Kingdom Presence

Haggai 2:20-23

1. Introduction:
   1. Unless you live in a hole, you know that we’re just at the beginning of an election year. You might think you’re sick of it right now, but you wait, it’s gonna get worse. Politicians making promises that they won’t deliver; spending hundreds of millions of dollars on advertising, travel & campaigning. All for the privilege of being the POTUS. Every 4 years it’s the same dialogue with different actors: for some it’s, let’s keep this thing moving the way it’s going because it’s going great & for others it’s time for a change. And the American people, buy it, watch it & are enthralled with it. And we should be. As responsible citizens, we should vote, listen & be informed. But there’s a phenomenon that underlies this process that we must be aware of. It’s the hope & even thrill that the election of a new president will change the fortunes of our nation. Some think: A new president will raise us up from the depths of depression to hope. Others imagine: That a new leader will change our economic fortunes, destroy foreign enemies & set our nation free from its moral decay. Don’t get me wrong, a good leader is remarkably important, but what we don’t realize in the middle of these election cycles is that it’s never enough. Ever notice that? If it were enough, just a new leader, the right leader, we wouldn’t need this cycle. This vicious yet exhilarating cycle is one of those moments on fallen earth that points us to something greater, more spectacular than a new POTUS. It points us to our desire & even our need for a leader, a king who rules perfectly, reigns righteously, never changes, never embarrasses us & never leaves us.
   2. And the reason we can think this way as Christians & the beauty of this type of thinking is that we see it throughout the Bible. One of those moments is at the end of the book of Haggai, which we’ve been studying this month & we will finish today. So let’s stand & read Haggai 2:20-23 & pray together.
2. Prophecy & Reality.
   1. Unlike the other messages that we’ve looked at in the book of Haggai, this is a personal message to Zerubbabel, the governor over Israel. This is the final message in the book & it’s like we get to be a fly on the wall, as the Lord speaks to personally Zerubbabel.
      1. You can see at the beginning of the message, in vs. 21, that the Lord said that he’s about to shake the heavens & the earth. This is cataclysmic language. It means something huge is going to take place. We’ve seen this type of language before in Haggai 2:6, when the Lord told the people that he would, “shake the heavens & the earth & the sea & the dry land.” This is God’s way of saying, “things are about to be different & there is a significant change taking place.”
      2. And the cataclysmic language continues in vs. 22 when he says, “he’s going to overthrow the thrones of kingdoms & destroy the strength of kingdoms.” In other words, God is going to do something that will utterly change the world. It will drastically affect the kingdoms of this world & it will be so powerful that it has the strength to cast off nations’ strength. In other words, it’s more authoritative & more powerful than the nations of this world.
      3. But then he speaks directly to Zerubbabel. Notice the personal nature of his words in vs. 23:
         1. I will take you & make you a signet ring, for I have chosen you.
         2. Sounds big doesn’t it? Wow, a signet ring. The instrument in the hand of a king to declare his authority & ownership. And notice how personal this is: take you, make you & chosen you.
      4. This prophecy seems to indicate something remarkable about Zerubbabel doesn’t it? I mean imagine that this was spoken to you. Would this make your head swell a little? Imagine any of our presidential candidates with this prophecy in their heads?? We’d really have a challenge on our hands, wouldn’t we? These words would give those who they were spoken to unquestioned authority, in their minds. It would cause someone to think pretty lofty thoughts about themselves.
   2. But here’s a question: what’s the reality of this prophecy? Yes, this prophecy was spoken to Zerubbabel, but what happened to him? Ever heard of him?
      1. We know from the book of Ezra 6:14-15, that he led the people to finish the rebuilding the Temple.
      2. But here’s where this text in Haggai presents a challenge. Not long after this prophecy was given, Zerubbabel dropped off the map & passed off the scene. History does not tell us much about him & even Jewish historians rarely mention him. Doesn’t sound like someone who overthrew kingdoms or destroyed great powers? We don’t know if he was removed from office or if he died in office. Don’t know if he was assassinated or what happened to him.
      3. But here’s what we do know about him: he played a role in leading the people back to Jerusalem & led them to rebuild the Temple. We also know that he did not usher any type of great triumphant kingship or reign like these verses indicate, while he was on the earth.
3. So what’s the deal? Well, this is where some question the Bible’s accuracy & historical content. But for us, as Christians, as we’ll see, this points us to Jesus in Haggai. Let me show you why we can say this.
   1. The first reason is because of what we’ve seen in this book already. In chapter 2:9, we have already seen where the latter glory of the Temple would be greater than the former Temple.
      1. We noted that the rebuilt Temple eventually was destroyed in AD 70 & we noted that the Temple was a signpost, pointing us to something greater than the Temple. It was pointing us to Jesus Christ as alluded to in Matthew 12:6.
      2. So, when we read that “God will shake the heavens & earth”, we know that the 1st time in the book that language was used, it was talking about the Temple & it pointed us ahead to Jesus being greater than the Temple. It pointed us to the fact that while that rebuilt Temple was the place that Jesus taught & was God’s house, that Temple was a signpost, pointing us to the One who is greater than the Temple, the One who has outlasted the Temple & the One who is our Temple.
      3. So because the 1st time this language was used in Haggai, it pointed us to Jesus, we have to believe the 2nd time it was used (in the verses before us) it’s doing the same thing.
   2. And we get a clue that this passage is pointing to Jesus by the language used to speak to Zerubbabel.
      1. The first clue is in the signet ring comment, “I will make you a signet ring”. This is remarkably important language to the Jewish people. In Jeremiah 22:24, prior to the Jews being exiled into Babylon, notice what God said to their king Jehoiakim (in David’s family line of kings): “even though you were a signet ring, I will tear you off & give you into the hands of the king of Babylon.”
         1. The reason the people of Israel were exiled into Babylon & God allowed Babylon to conquer them in 587 B.C. was because they continued to sin against God & their leaders were rebellious. They would not turn to God, who was their true king & God disciplined them by sending them into exile.
         2. God promised when he sent them to exile that he would be deliver them in about 70 years & return them to the land of Israel. So when they returned to start rebuilding the Temple, they had no known leader from David’s line (which was the line of the Kings in the Bible for Israel), & God was not happy with Israel or her kings.
         3. Until this prophecy to Zerubbabel. Do you see this? God was saying that Zerubbabel was a representative of David’s kingly line & God was restoring David’s line, through Zerubbabel & God was no longer disciplining his people.
         4. So heading into the exile of discipline from the Lord, the Lord took off the signet ring of the Davidic line (represented by Jehoiakim) & when the people returned to Israel & to the Lord, God put the signet ring of the Davidic line back on (represented by Zerubbabel).
         5. And this is how God works through representatives throughout biblical history. Adam represented mankind at creation. Moses represented the people of God before Pharaoh. And as R.A. Taylor wrote, “This governor of Judah (Zerubbabel) represented a renewal of divine pleasure in a people who had returned from the disciplinary experience of the exile—a people whom the Lord was once again pleased to acknowledge and for whom he had great plans.”
         6. So the signet ring is clue that God was restoring the Davidic line to his people & he was pleased with them.
      2. We get further proof that this Davidic line prophecy was what Haggai was speaking about when he calls Zerubbabel, “his servant”. Over 12 times in the Bible, God referred to David, as “his servant”. David’s kingship was always seen before God as a “servant kingship”. And in calling Zerubbabel, “my servant”, God was using prophetic language to refer to the restoration of the Davidic line.
   3. Now, you might ask, big deal? All that does is show us that Zerubbabel was in David’s line. But here’s why this is a really big deal in the Bible. While Zerubbabel’s name & history might’ve fallen off the world’s stage shortly after this prophecy was given, his name doesn’t disappear from the Biblical scene. In two places, his name shows up again & its reappearance is remarkable: In Matthew 1:12 & in Luke 3:27, in the line of Jesus.
      1. See don’t miss this: while Zerubbabel might’ve become obscure, his life mattered & this prophecy was fulfilled through him in his heir, who is the God-man, Jesus Christ.
      2. As we’ve studied Haggai, this shouldn’t surprise us because we’ve already seen that these people were putting stone upon stone in a Temple that would point to the Son of God & the glory of God.
      3. And we see it again here in Zerubbabel’s life. Obscure, doing his work, really not remembered for much, yet a signpost pointing us to the coming of Jesus.
      4. And tells us a couple of things that we should always remember:
         1. Leaders matter. But they’re not primary. What God is doing in this world is not ultimately dependent on who is elected as our POTUS. It tells us that having good leaders are a true blessing, but ultimately our need is for One who is greater, perfect & eternal. Zerubbabel mattered in his leadership. But his leadership ultimately pointed people to the only king who could shake the heavens & break the bow & crush the chariot! They & we need Jesus, the One true King.
         2. But not only do we see that leaders matter, we see that our lives matter. But our lives are not primary. We were not created to point the finger at ourselves & to raise our own banner. We were made to point to another. We were made for the glory of God & the revelation of Jesus Christ to the world. You weren’t just made to do your job: you were made to glorify God & point others to him. You weren’t just made to be a good spouse: you were made to glorify God & point others to him. You weren’t made to be a good athlete, engineer or musician: you were made to glorify God & point others to him.
         3. From this prophetic word to Zerubbabel we see that people matter, but people aren’t primary. People are to be signposts pointing to the One who made all things & who is our perfect King.
      5. This is why we must see Jesus in Haggai. Our work matters & as we serve the Lord, we’re building more than we can imagine or dream & we’re pointing others to our glorious Savior.
4. But, let’s close this book our by looking at our Forever King & Presence. This message to Zerubbabel, as we’ve seen was given to us to point us to Jesus. It was meant to reveal that God’s disciplinary hand was off his people & he had restored the line of David, which finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. Haggai is all about Jesus. But what about this “shaking the heavens & earth” stuff? What about that “overthrowing the throne of kingdoms” comment? How does Jesus do that?
   1. When Jesus Christ came to the earth, he came bringing his kingdom with him. He established the work of the kingdom of God on earth. Everywhere that Jesus went, he took that kingdom with him. He even told his disciples who were looking for the reestablishment of the glory days of Israel, “The kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:21). This kingdom is wherever the rule of Christ exists over his people. That means, the church is a part of that kingdom. And God is using his church to advance his kingdom. And Jesus himself declared in Matthew 16, that the “gates of hell would not prevail against the church”.
      1. The prophet Isaiah foretold of this with these familiar words: “Unto us a child is born & a Son is given. The government shall rest upon his shoulder. He will be called wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father. Of the increase of his government & of peace there will be no end. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.”
      2. And we see the culmination of this in the book of Revelation 19:11-16 when our King Jesus, who is called Faithful & True will judge & make war over all nations. He is called the Word of God & no one can stand in his way. With one word, he destroys the authority & power of nations. He is the King of Kings & the Lord of Lords.
   2. This tells us is that through Zerubbabel, God did shake the heavens & the earth. God did overthrow kingdoms & break the strength of nations through Zerubbabel. But it was through Zerubbabel’s heir, Jesus. Jesus’ kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. Only Jesus’ kingdom has the authority & the ownership of all things. Only Jesus’ authority is over heaven & earth. Only Jesus is the true King of Kings & Lord of Lords. Only Jesus can be the true signet ring & the fulfillment of the Davidic prophecies. Only Jesus can faithful, for all time represent us before God as our Advocate, Mediator & High Priest.
   3. So as you go home today keep two thoughts in your minds:
      1. You can go home knowing that power & authority to shut the mouths of enemies, to empower the work of your hands, to embolden your witness for the gospel, to overthrow kingdoms & break the back of horses & axles of chariots, rests solely in the presence of King Jesus. Zerubbabel died & could not fulfill (while on earth) what this prophecy declared. But Jesus did & he still does. We have a King, who is not dead, is always present & his presence with us is all the power we need to live life in his kingdom, for his glory.
      2. But you can also go home today knowing that you have a Forever King over your life, if you claim him as your own. As Paul Tripp wrote, “I don’t have to work to be a king and I don’t have to carry the burdens of a king because I have been gifted with a King. In his kingdom, I am blessed with every good thing I will ever need, and in my welcome to his kingdom, I am included in something that will never, ever end.” So you can give yourself wholeheartedly to this King because he’s forever your King. And you can trust that his presence with you & his authority over all things does the work of his kingdom through you, as you submit your life to him. He’s a great King. He’s the true King & he’s all we need.
   4. So listen, if you’ve never trusted Jesus as you King & Savior, do so today. Forgiveness of sin, a right relationship with God, & eternal life are waiting for you in Jesus. Trust him today.
   5. But if you’re a Christian, look & marvel at your King. He’s got it! He’s greater than our next president & he’s greater than all current or former presidents. Let those presidents (the good ones & the bad ones) remind you of your need for Jesus. And rest in him today.