

Prepare for God's shaking - Reflection from Haggai

In Haggai's two chapters we see that God's people were distracted from their holy assignment.

They were saying the time has not yet come for rebuilding the house of the Lord.

God explained that the loss, drought and ruin they were experiencing was coming from Him, and was caused by them (v10 "it's because of you the heavens withhold their dew").

The people responded well; they began to obey the Lord.

When they heard the words of the prophet they began to fear the Lord. I am with you says the Lord.

The Lord sparked the enthusiasm of the governor, priest and people.

The Lord kindly addressed what it must feel like to compare the temple in its present state with its former glory. He said: Be strong; Get to work - I am with you; My Spirit remains among you; Don't be afraid.

The Lord went on to say: In just a little while I will again shake the heavens and the earth...

Through this story I believe God is addressing our personal/organisational focus and priorities and he is enlightening us concerning His shaking of the church and the world. And it all comes down to Christ being supreme in all things.

1. Focus/Priorities (Rebuild the House of the Lord)

The Holy Spirit asks us what we are focussing on. A bit of a spiritual MOT for us...

1 Jesus is Lord

This is the heart of the good news we carry. There is no good news without Jesus being Lord.

There are many distractions, but we need to hold fast to this foundation for our lives and our work. Jesus is our Lord, we live only to obey him. We call others to do the same.

2 Our priority is to understand what the Spirit is saying to the churches

In each of Jesus' seven letters in Revelation he says "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he his saying to the churches." So we must give attention to the Holy Spirit to discern what He is saying.

3 God is the centre of our narrative

We live in a time of many challenges/issues, locally and globally. There are many suggested solutions. But essentially, in all contexts (global, local, personal), our calling is to centre the narrative on God. Our message in all contexts is - return to God. This is what we bring to any conversation. We are to relate His story through history to the events we see playing out on the world stage now. His story is bigger than any temporary narrative that gains the spotlight.

Example: Creation - Creator/Christ - Community

(John White from Hazelnut Community Farm taught me this!)

As a movement we carry a torch for the church, to remind them of our stewardship of creation. In these days of spiritual emptiness and disconnection from God we stand on the earth, our roots going deep down into it. Our connectedness with creation is a bridge to connectedness with God. It is what we offer to everyone (church included!)

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it! The world and all its people belong to him (Ps 24)

More specifically, we see Creation as the work of Christ, and introduce people to Him.

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible... all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, **so that in everything he might have the supremacy.** (Col 1:16-18)

2. Prepare for shaking

Haggai has a word from the Lord concerning the future: "In just a little while I will again shake the heavens and the earth, the oceans and the dry land. I will shake all the nations, and the treasures of all the nations will be brought to this Temple..."

I believe we are in a time of shaking - God is shaking all the nations and testing us, so that in all things, Christ "**might have the supremacy**".

Think of the faithful servants prepared for the masters return. (Luke 12:35-48)

And the wise virgins with oil in their lamps, ready when the bridegroom arrived (Matt 25)

We live in days of distraction. Jesus calls us to be alert, watchful, ready.

He will shake the church so that only that which is by and for Christ remains.

1 God disciplines those he loves. His kindness leads us to repentance

Hebrews 12:1-13. He disciplines those he loves. It doesn't feel pleasant at the time. It is for our good and results in us sharing his holiness.

Rom 2:4 His kindness leads us to repentance.

Lord's prayer - "do not lead us into the test, but deliver us from evil".

2 Informed by the Bible first, news feeds second

Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light on my path (Ps 119:105)

I specifically feel a challenge from the Lord to encourage us to keep searching the scriptures for our wisdom in these days, and our narrative for global events. For example, the Psalms keep reminding me that the Lord is over and above all the rulers of the earth.

Also a specific encouragement to look again at the history of the world as given by the bible as opposed to evolutionists. Our theology has been influenced by the atheistic views in the world.

3 Be strong in the Lord / not struggling against people

Biblical encouragement to be strong: Josh 1; 1 Kings 2:2; 2 Chron 16; Luke 22:32, Eph 6; Heb 12
Strong = take the weight, carry the burden, don't give in under pressure, take the strain.

Our strength comes from God. We are not strong without him.

Eph 6 is very clear on this and notes we are not struggling against people, but spiritual darkness.

Questions for reflection

- Is Jesus Lord of your life, work, organisation?
- What is the Holy Spirit saying to the churches?
- Are we noticing the narratives are we following? How do they include God?
- How are we encountering Christ in his creation?
- What 'shaking' do we see/have we experienced?
- How has God been disciplining you, as a loving Father, bringing you to share in his holiness?
- How is the bible helping you navigate this time? How healthy is your relationship to your news feed?

God's encouragements to us as we go forward.

From Haggai: In his tenderness, the Lord addressed what it must have felt like for the Israelites to compare the temple in its present state with its former glory. We may feel daunted. He said to them, and so to us:

- Be strong
- Get to work - I am with you
- My Spirit remains among you
- Don't be afraid.