

Accomplishing God's Purpose

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[0 : 00] Tonight, we'll finish our study in Haggai by looking at Haggai's final prophecy.

! Let's go ahead and read chapter 2, verses 20-23. The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month.

Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders.

And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.

In this passage, God reassures Israel that his covenant with them remains. Things may appear bleak, but God is still in charge. God will use Haggai's generation and the subsequent generations to accomplish his redemptive purpose.

[1 : 18] That's the main idea. God will use Haggai's generation and the subsequent generations to accomplish his redemptive purposes. As we go through tonight's final four Haggai verses, we'll see that God, through Haggai, used language that would have reminded the people to look back at what he had done for their ancestors.

Then God looked ahead to remind Haggai's generation of the important role that they would have in redemptive history. The same God who enabled Moses to defeat Egypt and Joshua to conquer the nations in Canaan would protect his people so that his purposes could be fulfilled through them.

Before we look at tonight's Haggai passage in detail, we need to look at two other passages that would have been very familiar to the people of Haggai's day. The first of those passages is Psalm 2. We're going to read the entire Psalm, so you might want to go ahead and turn to it. When you turn to it, you'll see that the ESV heads the Psalm, The Reign of the Lord's Anointed.

Let's begin Psalm 2 by reading the first three verses. Psalm 2, 1 through 3 say, Remember that most of the people to whom Haggai spoke would have experienced the Babylonian captivity and exile.

[3 : 00] They would have had no doubt that this first section of Psalm 2 was true. They had lived through the effects of pagan rulers setting themselves against God and against God's kings.

In fact, the people of Haggai's day were still living through the effects of nations rebelling against God and God's kings. The people were back in their land, but they were subject to a foreign ruler. The people of Haggai's day would have had zero doubt that the first three verses of Psalm 2, a psalm that they knew so well, were true. They would have had doubts, though, about whether the remainder of Psalm 2 would come through.

So let's read the remainder of Psalm 2 now. And here are Psalm 2, verses 4 through 12. These verses are in response to the first three verses documenting how the other nations have rebelled against God and against God's kings.

Starting in Psalm 2, verse 4, it says, He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath and terrify them in his fury, saying, As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.

[4 : 12] I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, You are my son. Today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage and the ends of the earth your possession.

You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now, therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest ye be angry, and you perish in the way. For his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. The words of Psalm 2, 4 through 12 sound great, but the people of Haggai's day had relatively little evidence that the events described in those verses would come true.

Quite likely, many in the crowd doubted whether their God could deliver on the promise of these verses. When you think about it, who could blame them for wondering whether God could deliver on his promise?

[5 : 21] They had seen their world turned upside down. They were a relatively small group of people trying to rebuild a Jerusalem that was in ruins. Yes, they just heard God make a nice-sounding pledge through Haggai, and that pledge came at the end of verse 19 of Haggai 2.

We looked at that last week when God said, Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing, but from this day on I will bless you. The pledge of blessing had to sound good, but the people's circumstances remained the same. Haggai's prophecy we are studying tonight was spoken on the same day as the words of verse 19. So the people were still facing a winter after a very meager harvest. Add to that one more thing that they would have known about. God had promised to bless his people through a line of rulers that descended from King David.

That line appeared to have been broken forever following the terrible rule of Jeconiah, also known as Coniah or Jehochin. We'll usually refer to him tonight as Coniah because that's the name used in the background passage we're about to read next.

[6 : 40] Listen to what God told Jeremiah to write about Coniah. You'll be able to tell how much Coniah had angered God, and the passage we're going to be looking at is Jeremiah 22, verses 24 through 30.

So here are Jeremiah 22, verses 24 through 30. As I live, declares the Lord, though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off and give you into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country where you were not born, and there you shall die. But to the land to which they will long to return, there they shall not return.

Is this man Coniah a despised, broken pot, a vessel no one cares for? Why are he and his children hurled and cast into a land that they do not know?

O land, land, land, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord. Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days, for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah.

[8 : 07] Notice how verse 30 ends. Jeremiah was to write Coniah down as childless. A different way to say it would be write this as if Coniah had no children.

We know that Coniah did have offspring, but he was considered childless in the sense that he had no sons who would reign. The words that Jeremiah prophesied about Coniah did come true.

We know that he was carried off to Babylon and that he never came back. By now you may be thinking, this lesson was supposed to be about Haggai, but we've spent the first several minutes talking about Psalm 2 and Jeremiah 22.

We spent the time on these passages because we needed to familiarize ourselves with background information that the people of Haggai's day already knew. Without this background information, Haggai's last prophecy in verses 20 through 23 seems to be of little importance to us.

But with the background information, we'll see that Haggai's last prophecy is critical to our redemption. So keep that in mind. Haggai's last prophecy is critical to our redemption.

[9 : 20] So let's go back to tonight's Haggai text and we're going to break the text into just two sections. Our first section tonight covers verses 20 through 22.

And in Haggai 2, 20 through 22, we see the Lord's power. So the Lord's power is your first section. Let's read Haggai 2, verses 20 through 22 again.

The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the 24th day of the month. Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms.

I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.

Verse 20 gives us the date of this final prophecy. If you look back a few verses to Haggai 2, verse 10, you'll see that this final prophecy occurred on the same date as the previous prophecy.

[10:32] And that date in our calendar is December 18, 520 BC. Remember from last week that the main significance of that date, at least until Haggai makes his prophecies, was that the people had come together to celebrate finishing the temple's foundation.

Unlike Haggai's previous prophecies, this last pronouncement is addressed to only one person.

Verse 21 tells us that the prophecy is addressed to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah.

In our first study in Haggai, we learned that Zerubbabel had been appointed governor by Cyrus, the pagan ruler of Persia. Let's look at the prophecy in verse 21, sentence by sentence now.

God first says, I'm about to shake the heavens and the earth and to overthrow the throne of the kingdoms. We've seen God say before that he was going to shake things.

Remember in Haggai chapter 2, verses 6 and 7, God said that he would shake things so that the other nations would bring their treasures to furnish the temple. The shaking mentioned here in this last prophecy is going to be even more significant than that.

[11:52] The shaking that God references here will be shaking that God initiates because of his judgment on the nations, but it's going to go beyond even that. Although the damage to the shaken nations will be catastrophic, this shaking will be a shaking that restores order.

God is promising to shake the nations so that events will turn out the way God has promised. The shaking here is also different in scope. In 2, 6 and 7, that shaking was focused on bringing in treasures that would add material glory to the rebuilt temple.

The shaking in tonight's text will have more far-reaching effects, and we see those effects in the last part of the first sentence. At the start of verse 22, God finishes that sentence by saying that he will overthrow the throne of kingdoms.

Here's where God begins to use language that would cause people to remember other times where God acted decisively. The term translated overthrow there signifies total and instantaneous destruction by God's unlimited power, and it's used more regularly and most regularly to describe God's annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In Deuteronomy and the prophets, the term also appeared to refer to the judgment of God on his people, but Haggai is called to reverse this trend and to use that word against the foreign nations.

[13:24] Listen to Genesis 19, verses 24 and 25 for just one example of how the past tense of the word translated as overthrow was used to describe what God did to Sodom and Gomorrah.

Here are Genesis 19, 24 and 25. Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven, and he overthrew those cities and all the valley and all the inhabitants of the cities and what grew on the ground.

In Haggai, God is clear about what he's going to overthrow. God says he will overthrow the throne of kingdoms.

The things overthrown speak to how thorough and complete the shaking will be. Thrones and kingdoms will topple easily when God acts. If we have yet to grasp how thorough this shaking will be, look at the next sentence of verse 22.

God says, I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations and overthrow the chariots and their riders. So you see there that God says he will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations.

[14:44] And then we see the word translated as overthrow again. And this time God says he is going to overthrow the chariots and their riders. The overthrow of chariots and their riders draws on the exodus events in which Pharaoh is defeated.

Even the most potent military resources available to ancient rulers will fall when God does this shaking. Listen to Exodus chapter 14 verses 23 through 29.

These verses describe what happened back in Moses' day when the Egyptians tried to follow the departing Israelites across the Red Sea. So here are Exodus 14, 23 through 29.

They say, The Egyptians pursued and went after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

And in the morning watch, the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily.

[15 : 55] And the Egyptians said, Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians. Then the Lord said to Moses, Stretch out your hand over the sea that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and upon their horsemen.

So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea.

The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen. Of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. Going back to Haggai, look at the last sentence of Haggai 2.22. God said there, And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother.

The wording here is similar to two things that Haggai's original audience also would know. The first would be Gideon's defeat of the Midianites.

[17 : 16] I said Gideon's defeat of the Midianites, but actually God caused the Midianites to defeat themselves. We see that in Judges 7.22. Listen to just the first part of Judges 7.22.

When they, talking about Gideon and his men, blew the 300 trumpets, the Lord set every man's sword against his comrade and against all the army.

So the wording here in Haggai could be a reference to Gideon and the Midianites. The wording certainly fits for that. However, the wording fits even better with an end times prophecy in Ezekiel that Haggai's original audience also would know.

Listen to Ezekiel 7.21. Ezekiel 7.21 says, I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Lord God.

Every man's sword will be against his brother. Listen to Haggai 2.21-22 together again to notice one more thing.

[18 : 28] God says, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms.

I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations and overthrow the chariots and their riders and the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. God is crystal clear that he is the one who is going to make these events happen. Nobody will be able to attribute these things to random acts of nature or to coincidence.

God repeatedly says that he is about to shake, to overthrow, and to destroy things. And here's why that is so important. When we read Psalm 2 earlier, we talked about how the people had seen the first three verses of that psalm come true, but they likely, from a human perspective at least, legitimately had doubts about whether the remainder of the psalm would come true.

So listen to Psalm 2, verses 4 through 12 again. Those verses say, And I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession.

[20 : 16] You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest you be angry, and you perish in the way. For his wrath is quickly kindled.

Blessed are all who take refuge in him. In tonight's Haggai passage, God is reminding the people that he is the same God who acted on Israel's behalf in the past.

Therefore, they have reason to believe that God will act again in the future just as God has said that he will. Haggai, verses 20 through 22 of chapter 2, had to give the Israelites some hope, but they still would have had some doubts because of what we read in Jeremiah earlier.

Jeremiah prophesied that no son of Coniah would reign. Even if God did the other things promised in Psalm 2, how could God reestablish the Davidic kingdom and maintain the curse against Coniah?

[21 : 31] That's a real good question. And for the answer, we need to look at the second section of tonight's lesson. In verse 23 of Haggai 2, we see the Lord's proxy.

So the Lord's proxy is your second blank. Listen to Haggai 2, verse 23 again.

On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.

Some of you may remember this piece of background information from our first Haggai lesson. Zerubbabel was the grandson of King Jehoiachin, who is the same Coniah that we've been reading about tonight.

And Coniah was exiled to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BC. Zerubbabel's name actually means seed of Babylon, or someone born in Babylon.

[22 : 39] He was an heir to the Davidic throne, and he's also called the son of Shealtiel. If you look at 1 Chronicles 3, verses 17-19, it says Padaiah was his father, and Shealtiel was his uncle.

The most obvious explanation for that is that when his father died, he was adopted by Shealtiel and became known as the son of his adopted father rather than his natural father.

So you're probably starting to see the connection here. Zerubbabel, the Persian-appointed governor of a small province in ruins, was an heir to the Davidic throne.

He was the grandson of the cursed king Coniah. But yet we have a small problem. God said in Jeremiah 22-30, Thus says the Lord, Write this man Coniah down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days, for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah.

God applied a curse to Coniah's offspring and Zerubbabel was the offspring of Coniah's offspring. The people hearing Haggai's words that day would have known about Zerubbabel's relatives.

[24 : 04] And we'll come back to the significance of that in just a minute. For now, listen to Haggai 2-23 again and think about what Zerubbabel must have been feeling when he heard these words.

On that day, which is the day that God overthrows the other nations and kingdoms, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts.

We can probably imagine that Zerubbabel was feeling very little like an heir to a kingdom when he heard those words from Haggai that day. Once again, the words are very carefully chosen, though.

The words are opposite of what God, through Jeremiah, said about Zerubbabel's grandfather. The governor is singled out as playing a major role in the Lord's plans for the future.

Zerubbabel is singled out as a key player not only in the reconstruction of the temple, but in the anticipated future of the Davidic kingdom.

[25 : 16] The language of verse 23 also emphasizes unilateral divine selection. The piling up of such language in a short space signals that the unusual events are being described here.

One of those specific terms is the term, my servant, and the term translated, my servant, is common in the Hebrew Bible.

It's often used of those whom the Lord has appointed to a particular task, whether from among his people or from the pagan nations. But the Hebrew word is especially used as a designation of either David as king, like in historical references to David, or an end times figure who will be David-like.

Ezekiel used the term like that. Here are Ezekiel chapter 34, verses 23 and 24. Ezekiel 34, 23 and 24 say, And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them.

He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I am the Lord, I have spoken.

[26 : 41] In Haggai 2, 23, Haggai's point is that Zerubbabel represents a restoration of the Davidic line of promise. As a result of God's initiative, what was lost by the tragedy of the exile will in the future be regained in a manner that exceeds expectations.

Zerubbabel represents God's renewed blessing upon the Davidic royal line. So the passage holds out unusual promise for the future, even though the language is somewhat guarded.

Neither the detailed circumstances nor the precise timing of the fulfillment is indicated here. God says that he's going to make Zerubbabel like a signet ring.

That also is an important term. The signet ring was a piece of metal jewelry on which was etched an impression of the seal of the king.

It symbolized the king's authority because of its use to authenticate legal documents and royal pronouncements. In Haggai 2, 23, the signet ring figuratively portrays Zerubbabel as one who uniquely represented divine authority and who appeared as God's ruling representative.

[27 : 58] Zerubbabel was authorized to act in the Lord's name and God was going to use him to authenticate his blessing to the people. The signet ring reference is where we see God through Haggai deliberately used language that was opposite of what God had said to Zerubbabel's grandfather.

When we read Jeremiah 22, verse 24, we heard God speak these words to Zerubbabel's grandfather. And here is Jeremiah 22, 24 again.

As I live, declares the Lord, though Coniah, the son of Jehoakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off.

So God said he tore off Zerubbabel's grandfather as the signet ring, but now God is going to reestablish Zerubbabel as his signet ring.

So this reference is a powerful reminder that God loves Zerubbabel and Israel very deeply. It also was a reminder that God was entrusting Zerubbabel with his authority, which is symbolized by the ring.

[29 : 13] This offer of authority is a step beyond forgiveness. It's a declaration of the restoration of the close relationship between God and his chosen people.

So let's pause right there for a minute and think about the change we have seen in the Israelites during the four-month span of Haggai's prophecy. That change is nothing short of remarkable.

What was initially a kingdom in shambles, slowly dying in its own disobedience, became a robust and blessed kingdom led well by a repentant and God-focused leader.

The miserable has been made majestic, and that is the power of God's redemptive activity. Before we leave verse 23, let's look forward in time to see how God used Zerubbabel and to see how God fulfilled that prophecy about Zerubbabel.

In the short term, we know that God used Zerubbabel to lead the people to finish building the temple again. Haggai stops with verse 23 of chapter 2, but if you look at Ezra chapter 6, verses 14 and 15, you'll see more details.

[30 : 31] Here are Ezra 6, 14 and 15. And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Ido.

They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

The rebuilding effort took four years from the time the work was restarted, but the people under Zerubbabel's leadership got it done. Zerubbabel faded from the scene shortly after that, but he still played an important role in future events.

Turn over to Matthew chapter 1 and we're going to spend some time in Matthew chapter 1. You probably already know that Matthew chapter 1 has the genealogy of Jesus from Joseph's line. And you may want to stay there even after we finish reading these next three verses because we're going to come back to Matthew chapter 1 again. Matthew chapter 1 verse 1 says, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

[32 : 01] Skip down now to Matthew chapter 1 verses 12 and 13. Starting with Matthew 1.12 it says, And after the deportation to Babylon, Jeconiah was the father of Shealtiel and Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud and Abiud the father of Eliakim and Eliakim the father of Azor.

There's R. Zerubbabel showing up in the genealogy of Christ. From an earthly viewpoint, he was the lowly governor of a small Persian province smack dab in the middle of nowhere, but he was also smack dab in the middle of the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

And that is why the events of tonight's passage are key to our redemption. God used Zerubbabel to restore the temple. More importantly, God used Zerubbabel to restore the line of David.

From that line would come the Messiah who would remove the need for the temple. Right now, I hope some of you are saying, wait a minute, wasn't Jeconiah who was also known as Coniah cursed so that none of his offspring would rule?

The answer to that question is yes. After all, we've read Jeremiah 22 30 a couple of times, and here it is one more time. Jeremiah 22 30 said, Thus says the Lord, write this man, talking about Coniah, down as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days, for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah.

[33 : 49] That leads to an obvious question. How can Zerubbabel be in the line of the Messiah when God said that none of Coniah's offspring would rule?

Well, two possible answers exist for that question. We'll cover both, but one is better than the other. Some people say that the word offspring there very specifically refers to only Coniah's sons.

Therefore, Zerubbabel, as a grandson, could still rule. That interpretation might be true, but that interpretation seems counter to how the line of David is referenced elsewhere in the Bible.

After all, we've read how God often speaks about his servant David sitting on the throne, even though it's a descendant of David sitting on the throne. So here's the better answer, and it's the answer that removes all doubt about how Jeremiah's prophecy can still be true, even though the descendants of Coniah are in the Messiah's genealogy.

If you still have your Bible open to Matthew chapter 1, skip down to Matthew 1.16. The list of the Messiah's ancestors ends with Jacob, the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

[35 : 20] Joseph came from Zerubbabel's line, but Joseph had nothing to do with fathering Jesus. Jesus was virgin-born, so none of Coniah's cursed blood is in the Messiah.

The connection to Joseph simply provided Jesus with the legal right to reign. Jesus' blood right to the throne of David came through Mary from Nathan, Solomon's brother, not Solomon from whom Coniah came.

And so, Jesus bypassed the curse. So the curse is still in effect, even though Zerubbabel could appear in the genealogy of Jesus.

Jesus. Remember the main idea we talked about tonight. This passage shows that God will use Haggai's generation and the subsequent generations to accomplish his redemptive purposes. Once again, we see that the narrative of the Bible is consistent throughout the Old and the New Testaments. When we studied the life of the Old Testament Joseph, we saw that the main point of the book of Genesis was to show the progression of redemptive history, or how God will redeem his people from the curse of sin.

[36 : 41] Throughout Genesis, God showed that he is faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem God's people. Here in Haggai, God tells the people that he still will be faithful to preserve the line of the seed who will redeem God's people, even though someone in that line was cursed.

Haggai also looks ahead to the events documented in Revelation, where the remainder of Haggai's final prophecy will come to pass. So from Genesis to Revelation, we once again see that the Bible is consistent.

In tonight's passage, we see that God is being true to his promise of deliverance. Remember the ending of Psalm 2. In Psalm 2, verses 7-12, the psalmist wrote, I will tell of the decree.

The Lord said to me, You are my son, today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way.

[38 : 05] For his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. And of course, now when you look at verse 12, we know who the psalmist is referring to when he talks about kissing the son, lest he be angry, and perish in the way.

He's talking, of course, about the ultimate descendant of Zerubbabel, who is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Tonight's Haggai passage gives us more details about how Psalm 2 will come true.

The New Testament gives us the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey would say. And we can make some other current-day applications of this passage. We talked about how the people of Haggai's day, because of their current circumstances, would have had doubts about whether God really would accomplish his purposes.

We'll skip a show of hands, but I'm guessing that if we were honest, all of us would admit to occasionally wondering and having doubts about God's word. The consistency of the Bible's message from beginning to end directly contradicts those doubts.

God has laid out in his word how he will accomplish his purpose. Even though some prophecies have yet to come true, enough prophecies have already come true to provide assurance that the other prophecies remaining will be fulfilled as well.

[39 : 36] Another important thing to remember is that any work God calls us to do is important.

From the world's point of view, Zerubbabel was a small-time governor, yet God used Zerubbabel in God's plan of redemption.

Warren Wearsby had this to say about Zerubbabel, When the Christian church celebrates the birth of Christ, people remember Mary and Joseph, the Magi, the shepherds, and even wicked King Herod, but they rarely think about Zerubbabel, a humble player in the drama, but a faithful one. Wearsby then listed some other things we can learn from our study in Haggai. The first is that the word of God sustains and encourages the work of God.

Or said another way, the work of God is begun, sustained, and encouraged by the word of God. We read Ezra 6.14 earlier, but here it is again.

And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by decree of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes, king of Persia.

[40 : 58] So you can see that their work was motivated by the word of God that came through the prophets. The second thing we can note is that God's servants must work together to build God's temple.

It took them over four years to rebuild the temple, but they did do it. This next one is one that I like. He had the way with words and he said, when the outlook is bleak, try the up look.

So when the outlook is bleak, try the up look. And then the last thing he noted was that apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, our labors are in vain.

Wiersbe's list is good, but the primary thing to take away from tonight's passage, and even from the entire book of Haggai, is tonight's main idea. God will use Haggai's generation and the subsequent generations to accomplish his redemptive purposes.

More than 2,500 years have passed since Haggai's day, but believers today are part of the subsequent generations referenced in that main idea. The book of Haggai should challenge us to become what the repentant people of Haggai's day became.

[42 : 17] Here's a quote from Mark J. Boda in his commentary about Haggai. He said, May God strengthen us to place kingdom activity in its proper perspective.

The Israelite community in the Persian period was a community dwarfed by the power of the Persian empire, and today we live in an increasingly secularized world.

We may be tempted as the church to cower in submission and to live in fear, but we have even greater reasons to expect the cataclysmic upheaval of the cosmos. The Zerubbabel who was to come has come, and through his resurrection confirms the promise of old.

Haggai calls us to embrace that cataclysm as our hope and to live faithfully until Zerubbabel's greatest son, our Lord Jesus Christ, returns. If Haggai could speak to believers today, he probably would paraphrase what he said in Haggai 2.4, and of course these words actually came from God, and Haggai 2.4 told us, Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the Lord.

Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehoshadak the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. And here's the part that really applies to us.

[43 : 39] Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the book of Haggai and what it teaches us about how you worked to continue to fulfill your redemptive promise.

And Lord, we know that you are working to continue fulfilling that redemptive promise today. When we are tempted to live in fear or doubt, help us remember that you are on your throne, and that you one day will shake the nations to make everything fall into line just as you said it will.

Let that hope strengthen us as we go throughout the next few days and weeks. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.