

Back from Captivity, Jews Completed New Temple

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In 539 BC, Babylon fell to a coalition of Medes and Persians. The new rulers of the Mid East made it their policy to restore captive nations to their respective homelands. Among those captives were the Jews. They returned to Judah with authority to rebuild their temple. Seventeen years later, construction still languished, and God raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to rebuke the neglect of his house.

In 520 Haggai preached "Is it time for you to live in your paneled houses while this house lies in ruin?" Through Haggai, the Lord asked the Jews how they had fared since their return. "You have sown much and harvested little; you eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put them into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6, RSV).

Haggai said God wanted them to bring wood and rebuild His house. Judah's political and religious leaders listened. Under their leadership, the remnant of exiles who had returned to Israel rebuilt God's house, which was completed in 515 BC. But it wasn't much to look at.

"Is it not in your sight as nothing?" the Lord asked them. Well, they should not think that way. God's Spirit was with them. And a day was coming when the Lord would shake Heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land. "I will fill this house with splendor," God promised. "The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former," said the Lord. "From this day on, I will bless you," he promised.

The temple, rebuilt in 515 BC, was rebuilt yet again by Herod the Great, who restored it in stone and covered it with gold. It was that temple that Christ visited in his life, bringing it glory. A generation after Christ's death and resurrection, Herod's temple was cast down by the Romans. A mosque now stands on its platform.

Haggai also prophesied that all the nations would bring their treasures to the temple. That event has not been fulfilled. It awaits yet another temple when Christ returns to rule the earth from Zion.

Bibliography:

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