

## Haggai and the Temple

### Commentary for March 1, 2009 — “The Rebuilding of the Temple”

The focus of this month’s article by Dr. Ernest L. Martin is on the short book of the Minor Prophets called Haggai. This month’s article, titled “The Rebuilding of the Temple,” deals with problems in the reconstruction of the Temple after the Jews returned from Babylon. (See the [“March 2009 Newsletter.”](#))

It gives us useful information that we can use in the future to take note of problems the Jews encountered in the time of Haggai. While the article deals with the past, some of the issues deal with the next Temple to be built in Jerusalem. But first, let us look at the historical scenario. During the second year of Darius king of Persia,<sup>1</sup> work on rebuilding the Temple had been halted (see also Haggai 1:2):

**“Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.**

**Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.”**

• *Ezra 4:24–5:2*

### *Timeline*

As this historical narrative from the Book of Ezra points out, and as Dr. Martin comments, the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah chapters 1–8 have a similar timeframe. The prophecies were both given during an interesting year. The messages from God all took place during the 2nd year of Darius the King. Allow me to show this time relationship as clearly as I can. The following list tells when during the second year the various prophecies to Haggai and Zechariah were given:

#### **Haggai**

6th month, 1st day (Haggai 1:1–13)

6th month, 24th day (Haggai 1:14–15), work on the Temple resumed

7th month, 21st day (Haggai 2:1–9)

#### **Zechariah**

8th month (day not specified, Zechariah 1:1–6)

#### **Haggai**

9th month, 24th day (Haggai 2:10–19), the first message that day.

***9th month, 24th day (Haggai 2:20–23), the second message that day.***

#### **Zechariah**

***11th month, 24th day (Zechariah 1:7–6:8)***<sup>2</sup>

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1. This is a different king than Darius the Mede presented in Daniel 5:31, 6:1, 6, 9, 25, 28, 9:1 and 11:1. The Darius of Haggai and Zechariah was the Persian king best known because of his later defeat by the Greeks at Marathon in 490 BC decades later. That battle limited Persian expansion to the west.
  2. In the 4th year of Darius another message is recorded in the Book of Zechariah that takes place on the 9th month, 4th day (Zechariah 7:1–4).

Note the interplay between Zechariah and Haggai, particularly in the second year, in the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th months of that year. All the Haggai prophecies have taken place except the 2nd message for Haggai 2:20–23. It will be fulfilled in the future as Dr. Martin explains. The prophecy of Zechariah 1:7–6:8 began to be fulfilled in the time of Zechariah when it was given, yet it has a later fulfillment during the time of Christ, and even beyond. Some portions will be fulfilled after His return to this earth.

It is often difficult to distinguish when any particular prophecy applies. For example, which parts of Zechariah 1:7–6:8 relate to: (1) Haggai/Zechariah's time, (2) Christ's time, (3) the time before Christ's return [near future to us], or (4) the time after Christ's return? Such matters are extremely complex.

## **A Zechariah Prophecy**

Zechariah had an undated prophecy given to him at some unspecified time after the 11th month, 24th day of the 2nd year of Darius:

**“And the word of YHWH came unto me, saying, ...**

**Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest; And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaks YHWH of hosts, saying, ‘Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up [branch] out of his place, and he shall build the temple of YHWH:**

**Even he shall build the temple of YHWH; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.**

**And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of YHWH. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of YHWH, and you shall know that YHWH of hosts has sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if you will diligently obey the voice of YHWH your God.’”**

**• Zechariah 6:9–15**

Like Haggai 2:20–23, this Zechariah 6:9–15 passage has not been fulfilled. The two passages parallel and complement each other, the events they describe have not happened in history.<sup>3</sup> Both passages deal with the construction of a Temple. Note that Haggai focuses upon Zerubbabel the Governor while Zechariah focuses on Joshua the High Priest.

**“The Branch”** in Zechariah 6:12 did not rule in Joshua’s day. Does Zechariah 6:9–15 relate to events before Christ’s return (with a person, a “Joshua” being a type of Christ) or after (at Christ’s enthronement as High Priest on earth)? I do not think we can be sure from our present understanding. Remember that the name “Joshua” means “Jesus” and we know from Isaiah 4:2, 11:1, and Zechariah 3:8 that the person being called **“the Branch”** is identified with Jesus.

One thing is certain, in a future time a person named Joshua will come to public notice, have authority to make decisions about the Temple, **“and he shall build the temple of YHWH”** (assisted by **“they that are far off”**). Future study may tell us whether this will happen before or after Christ’s return. I am pointing out for you some of the issues involved in these prophetic passages. There are similarities, parallels, and the distinctions among the verses. Some are very intricate and we will come to understand them better as we get closer to the times of their respective fulfillments (Proverbs 25:2).

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3. Zechariah 6:9–15 (undated) is a separate prophecy from the visions of Zechariah 1:7–6:8 (dated to the second year of Darius).