

BUILDING GOD'S WAY

Rebuilding the Temple

Ezra and Haggai

These are truly important and exciting days in the life of St. Andrew Baptist Church.

God has begun to rebuild our Worship Center, devastated by Hurricane Michael, and has called us to join Him in the reconstruction to help our church be what He wants it to be, a place of worship and proclamation of the gospel, and of discipleship FOR ALL GENERATIONS!

INTRODUCTION: We have been seeking God's instructions for how to build God's way by studying what the Lord said to His people in the four building projects described in Scripture.

From our study of God and His people building both the Tabernacle and the Temple, we have heard the Lord tell us that for us to be faithful coworkers with the Lord in the rebuilding of our Worship Center, ...

WE MUST SHARE GOD'S VISION.

WE MUST UNDERSTAND GOD'S PROVISION.

WE MUST COME WILLINGLY BEFORE THE LORD WITH FULL HANDS (or as Jesus put it, with big baskets), understanding that the size of the basket is not determined by the amount of our gift but by the proportion of what God has given us we give back to Him.

And Jesus used the example of the widow who gave two tiny copper coins,

- **but she gave with full hands,**
- **she gave with a big basket,**
- **because she gave all that God had provided for her to give.**

Today we look at the third building project in which God invited His people to join Him in accomplishing it, and I think there are some things about this particular project with which you can especially identify. I know I did.

The project was the rebuilding of the temple.

You may be wondering what happened. Did they have a hurricane?

No, something much worse.

For nearly four centuries the Temple of YHWH stood in Jerusalem as the most beautiful building in the world. When the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the Holy of Holies, the building shown with the glory of the Lord.

But God's people forsook the Lord and began to worship other gods. They even allowed pagan idols to be brought into the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. God showed His prophet Ezekiel a vision revealing the departure of the glory of the Lord from His holy Temple.

Then God allowed the Babylonians to defeat the nation of Judah, capture the city of Jerusalem, and utterly destroy the Temple of God. Many citizens were killed, and many others were carried as captives to Babylon itself, where they remained for 70 years, nearly two generations.

After some of His people repented of their wicked idolatry, God moved upon the heart of a Persian King we call in history, Cyrus the Great to both say and write,

Ezra 1:2–4 NKJV 2 Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the LORD God of heaven has given me. And He has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.

3 Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel (He is God), which is in Jerusalem.

4 And whoever is left in any place where he dwells, let the men of his place help him with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, besides the freewill offerings for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.

Wow! How wonderful. That God would so move in the heart of a Persian King to release the children of Israel to return to their homeland and tell them to rebuild the Temple of YHWH GOD.

But how would they pay for it? All of the wealth that was used in building the temple in the first place was now stolen or destroyed. Only the dirt of the temple mount remained in place.

Folks, here is a truth worth noting. This is really important if we are interested in being faithful co-laborers with God.

GOD ONLY HAS ONE PLAN FOR FINANCING HIS BUILDING PROJECTS.

- **God provided for the rebuilding through the willing gifts of His people.**

Let's read the next couple of verses in Ezra 1.

Ezra 1:5–6 NKJV 5 Then the heads of the **fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin**, and the priests and the Levites, with **all whose spirits God had moved**, arose to go up and build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. 6 And all those who were around them encouraged them with articles of silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with precious things, besides all that was **willingly offered**..

- **fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin – God's people**
- **all whose spirits God had moved – Gave as God moved**
- **willingly offered – Gifts willingly offered**

Folks, there is no example in Scripture of God inviting His people to join Him in a building project in which the primary funding for the building does not come from what God provides to His people so they can give it.

- **If God builds a building, He takes up an offering from His people.**

Now, as I re-read the Book of Ezra and the Book of Haggai the prophet in preparation for bringing this message to you this morning, I noticed something really interesting.

The next several verses tell us that King Cyrus turned to the Persian Treasurer and said, "Go get the things of gold and silver that King Nebuchadnezzar stole from the temple before he had it destroyed. We're going to give those things back to these Hebrews to help them rebuild the temple."

And I thought, "That's kind of like the way insurance works. The insurance pays you back for some of what you lost."

You see, in the case of rebuilding the temple, God provided some extra, beyond what He sent through His people.

And God has done that for us. God has already provided some money to help with the rebuilding of our Worship Center through insurance. We don't yet know how much ultimately that will be, but we already have some of it in the bank. In addition, God has sent us several hundred thousand dollars that we plan to use for the Worship Center that came from His people, but people not a part of our church or even who live in Bay County. So God has stirred the spirits of His King Cyruses for us!

But still, God's principle way of providing for buildings He builds is through the willing gifts of His people.

Now let me show you something else.

Ezra 2:68–69 NKJV 68 Some of the heads of the fathers' houses, when they came to the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God, to erect it in its place:

69 According to their ability, they gave to the treasury for the work sixty-one thousand gold drachmas, five thousand minas of silver, and one hundred priestly garments.

THE PEOPLE GAVE ACCORDING TO THEIR ABILITY.

That means they gave proportionately.

- The poor came with their hands full of pennies, like the widow with her two mites.
- The middle class came with their hands full of hundred dollar bills.
- The wealthy came with hands full of thousand dollar bills.
- The rich came with hands full of ten thousand dollar bills.

Each gave according to their ability to give.

Each gave according to the way the Lord had blessed and prospered them financially.

Folks, we saw Jesus teaching this same thing last week.

Luke 6:38 NKJV Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For **with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.**"

Only Jesus is turning it around to make the decision easier for us. He's saying, OK, instead of laboring with whether you're poor or middle class or whether you're middle class or wealthy to determine what the proportionally sized basket is for you, think about the way you want God to bless you.

If you want God to bless you, give with a big basket because God uses the same measure for His blessing back to you that you used in giving the gift.

So, the people gave to the Lord and the construction was started.

- They had some difficulties.

- Some of the people got discouraged.
- The rebuilding of the temple stopped altogether.
- In fact, the rebuilding stopped for 16 years!

And God sent His preacher, His prophet. His name was Haggai. (Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi)

Now Haggai was not the soft spoken, never step on anybody's toes kind of preacher like I am. Haggai jumps on this problem and says in essence, "I don't care who or what caused the problem, I have a word from the Lord that tells you the solution."

Haggai 1:2–8 NKJV 2 "Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built." ' "

3 Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?"

5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!

6 "You have sown much, and bring in little;

You eat, but do not have enough;

You drink, but you are not filled with drink;

You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;

And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes."

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Consider your ways!

8 **Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple**, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the LORD.

GOD TOLD THEM TO OVERCOME THEIR DISCOURAGEMENT WITH OBEDIENCE.

Folks, I know some of you have been discouraged that we are 3 ¼ years past the hurricane and construction on the interior of the Worship Center has not yet begun.

- Some may blame me

- Some may blame the Building Team
- Some blame our Design and Build Company
- Some blame the Insurance Company

And I'm not here to defend myself or anyone. That's not the point.

God gives us the solution.

God says, "Get to work."

- Don't gripe about the quality of the laborers in the forests of Lebanon.
- Quit bad mouthing the supply chain that gets the logs of cedar from the coast to Jerusalem.
- Forget about the carpenter's labor union that wants more per hour for cutting the beams.

God says, "Go to the mountains and bring wood, and build the temple and glorify Me!"

OVERCOME DISCOURAGEMENT WITH OBEDIENCE!

GET TO WORK!

DO YOUR PART!

And that's what we're all going to do next week, next Sunday!

We're all going to have our commitment cards. Now we are not going to fill these cards out today. But I want you to take a card. They are in the card holders on the back of the chairs. I want you to look at it and take it home. Everybody get one, and hold it in your hand.

It's not a promissory note.

It's not a contract.

It is the information about what you are committing to give for the rebuilding of our Worship Center out of what the Lord has and will provide to you.

We will total these all up, and that will help the church be the faithful steward of the project as God expects the church to be.

You simply put what you plan to give, what for you makes for full hands and big basket, and then whether the gift you list is what you plan to give weekly or monthly or you're doing multiple gifts or a one-time gift.

We will turn these in next Sunday during worship. If you want to mail it to the church this week instead, you can.

If you would rather make your commitment online, you can do that on our website after next Wednesday.

Whatever works best for you.

Now let me show you one last thing that Haggai said to encourage the people.

- Some of the people were discouraged because the new temple was started, and they could already observe that the new temple was not going to be as large as Solomon's temple.
- Some suspected that it might not be as beautiful as well, not as much gold covering, or silver plating.

Haggai 2:3–9 NKJV 3 '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?

4 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. 5 'According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!'

6 "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; 7 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.

8 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the LORD of hosts. 9 '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 Desire of All Nations is the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Son would one day walk in this temple.

In the building they were rebuilding, Jesus would preach the gospel.

And people would come to Him and be saved.

In Him, in Jesus, they would have the peace of God.

The Father said, the glory of this temple will be greater than the glory of the first temple because this temple is for My Son.

Folks, next Sunday we come to declare what offerings we will bring over the next three years for the rebuilding of the Worship Center.

We come with full hands, big baskets, and willing hearts.

Giving out of and according to what God has provided each of us.

And we do it for Jesus!