

Assignment 6.2

Arthur Hay

Haggai

Babylon fell to Cyrus in 539BC and in that year Cyrus issued a decree permitting the exiled Jews to return to Israel and rebuild the temple, which 50 000 did. However, the initial enthusiasm soon waned and people started "lining their nests" building up their own homes and neglecting the reconstruction of the temple. This spiritual apathy was caused by opposition, nay sayers, people who just did not want the temple to be rebuilt, and the general propensity to look after themselves first, returning from exile and rebuilding their lives they focussed on their own comforts and the temple still lay in ruins.

As a consequence the Lord's blessings on the people had faded, their crops were not yielding enough to eat, their clothes did not keep them warm, their money was not lasting and they were unable to meet all their needs. This can become a vicious circle, as people concentrate more on meeting their needs and desires with less, and sometimes it can be hard to tell the difference, they put the Lord further down the line.

Haggai came in to this about 20 years after the return, calling the people to action and encouraging them. They had not committed the same sins as others like worshipping other gods, committing adultery or trampling on the poor but they had neglected God, and that was their sin against God, rather than God and others. Their apathy would have led to that in another generation or two which is why God had to continually send prophets to keep the people on track with Him.

I could not help but seeing similarities in the western world today. We all had great blessings with our Judeo-Christian heritage with a high standard of living, while in the western world we had good houses, hot and cold running water, TVs, 2 car families and holidays to foreign lands while in the 3rd world they only had a few of these luxuries if any that we took for granted. Then there was the falling away, scripture was taken off the school curriculum, parents may have sent their children to Sunday School while they skipped church, the next generation did not even think of going to church, and many church leaders stopped believing the scriptures and believed the convincing lies by people full of worldly wisdom, and without the belief in God's word many churches just became shells of banging gongs, to use Paula's analogy of religion without love. Today many people not only reject God but actively

work against Him, pursuing and preaching sexual abominations, silencing those who stand up for what is right and those with economic power use it to get richer and suppress the poor. Now we have a cost of living crisis in much of the western world, extreme weather events, floods, bush fires, landslides, drought and climate change, blamed on human activity, whether it is or not we are all generally in financially lean times with climate uncertainty causing crop failures and threatening our food security.

Haggai promised blessings in return for reinstating God to where He should be in people's hearts, lives, minds and action. Can we in the west do the same by collectively returning to God?