

HAGGAI 2 : 3 - 9
THE GREATEST GLORY—IT'S IN CHIRST !

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?

Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel! says the LORD. And be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest! And be strong, all you people of the land! says the LORD. And work, for I am with you! says the LORD of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you! Do not fear!

For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land! And I will shake all nations, and they shall come! [to] The Desire of All Nations. And I will fill this temple with glory! says the LORD of hosts. The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine! says the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former! says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace! says the LORD of hosts.

Are things like they were before? How often do you fondly think back to former times and former years? Maybe years even before you lived—the unscarred landscape of Lewis and Clark days, the Old West with its frontier settlements and open range. Or maybe just thinking back to years when you were young—brothers and sisters all home, a simpler lifestyle, the days not so demanding, merchandise at the store not so expensive. Will those days ever return? Will you ever get to experience that again?

That is the flavor of our text this morning. It's about 500 years before Jesus was born at Bethlehem. For the Jews, Great Kings David and Solomon had lived 500 years earlier, Father Abraham 1500 before that. However, at this time there's not much left of Israel. Ten of the twelve tribes, those living in northern Israel, had been taken captive by the Assyrians and never came back. The remaining two tribes of Judah and Benjamin had been then taken captive to Babylon, Jerusalem and the Temple being destroyed. After 70 years the people of Judah were allowed to return. A remnant did. They had started rebuilding the temple, but things got "bogged" down. The undertaking was huge, plus they had their own homes they felt they had to work on, there was interference from neighboring peoples who did not want the Temple rebuilt, the times were not prosperous (because of their own mis-placed priorities). Twenty years dragged by and temple still only had a foundation. Why bother? "It's never going to be like the glorious old Temple anyway."

The Lord sent the prophet Haggai. At this time Zerubbabel was governor and Joshua was high priest. Haggai was sent to stir these leaders and the people to action. He reminded them to realize that the Lord had not left them, but that they had left the Lord!--and were still keeping Him at arm's length—the Lord their Savior God! And whether or not the external appearance of the second Temple would equal the old one didn't really matter.

And be strong, all you people of the land! says the LORD. And work, for I am with you! says the LORD of hosts. Get up each morning and be strong and go about your tasks! How often don't you wake up in the morning and not want to meet the day? not want to put your shoulder to the wheel of what needs to be done? not want to work? Work is a blessing of God. Before there was sin, God had Adam working—caring for—the Garden. It's sin that has made life hard and labor a drudgery—from the youngster who wants to play, not help with the dishes, or cleaning, or the yard, or the garden; to the adult who feels too much is expected from him/her, that life's not fair, that the world is too big to deal with, that a person always ends up doing what other people expect. "Be strong," says the Lord of hosts, "and work; for I am with you." God knows what you face each day and doesn't send you off alone to struggle. He, who made you and supplies you, is right there with you. He is the "Lord of hosts!" The Lord of the "multitudes" of heaven and earth! He has at His disposal, any and every army host, any and every animal kingdom host, the multitudes and the hosts of the stars of the heavens, and the countless hosts of angels. He is with you. Do not fear! Go about your life and work—even though it will never be like it used to be, which doesn't matter. The Lord is with you!

There's another aspect to this. Through Jesus, you are a member of His family and kingdom. Sin, that so disrupts and infects life, that stares you in the face each day, that paves the road to hell for you, is NOT your master. Satan himself who wants you to be discouraged and give up—not just in your physical life and labors, but in your spiritual life, life as a child of God and in your labors to serve Him—the devil Himself is NOT your master. In God's Son you have the upper hand. Your sins are forgiven!—sent away never to come back. You have His love and victory!

The Lord of hosts says, I am with you; do not be afraid. Many times that thought is presented in the Bible. I am with you; be not afraid—to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua and more. Joshua 1:9 Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you, wherever you go. Psalm 23:4 Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me. Matthew 14:27 Jesus, walking on the water to the disciples caught in a storm, Be of good cheer! It is I; be not afraid! In fact, Jesus is named “Immanuel,” God-with-us! And so our text says, *According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you!* God promised the Israelites that He would be with them, and He was. His Spirit never departed from them, even though they often left Him. God has promised! Run back to Him!

The Lord had, and has, a great plan for the future. *For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land! And I will shake all nations, and they shall come! [to] The Desire of All Nation! And I will fill this temple with glory! says the LORD of hosts.* Hold on, He says, the best is yet to come! Soon He would “shake” the world. He would tip upside down world-order and the devil’s power. What puts people in their place better than grabbing them by the shoulders and giving them a good shake “Get with it!” God will shake this universe in its opposition to Him and His children. And they will come to Him.

What’s the game changer? “The Desire of all Nations!” The Hebrew here is difficult. Whether it’s, I will shake the world and they will come to the Desire of all Nations, or They will come with the Desire of all Nations, or The Desire of all Nations himself will come, or They who are the desire of all nations (through the Savior) will come, the point is the same. The game changer is Jesus. God did shake the universe when Christ entered into life on this earth. Natural laws were suspended. A virgin conceived a child without any male father. That child was born, God and man. In Him the laws “of Satan” were shaken and uprooted. This child and this man, never once fell for Satan’s schemes and lies—unheard of in all the history of the world! After He died, He—without the help of any man—rose again—unheard of in all the history of the world! The laws of logical justice were shaken and upended. Through faith in Jesus’ who gave His holy life for man and His innocent death for man, the guilty are undeservedly, pronounced Not Guilty! In Christ, body and soul of the sinner shall live forever with the Lord! God has shaken the universe through Jesus!

Here is the real glory of God’s house and temple. Not the silver and gold and architecture—which are all God’s already—but Jesus! He builds the spiritual “house” and “church” God. The real church--all believers of all time—the Invisible Holy Christian Church! The Savior is the real glory of God’s House. Forgiveness and life forever for sinners—in Jesus! This is a glory, the glory, that surpasses all glory. Do you remember when Moses asked to see God’s glory (Exodus 33-34)? God in His glory passed by (Moses was concealed in a cleft in the rock), and the Lord declared His Name-- “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin” (Exodus 34:6-7). The Lord did not dazzle Moses with a display of power, with a display of intelligence, with a display of human logic, but with a proclamation of underserved love and pardon—His grace—which would be carried out in Jesus. Here is God’s glory!

The House of God that proclaims “Justification through faith in Christ,” that is, sins washed away through trust in Christ-for-man, is a House that has the surpassing glory. *The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former! says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace! says the LORD of hosts.*

The glory of His peace! Certainly, glory can be seen—a glorious sunset. Glory can be heard—a glorious rendition of O Come, All Ye Faithful. Glory can be sensed with the nose—the glorious aromas wafting from the kitchen. Glory can be felt—the glorious touch of softest silk. But this is a glory *of the heart*—calmness, security, love, joy, life—all in Jesus. Peace of God that passes all understanding. Such glory!

There is no dollar figure to put on it. At Christmas tonight and tomorrow, will you find your holiday in earthly thing? Or, in the peace that Jesus brings? Do you long to recover the “air” of Christmas’s long ago—when you were a child? No need! You have a surpassing glory in the Lord’s love, forgiveness, and eternal life in heaven, all through Jesus.

The Desire of All Nations! . And I will fill this temple with glory! says the LORD of hosts. The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine! says the LORD of hosts. The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former! says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace! says the LORD of hosts.

Amen! So be it!

Pastor Kanzenbach---