

A 5 WEEK SERIES IN HAGGAI

# CONSIDER *your* WAYS

CHOOSING GOD'S  
BUSINESS OVER OURS

My Way

God's Way

Study Guide Week 5: Haggai 2:20-23

## Standing on the Promises of God

Many Christians live as if their God resigned, not as if He truly reigns as the Sovereign of the universe.

A correction notice in a local Oregon newspaper read, "The title of a First Christian Church program in last week's paper was written as 'Our God Resigns.' The actual title is 'Our God Reigns'" (Reader's Digest, [9/93], p. 53). What a difference one letter makes! But maybe that typo is more true in our experience than we care to admit! Many Christians live as if their God resigned, not as if He truly reigns as the Sovereign of the universe. As I mentioned recently, 70 percent of pastors constantly fight depression and over 80 percent of pastors and their wives feel discouraged in their work. If we aren't careful, we can easily develop that perspective, because as you look around, it seems as if the enemy is winning. In spite of all of the Christian influence and Christian resources available in this country, evil has escalated to unimaginable proportions in the past 35 years.

Most Americans used to agree with Christian moral standards, even if they didn't keep them. But now even

many professing Christians do not live by those standards, let alone those in the world. People flaunt their sin as if it's a badge of honor. Several Christian denominations tolerate homosexual sin not only among their members, but even among the clergy! Very few churches take a stand for absolute truth, whether in morals or in doctrine. The gospel has been

changed from how a person can be saved from God's judgment to how we can use God for personal fulfillment! When you consider the cause of world missions, it also can be discouraging. The worldwide threat of militant Islam is daunting. Often new converts in Islamic countries are killed, which is no small problem in founding

new churches! There are still thousands of people groups with no gospel witness. Quite often, even in this country, let alone in developing nations, professing Christians mingle cultural folk religion with their Christian faith. If we focus too much on these problems, it's easy to wonder if our God resigned!





Zerubbabel found himself in that sort of discouraging situation. He was the grandson of Jehoiachin, the last ruler of Judah before Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and conquered the land. Most of the population had been carried off to Babylon, and even now, only a small remnant of about 50,000 had returned under Cyrus' permission. They were still under Persian rule and surrounded by hostile neighbors who opposed the Jewish resettlement. The Jews who returned seemed more concerned with their own comfort and prosperity than with the things of God. Although there was a good response to Haggai's call to rebuild the temple, many of the Jews were religious outwardly, but their hearts were not right before God (2:14). The walls of Jerusalem were still torn down, leaving the city vulnerable. Somehow, Zerubbabel was supposed to govern in this bleak situation. That was the picture on December 18, 520 B.C., the day that Haggai had a message from God for the people (last week, 2:10- 19). He called them not only to continue the work on the temple, but to do it from hearts that were holy before God. He promised to bless them from that day on.

On that same day, God gave Haggai a message directly to Zerubbabel. As stated before, the first and third

messages in Haggai are parallel, and the second and fourth are parallel. The first and third were messages of rebuke or exhortation. The second and fourth are messages of encouragement. To Zerubbabel and to all of God's servants who may be discouraged, God has this word:

**Because the Sovereign Lord will prevail in His eternal plan, His servants should be encouraged to trust Him and to do His will.**

Steve Cole

### **Haggai 2:20-23 (ESV)**

*The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother. On that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the Lord, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the Lord of hosts."*

# Open It!

Describe a time when you received an award or honor. How did it make you feel? What impact did it have on you moving forward?

## Read It | Haggai 2:20-23

Read the entire passage before proceeding to the questions below.



## Explore It

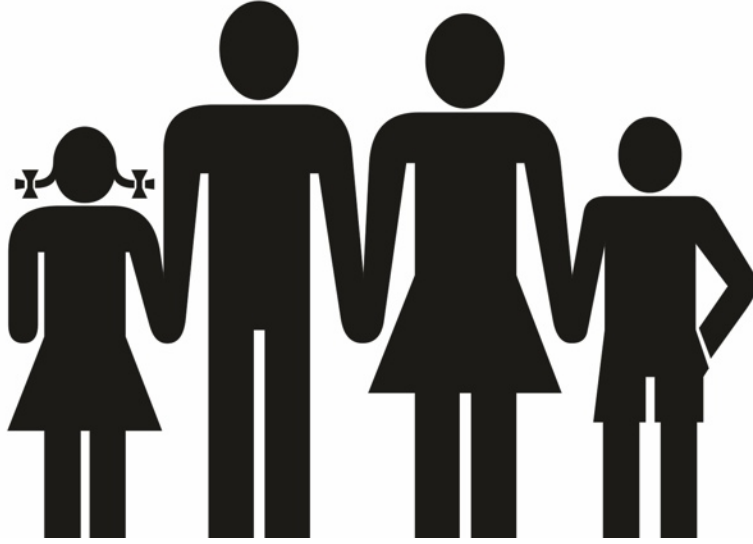
1. According to Haggai 2:10 & 20 what do we learn about the third and fourth message that God delivers?
2. To whom does this final message get addressed to?
3. What position did he hold?
4. What would God make his servant like?

## Get It

1. God has much to say to His servant in this final message of the book. Take time to write down some of God's promised actions. What do these statements tell us about God?
2. Zerubbabel had much to be concerned with as the governor. Domestic issues, enemies on all borders, even internal politics would be of great concern to him. What would this message of God do for his confidence to fulfill his duty as well as the concerns that had him worried?

3. God uses Zerubbabel, who was a political leader, to fulfill His purposes. Do you think that Christians should be active in political life? What are some of the positives and negatives to being engaged in politics?
4. God addresses the leaders in Haggai's time over and over again. Why is it that God uses leaders? What does God know about His people that supports Him working through those who have been gifted with the ability to lead and guide others? What qualities must be evident in those who lead others?
5. God tells Zerubbabel that "on that day" all of His promises and plans will be fulfilled. Many scholars believe that these words to His servant will find their full and final fulfillment with the events of Christ's second coming recorded in Rev. 19:11-21. What does the knowledge of Christ's final victory over the devil and sin do for the believer today?
6. God speaks of making Zerubbabel a "signet ring". Scholars tell us that this is a covenant sign of protection and care. In what ways does God continue to reinforce this covenant with His people today?
7. How can we know that the many promises in scripture given over 2000 years ago will still be fulfilled? What assurances do we have that they are true?
8. This passage speaks much about God's active sovereignty over nations, armies, and even the choosing of a particular person. Is the doctrine of God's sovereignty and choosing a source of comfort or confusion for you? Why?
9. God's words would bring peace to the heart of His servant. What troubles or concerns do you have that can be put to rest knowing the truths of this text?

# FAMILY ACTIVITY



## Activity

Make a promise to your children but do not keep it immediately. Use their waiting as a reminder that many waited for the promised Savior. Over dinner talk about promises that you have made to people and promises people have made to you. Talk about the promises God has made to His children and why we can trust Him.

## Devotional

As a family, spend time with God in His word and have someone read Haggai 2:20-23.

Each one of us has experienced broken promises. Perhaps, in some cases, we are the ones who have broken our promise. When we don't keep our word we damage relationships with those around us and cause people to trust us less and less.

Unlike us, God is one who never breaks a promise. Everything He has declared in His word will come true. Not a dot of God's word will be broken. This means we serve a God that we can trust. He will never disappoint us with a broken promise.

One of God's promises to His people was to send a Messiah who would be their Savior. He fulfilled that promise by sending His Son Jesus to come and to save His people from their sins. The promise of Jesus wasn't only for the Israelites; it was for us as well!!! Even today we have the fulfilled promise of our sins being paid for and defeated when Christ died on the cross, was buried for three days and then rose again.

Not only that, but God has promised that one day Christ will return, not only to perfect us, but to live with us eternally. Let's choose today to trust in God's promises.

## Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it hard to be patient when waiting on God's promises?
2. How can we fight impatience?
3. What ways can we make sure that we stay true to the promises we give to others?