

Haggai 2:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?
and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison
of it as nothing?

Analysis

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?—God acknowledges the painful reality of comparison. Some older Israelites remembered Solomon's temple—destroyed 66 years earlier (586 BC)—and this new structure seemed pitiful by comparison. The rhetorical questions don't deny their assessment but invite honest recognition of disappointment.

"This house in her first glory" (הַבַּיִת הַזֶּה בְּכְבוֹדוֹ הָרִאשׁוֹן/habayit hazeh bikhvodo harishon)—the Hebrew "glory" (כְּבוֹד/kavod) means weight, heaviness, splendor. Solomon's temple was overlaid with gold, filled with treasures from David's conquests, and featured the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. At its dedication, God's glory-cloud filled the temple so intensely that priests couldn't minister (1 Kings 8:10-11). None of this grandeur characterized the second temple.

"Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" (הֲלוֹא כְּמֹהוּ כְּאַיִן בְּעֵינֵיכֶם/halo khamohu khe'ayin be'eineikhem)—literally "is it not like nothing in your eyes?" God validates their perception while preparing to reframe it. The danger of comparison is that it breeds either pride (when we compare favorably) or despair (when we fall short). The people's discouragement threatened to paralyze the work.

Yet God's question contains implicit rebuke: they were measuring glory by outward appearance rather than God's presence. Later, Jesus would challenge similar

thinking: "Something greater than the temple is here" (Matthew 12:6). The incarnate Son of God standing in the second temple constituted infinitely greater glory than Solomon's gold and cedar. God was redirecting their focus from architectural impressiveness to covenantal faithfulness and messianic hope.

Historical Context

Those who remembered Solomon's temple would have been at least 70+ years old, having been children or young adults when Jerusalem fell in 586 BC. Their weeping when the foundation was laid (Ezra 3:12-13) reflected both grief over what was lost and disappointment with what seemed a poor replacement. Solomon's temple had taken 7 years to build with unlimited resources, 150,000+ laborers, and treasuries filled from conquest and trade.

The second temple was built by a small, struggling community with limited resources, no Ark of the Covenant, no Urim and Thummim, no sacred fire, and according to Jewish tradition, no Shekinah glory. The Talmud lists five things missing from the second temple that were present in Solomon's. Yet God's promise (verse 9) declared this house would surpass the former in glory—a promise fulfilled not through architecture but through the Messiah's presence.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. In what areas of ministry or life are you tempted to despair because present reality doesn't match past glory or current expectations?
2. How does comparing your work, church, or life to others' 'glory' either inflate pride or breed despair, and how does God call you beyond comparison?

3. What does Jesus's claim that He is 'greater than the temple' reveal about where true glory is found—in buildings, structures, and outward impressiveness, or in God's presence through Christ?

Interlinear Text

מִי	בְּכֶם	הַנִּשְׁאַר	אֲשֶׁר	רָאִיתָ	אֶת	הַבַּיִת	הַזֶּה
H4310	H0	Who is left	H834	among you that saw	H853	this house	H2088
		H7604		H7200		H1004	
וְכָבוֹד	וְהָרָאשׁוֹן	וְהָ	אֲתָם	רָאִיתָ		אֶתוֹ	עַתָּה
glory	in her first	H4100	H859	among you that saw		H853	H6258
H3519	H7223			H7200			
וְהָ	כְּמִהוּ	כֵּן	בְּעֵינֵיכֶם:				
H3808	in comparison	H369	it now is it not in your eyes				
	H3644		H5869				

Additional Cross-References

Ezra 3:12 (Parallel theme): But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: