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THE BOOK OF HAGGAI

The Book of Haggai is quite short, being only 38 verses long. Haggai was a prophet in Jerusalem amongst the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian captivity. At that time the leaders amongst the Jews were Joshua the High Priest and Zerubbabel the civil governor. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah were delivering God's messages to the Jews at the same time.

The relatively few Jews in Jerusalem were in very difficult circumstances, with the nations around them basically trying to destroy them. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Where before the captivity the population of the House of Judah had been well in excess of one million people, the people that returned from Babylon were only around 50,000, or less than 5% of the former population.

When after the fall of Babylon the opportunity arose to return to Jerusalem and to the area of Judea, the overwhelming majority of Jews chose to remain in Babylon, where they had established a comfortable existence. That large Jewish population in Babylon continued well into New Testament times.

And in fact, the Apostle Peter wrote his first letter from Babylon (1 Peter 5:13). Peter had gone to Babylon to preach to that large group of Jews, because he was the apostle to the "circumcision".

Before we examine the 4 messages in the Book of Haggai, let's look at some of the background and the circumstances in which the Jews in Jerusalem at that time found themselves.

SOME BACKGROUND

In the Book of Ezra we find a record of those who returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity.

When Babylon was defeated in 538 B.C., Cyrus the Persian became king. And in the 1st year of his reign Cyrus made a decree to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. As Cyrus put it in that decree:

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, **The LORD God of heaven** has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He **has charged me to build Him a house at Jerusalem**, which *is* in Judah. (Ezra 1:2)