

# God First

## Chapter 12

### Audio Lesson: Old Testament number 85



Objective: To understand the prophet Haggai's message of the importance of having proper priorities.



*"You expected much, but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?" declares the LORD Almighty. "Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house. Therefore, because of you the heavens have withheld their dew and the earth its crops. I called for a drought on the fields and the mountains, on the grain, the new wine, the oil and whatever the ground produces, on men and cattle, and on the labor of your hands."*

—Haggai 1:9-11

Haggai was one of three prophets to preach after the Babylonian captivity. This prophet preached to the first group of exiles to return to Jerusalem. These former exiles found people in their land who did not fear God and who strongly opposed their efforts to rebuild the temple. Because of the hostility of those around them, the people of Judah stopped their reconstruction project for 15 years, and instead selfishly focused on building their own homes. "Give careful thought to your ways," Haggai told them. He cried out for God's people to remember their priorities, to regain the proper perspective, to be motivated to continue their mission, and to stop fearing the nations that intimidated them. His words remind us of our need to stay focused on God's mission and His will for our lives.



1. True or false? Haggai chose to remain in Babylon while God's people returned to Jerusalem from their exile.

2. True or false? Exiles were allowed to return to Jerusalem when Babylon was conquered by the Medes and Persians.
3. True or false? Persecution and threats caused the children of God to become distracted from their mission.

*Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.*

4. How did the people of Judah appear when they returned from exile?
  - a. Strong and powerful
  - b. Rich and lazy
  - c. Poor and ragged
  - d. Exactly like Babylonians
5. What was the primary purpose of the first return of exiles?
  - a. To rebuild the temple
  - b. To rid the Promised Land of ungodly people
  - c. To make Jerusalem a strong city
  - d. To escape the wrath of Persia
6. How did the inhabitants of the land respond when Jews returned from Babylon?
  - a. They welcomed them enthusiastically.
  - b. They gathered weapons and warriors to fight them.
  - c. They ran from them in fear.
  - d. They harassed and persecuted them.
7. How did the returning Jews react to their enemies? (*choose all that apply*)
  - a. They stopped building the temple.
  - b. They fought their enemies courageously.
  - c. They lost their zeal and courage.
  - d. They focused on building their own homes.
  - e. They praised God for the opportunity to demonstrate faith.
  - f. They ignored the past and pressed on with a vision of the future.
8. Which of the following is a good summary for Haggai's message?
  - a. Future judgment
  - b. Past sins
  - c. God first
  - d. Wait
9. What did God do to teach His people not to put themselves or other things before Him?
  - a. He sent them back into captivity immediately.
  - b. He kept them from ever having enough until they put Him first.
  - c. He sent a plague on them.
  - d. He abandoned His people completely.

10. How did the people respond to Haggai's preaching?
- a. They ignored him.
  - b. They stoned him.
  - c. They repented, got their priorities right, and they began working on the temple again.
  - d. Their hearts were jealous of the ungodly and they abandoned God.

11. What did God promise when the people set their priorities right?
- a. He would bless them with plenty.
  - b. He would give them as much power, wealth, and health as they wanted.
  - c. He would tell them how well they were doing.
  - d. He would make their punishment less severe.



How are your values reflected in the way you spend your time, your money, and your skills and talents? Is there anything more important to you than God's kingdom? If so, what is it? What can you do to focus your priorities more on God?

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Thank God that He loves us enough to teach us what is most important in life. Ask Him to help you put Him First, love Him more than anyone or anything else and to help you be a good steward of His gifts. Ask Him to help you live your life according to His priorities and not your selfish desires.



## Going Deeper

1. When Haggai preached “*Consider your ways,*” what ways did he want the people to consider?

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2. When God speaking through Haggai preached “*Consider My ways,*” what ways of His did God want the people to consider? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How can you apply the hard reality that according to this prophet, based on the way the people were spending their time, talents and money on their own homes and not working on God’s house, who was first in their lives? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. Can you apply personally the ways of God that are graphically and eloquently described by Haggai as putting a hole in their sock or blowing away their money when they spread it out to make it go around? \_\_\_\_\_

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5. In the 11<sup>th</sup> verse of the first chapter, Haggai says that God sometimes calls for a drought on men as well as their crops. If you ever had dry spells that could be explained by this verse, describe them. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. In what other ways can you personally apply the message of this prophet? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What was the obstacle addressed by Haggai that was blocking the work of God? \_\_\_\_\_

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