

Bible Commentary on Haggai

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Bible Commentary on Haggai

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Introduction

This is not your typical commentary, so I'd like to give a few words of explanation before you begin. As a child I was taught to read the Word of God on a daily basis. Our goal as a family was to read through the Bible once a year, and that is what we did. When I became an adult I kept reading the Bible from cover to cover.

One day, however, I realized that I wanted something more. Reading the Bible was good, but I wanted to actually *study* it. Could I explain what each verse meant? Did I really understand what each chapter was saying? I decided to start writing daily commentary instead of just reading the Word.

This commentary was put together to help me study the Bible. I have no plans to release it, for there are far better commentaries out there that were written by much wiser men. This document is simply a tool to help me understand what the Word of God has to say.

Jon Cooper
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Introduction to Haggai

This book contains the prophecies of Haggai. The dates in this book are very clear, which makes it very easy to put on a timeline. This entire book takes place in the 2nd year of Darius. According to the timeline that I put together (see Resource 2, "Timeline"), this corresponds to 520 BC.

8/29/2018, 7/15/2019, 7/25/2022

Haggai 1

"1 In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying," (Haggai 1)

I find it interesting that some of the books of the prophets are very precise about when the prophecy was given, who it was given to, and what was going on at the time – while others are very vague or give no information at all. There has to be a reason for that. I don't think it's random; I think it's a clue. My guess is that once the millennial reign begins we will look back at history and see that these dates were used more than once – that other important events took place on these days. I don't think we can use them to predict the future, but I suspect we will be able to look back and see the hand of God at work throughout history.

Haggai was a prophet. Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah. Joshua was the high priest at the time. When this

prophecy was given in 520 BC, Darius was ruler. The foundation of the 2nd temple had been laid in 536 BC, but the enemies of God managed to stop the reconstruction project. 16 years had now passed and nothing had been done.

Daniel 9 (the chapter where Daniel realizes the 70 years is coming to a close and asks God to forgive Israel and send them back to the land) took place in the first year of Darius. So this chapter was written at a time when Daniel was still alive.

"2 Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." (Haggai 1)

At this point in history there must have been people in the land, and apparently they were living their own lives and not working on rebuilding the temple. The book of Ezra has a lot to say about the effort to rebuild the temple; what we see here is the other side of the effort – how God used Haggai to motivate people to accomplish that.

"3 Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?" (Haggai 1)

What is it Jesus said in the New Testament? Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you (Matthew 6:33). The people weren't prioritizing the rebuilding of the temple even though it was critical to the worship of God – without a functioning temple there was no way to offer sacrifices and celebrate feasts and so forth. Its reconstruction should have been a priority but it wasn't,

so God was rebuking them for that. They had rebuilt their own houses but not the house of God. They had time to tend to what they wanted but not to the commands of the Lord.

"5 Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. 6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes." (Haggai 1)

God wasn't going to bless Israel until they put Him first and pursued His kingdom. As long as they lived their own lives and pursued their own goals God was going to frustrate them. God knows how to bless a person and satisfy them, and He also knows how to keep them from being satisfied despite their best efforts. All blessings come from the Lord (James 1:17).

Please don't use these verses to say "This is why you should give to the building fund; if you do then God will bless you". There is absolutely no comparison between building a church building today and building the temple of God in the Old Testament! The New Testament church is actually *the people*, not the building. Today we can carry on quite nicely without a building at all – and many people in many countries have done just that. In the Old Testament, however, it was *impossible* to worship the Lord and offer the sacrifices He commanded without a temple, because that is where God Himself dwelt and manifested His presence. There is just no comparison.

Also, don't use this verse to mean "If you tithe then God will bless you". Pastors work very hard today to sell tithing as a way to enrich yourself personally – like some sort of get-rich-quick scheme. Once again, giving money to your local church is

not at all comparable to giving money to rebuild the temple. The two are not remotely the same! Besides, if you will notice, none of these giving verses are found in the New Testament, because the New Testament *does not command tithing*. (For more information on this topic see Appendix S, "The Modern Practice Of Tithing Is Not Biblical".)

"7 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. 8 Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." (Haggai 1)

Rebuilding the temple was an act of obedience and faith, and it brought glory to God. It re-established the worship of the Lord, which brought glory to God. There was also the fact that the Messiah was going to enter into this temple, and the Lord would use it to bring glory to Himself.

"9 Ye looked for much, and, lo it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. 10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. 11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands." (Haggai 1)

Once again – just so we're clear – God is *not* withholding

His blessings from the church today because we haven't helped the Jews rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. God also is not withholding His blessings from us personally because we have not helped the pastor fund his latest building project. There is a big difference between how worship and life was in the Old Testament and how worship and life is today. You cannot take passages like this and swap "temple" for "local church building" and then apply it to modern life. If you want to know how giving works today then read the New Testament – which has nothing to say about God cursing you for not building church buildings, and has nothing to say about tithing either. Pastors love passages like this because they can use them to send their congregations on guilt trips and then pressure them to give them money. They avoid what the New Testament says because it doesn't give them the leverage they want. It's a very bad thing to misuse the Scriptures in this manner, and God will hold people accountable for it.

Getting back to the passage: God was cursing Israel because they didn't have the heart of David, who acted to build the temple of God before God even asked for a temple to be built (2 Samuel 7:1-2). The Israelites knew the temple was in ruins and needed to be rebuilt, but they did nothing. So God cursed them.

"12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, 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 did fear before the Lord."
(Haggai 1)

There aren't many times when the people of Israel

listened to what a prophet of God had to say and immediately moved to act in obedience, but that happened to Haggai. The people heard what he said and went to work. It's really quite amazing! (To read more of the story see the book of Ezra.)

"13 Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith 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 Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, 15 In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king." (Haggai 1)

Haggai's message came on the first day of that month, and the work began on the 24th day of that month. I don't know if there's some deeper significance to knowing the exact day and month and year all of this began, but I don't think it's random, unimportant information. God only gives us details when the details matter and mean something.

Notice what it says in verse 14: the reason the people responded is because God used His Spirit to stir them up. Once again we see that when God uses His Spirit to bring people to life they live; when He doesn't they remain spiritually dead. Calvinism and predestination isn't something that is only taught in Romans 9; it's all throughout the Bible, if we will look for it. (For more information on this topic see Appendix C, "Divine Choice".)

The reconstruction of the 2nd temple began in 520 BC, 18 years after Cyrus issued an edit to build it and 14 years after the

enemies of God managed to halt the effort. The second temple was finished four years later, in 516 BC.

8/29/2018, 7/15/2019

Haggai 2

"1 In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, 2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, 3 Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" (Haggai 2)

A little less than a month has passed since the previous chapter. Work has begun but there's a problem: it's very clear to everyone that the new temple they're building is not nearly as good as the old one. This is immensely discouraging. It's clear that they lost something great and they aren't going to get it back. There are people there old enough to remember the previous temple, and seeing the new one is tremendously disheartening.

"4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: 5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came

out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you:
fear ye not." (Haggai 2)

God could have said "Deal with it. It's your fault! If you people hadn't been so awful then you would still have the old temple". But He didn't. Instead He reached out to them in compassion with a word of encouragement. He told them to remain strong and keep going – to not let this stop them from the work or slow them down. It looked like what they were doing wasn't very meaningful or as good as what was done before, but God told them that looks were deceiving. They needed to continue on in faith and not give up.

"6 For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; 7 And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. 9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (Haggai 2)

In other words, the Messiah (the desire of all nations) was going to come. He was going to enter into this temple and God would use this temple to glorify His name. The new temple would achieve greater glory than the previous one because of Who would enter into it and use it. Times were about to change! The Messiah was coming and He would do a great work among the nations and change the world in a radical way.

"10 In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, 11 Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, 12 If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. 13 Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean."
(Haggai 2)

A few months have gone by and the Lord comes to the priests with a question: if a holy thing touches an unholy thing, does the unholy thing become holy? The answer is no, it does not. It instead works in the reverse: if a holy thing touches an unholy thing then the holy thing becomes unholy.

"14 Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean." (Haggai 2)

This is a principle that we need to remember: when we join with that which is unholy, we become unholy and corrupt ourselves. We don't make wicked things better; instead the wicked thing makes us worse! That is why we are called to come out of them and be separate (2 Corinthians 6:17), and not join hand-in-hand with the wicked. We are set apart for the Lord's service and we must not compromise that. If we are the people of God then we *must* remain separate. Yes, we should preach to

the lost and tell them of Jesus, who is mighty to save, but there are certain lines we must not cross. The rule of the day is not pragmatism or expediency; the rule is obedience and faithfulness to the Word and sticking to principles. (For more information on this topic see Appendix D, "The Principle of Separation".)

As long as Israel sought that which was unclean or had dealings with them, they were corrupted. However, once they sought the Lord and did His will that changed. An unclean people could not offer a holy gift because their uncleanness would pollute the gift.

"15 And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord: 16 Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. 17 I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord." (Haggai 2)

This is what we saw in the previous chapter. Since the people left the temple in ruins and pursued their own wealth, God cursed them and they weren't getting the crop yields they hoped for. God knew their heart wasn't after Him and so God cursed the idol they were serving in His place.

I can already hear a pastor saying "See? If you just give me your money then God will bless you!" I have to say that if you're trying to motivate people to give money by *promising them more money*, you are very far from God! If you are giving money for the express purpose of getting rich then your heart is in the wrong place. We should give because we love the Lord and

are dedicated to His kingdom and want to see the lost saved! We should see our resources as *His* resources, and ourselves as the stewards of His property. If our heart is fixed on money and all we're trying to do is get more money then there's no point in giving at all. Our heart is in the wrong place and we're seeking the wrong thing.

There are people who have lived very righteous lives (like Elijah, Jesus, and the disciples) who gave much to God, and who were actually homeless or poor or imprisoned. There are also very wicked people who are fabulously rich. God never promised the New Testament church that they would be rich if they served God; what He promised was that they would be persecuted and hated if they served God (John 15:18-19). (There is a better world coming, but we're not there yet.)

"18 Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it. 19 Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you." (Haggai 2)

God said that from the day the foundation of the temple was laid the Lord would bless them. Some people have attached great significance to this date and said it speaks of certain things that will happen in the future, but there's no way to tell in advance. Once the future has come and all has been fulfilled we can look back at these dates and see if they did look forward to future promises. All we have right now is conjecture.

God told Israel that from this day He would start blessing them. This would be a turning point for them.

"20 And again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, 21 Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;" (Haggai 2)

Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah. He was not the king and he did not have a line after him, and he still ruled under the approval and authority of Darius. This was not as good as what Israel had before the Babylonian exile, when Israel was an independent nation with a line of kings that went from generation to generation.

God is reaching out to Zerubbabel with a message of hope. Notice how God sees those who are cast down and discouraged and offers them hope. God doesn't tell them "Deal with it; that's your problem". The Lord sees and cares, and He gave them promises – and He's given us promises as well.

"22 And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. 23 In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts." (Haggai 2)

I think this is a reference to the end times – to the day when the Lord will conquer the world and rule over the nations

with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:7-9), and put an end to war and fighting and bring peace to the world (Isaiah 2:4). When that day comes – when the Millennium begins – the Lord is going to raise up Zerubbabel and give him a position of authority in that kingdom. The Lord isn't going to forget the good things that Zerubbabel did, and will reward him accordingly in the coming kingdom.

It's interesting that in the New Testament Jesus taught a parable of a man who went away to get his kingdom, and when he returned he gave his servants positions of authority in that kingdom that depended on how faithful and productive they had been in his absence (Luke 19:12-27). Passages like this teach that our faithfulness in this life does matter, and in the Millennium God is going to reward that faithfulness with positions of authority. It's certainly something to think about! God cares about our faithfulness, and He will give to every man according to his works (Matthew 16:27).

Appendix C: Divine Choice

It's so easy to breeze right by a Bible verse without stopping to consider its implications. One rather striking example of this can be found in a remark that Jesus made about Sodom and Gomorrah. The Lord said something about these two cities that is extremely shocking – and yet for years I read right over the statement without stopping to consider its staggering implications.

In order to give a little context to the passage let's back up a bit. As most people know, Sodom and Gomorrah were two ancient cities that were so wicked that God decided to investigate them *in person*:

Genesis 18:20: "And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;
21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."

Now, there were many times when God sent down judgments upon a person or a nation. In nearly all cases, though, God acted through an intermediary. Throughout the Old Testament God meted out judgment through angels, prophets, storms, plagues, and natural disasters. However, it is *very rare* for God to go down to Earth and do it *Himself*, in person. Aside from the Tower of Babel, the only other example of this that I can think of is the Second Coming, when the Lord will return to put an end to *the entire world itself*. What this means is that this kind of personal visit by God Himself is a Very Serious Matter. It is a sign that someone has crossed the line in a *big* way. If you are in so much trouble that God is coming to *personally* execute judgment against you, then that means your world is about to

end. It is simply not possible to get into more trouble than that.

As an aside, there are some commentators who claim that God didn't actually go Himself; instead He sent angels to investigate. However, that's not what Genesis 18:21 says. As best I can tell, at least one of the three men who visited Abraham on that fateful day was actually God Himself. If you read through Genesis 18 and pay close attention, you will notice that when one of the men speaks the Bible says that it was actually the Lord who was doing the talking. For example:

Genesis 18:9: "And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent.

10 And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. ...

12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?

13 And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

14 Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

15 Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh."

Do you see what happened? In verse 10 the man said "I will certainly return unto thee", and then in verse 14 we are told that it was "the LORD" who said "I will return." The man, then, must be the Lord! It's as simple as that.

But to continue the story: as we know, the Lord told Abraham that He was going to judge Sodom. When Abraham heard this he interceded on the city's behalf, and after a round of negotiations the Lord said that He would not destroy the city if He found 10 righteous people there:

Genesis 18:32: "And he said, Oh let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

As it turned out, though, Sodom didn't have 10 righteous people, so the Lord destroyed it:

Genesis 19:24: "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;
25 And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground."

When it was all over the cities were utterly destroyed and everyone who lived in them perished. The cities were full of utterly wicked people and the Lord judged them, giving them exactly what they deserved.

This is all well-known and there is nothing new here. However, what *is* startling is what Jesus had to say about it. When Jesus was on Earth He performed a great many notable miracles. Some cities repented when they saw His works, but others did not. The cities that refused to repent, *even after seeing miracles performed by Jesus in person*, were singled out by Him for special condemnation:

Matthew 11:23: "And thou, Capernaum, which

art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day."

Do you see what this verse says? Jesus said that if the miracles that He performed in Capernaum had been done in Sodom, then the people in Sodom would have repented and the city would not have been destroyed. Stop and think about that for a minute! Do you see how shocking that is? It means that God knew exactly what the people of Sodom needed to see in order to repent, *and yet God did not save them*. God could have raised up a prophet, sent him to Sodom, and used him to do mighty works and save the city, but He didn't. God actually *knew* they would repent if "mighty works" were done in the city, *but yet He didn't send anyone to do those mighty works*. Instead of saving them He wiped them all out. God could have saved them, but instead God chose to kill them.

What makes this even more striking is that there is another very famous case in which an equally wicked city was on the verge of judgment, but instead of destroying them the Lord *did* send someone to save the city. That wicked city was Nineveh. As we all know, the Lord treated Nineveh *very* differently from the way He treated Sodom. Instead of going down to see the wickedness of the city and then destroying it, the Lord sent Jonah to preach a message of repentance:

Jonah 1:2: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

One of the things that makes this story so famous is that *Jonah did not want to go*. He was *not* a willing participant in this missionary journey and he did everything possible to avoid going.

His reasoning was very clear:

Jonah 4:2: "And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil."

The whole reason Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh was because he knew that if he went and the city repented, the Lord would not destroy them – and Jonah desperately wanted to make sure that God killed everyone who lived in that city and sent them all straight to Hell. But the Lord forced Jonah to go. Let me emphasize that fact: Jonah only went because *the Lord forced him to go*. God actually held Jonah hostage in the belly of a fish until Jonah finally gave in. Jonah was not a willing participant in any of this, but the Lord forced him to go anyway because God was determined to save Nineveh – and Nineveh was indeed saved:

Jonah 3:5: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

6 For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

7 And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water:

8 But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

9 Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"

As an aside, I have heard people say that God cannot use you unless you are 100% right with God. They claim that if you are backsliding or in sin then God can't do anything with your life; you must be a paragon of holiness before God can use you. I think Jonah conclusively proves that this is not true. After all, Jonah was *not* right with God. Jonah had a deep and abiding hatred toward the people of Nineveh, and he had a heartfelt desire to see them all burn in Hell. Jonah hated them so much that when they repented he got very angry. Yet the Lord *still* used Jonah to save them! The Lord used Jonah to save people *that Jonah hated with all his heart*. This proves that the Lord is the one who works through us. Any fruit that we bear is His doing, not ours. The Ninevites weren't saved because Jonah wanted to see them saved or because Jonah was a righteous man; they were saved because God decided to save them, and He saved them *in spite* of Jonah.

I say all of that to say this: God Himself said that both Sodom and Nineveh were exceedingly wicked cities. Jesus was clear that Sodom would have repented if someone was sent to Sodom to perform great miracles – but no one was sent, so Sodom was destroyed and its inhabitants perished. Abraham desperately wanted to save the city, and if the Lord had commanded him to go he would have gone – but the Lord gave no such command. Yet in the case of Nineveh, the Lord *did* send someone (even though that person did not want to go!) and the city *did* repent and was saved. As you can see, *the Lord did not*

treat Nineveh the way He treated Sodom. He saved one city and He destroyed the other.

Now, there is nothing evil about this. Sodom really did deserve to be destroyed, and the Lord was absolutely justified in destroying it. The Lord is under no obligation to save anyone, and no one deserves mercy. Yet it is impossible to escape the fact that God chose to save Nineveh (a city that *Jesus Himself* said would have repented) and He chose to destroy Sodom. In other words, *this is a clear case of God deciding to save one person and destroy someone else.* God chose *not* to save someone who could have been saved. Both cities needed salvation, but God only helped one of them. Nineveh would have been destroyed if God hadn't sent Jonah, but God *did* send Jonah – in fact, God actually forced Jonah to go against his will. That is something He did *not* do with Sodom. There were two cities that could have been saved, but God only chose to save one of them. He let all the inhabitants of the other city go straight to Hell.

The case of Sodom vs Nineveh is a clear case of divine choice. It shows us that God actually does not save everyone. There are some people that God divinely chooses to save, and there are other people that God chooses *not* to save. Divine choice is a real thing. This idea may seem shocking to us, but it shouldn't. The apostle Paul lays out the case for it in unmistakable terms:

Romans 9:14: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.

15 For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

16 So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.

...

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Notice how clearly Paul explains that God never promised to have mercy on everyone. Verse 18 is direct and to the point: God extends mercy to some people so that they *will* be saved, and God hardens others so that they *will not* be saved. You can go back and read those verses if you don't believe me – God is quite up-front about this. God chooses to save some people and He chooses to *not* save others.

Of course, a great many people absolutely hate the idea of divine choice. I have seen some people use this verse to argue against it:

John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Now, let me say that I completely agree with this verse. It is absolutely true that any and all who believe in Jesus will not perish but will have everlasting life. However, it is *also* clear that the people of Sodom would have repented and believed if the Lord had sent someone to demonstrate His power – but He didn't, even though He *did* send someone in the case of Nineveh. According to Jesus Himself the people of Sodom *would have believed* but God chose not to intervene on their behalf. Instead of sending someone to save them He sent them all to Hell.

Does God treat everyone the same? No – but then, God never promised that He would. God gives some people amazing talents while He gives others a life of disability and pain. Some people are given long lives while others die before they are even born. God moves miraculously to save some people while He hardens others and sends them to Hell. And make no mistake

about it – God *does* harden people's heart to make sure that they *will not* be saved. For example:

Exodus 4:21: "And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go."

Exodus 7:3: "And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt."

Who hardened Pharaoh's heart? The Lord did. He said this not once, *but twice*. The reason Pharaoh did not let the Israelites go is because the Lord hardened his heart – and after the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let Israel go, the Lord then destroyed him for not letting Israel go. Pharaoh's hardening led to the devastation of Egypt, the death of all the firstborn in the country, and the death of Pharaoh himself. And it all happened because *the Lord intervened and made it happen*.

People today don't like to hear this. They prefer a God that treats everyone the same. Many people say that God has given everyone a chance to be saved and it's up to us to take it. If some people aren't saved then it's their own fault because God did all He could to save them.

But that's not what the Bible says! Jesus clearly said that *Sodom would have repented*, but God chose to destroy them instead. Nineveh was on the same path to destruction but God *did* intervene to save them (over the strenuous objections of Jonah). Pharaoh might have let the Israelites go, but God hardened his heart so that he wouldn't. God chose to save some people and chose to *not* save others:

Romans 9:18: "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

Notice that verse 18 does *not* say "God has mercy on everyone, but some people are rebellious and don't listen." No, what the verse actually says is "God has mercy on some and God hardens others." It is frighteningly clear.

Why would God do such a thing? In order to demonstrate His power:

Romans 9:22: "What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction:

23 And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,

24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?"

What people do not realize is that God is glorified by those who are saved *and* by those who are damned, because both groups allow God to demonstrate His character. Those who are saved glorify God by giving Him an opportunity to demonstrate His mercy and love, while those who are damned demonstrate God's wrath and power – not to mention His justice.

The key to remember is that *everyone* deserves to spend an eternity in Hell. All have sinned, and the wages of sin is death. Hell is the just punishment for our immense crimes against God, and there is *no one* who deserves to be forgiven. No one can stand up and say "God owes me salvation" or "God owes me

mercy." It is a gift – and that means that God has the right to give it to some people and to withhold it from others. As Paul said:

Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
9 Not of works, lest any man should boast."

We are saved through faith, and that faith is *not of ourselves*. God gives us the faith we need in order to be saved. However, God does not give that faith to everyone. There is nothing unrighteous about this because no one deserves anything from God, and God has not promised to save everyone. Those who *are* saved are given a tremendous gift, because God has given them something that they did not deserve and could never earn. My salvation did not happen because I decided to accept God; it happened because God chose to bless me with saving faith. If God had decided to harden me (as He did to Pharaoh) then I would have been lost and there would have been nothing I could have done about it. My eternal fate – and the eternal fate of everyone – rests solely in the divine choice of God.

If this seems incredible to you, or if it seems like something God would never do, remember the cases of Sodom and Nineveh. One was saved and the other was lost, because God chose to have mercy on one city but withheld His mercy from the other.

Appendix D: The Principle Of Separation

These days it is common for Christian groups to join forces with non-Christian organizations in order to accomplish some social goal – be it protesting abortion, or feeding the hungry, or whatever the hot topic of the day might be. Christians will join with Catholics, Muslims, Mormons, Jews, and whoever else they can find in order to accomplish their goals. The supposed justification for this is that while we may have differences we can all agree on this one area, so why not work together?

The answer is simple: it's because the Bible forbids it. Our generation has forgotten (or rejected) the principle of separation, and the consequences have been devastating. The Church desperately needs to relearn that ecumenicism – the idea that we should all get along and work together no matter what we believe – does not come from God. In fact, God is so opposed to it that He promises to curse those who are involved in such things.

I realize that's a strong statement, so let's look at the evidence. In 2 Chronicles 18 we find the story of Jehoshaphat and Ahab. Jehoshaphat was a wise and godly king who the Lord gave great riches and honor. Ahab was an incredibly evil king who was married to the even-more-evil Jezebel. Despite their differences, Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea to join with Ahab and attack their common enemy:

2 Chronicles 18:1: "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

2 And after certain years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for

him in abundance, and for the people that he had with him, and persuaded him to go up with him to Ramothgilead.

3 And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war."

This is exactly the sort of thing that the modern Church does. Jehoshaphat was good and Ahab was evil; Jehoshaphat worshiped the true God while Ahab worshiped pagan gods. Since they had a common enemy, Jehoshaphat thought it made sense for them to team up and work together. After all, the Syrians were evil and posed a threat to both kings. As the modern Church would say, this is the Lord's battle, and if we can get unbelievers to join us in our fight then so much the better!

Except the battle did not go well. If you read chapter 18 you will see that the prophet Micaiah warned against going to war at all and prophesied that Ahab will be killed. Sure enough, Ahab actually was killed. When Jehoshaphat returned home, the prophet Jehu rebuked the king for joining forces with Ahab:

2 Chronicles 19:1: "And Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

The Lord was *not at all* pleased that Jehoshaphat had joined forces with Ahab. Even though they had a common enemy and a common threat, Jehoshaphat was forbidden from joining

forces with him. The Lord did not see it as attacking a common problem; He saw it as helping the ungodly and aiding those who hate the Lord. What the Lord focused on was the fact that *Jehoshaphat helped Ahab*, a king who hated God. What Jehoshaphat helped him do was beside the point. The Lord was upset that he had helped Ahab *at all*. Because of this, as the prophet Jehu said, "therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord."

Some may wonder, didn't the Lord command us to pray for our enemies and do good to them that hate us? Yes, He did. But the Lord did *not* command us to *join forces with them and help them accomplish their goals*. That is an entirely different matter. That is what Jehoshaphat did, and the Lord was very upset about it. The fact that the Syrians were evil and were also Jehoshaphat's enemy did not matter to God at all.

Let's look at another case. After Ahab died another king arose named Ahaziah, who was also very evil. Jehoshaphat thought it would be a good idea for the two of them to join forces and send some ships to Ophir to get gold (1 Kings 22:48). Once again we see a godly king teaming up with an evil king in order to accomplish something. Now, there was nothing wrong with going to Ophir for gold; King Solomon sent ships out and acquired great wealth. Jehoshaphat thought that by teaming up together both kings would be enriched.

However, the Lord was not pleased:

2 Chronicles 20:35: "And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:

36 And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongaber.

37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying,

Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the Lord hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish."

As you can see, what upset the Lord was not the purpose of the voyage. No, what really upset God was that Jehoshaphat had teamed up with the evil Ahaziah. Because Jehoshaphat joined himself with a pagan, God-hating king, the Lord destroyed the ships they had made. The Lord *hates* it when His people team up with His enemies in order to accomplish something. It doesn't matter if their stated goal is something that is actually good. *He hates it.* In fact, He hates it so much that He promises *wrath* on those who dare to do such things. In the example above, God was so upset at the partnership that He actually destroyed the ships.

This same principle is repeated in the New Testament:

II Corinthians 6:14: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you."

People commonly apply this to marriage, but *Paul was*

not talking about marriage. Marriage isn't even mentioned anywhere in the chapter! What Paul is saying is that Christians should *not join forces with pagans.* As Paul points out, light has no communion with darkness and righteousness has no fellowship with unrighteousness. They are *different teams entirely* and they are not to be "yoked together".

How many times did the apostles join forces with pagans in order to accomplish societal goals? *Zero times.* How many times did the Church in the New Testament join with idol-worshippers to stamp out poverty, feed the hungry, or pursue some other goal? *Zero times.* Instead Paul stands up and condemns this practice – just as it was condemned in the Old Testament. God wants His people to be *separate* from the world. He doesn't want them building alliances with them; He wants His followers to "come out from among them, and be ye separate".

This principle of separation is no longer believed by the modern Church. We have rejected the clear teaching of II Corinthians 6:14-17. In fact, we think it's *great* when we can team up with God-hating organizations in order to get things done! We see that as winning. What God has to say about it is entirely forgotten – but God does not mince words about this:

II John 1:10: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:
11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

How does God say we should treat those who preach a false gospel? Does it say we should join forces with them and try to find areas of commonality so we can build agreements? Nope. What it actually says is that we shouldn't receive them into our home. In fact, we *shouldn't even bid them 'godspeed'.*

Now, when John says "receive him not into your house"

he is not forbidding us from inviting them over so we can share the gospel with them. What he is forbidding is doing anything to help them, either in deed (by giving them a place to stay so they can keep preaching a false gospel) or in word (by bidding them godspeed). John is clear that those who help them, even verbally, become a "partaker of his evil deeds".

Sadly, this is a sin that the modern church *loves* to commit. I saw a case where one church learned that a mosque was undergoing renovations, so they invited the Muslims to *borrow their sanctuary* so they could keep worshiping their false god. That is exactly the sort of thing that John was condemning – but instead of being dismayed, we hold up such terrible sins as examples of "outreach" and "building bridges" and "true love". God, however, calls it *being a partaker of their evil deeds* and hates it with a passion.

Another common thing is to see famous Christians get up and praise Catholics and Mormons for their good works and their love of God. As I have said many times before, Catholics and Mormons preach a false gospel. Praising and encouraging them goes far beyond "bidding them godspeed" and is absolutely condemned by the apostle John, but somehow the Bible's disapproval doesn't stop us from finding people who "bring not this doctrine" of saving grace and then doing all we can to encourage them and make them feel good about themselves.

"Come out from among them, and be ye separate", the Lord says. That is the commandment. God repeats it in Revelation and adds a threat:

Revelation 18:4: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

In this case the "her" is the evil Babylon, the mother of

harlots and abominations. God is commanding His people to come out of that enemy of God and "be not partakers of her sins" – for those who *are* partakers of her sins will also partake of the plagues that God will send. How do we become partakers of her sins? By joining forces with them and helping them in word or deed. We become partakers when we refuse to separate ourselves from them.

The modern Church has decided that it is not interested in separation, and instead it eagerly tries to form alliances with as many god-hating organizations as it can possibly find. The Church has no idea of the great trouble that it is in. God did not hesitate to discipline king Jehoshaphat, and He will not hesitate to discipline us either.

Appendix S: The Modern Practice Of Tithing Is Not Biblical

If you have been going to church for any length of time, you have probably heard a sermon about tithing. Pastors commonly teach that Christians must give 10% of their pre-tax income to their local church. They even go so far as to say that the curse of Malachi rests upon those who refuse to pay it:

Malachi 3:8: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

9 Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

However, is this really true? Are Christians really commanded to do this? Does God actually curse believers if they don't give their local church ten percent of their pre-tax income?

Before I answer these questions, let's take a look at the context of these passages. We need to understand what the Biblical tithe actually was before we can explore whether it still applies today.

Tithing in the Old Testament

In Numbers 8 the Lord gave a series of ordinances regarding the Levites. In case you're not familiar with them, the Levites were given the job of maintaining the tabernacle:

Numbers 8:19: "And I have given the Levites as a gift to Aaron and to his sons from among the children of Israel, to do the service of the children of Israel in the tabernacle of the congregation, and to make an atonement for the children of Israel: that there be no plague among the children of Israel, when the children of Israel come nigh unto the sanctuary."

The reason the Levites were given this job is because in the Old Testament, before Jesus came, the Israelites were not allowed to interact directly with God. This was because they (like everyone else) were sinful and unholy, and if they approached God in their unholiness they would die. In order to save their lives the Lord appointed the tribe of Levi to take care of the tabernacle.

The Levites were divided into two groups. Aaron and his sons were made priests, and became responsible for offering the sacrifices. The rest of the tribe was charged with taking care of the tabernacle (and later, the Temple). The priests and the Levites were the *only ones* who were authorized to serve in the tabernacle. The Lord was quite strict about this:

Numbers 18:22: "Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.
23 But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall

bear their iniquity; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance."

If you were not of the tribe of Levi then you were not allowed to serve in the tabernacle, and the penalty for breaking this commandment was *death* (Numbers 18:22). Your eligibility to serve was determined by your ancestry. Although the Temple had an outer court that non-Levites could enter after they purified themselves, no non-Levite was ever allowed to enter the Temple itself. (There were no exceptions to this: when King Uzziah broke this commandment the Lord immediately struck him with leprosy.) Even the High Priest (the oldest son of Aaron of each generation) could only enter the Holy of Holies *once a year* to make atonement on behalf of the people, and before he could enter he had to offer a sacrifice to cleanse his own impurities (Hebrews 9:7).

Even if you *were* of the tribe of Levi, the requirements for being involved in Temple service were very strict. As Numbers 8 and Leviticus 21 explains, not only did Levites and priests have to come from the tribe of Levi, but they had to be of a certain age (starting at 25 and forcing mandatory requirement at age 50), have no physical handicaps (Lev. 21:17-21), and abide by certain purification laws. These were the people that interacted with God on behalf of the nation of Israel, and they had to do things God's way all of the time or God would strike them dead. There was no margin allowed for error or personal flair. Nothing less than absolute holiness and perfection could enter His presence. (Incidentally, those requirements have never changed; the only reason we can enter God's presence is because we are clothed in Jesus' righteousness. His absolute perfection cleanses us of our sins and grants us entrance to Heaven. Those who try to enter on their own merits, or apart from Jesus, will find themselves damned. There simply is no other way.)

All of this brings up a question: if you were a priest or Levite then where did you get your income? Well, when the land of Canaan was given to the Israelites the tribe of Levi was not given a portion of the land (Numbers 18:20). Instead they were to dwell in a series of cities that were set aside for them throughout the land of Israel (Joshua 21). The tithe was given to them as their inheritance:

Numbers 18:21: "And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. ...

24 But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as a heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance."

However, the Levites did more than just maintain the Temple. God designed Israel to be a theocracy, and the Levites served as the nation's government. They were the judicial system: cases were brought to them and they issued judgments (Deuteronomy 17:9-12). The Levites also served as the nation's education system, who were supposed to teach the people and guide the nation. They were not just holy men: *they were the government*. Even in the time of the kings they still functioned as judges and teachers.

As was mentioned earlier, not all Levites were priests. The only Levites that were allowed to serve as priests were the descendants of Aaron. The priests operated the Temple and offered sacrifices. When Israel gave the Levites the tithe, the Levites were to give a tenth of what they received to the priests:

Numbers 18:25: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,

26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe.

27 And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress.

28 Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the Lord of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the Lord's heave offering to Aaron the priest."

It's interesting to note that the tithes were not given directly to the priests. Instead the tithes were given to the Levites, who gave a tenth of what they received to the priests. The priests themselves tithed to no one; they kept everything they received. In other words, the priests *only received 10% of the tithe!*

Another interesting fact is that every three years, the entire tithe was given to the poor. In those years none of it went to the priests:

Deuteronomy 26:12: "When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;"

Also, do you notice how it says "of thine increase"? One important fact that is often overlooked is that the tithe was *not* an income tax. The Israelites were not required to keep detailed financial records of all their income so that at the end of the year (when tithes were paid) they knew how much to give God. Instead the tithe was calculated based on *the increase of their net worth*. If their net worth did not increase then they paid no tithe. This is how one person described it:

The ancient Israelite calculated and paid his tithes only once per year, after the harvest. During the year, he bought and sold, exchanged his labour for other men's goods, and his goods for other men's labours; on none of this income did he pay any tithes. All year long, he and his family ate of the increase of the land and of the livestock. What he consumed in the course of the year was not recorded and added to his total harvest for the purpose of calculating his tithes. If he went fishing and caught ten fish in the middle of the year, he ate them all; he didn't save one of them to the end of the year in order to pay tithes on his fish. If he received some gold or silver in an inheritance, he was not required to pay tithes on his inheritance. . . The Israelite was not commanded to tithe on everything he obtained and used throughout the year, but only on his increase at the end of the year. (apostasynow)

So let's stop and take a quick review. Because the Israelites were not holy enough to interact directly with God, the Lord took one of the tribes of Israel and dedicated them to serving in the tabernacle on behalf of the people. Since they were dedicated to Temple service the Lord gave them no

inheritance in the land; instead the Israelites were to give the Levites one tenth of their increase (*not* their income!), and the Levites were to live off of that. The Levites then gave a tenth of what they received to the priests so that they could operate the Temple and perform the sacrifices.

This tithe was very important because it was the priests' entire livelihood. If the priests didn't receive the tithe then they couldn't do their job, and that was bad news for the nation because in order to approach God in the Old Testament *you had to go through a priest!* No one else could offer sacrifices or enter into the Temple to inquire of God with the Urim and Thummim. When people neglected the tithe the priests were forced to abandon the Temple to find another means of survival, which that meant that the only people who were allowed to approach God were gone. That is why God became so angry when the tithe was neglected, and that is why Malachi 3:9 (which was quoted at the beginning of this chapter) says what it does.

Although the Levites as a whole received the full tithe, the priests only received 10% of it. However, every third year the entire tithe was given to the poor and the priests didn't receive anything.

So, how does this compare to the modern practice of tithing? Do we still go through the tribe of Levi in order to approach God? Do Levites tithe to priests so that they can offer sacrifices on our behalf? The answer, of course, is *no*. The sacrificial death of Christ on the cross changed everything.

Christ's Sacrifice Changed Everything

You see, when Jesus died and rose again He replaced the Levites as our bridge to God. We no longer need a High Priest to

make atonement for our sins each year in the Holy of Holies, because Jesus has finished our salvation. Jesus is now our high priest. We no longer need to offer sacrifices because Jesus offered Himself once and for all as the perfect sacrifice:

Hebrews 9:11: "But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. ...

24 For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others;

26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

The reason Christians no longer need a class of Levites to interact with God on their behalf is because Christ's death has consecrated us as a nation of priests:

Hebrews 10:19: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

20 By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh;"

Revelation 1:5: "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the price of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,
6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

1 Peter 2:9: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that He should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light:"

It is very important to realize that there is no longer a tribe of Levi ministering to God on behalf of His people. Jesus bridged the gap between man's sinfulness and God's holiness. Christians are a royal priesthood and are able to boldly approach the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). In the past this would have brought instant death, but Jesus changed that forever.

In the Church Age pastors minister to the body of Christ, *but they are not Levites*. In order to be a Levite and serve in the Temple you had to prove the purity of your lineage (that is, present documented evidence that all of your forefathers were from the tribe of Levi), you had to be ordained in a certain way, and you had to meet certain physical characteristics. The Levites pointed the way to what Christ would accomplish in His sacrifice, and that sacrifice has been made. Pastors today do not approach God once a year to atone for the sins of their congregations. They do not sacrifice animals on behalf of anybody. Their job is *completely different* from the Levites.

It's also worth noting that tithes were to be brought *into the Temple*. This can be seen in Malachi 3:10, in which the Lord

says "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house". In the Old Testament God did not dwell within His people. Instead the glory of God resided in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. When the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies once a year he was going before the *actual presence of God* to intercede on behalf of the nation. God Himself dwelt within the Temple, which can be seen passages such as 1 Kings 8:10-11. The reason that the Jews no longer offer sacrifices is because they no longer have a Temple. Modern Jews also do not tithe because tithes can *only* be given to the Levites, *and there are no Levites today*.

As Christ predicted when talking to the woman at the well (John 4:21-23), Christians do not gather at a single Temple in order to approach the presence of God. This is because Christians *are* temples of the Living God, for God dwells within us, not inside a building in the Middle East:

1 Corinthians 3:16: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"

17 If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."

In other words, things are different now. The sacrifice of Christ changed everything – including the way that giving works. As we are about to see, what the apostles taught the Church about giving is quite different from the system of tithing in the Mosaic Law.

Tithing Is No Longer Possible

It should be apparent by now that it is *impossible* for Christians to tithe according to the Law of Moses. The tithe could only be given to the Levites (Numbers 18:24) and there are no Levites today because Christ fulfilled the sacrificial system and brought it to an end. Even if the Levites still existed it would still be impossible for Christians to bring tithes into the Temple because *there is no Temple*. Instead Christ dwells within us, making our bodies the temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:16).

I want to emphasize this last point, because it is easily glazed over. It is *impossible* for Christians to offer the tithe that the Lord instituted in Numbers 18. It *cannot* be done. The only people who were allowed to receive the tithe were the Levites, not some random Gentiles from your local community (or even random Jews, for that matter). The job of Levites was to offer sacrifices for the forgiveness of sins, which is something that pastors do not and cannot do. Pastors are *not* the same thing as Levites.

The curse and blessing of Malachi 3 simply cannot be applied to modern Christians. God was concerned about providing *the Levites* with a livelihood, but that group of people no longer exists. God no longer has a Temple in which goods can be stored and given to a priestly class. *That entire system is gone*. Even if Christians wanted to bring food into the Temple, it isn't possible because *there is no Temple anymore*. The death and resurrection of Jesus changed everything.

To put it as plainly as possible, Christians today cannot tithe as instructed in the Law of Moses. It is not possible. They can give a portion of their income to their local church, yes, *but that is not tithing*. Tithing involved giving to Levites and there are no Levites. It involved bringing food into the Temple and there is no Temple. Have you ever met *anyone* who gave a tenth of their increase to a Levite? The truth is that no one has tithed

according to the Law of Moses since the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. You *cannot* simply swap out pastors for Levites and churches for the Temple and then say that it's all the same thing. The New Testament simply *does not allow this* (which we'll get into a bit later.)

Many pastors (in fact, virtually all of them) teach that Christians are required to give a tenth of their pre-tax income to the Church. I hope you can see by now that this is not even close to the Mosaic Law of tithing. The Israelites tithed *of their increase* – that is, of the increase of their net worth at the end of the year. On top of that, the tithe went to the Levites, who functioned as Israel's government. The priests themselves only received a tenth of the tithe, or 1% of the increase of Israel's net worth. There is simply *no way* you can turn "1% of the increase of your net worth" into "10% of your pre-tax income". They're not even close.

But there's more. In the Old Testament, the priests never tithed because *the entire point of tithing was to support the priests*. I have yet to hear any pastor say that pastors are exempt from tithing. There is also the fact that every third year the entire tithe went to the poor and the priests received nothing. I've never seen any church try to implement *that* part of the Law either.

There's also something else. If the Temple was too far away, you were allowed to spend the entire tithe on whatever you wanted:

Deuteronomy 14:22: "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.

23 And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds

and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always.

24 And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee:

25 Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose:

26 And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household,

27 And the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee."

Did you notice that verse 22 once again mentioned that the tithe was only *of their increase*, and not of their net income? Did you see how God said that if the **one** place that was allowed to receive the tithes (the Temple) was inaccessible or too far away, you were allowed to spend the money on whatever you wanted and literally eat it before the Lord? In other words, since there is no longer a Temple, people who *really* wanted to keep the Mosaic Law of tithing should spend their entire tithe on steaks and have a big barbeque. After all, *that is what the Mosaic Law commands!* But no pastor is *ever* going to say that, even though that is exactly what the Bible teaches.

So does the Mosaic Law *really* command Christians to give a tenth of their pre-tax income to their local church? It should be obvious by now that the modern practice of tithing is not in any way similar to the tithe specified in the Law of Moses.

Pastors are not Levites, the local church is not the Temple, and 10% of your pre-tax income is not the same as 1% of the increase of your net worth.

Is there a commandment in the New Testament stating that all Christians must give ten percent of their income to support their local body of believers? The answer is *no*. As it turns out, the New Testament model of giving is actually quite different.

Are There Other Examples of Tithing?

Before we get into that, though, there is one other point I need to address. Some people claim that there are other examples of tithing apart from the Law of Moses. Take Jacob as an example:

Genesis 28:20: "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, if God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God, and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

This passage has been used to support tithing, but I believe it actually does the opposite. If Christians are required to tithe then why is Jacob offering to tithe if he returns in peace? After all, if God *already* required Jacob to give a tenth then this whole vow is meaningless! *This is only a gift if Jacob was not*

required to give it.

Plus, how did Jacob give the offering to God? There were no priests in those days because Levi had not yet been born (much less Aaron or the other priests). Jacob, a shepherd, must have sacrificed one-tenth of his flocks on an altar. He did *not* give the animals to his local tabernacle. Are Christians required to take their money into their backyard and burn it, *as Jacob did*? I've never heard anyone suggest that, but it's worth noting that the animals that Jacob gave did *not* go to support the local priesthood – instead they were slaughtered and burned. (It's worth noting that the tithe in Scripture was always a portion of crops or animals, not money; Lev 27:30-32 is a good example of this. There was a monetary tax called the temple tax but that was completely different from the tithe.)

What is entirely missed is that Jacob's vow shows how little faith he really had in God. The Lord had already given Jacob fabulous promises, but instead of believing them Jacob tried to bribe God by saying that *if* God lived up to His end of the bargain then Jacob would pay God back for it. Jacob's tithe was intended to *bribe God into fulfilling His promise*. Is that really an example that Christians should follow?

Another example that people sometimes use to support tithing appears in Genesis 14:

Genesis 14:18: "And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

19 And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

20 And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all."

After Abraham returned from conquering the armies that attacked the king of Sodom, he gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek. Some people have claimed that this proves that Christians are required to tithe, but it should be noted that Abraham *gave* tithes. If they were required then he would have *paid* them, which is quite different. A gift is not required – it is given freely. If it is required then it is the payment of a debt, not a gift. Nowhere in this passage is it even suggested that Abraham was required to do what he did.

There is also the fact that Abraham was not tithing *his* property. The loot that he was tithing consisted of things he had recovered through his military victory. After Abraham gave the tithe he returned the rest of the loot to the kings of Sodom, which is who the goods had been stolen from. The loot he had tithed belonged to *them*, not to Abraham. There are *no* examples of Abraham actually tithing *things that belonged to him*.

In other words, when an enemy nation invaded a neighboring country, Abraham defeated the invaders with an army of his own, recovered the loot they had stolen, gave 10% of that loot to a third party, and returned the rest of it to its original owners. If you are determined to follow Abraham's "tithing" then *that* is how you need to do it.

Some people support the idea of mandatory tithing through this verse in Matthew:

Matthew 23:23: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and arise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

What we need to remember is that when Jesus said this He had not yet died, and so the Mosaic law was still in force.

Jesus had to perfectly fulfill the entire Mosaic Law, and He did. It's worth noting that Jesus also commanded the lepers He healed to go show themselves to the priests. I have never heard *anyone* suggest that those who have been healed of skin cancer should go to their local pastor before re-entering society – and yet that is also a command found in the Mosaic Law. The reason that people don't do that anymore is because the entire Mosaic Law has been ended – and that includes the sacrificial laws, the ceremonial laws, the dietary laws, and tithing. Since Christ put an end to the Mosaic Law, the only commands that apply to the Church are the ones that were given to the Church in the New Testament.

What Does The New Testament Actually Teach About Giving?

If Christians truly are required to give a tenth of their income to the local church then you would expect that fact to be mentioned *somewhere* in the New Testament, but it's not. *There is not one verse anywhere in the New Testament that commands Christians to tithe.*

Let me give a few examples. In Acts 4:32-5:11 the Bible talks about the financial support of the new church. Instead of tithing, though, Christians did something quite different:

Acts 4:34: "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,
35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man

according as he had need."

There is also the case of Ananias and Sapphira. This couple sold a piece of property and gave part of the proceeds to their local church. When they gave the money, though, they lied and said that they were giving the entire amount that they had received. Although the Lord killed them for lying, it's interesting to notice what Peter said:

Acts 5:4: "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? ..."

Nowhere did Peter even hint that they owed a tithe on it to the church. If tithing was required this would have been a great place to mention it, but the passage is silent.

Another passage that has been used to support tithing is this one:

1 Corinthians 16:1: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem."

It is important to notice that Paul is asking the Corinthian church to gather together a sum of money that he can send to *destitute people in Jerusalem*. This is *not* being collected for the support of the local church, nor is any amount or percentage specified. Paul is simply asking the Corinthians to get together and provide for the needs of their brothers and sisters in a

distant country. This is *not at all* the same thing as being required to give ten percent of your income to the local church. Once again, if tithing was required then this would have been a good place to mention it, but it wasn't mentioned.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul talks at length about giving, and he discusses the fact that it is perfectly right for pastors to receive their income through the generosity of other Christians. Since pastors minister to people's spiritual needs, it makes sense for people to meet the pastor's physical needs:

1 Corinthians 9:9: "For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?"

10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. ...

14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

This would have been a perfect time for Paul to bring up tithing, *but he didn't*. Tithing isn't mentioned anywhere in this chapter. Such a teaching is *entirely absent* from this rather lengthy discussion of giving – and, in fact, it is also absent from *all other discussions on giving in the New Testament*. Do you know how many characters in the Bible followed the modern version of "tithing" and gave 10% of their pre-tax income to their local church? **Zero.** There is not a single case in the Bible of anyone ever doing that.

So what is going on? The answer to this riddle can be found earlier in that very same chapter, which says this:

2 Corinthians 9:6: "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully,

7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."

In the Old Testament the Israelites were *required* to give a tenth of the increase of their crops and herds to the Levites. Anything that they gave above the tithe was a freewill offering, but the tithe was required. If the tithe was given then God would send blessings, and if the tithe was withheld then God would send curses and famine. The tithe was *not* a gift.

In the New Testament things are completely different. God simply wants us to give as we have purposed in our heart, out of love. There is no fixed amount specified, nor does it say that a tenth must be given to the local church before anything can be given to other causes. God wants us to have a heart to meet the needs around us and to give cheerfully out of love. The real issue is the heart, not percentages.

The truth is that *everything* that we have belongs to God. We are stewards, not owners, and are commanded to use our possessions for the honor and glory of God. All of our wealth and energies and hopes and dreams are to be focused on the Lord's kingdom. God doesn't want a tenth of us; He wants *all* of us.

Christians should look at the financial resources they have been given and use them wisely for the Lord's glory. This doesn't just encompass tithing, but everything – paying bills, raising children, investing in education, buying groceries, and so forth. Can't God be glorified when we pay our debts? When we raise our children? When we instruct others in wisdom? When we provide for those in need? When we bring the gospel to those

who need it? God made the oceans, the rivers, the trees, and the fields, but too often Christians view life as being mostly secular with a few religious moments here and there. Being a Christian isn't something that you just do at church; it's the way you live your entire life. It affects how you manage your money, what entertainment you choose, what you do with your free time, how you raise your children, and how you treat your neighbors. For the Christians there is nothing that is purely secular. The Lord has laid a claim to every facet of life, and there is a time for everything.

God wants us to love and enjoy Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to be passionately devoted to following Him and loving our neighbors. That is what life is all about, and that is what life will *always* be about for the rest of time. God does not want a tenth of us; He wants all of us, devoted completely to Him in every way.

It may be that some people can give more and others can give less; in Christ's parables some servants were given more talents than others. God is not nearly as concerned with the *amount* as He is with the *heart*. That is what it is really all about.

Freely Have You Received; Freely Give

The truth is that there is nothing even remotely Biblical about the modern practice of tithing, and pastors who preach tithing are preaching error. The modern practice of tithing bears no resemblance to what the Mosaic Law commanded. No Bible character in the Old or New Testament ever tithed the way that modern pastors command, and no passage in the New Testament commands Christians to give 10% of their pre-tax income to the local church. I think this quote puts it well:

It is very difficult to come up with an exact set of figures on who got how much of the tithes in the end; but one thing is sure: the Temple in Jerusalem was not collecting 10% of the total income of the people, and at least 1/3 of the tithes were given to support education and poor people in their own community. How anyone with an honest mind can take the Mosaic Law of Tithing and come up with, "10 cents out of every dollar that passes through your hands belongs to the local church", eludes me. (apostasynow)

The great tragedy is that the New Testament actually has a lot to say about how Christians should give, but modern Christians have completely ignored its teachings in order to impose a system that has no Biblical foundation. The truth is that God doesn't want 1% of our net increase, or even 10% of our pre-tax income. Instead God wants us to see ourselves as His servants. He wants us to spend our life working for Him, using everything we have and everything we are for His glory. He wants us to think "I exist to glorify God and advance His kingdom, so how can I use my assets and talents to further that purpose?"

God has entrusted us with many things. What He really wants us to do is to realize that we are *managers*, not owners. Think of your assets as something that God has given to you so that you can invest it for His kingdom. What kind of a return are you giving God? When you settle accounts with Him, is He going to be pleased with your decisions?

Preach The Word

There is one final point that I want to mention. One of the reasons pastors continue to teach tithing, despite its blatantly unbiblical nature, is because they believe they have to have tithing in order to survive. They think that if they taught what the Bible actually said, giving would drop and they would be unable to make ends meet. In other words, the heresy of tithing brings in a lot of money and no one wants to jeopardize that cash flow.

But God has called us to preach the truth, not hide from it. Refusing to preach the truth because of its potential impact on your bottom line is a very, very dangerous stance for a pastor to take. Am I supposed to believe that you would gladly give your very life for the sake of the gospel, but you find it impossible to preach the truth because it might impact weekly offerings? If your sermons are based around their impact on the church's budget then there are many things you will never say for fear of offending people and driving them off. You will find yourself compromised, unable to preach the entire truth of the Word for fear of how people will respond. The only "hard truths" you will be willing to preach are the socially-acceptable ones that you believe people won't mind hearing.

And make no mistake – God really *does* require you preach the *entire* counsel of God, and to do so both in season (when people want to hear it) and out of season (when it won't go over well). Jesus never hesitated to do this, even though it drove many people away (for example, see John 6:60-66).

That is a very serious matter because God does hold pastors accountable for what they teach (James 3:1). The job of a pastor is to faithfully preach the entire counsel of God, no matter what the consequences. Pastors may fear what would happen if they were honest with their congregations about the Bible's teachings, but I assure you that the wrath of a congregation is a small thing compared to the wrath of an angry God. Each one of

us will stand before God and give an account of our lives. The day will come when the truth will be revealed:

1 Corinthians 4:5: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

When that day comes will you have praise of God, or will you instead find yourself explaining why you sold out your congregation for money? Do you actually trust Him enough to preach the entire Word and let come what may? The apostles preached the whole truth and were willing to die for it. What are you going to do?

Resource 1: Chapter Summary

Haggai

Haggai 1

- IN DARIUS' 2ND YEAR, GOD'S WORD CAME BY HAGGAI TO ZERUBBABEL
- THE PEOPLE SAY IT IS NOT TIME TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE, BUT IS IT TIME FOR YOU TO LIVE IN NICE HOUSES WHILE THE TEMPLE LIES WASTE?
- YOU SOW MUCH AND REAP LITTLE BECAUSE MY HOUSE LIES WASTE
- BUILD THE TEMPLE, AND I WILL TAKE PLEASURE IN IT AND BE GLORIFIED
- ZERUBBABEL, JOSHUA, AND THE REMNANT OF THE PEOPLE OBEY

Haggai 2

- TELL ZERUBBABEL THIS: THE NEW TEMPLE DOES NOT SEEM AS GLORIOUS AS THE OLD ONE, BUT IN A LITTLE WHILE I WILL SHAKE THE NATIONS; THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS SHALL COME, AND I WILL FILL THIS HOUSE WITH GLORY
- THE GLORY OF THIS LATTER HOUSE WILL BE GREATER THAN THE FORMER
- FROM THE DAY YOU BEGAN WORK ON THE TEMPLE I WILL BLESS YOU
- TELL ZERUBBABEL THAT I WILL OVERTHROW KINGDOMS AND CHARIOTS AND MAKE HIM A SIGNET

Resource 2: Timeline

538 BC	In the 1st year of Cyrus he issues a command to rebuild the temple; he encourages Jews to return to Jerusalem, and gave them the temple vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had taken [Ezra 1:1-8; 6:3]	Known historical date of the Cyrus edict: 538 BC. This was 70 years after the 608 BC captivity, and 1 year after Daniel prayed for God to bring Israel's captivity to an end.
538 BC	In response to the edit from Cyrus, 42,360 Jews travel to Jerusalem (along with 7,337 servants) [Ezra 2:64]	
538 BC	In the 7th month after Cyrus' edict, the Jews gather at Jerusalem; the altar is rebuilt; the people begin offering the daily sacrifices; the feast of tabernacles is kept [Ezra 3:1-6]	
536 BC	In the 4th year of Darius, Zechariah is given a message that rebukes the Jews for false fasting [Zechariah 7:1-2]	
536 BC	In the 3rd year of Cyrus, Daniel is given a vision of what will happen in the latter days [Daniel 10, 11, 12]	Daniel had been in Babylon for 70 years.
536 BC	An angel tells Daniel that there will be 4 more Persian kings, and the fourth will "stir up all" against the Greeks [Daniel 11:2]	
536 BC	In the 2nd year after the Jews returned to Jerusalem, the foundation of the second temple is laid; when the elderly people saw it they wept, because they remembered the previous temple	Known historical date.

	and it was clear the new temple would be much less glorious [Ezra 3:8-13]	
536 BC	The enemies of the Jews try to stop them from rebuilding Jerusalem and the temple [Ezra 4:5]	The command from Cyrus to rebuild the temple had been given just 2 years earlier.
534 BC	The reconstruction of the temple is stopped [Ezra 4:5]	
530 BC	The opposition to the rebuilding efforts continues for the whole reign of Cyrus [Ezra 4:5]	Known date of the ending of Cyrus' reign
525 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: in Daniel's vision of the four great beasts, the bear takes the third rib (Medes conquer Egypt) [Daniel 7:5, Ezekiel 30:6-19]	Known historical date. This happened 28 years after Daniel was given the four great beasts prophecy.
525 BC	Prophetic fulfillment: Cambyses II destroys Egypt's idols [Ezekiel 30:13]	Known historical date.
520 BC	In the 2nd year of Darius, Haggai commands the people to rebuild the temple [Haggai 1:1]	Known historical date. This is when the prophet Haggai's ministry began.
520 BC	The Jews resume their efforts to rebuild the temple [Haggai 1:15]	This was 18 years after the edict from Cyrus to rebuild the temple, and 14 years after the reconstruction effort had been halted.
518 BC	Darius issues a command to rebuild the temple [Ezra 6:1-2]	Known historical date of the Darius edict
516 BC	In the 6th year of Darius, the construction of the second temple is completed [Ezra 6:15]	Known historical date. This was 22 years after Cyrus issued an edict to rebuild the temple.

Resource 3: The Teachings Of The Bible

Haggai 1

- The word of the Lord came to Haggai in the reign of Darius; it came in the second year, the sixth month, and the first day of the month (v1)
- The Bible is extremely specific about the exact day that this message was given to Haggai; it records it down to the very day (v1)
- God gave this message to Haggai so he could give it to Zerubbabel and Joshua (v1)
- Haggai was a prophet (v1)
- Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah (v1)
- Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel (v1)
- Joshua was the high priest (v1)
- Joshua was the son of Josedech (v1)
- God had a message for the governor of Judah and the high priest, and He gave it to them through His prophet Haggai (v1)
- Darius was the king at the time this message was given (v1)
- Darius was a real person who actually existed (v1)
- God calls Himself the God of armies (v2)

- The reason God sent this message is because the Jews were claiming that it was not yet time to build the second temple (v2)
- The Jews had been returned to the land, but they had not rebuilt the temple (v2)
- The Jews of that era did not have a desire to rebuild the temple; instead of earnestly seeking to rebuild it so they could resume the worship of the Lord, they put it off (v2)
- The Jews of that era did not have a heart to worship the Lord, which can be seen from the fact that they had no desire to rebuild the temple (v2)
- The message that Haggai proclaimed came from the Lord (v3)
- The Lord used His prophets to proclaim messages to the people (v3)
- The Lord spoke through His prophets (v3)
- This message did not come from Haggai; it came from the Lord (v3)
- God did not "inspire" Haggai; instead God spoke directly through Him and told Him what to say (v3)
- God was angry with the Jews because they had rebuilt their own homes, but they had not rebuilt the house of God (v4)
- The Jews valued their own homes more than the house of God (v4)
- The Jews allowed God's temple to lie in waste for years while they labored for themselves (v4)

- It was wrong for them to rebuild their own homes while doing nothing to rebuild the temple of the Lord; they had put themselves first and God last (v4)
- God once again calls Himself the God of armies (v5)
- God told the Jews to open their eyes and look around; if they did they would realize that God had cursed them for putting themselves first and Him last (v5)
- God had cursed the Jews because they had built their own homes but refused to build His (v6)
- The Jews had sown much seed, but had harvested very little (v6)
- The Jews did not have enough to eat or drink (v6)
- The Jews were unable to stay warm (v6)
- The Jews were poor; they earned money but quickly lost it (v6)
- God afflicted the Jews mightily because they left His temple in ruins and did nothing to rebuild it so they could resume worshiping Him (v6)
- God has the ability to give us a bountiful harvest or a meager one (v6)
- God has the ability to give us wealth, or to send disasters that eat up our earnings and leave us with nothing (v6)
- God can satisfy our hunger or leave us hungry (v6)
- God can give us clothing or leave us cold (v6)
- There are times when God sends poverty and affliction as a curse upon people for their sin (v6)

- If God blesses us then we will be blessed; if He curses us then we will suffer (v6)
- Our prosperity is in the hands of God (v6)
- God calls Himself the God of armies yet again (v7)
- God once again commanded the Jews to consider their ways; the things they had been doing had only brought them poverty, but if they changed their ways then God would bless them (v7)
- The path to prosperity was obedience to God, not selfishness (v7)
- God commanded the Jews to build the second temple (v8)
- The second temple was made at least partly from wood (v8)
- God commanded the Jews to obtain the lumber they needed to rebuild the temple from the mountain (v8)
- God said that if the Jews built the second temple then He would take pleasure in it (v8)
- God said that the second temple would glorify Him (v8)
- The reason the Jews were poor and suffering was because they built their own houses but did not build the house of God (v9)
- Since the Jews had refused to build God's house, the Lord cursed them with poverty and hunger (v9)
- The reason the Jews were poor wasn't because they hadn't worked hard enough; it was because they served themselves and refused to serve the Lord (v9)

- God was not going to allow the Jews to prosper as long as His temple was in ruins (v9)
- If the Jews wanted to be blessed then they had to finish the second temple (v9)
- God is the one who gives us much, or who withholds it and gives us little (v9)
- Since the Jews refused to finish building the second temple, God stopped the rain from falling (v10)
- Since the Jews refused to finish building the second temple, God stopped the crops from growing (v10)
- God has the ability to send rain, or to withhold it (v10)
- God has the ability to send abundant crops, or to send famine (v10)
- There are times when God punishes a nation by withholding rain (v10)
- There are times when God punishes a nation by withholding crops and sending famine (v10)
- If the Jews wanted to stop suffering, and stop being hungry, and stop being poor, then they had to rebuild the temple; otherwise their suffering would continue (v10)
- God would not bless the Jews as long as they continued to put themselves first and Him last (v10)
- God has control over the weather (v10)
- God has control over the harvests of a nation (v10)
- God holds nations accountable for their actions and punishes them for their sins (v10)

- Since the Jews built their own homes instead of building God's temple, the Lord cursed them (v11)
- God cursed the land and sent a drought (v11)
- God cursed the mountains and sent a drought (v11)
- God cursed their corn harvest (v11)
- God cursed their wine harvest (v11)
- God cursed their oil harvest (v11)
- God cursed everything that grew on the ground (v11)
- God cursed the people of the land (v11)
- God cursed the cattle (v11)
- God cursed everything that the people worked on (v11)
- God cursed every aspect of their lives because they did not rebuild the temple so they could start worshipping Him again (v11)
- There are times when God curses the labor of people's hands because of their sin (v11)
- There are times when God sends droughts upon a nation because of its sins (v11)
- There are times when God curses the food supply of a nation because of its sins (v11)
- There are times when God curses a nation for putting themselves first and Him last (v11)
- God is the one who either blesses the work of our hands or curses it (v11)
- God is the one who either blesses our crops and cattle or

curses them (v11)

- Zerubbabel the governor of Judah obeyed the Lord (v12)
- Joshua the high priest obeyed the Lord (v12)
- The remnant of the people who lived in Judah obeyed the Lord (v12)
- When the people obeyed the words of Haggai they were actually obeying the Lord, because God was the one who was speaking through Haggai (v12)
- God was the one who sent Haggai to speak to them; the prophet spoke with God's voice, because he spoke the words that God had given him to speak (v12)
- The people feared the Lord (v12)
- Haggai was the Lord's messenger, because he spoke the words that God gave him to speak (v13)
- Haggai delivered the Lord's message to the people (v13)
- When the people obeyed the Lord and started work on the temple again, God said that He was with them (v13)
- The reason the people obeyed the Lord and started building the second temple is because God stirred up their spirit (v14)
- God was the one who gave the Jews the desire to finish the second temple (v14)
- God stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah (v14)
- God stirred up the spirit of Josedech, the high priest (v14)
- God stirred up the spirit of the people who lived in the

land (v14)

- At this time only a remnant of the Jews were in the land (v14)
- The governor, the high priest, and the people started work on building the second temple (v14)
- The temple is called the house of the Lord of armies (v14)
- The temple is called the house of their God (v14)
- The heart of the people was stirred up during the reign of Darius - in the second year, sixth month, and twenty-fourth day (v15)
- God spoke to Haggai on the first day of the month, and the people were stirred up on the twenty-fourth day of the month (v15)
- The Bible tells us the exact day that the heart of the people was stirred up to resume work building the temple (v15)

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Haggai 2

- God spoke to Haggai again in the seventh month and the twenty-first day (v1)
- The word of the Lord was given through Haggai the prophet (v1)
- God did not speak to the people directly; instead He spoke through His prophet (v1)

- This message was from the Lord; it was not the words of Haggai (v1)
- This message was given after the people were stirred up to build the second temple (v1)
- God told Haggai to give this message to Zerubbabel the governor of Judah (v2)
- God told Haggai to give this message to Joshua that high priest (v2)
- God told Haggai to give this message to the people who lived in the land (v2)
- There were some people in the land who were so old that they had memories of the first temple (v3)
- The second temple was not nearly as magnificent as the first temple (v3)
- For those who remembered the first temple, the second temple was far less glorious and was nothing special at all; to them the second temple represented an enormous loss (v3)
- The elderly people were comparing the second temple to the first temple, and they were greatly disappointed and disheartened (v3)
- God was not concerned that the second temple was much less glorious than the first temple (v4)
- God commanded Zerubbabel the governor of Judah to be strong (v4)
- God commanded Joshua the high priest to be strong (v4)
- God commanded the people of the land to be strong (v4)

- God commanded the people to continue working on the second temple, and to not give up (v4)
- God told the people that even though the second temple was much less glorious than the first temple, God was still with them in this effort and He wanted them to finish it (v4)
- God did not want the people to become disheartened and quit over the fact that what they were doing was not as good as what they had before (v4)
- God told the Jews that the covenant He had made with them at the time of the exodus from Egypt was still in effect (v5)
- God had made a covenant with them when they were set free from Egypt (v5)
- The Israelites had been delivered from Egypt in the past; that was a real thing that actually happened (v5)
- In spite of everything that had happened, the covenant of the Mosaic Law was still in force and had not been changed (v5)
- In spite of everything that had happened, God's Spirit still remained among the Jews (v5)
- God told the Jews to not be afraid, but to continue the work (v5)
- The Jews did not have to be afraid over the fact that the second temple was less glorious than the first temple (v5)
- The Lord said that in a little while He would shake the heavens (v6)
- The Lord said that in a little while He would shake the

earth (v6)

- The Lord said that in a little while He would shake the sea (v6)
- The Lord said that in a little while He should shake the dry land (v6)
- The day was coming when God would shake this world (v6)
- God has the power to shake this world (v6)
- The Lord said that in a little while He would shake all nations (v7)
- The Lord said that in a little while the desire of all nations would come (which is probably a reference to the Messiah) (v7)
- God said that He would fill the second temple with glory by sending the Messiah into it (v7)
- The Messiah would come during the days of the second temple; He would appear before it was destroyed (v7)
- Even though the second temple was not as physically magnificent as the first temple had been, God would fill the second temple with glory by sending the Messiah into it (v7)
- The magnificence of the second temple had nothing to do with silver or gold (v7, v8)
- The silver of this world belongs to the Lord (v8)
- The gold of this world belongs to the Lord (v8)
- The silver and gold of this world already belongs to God; this is true even if the temple itself lacks silver or gold

(v8)

- God was not concerned about the second temple's lack of silver and gold (v8)
- Even though the second temple was not as large or ornate as the first temple, the second temple would be more glorious (v9)
- The reason the second temple will be more glorious than the first temple is because the Messiah will enter into it (v7, v9)
- God said that He would give peace "in this place" (which may be a reference to the Prince of Peace, who came and gave His life to save us; it may also be a reference to the peace that Jerusalem will experience during the millennium) (v9)
- The second temple would be glorious, in spite of the way that things seemed (v9)
- God was encouraging the people to let them know that their work was not in vain, and should not be despised (v9)
- The word of the Lord came to Haggai yet again during the reign of Darius; it came in the second year, the ninth month, and the twenty-fourth day (v10)
- The Bible is very specific about the exact day that each of these messages were given to the prophet Haggai (v10)
- God commanded the prophet Haggai to ask the priests a question about the Mosaic Law (v11)
- God expected the priests to know the Law and be able to answer questions about it (v11)

- God sometimes asks questions in order to teach people, or make a point about something (v11)
- God told Haggai to ask the priests what happened if they took a holy thing and used it to touch something that was unholy; the holy thing did not make the unholy item holy (v12)
- When a holy item comes into contact with an unholy item, it does not spread its holiness to that which is unholy (v12)
- Unholy things do not become improved if they are touched by something holy; instead they defile the holy thing (v12)
- The priests were familiar with the Mosaic Law and knew the answer to this question about holiness (v12)
- Holy things should be kept away from unholy things (v12)
- Unholy things should be kept away from holy things (v12)
- Unholy things defile whatever they touch (v12)
- God commanded Haggai to ask the priests another question: what if a person who was unclean due to contact with a dead body touched something? (v13)
- The Mosaic Law said that if a person touched a dead body, they were unclean (v13)
- The Mosaic Law said that if a person was unclean because he had come into contact with a dead body, anything that person touched also became unclean (v13)
- Under the Mosaic Law, being unclean was contagious and spread by contact (v13)

- The priests knew what the Law said about uncleanness due to contact with the dead (v13)
- Dead bodies were considered unclean (v13)
- It was important to avoid contact with the dead (v13)
- God was comparing the Jews to people who had become unclean, and therefore everything they came into contact with was also unclean (v13, v14)
- God considered the Jews to be unclean in His sight (v14)
- Since the Jews were unclean, everything they touched was unclean as well (v14)
- Since the Jews were unclean, all of their sacrifices were unclean as well (v14)
- The Jews had been sacrificing to the Lord, but since they were unclean God rejected their offerings (v14)
- If a person is unclean in the sight of God, everything that he touches and everything that he does is also polluted and unclean (v14)
- It is impossible for someone who is unclean in the sight of God to do something holy, or to give a holy gift, because that person's unclean nature infects whatever they touch (v14)
- You must be made clean before you can give God a holy gift or offering (v14)
- God rejects unholy offerings (v14)
- God rejects offerings made by unholy people (v14)
- God rejects the deeds done by unholy people, for they are unclean in His sight (v14)

- It is possible for a person to be unclean (v14)
- It is possible for an entire nation to be unclean (v14)
- It is possible for an offering to be unclean (v14)
- God told the Jews to think about the poverty that they experienced before they started building the second temple (v15)
- God wanted the Jews to remember the problems they experienced in the past so that they could contrast it with the blessings that they would experience in the future (v15)
- The day that construction resumed on the second temple would be a turning point (v15)
- God referred to the temple as His temple (v15)
- God connected the prosperity and blessings of the Jews to the existence of the second temple; He would not bless them unless they started work on it again (v15)
- The second temple was constructed at least partly from stones (v15)
- Because the Jews had not build the second temple, God cursed the yields of their harvest (v16)
- Because of the curse of God, there were only 10 measures when the people expected 20 (v16)
- Because of the curse of God, the vat only yielded 20 vessels instead of 50 (v16)
- God has the power to send abundance, and to withhold it; He can multiply the harvest or diminish it (v16)
- There are times when God diminishes harvests in order to

punish a nation for its sins (v16)

- God controls the yields of harvests (v16)
- Because the Jews had not built the second temple, God cursed their crops with "blasting" (meaning their crops were scorched by a hot wind) (v17)
- Because the Jews had not built the second temple, God cursed their crops with mildew (v17)
- Because the Jews had not built the second temple, God cursed their crops by sending hail (v17)
- God has the power to send hail upon a nation (v17)
- God has the power to poison and damage crops (v17)
- There are times when God sends hail upon a nation to punish it for its sins (v17)
- Because the Jews had not built the second temple, God cursed the works of their hands (v17)
- In spite of all the punishments that God sent upon the Jews, they did not return to Him and they did not resume work on the second temple (v17)
- When the Jews refused to rebuild the temple, God considered it to be a rejection of Him (v17)
- The fact that the Jews did not rebuild the temple was a sin, and God punished them for it (v17)
- There are times when God uses the weather to punish nations (v17)
- God said that this specific day (the 24th day of the 9th month of the 2nd year of Darius) would be a turning point for the Jews (v18)

- The reason this specific day was a turning point for them is because that is the day the foundation of the temple was laid (v18)
- God wanted the Jews to contrast the poverty they had experienced with the blessings that would come (v18)
- God wanted the Jews to understand that He had cursed them because of their sin, and He would bless them when they were obedient (v18)
- The blessings that God sent upon the Jews depended on their faithfulness to the Law (v18)
- In the 24th day of the 9th month, the crops had not yet yielded their harvest (v19)
- The Jews had vines (v19)
- The Jews had fig trees (v19)
- The Jews had pomegranates (v19)
- The Jews had olive trees (v19)
- From this day forward God would bless them, because they had resumed work on the second temple (v19)
- The yield of their vines and fig trees and pomegranates and olive trees depended on their faithfulness to God (v19)
- The Lord spoke to Haggai again; this message also came to him on the 24th day of the month (v20)
- This was a separate message from the previous one which had been given that day, which concerned the future prosperity of the Jews (v20)
- Sometimes God gave His prophets multiple different

messages on the same day (v20)

- This message from God was given to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah (v21)
- God said that He was going to shake the heavens and the earth (v21)
- Sometimes God gave his prophets a message that was aimed at one specific person (v21)
- The day is coming when God will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; this appears to be a reference to the tribulation and the Millennium that will follow (v22)
- The day is coming when God will destroy the kingdoms of the Gentiles (v22)
- The day is coming when God will destroy the armies of the Gentiles (v22)
- The day is coming when God will turn the weapons of the Gentiles against them, and they will kill one another (v22)
- God is going to destroy the chariots of the nations (v22)
- God is going to kill the horses in the Gentile armies and those who ride on them (v22)
- God has the power to destroy nations (v22)
- God has the power to destroy armies (v22)
- God has the power to turn nations against one another (v22)
- God actively intervenes in history and determines the fate of nations (v22)
- In the day that God destroys the kingdoms of this world

and wipes out their armies, He will bless Zerubbabel and raise him up (v23)

- God had chosen Zerubbabel and promised to bless him in the day that God overthrew the kingdoms of this world (v23)
- God called Himself the God of armies (v23)
- God said that Zerubbabel was His servant (v23)
- God gave Zerubbabel a great promise after he obeyed the Lord and restarted the construction of the second temple; the promise was given after his obedience (v23)

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