

# Repentance

## REPENTANCE BRINGS TRANSFORMATION

Focal Verses • HAGGAI 1:2-14

### Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, students will: ANALYZE the issues for which God rebuked the returning exiles; EXAMINE their failure, repentance, and success; ACT on the word of God; and adjust their priorities according to the Word of the Lord.

### In Focus

Attuk had been alienated from his family since he was 22. He had a falling out with his parents about something he could not remember. He had moved without leaving a forwarding address, and he never called.

Now, thirty years later, he was married with three children who had never seen their grandparents. However, Attuk's parents never stopped loving him, and they would ask every family friend and acquaintance about him.

One day, while he was shopping, a childhood acquaintance saw him and called out his name. "Where have you been? Your parents are concerned about you," the acquaintance asked. Attuk was ashamed. He turned to the man and said, "I have been away so long, and there are many hurt feelings between me, my parents, and all my old friends." To this, the man responded, "You can always come back home."

Attuk said, "I thought I would return to my parents when I had accomplished something and made a life for myself. However, when that happened, I told myself I would return when I had made enough money; then, the Lord blessed me with money. I then said I would return when the Lord blessed me with children, but I never went back."

Then the man asked him, "Do you suppose it is good for you to have your children while your parents lose the opportunity to be with their child? Do you suppose it is good for you to have finances while your parents have spent every dime they have looking for you?" Attuk said, "Yeah, I know." The man said, "Well, it's time to go home and say you're sorry."

*In today's lesson, we see a people who, despite God's love for them, have created a priority system that is out of touch with the reality of the God who brought them from exile. The prophet Haggai called them to repent for their actions. When was the last time you recognized your priorities were incorrect and had to apologize or repent for your actions?*

### Keep in Mind

"Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?"  
(Haggai 1:4, KJV).



## Focal Verses

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**KJV** Haggai 1:2 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.

3 Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?

5 Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

6 Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but you have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

8 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.

9 Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? Saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

10 Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

11 And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, 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 did fear before the LORD.

13 Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.

14 And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts, their God.

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## The People, Places, and Times

**Haggai.** An Old Testament prophet and author of the Book of Haggai. As God's spokesman, he encouraged the captives who had returned to Jerusalem to complete the reconstruction of the temple. This work had started shortly after the first exiles returned from Babylon in 538 B.C., but the building activity was soon abandoned because of discouragement and oppression. Beginning in 520 B.C., Haggai and his fellow prophet, Zechariah, urged the people to resume the task. The temple was completed four years later, about 516 B.C. (Ezra 5:1; 6:15)

**Remnant.** The part of a community or nation that remains after a dreadful judgment or devastating calamity, especially those who have escaped and remain to form the nucleus of a new community. The survival of a righteous remnant rests solely on God's providential care for His chosen people and His faithfulness to keep His covenant promises.

**Zerubbabel.** The temple that Zerubbabel built in Jerusalem in the sixth century B.C. lasted longer than the temples of Solomon and Herod the Great combined. He was placed in charge of the returning Israelites and given the title "Governor of Judah."

## Background

The Lord had provided wondrously for the children of Israel. They had sinned against Him. Yet He had mercy and promised to deliver them from the hands of their captives. He gave careful instruction to them through the prophets on how and when to build the Temple. Yet the Lord's house was not rebuilt. God was waiting for Israel to get their act together and prepare and build again. He was also perhaps waiting until they were settled in their own homes (after being held captive for so long, there had to be a period of adjustment). That period of adjustment, however, had long past, and God was waiting for His people to complete the Temple.

## At-A-Glance

1. The Message of the Prophet Haggai (Haggai 1:2)
2. A Prophetic Challenge (vv. 3–6)
3. God Sends a Second Command to Build (vv. 7–8)
4. Obedience and Transformation (vv. 9–14)

## In Depth

### 1. The Message of the Prophet Haggai (Haggai 1:2)

Haggai is a message to the returned exiles. Even though they have had more than seventy years to learn about the priority of divine things, a few years after returning from exile, they were back to the old pattern of misplaced priorities and misunderstood purposes. As is the manner of God with Israel, the prophet deals with Israel's seeming ingratitude. God brought them back and made it clear, through the pagan King Cyrus, that the reason for the return was to build the house of the Lord again and to make sure that worship resumed in it. The command was

clear: "Go rebuild the Temple of God." But after the people had received their freedom, they put other priorities before those of God's. The people had an excuse for not doing this task, which is not unlike the excuses we use as we procrastinate about the things of God. The first excuse was that it was not time. What is the rush? It can wait. Is it not amazing how we suddenly acquire the gift of patience when it comes to doing the things that God has commanded us? Why was it not time to build the house of God? The text lets us know that while they had been freed from physical bondage, they were still bound by the tyranny of time. There never seems to be enough time to do the things of God, but we can always find time for whatever else that may suit our fancy.

They could not say that they did not know how to go about the work, for God had given them specific instructions on how to do it. They could not say that they had no money, for God had provided the monies. They could not say that they had no experts, for God had provided skilled workers. In spite of all the providential preparation, they said that it was not time yet. Could it be that there was something more serious going on here than just the lack of time or even the constraint of time?

### 2. A Prophetic Challenge (vv. 3–6)

In these verses God, through the prophet, responds to the question raised in the previous section. Since they argued that they did not have time, where did they find the time to do all the things that they were doing? Where did they find time to watch "Jerusalem TV" twenty-four hours a week but could not find time to fellowship with God's people? How could they have a question of time as it relates to God's work but find the time to build their houses? They had placed God lower in importance. Their own comfort had become their god. In short, they had become their own god. What they wanted took precedence over what God wanted. Look at the way God poses the

question to them in verse 4: “Is it time for you?” This implies that it was not an issue of time but of their view of God’s place in their lives.

This kind of attitude calls for self-examination. God has to rebuke His people. He says in verse 5: “Consider your ways.” The idea here is that they now need to think clearly about their stance. The very root of their being (figuratively) and the ground of their inferences needed to be examined in light of God’s nature and the work that He had done in their lives. This is God’s wake-up call. There is also the call to change, to reconsider, and to recommit. They were to take off their disguise and dispose of it for good.

This call to self-examination implies that if they truly weighed things carefully, they would notice their way was not working. According to verse 6, having made God secondary, rather than having victory (which God promised them), they struggled just for the bare minimum. God, having been put on the back shelf, was withholding His blessings. These people were like so many of us; we want the gifts but not the giver. We need to be reminded that God is our source. We must keep in mind that God is the reason we have what we now possess. How soon do we forget?

### **3. God Sends a Second Command to Build (vv. 7–8)**

God has revealed that there was an imbalance in their lives because of their procrastination and disobedience. In verses 7 and 8, He reveals how they can get back on track again. First, “consider your ways.” Second, God seems to be saying: reprioritize. You have a way of escape. God says to go and “build the house” (v. 8). Notice that God does not change the command; He merely gives them a second chance. Obedience to God realigns us with the will of God and puts us in the place where we are able to receive from the Lord. God shows them the immediate consequence of their misplaced

loyalty (vv. 9–11). If they have been in trouble in this case, they brought it upon themselves. They chose their own houses instead of God’s house. The desolation of God’s house led to the desolation of their own houses. Everything that happens to them here is directed to something that they have done or refused to do in relating to God. Just like them, our ways and actions determine our future. God is repeating why His people are in the condition they are in. God had provided everything that they needed and yet there was not a house for Him. The law of recompense was in progress—you reap what you sow.

### **4. Obedience and Transformation (vv. 9–14)**

God is pleased when we hear a rebuke and repent. The people repented after Haggai revealed what God was saying to His people. They did just what God said to do and that was to “consider their ways.” We need the Lord to speak to us and tell us about ourselves. He needs to tell us how foolish we are sometimes. When you are suffering, you want answers. God’s people were struggling. Maybe they did, or didn’t, know why. Perhaps they were in denial and needed a spiritual “thump” on the head to get them back on track.

Haggai assured the people of God’s presence (vv.13–14) Once the people obeyed, God reassured them. He said, “I am with you.” Just in case there was fear in the camp, God reassured His people that He would be there. This reassurance caused the people to complete the work they started. Their spirits were stirred. They were ready to work.

### **Search the Scriptures**

1. How did Haggai describe the LORD’s house to His people? (Haggai 1:4)
2. What does the LORD of hosts tell Israel to do? (v. 5) Explain.
3. How will God be glorified? (v. 8)

### Discuss the Meaning

1. Explain the meaning of verse 6.
2. Explain the meaning of verse 9.
3. Why do you think God is so patient with us?
4. Explain the wrath of God in verse 11.

### Liberating Lesson

If we are honest with ourselves, we will discover that many (not all) of the calamities in our lives are a direct result of our disobedience to God's law. God has told us the way to achieve and succeed, and we choose to go our own way. He says left and we say right. He says up and we say down. He says no and we say yes. In today's lesson, the Lord of hosts reveals to His people their disobedience, and they acknowledge it. They acknowledged their disobedience and moved on to do great things in the kingdom. Do you have the same attitude as the children of Israel? If you do, try seeking God's help today.

### Application for Activation

Make a list of some circumstances in your life that are not going so favorably. Apply the Scriptures to that situation and watch for the results.

### Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

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### Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

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### Say It Correctly

Ratsah. rah-SAH

### Daily Bible Readings

#### DAY 197

Ezekiel 40–42

Psalms 79:1–7

#### DAY 198

Ezekiel 43–45

Psalms 79:8–13

#### DAY 199

Ezekiel 46–48

Psalms 80:1–7

#### DAY 200

Daniel 1–3

Psalms 80:8–15

#### DAY 201

Daniel 4–6

Psalms 80:16–19

#### DAY 202

Daniel 7–9

Psalms 81:1–5

#### DAY 203

Daniel 10–12

Psalms 81:6–12