

September 28, 2025

Return: God's Plan Will Not Fail

Haggai 2:20-23

Vernon Advent Christian Church

Introduction...

The first message was a call to rebuild the Temple, rebuking the people for prioritizing their own homes over God's house and urging them to "consider their ways". The second was a promise of future glory for the new Temple, assuring the people that the new house would be filled with God's presence and surpass the glory of the former Temple. And last week, we looked at Haggai's third message that was a reminder of the consequences of sin and a promise of God's renewed blessing for faithfulness and obedience.

This morning we are going to finish our look into the Book of Haggai. And as we do so, we come to the fourth and final message that God gave to in Haggai 2:20-23. It's only four verses, but there's a lot to unpack here, so let's jump in. If you are able, please stand with me as I read the Word of God this morning. [Read Text]

If you look back to vs. 10 in ch. 2, you'll see that Haggai's third message, the passage we looked at last week, was also given on twenty-fourth day of ninth month. So, this fourth and final message also comes on the same day as the message we looked at last week. Two messages in one day! And this message is directed specifically to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah.

Now, the Persians, under King Darius, who is mentioned in ch. 1:1 and 2:10, were currently ruling over the region, but they had delegated local authority to Zerubbabel, an Israelite who had been born during the Israelite exile in Babylon and then had returned to Jerusalem with the group of exiles mentioned in Ezra 1:1-2:2.

And the Lord instructs Haggai to tell Zerubbabel: [Read v. 21-22]

Now, we saw this same type of language a couple of weeks ago, in Haggai 2:6-9. Once again, the Lord is prophesying an event that is in Zerubbabel's and Israel's imminent future. He is "about to" do something and that something is described as a "shaking" which is the same verb used back in verses 6-7.

As we noted a couple of weeks ago, this verb is used frequently in prophetic literature to refer to a destructive revelation of Lord's presence, power, and judgment. And this "shaking" is often connected with a two-fold outcome. First, is the judgment of nations. And second, ultimately, it leads to the restoration and renewal of God's people.

For example, the prophet Joel foretells of the Lord's future judgment of the nations in Joel 3:16-17, saying, "The Lord roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the Lord is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to the people of Israel."

We could go on and on with examples like this one, using this same verb, but you get idea. Many prophets, especially during the period of the exile and after, like Haggai, spoke of a future "shaking" when the Lord would show up in a destructive way to demonstrate His power and glory by judging nations and by renewing His people.

And that's exactly what Haggai describes here in this final message. A future but imminent "shaking" where the Lord will overthrow "the throne of kingdoms" and He will "destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations."

And then, with imagery that reminds us of the fate of Pharaoh's army at Israel's crossing of the Red Sea, he tells us how. The text says He will "overthrow the chariots and their riders" so that "the horses and their riders shall go down." And He will create confusion among His enemies so that they will enact judgment upon themselves, "every one by the sword of his brother." And so, the message is clear. God will defeat all his enemies in a clear and decisive victory with the results being that the nations will be judged and God's people will be renewed.

Then we come to the final verse, and here we're going to spend a little bit of time. [Read v. 23]

Central to what will happen on that future day of "shaking" is a coronation ceremony. The Lord will "take" Zerubbabel his "servant" and make him like a signet ring because He has "chosen" him.

The royal language is thick here. Back in vs. 20, the Lord acknowledges Zerubbabel with the title of "governor of Judah." But here in vs. 23, the Lord shifts to using two different titles. First, He uses the title "my servant," which was the title ascribed to King David himself. And second title He uses is, "son of Shealtiel," which is a reminder of Zerubbabel's lineage and his connection to David's royal line. What's the point that God is trying to make here?

Well, things come to a head with the reference to the "signet ring." A signet ring was a ring that a king would wear that had an impression of his seal etched into it. The King would use the ring to authenticate his legal documents and royal pronouncements by pressing his signet ring into a piece of wax sealing, or giving his "stamp of approval" to the document or proclamation.

But what makes this mention of a signet ring especially meaningful here is its connection to God's covenant with David. And just like last week, a little background information is helpful here.

In 2 Sam. 7, God had promised David: "I will raise up your offspring after you...and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever...And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Sam. 7:12-13, 16) This is known as Davidic Covenant. Like other covenants in scripture like the Mosaic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant is central to our understanding of God's redemptive work in the Old Testament finding its fulfillment in Christ.

At the heart of Davidic Covenant is God's promise to raise up one of David's descendants to establish an eternal throne and kingdom. While it initially appeared to move forward in David's son, Solomon, things quickly turned south at the end of Solomon's life, when under his son's rule the nation of Israel was split in two followed by a long series of Jewish kings who abandoned the Lord, worshipped idols, and acted unjustly. The spiraling of the kingdom ended with King Jehoiakim, one of final kings in Judah, before it was defeated by Babylon.

And listen to what Lord said about King Jehoiakim through mouth of the prophet Jeremiah: “As I live, declares the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off and give you into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans.” (Jer. 22:24-25) And, a few verses later, the Lord promises that none of Jehoiakim’s offspring who go with him into exile “shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David and ruling again in Judah.” (Jer. 22:28-30)

As we have seen in Israel's history through the Old Testament, and especially in the Minor Prophets, the signet ring of the Davidic kings has become so corrupt and ineffective in what they were called by God to do. To reflect and represent the Lord’s presence and authority on earth. So, the Lord has torn off the signet ring and casts it into land of Babylon. And as Israel goes into exile, the status of the Davidic Covenant is left in doubt. Will there be another king in Judah? Will God keep His promise He made to David?

And now in our passage after decades of waiting, God is making it clear that He will keep his promise. He will put His signet ring back on his finger. He will put a Davidic king back on throne. Zerubbabel’s name literally means “seed of Babel.” Since Jehoiakim, and the original kings of Israel, did not fulfill their God-given role as righteous kings, God has “chosen” the “seed of Babel.” Meaning, he will “take” one out of Babylon, make him His “servant,” and make Him like a “signet ring.” The Lord will keep His promise to raise up one of David’s descendants and to establish his throne forever. Israel’s hope is being renewed.

But to what end? Now, 2,500 years later, looking back, we have the rest of story. We know that Zerubbabel never, in his lifetime, actually ascended a Jewish throne. We know that Israel never saw the “shaking” of the nations and the restoration of a flourishing Jewish state, as they had envisioned. Instead, Israel largely remained under the rule of other nations for centuries, the Persians, the Greeks, then, at time of Jesus, the Romans.

Through all of this, they longed for a Messiah, an Anointed King, from the line of David who would, as it is written in Psalm 2, break the nations with a rod of iron, dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel, and expand his possession to the ends of earth. They waited and they waited and they hoped and they prayed. And that kind of “military” king never came.

But Jesus did. Of the four Gospel accounts, Matthew and Luke record Jesus’ genealogy. And while these genealogies are different from each other in a number of ways, and there is good reason for that, they are not different in that they both clearly put Jesus in the royal line of David. And guess who else is found there? That's right, we find Zerubbabel there as well in Matt. 1:12 and Luke 3:27.

And as Jesus began His ministry, He said this in Mark 1:15: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel.” His preaching and His miracles drew large crowds. They were astonished by His authority. (Matt. 7:28, Luke 8:25) Thinking that He might be that long-awaited Messiah, they tried to take him by force and make him king.

But Jesus, to their surprise, withdrew away from them and the more they tried to exalt Him to an earthly throne, the more He humbled Himself as servant, even to the point of death.

And at His death there was literally a “shaking.” Though it was in the middle of the afternoon, sun went dark. (Matt. 27:45) When Jesus breathed His final breath, the Bible says there was an earthquake and the rocks were split, the Temple curtain was torn in two, the tombs were opened, and many people were raised from the dead. (Matthew 27:51-52)

But that’s not all. Three days later, the earth shook again as Jesus rose from dead, defeating the curse of sin and death (Matt. 28:1-2) At the resurrection, Jesus had defeated great enemy. He had “disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame” by canceling the record of debt that stood against us” by shedding of His blood (Col. 2:14-15) And, then, after appearing to His disciples for many days, Jesus did what every king must do, He ascended to His rightful throne as King. (Acts 1:9)

And it is from this heavenly throne that Holy Spirit was commissioned to bring a surprising renewal of God’s people, in what the author of Acts describes as another “shaking” at the day of Pentecost, which brought a renewal that would involve people from every tribe, tongue, and nation who would turn from their sin, have faith in Christ Jesus as Savior, and obey Him as King. These people would be bound together not by a common ethnic heritage, but by blood of Christ, truth of Gospel, unity of Holy Spirit. And the Church was born. They would be a people who would have God’s Word written on their hearts and then would carry that Word out from Jerusalem, Judea, and to ends of earth (Acts 1:8)

And so, as it stands, we can see more clearly that God has fulfilled His promise to David. And God has fulfilled His promise to Zerubbabel, who was a key link between the promise that was jeopardized by Jehoiakim and fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus is the new and better King of God’s People. God has kept His promise and His plan will not fail.

And yet, while we can see clearly that we, as God’s children by faith, have received these promises, there remains a future day when Jesus’ rule and reign will be established forever. There remains a future day when God’s people will be renewed and restored in completeness.

The scriptures are clear that Jesus will, at end of this age, overthrow “the throne of kingdoms” and “destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations” and “overthrow the chariots and their riders.” He will defeat all competing powers in a clear and decisive victory. But for the people of God, this judgment and destruction of evil brings about a restoration and renewal of God’s original intention for creation. One in which we get to enjoy forever in the very presence of God.

How do we respond to these things? First, we need to worship Him as king. Every one of us has a decision to make. Either we will acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the rightful Savior and King of the Universe, deserving of all our worship, glory, and praise. Or we will search in vain for something or someone else to fill that role. The throne must be reserved for the Lord Jesus Christ and all other things must be brought under His Lordship.

It’s possible you’re hear and you’ve never actually decided to put Jesus on the throne of your life. Maybe you’ve let Him in vicinity or you’ve let Him get close to the throne to keep an eye on it. But you’ve never actually let Him sit there to rule and to reign. Or maybe you have made that decision but you are realizing this morning that there are some other things vying for control in our life.

Whatever the case, know that Jesus is not satisfied to be in the vicinity of your heart. He is not satisfied to be close to your heart. And He is not even satisfied to keep an eye on

your heart. He will not be satisfied until He sits on throne of your heart. And neither will you, because no other person and no other thing will satisfy the deepest longing of your soul. Only Jesus can do that. And so, humble yourself and worship Him as king this morning.

Second, we need to proclaim Him as king. The truth is that someday soon Jesus will return to judge the nations and every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Some will make that confession willfully and others, the Bible says, will confess through the gnashing of teeth. Our God-given mission as the church is to proclaim the Gospel, to proclaim Jesus as King, so that everyone might bow before Jesus now, and not wait until its too late. All are confronted with choice to kneel now or kneel later.

Lastly, we need to trust him as king. We live in a world filled with evil, corruption, exploitation, and suffering. We hear about it in news, we experience it in our communities, and all too often, we know it personally in our lives. Many times, evil goes on with what seems like little to no consequences. Sometimes, it may even seem like evil is embraced and rewarded and our efforts often seem powerless to create reform and change.

But one day Jesus will return and repay every evil deed. No evil will go unpunished and all things will be made right. His enemies will be cast away forever and He will make all things new, and we will be with Him forever. In this we trust.

If God can move entire nations to keep His promises and bring about His perfect plan, why do we doubt what He is doing in our lives? God is good and His plan is perfect. He keeps His promises and He will not fail. Let's pray.

Benediction: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen" – 2 Cor. 13:14