

Haggai 1:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

Analysis

Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? Through the prophet Haggai, God confronts the returned exiles with a penetrating rhetorical question exposing their misplaced priorities. The contrast is stark: they live in "cieled houses" (סְפִינִים / בָּתִים סְפִינִים—paneled, decorated, finished homes—while God's house lies in ruins. The Hebrew participle "cieled" (סְפִינִים/sepunim) indicates houses with expensive wooden paneling, a luxury in ancient Israel where wood was scarce and costly.

"Is it time for you" (לְכֶם / הַעֲתָה ha'et lakhem) questions their sense of timing and priorities. The people claimed it wasn't yet the right time to rebuild the temple (v.2), yet they found time and resources for their own comfortable dwellings. This reveals the human tendency toward self-justification—we find time for what we truly prioritize while making excuses for neglecting God's purposes.

"This house" (הַבַּיִת-הַזֶּה / habayit-hazeh) refers to the temple, God's dwelling place among His people. That it "lies waste" (חָרֵב / charev)—desolate, destroyed, in ruins—represented a spiritual crisis beyond mere architecture. The temple symbolized God's presence, the focal point of worship, the place where heaven and earth met. Its ruined state indicated broken relationship, abandoned worship, and misplaced affections.

This verse establishes a crucial biblical principle: God will not be an afterthought. When God's people prioritize comfort, prosperity, and personal security over His

glory and purposes, they invite divine discipline. The order of our loves reveals the God we actually worship. If our homes are finished while God's house languishes, we worship comfort more than Christ.

Historical Context

Haggai prophesied in 520 BC, during the second year of Persian King Darius I's reign. The context is crucial: in 538 BC, Cyrus of Persia had conquered Babylon and issued a decree allowing Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-4). About 50,000 returned under Zerubbabel, laid the temple foundation (536 BC), but then stopped work due to opposition from local adversaries (Ezra 4:1-5, 24).

For sixteen years (536-520 BC), the temple foundation sat abandoned while the people focused on establishing their homes, farms, and businesses. They rationalized their inaction—claiming it wasn't the right time, citing opposition, prioritizing economic survival. Meanwhile, they prospered enough to build and panel their own houses, revealing that lack of resources wasn't the real issue; lack of will was.

This situation echoed Israel's perpetual pattern: God delivers, people initially respond with enthusiasm, opposition or hardship arises, people compromise, and worship of God gets relegated to an afterthought. Haggai's ministry catalyzed renewed commitment, and the people resumed building within weeks of his first sermon. The second temple was completed in 516 BC (Ezra 6:15), though it lacked the glory of Solomon's temple, causing some to weep (Ezra 3:12-13).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What 'cieled houses' in your life—areas of comfort, security, or self-focus—might be crowding out God's purposes and priorities?
2. How do you justify delaying obedience to God's clear calling while pursuing personal goals, comfort, or prosperity?
3. In what ways does the condition of your heart's 'temple'—your inner life of worship, prayer, and devotion—reflect your true priorities?
4. What would it look like practically to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness rather than making Him an afterthought in your life?

Interlinear Text

סְגִּינִּים	יְמִינָה	וְעַבְדָּת	לְכָם	אַתָּה	מִן	בַּת	לֹא	בְּתַת	וְעַבְדָּת	יְמִינִים	סְגִּינִּים
Is it time	H0	H859	for you	O ye to dwell	and this house	in your cieled					
H6256				H3427		H1004					H5603
and this house	H2088	H2720	lie waste								
H1004											

Additional Cross-References

2 Samuel 7:2 (Parallel theme): That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.

Philippians 2:21 (Parallel theme): For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Matthew 6:33 (Parallel theme): But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Haggai 1:9 (Parallel theme): Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

Jeremiah 52:13 (Parallel theme): And burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire:

Micah 3:12 (Parallel theme): Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org