

Haggai: The Prophet Who Got People Moving

Getting to Know the Man Behind the Book

Most of the prophets left us pages of sermons and at least a few details about their lives. Haggai left two short chapters and almost nothing about himself. We do not know who his father was, where he was born, or how old he was. What we do know is what happened when he spoke: a stalled work that had sat untouched for sixteen years started again in about three weeks.

What We Know

- **His name.** Haggai is related to the Hebrew word for a festival. It may mean that he was born on one of Israel's feast days.
- **His title.** He is called simply “Haggai the prophet” (Haggai 1:1; Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Once he is called “the LORD's messenger” who spoke “the LORD's message” (Haggai 1:13).
- **His time.** All of his recorded preaching falls within about four months in 520 BC.
- **His partner.** The prophet Zechariah began preaching in Jerusalem two months after him (Zechariah 1:1). The book of Ezra always names the two together.
- **His age.** Unknown. Because he asks who remembers the first temple (Haggai 2:3), some have guessed he was an old man who had seen it himself. The Bible does not say.

How He Spoke

He was brief. The whole book is 38 verses. His first message can be read aloud in under two minutes.

He asked questions. “Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses?” (1:4). “Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory?” (2:3). “Is the seed still in the barn?” (2:19). He made people think before he told them what to do.

He was specific. He gave the day, the month, and the year of each message. He named the people he was speaking to. He told them exactly what to do: go up to the mountains, bring wood, and build (1:8).

He pointed away from himself. Over and over he says “says the LORD” or “thus says the LORD of hosts.” He never tells a story about himself.

He encouraged as well as corrected. He opens with a rebuke, and his third message has hard words too. But every message ends in promise: I am with you, be strong, I will fill this temple with glory, I will bless you, I have chosen you.

What Happened When He Spoke

The response is one of the most remarkable in the Bible. Many prophets preached for decades and were ignored. Jeremiah was thrown into a pit. Haggai preached, and the leaders and all the people “obeyed the voice of the LORD their God” (Haggai 1:12).

The book is careful about where the credit goes. “The LORD stirred up the spirit” of the governor, the high priest, and the people (Haggai 1:14). Twenty-three days after the first message, they were at work. About four years later the temple was finished, and Ezra says it was built “through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah” (Ezra 6:14).

Haggai and Zechariah

	Haggai	Zechariah
Began preaching	Sixth month, 520 BC	Eighth month, 520 BC
Length of book	2 chapters	14 chapters
Style	Plain, direct, practical	Visions, symbols, and pictures
Main call	Build the house	Return to the LORD

Ezra 5:1 and 6:14 name them side by side as the voices God used to get the temple built. God used two very different men for the same work. One was short and plain. The other was long and full of pictures. The people needed both.

What We Can Learn From Haggai

- You do not need a well-known name to be used by God. We know almost nothing about Haggai, and his words are still being read.
- A short, clear word at the right time can do more than a long one.
- Honest questions often open a heart that a lecture would close.
- Correction and encouragement belong together. Haggai gave both.
- The power is in God's word and God's Spirit. The messenger simply delivers the message.

All Scripture references follow the New King James Version (NKJV) unless noted otherwise.