

**Belief Without Worship**  
**Haggai 1:1-15**  
**Sunday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021**  
**By Ryan Perry**

**Scripture:**

**Haggai 1:1-15**

*[1] In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: [2] “Thus says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.” [3] Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, [4] “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins? [5] Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. [6] You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.*

*[7] “Thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. [8] Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD. [9] You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. [10] Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. [11] And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors.”*

*[12] Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. [13] Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD’s message, “I am with you, declares the LORD.” [14] And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God, [15] on the twenty-fourth day of the month, in the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.*

**Let’s Pray**

**Introduction**

Back in college before I met my lovely wife, I dated a girl by the name of Erin McDaniel’s. Now, the relationship was okay except for the fact that we were almost complete polar opposites on about 90% of the things we believed, and we fought a lot. **So, as you can imagine, this was a really healthy relationship.**

But I remember one distinct interaction that has stuck in my brain. We were fighting about something (I can't remember what), but I distinctly remember saying the following statement to her: "Are you able to love me for who I am today?"

To which she replied (no joke): **"I love the idea of you and who you could be."** That's just what every dude wants to hear: **"I love the idea of you."** Thankfully our relationship was over shortly after that.

But I have always remembered that phrase, **"I love the idea of you"** because it is applicable to so many things, and it is especially applicable to our relationship with God. **In fact, this is exactly what was happening in the life of the returned exiles during the time of Haggai.**

Now, if you are unfamiliar with the book of Haggai and really the chronology of the Jewish people let me give you a brief overview so that you have a good foundation for what we will be talking about this morning and next week.

1. Because of their sin the Jews ended up in captivity in Babylon from 586 – 538 B.C. until king Cyrus issues a decree in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of his reign that freed the Jewish exiles so they can return home.
2. In 537 the 1<sup>st</sup> of many waves of Jews return from Babylon to Jerusalem, and then one year later in 536 they start to rebuild the temple as God had called them to do.
3. But in that same year there were adversaries in the surrounding lands who began to oppose the Jews, and they fought against their attempts to rebuild the temple for 6 years until the Jews finally gave up in 530 B.C.

And for 10 years the temple sat unfinished, and eventually fell into disrepair as the people of Israel focused more on their own homes and their own welfare than they did the glory of God and their worship of him in his dwelling place, the temple.

But that doesn't mean that they went after the gods of other nations. In fact, we could say (in one sense) that they still believed in God during those 10 years, but they didn't love him or worship him as God in the way he called them to do so.

Instead, like that girl in college, they loved (or we could say believed in) the idea of God, but were ultimately more consumed by a desire for their prosperity than they were about the enduring and glorious presence of God among them.

**We would say they had a belief in God that was devoid of genuine worship.**

And this is the sin that the prophet Haggai exposes, confronts, and challenges within God's people when he speaks God's words to them. And it is the same sin that I believe his words can and should confront within God's people today.

So there are 3 main things I believe that God, through the prophet Haggai, is trying to communicate to these Jews and to us today.

1. He is exposing our sin of belief without worship. (V. 1-4)
2. He shows us the consequences of a belief without genuine worship. (V. 5-6, 9-11)
3. We get to see, from God's people, what a true response of worship looks like (V. 8, 12-15)

And I hope that God will use these words this morning so that we will all leave here with a deep seated, Holy Spirit driven challenge, to make the genuine love and worship of God our greatest and most pressing priority. So let's start by looking at the sin that Haggai exposes:

### **The sin of belief without worship (V. 1-4).**

So one of the bathrooms on the main floor of my house is in desperate need of a remodel. And we keep talking about it and talking about it as if we are going to do something about it and we yet never do. In fact, we even started the project by tearing off the old wallpaper, but then we got caught up in other priorities and we sort of stopped working on it.

Often, we will even come back to it and say, "oh yeah we should really do something about this bathroom," and we throw out a couple of ideas, but then we end up focusing on other things and it doesn't get prioritized.

And this is what the Jews were doing in the time of Haggai. Now yes, they were definitely harassed by non-jewish adversaries which made them stop their work on the temple. In fact, Ezra chronicles this history in Ezra 4:4-5, 24 when he writes:

*[4] Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build [5] and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

*[24] Then the work on the house of God that is in Jerusalem stopped, and it ceased until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.*

But there are a couple problems with this. One, even though adversaries arose that made the work hard, God didn't actually call them to stop. They chose to stop in the face of persecution. In essence, the work of God got hard and so they choose comfort over doing what God wanted.

Second, why didn't they come back to rebuilding the temple even once in 10 years? Is it just the fear of persecution or is it something else? According to Haggai it's something else. As he writes in Haggai 1:1-4:

*[1] In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: [2] "Thus*

*says the LORD of hosts: These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.” [3] Then the word of the LORD came by the hand of Haggai the prophet, [4] “Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, while this house lies in ruins?*

The people are continuing to say that it’s not time to rebuild the temple while they are living in nice, decorated, and paneled homes. Meaning that they have become more consumed with their own welfare and their own comfort than they are consumed with the very presence and glory of God among them.

And though are sin today isn’t necessarily neglecting a brick and mortar building, it is often true that we neglect a robust and full-hearted worship of the triune God in our daily lives.

We can so subtly become consumed by things other than the daily worship of our God. Job pressure, kids, our desire for down time, home projects, financial pressures, entertainment, social media, and politics can all become things that become a primary focus.

They become primary over God’s call on our life to have a daily moment by moment fellowship with him, and they subtly shift our desires toward earthly blessings versus the glory of God being seen in all that we do, which is our primary calling.

As Paul wrote in those famous words in 1 Corinthians 10:31:

*[31] So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*

Now, a great example of this subtle shift, which comes from my own life, is my kids. I say that I want the glory of God to be seen in our family and in how my kids grow, but I see in my own heart this desire creeping up that just wants them to turn out normal (whatever that means). Which is absurd, but it’s real.

Can you see these kinds of things in your own life? And when we do this, we have not only traded the glory of God for a created thing that will perish, but we miss out on the fact that these subtle kinds of shifts in our hearts can actually have real life consequences.

## **2. There are consequences to a belief without genuine worship (V. 5-6, 9-11)**

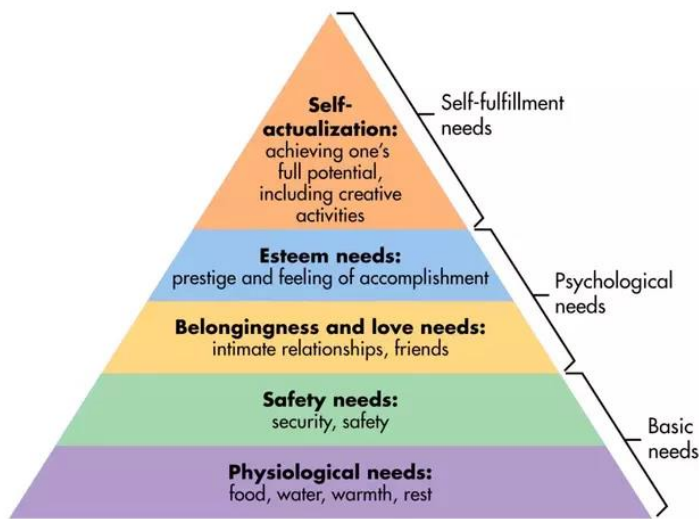
### **Haggai 1:5-6**

*Now, therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: Consider your ways. [6] You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.*

How many of you have ever heard of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs? If you don’t know what it is in 1943 an American Psychologist by the name of Abraham Maslow came up with a 5 tier

model of what motivates people to grow. And he stated that people tend to grow based on their greatest area of need.

And the areas that he identified are as follows from bottom to top:



And as you can imagine, most people within our American society are working hard to try and meet needs within the upper three categories (**belonging, esteem, self-fulfillment**) because for most of us our physical and safety needs are met.

However, for the Jews in Haggai's day they were spending their days trying to fulfill their physical and safety needs. As Haggai says in verse 6:

*[6] You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.*

They are working hard to sow and harvest, to put food on the table, to provide the necessary sustenance for their families, and to make a living wage so they can have a sense of security as they are trying to make a new life for themselves in Jerusalem. **And it would be hard for us to want to fault them for that, right?**

But here's the problem with what they are doing, and really this is the problem with the whole idea of the hierarchy of needs. **It ignores our greatest and most pressing need.**

It ignores the fact that our primary and greatest need is first and foremost found in our triune God. And for us as New testament Christians we would say that it is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ by and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is why Jesus said to the disciples in Matthew 6:33:

*[33] But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*

Meaning, all the things that we (actually) need in this life will be given to us if we first and foremost seek after our triune God. **But the question for us to ponder is do we actually believe that?**

**But on the other side of that coin is another truth that we don't like to often wrestle with.**

The Israelites were seeking all of these physical things as of primary importance, and the truth is they weren't getting anywhere. The sowed and harvested little, they would eat, but they were still hungry, and they tried to make money, but it seemed like it would never last.

And we might look at that situation and think, **"Man they got a raw deal."** But that's not what God says to them. Instead God tells them this in verses 9-11:

*[9] You looked for much, and behold, it came to little. And when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? declares the LORD of hosts. Because of my house that lies in ruins, while each of you busies himself with his own house. [10] Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. [11] And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth, on man and beast, and on all their labors."*

**Ah, this is so hard to wrestle with.** But the truth of their situation is that God was bringing this hardship upon them because they had rejected their primary task and calling. The calling to worship God in and through his presence in the temple. **These hardships were not just a trial given to faithful people, but these were punishments brought upon the Israelites for their faithlessness.**

Now, I know this kind of talk makes many of us uncomfortable, right. Many of us have come out of legalistic backgrounds where we lived as if God was angry with us for every little thing and if we mess up God is right around the corner ready to wack us.

And that type of theology is absolutely opposed to the New Testament teaching. As Paul writes in Romans 8:38-39:

*[38] For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, [39] nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Because of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ we, as his people, are forever loved by God. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Also, we know that not all trials are the result of sin, but may be given to us to make us more like Christ. As James writes in James 1:2-3:

***[2] Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, [3] for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.***

But that doesn't mean that God won't discipline us, and it doesn't mean that our sin won't have consequences.

We only need to look to 1 Corinthians 11 to see that there were some who were sinning by taking the communion in an unworthy matter and in response Paul says to them in 1 Corinthians 11:30:

***[30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.***

Or as the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 12:6:

***[6] For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."***

**God disciplines his people and there are at times real world consequences for our sin.**

Now, I don't have time to put out all the possibilities that exist here, but I want to ask some questions that more get at the general trajectory of our lives, versus one particular sin.

**Do you find yourself hurried and busied with an inner feeling your not getting anywhere? Are you finding yourself feeling unsatisfied by your work, your spouse, or your situation in such a way that you wish you could find a way out? Are you so busy going from one thing to the next that you feel like you don't have any time to think? Are you tired, run down, and maybe even depressed about your life? Do you find yourself always longing for something more that never seems to come? Or do you find yourself often trying to check out of your life?**

Though some of these things may be out of your control, I want to encourage you to ask this question. If any of these resonate with me, **are these the consequences of a life that is seeking earthly needs versus heavenly forever treasures? (repeat)**

And if they are, the last question to answer is how do we move forward?

**3. The true response of belief with worship (V. 8, 12-15)**

***[8] Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, says the LORD.***

*[12] Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. [13] Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "I am with you, declares the LORD." [14] And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people. And they came and worked on the house of the LORD of hosts, their God...*

Do you see the answer here? The answer to how God is calling us to move forward out of the sin of belief without worship?

The leaders being Zerubbabel and Joshua, along with the remnant of the people of Israel, recognized their sin as they heard God's words through Haggai. **And as a result, they turned obeyed the voice of the LORD. They rose up and began to build the temple.**

Now that might not feel like a revolutionary concept to you, but far too often, especially in reformed circles we say things like, "well nothing going to change in my life unless God does it."

And yes, in one sense that is true, As Paul writes: **It is he who works in you both to will and work according to his good purposes.**

Yet in another sense that is you and I coping out of the responsibility that God has given to us to walk in a manner worthy of his calling on our lives (Eph. 4:1).

For us today, like the Israelites, God's call through Haggai is that we would prioritize the worship of God and the glory of God in every area of our life. That we would prioritize it for ourselves and or our families over our own desires for productivity, rest, or whatever else this world tries to get us to seek after.

This means we make meditating on God's Word and prayer a vital part of our existence and it means that we must daily fight to live out Joshua's words when he says: "as for me and my house we will serve the LORD."

And God is calling us to take up this struggle, on a daily moment by moment basis, so that he becomes our primary treasure and his kingdom work becomes our primary focus.

Now, I realize that I'm out of time this morning. And next week we will look at Haggai 2 and will see how God calls us to obey and worship him while simultaneously working on our behalf to accomplish his purposes both here on earth and in eternity.



But until then I want to leave you with this for this morning. Examine yourselves in light of God's word, and ask yourself does my life reflect a full-hearted worship of God or do I have a mere belief in God?

And if you are at a place of mere believe I encourage you to hear God's call on your life to repent, obey his voice, come back to him, and make your worship of him the greatest and most pressing priority in your life. **It is the thing for which you were made.**

And don't worry God knows all your greatest and most pressing needs which is why he says, **"seek first my kingdom, and all the other needs you may have will be given to you."**

**Let's pray.**