



Haggai - Chapter Two

Summary of Chapter Two

Haggai bolsters flagging spirits in the fourth message. Comparing the past glory of the temple with the present ruins brought inevitable discouragement (vv.1-3). The people are called to act based on the past (vv.4-5). As God moved Israel to build the tabernacle, so he will now move among the nations to provide for the restoration of his house (vv.6-9).

In the fifth message, the Lord uses an analogy of ritual holiness and defilement to compel reflection upon the actual status of the people before him (vv.10-14), consideration of that status and its relation to past agricultural failures before temple restoration (vv.15-17), and consideration of their experience since rebuilding of the temple began (vv.18-19).

The sixth and final message from the Lord to Haggai complements the previous word and comes on the same day. Consideration of the past and present (vv.10-19) shifts suddenly to a future royal vision of trembling creation, overthrown kingdoms, and perishing armies. Ultimately, the vision comes to focus upon the actions of the divine King whose hand bears, as a signet ring, the promise of David's house restored in the person of Zerubbabel. Seven times in this short section the Lord is the acting subject.

b. Haggai 1:15b-2:9 -The Future Glory of the Temple

The Lord challenges those who remember to compare the past glory of the temple with its present status. All of those addressed, both leaders and people, are called to move ahead in God's strength. The previous promise of the Lord's presence is matched in this section by a promise to provide materially for the temple, even as it looks forward to the decisive presence of God with his people.

^{1:15b} In the second year of King Darius, ^{2:1} in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the

prophet Haggai, saying: ² Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, and say, ³ Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing?

Haggai 1:15b-2:3

The second year, the seventh month, the twenty-first day is 18th September 520 BC, and the next-to-last day of the Festival of Tabernacles: <<*All the people of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the festival in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month*>> (1 Kings 8:2). It is likely that the people celebrated with limited resources: <<*Therefore the heavens above you have withheld the dew, and the earth has withheld its produce. And I have called for a drought on the land and the hills, on the grain, the new wine, the oil, on what the soil produces, on human beings and animals, and on all their labours*>> (Haggai 1:10-11).

Who is left? Left translates Hebrew *sha'ar*, wordplay on remnant, Hebrew *she'erit* (v.2), i.e. 'what is left'. Among those who remained were some in their 70s or older who could remember Solomon's temple that had been destroyed 66 years earlier.

The Book of Ezra describes what those who had seen the first temple felt like 16 years before this prophecy of Haggai, when the work of rebuilding the temple first began: <<*But many of the priests and Levites and heads of families, old people who had seen the first house on its foundations, wept with a loud voice when they saw this house, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted so loudly that the sound was heard far away*>> (Ezra 3:12-13). The men in Ezra Chapter 3 wept because they saw this temple in its former glory. When Solomon built the first temple, he spared no expense in materials, and hired the best talent he could find to do the work.

This house. The loss of temple and land is evidence for covenant curses for disobedience: <<*If you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut Israel off from the land that I have given them; and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight; and Israel will become a proverb and a taunt among all peoples. This house will become a heap of ruins; everyone passing by it will be astonished, and will hiss; and they will say, "Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this house?" Then they will say, "Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their ancestors out of the*>>

land of Egypt, and embraced other gods, worshipping them and serving them; therefore the Lord has brought this disaster upon them”>> (1 Kings 9:6-9).

Is it not in your sight as nothing? The people could see that the rebuilt temple would be far inferior to Solomon’s temple in its wealth and physical beauty. These kind of comparisons between ‘the good old days’ and the present day, or between the work of God in various places and times, are rarely beneficial. It did not do the people of Haggai’s day any good to think of how magnificent Solomon’s temple was compared to their own rebuilding work.

A.W. Tozer suggested this prayer regarding the Christian tendency to compare and compete: “Dear Lord, I refuse henceforth to compete with any of Thy servants. They have congregations larger than mine. So be it. I rejoice in their success. They have greater gifts. Very well. That is not in their power nor in mine. I am humbly grateful for their greater gifts and my smaller ones. I only pray that I may use to Thy glory such modest gifts as I possess. I will not compare myself with any, nor try to build up my self-esteem by noting where I may excel one or another in Thy holy work. I herewith make a blanket disavowal of all intrinsic worth. I am but an unprofitable servant. I gladly go to the foot of the Cross and own myself the least of Thy people. If I err in my self-judgement and actually underestimate myself I do not want to know it. I purpose to pray for others and to rejoice in their prosperity as if it were my own. And indeed it is my own if it is Thine own, for what is Thine is mine, and while one plants and another waters it is Thou alone that giveth the increase.” (A.W. Tozer, *The Price of Neglect*).

The word glory is used in two senses in Haggai: here and in Haggai 1:8 it conveys the idea of honour or distinction, while in v.7 it is probably ‘the glory of the Lord,’ i.e. his special presence, which is said to ‘fill’ the sanctuary: <<*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*>> (Exodus 40:34-35), <<*And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord*>> (1 Kings 8:10-11).

⁴ Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts, ⁵ according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear.

Haggai 2:4-5

Yet now. This transition moves the people from their past reflection to present action by means of a series of imperatives. As earlier, God's presence, I am with you, forms the basis for their ongoing work in the face of pessimism: <<*Then Haggai, the messenger of the Lord, spoke to the people with the Lord's message, saying, I am with you, says the Lord. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and worked on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God*>> (Haggai 1:13-14).

I am with you. As stated in 1:13 God was there to encourage them, and to strengthen them for the work. He always empowers and encourages his people to do what he commands them. Therefore, the task before them will be undertaken with the promise of God's aid.

The command do not fear is based on an assurance of God's presence: My Spirit abides among you. This is one of the strongest statements in the entire OT of God's ongoing presence among his people. As the people gave willingly of talent, time, and goods in the building of the tabernacle, as detailed in Exodus Chapters 25, 28 and 35, so now they are exhorted to fulfil their covenant obligations in contributing to the current temple restoration.

⁶ For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; ⁷ and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendour, says the Lord of hosts.

Haggai 2:6-7

The Lord of hosts occurs five times in vv.6-9, emphasising the Lord's sovereign authority over all things, including the adornment of his house; refer also to the comment made on 1:2.

I will shake the heavens. The same verb form is translated 'about to shake' in v.21, which is a similar theme to: <<*At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, 'Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.'* This phrase 'Yet once more' indicates the removal of what is shaken – that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain>> (Hebrews 12:26-27. In the present context, 'shaking' does not primarily involve future judgement but God's immediate intervention in providing for the work at hand.

Only the day of the Lord could produce this 'cosmic shakedown.' In many cases in the Prophets, the Hebrew verb *ra'ash*, translated 'tremble' in Joel 2:10, was

associated with the end of the age, the return of chaos, and God's final judgement.

God promises to shake all nations as well as the heavens and the earth. The result of this shaking will be that the treasures of all nations will be yielded by the nations to adorn the temple; but the result will also be more than this, for the Lord will fill his house with splendour; that is, with his own presence. The focus of Haggai's oracle in its context is specifically on the immediate fulfilment of this prophecy. In addition, from a NT vantage point, many would see a foreshadowing of events unfolding in the incarnation of Christ and ultimately in his Second Coming at the end of the age, e.g. when Jesus spoke of his body as 'this temple' <<*The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body*>> (John 2:20-21); and when the Book of Revelation speaks of the day when the whole city of Jerusalem will be filled with the presence of God: <<*I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it*>> (Revelation 21:22-24).

⁸ The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts.

Haggai 2:8

God ultimately owns all the wealth of all nations: the silver is mine, and the gold is mine. Therefore it should be used in obedience to him. David indicated the right heart for God's house even though he would never see it built: <<*So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, coloured stones, all sorts of precious stones, and marble in abundance*>> (1 Chronicles 29:2).

⁹ The latter splendour of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.

Haggai 2:9

The latter splendour of this house. The ultimate fulfilment of this passage demands a still wider view of redemptive history. The possessions of Jew and Gentile are enlisted in restoring the temple as a place of *shalom*, i.e. prosperity, peace, and well-being. Likewise, Ezekiel envisions the temple as a source of healing: <<*Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple towards the east*>>

(for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar>> (Ezekiel 47:1), and: <<On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing>> (Ezekiel 47:12), which is confirmed by: <<Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations>> (Revelation 22:1-2). The NT 'mystery' is a new spiritual temple composed of people from all nations: <<For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building>> (1 Corinthians 3:9), and: <<Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple>> (1 Corinthians 3:16-17), a new community that is the focal point of God's saving work in the world: <<Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places>> (Ephesians 3:8-10). Ultimately, the temple as a sign of God's presence with his people is eclipsed by the presence of the Lord of hosts and the Lamb (Revelation 21:22-26).

c. Haggai 2:10-19 - A Rebuke and a Promise

Haggai uses questions directed to priests, as seen in 1:4 and v.3 above, and an analogy to force reflection upon the uncleanness of the people before the Lord (v.14). The Lord calls the people to reflect upon their economic situation prior to the start of reconstruction. The past lack of agricultural prosperity, key to all other aspects of life in the region, did not lead to repentance. Things still appear bleak, but the mention of four crops essential to the life of the people is now a promise that God's blessing is on the horizon.

¹⁰ On the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai, saying:

¹¹ Thus says the Lord of hosts: Ask the priests for a ruling: ¹² If one carries consecrated meat in the fold of one's garment, and with the fold touches bread, or stew, or wine, or oil, or any kind of food, does it become holy? The priests answered, 'No.' ¹³ Then Haggai said, 'If one who is unclean by contact with a dead body touches any of these,

does it become unclean?’ The priests answered, ‘Yes, it becomes unclean.’

Haggai 2:10-13

The twenty-fourth day, the ninth month, the second year of Darius is 20th November 520 BC, the three-month anniversary since the work of renewal began. This oracle came during the time for sowing seed.

Ask the priests for a ruling. It is their duty to give a ruling in matters of ritual and law, Hebrew *Torah*, as stated in: <<*You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean; and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them through Moses*>> (Leviticus 10:10-11), and: <<*If a judicial decision is too difficult for you to make between one kind of bloodshed and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another – any such matters of dispute in your towns – then you shall immediately go up to the place that the Lord your God will choose, where you shall consult with the levitical priests and the judge who is in office in those days; they shall announce to you the decision in the case. Carry out exactly the decision that they announce to you from the place that the Lord will choose, diligently observing everything they instruct you. You must carry out fully the law that they interpret for you or the ruling that they announce to you; do not turn aside from the decision that they announce to you, either to the right or to the left. As for anyone who presumes to disobey the priest appointed to minister there to the Lord your God, or the judge, that person shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. All the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again*>> (Deuteronomy 17:8-13).

Consecrated meat is meat dedicated for sacrifice; it is holy to the Lord: <<*All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the Lord’s; they are holy to the Lord. If persons wish to redeem any of their tithes, they must add one-fifth to them. All tithes of herd and flock, every tenth one that passes under the shepherd’s staff, shall be holy to the Lord*>> (Leviticus 27:30-32). It was assumed that holiness could be transferred from a consecrated object to a person or other object: <<*Whatever touches its flesh shall become holy; and when any of its blood is spattered on a garment, you shall wash the bespattered part in a holy place*>> (Leviticus 6:27). Haggai questions whether holiness may be transferred from that second consecrated object to a third.

Does it become holy? Does it become unclean? Haggai questions the priests, who were accustomed to answering such questions, about the transmission of both holiness and impurity. The priests answered correctly according to the Law of

Moses: holiness is not contagious, but impurity is. The principle of transmission only really works one way far more than both ways.

A dead body. While holiness may not be attained through indirect contact, one defiled by contact with a dead body pollutes all that he contacts; refer to Leviticus 22:1-9, and Numbers 19:11-13.

Any of these in v.13 likely refers to the foods mentioned in v.12.

¹⁴ Haggai then said, So is it with this people, and with this nation before me, says the Lord; and so with every work of their hands; and what they offer there is unclean.

Haggai 2:14

So is it with this people, and with this nation before me. On the same principle, 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 does not make everything they do holy. If the priorities of a Christian's heart are wrong, nothing they do is really holy to God.

With every work of their hands. All that they do is unclean, refer also to v.17.

There refers to the temple. The lack of holiness and the presence of defilement is due not to the impropriety of current sacrifices: *<<They set up the altar on its foundation, because they were in dread of the neighbouring peoples, and they offered burnt-offerings upon it to the Lord, morning and evening. And they kept the festival of booths, as prescribed, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number according to the ordinance, as required for each day, and after that the regular burnt-offerings, the offerings at the new moon and at all the sacred festivals of the Lord, and the offerings of everyone who made a freewill-offering to the Lord. From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt-offerings to the Lord. But the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. So they gave money to the masons and the carpenters, and food, drink, and oil to the Sidonians and the Tyrians to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea, to Joppa, according to the grant that they had from King Cyrus of Persia>>* (Ezra 3:3-7), but rather to the fact that they permit a ruinous 'corpse,' i.e. the unfinished temple, to remain in their midst without attempting to deal with it appropriately.

¹⁵ But now, consider what will come to pass from this day on. Before a stone was placed upon a stone in the Lord's temple, ¹⁶ how did you

fare? When one came to a heap of twenty measures, there were but ten; when one came to the wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were but twenty.

Haggai 2:15-16

Consider, used twice also in v.18, is literally ‘set your hearts’. They are to keep an eye on past experience while looking forward to the new thing that God is presently doing.

Before a stone was placed in the Lord’s temple. The play on this verb, Hebrew *sim*, translated both ‘consider’ and ‘placed’, supports a correlation between the current state of the people’s hearts and their common experience before construction restarted.

How did you fare? There is a direct correlation between the lack of progress on the temple and the people’s shattered agricultural expectations: <<*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 you that earn wages earn wages to put them into a bag with holes. Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider how you have fared. Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honoured, says the Lord. You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because my house lies in ruins, while all of you hurry off to your own houses*>> (Haggai 1:6-9).

¹⁷ I struck you and all the products of your toil with blight and mildew and hail; yet you did not return to me, says the Lord.

Haggai 2:17

I struck you is drastic action motivated by the love of a Father for his children, but to no avail; refer to Deuteronomy 8:1-5 and 30:1-10; and Hebrews 12:7-11.

Blight and mildew. These examples of covenant curses: <<*The Lord will afflict you with consumption, fever, inflammation, with fiery heat and drought, and with blight and mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish*>> (Deuteronomy 28:22), <<*If there is famine in the land, if there is plague, blight, mildew, locust, or caterpillar; if their enemy besieges them in any of their cities; whatever plague, whatever sickness there is*>> (1 Kings 8:37), and: <<*I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and lack of bread in all your places, yet you did not return to me, says the Lord. And I also withheld the rain from you when there were still three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would be rained upon, and the field on which it did not rain withered; so two or three towns*

wandered to one town to drink water, and were not satisfied; yet you did not return to me, says the Lord. I struck you with blight and mildew; I laid waste your gardens and your vineyards; the locust devoured your fig trees and your olive trees; yet you did not return to me, says the Lord>> (Amos 4:6-9), represent the spectrum of dangers, i.e. heat and moisture, faced by crops.

Yet you did not return to me is literally ‘and there is not you to me’; as confirmed by Amos 4:9 above. The people come ‘to’ (Hebrew ‘el) their failed agricultural production (v.16), but not ‘to me’ (Hebrew ‘elay), i.e. they do not return to God. The experiences were real but God’s people did not learn from them. Tough times do not necessarily bring people closer to God.

¹⁸ Consider from this day on, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid, consider: ¹⁹ Is there any seed left in the barn? Do the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree still yield nothing? From this day on I will bless you.

Haggai 2:18-19

Since the day that the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid is probably a reference to the resumption of work in 520 BC, including an official foundation-laying ceremony rather than the initial work on the foundation, begun in 538 BC (Ezra 3:11), which subsequently had been abandoned.

The late-summer harvest of these essential crops: the vine, fig, pomegranate and olive, fits well with the November date (v.10).

Is there any seed left in the barn? Although God’s people had already planted their seeds, the day of harvest is still months away, so the Lord promises that an abundant harvest will in fact come. The work on the temple had been started again, giving evidence of the people’s renewed devotion to the Lord and their return to a God-centred lifestyle. Thus they should mark this day as the day when the Lord has promised I will bless you. Although God is not obligated by their obedience, the statement heralds a brighter tomorrow than the meagre results of previous years (1:6-11).

d. Haggai 2:20-23 - God’s Promise to Zerubbabel

In this section the sovereign Lord warns of a coming destruction of kingdoms and nations. He then promises the re-establishment of the throne of David. It was easy for the returning exiles to feel insignificant in the world, as if they were just pawns or spectators. God wanted them to know that, although they were small in the eyes of the superpowers of the world, they were servants of the God of all power; they are on the winning side.

²⁰ The word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month: ²¹ Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, ²² and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I am about to destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders; and the horses and their riders shall fall, every one by the sword of a comrade.

Haggai 2:20-22

A second time. This assumes the same date, i.e. the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, and makes a clear connection between vv.20-23 and vv.10-19.

I am about to shake the heavens and the earth. Earlier this was for the purpose of harvesting the wealth of the nations (vv.6-7), while here it is tied to a wide-ranging sense of impending destruction of the nations.

Overthrow suggests the complete devastation of political entities by divine action. This word of encouragement reveals that Haggai's messages from God are a mixture of rebuke and encouragement.

Chariots, horses, riders shall fall is an allusion to the destruction of Pharaoh's army as they crossed the Red Sea, refer to Exodus 14:22-29. It also reveals the truth in battles yet to come: *<<Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, 'Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of the mighty, the flesh of horses and their riders – flesh of all, both free and slave, both small and great.' Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against the rider on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed in its presence the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur. And the rest were killed by the sword of the rider on the horse, the sword that came from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh>>* (Revelation 19:17-21).

Every one by the sword of a comrade. The chaos will be so great that the enemies of God's people will destroy themselves: *<<I will summon the sword against Gog in all my mountains, says the Lord God; the swords of all will be against their comrades>>* (Ezekiel 38:21).

²³ On that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts.

Haggai 2:23

On that day is a phrase common to prophetic contexts. Here it sets the Lord's actions in an unspecified future, i.e. 'the day of the Lord'. Refer to Isaiah 2:11-20, Amos 5:18-20, Joel Chapter 2, Zechariah Chapter 14, and the 'The Day of the Lord in the Prophets' in the About section of the website.

I will take you. The Lord's actions are underscored by the thrice-repeated says the Lord of hosts.

My servant is a title given to individuals selected to accomplish God's appointed task. It is particularly associated with David himself or an ideal Davidic king: <<*Now then bring it about; for the Lord has promised David: Through my servant David I will save my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines, and from all their enemies*>> (2 Samuel 3:18), <<*You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to my servant David'*>> (Psalm 89:3), <<*And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honoured in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength – he says, 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth*>> (Isaiah 49:5-6), and: <<*I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken*>> (Ezekiel 34:23-24).

The NT writers frequently referred to themselves as servants of the Lord: <<*We are putting no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labours, sleepless nights, hunger*>> (2 Corinthians 6:3-5), <<*Am I now seeking human approval, or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ*>> (Galatians 1:10), <<*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greetings*>> (James 1:1), <<*Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have received a faith as precious as ours through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ*>> (2 Peter 1:1), and: <<*Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, who are beloved in God the Father and kept safe for Jesus Christ*>> (Jude 1).

A signet ring was a ring that provided evidence of royal authority and ownership. Like a king sealing legal documents with his ring: <<*You may write as you please with regard to the Jews, in the name of the king, and seal it with the king's ring; for an edict written in the name of the king and sealed with the king's*>>

ring cannot be revoked>> (Esther 8:8), the Lord will set his authentic impression upon the world through his royal representative. Zerubbabel, a descendant of one previously discarded (Jeremiah 22:24-27), is the ring placed back on the hand of the divine King. God's promise to bless his people and the whole world through the house of David still stands, as confirmed by Matthew 1:1.

For I have chosen you. What was so special about Zerubbabel? He truly was chosen of God, in the ancestry of Jesus, Zerubbabel was the last person to stand to be in both the line of Mary, the blood lineage of Jesus (Luke 3:27), and Joseph, the legal lineage of Jesus through Joseph (Matthew 1:12).

God used these two lines of ancestry for Jesus because he placed a curse on the seed of Jechoniah: <<*Thus says the Lord: Record this man as childless, a man who shall not succeed in his days; for none of his offspring shall succeed in sitting on the throne of David, and ruling again in Judah*>> (Jeremiah 22:30); Jechoniah was also known as Coniah or Jehoiachin. That line was royal line of David, so if the Messiah was to qualify for the throne of David: <<*And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end*>> (Luke 1:31-33), he had to be of the legal line of David, yet not of his seed. Jechoniah was the last legitimate king of Judah and the royal House of David goes through him. His only successor was Zedekiah, his uncle who was appointed not by right, but by an occupying Babylonian ruler: <<*The king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah*>> (2 Kings 24:17). Even at the end of his life, the Babylonians recognised Jechoniah as the legitimate king of Judah: <<*In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, King Evil-merodach of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released King Jehoiachin of Judah from prison; he spoke kindly to him, and gave him a seat above the other seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes. Every day of his life he dined regularly in the king's presence. For his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion every day, as long as he lived*>> (2 Kings 25:27-30). Because Zerubbabel was a descendant of the last legitimate king of Judah, he could be legitimately recognised as the ruler, although not the king, of the returning exiles.

All date conversions are based on the Hebrew calendar produced on www.cgsf.org.