

'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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10. Glory

"The glory of this present house will be greater .."

Haggai 2.1-9

This second message was brought to the people about 4 weeks after they'd started work on 'the house of the LORD Almighty' (compare 2.1 with 1.15) when the initial burst of enthusiasm was running dry!

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1. **Read Haggai 2.1-9.** In contrast to the challenge of the first message (1.1-15), this message is full of encouragement: all of us need both, albeit in varying measure at different times.

In these days of 'restricted living' why might we need to be challenged, and in what ways might the Lord encourage us?

How has the Word of God encouraged you over the past 4 weeks or so?

2. Read Haggai 2.1-3. The message Haggai brought was spoken into a specific situation and directed to a specific constituency – this time to the leaders and people together (v.2).

From your reading of these three verses what would you say were the reasons for the ‘discouragement’ this message was addressing?

What tends to leave you discouraged in the work of the Lord?

3. Read Haggai 2.4-5. The Lord called Haggai to exhort the people with a word from Himself which would encourage their hearts and stir them into action.

What is the encouragement which Haggai brought to the people?

Let the Lord speak these two verses to you: in what ways do they encourage you?

4. Read Haggai 2.6-9. Where the tendency of some anyway had been to look back, Haggai points them all forward, assuring them that the future will be brighter and better and more glorious.

What did God mean by saying that 'the glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house'?

Does the assurance of a future glory motivate your present service?