

In the difficult years of the return from exile God spoke to His people through the prophet Haggai. Haggai is also mentioned twice in the Book of Ezra, the priest who oversaw the work of rebuilding the temple. After the people returned from captivity, work began in rebuilding Israel. The people quickly laid the foundation of the temple, but the work stagnated. The people were distracted with rebuilding their own homes and efforts to produce a living. Over time they became apathetic and for 16 years nothing happened. The prophet Haggai arose at this point to stir up the people. All their sacrifices can't make something or someone holy. Holiness is not contagious, but their sins and uncleanness are. They can cause the holy to become unholy.

(12-13) The prophet Haggai asked the priest about some practices of both holiness and impurity. He asked about touching a dead carcass and will it be unclean? Then he asked if touching clean food with a soiled garment would make that garment holy? The priests again answered correctly according to the Law of Moses: holiness is not "contagious," but impurity is. A sick child cannot catch "health" from contacting a healthy child; but the healthy child can become sick.

(14) Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean. Now the point of the questions; just living in the Holy Land and offering sacrifices will not make the people acceptable, as long as they themselves are unclean through neglect of the house of the LORD.

Since the exile to Babylon, the people of Israel focused on *getting back to the Promised Land*. In and of itself this was not a bad focus; yet it led to the thinking that once they made it back to the Promised Land everything else would just fall into place. Haggai reminds them that their presence in the Promised Land doesn't make everything they do holy. If the priorities of the heart is wrong, then nothing you do is really holy to God. The ruined skeleton of the Temple was like a dead body decaying in Jerusalem and making everything contaminated. Haggai reminded them that God had sent several catastrophes in an attempt to get their attention but to no avail. They were so focused on doing their own personal projects that they ignored God's task of rebuilding the temple. ***(19) Is the seed yet in the barn?***

"Is the seed still in the barn?" This is a rhetorical question because it is mid-December which is toward the end of the planting season in Israel. The rainy season is about to begin. God has been punishing them with damaged harvests trying to get people to wake up and return. They had ignored God's message, but now, finally, they have returned to building the temple. Despite the past difficulties, they still committed their grain to the fields. It is too soon to tell what the

results will be. The rains haven't started yet. The trees and vines are still dormant. Yet there is a reason they put out their grain in advance. They had hopes of a good crop. *(19) Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.* God is going to bless them because they have finally put Him first. Their obedience were going to make them holy.

Seed is used frequently in the New Testament as a metaphor. It is called the **INCORRUPTIBLE SEED.** *1 Peter 1:22-23 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: (23) Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* Each of us were conceived of corruptible seed when we were physically born into this world. We grow and mature until the point we begin to decay, grow old, and then one day die.

But not so with the Christian; Christians are born again of the water and Spirit (John 3:5). James says that we are brought forth by the word of truth. *James 1:18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.* Skipping down to v21 James an implanted word (image of seed) able to save our souls. *James 1:21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.* That incorruptible seed, the word of God, can produce immortal people (1 Corinthians 15:42-54). For 2000 years the gospel has brought new life to sinful, dying people. It hasn't change. It endures and still changes people in whom it is planted

PARABLES OF SEED. In this parable we see one seed producing different results. The results depend on the soil in which it is planted. (Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23) The seed is good, but the enemy is also sowing tares in the same field (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43). The seed looks insignificant and is easily overlooked, but it will germinate and grow into something marvelous. But consider the question from Haggai. What if the seed is left in the barn? Can it produce? Would it help or hinder the work of Satan? Satan wants the seed to stay in the barn.

The seed is Christ. *Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds,*

as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. The seed is actually the teachings of Christ – His word. **Luke 8:11b** *The seed is the word of God.* God fulfilled his promise to Abraham, to bless the whole world through his descendant. The eternal one, Christ our Lord, produced a bumper crop. The Jews alone were not saved, but salvation reached the Gentiles. **Galatians 3:26-29** *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (27) For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* All Christians are become Abraham's seed. The world is full of tares plated by Satan as he doesn't want the seed sown. Satan wants the seed left in the barn out of sight where it won't cause offense. That is why religious expressions are being battled. No prayers in schools. No indications of religious faith in the work place, etc. Keep it hidden in the churches and homes. Keep it in the barns.

ARE WE KEEPING THE SEED IN THE BARN? In answering that question we first need to determine if it has taken root in our heart. When God asked through Haggai, *"Is the seed still in the barn?"* the inferred answer was "no." It had been invested in the soil of Judea. God held its fate, and He promised a good return if they did as He asked. So again, are we leaving the seed in the barn? Are we letting it take root in our own lives? The seed has no effect if it is not used. As some look at their lives, they see an overgrown weed patch. **1 John 3:7-8** *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (8) He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

The seed is sown when we share it with those around us. Seeds of kindness, seeds of joy, and seed of doing good -- these help our neighbors; but nothing compares to sowing seeds of the gospel in the hearts of our neighbors. Recalling the parable of the sower, the seed was richly scattered over a variety of soils. The sower wasn't selective nor should we be selective. Spread the word. Let it fall where it may. The sprouting depends on the people receiving the word, not the sower.

It can and will make an impact because God promised a bountiful harvest. **Romans 1:16-17** *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first,*

and also to the Greek. (17) For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

It is unfortunate that some act ashamed of the gospel; we are timid with it. We aren't prepared for the opportunities. *1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:* Study so we need not be ashamed. *2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* Give the Bible the attention that it deserves.

ARE YOU SOWING THE WRONG SEED? Has there been a change in your life? Are you a New Creature *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.* People think they become children of God, but they retain their old ways; they continue to plant seeds of destruction. How will the word of God ever take root in that kind of soil. Imagine putting in a new lawn and sowing it with dandelions and crabgrass. Even a mixture of good and bad seed would be ridiculous. So why do people approach Christianity part way?

Romans 13:11 And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. If eternal life really matters to us, then why is the seed still in the barn?

Invitation.