

The Greater Glory of the Second Temple (Haggai 2:1-9) by Rev. Tom Aicken

When the Jews returned to their homeland after the Babylonian Captivity, they faced opposition (first from the Samaritans, and later in their own hearts) to rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. Darius reissued the edict for them to go back to work on the temple, and the Lord sent a revival to make them willing and eager to do so, but that still did not resolve the difficulty that they faced, namely, how was it that this latter temple would not match the splendor of Solomon's temple when the prophets of the Lord had said that it would surpass it in glory?

The Lord sent Haggai once again to answer that question, but, even before that, to teach them how to deal with the problem of discouragement. Discouragement is a natural weakness of our fallen nature, and even believers are subject to it. How does it happen? Most often, it's because we are prone to be deluded by externals. We suppose that the absence of an outward, spectacular display means that God Himself cannot be in it. That conclusion is wrong.

Haggai addresses this discouragement by giving the people a word of encouragement, and it's in 2 parts: (1) v.4, He tells them to be strong and work. Many people think, when they are discouraged, that they should stop working, that they should re-evaluate what they are doing, and maybe do nothing at all until the solution to their problem becomes apparent. That's probably the worst thing they can do. They need to be strong and work. (2) also v.4, He reminds them of what he told them earlier, "I am with you, says the Lord of hosts". This was the promise of God's covenant, v.5, His solemn oath, and that cannot fail.

Haggai then addresses the problem at hand, namely, how the second temple will be more glorious than the first when it is so obvious to all that it is as nothing in comparison. The prophet answers that question by giving the big picture of what God is doing in the world. V.6, The Lord is shaking the nations. V.7, The purpose of these shakings is to let men know how all the empires of their own making must come to nothing in the end, so that they will seek the more secure and unshakeable foundation, which is Christ Himself. When the Gentiles come to Christ and commit their bodies a living sacrifice to Him, their good works will be the glory with which Christ fills the house of God.

V.8, The Lord has all the resources to do this. V.9, The glory of this second temple is not to be found in what is seen, and therefore temporary, but in what is unseen and eternal. It is to this latter temple that Christ Himself will come and will fulfill His redemptive purpose. It's not the material ornamentation that will make the temple glorious, but the Person and work of Jesus Christ! The temple represents universal and everlasting peace. The nations talk of that, but can never achieve it. Such perfect peace is to be found only in the kingdom of Christ.