

# 'Starting again'

Returning to life after lockdown

*"Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? But now be strong ..."* (Haggai 2.3f)

As the lockdown restrictions are gradually eased and we return bit by bit to the rhythms of congregational life, the return of the exiles from Babylon provides an instructive, parallel narrative.

The return from Babylon was both gradual and difficult: it's narrated in the two books Ezra and Nehemiah (which were originally one book), and the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah had an integral part to play in the challenges facing the people back then.

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## 9. Priorities

*"Give careful thought to your ways .."*

### Haggai 1.1-15

God raised up Haggai and Zechariah to bring His Word to His people at a time when, for some 18 years or so, the work on rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem had ceased.

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**1. Read Haggai 1.1-15.** The whole chapter comprises the first of four messages which Haggai was given by God to bring to His people and which had a transforming impact on their lives.

What would your one-sentence summary be of this first message brought by Haggai?

In what ways does the chapter as a whole (a) challenge and (b) encourage you as you follow Jesus?

**2. Read Haggai 1.1-4.** Haggai's message was directed in the first place to the leaders, and challenged them, as leaders, in regard to the priorities of the people.

Are you a procrastinator? Do you tend to put off to another time the challenge of addressing certain tasks (v.2)?

Would the Lord be asking us today the same question He posed to the people in v.4?

**3. Read Haggai 1.5-11.** Haggai was measured in his ministry of God's Word: he exhorted the people to reflect on their situation, to 'do the maths', and to draw the necessary conclusions.

Do you take time on a regular basis to 'give careful thought to your ways'?

What lessons should we be taking from what the Lord was saying to the people through Haggai?

**4. Read Haggai 1.12-15.** The message brought by Haggai brought a swift response: within 3 weeks the perspective which had prevailed over the previous 18 years was transformed.

Why does the conviction that God is with you stir people into action? How has it stirred you into action?

What practical steps has this passage prompted you to take?