody* when *Nobody* did what *Anybody* could have done. Then the church grounds needed some work and *Somebody* was asked to help. But *Somebody* got angry, because *Anybody* could have done it just as well and, after all, it was really *Everybody's* job. In the end the work was given to *Nobody*, and *Nobody* did a fine job maintaining the church grounds. On and on this went. Whenever work was to be done, *Nobody* could always be counted on. *Nobody* visited the sick. *Nobody* gave liberally. *Nobody* shared his faith. *Nobody* shared his talents. In short, *Nobody* was a very faithful member. Finally the day came when *Somebody* left the church, and took *Anybody* and *Everybody* with him. Guess who was left? That's right, *Nobody!*"

Sadly, Haggai was pastoring a church full of nobodies. Nobody wanted to help build a temple for God, they were all too busy working on their own projects. Haggai warns them in verse 5 to *consider their ways!*

In verse 6 the prophet says, "You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes." In other words, live for yourself and the rewards are never equal to the investment.

Selfishness is a hollow existence. It's ultimately a dead end. It's like shopping with a bottomless shopping bag. You keep stuffing stuff into the bag, but it never fills up... and you go broke in the process.

As Jesus said in Matthew 10:39, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it." Guys, real fulfillment in life is found when I give up my own selfish ambitions and throw myself into a great work for God.

Z E C H A R I A H

THE ODD COUPLE

Haggai and Zechariah were the original odd couple – the Felix and Oscar of the Old Testament. Chronologically and circumstantially they were roommates, but in terms of approach and personality they couldn't have been more different.

Haggai was a doer. He was a practical man with hammer and nails. He demanded that the people return to the work of constructing the temple. The capsulation of his message is two words, "be strong... and work." Haggai was a doer, while Zechariah was a dreamer. Haggai's approach was practical, Zechariah's approach more spiritual. He speaks to the nation at the time of Zerubbabel through 8 visions God gives him.

Devotion Box - Apple Of His Eye

In 2:8 the Lord threatens the nations that threaten the Jews. Zechariah tells the Jewish people, "he who touches you touches the apple of His eye." The apple of the eye is the pupil. Try touching a person's pupil and they'll flinch. It's the eyelid's job to protect the pupil. It operates on instinct and reflex. It's also God's instinct – His divine reflex – to protect His people.

In 1:7 Zechariah marks the date, "On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month..." or February 15, 519 BC. On that one night God showed the prophet 8 different visions – 8 visions that span the scope of human history, project Israel's history into the distant future, and center on none other than Jesus the Messiah. These 8 visions are Messianic and Millennial – they're wild and woolly – and they no doubt keep Zechariah up many more nights pondering their implications. While Haggai and Zerubbabel are working to rebuild the temple – strange visions are occurring between the temples of Zechariah's head. God gives him a series of visions to encourage the workers.

EIGHT VISIONS

THE DIVINE PERRY MASON

In chapter 3, Joshua the High Priest is not exactly dressed for success. He's standing before God in filthy garments. The Hebrew word translated "filthy" could be rendered "excrement covered" or "dung splattered". Imagine a bad case of diarrhea. That's his robe.

The Angel of the Lord is on Joshua's one side. Satan is on the other. And the devil is up to his old tricks. The accuser of the brethren is doing all he can to heap guilt and condemnation on a child of God helping to build a temple.

It reminds me of the vision Martin Luther had of the devil. He was at his desk when Satan appeared to him to remind him of the evil he'd done. Luther had enough with ol' Lucifer. He shouted, "It's all true, Satan, and many more sins I have committed in my life which are known to God only; but write at the bottom of your list, 'the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin'."

He grabbed the inkwell sitting on the desk and threw it at Satan. It was a turning point in Luther's life – from that moment on he was free from the devil's debilitating condemnation. Of course the inkwell missed and hit the wall. In fact, you can go to the Wartburg Castle in Germany, and still see the famous ink spot.

Here's how I like to view these two men. Haggai drives a pick-up, with a medal tool box on the back. He's the kind of guy who straps his keys to his belt. He enjoys working on the temple, but when he works he pounds and perspires.

Zechariah is equally committed to building the temple, but his contribution is to pray and praise. Haggai *saws* for God. Zechariah *sees* for God. Haggai is an "actionary". Zechariah is a visionary. And both approaches were needed.

Likewise, both types of people are needed in the building up of the church. We need the visionaries – *who'll see*. And we need the "actionaries" – *who'll saw*.

THE BATTLE OF JERUSALEM

Chapter 14 describes the battle of Jerusalem. It will be the final battle before Jesus returns.

Verse 2 says all the nations will gather to battle against Jerusalem. The nations will deal a heavy blow, but verse 3 says the Lord will fight for His people.

Verse 4 tells us, "in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives..." In the very spot where Jesus ascended into heaven He'll return to earth. The power of Jesus' little toe falling on the mountain top will set off an earthquake that'll tear the mountain in two.

This is what happens in chapter 3 to Joshua. Satan is there to oppose him, when the Lord says, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan!... Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?" That's a fitting description for us all. None of us deserve God's mercy. We're all brands plucked from hellfire.

In fact, Satan's case against us seems airtight. We, too, are standing there in filthy garments. Satan is just hoping you and I will try to defend ourselves, and prove we're worthy of God's favor. Hey, Satan is an alligator of a litigator. He'll tear you up on cross-examination. Try to defend yourself and you'll get worse.

But that's not what Joshua does. Note the key to his defense. Verse 5, "And the Angel of the LORD stood by." The Angel of the Lord is Joshua's attorney. And in the Old Testament, more often than not, the Angel of the Lord is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ. Joshua here has recruited the divine Perry Mason. Jesus is undefeated. He's never taken a case he didn't win.

Jesus rebukes the devil, then strips away Joshua's filthy threads and replaces them with rich robes, and a clean turban. This is what Jesus does for us – He pays the penalty for our sin, forgives us and accepts us, then rebukes the devil, clothes us with His righteousness, and makes us as a member of His royal family.

Remember 1 John 2:1: "If anyone sins, we have an advocate (*attorney*) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - July 8, 2001 - **Café Calvary**: 7/11- Pastor James and Three Last Words; **Middle School Youth**: Christmas in July, 7/20 and Monday Night Live, 7/30; **Men's Retreat with Gayle Erwin**: August 10-11 - *Please pray for our High School Mission Trip to Mexico. The kids will be gone through next Saturday.* - **CC Christian School** (Grades K5-5th) is registering students for the 2001-2002 school year.
Next Bible Scan - July 15 - Malachi 1-4

“The glory of the latter temple shall be greater than the former,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘And in this place I will give peace...’ ” - Haggai 2:9

**Bible Scan
Memory
Verse**

FUTURE FAITH

When folks in the church at Rome suggested God were through with the Jew, Paul protested, “Certainly not!” He explained after the church is raptured, God will turn His attention back to the Jew, and in the end all Israel will be saved. The Jews alive at the end of the Great Tribulation will be gripped by the Spirit, and they’ll see Jesus – perhaps literally in the clouds as He prepares to return.

According to Zechariah 12:10, at that moment, “they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son...” They’ll turn to the Lord in a spirit of repentance, and individually they all will put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Devotion Box - “For Who Has Despised The Day Of Small Things?”

In 4:10 the angel says to Zechariah, “For who has despised the day of small things?” What encouragement! The old guys who remembered Solomon’s temple mocked the new temple – it was smaller and less ornate. But Zechariah is not to despise the small things. God uses small things as well as large.

Sometimes God’s greatest works are subtle, silent, simple - small in scale. J Vernon McGee once wrote, “We Americans are impressed with the big and brassy. We like our Christian work to be a success story. We measure success by the size of the building and the crowds that come. Well, I am becoming more and more convinced that the Lord is working in quiet ways and in quiet places today.”

Don’t get discouraged with the Bible study that only has five people who come. Who knows the work God is doing in those five, and the work that may eventually result? The temple God

is building is made up of lots and lots of small things.

Ben Franklin wrote, “For lack of a nail the shoe was lost; for lack of a shoe the horse was lost; for lack of a horse the rider was lost; for lack of a rider the war was lost – all for the lack of a nail.” Little things do matter. They’re vital to God’s plan.

It reminds me of Robert Shepard, who escaped from jail in Charleston, South Carolina using dental floss. That’s right- the rope he used to climb over the fence was made by braiding together 48 strands of mint-flavored, waxed dental floss.

Your life may represent a single strand, but who knows how God is twisting your circumstances together to do a great work in and through your life. “Shamgar had a oxgoad. David, a sling. Samson had a jawbone. Rahab, a string. Mary had some ointment. Aaron had a rod. Dorcas had a needle. All were used by God.” *“For who has despised the day of small things?”*

Devotion Box - “Not By Might Nor By Power, But By My Spirit”

In chapter 4 Zechariah sees a bowl of oil at the top of a lampstand with seven different feeders, each supplying seven lamps. It was a type of a Jewish menorah. In addition, beside the bowl, at the top of the lampstand, were two olive trees.

Zechariah notices that this lampstand is being supernaturally supplied with oil. Usually it’s the priest’s job to fill the menorah with oil, but no priest is involved. The olive trees are dripping oil into the bowl.

In verse 6 the angel who shows him the vision interprets it, “This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.” Throughout the Scriptures oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. Oil lubricates, and soothes, lights and warms, refreshes, and shines – all of

which the Spirit does in our lives.

Zerubbabel is building a temple, and it’s no easy task. His job is the equivalent of climbing a mountain. Verse 7 asks, “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’” Zerubbabel will cut down his mountain, and finish the job. By the grace of God the temple will be completed. It won’t be Zerubbabel’s engineering might, or physical prowess that gets the temple built. Neither brains or brawn can get God’s work done on earth. When it comes to New Testament temple building - it requires the blessing of God.

Any true work of God is accomplished by the Spirit of God. It’s not elbow grease we need, but the oil of the Holy Spirit.