

Life Group Notes 2 February 2025:

Haggai 2:10-19: Foundation Day

Preached by Beks <https://www.npb.org.nz/sermons/foundation-day/>

Intro:

Q: Have you ever had a fall out with another believer and struggled to reconcile?

Is it harder to resolve issues with Church people than outside the church?

Did you manage to address the issue or was it something that you avoided? (Note to leaders this can be sensitive, use some discernment if you know people in your group are in disagreement)

The question of what makes us clean or unclean is constantly challenged in the bible – is it what we touch? Is it what we do on the outside and the way that we act in front of others? The Old Testament is full of rituals and laws handed down from God and magnifies the contrast between sinful man and a holy and righteous God.

Read Haggai 2:10-14

10 On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Haggai: 11 “This is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Ask the priests what the law says: 12 If someone carries consecrated meat in the fold of their garment, and that fold touches some bread or stew, some wine, olive oil or other food, does it become consecrated?’”

The priests answered, “No.”

13 Then Haggai said, “If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these things, does it become defiled?”

“Yes,” the priests replied, “it becomes defiled.”

14 Then Haggai said, “‘So it is with this people and this nation in my sight,’ declares the Lord.

‘Whatever they do and whatever they offer there is defiled.

What is going on here? At this point in Israel's History, Israel had come back to rebuild the temple and they had not followed through on that task as they were instructed. Intention didn't result in action.

This act of disobedience meant that they were defiled and everything they did and offered to God, was also defiled. Whatever they offered would be defiled because of their disobedience.

What about the New Testament?

When we consider some of the teachings of Jesus, are we actually challenged to tackle our cleanliness more deeply and consider how we think, how we feel and our motives and thoughts?

Read Matthew 5:21-24

Jesus says, 21 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. 23 “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

Q: Why do you think God says we ought to reconcile with our brothers and sisters before we bring him an offering? Discuss

God makes it clear that, while the sacrifices are good, they are not more important than having a heart of obedience. Throughout scripture, it is that it is the changed heart that is of importance, not the trappings of religion.

If you are living with contention between you and someone else, you need to do your very best to get that sorted before making an offering to God. If you are doing something you know to be against the word of God, you need to be brave enough to make a stand and change your ways, before making an offering to God. If you have been talking rudely behind someone’s back, you need to sort that out before you make an offering to God. If you are prioritising your own things, instead of God’s things, you need to get things in the right order, before you make offerings to him.

The rituals and sacrifices and festivals, while good and right, cannot make up for an unclean heart. If you want to know how God feels about people offering sacrifices when they are not living a godly life, then have a read of Isaiah 1. “Stop bringing me meaningless offerings! . . . I am weary of your festivals . . . I have had enough of your burnt offerings . . . I will hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening.”

Q: What do you think are the modern-day equivalents of these “meaningless offerings” and festivals? What would make them meaningless?

When we take communion, when we sing worship, when we give tithes, when we serve, we need to know that it is good before the Lord, but it is not a substitute for obedience.

Q: Where did God dwell when the people of Israel wanted to meet with Him in the Old Testament?

Q: Where does God dwell now?

1 Corinthians 3:16

Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? We are the temple of the holy spirit and the church is being drawn together as a temple. Jesus became the atonement sacrifice, once and for all.

Q: What do we sacrifice now in the new temple if we are not sacrificing animals?

Read: Romans 12:1 and Hebrews 13:15-16

Q: How does God empower us now to be a living sacrifice?

Through the work and strength of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1 tells us about how the same spirit of power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in and through us.

On one hand Jesus' sacrifice resolves the dilemma of this as he atones for our sin, purifies us, and enables us to walk in obedience.

On the other hand, as we struggle to walk in a manner worthy of the calling of Christ (Eph. 4:1), we realize how much we need the empowerment of the Spirit to avoid repeating the failure of Haggai's community.

Back to Haggai

The people had been disobedient for years, and God had tried to get their attention and it had not worked. So he sent Haggai with a message, and they finally listened.

After the reminder of the curse Israel have been living under, Haggai reiterates the date, the laying of the foundation stone. They are reminded that the harvests, which they have just completed, were pretty bad. The next verse says, "From this day on I will bless you." "From this day, the day that the foundations are started on the temple.

The day that the call to obedience is met, not just with desire, but with action. This day, when action follows preparation, is the day on which the curse is turned to blessing.

Conclusion:

For every single believer there is a call to obedience, to live faithfully and as a living sacrifice for His kingdom, as Christ Himself did.

But what about you personally here and now - Is God asking you to leave your offering at the alter so that you can reconcile with a brother or sister in the body?

Maybe you need to walk in obedience and lay down sin or worldliness that's holding you back?

It could be that God is asking you to start doing something that you have always intended to do until now - just like the people of God always intended to build the temple.

Intention in and of itself holds no value, it's the actions that follow that really matter.

Spend some time in prayer, ask God to empower you to be a living sacrifice for His Glory. If there is a difficult reconciliation you need to make, ask God to give you grace and strength to walk obediently.