

*Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies*

# Haggai

"A Bag With Holes"



Bible Studies  
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**"A Bag With Holes"**  
**A Verse-by-Verse Study of the Book of Haggai**

Haggai

A Bag With Holes

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## **Introduction to Haggai**

This is a true story.

There was once a group of people who found out they had been specially chosen by God to accomplish a great task. They were not exactly the group you would think God would choose for such a huge and difficult job.

They were lazy. They were self-centered. They were rebellious. And they had no desire to change. Nothing about them, in fact, was attractive.

The only thing that made them special was that the Lord of all the universe decided He loved them. He chose to love them and help them see how much they needed to change. And He entrusted them with this very impressive assignment: He had chosen them to tell all the other people in the world about Him.

He did several things to get them ready for the task.

First, He helped them become a nation. They were slaves in another nation, and He helped them escape from slavery

Second, He gave them a set of rules to live by so that they would be easily distinguishable from the rest of the people who lived around them – if they followed those rules they would be like Him.

Third, He gave them a land of their own. Once they reached this land they were to simply live the way God told them to live, and this life would be a testimony to the whole world of what God was all about.

And fourth, He gave them leaders to help them get there.

Amazingly, God's plan worked. This rag-tag bunch of people pulled together and became a power to be reckoned with in the world. They began to live by God's rules and prospered because of it. They reached the land God had given them, and they loved it and settled

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there. And they had strong and courageous leaders who loved God and wanted to do things His way.

And then they self-destructed. They were so prosperous and so blessed that they began to think they had brought about their own happiness. They began to pat themselves on the back...and to forget what their great task was. They began to live by their own rules and rebel against God’s ways. And then, horror of horrors, they began to give their allegiance and worship to other “gods”. They set up idols in their homes. They said they were believers in the One, True God...but they weren’t.

So God, Who continued to love them, allowed an enemy nation to conquer them and carry them off to a foreign land, turning them into slaves once again. He did it to get their attention. It worked. They were slaves for 70 years, and by the end of that time they realized that they had failed God, and wanted very much to try again to accomplish their great task, if only He would get them back home again.

God did just that. He changed the heart of the king who was keeping them captive, and the king allowed this group of people to return to their land, which was destroyed and falling apart.

When the people first arrived back in their land they were full of desire to do things God’s way. They immediately began to rebuild the temple – the place they could worship the One, True God and show the rest of the world what He was like.

But they ran into difficulty as they rebuilt. They had enemies who did not want them to make the temple and their land great again. And the people who had such great aspirations to once again live for God were discouraged...so they stopped working.

They were in their land, though. So they built houses for themselves. And planted orchards. And worked hard to live life. The work of God was put on hold...and all the wealth they gathered kept slipping away from them. Nothing was right.

The book of Haggai is the story of the man who put them back on the right track again...by telling them: “Think about what you are doing. Is this really the way you want to live?” Consider your ways.

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**A Bag With Holes**

Chapter 1 – Questions

1. (:1)
  - a. When is this happening?
  - b. Where is this happening?
  - c. Who is involved?
  - d. What are they doing?
  - e. Why are they doing it?
  
2. (:2-5) Haggai is illustrating here a conversation between the Jewish people and God.
  - a. (:2) What are the Jewish people saying?
  - b. (:3-5) What is God saying?
  
3. (:6-7) The Jewish nation has become complacent because they feel prosperous...but what really is the case?
  
4. (:8-11) Why is life so non-productive for the Jews?
  
5. (:8) What is the Lord, through Haggai, calling the Jewish people to do?
  
6. (:12) What was the leaders' and the peoples' response?
  
7. (:12) This verse says the people "feared" the Lord. What action on their part showed that they did "fear" the Lord?
  
8. (:13) What further message from Haggai did the people need in order to accomplish their task?
  
9. (:14) What needed to happen inside each person in order for the task to get done?
  
10. (:14-15) From the time Haggai first spoke to them, how long did it take for the people to begin work on the temple?

**APPLICATION:**

11. Do you sometimes feel that you are putting money into a bag with holes?
12. What work of God are we neglecting today?
13. What would God have us do?
14. Are you "stirred up"?

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**Chapter 1 – Discussion Notes**

1. (:1)
  - a. When is this happening?

This is one of the places in scripture that we can put an exact date to. Haggai first spoke out on the first day of the 6<sup>th</sup> month of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year Darius was king in Persia. That was August 29<sup>th</sup>, 520 BC.

- b. Where is this happening?

In Israel. Specifically, in Jerusalem.

- c. Who is involved?

Two very influential men in Israel: Zerubbabel, who was the governor (in the line of David the king), and Joshua, who was the High priest.

- d. What are they doing?

It looks like these two men come to Haggai to ask him what God might have to say to them. It was a tradition in Israel to seek out a man of God and ask for direction – and quite often this was done either on the Sabbath, or on the first day of the month (the new moon day).

- e. Why are they doing it?

Yes, these men would have been able to worship and communicate with God individually. They, like king David of old, would have loved to spend time thinking about God and worshipping God in their every day lives. But they needed to come to a prophet in order to get some word of direction for the whole nation. This wasn't devotions. This was "going to church." In other words, they needed some guidance from someone who had a vision for the whole group. Haggai apparently had the reputation of hearing from God on such matters...so they went to him.

Haggai had 4 messages for God's people – and he gave those messages over a 4-month period. And then we never hear from him again. Chapter 1 is the first message.

I'm guessing Haggai had a whole lifetime of walking with God and hearing from God. A whole lifetime of watching his nation drift away from God, be taken captive to a mean and cruel place, then come back again to God, only to get lazy and stop serving God...a whole lifetime to understand God enough to state simply, in 4 messages, at the end of his life, the things God wanted him to state.

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Here's the result:

2. (:2-5) Haggai is illustrating here a conversation between the Jewish people and God.

a. (:2) What are the Jewish people saying?

They have the attitude that "of course we want to do God's will. Of course we want to get the temple rebuilt...but it just isn't God's timing yet. The time is just not right. We'll know when the time is right..."

b. (:3-5) What is God saying?

"Oh, really? You think it's OK to be fixing up your own houses? OK to be taking your kids to soccer practice? OK to be going out to dinner? OK to be making a living?...but not time to do the thing that means the most to God?" Think about it.

3. (:6-7) The Jewish nation has become complacent because they feel prosperous...but what really is the case?

They have seed to sow, food to eat, drink to drink, clothes in their closets, wages to put in the bank...but there's never enough. It is like they are putting their earnings into a beautiful bag...with holes at the bottom. What they put in is falling out as fast as they are putting it in.

4. (:8-11) Why is life so non-productive for the Jews?

Nobody prospers unless God allows them to. God is not allowing them to prosper.

5. (:8) What is the Lord, through Haggai, calling the Jewish people to do?

They are not doing God's will. They are not rebuilding the temple. Why is this so important? We'll find out in Haggai's next message – next chapter.

6. (:12) What was the leaders' and the peoples' response?

We will do what God wants us to do.

7. (:12) This verse says the people "feared" the Lord. What action on their part showed that they did "fear" the Lord?

The fact that they did what they were supposed to do.

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8. (:13) What further message from Haggai did the people need in order to accomplish their task?

They needed to know that He would be with them all the way through. They were going to have his hand of blessing on what they were doing.

9. (:14) What needed to happen inside each person in order for the task to get done?

They needed to get fired up. They needed to want to do this more than they wanted anything else. They needed to not care as much about their things and their comfort as they cared about the things on God’s heart. They needed to be “stirred”. And God stirred them.

10. (:14-15) From the time Haggai first spoke to them, how long did it take for the people to begin work on the temple?

A little over 3 weeks. Nice response.

**APPLICATION:**

11. Do you sometimes feel that you are putting money into a bag with holes?
12. What work of God are we neglecting today?
13. What would God have us do?
14. Are you “stirred up” about the things God is “stirred up” about?

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**Discouragement**

Chapter 2:1-9 – Questions

1. (:1) Look back at chapter 1, verses 1 and 15, and determine where this next message of Haggai comes in the 4 months of his ministry to Israel.
2. Now look at Zechariah 1:1, and figure out at what point the LORD gives 8 dreams to Zechariah in order to spur the Israelites on in their task.
3. Why do you think the LORD uses 2 different men, working separately yet together, to accomplish this mission....What does that teach you about God...and how can you apply that to your life?
4. (:2) To whom does Haggai direct this message?
5. (:3) What is his question for them?
6. Why are they discouraged?
7. Why do we get discouraged?
8. (:4) What is God’s message for discouraged people?
9. (:5) What is the LORD referring to when He talks about the “covenant” He made with them when they came out of Egypt?
10. Why would it be encouraging to the Jews to know the LORD’s spirit was still with them? Did they think He had left? (see Ezekiel 10)
11. (:6&7) What coming event is the LORD referring to when He says He will “shake the heavens and the earth...and the desired of all nations will come...and...fill this house with glory?” Could this be two different coming events?
12. (:8) The silver and gold of Solomon’s temple are mostly gone...does that matter?
13. (:9) The future temple that the LORD is referring to – in what way will it be even more glorious than Solomon’s temple?
14. Why was it so important for the Jews to rebuild this puny little temple?
15. How can we apply that to our lives today?
16. What are you discouraged about? How can Haggai’s 2<sup>nd</sup> message affect your thinking?

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**Discouragement**

Chapter 2:1-9 – Discussion Notes

1. (:1) Look back at chapter 1, verses 1 and 15, and determine where this next message of Haggai comes in the 4 months of his ministry to Israel.

Haggai gives his messages to Israel during a 4-month period. They begin in the 6<sup>th</sup> month of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the reign of King Darius (ruler of the Persians), and they end in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of that same year. In order to help us understand this easily, let's call the 6<sup>th</sup> month June, and the 9<sup>th</sup> month September.

June 1<sup>st</sup> - Haggai's first message (in chapter 1), was spoken to the Israelites

June 24<sup>th</sup> - They began to rebuild the temple

July 21<sup>st</sup> - Haggai's second message (our passage for this lesson)

2. Now look at Zechariah 1:1, and figure out at what point the LORD gives 8 dreams to Zechariah in order to spur the Israelites on in their task.

August - Zechariah is brought into the picture.

3. Why do you think the LORD uses 2 different men, working separately yet together, to accomplish this mission...What does that teach you about God...and how can you apply that to your life?

It's probably a pretty simple lesson – no trick questions here. The LORD quite often uses more than one person to get something done. Perhaps it takes more than one set of abilities. Perhaps different people are respected in different ways by the people who are listening. Perhaps more than one person adds believability to the message. Maybe the two people are encouraging one another.

Whatever the reason, it tells me that the LORD wants certain things to be accomplished. And He finds people who will respond in faith to His vision, and speak out...spurring people on to do God's will.

I guess there's a lesson here in pride. If I have a burning desire to deliver God's message, I should just remember it's His message, His job, not mine...and not be proud of myself.

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And maybe I also should realize there may be other people necessary to accomplish the task..and I should not isolate myself.

Also – if I am feeling like I'm the only one out there who knows what the LORD wants – maybe I should not take myself so seriously.

Maybe there are plenty of others doing the same thing, and together we can encourage one another.

4. (:2) To whom does Haggai direct this message?

To Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all the people of Israel. Again, this just brings home for me the fact that it was going to take many people to get this job done.

5. (:3) What is his question for them?

"Does it not seem to you like nothing?"

This is really poignant. There were people listening to Haggai who had seen the original temple (the one the Babylonians destroyed) in all its glory. Solomon, almost 500 years before, had spent 7 years building the temple of the LORD. (I Kings 6:37&38). It was magnificent. It sparkled with gold and silver and was visible from all over as it perched on a mountain in Israel...the gem of the middle east.

Haggai himself could have been one of those who had seen Solomon's temple...and who had grieved when it was destroyed by the Babylonians just before the Jews were hauled off to slavery.

On June 24<sup>th</sup>, as we have seen from chapter 1, the Jewish people took the foundation which still existed from the old temple, and began to shore it up and build another temple on top of it. I can just see them so excited to be about God's work again...so full of hope that He was indeed with them, loving them, caring about them. So glad to be back in the will of God.

And then I imagine some of them, especially those who had seen the old temple, must have stepped back to take a good look at what they were doing...and perhaps they felt like cold water had just been dashed over them. What they were building was so....small... So unimportant-looking. So plain. There was no gold and silver to adorn it. There was no grand entrance and glorious interior. It was just a little building on a shored-up foundation. This was not a bit like the temple they remembered. Maybe this wasn't God's work after all....

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That’s why Haggai asks them: “Does it not seem to you like nothing?”

6. Why are they discouraged?

What they were doing was so small. How could God use such an insignificant building to tell the world about Himself? How could He expect them to spread the truth when the truth looked so unimportant?

7. Why do we get discouraged?

This is a question each of us can answer for ourselves. I know I get discouraged when the picture I have in my mind is not the one I see coming to pass. That’s exactly the problem Haggai had...exactly the problem the Jews were facing. But God, of course, has an answer.

8. (:4) What is God’s message for discouraged people?

- First, quit feeling sorry for yourselves. Be strong. This is going to be hard...did you think it would be easy?
- Second – I’m with you! Even in the small and insignificant building you are working on. It doesn’t have to be big and beautiful to be something I can use. I’m with you! What else would you need?

9. (:5) What is the LORD referring to when He talks about the “covenant” He made with them when they came out of Egypt?

One thousand years before this the people of God had been slaves in Egypt. The LORD brought them out of there with His mighty hand, and after they came out (kicking and screaming all the way), He made a covenant with them...the 10 Commandments (Exodus 20), and that covenant came with thunder, lightning, and fearful trumpet blasts. (Exodus 19: 16-19). It was awesome! He promised to be their God. They promised to be His people and to obey Him.

Now these same chosen people of God have been rescued from slavery once again. They have come out of Babylon this time. And God still has a covenant with them. He still is their God. They still are His people. But the covenant they made as they left Egypt didn’t work. They could not keep the commands He had made. They failed Him utterly.

I’m sure the thought had lodged in more than one mind: “...maybe the LORD God has had enough of us...we wouldn’t blame Him if He turned

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away from us. We broke the covenant. He isn't obligated to keep it anymore....and maybe this small, unimpressive temple we are trying to build is just the proof we need that He no longer considers us His people."

But no. That wasn't what God was thinking at all. He still loved them and wanted them to be His people. The covenant He had made with them didn't work because they couldn't keep their end of the promise. But He still kept His. He promised to be with them. He still was. "My Spirit remains among you."

10. Why would it be encouraging to the Jews to know the LORD's spirit was still with them? Did they think He had left? (see Ezekiel 10)

He had left. While the Jews were in slavery in Babylon. Ezekiel 10 tells of a vision seen by the prophet Ezekiel of the moment when the presence of the LORD left Solomon's temple – no fanfare...no grieving people...for they had forgotten the LORD altogether. He left and no one said goodbye.

But, wonder of wonders, Haggai is telling them that even though the LORD of all creation had no choice but to leave the temple, He still was with them....the people. His spirit was still there.

In fact, in August the LORD was going to give Zechariah a night of dreams...8 of them....to encourage the Jews to finish their task...and in one of those dreams, #4 to be exact, He says: "...not my might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD Almighty"...telling them for the second time in less than a month that He was with them. Telling them that this job couldn't be accomplished any other way than by depending on Him.

11. (:6&7) What coming event is the LORD referring to when He says He will "shake the heavens and the earth...and the desired of all nations will come...and...fill this house with glory?" Could this be two different coming events?

On Mt Sinai the heavens and the earth were shaken as the LORD stepped into our world and communicated His love.

In Jerusalem at the time of Haggai's message there was no thunder, no lightning, no trumpets. But God was still there.

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Also in Jerusalem, about 400 years later, a man came unimportantly, unimpressively into our world – Jesus walked into the temple the Jews rebuilt and declared Himself to be the Glory of God. His life would have been considered unimportant, unimpressive except for one thing: the heavens and the earth were shaken once again as He died for every man’s sin – and broke the power of death by rising from the dead. (Matthew 27:50-54)

And again, in Jerusalem, some day long into the future, the heavens and the earth will be shaken once again...and the desired of all nations...Jesus Christ...will once again enter the temple of God...this time to spread His Glory throughout the building and into the world, never again to leave.

(Daniel 7:13-14, Ezekiel 43:1-7)

12. (:8) The silver and gold of Solomon’s temple are mostly gone...does that matter?

No, it doesn’t. It all belongs to Him anyway. When the time comes, He will go and get all the silver and gold He needs.

13. (:9) The future temple that the LORD is referring to – in what way will it be even more glorious than Solomon’s temple?

From this future temple, the one still in our future, peace will spread over all the earth. Even Solomon’s temple, in all its glory, could only be a hazy picture of the Glory that is coming.

14. Why was it so important for the Jews to rebuild this puny little temple?

Because here the LORD of Glory would walk one day. He would teach in its courts, and offer His life as a sacrifice for the sin of those He loved so dearly...so that one day He could bring that elusive peace.

15. How can we apply that to our lives today?

16. What are you discouraged about? How can Haggai’s 2<sup>nd</sup> message affect your thinking?

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**Dirt Spreads...Clean Does Not**

Chapter 2:10-19 – Questions

1. (:10) When does Haggai give this next message?
2. (:11-14) What was the main point of this third message from Haggai?
3. Why do you think God tells Haggai to address the priests with this question?
4. The people have already begun to obey God...they have begun to construct the temple. Why do you think God tells Haggai to give this message now? (see Zechariah’s message, given just before this message from Haggai, in Zechariah 1:2-6, to help you understand the timeline of God’s communications with the Jews of this time)
5. (:15-19) Haggai reminds the people of what things have been like up until this point...and then he contrasts it with what things will be like from then on. What have things been like...and what will they be like?
6. Why is God going to now be able to bless them? What has happened which has changed things?
7. What happens when you finally face reality and admit your sin?
8. Why does it take repentance to turn things around?
9. How does a person know whether or not they have something to repent of?
10. What should a person do in order to repent?
11. How would repentance affect our lives in the following areas:
  - a. Relationships
  - b. Job
  - c. Health
  - d. Finances
  - e. Heartaches
  - f. Church
12. The obvious way to end this lesson is to ask: Is there anything you have been denying...anything you need to honestly face and admit...and repent of?

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**Dirt Spreads....Clean Does Not**

Chapter 2:10-19 – Discussion Notes

1. (:10) When does Haggai give this next message?  
Let's look at what has happened so far:

(note: the “June”, “July”, etc. dates are only to help us understand the timeline, since those are month-names we are familiar with. The actual Hebrew month-names were different)

**June 1<sup>st</sup>** - Haggai's first message (in chapter 1), was spoken to the Israelites. He told them to quit procrastinating – it was way past time to build the temple of God.

**June 24<sup>th</sup>** - They began to rebuild the temple

**July 21<sup>st</sup>** – Haggai's second message. – He helps them with discouragement.

**August** – Zechariah is brought into the picture. He brings a message from God to the people. He tells them to turn away from the sins their fathers had committed.

**September 24<sup>th</sup>**. - And now, for this lesson, Haggai's third message –

2. (:11-14) What was the main point of this third message from Haggai?

He asks the priests: If a person is carrying something holy, and then touches something else, does that make the something else holy, too?

The answer is: no.

Then he asks again: If a person is carrying something unholy, and then touches something else, does that make the something else unholy, too?

The answer is: yes.

Let's make this practical so we can see what Haggai is getting at.

If you give your dog a bath...and he is clean and smelling good...and then you give that dog to a really dirty person to hold, does that really dirty person become clean and start smelling good, too? No.

If your dog has just come in from running around in the mud and is covered with filth, and you hand that dog to a really clean person with

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very clean clothes, does that person become dirty from holding that dirty dog? Yes.

The point? Dirt spreads. Clean does not.

After Haggai has made that point he goes on to apply it. The Jewish people have been, up to this point, made dirty by their sinful choices. They have in the past chosen to worship idols and to offer sacrifices of their children to those idols, and to engage in sexual sin, and generally to live in ways which were wrong. Dirty. Not pure like God.

Their dirtiness is infecting every area of their lives. Their dirtiness is the reason their lives are so messed up. And as dirty people they can't build a temple, start offering sacrifices there, and expect that the temple they build will be any cleaner than they are.

3. Why do you think God tells Haggai to address the priests with this question?

The priests would have known this general principle. They knew what God's rules were from the Old Testament writings. Their knowledge of God's words would have lent support to God's message through Haggai.

4. The people have already begun to obey God...they have begun to construct the temple. Why do you think God tells Haggai to give this message now? (see Zechariah's message, given just before this message from Haggai, in Zechariah 1:2-6, to help you understand the timeline of God's communications with the Jews of this time)

Even though the people had been stirred in their hearts to obey God (Haggai 1:14), and had begun the work of rebuilding the temple, They had not yet repented of the past. It was time to get clean. They were wanting to know God, obey God, and serve Him...but they had missed a step – they needed to be reminded of their sin.

Look at Zechariah's message to them in Zechariah 1:2-6. He reminds them of what their parents had done. And he reminds them that they have followed in their parents' footsteps. He reminds them that their parents are no longer alive. That their parents died clinging to their evil ways. He tells them they need to make a break with the past – to admit sin and turn away from it.

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Do they repent? Look at Zechariah 1:6. Yes, they repented. They admitted that everything which had happened to them they deserved. They had sinned and they deserved the tragedy which had fallen on them. And now they wanted to turn around the other way, and begin to be different. They repented. They asked God to forgive them and give them a clean start. They admitted they needed the grace of God to be anything at all.

5. (:15-19) Haggai reminds the people of what things have been like up until this point...and then he contrasts it with what things will be like from then on. What have things been like...and what will they be like?

Up to this point everything they attempted to do just turned to dust in their hands. But from this point on they will be blessed by God.

6. Why is God going to now be able to bless them? What has happened which has changed things?

Zechariah 1:6 tells us what happened. They faced reality. Admitted their sin to God. Repented. From now on God would be free to bless them.

Although the temple being built was essential for the future...even more essential than that was the repentance of the Jewish people Without that everything they attempted would be dirtied...would turn to dust.

7. What happens when you finally face reality and admit your sin?

God can begin to bless you.

8. Why does it take repentance to turn things around?

Repentance needs to happen at two different times in a person's life.

First – Every single person in the world is born with a sin nature. We are born wanting to sin. Desiring to do the wrong thing. Like it or not, it's true. A baby, so beautiful and perfect in so many ways, is going to someday be self-centered and cranky...will lie and hit...will steal and use other people....it's a given. (Romans 3:23)

So the first time a person repents is the time he or she realizes they are someone who chooses to do things the opposite of God's way.

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They realize they are a sinner. And they admit they cannot be any different. They admit they are headed for everlasting punishment for their sin. And they admit they deserve it. (Romans 6:23)

When they admit all those things...then, because of what Jesus Christ did so many years ago, that person can ask Jesus to forgive them for their sin – and can be made clean. Jesus died so that we don't have to. Facing reality and admitting our need and coming to Him to meet it...that's faith. And that's the first time we exercise repentance.

The second time....and for many times thereafter...we can, as believers in Jesus Christ, come to Him again and again and again admitting that we have not lived up to the life He wants us to live. We can repent, turn away from the sin we have slipped into, and restore our right relationship to Jesus... God.

After we have initially repented and placed our faith in Jesus, do we lose that salvation He has given us, and go back to square one when we sin again? No – because salvation is a gift from God. Not to be taken back.

But, like a son who is in the “dog-house” because he stole the keys to the family car and went on a joy-ride with friends, even though we never lose our “sonship”, we do have to admit what we have done wrong and ask for forgiveness to experience the happiness of once more being in good standing in the family.

Here's the key to understanding repentance. Here's the question which must be asked:

Have I ever humbled myself before Almighty God and admitted that I am a sinner? Have I faced the reality that I have gone against God's direct commands? Have I seen myself for the rebel that I am? Have I asked for forgiveness from Jesus Christ for being the one who made Him go to the cross?

If I haven't, then I need to. I need to repent for the first time.

If I have, then I need to repent again, every time I sin, not to regain my salvation, but to get right with God again – operate His ways again.

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9. How does a person know whether or not they have something to repent of?

Just ask God. He doesn't play games with us...teasing us with guilt and then not letting us know there is a solution. Just go to Him and ask: "Lord, is there anything standing in between me and You? Have I displeased You in any way?" (Psalm 139:23&24) He will not leave you hanging. If God has said in His Word (the Bible) that something is wrong, then it's wrong. If we have done those wrong things, then we need to repent. It's no more complicated than that.

10. What should a person do in order to repent?

Talk to God. Admit specific sins. Tell God you want to do things His way. Ask Him for forgive you and help you turn around in the other direction.

11. How would repentance affect our lives in the following areas:

- a. Relationships
- b. Job
- c. Health
- d. Finances
- e. Heartaches
- f. Church

12. The obvious way to end this lesson is to ask: Is there anything you have been denying...anything you need to honestly face and admit...and repent of? Do you need to repent for the first time...or the second....or the third...or...?

Back to the title of this lesson: Dirt spreads, Clean does not.

If you have never repented, everything in your life has been contaminated by your sin. You need to be made clean.

But if you are clean, you are not going to be the reason other dirty people get clean. Clean doesn't spread.

The only reason dirty people become clean is by coming to the source of clean – the One Who can wash away the dirt and give everyone a fresh, clean start. Point people to Jesus...not to you. You can't clean them up. He can.

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**Quit Looking at the Obvious**

Chapter 2:20-23 – Questions

1. (:20) When does Haggai give this last message?
2. (:21) To whom is the message addressed?
3. Who was Zerubbabel? (Haggai 1:1)
4. Read II Samuel 7:16. What did God promise David about the future Kings of Israel?
5. Read Jeremiah 33:14-21. What did God say would have to happen before the kingship of Israel would ever be taken away from the family of David?
6. Read Jeremiah 22. This passage tells the story of a curse placed on one of the last Old Testament Kings of Israel, Jehoiakin. (also known as Jeconiah...also knicknamed "Coniah"). Why did God place a curse on him?
7. Look specifically at Jeremiah 22:30. What part of this curse would affect Israel's future....and the future of the world?
8. Now look at Matthew 1:11-12. This is a geneology of Jesus. What names do you recognize in these verses?
9. Zerubbabel and Jesus descended from Jenoiakin (Jeconiah)! Does that mean neither Zerubbabel nor Jesus could ever sit on the throne of Israel?
10. Now back to Haggai 2:23. What was the Lord's special message just for Zerubbabel?
11. Did God go against His own word?
12. Or did satan get "foiled again"?
13. Instead of ruling as the King in Israel, Zerubbabel finds himself just an appointed governor of a struggling remnant of discouraged people....trying to rebuild a somewhat inferior temple. What has Haggai's message done for Zerubbabel?

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**Quit Looking at the Obvious**

Chapter 2:20-23 – Discussion Notes

Story time.

Three thousand years ago God chose a man to be King of Israel. He wasn't the tallest, or the handsomest, or the most charismatic man in Israel. But he had a passion for God. He longed to know God and to fashion his life in the ways of God.

He was David, the shepherd boy. You can read the story of his choosing in I Samuel 16.

The shepherd became the King. He ruled well, and, although he was not perfect, he followed the path the Lord set before him. God called David "a man after my own heart".

God promised David that all the future Kings of Israel would come from him. In that promise was locked the hope of the whole world...for the Messiah of Israel would also be its King someday. The coming Messiah would come from David.

So David's son, Solomon, sat on the throne of Israel when David died. And Solomon's son, Rehoboam did the same. Rehoboam's son, Abijah, and Abijah's son, Asa.....and on, and on, and on...through kings who loved and obeyed God and kings who disobeyed God. Good kings and bad kings. All of the kings of Israel were of the line of David.

Even the last king...before Israel was carted off to Babylon for 70 years...was a "son" of David. His name was Jehoiakin...he was also called "Jeconiah", or "Coniah". He was incredibly evil. But he was of the line of David, so he had the right to be king.

Our small three-verse passage in this lesson has to do with God's promises to David (and God never goes back on His promises, right?), and has to do with Jeconiah (the last of the bad kings), and a man named Zerubbabel, who lived in Haggai's time.

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1. (:20) When does Haggai give this last message?  
Here’s the timeline we have put together so far:

**June 1<sup>st</sup>** - Haggai’s first message (in chapter 1), was spoken to the Israelites. He told them to quit procrastinating – it was way past time to build the temple of God.

**June 24<sup>th</sup>** - They began to rebuild the temple

**July 21<sup>st</sup>** – Haggai’s second message. – He helps them with discouragement.

**August** – Zechariah is brought into the picture. He brings a message from God to the people. He tells them to turn away from the sins their fathers had committed.

**September 24<sup>th</sup>**. – Haggai’s third message – Once you repent, God can bless.

And now, **also on September 24<sup>th</sup>**, Haggai’s fourth message – his last – a sweetly understated message of hope for a far-away future.

2. (:21) To whom is the message addressed?  
To Zerubbabel.

3. Who was Zerubbabel? (Haggai 1:1)

He was one of the leaders of Israel. In fact, he was considered the “governor” of those who had returned from Babylon. He wasn’t the “king”, because Israel would not be allowed by Babylon to have a king...but he was the closest thing to it. He was the son of Shealtiel, a Jew who had lived in captivity in Babylon.

4. Read II Samuel 7:16. What did God promise David about the future Kings of Israel?

“Your throne shall be established forever.” An irrevocable promise from God. Descendants of David would always be the kings of Israel. Forever. Not just for a lifetime. Not just as long as Israel remained true to God. But forever. Eternity. This promise obviously meant there would someday come a King of Israel who could defy death. Pretty huge promise. One that could only be fulfilled in the Messiah Who had been promised.

5. Read Jeremiah 33:14-21. What did God say would have to happen before the kingship of Israel would ever be taken away from the family of David?

And just in case anyone wondered if the Lord truly meant this promise would last even through Israel’s worst failings, He repeated the

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promise again through the prophet Jeremiah, who ministered during the time Israel was taken away to Babylon:

*“If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant....can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne.” (Jeremiah 33:20,21)*

In other words, my promise to David is good as long as there is day and night.

6. Read Jeremiah 22:24-30. This passage tells the story of a curse placed on one of the last Old Testament Kings of Israel, Jehoiakin. (also known as Jeconiah...also nicknamed “Coniah”). Why did God place a curse on him?

This curse was placed on Jehoiakin about 2 generations before Haggai ever came on the scene. And the “why” is pretty obvious. He was evil. He had no intention of doing the good things kings should do...and he had every intention of hurting the people of Israel in order to get gain for himself. Jehoiakin was the last king from the line of David...then Babylon completely conquered the Jews, destroyed their temple in Jerusalem, and took most of them away.

7. Look specifically at Jeremiah 22:30. What part of this curse would affect Israel’s future....and the future of the world? God places the curse on Jehoiakin and on all his future children. No future child of Jehoiakin would ever reign on the throne of Israel.

8. Now look at Matthew 1:11-12. This is a genealogy of Jesus. What names do you recognize in these verses? Verse 11 repeats what we already know. Jehoiakin (Jeconiah) was last king of Israel before the captivity in Babylon.

Verse 12 tells us something new: Zerubbabel (the one to whom Haggai is addressing his prophecy) is a grandson of Jehoiakin (Jeconiah).

And then, look ahead to Matthew 1:16 – Jesus was a descendent of Zerubbabel.

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9. Zerubbabel and Jesus descended from Jehoiakin (Jeconiah)! Does that mean neither Zerubbabel nor Jesus could ever sit on the throne of Israel?

How can God keep his promise to David, made 500 years before, when God has also promised no descendent of Jehoiakin’s would ever sit on the throne of Israel?

10. Now back to Haggai 2:23. What was the Lord’s special message just for Zerubbabel?

Zerubbabel will again be that “signet ring” which is the stamp of authority for the Messiah to come. God is saying here that the future Messiah would come from Zerubbabel!

11. Did God go against His own word?

The Messiah did, indeed, come from Zerubbabel. How can that be?

The devil must have been pretty sure he had worked God into a corner. He knew God had made that promise to David. And then he did all in his power to draw the kings of Israel into his web of selfishness and sin...and he succeeded many, many times. He succeeded so many times that the Lord was forced to cut off the descendants of Jehoiakin from ever being kings.

It sure must have looked to satan like the Messiah could never come.

12. Or did satan get “foiled again”?

But then there was Zerubbabel. Someone satan didn’t count on. Zerubbabel loved the Lord God and was anxious to do things in the ways of God, just like his “father”, David.

And Zerubbabel was in the legal line to inherit the throne of David. Because he was adopted..... by his uncle, Shealtiel. Legally, he could be the king because he’d been adopted...but the Lord had said this would never happen because of his evil grandfather, Jehoiakin. How does this get solved?

So the critical question here is: who was Zerubbabel’s birth-dad? If his birth-dad was not a descendant of Jehoiakin, then Zerubbabel was free from the curse God had placed on the family of Jehoiakin. But if Zerubbabel’s birth-dad was not a descendant of David, then he still didn’t have the right to reign as king. Zerubbabel’s birth-dad was not a descendent of Jehoiakin (so no curse applies)...and, amazingly, Zerubbabel was still a descendent of King David.

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Remember, at the first of this lesson, we saw that David's son Solomon inherited the throne after him? And then Solomon's son, etc., etc., on down the line?

Well...David had other sons, too. Many of them...19 of them. One of those 19 was Nathan...and Zerubbabel came through the line of Nathan.

As the legally adopted descendent of Jehoiakin he could never be the conduit for the coming Messiah. But as the birth descendent of Nathan (hardly noticed...insignificant son of David), the Messiah could safely be tucked away in his loins...able to reign one day over the Jews...and over the whole world.

No plan of satan's ever succeeds. Foiled again!

Haggai's fourth and last message to his Jewish brothers and sisters? Quit looking at the obvious. Just focus calmly on the promises of God and know that He is perfectly capable of keeping them.

And with this, the old man prophet, Haggai, fades into obscurity, after only 4 months of ministry. We never hear from him again. His words were enough to instill hope and energy into the Jewish people. And the younger prophets, Zechariah and Malachi, went on to inspire them to wait for 400 years for the Messiah.

When the baby Jesus was born there were Jewish people looking for him...ready to respond to the touch of God on their hearts. A few of them were Mary...Joseph...Anna...Simeon... The spiritual inheritors of the legacy of the old man prophet who bravely proclaimed, "Consider Your Ways.", and challenged the Jewish people to start living in such a way that they are no longer putting their wealth into a "Bag with Holes".

13. Instead of ruling as the King in Israel, Zerubbabel finds himself just an appointed governor of a struggling remnant of discouraged people...trying to rebuild a somewhat inferior temple. What has Haggai's message done for Zerubbabel?

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