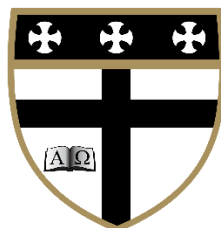


# The Whitefield Seminary Papers

“Law & Religion Forum”

Volume 2, Apostolate Paper # 20



## A HISTORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

“Haggai’s Prophecy: A Prologue to the New Testament”<sup>1</sup>

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by

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<sup>1</sup> Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022). [www.roderickford.org](http://www.roderickford.org).

# “Haggai’s Prophecy: A Prologue to the New Testament”<sup>2</sup>

by

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Chapter 1. A Call to Rebuild the House of the LORD.....	5
Chapter 2. The Desired Glory of All Nations.....	7
Conclusion.....	10

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<sup>2</sup> Roderick O. Ford, *The Apostolate Papers* (unpublished research papers, 2015 to 2022). [www.roderickford.org](http://www.roderickford.org).

## Introduction

The Prophet Haggai was one of the Jews who lived in the kingdom of Judah before the Babylonian captivity, survived the seventy years of that captivity, and had returned to Jerusalem as an old man.

The Book of Haggai involves events that occurred after Cyrus the Great had issued his decree permitting the Jews to return to Jerusalem in 538 BC. Eighteen years later, during the year 520 BC, King Darius I had become ruler of the Persian empire; Zerubbabel had been established as the governor of Judah; and Joshua was consecrated as the high priest in Jerusalem.

In 520 BC, the building of the Second Temple already had come a halt, but to a dispute between the Jews and their rivals (i.e., other ethnic groups and fellow subjects of the Persian empire). This history is described in the Book of Ezra in chapters four, five, and six, to wit:

### Completion and Dedication of the Temple

Then, because of the decree King Darius had sent, Tattenai, governor of Trans-Euphrates, and Shethar-Bozenai and their associates carried it out with diligence.

So the elders of the Jews continued to build and prosper under **the preaching of Haggai the prophet** and Zechariah, a descendant of Iddo. They finished building the temple according to the command of the God of Israel and the decrees of Cyrus, Darius and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia.

The temple was completed on the third day of the month Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the Prophet Haggai and his preaching are largely associated with the period of the Jewish return to Jerusalem and of the building of the Second Temple.

Haggai ... is known for his prophecy in 520 BCE, commanding the Jews to rebuild the Temple. He was the first of three post-exile prophets from the Neo-Babylonian Exile of the House of Judah (with Zechariah, his

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<sup>3</sup> Ezra 6: 13-15.

contemporary, and Malachi, who lived about one hundred years later), who belonged to the period of Jewish history which began after the return from captivity in Babylon. His name means "my holidays."

Scarcely anything is known of his personal history, with the book of Haggai offering no biographical details about his ancestry or anything else in his life outside the prophecies of 520 BCE. Haggai is only mentioned in one other book of the Bible, the book of Ezra. He may have been one of the captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Some commentators suggest he may have been an old man, and seen the previous temple before its destruction due to what he says about the former glory of the Temple in Haggai 2:3. He began God's prophecy about sixteen years after the return of the Jews to Judah (ca. 520 BCE). The work of rebuilding the temple had been put to a stop through the intrigues of the Samaritans. After having been suspended for eighteen years, the work was resumed through the efforts of Haggai and Zechariah. They exhorted the people, which roused them from their lethargy, and induced them to take advantage of a change in the policy of the Persian government under Darius I.<sup>4</sup>

In Reformed theology, Haggai's prophetic warning to build the Second Temple in Jerusalem was a prophecy of both Christ and his Church. Both Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430 AD) and John Calvin (1509 – 1564) reached this theological conclusion.

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<sup>4</sup> "Haggai," Wikipedia (online encyclopedia) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haggai>.

## Chapter One

### “A Call to Rebuild the House of the LORD”

When in the year 538 BC the Jews had returned to Jerusalem from their exile in Babylon, a sort of reorganization and adjustment needed to take place. Priorities were established; a Jewish governor and a Jewish high priest were instituted; economic and commercial activities were reorganized; but the rebuilding of the House of the LORD languished.

However, the Prophet Haggai did not believe that the Jews would prosper in any other endeavor until the House of the LORD was rebuilt. Around the year 520 BC, the prophet said:

Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways.

You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.’

This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways....

‘You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?’ declares the Lord Almighty. ‘Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with your own house.

Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the olive oil and everything else the ground produces, on people and livestock, and on all the labor of your hands.’<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Haggai 1:5-11.

In so many words, Haggai forewarned that unless the Temple was rebuilt, the LORD would not bless the children of Israel or the city of Jerusalem.

Haggai's prophetic message was directed to Judah's leaders, Zerubbabel, governor, and Joshua, the high priest, and to all the people of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup>

The response given to the Prophet Haggai was favorable. The king, the high priest, and the people "came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Haggai 1:1; 1:12-13.

<sup>7</sup> Haggai 1:14-15.

## Chapter Two

### “The Desired Glory of All Nations”

The new House of the LORD, or the Second Temple, which the Prophet Haggai admonished the Jews to make the first priority, would guarantee the presence of the LORD amongst the people of Judah and Jerusalem.

God’s Spirit would thereby remain amongst the people of Judah and Jerusalem. But of even greater significance was Haggai’s prophetic admonition that God’s glory would return to the Second Temple thus making it even greater than the First Temple, to wit:

“This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘In a little while **I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land.**

**I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come,** and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the Lord Almighty.

‘The silver is mine and the gold is mine,’ declares the Lord Almighty.

‘The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,’ says the Lord Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the Lord Almighty.”<sup>8</sup>

This prophecy of the meaning and significance of the Second Temple extends far beyond the reinstatement of the Mosaic laws and the liturgical practices of the First Temple.

Hence, orthodox Judaism was not the objective goal of the rebuilding of the Second Temple—there would be something else, perhaps a “reformed” and a “catholic” Judaism that be profoundly greater than the first orthodox Judaism!

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<sup>8</sup> Haggai 2:6-9 [NIV].

Indeed, the glory of the Second Temple would far exceed the First Temple on this account: God would “**shake the heavens and the earth**” and “**shake all nations**” and “**what is desired by all nations will come.**”<sup>9</sup>

In *The City of God*, Augustine of Hippo has interpreted the words “**shake the heavens**” (Haggai 2: 6) to mean that God “moved the heaven by the testimony of the angels and the stars, when Christ became incarnate.”<sup>10</sup>

Augustine interpreted the words “**shake... the earth**” (Haggai 2:6) to mean that God “moved the earth by the great miracle of His birth of the virgin. He moved the sea and the dry land, when Christ was proclaimed both in the isles and in the whole world. So we see all nations moved to the faith....”<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, Augustine interpreted the words “**shake all nations**” and “**what is desired of all nations**” (Haggai 2:7) to mean what “is looked for at His last coming”; “[f]or ere men can desire and wait for Him”; and, thus, “Haggai more openly prophesies of Christ and the Church.”<sup>12</sup>

For this reason, Augustine conceptualized a theology of the “**true Israelites**” consisting of such persons who come for “**all nations**” and who have God’s laws written in their minds and hearts belong to a “heavenly fellowship, **to the true Israelites**, the citizens of the country that is above.”<sup>13</sup> And these “true Israelites,” concluded Augustine, come from “**all nations**” and form “a society of pilgrims of all languages, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby earthly peace is secured and maintained....”<sup>14</sup>

Reformed theologian John Calvin gives the same interpretation of Haggai 2:6-7 as Augustine’s, thus stating:

He then adds, I will move all the nations, and they shall come. After having mentioned the heaven and the earth, he now shows that he

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God* (New York, N.Y.: The Modern Library, 1950), p. 642.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, supra, p. 658.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 698.



would **arrest the attention of all mortals**, so as to turn them according to his will, in any way it may please him: Come, he says, shall **all nations**—How? because I shall shake them. Here again the Prophet teaches us that men come not to Christ except through the wonderful agency of God. He might have spoken more simply, I will lead all nations, as it is said elsewhere; **but his purpose was to express something more, even that the impulse by which God moves his elect to betake themselves to the fold of Christ is supernatural**. Shaking seems a forcible act. Lest men, then, should obscure the power of God, by which they are roused that they may obey Christ, and submit to his authority, it is here by the Prophet expressed by this term, in order that they might understand that the Lord does not work in an usual or common manner, when they are thus changed.<sup>15</sup>

To that end, the Apostle Paul, who crafted the Christian theology of the Early Church, adopted the same general theological conclusions that are reflected in Augustine’s and Calvin’s writings, where Paul wrote: “[f]or he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”<sup>16</sup>

Hence, the Book of Haggai is an ultimate prophecy of a global religion—a universal or catholic religion— whereby orthodox Judaism is reformed and internationalized and made the focal political and theological objective of all nations.

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<sup>15</sup> *Calvin’s Commentaries on the Bible* (Haggai 2:6-7).

<sup>16</sup> Romans 2:28-29. But see, also, Deuteronomy 30:6 (“And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”)

## **Conclusion**

The Prophet Haggai not only urged this fellow 6<sup>th</sup>-century Jews to give first priority to the building of the Second Temple, but he also foretold of the Second Temple's global significance, glory, and greatness.

According to the Prophet Haggai, the glory of the Second Temple would be greater than that of the First Temple.

The Prophet Haggai stated that upon the completion of the Second Temple, the LORD God would shake all nations and that "the desired of all nations will come." (Haggai 2:7).

Augustine of Hippo and Reformed theologian John Calvin interpreted this Scripture to mean Christ and the Christian Church.

Thus, we in the Reformed theological school, conclude that the Book of Haggai is a prophecy that reflects the establishment and organization of the Christian Church.

**THE END**

**THE END**

