

**DISCUSSION FOCUS**

Read (Primary Text): Haggai 1; Zechariah 3; Malachi 1 – 2:9

Supporting Texts: Ezra 5:1-2; Exodus 23:14-19; John 15:1-8; Matthew 17:9-13, etc.

**MAIN IDEA: God is holy and patient, enduring in mercy and therefore, deserves our whole lives.**

*\*\*Note that these three books were written in a time of rebuilding Jerusalem after seventy years in exile. However, the people still seem to be struggling to follow God's law. Haggai and Zechariah are contemporaries, written before the temple rebuild is complete, whereas Malachi follows about 100 years later after the rebuild. (See Ezra 5:1-2)*

**OBSERVE****Read Haggai Chapter 1**

Israel has returned from captivity in Babylon, but already they have become distracted. On what issue is Haggai calling the people to repent? *At the start, they are more concerned with finishing the building of their fancy "paneled" houses than with rebuilding the house of the LORD and meeting place, the temple.*

**Read Zechariah Chapter 3**

In this chapter Zechariah speaks directly to Joshua the High Priest. What does God promise Joshua? *God will take away his iniquity (his sin) and clothe him (v. 4).*

What must Joshua do for that promise to be fulfilled? *If Joshua walks in God's ways and keeps His charge, then he shall rule God's house.*

**Read Malachi 1 – 2:9** (About 100 years later) Now that Jerusalem and the temple have been built, the people who returned have proven to be as unfaithful as their ancestors. What is God disputing with the people about in this first chapter? *They are NOT bringing God their best, but instead bringing God their worst in terms of worship and sacrifice; not the first-fruits, but the trash pile. This is similar to showing up to the family reunion not with your fresh homemade pecan pie, but with week old stale leftovers.*

**INTERPRET**

Consider Exodus 23:14-19 as we interpret Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi. In Exodus, God established three pilgrimage feasts to Jerusalem with specific requirements concerning the offerings to God and how He was to be worshiped. During the years of exile, God's people did not have a temple to go to to worship. How do you think the lack of a temple affected the people's worship and approach to God during the years of exile? *The feasts all required that the people bring their first fruits (the best) of each harvest to Jerusalem to worship God. But all during the exile this wasn't possible, so habits changed—they couldn't go to Jerusalem; they didn't have a temple to worship at; they couldn't bring first fruits from harvests.*

According to the passage we read in Malachi, were the Israelites bringing the proper sacrifices? *No.*

How do you think the exile impacted the Israelites' worship once they returned to Jerusalem? *Perhaps they didn't feel the journey was important since they had been removed from Jerusalem for so long. Perhaps they didn't think God was serious when He said it was time to come home to the temple in Jerusalem because He had proved He was still with them during the exile. Here's a fun extra.* [Watch: Exile Biblical Theme Video | BibleProject™](#)

## RESPOND

During the times of Haggai and Zechariah, the people were returning to rebuilding after massive destruction and decades of turmoil. With the effects of hurricane Michael and the death and disruption of COVID-19 still fresh, we are also experiencing a time of "rebuilding". In what ways might our priorities in "getting back to normal" conflict with God's will for us in this time?

## APPLY

Read Malachi 4:4-6. As we wrap up the Old Testament in our journey through the Whole Story, let's spend a few minutes reflecting on what the Law and the prophets have taught us so far? Is the story complete? *Guide discussion along these lines: In many ways the text of the Old Testament leaves us with what seems to be an unfinished tale, hanging ultimately on the fact that several of God's promises are yet to be fulfilled. Sin still rules the world, and the promised Messiah, the anointed Prophet, Priest and King has yet to appear. With anticipation we ask ourselves, "What comes next?!"*

God be praised, the story doesn't end and next week we begin to see the completion of the Whole Story as we study the book of Matthew in City Groups! Often, it is tempting to focus so much on good news we have in the New Testament that we ignore the Old Testament. How has this journey through the OT as part of our reading of the Whole Story prepared you for reading the New Testament? How does understanding the Old Testament better help us live in light of the hope we have in Jesus?

### Messianic Prophecies in Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi

If you have time at the end of your discussion, there are several key Messianic prophecies in Zechariah and Malachi. Read some (or all) of the passages below and their corresponding New Testament references. With each reference discuss how the context of the situations surrounding the people in Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi might cause the people to interpret these prophecies. Then contrast this with our knowledge of Jesus and how we interpret these prophecies.

Zechariah 3 (already read earlier), John 15:1-8

Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:1-7

Zechariah 11:12-13, Matthew 27:3-10

Zechariah 12:10-13:1, John 19:31-37

Malachi 3:1, Matthew 11:7-10

Malachi 4:5-6, Matthew 17:9-13