

Haggai 2:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

Analysis

Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean ען חגי ויאמר כן בְּעַמְּךָזֶה וְכֵן בְּגָויִהֶזֶה לְפָנֵי בָּאָמִרְתֶּה) וְכֵן כָּל-מְעִשָּׂה יְדֵיכֶם וְאַשְׁר יָקְרִיבוּ שָׁם טָמֵא הוּא vaya'an Chaggai vayomer ken ha'am-hazeh vekhen hagoy-hazeh lefanai ne'um-YHWH vekhen kol-ma'aseh yedeihem va'asher yakrivu sham tame hu)—God springs the trap. The priests acknowledged that uncleanness contaminates; now God applies it: **So is this people**—like the defiled person, they contaminate everything they touch. **Every work of their hands** (כָּל-kol-ma'aseh yedeihem)—even temple-building—**is unclean** (טָמֵא/tame).

This is shocking: even their obedience in rebuilding the temple couldn't make them acceptable to God if their hearts remained defiled. Religious activity—even commanded activity—doesn't automatically please God. Isaiah 64:6 declares, "All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment." God desires heart-purity, not merely external compliance. Jesus confronted Pharisees with similar truth: meticulous external religion while hearts harbored pride, greed, and hypocrisy (Matthew 23).

The shift from "my people" (1:2) to **this people** and **this nation** (הָעַמְּךָזֶה... הָגֹיִ... ha'am-hazeh... hagoy-hazeh) signals divine displeasure. When God calls them "nation" (הָגֹי/goy), the term usually applied to gentiles, He indicates they're acting like pagans, not His covenant people. Their defilement came from prolonged

disobedience (sixteen years neglecting His house), creating spiritual contamination that infected everything.

Historical Context

This message came after the people had resumed building (three months into the project). They might have thought that because they were now obeying, all was well. God corrects this: obedience without genuine heart-repentance leaves them still unclean. They needed both to rebuild the temple and to deal with the heart-defilement that years of self-focused living had produced. True restoration required internal and external transformation.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does the truth that even "good works" can be defiled by impure hearts challenge your confidence in religious activity as earning God's favor?
2. In what ways might you be substituting external obedience or ministry activity for genuine heart-repentance and spiritual purity?
3. What does it mean to come to God acknowledging that even your best efforts are contaminated by sin, needing Christ's righteousness rather than your own?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	יְהוָה	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי	כִּי
Then answered	Haggai	and said	H3651	So is this people	H5971	in	H2088
H6030	H2292	H559				H3651	
and so is this nation		before	H6440	nam	H5002	the LORD	H3605
H1471	H2088					H3068	
and so is every work	of their hands		H3027	and that which they offer	H7126	שְׁמָרָה	H8033
H4639							
there is unclean							
H2931	H1931						

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 15:8 (References Lord): The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight.

Proverbs 28:9 (Parallel theme): He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.

Titus 1:15 (Parallel theme): Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.