***Former* and *Latter* Glory**

Text: Haggai 2:1-9

Background:

* Haggai was probably among the first group to return from Babylonian captivity to Judah. However, he is first introduced as being one of the prophets to *“the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem…”* (along with Zechariah), Ezra 5:1.
* Almost nothing else is known of the prophet, aside from his name meaning “festive” or “festival”- though at least one commentator (Robinson) suggested that if his name were an abbreviation of “Haggiah,” then it would mean “festival of Jehovah.” Perhaps. Perhaps not- I have no idea. But I do know that the overall message and mood of Haggai isn’t “festive” at all… at least not yet.
* Even from Ezra 5:2, Haggai’s *mission* seems to clear and singular- when Zerubbabel and Jeshua *“arose and began to rebuild the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and* ***the prophets of God were with them supporting them****.”*
* Hag.1:2-8 indicates that although the people had been returned to their homeland, they were *dragging their feet* with regard to rebuilding the Temple which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar some 70+ years previous. They were living in *“paneled houses”* while *“this house”* (God’s house, the Temple) *“lies desolate,”* 1:4. Additionally, and surely because of their failures, the Lord was *restricting* their *provisions,* 1:6. Thus, it was Haggai’s primary mission to get them to *“Consider your ways!”* 1:5,7 and get busy *rebuilding the Temple* AND *their relationship* with Jehovah.
* The *“word of the Lord”* that *“came by the prophet Haggai”* worked- with the added *stirring up* of the *spirit of Zerubbabel*  and *Joshua* as well as that of *the people, “and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God,”* 1:14.

**Points of Consideration from the text**:

1. ***“Like nothing in comparison,”* v.3.** It was obvious, even though they had begun *rebuilding,* that the “current” structure (even in its early stages of renovation) paled in comparison to the “former” one. Ezra 3:12 adds that some of the *old men “wept with a loud voice when the foundation”* of this “new” Temple was laid. They had lived long enough to have seen the *former*, and were sorely grieved at this *latter* one.

Many today feel much the same way about worshiping “at home” by themselves or even with family members. It’s just not the same as before. Though it is perhaps the best we can do under the circumstances, it just makes us sad as we mournfully remember what *collective/congregational* worship once was, cp. 2Chron.7:1-3. We miss that!

1. ***“But now take courage,”* v.4**. There are two important points to be made from this admonition: a) the **reason** they (and we!) should *take courage- “for I am with you,”* cf. Heb.13:5; and, b) the **result** was that they should *“work”-* just keep on keeping on and doing the best you can, and don’t allow *“the people of the land”* to *frighten* or *discourage* your efforts to *serve* and *build* for the Lord, cf. Ezra 4:1-5. There are many things we may not be able to do right now, but such can’t be allowed to prevent us from doing what we can do! *Worship* as best you can, Heb.13:14-15. Pray without ceasing, 1Thess.5:17. Be devoted to one another in love; give preference to one another in honor, Rom.12:10. And, do good to all men, especially to those of the household of faith, Gal.6:10. *Take courage* for *God is with you,* vv.5-6!
2. ***“I will fill this house with glory,”* v.7**. When God’s people do God’s will, He *blesses* their efforts. There were many things these post-exilic people *could not do-* they did not have the means or the ability to make their current efforts to serve and worship God comparable to those of Solomon when Israel was at its zenith. But, as the woman *who anointed Jesus,* all we can do is all we can do, and God will surely bless our efforts, cf. Mark 14:3-6. The simple but faith-filled acts of worship and service are sufficient for God to *fill them with His glory!* Think about it: simple *unleavened bread* and *fruit of the vine* are meager of themselves. But when partaken by faith and in truth and spirit, they become the glorious body and blood of Jesus, cf. John 6:51-57!
3. ***“The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,”* v.9.**  Carefully consider what God, through Haggai, is saying. The then “current” Temple, would possess *great glory* than its forbearer! How could that be since it would surely be smaller and much less opulent? It wasn’t/isn’t the multitude or magnitude of sacrifices offered, the myriad of people present, or the worldly/brotherhood renown that *fills ANY house of worship* with glory, but the *presence* and *blessing of God!*  And when we truly *“worship the Father in spirit and truth”* (John 4:23-24), He provides the *glory of His presence!*

**Conclusions:**

* **I, like you, *mourn* and *miss* the *“former glory”* of our collective/congregational worship.**  I long to not only see, but *sing, pray, commune,* and *study* with my brethren!
* **But, we must *take courage* and “do what we *can* do” until such time as we can be together, and worship together, again.** So, *take courage* for *God is with you/us;* and He will NEVER *desert* or *forsake* us!
* **How much so will the *latter glory* be over the *former glory* when we are able to be together again!** I long for that day- what a *glorious day* it will be…. but if it never comes, remember what *glory* awaits *at the last day,* when *the trump of God sounds,* and the Lord Jesus Christ *appears.* Oh, what *glory that will be!*