

# From Rubble to Royalty

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good afternoon and welcome to the Lunchtime Bible Talk. We're finishing off our short series on Haggai today. So in just a few moments, we'll read the end of Haggai chapter 2, verses 20 to 23.

First though, let's pray. Father, we thank you that we can come together this lunchtime and know that you speak to your people.

We thank you that you speak to reassure us when all around things can look fragile and weak, when all around things can weigh on us and burden us, but that you speak to reassure us of what you are doing in the world and of what you will ultimately do at the end on the last day.

So be with us now. Help us to put away distractions. Help us to focus. Help us to listen and help us to respond to you with all of our hearts. For it's in the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

So Haggai chapter 2, and we're going to be reading verses 20 to 23. The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the 24th day of the month.

[ 1 : 25 ] 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'm 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, everyone by the sword of his brother. 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've chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts. Amen. Do keep that open. When I look at a beaten up piece of property, I can only think of how terrible it looks.

I don't have the vision to see what it once was, or maybe more importantly, what it could become. Some people can walk into a building and immediately think how they would develop it, how they would improve it.

What could be done to transform that into something much better? They can see through the peeling wallpaper, the disheveled ceiling, and all the rest.

[ 2 : 42 ] They can see what walls ought to come down, what would be best to be restored, how to turn drab to delightful. They have a vision for what can come of it, a vision of where it can go.

And that's what we need at points. We need to have our vision extended beyond the immediate, what's in front of us, what we see. To what is going to happen, what can happen, what the future has in store.

And that's how this prophet of Haggai comes to a close. The words of the Lord speaks again. And the restoration community are given a grand vision of what lay ahead. Potentially in the future, but certainly in the ultimate future.

Before we look at the two parts of this grand vision, let's remember the setting that Israel found themselves in as the restoration community. Israel's glorious past, where God's kingdom was obvious and flourishing under David and then his son Solomon.

The days of the great temple, great prosperity in the land. As the people of God were the king in David's line. That was their past. But this had all fallen apart.

[ 3 : 54 ] The land had divided between a northern kingdom under Jeroboam and a southern kingdom. Judah under Rehoboam. And from there, things only spiraled even more as both kingdoms eventually are taken into exile.

And there's no more king in Israel. The temple was destroyed. The people are captured. And it's a disaster. The kingdom of God on earth looks like it was finished.

What about all those great covenant promises they may have been thinking? Had Israel's rebellion, their constant refusal to listen to God, had that voided them? Well, it certainly would have seemed

that way until the restoration community had this opportunity.

To return to the land and to rebuild the temple and the walls. You see, now there was hope once again that God's kingdom might be established. Even if that hope was just flickering.

And so the people needed to have a vision of what the restoration was achieving. What it was working towards. To see that what they were building. What they were building for. What they were building towards. Was something worth it.

[ 5 : 01 ] Just like the person who sees clearly the potential of a property. The vision of the end is what aligns each step along the process. The vision of what it will look like is what keeps you going.

And so we too need to have our vision. Our hope. Fastened to something that's sure in the future. So that our labors to spread the gospel. Are not in vain.

And so in this vision that Haggai gives the people of God. Both in his own day and to us. Is firstly. Verses 20 to 22. A vision of the enemies of God defeated.

And secondly. Verse 23. A vision that. There will be the enthronement of the greater David. So first. Verses 20 to 22. The enemies of God defeated.

There can only be. And will only be. One winner. At the climax of history. It will be God. And with him. His people.

[ 6 : 03 ] All the great acts of rescuing his people in history. Are pictures of what God will ultimately do. In overthrowing this world. Israel at this point in time.

Were still subjugated to a foreign power. And so this was a necessary hope for them. And throughout history. When the world seems to be against God's kingdom.

His people may be led to ask the question. Will his kingdom continue. Never mind flourish. So this hope is one that we need.

As we too live as aliens and strangers. In a world that is determined to dismantle anything. In our society that has God at its center. So verse 20.

The word of the Lord came again to his people. Through Haggai. It comes on the same day as a prophecy. We looked at last week. That finished with God promising to bless them. And whilst that promise of blessing.

[ 6 : 57 ] Was imminently about the harvest. That they were anticipating. Now we're told. That there's a blessing. That's being talked about. At the ultimate.

In the fullness of time. And it will look like verses 21 and 22. God is going to shake the heavens and the earth. God is going to overthrow. The throne of kingdoms.

He's going to destroy the strength of kingdoms. Overthrew the chariots and the riders. The horses and their riders shall go down. Every one. By the sword of his brother.

And each one of those phrases. Packed into there. Harkens back. To previous victories of God. For his people. We've seen already.

That God will shake the world. At the start of chapter 2. As he plans to elevate the latter glory. Of this temple. But the shaking here is more than that. I once heard a preacher.

[ 7 : 52 ] Describing where he came from. And explaining that it wasn't a particularly nice part of the world. I won't tell you where it was. But he said that there was once a small earthquake. Where he lived. And because it was such a state.

The earthquake was said to have improved. Where he lived. That's tongue in cheek of course. But when we think of tremors. And great shaking of an earthquake. We think of its destructive and chaotic aftermath.

But here. God is promising to shake the world. And bring not disorder. But order. He is going to improve it by the shaking.

His shaking will be to establish. His unshakable kingdom. The shaking will get rid of all that's corrupt. All that's wrong. All that's in opposition to God and his people. So let's look at each of these phrases.

That serve as further evidence. That God will emerge victorious. Verse 22. We see the use of overthrowing. That's pointing us back to Sodom.

[ 8 : 51 ] Sodom. A city that was set on wickedness. That was in complete and absolute opposition to God and his ways. And so we're told way back that God overthrew that city.

Well again verse 22. What about destroy? Destroy the strength of the kingdom of nations. That's the very word that was used by God to Israel in Deuteronomy.

When he was promising to give Canaan the promised land to his people. We read multiple things like this. The Lord your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you.

And that's what God did. Leading his people to victory in the promised land. And destroying the Canaanites despite their grand chariots. And when we think of chariots.

And the phrase we see again. The horses and their riders will go down. Well that's pointing us back to the Exodus isn't it? Pharaoh's massive army. Sent down into the depths of the sea.

[ 9 : 54 ] At God's hand. So that Israel could sing. The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation. He is a man of war. Pharaoh's chariots and his host.

He's cast into the sea. The floods covered them. They went down. Into the depths like a stone. In the greatness of your majesty. You overthrew. And finally the last phrase in verse 22.

Everyone will face this by the sword of his brother. Just like Gideon's victory over Midian. Where this happened. Or when Saul defeated the Philistines. God is saying.

That he has a rich history. And it's a history of defeating his enemies. And bringing victory for his people. And his kingdom. And what Haggai is saying.

That all these past victories are shadows. Of the great overturning. The great shaking. The great establishing. Of God's kingdom that's still to come. That's what God's going to do.

[ 10 : 55 ] How do we know? Because he's done these things before. So in the midst of living under. And at the whim of a global superpower. This was a necessary reminder. That God holds all nations in his hands.

Even when God's people are put under the most intense. Or severe persecution. That will not change the outcome of history. Just as the reduced and meager circumstances of Israel here. Didn't void God's promises. Israel might have asked. Will we live forever as subjects of a foreign power? Well this is God's emphatic answer.

No. He gives them glimpses. That he's been working to this end already. He's allowed them after all. To return to the land. And work at restoration.

But this is a grander promise. Than just their immediate situation. God holds the fate of nations in his hands. And so ultimately. All who oppose him. All who stand in the way of his kingdom progressing.

[ 12 : 02 ] All who stand in the way of his people. Are his enemies. And the day is coming. Where God will finally shake the world. And overthrow all of them.

We might look around. And despair at the world around us. A world that revels in. And celebrates things like. The legalization of abortion. We might look around and see that our society wants to. Unman man. To de-God God. In whatever way it can. We might look further afield. And see the growing physical hostility. That our missionaries. Maybe even ones we knew.

What they have to face. We might see others who have to go to church. And have armed guards. Because there's such a threat. We might look around and see that Christianity in the West.

Is declining. Almost seemingly becoming irrelevant. Or I heard recently of a friend. Who works overseas. That a legislation had been passed.

[ 12 : 59 ] In the country he works in. That meant that the church was reduced by two thirds. Because the possibility of persecution. Was real now. In the face of all of this.

What hope. Do a small number of gospel churches. In Scotland really have. Of keeping going. Never mind expanding. And building. What hope do we have.

As legislation. Will no doubt one day. Turn completely against us. Well. Any power. Any government. Or group.

Or person. That sits in opposition to God. And his people. Will ultimately come to nothing. We aren't the people. Who need to fear that. God has a rich history.

Of keeping his promises. And bringing victory to his people. That's not just ancient history. For Israel and for us. It is the model. Through which we can see a bright future.

[ 13 : 57 ] Wickedness. Evil. Corruption. All that's wrong. Will come to a very drastic end. God wins in the end. No matter how unlikely that looks now.

No matter what. Is coming on the horizon. That means this looks weak. And feeling. As his church. No matter what comes. That makes us think. How can God possibly win?

The might of Pharaoh was put down. The chariots of Canaan were crushed. None of those stood a chance. He will stand in victory. Over all of his enemies.

He will eradicate all evil. He will overthrow all who oppose him. And his people. And so as he does this.

His people will be with him. Sharing in all that it means. Rescue. Resurrection. Rest. We might sometimes feel like we're clinging on. Like we're dying out.

[14:56] Like we're going to be overcome. But our future is as sure as the exodus. And the conquest. And all the other great acts.

Of God saving his people in history. And so just as the enemies of God are defeated. So too will his king be enthroned.

Verse 23. We see the enthronement of the greater David. Israel might have wondered if the covenant with David had been trampled underfoot. Israel is but a little backwater at this point. There's no throne. Where's the king in Israel? All they have at this point in time is a descendant of David who was a puppet governor. Zerubbabel. But God assures his people that the greatest David will rule this world ultimately and forever.

Because God's covenant with David still stands. Look at verse 23. On that day declares the Lord of hosts. I will take you. O Zerubbabel my servant. And I will make you like a signet ring.

[16:00] For I have chosen you. Now Israel might have had good reason to question the restoration and the place of the king. After all back in Jeremiah it looked like the descendants of David would be cast off forever.

However, Caniah the king of Judah at this point was called a signet ring on God's hand. And God said that he would tear the ring off and give Caniah into the hands of the Babylonians.

He would tear him off and give him away to the Babylonians. And it was through the Babylonians that the line of David was cut off from the throne. That prophecy rang true. That had happened.

There was no king. There's no descendant of David on the throne. But now God is saying that that's been reversed. In this restoration that is being reversed.

God reaffirms his commitment to his covenant with David through Zerubbabel. Just as previously that signet ring was torn off. He's now saying Zerubbabel you are the new signet.

[17:04] Look at how Zerubbabel is addressed in verse 23. O Zerubbabel my servant. That's a title that was used regularly of King David throughout the Old Testament.

God is making clear that he is again setting up David's line. It's no surprise that the restoration of David's line is linked to the temple. When the covenant with David was made.

It was as David declared his intention to build a temple for God. Instead God said to him. Don't worry about that. I'm going to establish your line forever.

And now Zerubbabel is proof that that line of David stands. As sure as Zerubbabel was in the midst of Israel. So sure would there be a king that reigns forever from David's line.

Turn over to Matthew chapter 1 with me. Matthew 1. Matthew 1. Here we see the genealogy that leads through to the birth of Jesus.

[18:12] Look at verse 12 and 13. There we are right smack bang in the middle of the line of Jesus.

Is Zerubbabel. He is in the family line of the greater son of David. God's covenant stood.

Israel were not aimlessly going about their work. God was still very much in it. Zerubbabel was another significant cog in the history of salvation. That leads all the way through to Jesus.

God's choosing of Zerubbabel in this way is not a token thing. It wasn't simply to fix eyes to the ultimate future. Although it certainly does that. But it was another reassurance of God's commitment to the people there and then.

When they were doing, what they were doing was paving the way. The signet ring was a seal of God's authority, of God's presence. With his anointed. It was the thing that would authenticate the true king of the true people of God.

[19:20] And here in the day of small things, when the situation looked bleak, Zerubbabel was faithful in doing what God had asked. Back in chapter 1, he led the people in repentance.

He's overseen the foundation being laid as they rebuild the temple. And so obedience is not wasted. Even when it looks like nothing is going to happen.

Because God is always committed to his work. And this passage assures Israel that the work of the kingdom is always of eternal significance, no matter what the external circumstances look like.

Zerubbabel in his present faithfulness was playing his part in the unfolding story of the gospel. And as Israel responded to God's word, he reminds them and reassures them that their faith is looking

forward to the day of the final gospel declaration.

The declaration of God's final victory where Satan and all the powers and principalities of this world will be made a footstool of the son of David.

[ 20 : 30 ] Where Jesus will sit with all his enemies under his feet. The Lord spoke the following to David. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me.

Your throne shall be established forever. And in Zerubbabel's line, Jesus is the king who's going to reign forever.

So how much more can we be sure of what awaits? Because that shaking has begun. The earth was shaken at King Jesus' death through an earthquake.

It was shaken at his resurrection as the stone was rolled away. But when he returns to claim his final victory, that's when the great shaking of kingdoms and thrones will take place.

And nothing is going to stop King Jesus. No liberal ideology. No atheistic manifesto. No rival religious state.

[ 21 : 31 ] No government. No king. No dictator. No alliance of nations. Will stand in the way of Jesus. Claiming a victory that we will share in. Jesus has been raised up to sit at the place of highest honor.

He is the great king. The fulfillment of all that the prophets spoke of. And not only is he now the true temple, but he's the true king. At the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus was given such a title.

He was given a crown. He was bowed down to. Clothed in purple robes. In a palace. Before taking to his earthly throne. But that was all done in mockery.

King of the Jews. A crown of thorns. And his earthly throne was a cross. But Jesus is coming back. And it won't be in the humble state of a Zerubbabel.

In a day of little things. It won't even be like his first coming. He's coming back in glory. And the whole world will know it. There will be no mockery at that point.

[ 22 : 39 ] No appearance of weakness. Only victory. It will be the denouement. The zenith. The climax of all of world history.

And all that God has promised to do. Jesus will sit on the forever throne that was promised to David. And from there he will turn the oppression that his people now knew. When we're marginalized.

Mocked. Opposed. He will turn them all upside down. Ending them forever. Remember. The Israelites of Haggai's day had the task of rebuilding a temple.

That was going to be a shadow of what had gone before. Struggling to believe that what they were doing mattered. And perhaps that's sometimes how we can feel. About life now as the church.

As we seek to reach Scotland with the gospel. Or maybe even just the street that we live on. Or maybe even just some family members. We can feel that the world overwhelms.

[ 23 : 38 ] The struggle to get through another week seems too much. Well Haggai has given us a vision of what we're building towards. The work of the kingdom is always of eternal significance.

No matter what circumstances look like. For Zerubbabel it was clearing rubble. It was through getting bricks ready to lay. That he was told that he would be the person.

Through whom the royal line of David would be restored. It was through faithfulness with rubble.

That God turned his people's eyes to see the final picture. Maybe when you think of serving the church.

You see it like a dilapidated or disheveled building. When you think of what you do to share the gospel. It just seems like it has little potential. Where's this going to go?

Maybe you think the size of the task is just too big. And your tools are just too limited. Well God gives us a glimpse at the final masterpiece of what he will do.

[ 24 : 40 ] Of what he will do in the end. And so he invites us to take part. Assured that it will happen.

And that any obstacles, any opposition will be dealt with. The small and at times we might even think puny work that we now do. And faithfully serving the Lord.

Will be proven to be cosmically significant in the end. So as we serve. Every hour lovingly devoted. Every person invested in.

Every conversation conducted that carries the aroma of Christ. Every book bought and given away. Every child taught. Every act of obedience that models the way of Christ.

Every pound sacrificially given. Every ministry prayed for. Every act of service for brothers and sisters. Every lift offered to someone else.

[ 25 : 38 ] Every welcome lavished. Every time we invite someone to church. These are all investing in this future. All of this displays our faith in what God is going to achieve.

And he is going to do it. God gives us a vision of his masterpiece. So that we can be assured that all that is done for him.

Will not be shaken away. Amen. Let's pray. Father we thank you.

That your wonderful gospel promises. That your wonderful covenant. stands true and that we can look forward to a day when it will come to its fulfillment where every wrong will be righted and we will experience the reality, the presence of the glorious fruition of your promises.

So encourage us by that and help us to serve you now in the present for we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.