



# PRAYING WITH PURPOSE MINISTRIES

## BIBLICAL NOTES & HIGHLIGHTS

**Minor Prophets: Haggai • Zechariah • Malachi**

**Books Of: Ezra • Esther • Nehemiah**

**The Gospel: Matthew • Mark • Luke • John**

*October 2021*

### **The Book of Haggai**

Many scholars think the prophet Haggai was born in Judah before the captivity which means the prophet was an older man (over 70 years old) when he returned to Judah. He had seen the former Temple before it was burned down. Haggai returned with Zerubbabel and encouraged the builders to continue to rebuild the Temple by preaching four powerful messages which were dated:

1. August 26, 520 BC — (Haggai 1:1)
2. October 17, 520 BC — (Haggai 2:1)
3. December 18, 520 BC — (Haggai 2:10)
4. December 18, 520 BC — (Haggai 2:20)

In Haggai's messages, he was telling the people to consider their ways ... take introspection of themselves to understand why they were not prospering, Haggai 1:3-7:

*<sup>3</sup> Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, <sup>4</sup> Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house [of the Lord] lies in ruins? <sup>5</sup> Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways and set your mind on what has come to you.*

*<sup>6</sup> You have sown much, but you have reaped little; you eat, but you do not have enough; you drink, but you do not have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages has earned them to put them in a bag with holes in it.*

*<sup>7</sup> Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways (your previous and present conduct) and how you have fared.*

The messages of Haggai encouraged and inspired the people of Judah to finish rebuilding the Temple and to be faithful and trust the God of their salvation for the promise of future blessings. The Book of Haggai clearly points out the blessings—rewards received by adhering to the Principle of Obedience—a righteousness building principle, Haggai 2:18-19:

<sup>18</sup> Consider, I pray you, from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was [re]laid, consider this:

<sup>19</sup> Is the harvested grain any longer in the barn? As to the grapevine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree—they have not yet borne. From this day on I will bless you.

The prophet Haggai stills speaks to us today to consider our ways ... Selah!

### **The Book of Zechariah**

Zechariah's very name means "God Remembers," which resonates the theme: "Yahweh remembers the covenant He made with their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; therefore, Israel will be blessed." Like Haggai, Zechariah is commissioned to encourage and inspire the people of Judah to finish rebuilding the Temple because it is crucial for Israel's identity and for the coming of the Messiah. In essence, he lets them know that they are not just building a building but the future. This really motivates the people to get to work. The Book of Zechariah also promotes "spiritual revival" ... encouraging the people to repent, humble themselves and call upon the Lord their God, Zechariah 1:1–6:

<sup>1</sup> In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah, the son of Iddo:

<sup>2</sup> "The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. <sup>3</sup> Therefore tell the people: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Return to me,' declares the LORD Almighty, 'and I will return to you,' says the LORD Almighty. <sup>4</sup> Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the earlier prophets proclaimed: This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Turn from your evil ways and your evil practices.' But they would not listen or pay attention to me, declares the LORD. <sup>5</sup> Where are your ancestors now? And the prophets, do they live forever? <sup>6</sup> But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your ancestors?

"Then they repented and said, 'The LORD Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as he determined to do.'"

Zechariah is not only a prophet but a priest also. He is the grandson of Iddo, the priest who returned from Babylon. Zechariah through a series of eight visions and several messages reinvigorates the people and gives the post-exilic community hope during a time of ridicule and debasement from the Gentile nations. The Book of Zechariah is not only concerned with repentance, rebuilding, and renewal of leadership—priestly, prophet and political leaders; but it shows God's grace, love and forgiveness toward His people Israel. Therefore, they should turn back to God with pure hearts ... don't fast and mourn without being obedient to Yahweh and to practice Zechariah 7:9–10:

<sup>9</sup> *“This is what the LORD Almighty said: ‘Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. <sup>10</sup>Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.’*

His Book is the largest out of all the Minor Prophets, containing the clearest and the most messianic passages. One could say it is a “miniature Book of Isaiah.” Zechariah portrays Christ’s first coming, Zechariah 9:9, as well as, His second coming in Zechariah 9:10–10:12.

<sup>9</sup> *Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9:9 NIV)*

The Book can be divided into two parts:

- |   |   |               |
|---|---|---------------|
| 1. Call to repentance and rebuilding the Temple | — | Chapters 1–8  |
| 2. Coming of the King                           | — | Chapters 9–14 |

Zechariah like Haggai encourages the people to simply obey Yahweh. In essence, operate in the Principle of Obedience which is a righteousness building principle and they would be blessed—rewarded by Yahweh.

The prophet Zechariah summoned the people to repentance and conversion because his concern was for the people to have a right relationship with God. Therefore, before renewal and restoration could take place, they had to first repent. And because of God’s love, grace and mercy, He would forgive the people and cause them to prosper in every area of their lives ... spiritually, physically, economically and socially.

Zechariah helped the people realize that their future expectations could be realized in the present and that they could experience Yahweh’s salvation now by adhering to the Principle of Obedience. When we obey, the covenant promises are activated NOW!

**SO, LET’S PAUSE AND HAVE A TIME OF CORPORATE PRAYER ... PRAYING FOR REPENTANCE, RESTORATION & REBUILDING, BASED ON THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.**

## PRAYERS OF REPENTANCE, RESTORING AND REBUILDING:

- I. Pray for Repentance ... Pastors and Preachers and People to turn back to God wholeheartedly. (Zechariah 1:3–4; 2 Chronicles 7:14)

After repentance, we can expect restoration—just as the Lord restored Joshua, the high priest in Zechariah 3:1–9. Even though the adversary, Satan was standing at the right hand of Joshua in God’s Presence, accusing Joshua because he had on filthy garments which represented iniquity/sin. The adversary, Satan, is still always accusing the brethren, Revelation 12:6.

The Lord, Himself rebuked Satan and then cleansed and purified Joshua. He removed the filthy garments and clothed him with a rich robe, which is symbolic of how we have been cleansed and clothed with righteousness by the blood of Jesus.

Also, the Lord’s actions in purifying Joshua and clothing him with clean and holy apparel shows the necessity of purity and holiness for the people and leaders of God.

- II. Pray for Restoration of Purity and Holiness for the church, especially for spiritual leaders, that they listen and obey completely. (Zechariah 3:1–9; Joel 2:28)
  - a. Restoration of the prophetic voice ... “utterance” in the church. (Zechariah 3:7; Joel 2:28; Hebrews 1:1; Proverbs 1:23)  
When spiritual leaders and the people have clean hands and pure hearts, and are obedient to God we can expect prophetic utterance.  
Now in Chapter 4, Zechariah receives another vision. In this vision Zechariah is given a prophetic word “an utterance” to speak to Zerubbabel, the governor to encourage him to finish rebuilding the temple.
- III. Pray for restored ... harmonious relationship between spiritual and political leaders, modeled by Joshua, the priest and Zerubbabel, the governor. (Zechariah 4:1–6, 14; Amos 3:3)
- IV. Pray for Rebuilding of the Country’s Infrastructure. (Zechariah 4:7–10; Nehemiah 2:17–18)  
**The rebuilding of the Temple was an important infrastructure for the restoration of the Jewish Community.**
- V. Prayer of Thanksgiving to God for His Grace and Love in restoring His people and rebuilding the Church and Country and forgiving us. (Zechariah 1:12–17; Lamentations 3:22–23)

## The Book of Malachi

Malachi is the last book in the Old Testament. His very name means, “My Messenger.” And he had a word for the people of Judah during the time of spiritual apathy, moral and ethical decay. The people were very discouraged, disappointed, and I would say depressed because they were not experiencing the blessing of Yahweh. They thought Yahweh didn’t love them. Therefore, the book opens with Yahweh declaring His love to His people, Malachi 1:2:

*<sup>2</sup> “I have loved you,” says the LORD. “But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’ “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the LORD. “Yet I have loved Jacob,*

Malachi’s message reflects the religious, social, and political issues during that time. The people believed that there were no benefits in being children of the Most High God. In other words, religion was a waste of time and effort. The Jews were ready to give up their religion because they thought it was irrelevant ... a relic of the past; therefore, they weren’t honoring their covenant relationship with Yahweh.

### DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR!!!

This was the environment in which Malachi began to prophesy. A prophetic word was necessary to encourage and inspire the people to return back to Yahweh and serve Him wholeheartedly; and He would bless them. Malachi proclaims his message through a series of dialogues between Yahweh and His people ... questions and answers disputes:

1. Dispute over Yahweh’s love for them (1:2–5)
2. Dispute over the priests despising Yahweh’s Name (1:6–2:9)
3. Dispute over the people profaning the covenant (2:10–16)
4. Dispute over wearying Yahweh through injustice (2:17–3:6)
5. Dispute over robbing Yahweh (3:7–12)
6. Dispute over speaking against Yahweh ... serving Him (3:13–15)

Malachi assures the people that Yahweh is faithful and He makes a difference between those (the righteous) who serve Him and those (the wicked) who don’t, Malachi 3:16–18:

*<sup>16</sup> Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name.*

*<sup>17</sup> “On the day when I act,” says the LORD Almighty, “they will be my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him. <sup>18</sup> And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.*

The Book of Malachi can be divided into three parts:

1. The Nation’s Privilege — Chapter 1:1–5
2. The Nation’s Pollution — Chapters 1:6–3:15
3. The Nation’s Promise — Chapters 3:16–4:6

## **The Book of Ezra**

The Book of Ezra, like the Books of Chronicles, gives us a historical account of the people of God, the Israelites. They have gone from glory to captivity in Babylon and now a remnant has returned to their homeland after seventy years of captivity. This Book reveals the fulfillment of the prophecy proclaimed by Isaiah (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1) that the Lord would use Cyrus, the king of Persia, to allow the Jewish people to return to their homeland and rebuild the temple. The scribe Ezra, who is also a priest from the direct descendant of Aaron, gives us an account of the first group under the leadership Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua. After six decades Artaxerxes, the king of Persia, allows Ezra to lead a second group of Jews back to Judah. Artaxerxes not only appoints Ezra—giving him a position of authority; but gives him money and supplies for the Temple. Yahweh is using pagan kings to establish His will in the earth realm; for He is “Lord of History.”

**REMEMBER GOD DOES NOT CHANGE — HE AND JESUS ARE THE SAME YESTERDAY, TODAY AND FOREVER!!!**

Ezra’s very name means “Help,” which is exactly what he did by leaving a prominent position in the king’s court in Babylon to lead a remnant to Judah. He had a love for his people and wanted to teach them the laws and status of their God ... Yahweh. Ezra comes on the heels of the last Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; and encourages the people in pure worship and holy living—obedience to Yahweh. The Book of Ezra can be divided into two parts:

1. Part I: Restoring the Temple — Chapters 1–6
2. Part 2: Reforming the People (spiritual revival) — Chapters 7–10

## **The Book of Esther**

The Book of Esther continues with the saga of the Jewish people after the exile. There are about six decades between Part I and Part 2 of the Book of Ezra; and this is when the story of Esther takes place before the second exodus from Babylon under the Persian King Ahasuerus. The Book explains the establishment of the Feast of Purim (lots). It was instituted after the Jewish people destroyed their enemies who had planned to annihilate them. The edict to annihilate the Jews was plotted by Haman who was a descendant of Agag, Amalekite king ... enemy of the Israelites during the times of Moses, Saul, and Samuel. The gallows Haman built to hang Mordecai was used to hang him.

Although God’s name is not mentioned in the Book, one sees “Divine Providence” throughout the Book with God working secretly behind the scenes to care for and protect His people ... the majority of the Jews who decided to stay in Persia. God uses five characters: King Ahasuerus, Queen Vashti, Esther, Mordecai, and Haman to accomplish His goals, for His glory. We also see how God adjusts circumstances to accomplish His purposes:

1. Queen Vashti did not submit to the request of her husband, King Ahasuerus, to come to the banquet to display her beauty.

2. King Ahasuerus' sleepless night, when he reads the annuals and discovers how Mordecai prevented his assignation ... and rewards Mordecai.

This Book should encourage and inspire us in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to continue to trust, lean and rely on God; for He causes all things to work for our good and like Mordecai said in Esther 4:14:

*<sup>14</sup> For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance shall arise for the Jews from elsewhere, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows but that you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this and for this very occasion?*

The Book of Esther can be divided into two parts:

1. Threats to the Jewish People — Chapters 1–4
2. Triumph of the Jewish People — Chapters 5–10

### **The Book of Nehemiah**

Nehemiah was a contemporary of Ezra and he led the third exodus to Jerusalem from Babylon. Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king of Persia ... a very influential and prominent position; therefore, he was a trusted adviser to the king. However, he had not forgotten his kinsmen who were suffering in Jerusalem. His very name means, "Comfort of Jehovah," and he sought comfort and restoration for his people.

Nehemiah prayed to God on behalf of his people and himself and God by His Spirit had the king show favor to Nehemiah. As a result, Nehemiah was able to journey safely to Jerusalem and help his people, the Israelites, rebuild the walls around the city. Restoration of the walls ensured safety for the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants. The restored walls allowed the Jewish community to continue social and religious reforms, which served as a catalyst to bind the community together—a worshipping community with the Temple as its center. Israel was called to be a "Church". Therefore, the rebuilding of the walls was crucial for Israel's identity. Nehemiah's prayers and leadership helped preserve this identity. Nehemiah used the discipline of "prayer and fasting" in his preparation to rebuild the walls and restore the people.

The Book of Nehemiah can be divided into parts:

1. Reconstruction of the Wall — Chapters 1–7
2. Restoration of the Jewish People — Chapters 8–13

Now, this happened about 400 years before the coming of the Messiah, Lord Jesus. Everything was restored in the Book of Nehemiah except the King. The temple is rebuilt, Jerusalem is reconstructed, the covenant is renewed, and the people are reformed. The messianic line is intact, but the King is yet to come. And now here we are in the same predicament in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, needing to rebuild our country, especially our economy, and restore the people. We need physical and spiritual restoration, which can be accomplished only through PRAYER & INTERCESSION.

Just as Nehemiah was determined to accomplish the assignment God had given him, we should always be determined—resolved to make intercession on behalf of God's people and those who



have not yet become His children. As intercessors “determination” should be our hallmark. I agree with Walter Wink, “**History belongs to the intercessors who believe the future into being.**”

In Nehemiah’s prayers, he would always tell the Lord to remember him; so, we want to especially remember to pray for our pastors, especially since it’s Pastor’s Appreciation Month.

### **Nehemiah 13:14:**

*<sup>14</sup> Remember me for this, my God, and do not blot out what I have so faithfully done for the house of my God and its services.*

## **PRAYER FOR PASTORS**

### **INTER-TESTAMENT PERIOD COMMENTARY**

#### **THE GOSPEL: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John**

As we all know the Gospel is the “Good News” of salvation to mankind. Each author gives his perspective of the life of Jesus and His ministry. The first three Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are called “Synoptic Gospels” meaning ‘taking a common view’; they are very similar. However, the Book of John is very different, it stands in a class by itself. Nevertheless, they all have the following five common elements about the life of Jesus and His ministry:

1. Jesus’ Deity
2. Jesus’ Miracles
3. Jesus’ Teachings
4. Jesus’ Betrayal, Trail and Crucifixion
5. Jesus’ Resurrection and Commission to Disciples

#### **The Book of Matthew**

Matthew is the tax collector who writes mainly to a Jewish audience who are now Christian converts. He wants to prove to his audience that Jesus is the Messiah (the King of the Jews) that they have been expecting; therefore, he references many passages from the Old Testament, like the genealogy, to show that the prophecies were fulfilled about the coming Messiah. By starting off with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Book of Matthew forms a natural bridge between the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Matthew wants his Jewish audience to know without a doubt that:

1. Jesus is Deity, “Divine” ... The Son of God.
2. Jesus is King, of the Kingdom of God, from the lineage of King David.
3. Jesus is the Savior, promised to the world through the seed of Abraham,  
Matthew 1:21:



<sup>1</sup> *She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus [the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua, which means Savior], for He will save His people from their sins [that is, prevent them from <sup>[a]</sup>failing and missing the true end and scope of life, which is God].*

The Book of Matthew focused a lot on the “kingdom of heaven”; it is known for the Sermon on the Mount ... the “Beatitudes,” Matthew 5:1–12:

<sup>3</sup> *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

<sup>4</sup> *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

<sup>5</sup> *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

<sup>6</sup> *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

<sup>7</sup> *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

<sup>8</sup> *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

<sup>9</sup> *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

<sup>10</sup> *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

<sup>11</sup> *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

## **The Book of Mark**

The author is John Mark who is the young cousin of Barnabas and a close associate of Peter. As a matter of fact, Mark gives us an account on Jesus’ life based on Peter’s eye witnessed account. The Book of Mark is very brief. He tells us who Jesus is and what He did in a very succinct manner; Mark uses the word “immediately” frequently. In essence he portrays Jesus as a “Man of Action.” He focuses on Jesus as the “Suffering Servant,” (Mark 10:45)

<sup>45</sup> *For even the Son of Man came not to have service rendered to Him, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for (<sup>[a]</sup>instead of) many.*

The Book shows Jesus’ authority as the Son of God.

## The Book of Luke

Luke is a Gentile physician who was a close associate of Paul. His writing style reflects one with an excellent education and Greek background. Many scholars believe it was Paul's teaching which caused Luke to become a Christian. Luke traces Jesus' genealogy back to Adam. He gives a very accurate and detailed account of Jesus' life, very comprehensive ... emphasizing Jesus' ancestry, His birth and early years before His ministry. The Book of Luke is written in a manner that both the Jews and Gentiles could understand it. It is the longest book of the Gospel as well the New Testament.

Luke covers a diverse group of people, more than any of the other Gospels, giving special attention to women, children, the poor and oppressed. Luke's view of Jesus is expressed clearly and concisely in Luke 19:10:

*<sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.*

## The Book of John

The Book of John is the last book of the Gospel and John takes into account what was already said in the previous books about the life of Jesus. Therefore, he leaves out a lot of events that Matthew, Mark and Luke included. Note that John's Gospel doesn't include the following:

1. Jesus' natural birth and baptism
2. Jesus' temptation in the wilderness
3. Jesus' parable teachings
4. The Last Supper
5. Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and Ascension to Heaven

Unlike the "Synoptic Gospel", John focuses more on the Deity of Jesus, the Son of God, John 1:1–2:

*In the beginning [before all time] was the Word (<sup>[a]</sup>Christ), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God <sup>[b]</sup>Himself. <sup>2</sup> He was present originally with God.*

He goes back to the beginning of all creation in his opening statement portraying Jesus as the Word (as God). Whereas Matthew portrays Jesus as King, Mark portrays Him as the Suffering Servant and Luke, as the Son of Man.

John highlights seven miracles:

1. Changing water into wine at Cana (John 2:1–11)
2. Healing the royal official's son in Capernaum (John 4:46–54)
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (John 5:1–15)
4. Feeding the 5000 (John 6:5–14)
5. Jesus walking on water (John 6:16–24)
6. Healing the man blind from birth (John 9:1–7)
7. The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1–45)

John also highlights seven “I AM” statements that Jesus made about Himself:

1. “I Am the bread of life” (John 6:35)
2. “I AM the light of the world” (John 8:16)
3. “I AM the door” (John 10:7)
4. “I AM the good Shepherd” (John 10:11)
5. “I AM the resurrection and life” (John 11:25)
6. “I AM the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)
7. “I AM the vine” (John 15:1, 5)

All these miracles (signs) and statements reveal His Deity.

John states his purpose in writing the book in John 20:31:

*<sup>31</sup> but these have been written so that you may believe [with a deep, abiding trust] that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed), the Son of God; and that by believing [and trusting in and relying on Him] you may have life in His name.*

John simply wants his audience to believe that Jesus (the Son of God) is the Messiah, the Christ, so they might have eternal life. John is the son of Zebedee and his mother is Salome who scholars say is the sister of Mary, Jesus’ mother. John, along with his brother James and Peter, was one of Jesus’ inner-circle disciples. He and his brother James were known as “Sons of Thunder”.

**SMALL GROUP PRAYERS ... PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER AS IT RELATES TO RESTORING ... OUR HEALTH, RELATIONSHIPS/RENEWAL ... STRENGTH, ENERGY /REBUILDING, ETC.**