



# Consider Your Ways!

Daniel 5:1-13, 25-30 Haggai 1:1-15 Luke 7:36-50

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Do you remember the “handwriting on the wall” story in the Bible? It was the *very last night* of the Babylonian Empire; the Babylonian King Belshazzar was hosting a wild drinking party; and suddenly a human hand appeared, and wrote **“Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin”** on the wall. Those words were written in Aramaic and they meant the end of the Babylonian Empire. *That very night*, the Persian Empire crushed Babylon and became the dominant world power.

The King of the new Persian Empire was Cyrus the Great, and one of the first things he did was to release the Jews from captivity. Their captivity had lasted for 70 years under the Babylonians<sup>1</sup>. 50,000 exiled Jews followed a man named Zerubbabel back to Jerusalem, where they tried to rebuild their lives and live in peace and new found freedom.

One of the things that the Jews did in Jerusalem was rebuild the Temple, which the Babylonians had completely destroyed and burned down 70 years earlier. The Book of Ezra tells this dramatic story of rebuilding. The people generously gave money for the work of the Lord; there was joy and excitement among the people, they once again worshipped the Lord their God in the Promised Land.

**But soon the work on the Temple stopped** ☹ --- the foundation was laid, the altar was built, but no further construction occurred. *Sadly, the work stopped for 20 years.*

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<sup>1</sup> This is how God worked to keep His promise that the people of Judah would return to their land after 70 years. Here is an example of the promise of return from exile after 70 years: [Jeremiah 29:10-11](#): For this is what the LORD says: “When Babylon’s seventy years are complete, I will attend to you and confirm My promise to restore you to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, to give you a future and a hope.” The people of Judah were taken captive by the Babylonians +/- 586BC, and the Persians allowed them to return +/- 516BC, thus 70 years.

**THIS IS WHERE THE BOOK OF HAGGAI COMES IN.** It is now 20 years after the first exiles returned from Babylon. The work on the Temple had stopped because of the sin of the people. **God sent Haggai to confront the people, and call them to repentance.** Here is a portion of what the Lord told Haggai to say to the people:

Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Consider your ways! You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Consider your ways! Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD. "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of My House, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Haggai 1:5-9

Rebuilding the Temple was important to God because that is where He met with His Old Testament people to forgive their sins.

**The people delayed building God's House because they were too preoccupied building their own homes!** The Lord sees it, and He frames it, as a **First Commandment** issue.

This is what the LORD Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built.' " Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this House remains a ruin?" Haggai 1:2-4

**The people had neglected God . . . and He noticed!** They did not fear, love nor trust in Him above all things. They did not love him with all of their heart, mind, body and soul. For 20 years they had focused on themselves: building their own homes; planting, eating, buying clothes, and saving money. But they were no better off than they had been 20 years earlier ... it was because the Lord was hindering their prosperity; the Lord said that He just **"blew it all away."** Twice the Lord calls them to repentance; here is what He said:

Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Consider your ways! ...  
This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Consider your ways! Haggai 1:5-7

## **"CONSIDER YOUR WAYS!"**

Those are some sobering words! Give careful thought to your ways! Those are words of warning. Twice in three verses God says it. **Those words are a call to repentance** --- for the people in Haggai's time, and to us today.

## "CONSIDER YOUR WAYS!"

In other words, are you neglecting the Lord in your life? Are you pursuing your own desires to the neglect of God and His Kingdom? Are you making excuses like the people in Haggai's time who said, "*The time is not right*"?

Today, the Prophet Haggai still speaks through Holy Scripture! He is calling you to "*Consider Your Ways!*" to make sure that you are not neglecting God and His Kingdom.

### GOD NOTICES NEGLECT.

#### The Lord sees procrastination.

The Lord sees it as a **First Commandment** issue.

In the Gospel story today, Jesus noticed the neglect of the Pharisee. The Pharisee did not give Jesus a proper greeting: no water for His feet, no kiss, no oil for His head. *The Lord noticed the neglect.* Neglecting the Lord is a **First Commandment** issue.

In the days of Haggai, the Lord notice the neglect of His people in Jerusalem. *The Lord notices your neglect also.*

## "CONSIDER YOUR WAYS!"

- ⇒ How are you neglecting Christ and His Word?
- ⇒ Are you too busy to serve God and help your neighbor?
- ⇒ Are you preoccupied with building up your own life?

**"CONSIDER YOUR WAYS!"** It means to give careful thought to your life ... maybe even to your excuses. Excuses are simply a way to justify yourself and enable yourself to continue to sin; excuses can make it seem alright to neglect God! Today, hear and take to heart Haggai's words: **"CONSIDER YOUR WAYS!"** give careful thought to your life ... including your excuses.

**The Good News** is that the Lord doesn't neglect you. He remains faithful to you and loves you – as He did the people in Haggai's time.

### THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

HAGGAI means "festival"

2<sup>nd</sup> shortest book in OT,  
behind only Obadiah

Only 2 chapters  
There are 4 prophecies  
in those 2 chapters

+/- 500BC

Considered a "Minor Prophet"  
because of length of book  
(along with 11 others)

He states 27x that the  
"Word of the Lord came to him"

Key players:  
Haggai → the prophet  
Zerubbabel → the governor  
Joshua → the priest

Haggai's message:  
BUILD GOD'S HOUSE!

And the people feared the LORD. Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: "I am with you!" declares the LORD. Haggai 1: 12-13

**These are words of Gospel – it's Good News.** "*I am with you!*" God does not neglect you, nor abandon you. He brings you close because of His Son Jesus Christ. Through His life, death, and resurrection, you are given a new start --- the sins of the past are removed and forgiven. **The forgiveness of sins empowers you to live a Godly life and to engage in Christ, His Word and His Kingdom.** "*I am with you!*" are words of Gospel – they are Good News for us!

The Gospel not only strengthens your faith; but it also stirs up your Spirit, like it did for the people of Haggai's time.

So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, Haggai 1:14

That is what the gospel does: it gives life; it motivates; it *stirs up your Spirit!* **Today let your spirit be "stirred up!" by the Lord.**

You know the areas where you need to be "stirred up."  
You know the areas where you need help and strength from God.  
You know the areas where you are neglecting the Lord.

We all need to be "*stirred up*" by the Lord --- this "*stirring up*" is God *present and at work* in your life through His Word and Sacraments! Be "*stirred up in your Spirit*" today by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ!

For Haggai, and the people in Jerusalem, it motivated them to finish rebuilding the Temple of God. It was a **first commandment** issue; their work on the Temple was a sign of their love, devotion, and need for the One, True and Only God.

For you, may you **""CONSIDER YOUR WAYS!"** Repent if needed, and then be *stirred up in your spirit* by the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! **AMEN!**

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## Daniel 5:1-13, 25-30

1 King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. 2 Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. 3 Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. 4 They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. 5 Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. 6 Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together. 7 The king called loudly to bring in the enchanters, the Chaldeans, and the astrologers. The king declared to the wise men of Babylon, "Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around his neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." 8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation. 9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, and his color changed, and his lords were perplexed. 10 The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banqueting hall, and the queen declared, "O king, live forever! Let not your thoughts alarm you or your color change. 11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father--your father the king--made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, 12 because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation." 13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king ...

25 And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; 27 TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; 28 PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." 29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

## Haggai 1:1-15

In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest: **2** This is what the LORD Almighty says: "These people say, 'The time has not yet come for the LORD's house to be built.' " **3** Then the word of the LORD came through the prophet Haggai: **4** "Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin?" **5** Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. **6** You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it." **7** This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. **8** Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored," says the LORD. **9** "You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. **10** Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. **11** I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands." **12** Then Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the whole remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the LORD their God and the message of the prophet Haggai, because the LORD their God had sent him. And the people feared the LORD. **13** Then Haggai, the LORD's messenger, gave this message of the LORD to the people: "I am with you," declares the LORD. **14** So the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the LORD Almighty, their God, **15** on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius.

## Luke 7:36-50

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." 41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." 44 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven--for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" 50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."



Father in Heaven,  
as you sent Haggai to the people of  
Jerusalem,  
we too hear his words and take them to  
heart in our day. Help us to properly reflect  
on our lives,  
to consider our ways,  
and to look to you and your strength for all  
things.

Rid us from all neglect, carelessness, and  
apathy towards You, Your Word, and Your  
Kingdom.

Stir up our Spirit,  
and motivate us through the forgiveness of  
our sins,  
to fear, love, and trust in you above all  
things.

Amen!



1 In the second year of *Darius the King*,  
in the sixth month, on the first day of the month,

## the word of the LORD

came by the hand of *Haggai the Prophet*  
to *Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, Governor of Judah*,  
and to *Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the High Priest*:

## 2 Thus says the LORD of hosts:

"These people say the time has not yet come to rebuild the House of the LORD."

## 3 Then the word of the LORD

came by the hand of *Haggai the Prophet*,  
4 "Is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses,  
while this House lies in ruins?

5 Now, therefore, *thus says the LORD of hosts:*

### **CONSIDER YOUR WAYS.**

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

## 7 "Thus says the LORD of hosts:

### **CONSIDER YOUR WAYS.**

8 Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the House,  
that I may take pleasure in it and that I may be glorified, *says the LORD*.  
9 You looked for much, and behold, it came to little.  
And when you brought it home, I blew it away.

Why? *declares the LORD of hosts.*

*Because of My House that lies in ruins,  
while each of you busies himself with his own house.*

10 Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew,  
and the earth has withheld its produce.

11 And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills,  
on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the ground brings forth,  
on man and beast, and on all their labors."

12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel,  
and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the High Priest,  
with all the remnant of the people,  
**obeyed the voice of the LORD their God,**  
and the words of Haggai the Prophet,  
as the LORD their God had sent him.  
**And the people feared the LORD.**

13 Then Haggai,  
the messenger of the LORD,  
spoke to the people with the LORD's message,

**"I AM WITH YOU!"**, declares the LORD."

14 And **the LORD stirred up the spirit**  
of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah,  
**and the spirit of**  
Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the High Priest,  
**and the spirit of**  
all the remnant of the people.

**And they came and worked on  
the House of the LORD of hosts, their God,**

15 on the twenty-fourth day of the month,  
in the sixth month,  
in the second year of Darius the king.