

The Project of God

Introduction

Let's look together at the story of Joshua and Zerubbabel and the project of rebuilding the temple. We will see how God blesses obedience and focus of its people. We will see how to bring glory to God is to receive His blessings.

So let's look together in the book of Haggai chapter 2:

2 "Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.' ' "

4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"

9 "You looked for much, but indeed it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts. "Because of My house that is in ruins, while every one of you runs to his own house.

In the year 537BC, a group of Judeans returned from Babylone to the country of their ancestors, to the promised land. King Cyrus the Great gave them permission to build the temple but they are not doing it. In the 520BC, they still did not build the temple. 17 years the people of Judah minded their own business (too busy to do God's work). In fact, they started building in 537BC, but "people of the land" discouraged them and accused them before the King Artaxerxes, so the building stopped. But this was no excuse in the God's eyes. People forgot about their mission. They lost their identity. Can it happen to us? Can it happen to us that God delivers us from slavery and we still mind only our own business? God is reminding us that everyone has its own mission and purpose. There is a reason why we are at this time in this part of the world.

Enthusiasm

The text continues:

12 "Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the Lord."

Verse 2 refers to Judah as "people", and now Haggai is using the word "remnant", which bears quite some meaning in Bible. This word reminds the people of their purpose and mission. And the whole text speaks about the mission that God entrusted them. They became remnant again once they embraced God's project for their lives.

13 Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, "I am with you, says the Lord."

God promises His special presence in the lives of His remnant people. The text also refers to us today, as Jesus says in Matthew 28.20 that He will be with us till the end of the world.

14 "So the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of the whole remnant of the people. They came and began to work on the house of the Lord Almighty, their God."

In this account, God stirs the spirit of two men. God put enthusiasm in their hearts; they are enthusiastic about the project of God. The first step is the recognition of our identity

and the mission of God for our lives. Embracing the project of God brings His special presence in our lives. This result in our excitement for our calling. There is excitement that comes from God's presence and excitement for doing God's work. When we are controlled by God's Spirit we want to follow Him.

Excuses. Sometimes we find excuses that the current situation is simply as it is, and we cannot change it. Sometimes we are too busy running for our houses, jobs so that we forget God's project. Or we think we are too little to make an impact in the world.

Going against the odds/going counter-courant. The Bible provides plenty of examples when 2-3 people made an impact in the world and stood against the whole nation, or inspired the whole nation for an action when everyone else was saying it's impossible or the timing is not good. When you want to introduce a change, everyone says - this will not fly. What is important is prayer and persistence. We need such visionaries that consider God's plan as their life mission.

- **Moses and Aron:** the leaders of Israel were initially against the plan of God and did not immediately understood that God sent Moses. We need to continue pursuing (being sure that it's God who sends us) despite the opposition. People of Israel get used even to slavery. Just to keep the things how they are; just to keep the status quo.
- **Israel entering the promised land.** The first attempt was 40 days after they left Egypt. The twelve spies complained that the people they need to fight against are giants and that there is no way they can prevail. This is too big obstacle. But Joshua and Caleb think differently.
- Matthew 18:20 Jesus said "For **where two or three are gathered together in My name**, I am there in the midst of them." God is with us: Luc 12.32 reads: "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."
- Acts 4:13 reads: "Now when they saw **the boldness of Peter and John**, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus." In front of Sanhedrin consisting of 70 most educated, successful and highly-esteemed people, two fishermen were bold. If we look into Acts chapter 4, it speaks about priests, rulers of the temple, Sadducees, leaders, elders, scribes, the high priest, relatives of the high priest. But Peter and John were not afraid and the number of believers grew to 5000.

The level of commitment for doing a technological start-up is quite high. It's usually started by 2-3 people that pledge a vow to the level of commitment, similar to those we promise on the marriage day. What would happen if Christians would invest their money, energy and time in God's mission in the same way that successful businessmen look after their businesses?

Now, someone may say that even if we have the calling and enthusiasm, we still should stay passive till we get enough money or enough people to join our project. We may say that we don't have enough resources or strength. But when God calls, He provides.

Strength

Haggai 2:4-5 "But now be strong, O Zerubbabel," declares the Lord. 'Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares the Lord, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares the Lord Almighty. 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.'"

Resources, Presence and Peace

Haggai 2:3,8 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing? 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty. 'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty."

Our efforts may look weak and miserable looking into the big picture. The old temple was bigger and nicer, but Jesus will glorify the new temple with His presence. Jesus' presence in our lives makes all the difference. God will multiply and glorify our weak efforts. Only Christ gives sense to everything we do.

A bit more about the resources can be found in the book of Esdra 6:8-10, 15 where King Darius is speaking: "Moreover I issue a decree as to what you shall do for the elders of these Jews, for the building of this house of God: Let the cost be paid at the king's expense from taxes on the region beyond the River; this is to be given immediately to these men, so that they are not hindered. 9 And whatever they need—young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request of the priests who are in Jerusalem—let it be given them day by day without fail, 10 that they may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons. 15 Now the temple was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius."

Prosperity

Haggai 2:19 "Is there yet any seed left in the barn? Until now, the vine and the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree have not borne fruit. 'From this day on I will bless you.' "

The people had lived in a drought and famine because God had withheld his blessing because of their disobedience. Now, God blesses them because they have focused on the most important things in life.

Zaharia 4: 6 So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the Lord of hosts.

7 'Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain! And he shall bring forth the capstone With shouts of "Grace, grace to it!" ' "

10 For who has despised the day of small things?

Small beginnings lead to great results, if we let God to lead, and if we rely on His power.

Conclusion & Call for action

If God had placed something on your heart, don't wait for better time, better church, this or that leader to leave or come into power, for better circumstances, for someone to invite you, for the things to improve. Rather, with the help of God be that steering factor for good, be the inspiration for others. Now is time of salvation (2 Co 6.1,2). Find a teammate/prayer-mate, and see where God leads you.