

Through the Bible

HAGGAI

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla

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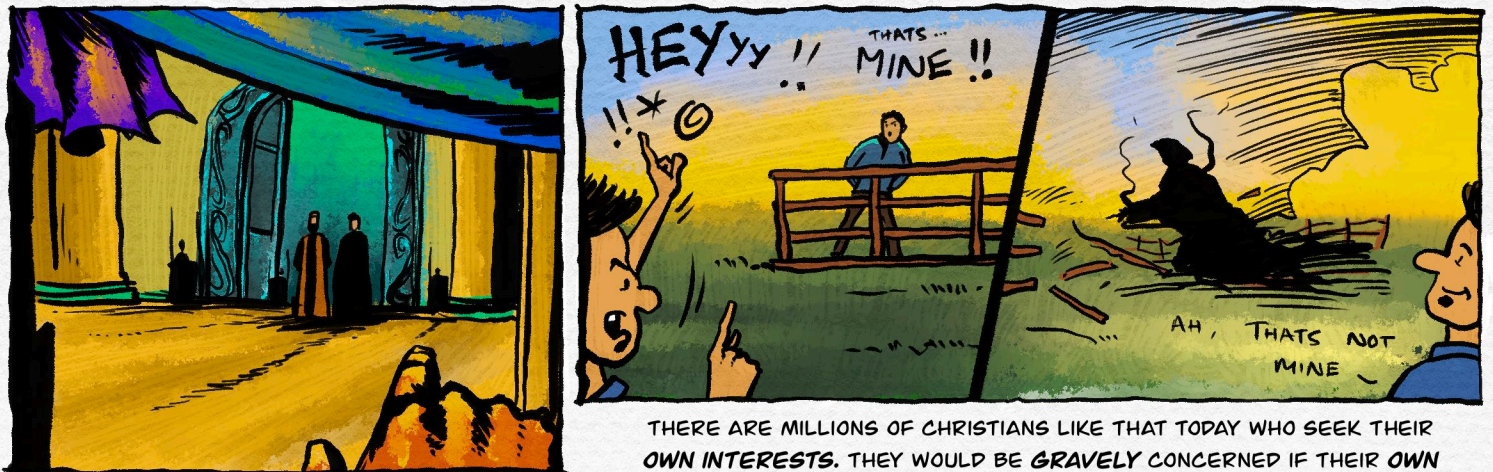
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

**69 PARADISE ENCLAVE, BELAHALLI
KANNUR POST, BANGALORE - 562 149
INDIA**

HAGGAI



HAGGAI HAD A TREMENDOUS BURDEN THAT THE **TEMPLE** SHOULD BE BUILT. FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS AFTER THE JEWS RETURNED FROM **BABYLON** TO **JERUSALEM**, THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD HAD NOT BEEN REBUILT, BECAUSE THE JEWS WERE **AFRAID OF OPPOSITION** FROM THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED AROUND THEM. SO GOD SENT TWO PROPHETS TO THEM -- **HAGGAI** (AN OLDER MAN) AND **ZECHARIAH** (A YOUNG MAN) -- TO ENCOURAGE THE JEWS TO START REBUILDING THE TEMPLE. THE PEOPLE KEPT ON SAYING "THE **TIME** HAS NOT YET COME TO REBUILD THE LORD'S HOUSE". THE LORD **REBUKED** THEM SAYING, "YOU FEEL THE TIME IS **RIGHT** TO BUILD YOUR **OWN LUXURIOUS HOUSES**, WHILE MY HOUSE REMAINS IN **RUINS**" (1:4).



THE PERSIAN KING HAD ONLY ORDERED THAT THE **CITY** OF **JERUSALEM** WAS NOT TO BE REBUILT (EZRA 4:21). HE **NEVER** FORBADE THE BUILDING OF THE **TEMPLE**. BUT THE JEWS IN **JERUSALEM** USED HIS WORDS TO **JUSTIFY** THEIR **SELFISHNESS** AND **LAZINESS**

THERE ARE MILLIONS OF CHRISTIANS LIKE THAT TODAY WHO SEEK THEIR **OWN INTERESTS**. THEY WOULD BE **GRAVELY** CONCERNED IF THEIR **OWN** PROPERTY WAS **ENCROACHED** UPON BY A NEIGHBOUR, BUT THEY ARE NOT ONE BIT **CONCERNED** WHEN THE **LORD'S** PROPERTY IS ENCROACHED UPON BY **SATAN**. JESUS TOLD US THAT IF WE SOUGHT THE **KINGDOM** OF **GOD** AND HIS **RIGHTEOUSNESS** **FIRST**, EVERYTHING **NECESSARY** FOR OUR **LIFE** ON EARTH WOULD BE **ADDED** TO US.

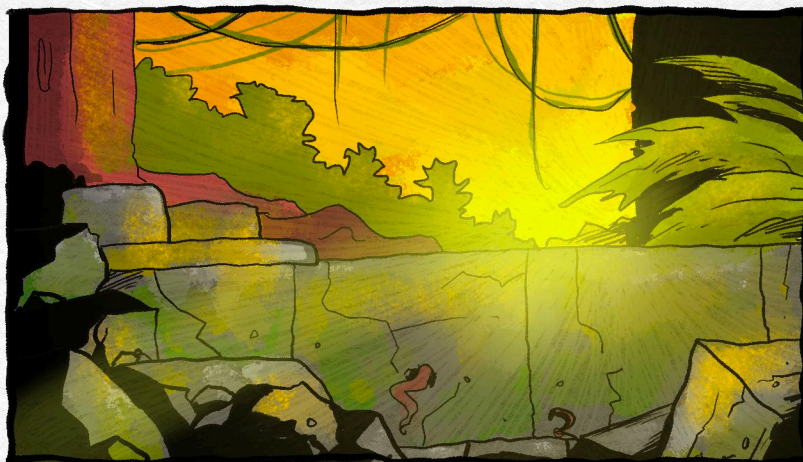
IF WE TAKE CARE OF **GOD'S** FAMILY, HE WILL TAKE CARE OF **OURS**.



WE CAN APPLY THE QUESTIONS IN 1:5, 6 TO OURSELVES LIKE THIS: THE LORD CHALLENGES US SAYING, "CONSIDER HOW THINGS HAVE BEEN GOING IN YOUR LIFE. HAS THERE BEEN **SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS**? YOU HAVE **PLANTED MUCH**, BUT HAVE **HARVESTED LITTLE**. YOU HAVE GONE TO MANY MEETINGS, READ MANY CHRISTIAN BOOKS AND LISTENED TO MANY CHRISTIAN SERMONS, BUT IS YOUR HOME A **GODLY** HOME AND A HOME OF PEACE TODAY? IF NOT, THEN ALTHOUGH YOU HAVE SOWN MUCH, YOU HAVE HARVESTED LITTLE. YOU WEAR CLOTHING, BUT YOU ARE STILL NOT **WARM**. YOU EARN SO MUCH MONEY. BUT THERE ARE **HOLES** IN YOUR POCKET AND SO MOST OF IT IS WASTED. YOU ASK GOD TO FILL YOU WITH THE **SPIRIT**. BUT YOU **LEAK**, AND SO ALL THE **POWER** GOES **OUT**. SOMETHING IS WRONG."



WHO WILL POUR WATER INTO A VESSEL THAT HAS **HOLES** IN IT? MANY BELIEVERS WHO COME TO GOD ASKING TO BE **FILLED** WITH THE **HOLY SPIRIT**, ARE VESSELS FULL OF **HOLES**. GOD SAYS, "**CLOSE UP THE HOLES FIRST**." GOD IS **EAGER** TO FILL YOU WITH HIS **HOLY SPIRIT**. BUT THERE ARE THINGS IN YOUR LIFE THAT NEED TO BE SET **RIGHT** FIRST.



IN 1:7, 8, HAGGAI URGES THEM TO **COMPLETE** THE BUILDING. THE **FOUNDATION** HAD BEEN LAID MANY YEARS EARLIER. BUT THEY **STOPPED** THERE. JESUS SPOKE A PARABLE ABOUT A MAN WHO LAID ONLY A FOUNDATION AND THEN DID **NOT COMPLETE** THE BUILDING (LUKE 14:28--30). THAT PARABLE COMES RIGHT IN THE **MIDDLE** OF A SECTION ON BEING HIS **DISCIPLE**. WHAT JESUS WAS IMPLYING WAS THAT **EVANGELISM** WITHOUT **DISCIPLE-MAKING** WAS LIKE LAYING A FOUNDATION AND **NOT COMPLETING** THE BUILDING. HEBREWS 6:1--3 WARNS US OF SUCH FOOLISHNESS. THE WRITER SAYS THAT WE MUST **FOLLOW** JESUS AND **PRESS ON** TO **PERFECTION** -- THAT IS BUILDING THE HOUSE.



WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A **CONGREGATION** AND THE **HOUSE** OF GOD? IF YOU **CUT OUT** 50,000 STONES FROM A **QUARRY** AND **BRING** THEM TO THE **BUILDING SITE**, THAT IS **EVANGELISM**. THESE STONES SYMBOLISE PEOPLE WHO ARE **BORN AGAIN**. BUT THEY ARE **NOT** A BUILDING AS YET. THESE STONES MUST NOW BE BUILT UP, BEING **PLACED NEXT TO EACH OTHER**, IF THEY ARE TO BE AN **EXPRESSION** OF **CHRIST'S BODY**.



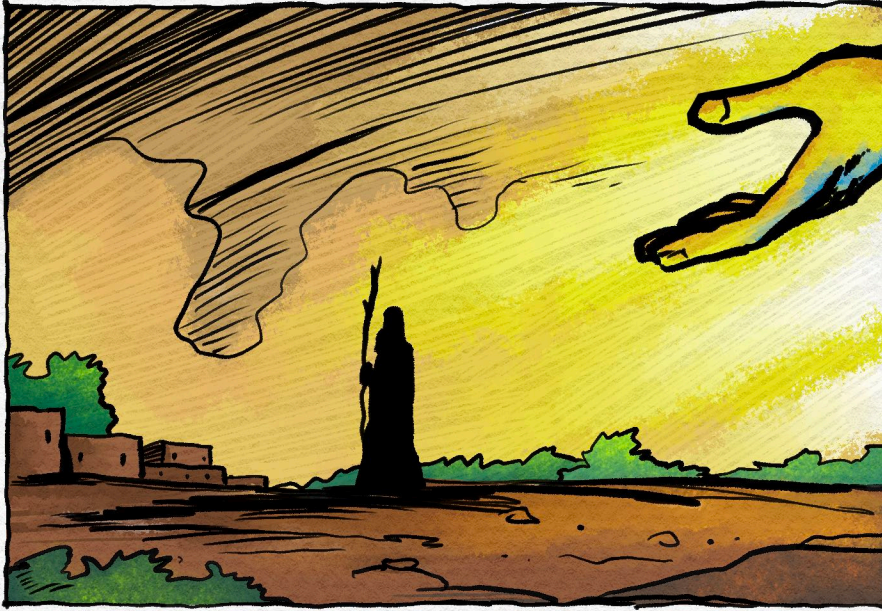
MANY CHURCHES TODAY ARE MERE **CONGREGATIONS**, WHERE ONE MAN (THE PASTOR), LIKE A WATCHMAN, HAS TO ENSURE THAT NO-ONE **STEALS** HIS "STONES". WHEN ONE OF HIS "STONES" DECIDES ONE DAY TO JOIN **ANOTHER** CHURCH WHERE HE CAN RECEIVE MORE **SPIRITUAL** HELP, THE WATCHMAN WILL **COMPLAIN** THAT OTHERS ARE **STEALING** "HIS STONES"! BUT IF HE HAD BUILT THAT STONE INTO A **BUILDING**, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN **IMPOSSIBLE** FOR ANYONE TO **STEAL** IT. IF YOU BUILD THE BODY OF CHRIST, YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT OTHERS STEALING YOUR MEMBERS. WHEN STONES ARE BUILT **TOGETHER** AND **CEMENTED**, WITH STONES ON **TOP** OF THEM, **UNDER** THEM, AND TO THEIR **SIDE**, WHO CAN STEAL THEM?



WHEN **ZERUBBABEL** AND **JOSHUA** THE HIGH PRIEST HEARD THIS PROPHECY, THEY **RESPONDED** TO HAGGAI'S MESSAGE IMMEDIATELY AND SAID, "WE WILL START BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE STRAIGHTAWAY." OR SYMBOLICALLY, "WE WILL NOT ENGAGE IN MERE **EVANGELISM** HENCEFORTH. WE WILL MAKE **DISCIPLES** AS WELL. WE WILL BUILD CHRIST'S **BODY** AND NOT A ONE-MAN CHURCH."

THE **CHURCH** IS TO BE LIKE A **FUNCTIONING** BODY -- AND NOT A PILE OF BODY PARTS, AS FOUND IN **ANATOMY** LABORATORIES -- WHERE THEY HAVE MANY HANDS, LEGS, EYES AND EARS **LYING** AROUND, BUT NONE OF THEM **CONNECTED** WITH **EACH** OTHER BY **LIFE**. AND SO THEY CANNOT **FUNCTION** TOGETHER.

NOTICE THE STRONG REBUKE THE LORD GIVES IN 1:9--11. THERE IS A GREAT NEED IN OUR CHURCHES FOR PREACHERS WHO KNOW HOW TO SPEAK A WORD OF **REBUKE** IN **LOVE**. THERE IS PLENTY OF PREACHING NOWADAYS, BUT VERY LITTLE **REBUKE** AND **CORRECTION**. WHEN GOD ALLOWS DEFEAT OR CONSTANT **FAILURE** IN YOUR LIFE, YOU NEED TO STOP AND **LISTEN** TO WHAT **HE** IS **TRYING** TO **TELL** YOU. ASK YOURSELF, "WHY IS THE **FRUIT** OF THE **SPIRIT** **MISSING** IN MY LIFE? WHY IS MY FAMILY-LIFE IN A MESS? WHY IS THERE NO **RAIN** FROM HEAVEN? WHY IS THERE A **DRYNESS** IN MY LIFE?" (1:9--11). IT MAY BE BECAUSE YOU ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT **EARTHLY** MATTERS AND YOUR **BANK** ACCOUNT THAN ABOUT YOUR **WALK** WITH THE LORD!



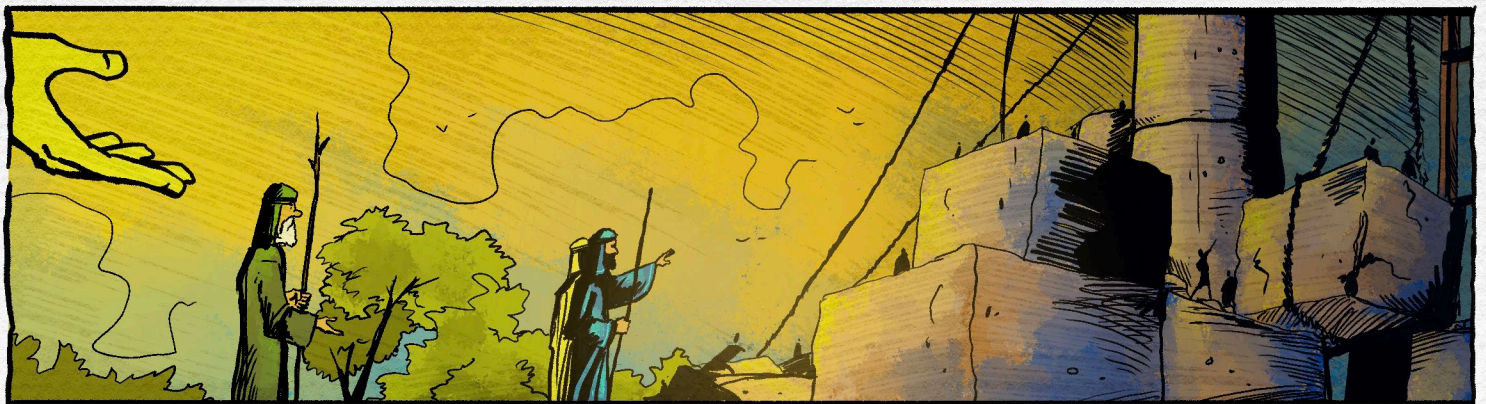
"THEN HAGGAI, THE LORD'S MESSENGER, GAVE THE PEOPLE THE LORD'S MESSAGE" (1:13). HAGGAI WAS FIRST THE **LORD'S MESSENGER**, AND THEN HE GAVE PEOPLE THE LORD'S MESSAGE. YOU CAN LISTEN TO AN **ANOINTED MESSAGE** ONLINE AND **REPEAT** THAT -- AND THAT MAY BE THE LORD'S MESSAGE. BUT HAGGAI WAS **FIRST** THE LORD'S **MESSENGER**.



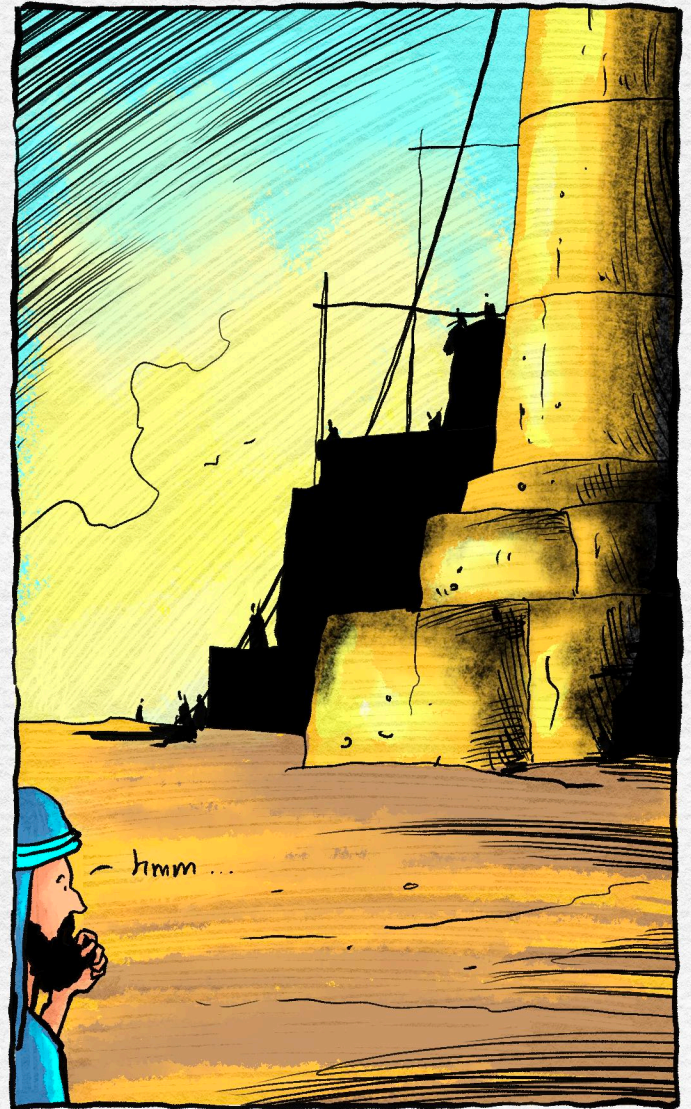
HAGGAI DOESN'T TELL US HOW GOD **CRUSHED** HIM IN HIS **YOUNGER DAYS** AND **BROKE** HIM OR WHAT **DEEP TRIALS** HE HAD TO GO THROUGH. EVERY **SERVANT** OF GOD, WHOM GOD HAS EVER **USED** HAS HAD A **PRIVATE HISTORY** OF **GOD'S DEALINGS** WITH HIM, WHERE HE WAS **BROKEN**, **CRUSHED**, **HUMBLED** AND TAKEN THROUGH LOSS OF **MONEY** AND **REPUTATION** ETC. ONLY THUS DOES ONE BECOME THE LORD'S **MESSENGER**.



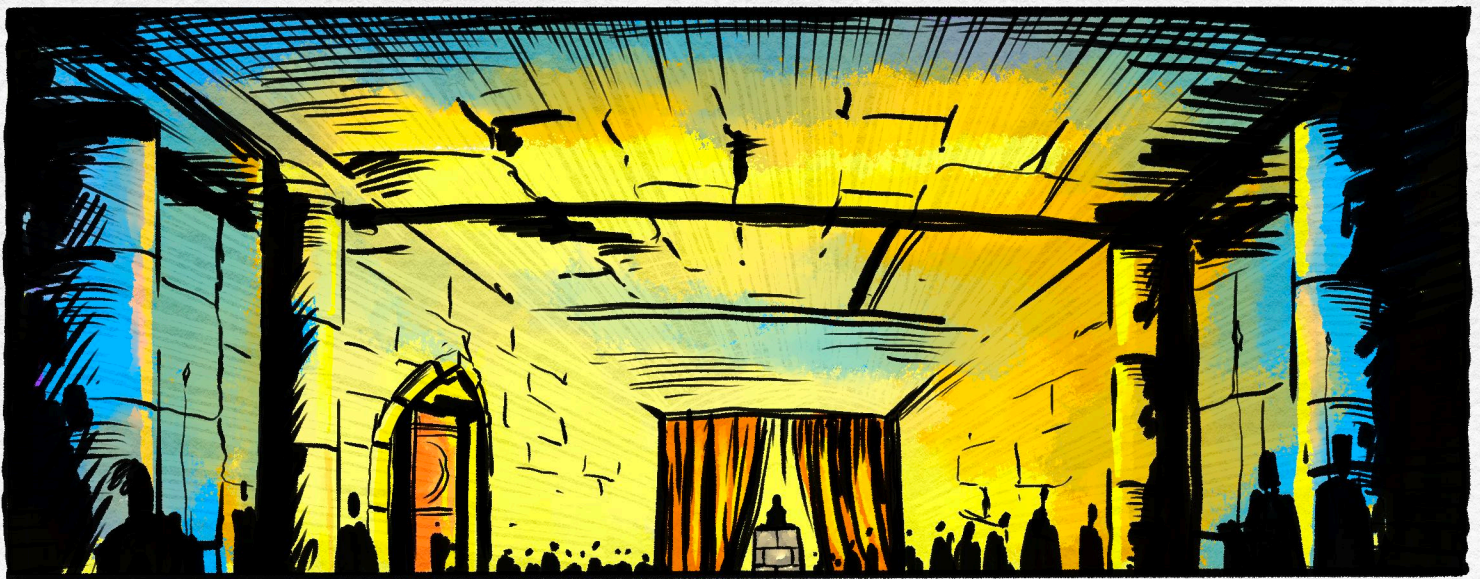
THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE **LORD'S MESSENGER** GIVING THE LORD'S **MESSAGE** AND SOMEONE **ELSE** GIVING THE **SAME MESSAGE**. THERE WILL BE AN **ANOINTING** OF **GOD** IN THE **FIRST CASE** WHICH WILL BE **ABSENT** IN THE **SECOND** -- BECAUSE THE **ANOINTING** COMES ON THE **MESSENGER** PRIMARILY, NOT ON THE MESSAGE. THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES ON **PEOPLE**.



"THE **LORD** SPARKED THE **ENTHUSIASM** OF **ZERUBBABEL**, **JOSHUA** AND THE WHOLE **REMNANT** OF **GOD'S PEOPLE** AND THEY CAME AND BEGAN THE **WORK** ON THE **HOUSE OF THE LORD**" (1:14). THAT PROVED THAT THERE WAS AN **ANOINTING** ON THE **MESSAGE**. TO THOSE WHO **PREACH** THE WORD, I WOULD SAY, "DON'T BE SATISFIED UNTIL YOUR **PREACHING STIRS** PEOPLE TO **ACT**." HERE WE SEE THAT WITHIN **23 DAYS** THINGS BEGAN TO HAPPEN THAT HAD NOT HAPPENED FOR **16 YEARS** (1:1, 15).



THE LORD ASKS THE OLDER PEOPLE AMONG THE JEWS, "IS THERE ANYONE WHO CAN **REMEMBER** THIS HOUSE -- THE TEMPLE -- AS IT WAS **BEFORE?** IN COMPARISON, HOW DOES IT LOOK TO YOU **NOW?** IT MUST SEEM LIKE **NOTHING** AT ALL! (2:3). THIS NEW TEMPLE COULD **NOT** POSSIBLY **MATCH** THE GLORY OF THE ONE THAT **SOLOMON** BUILT. BUT THE LORD SAID, "TAKE **COURAGE** AND WORK -- FOR **I AM** WITH YOU"



AND THEN THE LORD SAID "THE '**DESIRE** OF ALL NATIONS' SHALL COME -- AND (THEN) THE **GLORY** OF THIS **LATTER** HOUSE SHALL BE **GREATER** THAN OF THE **FORMER**" (2:7--9 - KJV). THE "DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS" REFERS TO THE LORD **JESUS**. HE WAS THE BRIGHTNESS OF GOD'S **GLORY** AND WHEN HE ENTERED THIS **NEW TEMPLE** (500 YEARS LATER), THEN THE GLORY OF THIS **LATTER** TEMPLE WOULD BE **GREATER** THAN ANYTHING IN SOLOMON'S TEMPLE. THE **NEW COVENANT** CHURCH DOES **NOT** HAVE ANY **EXTERNAL** GLORY, BUT IT HAS SOMETHING FAR BETTER -- AN **INNER** GLORY THAT IS **ETERNAL!**



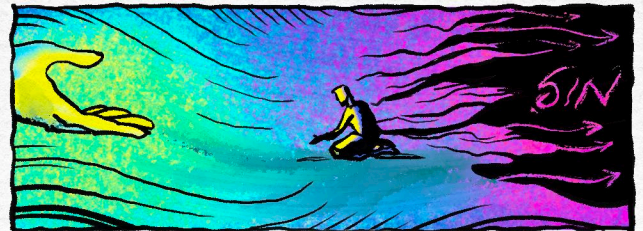
THEY NEEDED A LOT OF **MONEY** TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE. THE LORD KNEW THAT, AND SO HE SAYS, "THE **SILVER** IS MINE, THE **GOLD** IS MINE" (2:8). GOD **HIMSELF** WOULD PROVIDE ALL THE MONEY THEY NEEDED. **JESUS** NEEDED MONEY TO LIVE. HE HAD TO TAKE CARE OF HIS **OWN** EXPENSES AS WELL AS THAT OF HIS **12 APOSTLES** AND THEIR **DEPENDENT FAMILIES**. GOD KNEW THAT, AND SO HE ARRANGED FOR SOME **RICH FAMILIES** TO GIVE **MONEY** TO **JESUS** FOR HIS WORK (LUKE 8:2, 3). JESUS RECEIVED THEIR **GIFTS**, BUT HE **NEVER ASKED** ANYONE FOR MONEY OR MADE HIS FINANCIAL **NEEDS** KNOWN TO **ANYONE**.



WHENEVER ANY PROPHET SPOKE ABOUT BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE, THE VERY NEXT THING HE SPOKE ABOUT ALWAYS WAS **HOLINESS**. YOU **CANNOT** BUILD THE HOUSE OF GOD, IF YOU DO NOT EMPHASISE **HOLINESS**. HOLINESS CANNOT BE TRANSMITTED FROM ONE TO ANOTHER, BUT SIN CAN. IN A HOSPITAL'S OPERATING THEATRE, THE EQUIPMENT IS ALL **STERILISED** AND FREE FROM GERMS. IF YOU TAKE ONE OF THOSE **STERILISED KNIVES** AND TOUCH A **DIRTY CLOTH** WITH IT, WILL THAT **CLOTH** BECOME **STERILISED** AND FREE FROM GERMS? **NO**. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF YOU **REVERSE** THE PROCESS AND TAKE THE **DIRTY CLOTH** AND TOUCH THAT **STERILE KNIFE** WITH IT, THAT KNIFE WILL **IMMEDIATELY** BECOME **INFECTED** WITH THE GERMS ON THE CLOTH.



THEN THE LORD WENT ON TO SAY, "THEREFORE WHATEVER YOU **OFFER** IS **DEFILED**" (2:14). EVEN IF THE OFFERING ITSELF WAS **CEREMONIALLY PURE**, THEIR HANDS WERE **DEFILED** BY **SIN**, AND SO THEIR OFFERINGS WERE **DEFILED TOO**. PEOPLE MAY BE **IMPRESSED** BY OUR PRAYER; BUT GOD **REJECTS** IT, BECAUSE THERE WAS "**SIN** IN OUR HOLY ACTIVITY" (EXODUS 28:38).



THE LORD THEN URGED THE PEOPLE TO **SET RIGHT** THEIR SINS AND CONCLUDED WITH THIS PROMISE, "FROM THIS DAY ONWARD I WILL **BLESS** YOU" (2:19). HE **DESIRES** TO **BLESS** US. IT IS ONLY OUR **SIN** THAT ROBS US OF THAT BLESSING.



THE FIRST MESSAGE WAS ABOUT **COMPLETING** THE TEMPLE. THE SECOND WAS ABOUT THE **GLORY** OF THE TEMPLE. THE THIRD MESSAGE WAS ABOUT **HOLINESS** AND SIN. THE FINAL MESSAGE WAS A **PERSONAL** ONE FOR **ZERUBBABEL** "I WILL OVERTHROW ROYAL THRONES AND OVERTURN THEIR CHARIOTS AND CHARIOTEERS. BUT WHEN THIS HAPPENS, I WILL **HONOR** YOU, MY **SERVANT**. I WILL TREAT YOU LIKE A **SIGNET RING** ON MY FINGER, FOR I HAVE SPECIALLY **CHOSEN** YOU" (2:22, 23). THE RING HERE SYMBOLISES THE **ANOINTING** OF THE **HOLY SPIRIT**. WHEN THE PRODIGAL SON CAME BACK, THE FATHER PUT A RING ON HIS FINGER -- A PICTURE OF GOD ANOINTING **REPENTANT SINNERS** WITH THE **HOLY SPIRIT**.



HAGGAI WAS A **REAL** PROPHET. HE **EXALTED** ZERUBBABEL AND **HID HIMSELF**. HE SAID, "ZERUBBABEL, YOU ARE GOING TO LEAD THESE PEOPLE IN BUILDING GOD'S HOUSE. THE RING WILL BE ON **YOUR** FINGER. MY MINISTRY WAS JUST TO **ENCOURAGE** THESE PEOPLE AND THEN TO **DISAPPEAR**." TRUE PROPHETS NEVER GOT ANY **HONOUR** FROM **MEN**. KINGS LIKE DAVID GOT **HONOUR**. AND GOVERNORS LIKE ZERUBBABEL GOT **HONOUR**. BUT THE PROPHETS FULFILLED THEIR MINISTRY AND DISAPPEARED. THEIR **HONOUR** WILL COME TO THEM WHEN **CHRIST RETURNS**. BE A **SERVANT** OF GOD WHO **PROCLAIMS** HIS WORDS AND **SEEKS NO HONOUR** FROM **CHRISTENDOM** OR FROM ANYONE ON THIS EARTH. **ENCOURAGE** OTHERS, **PUSH** THEM FORWARD. LET THEM BE THE LEADERS AND THE ELDERS. AS FOR YOU, **PROCLAIM** GOD'S WORD AND THEN **HIDE** YOURSELF. JESUS HAS GIVEN US A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE IN THIS AREA. FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE AND BE A TRUE SERVANT OF GOD.