

## XI. ON BUILDING THE HOUSE OF GOD - Part 1

~Other Speakers S-Z: John Sung:

### Haggai 1

**Vs. 1.** First, let us explore the historical background of this prophecy. Seventy years had passed since the children of Israel were taken into captivity to Babylon. Now they were returned to their homeland. But their Temple was lying in ruins. The City Gates were also destroyed. The first step taken by the people upon their Return was to rebuild their Temple!

Some enemy proposed to join them in this work. This proposal was rejected because they were deemed unclean. This sparked up their anger. The enemy were determined to stop them. They sent a petition to the Persian king, "The people of Judah are repairing the city wall in an evil plot . . ." This induced the king to order the Jews to stop building their City and Temple.

On the 1st of the 6th month of King Darius, God told Haggai to speak to the people, "Hasten to build the Temple. Don't let it lie waste." Now, when God speaks He means business! Like the Manchu Emperor's decree, every word must be heeded! Shall we not listen and obey what the King of Kings decrees? Let us obey! We believe God speaks to us today as He spoke to them of old.

**Vs. 2.** God says, "You say it is not time yet to build the Temple." What is the Temple? Even our body, which is the temple to the Holy Spirit. Though We are of little worth, God wants us to become holy. To become holy is to become a holy temple. Let us seek holiness early that God might dwell in our hearts. But this the Jews did not want to do.

**Vs. 3 & 4.** God said to the prophet, "Though God's House is in ruins, you are living in houses with decorative ceilings. You care only for your own houses, your bungalows and gardens, but not God's House. You let it lie in ruins." There are many today busily engaged in business, making money and seeking promotions. But they have no time to repair their own temple, still in ruins. Will God bless them? God says, "I will not bless you because you care only for yourself. You care not for my Temple."

**Vs. 5 & 6.** God says, "Because you do not consider your own temple at all, I want you to self-examine your own doings. You plant and reap abundantly, but I will not let you enjoy it. I'll make a hole in your bag and all will leak out."

Some think the most important thing is money. God says, "I won't bless. I'll blow upon it, and it is gone with the wind." Once I put some dollars in my pocket. In a little while they had disappeared. I looked into my pocket. There was a hole! God says, "Since you disregard the Temple, I'll make a hole in your bag."

Today there are some who disregard holiness. God then brings sickness on their children. They spend \$50, \$100. Their pocket is emptied. Why? Because you disregard the Temple. God cannot bless you.

There are preachers who are engaged in mundane things. They disregard the quiet time. Someone said to me, "Mr. Sung, I never succeed in any work I do." I replied, "Maybe your Temple is in ruins." When we disregard the temple, God says, "I'll make a hole in your bag." There was a tycoon in Shanghai. He made \$1,000 a month. When exhorted to close shop on Sunday, he replied, "My business suffers greatly if I stop trading for a day." He had eight children but these got sick by turns. He spent \$1,000 a month on their doctor's bills. He said to me, "Mr. Sung, God has not blessed me. My children have all taken ill. All that I have earned has gone into the doctor's purse." I said, "Maybe you lacked holiness, so your bag had a hole. You are not holy, so God makes things turn against you. The more you disregard God, the more holes God puts into your bag."

**Vs. 7 & 8.** The prophet says, "Thus saith the Lord, consider your ways, Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house: and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord." If we seek God's delight in us, we must cleanse ourselves. How? The Bible says we should go up daily to the mountain to study His Word. That is to bring wood. One piece at a time. It increases. The temple is built! Beloved, have you gone up the mountain and bring wood. Everyday before it dawns, I get up. For what? To bring wood to build the temple. How important it is to have devotions!

God says, “Go up the mountain and bring wood.” Have you prayed? Searched your soul? Read the Bible? Do not let your temple lie in ruins! Whenever I study the Word, I thank the Lord. Because I ascend the highest summit, I find the best wood. Everyday.

Beloved, Do you read your Bible everyday? If not, your temple is in ruins. Do you want to have devotions everyday? If you do, God will be pleased and glorified.

Vs. 9. God says, “You expect much, but I won't give.” Do you want to get rich? God says, “If you don't build the temple, I will blow all that you store up together. You care only for yourselves, but I won't bless, thus saith the Lord of hosts.”

Vs. 10 & 11. God says, “For your sakes, it will not rain. The earth will not produce. You have no way out!” God says, “I send the drought. There is no reaping.” Why won't God bless? Because you have not gone to bring wood everyday. The temple is in ruins.

I met a preacher, a clever businessman. He loaned on high interest. He made plenty of money every month. He preached only twice a week. He was rather a big business man. But, alas! His eldest son died while studying at the university. His wife got very sick. His second son became a bandit, was shot by the government. One day he said to me in tears, “God does not bless me. I met with disasters on every hand. I have an awful time.” I replied, “Because you thought the temple could be left in ruins. You tried to amass a fortune but God didn't bless. Even your body now is not the temple of God.” Beloved, how is your temple? When God blows upon it, it is gone, Because you don't go up the mountain to bring wood.

Let me ask you. Some of you have been old-timer Christians. Some, leaders of the Church. Do you read your Bible everyday? Maybe, you're too busy! But money is No. 1. And you praise the mighty dollar, and not the Lord. God cannot bless!

Vs. 12-15. Praise the Lord! After Haggai's sermon, the people were moved! They said, “We are undone.” God replied, “I am with you.” Now that the people realised how important the Temple was, they launched out to build it on the 24th of the 6th month.

Beloved, may God move you this morning to attain holiness, that God might delight in you. Whenever I speak on my own, God would chastise me. Once I yearned for home as I still do, even now. That five-year-old son of mine who also yearned after me wrote me a letter. But he did not know how. He only scratched on the paper at random. His mother translated these marks as being his yearning for Daddy and wanted me to come home. But I did not go home, and everyone at home was well. The moment I got home, however, everything went wrong. First week, second week. My wife fell ill, then my son. When I left home, without medicine, they all got well. God said, “You should go out. Don't think of yourself, but think of Me.” God blesses, if we bring wood everyday, and regard the Temple as important.

Once I visited Shansi at the invitation of a Westerner. That Western friend treated me very well. Every meal he fed me with eggs, rice-noodles, sweet potatoes, turnips, milk. Everyday the same. I got sick after this. I caught cold. I could not sleep at night. I got worried. I was a guest. I dared not tell him.

My companion secretary bought me some hot soup. He dared not let the host know lest he be offended. God said, “You regard yourself too highly.” My sickness got worse. I had sleepless nights though I was a good sleeper. I worried if I had contracted T.B. Because I worried, God made me worse.

I went to Ping Yan Prefecture and from there to Ping Ting. Everyone urged me to rest. I couldn't stand up. I had to be supported by two persons, as I preached. I spoke only once a day. I knelt and prayed. God said “You care too much for yourself.” I said, “O.K.” The next day I preached twice instead of once, and prayed for the sick also. Thus I got well again! The more we fear it, the more we get it. The more we disregard death, the less it bothers us. The more we labour for God the more we receive His help. The more we go up the mountain, the more wood we bring.

Many say to me, “Mr. Sung! We have headache, soreeyes, stomachache, earache, noseache.” These people care not for their souls but for their bodies. God cannot bless them. If they come rather to hear the Word and not to get divine healing their sickness would go automatically. God cannot bless those who think only of their bodies.

I have a secret way of healing. Whenever I get sorethroat or headache, I would preach the more, yes, until I get

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wet, sweating all over. Then I get well! When I lose my voice, I preach more times, not twice a day, but thrice. The more I preach, the more I keep my voice.

A Shanghai preacher's daughter was suffering from worms. She was bedridden three years. Her father consulted many doctors without avail. He came to see me. I said to her, "I give you a prescription, O.K.?" She agreed. I said, "First, confess all your sins. Second, don't be afraid of your sickness. Third, give your testimony." She confessed her sins. I prayed for her. She was healed. She was on a milk diet. I prescribed rice. Though she could not eat, I urged her to swallow it. After one week, she gained two pounds. When I visited Shanghai again this time, she was the proud mother of a child. When she saw me she said, "Praise the Lord!" So we must be concerned for the things of God, to obtain His blessing. The more we fear, the more we die! The more we dare to die, the more we live!

**THEME SONG**

Oh, deeper yet, I pray

And higher every day,

And wiser, blessed Lord,

In Thy precious, Holy Word.