

City of God Part 7 - "A Compassionate Gift" (6-7-26)

Introduction: Reminder of Key Themes, Review Series so far, then introduce today's topic

Key Themes

- **Temple** (Where God meets with us) - embracing what God is building and doing now, let go of expectations
- **People** (Who we are as God's people) - coming out from another culture that we are too intertwined with
- **City** (How we live as the people of God) - set apart: invite the people around us, but oppose the culture

Series Review

- **Ezra 4** (the work stops for about 16 years), **Ezra 5:1-5, Haggai 1, and Zechariah** (God initiates a restart)

Today's Text: Ezra 5:6-6:12 (plus some passages from Haggai)

1) Opposition

Ezra 4:4-5 (ESV)

[4] Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah and made them afraid to build [5] and bribed counselors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

List of opposition they've faced so far . . .

- Their own low view of what they are building, especially compared to what used to be (Chapter 3): This lingers for years.
- Local Discouragement and Opposition (Chapter 4): 1st an unholy alliance is offered, then discouragement and opposition that brings the work to a halt.
- Opposition from the governing authority (Chapter 4): Brings a pause to the work for 16 years!
- Complacency and Comfort (Haggai 1): Building their own kingdoms (paneled houses)

(Shawn) - Through the prophets Haggai & Zechariah, the leaders & people are stirred to get back to work . . .

Ezra 5:2 (ESV)

Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God that is in Jerusalem, and the prophets of God were with them, supporting them.

Ezra 5:3-4, 6 (ESV)

[3] At the same time Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and their associates came to them and spoke to them thus: "Who gave you a decree to build this house and to finish this structure?" [4] They also asked them this: "What are the names of the men who are building this building?" . . . [6] This is a copy of the letter that Tattenai the governor of the province Beyond the River and Shethar-bozenai and his associates, the governors who were in the province Beyond the River, sent to Darius the king.

Note: They restarted the work as directed by God, and immediately face renewed opposition!

But God speaks, even through the opposition we face . . .

- **Rehum** (Chapter 4) - brought the work to a halt by letter to the king and then by force.
- **Tattenai** (Chapter 5) - challenges them as they restart, and writes threatening letter to the new king.

Their names mean: Rehum - **Compassion** and Tattenai - **Gift**

Application: Enemy Opposition can be God's compassionate gift to us - revealing our **Fears, Sins, and Idols**

2) Faithful thru the Unknown (and Unseen)

How can we see and experience Opposition as God's compassionate gift?

- **Fear of the Lord** and trusting in the **Faithful promise** of God (The main promise is His Presence)

God's Promise as He initiates the restart to this project . . .

Haggai 1:12-13 (ESV)

[12] Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their God had sent him. And **the people feared the LORD**. [13] Then Haggai, the messenger of the LORD, spoke to the people with the LORD's message, "**I am with you**, declares the LORD."

Note: The Fear of the Lord is the antidote to our fears, sins, and idols. His primary Promise: His Presence!

A few weeks after they restart God re-affirms His promise (what changed? The Enemy Opposition) . . .

Haggai 2:4-5 (ESV)

[4] Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, declares the LORD. Be strong, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, for **I am with you**, declares the LORD of hosts, [5] according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. **My Spirit remains in your midst**. Fear not.

This was all they needed to stay the course, not the final resolution of Darius' response to the letter . . .

Ezra 5:5 (ESV)

But the eye of their God was on the elders of the Jews, and they did not stop them until the report should reach Darius and then an answer be returned by letter concerning it.

- **Faithful Obedience** while **Trusting Him** with what we can't see (and may never see)

They do the work, prior to receiving the king's approval, but feel discouraged about their work . . .

Haggai 2:3 (ESV)

'Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How do you see it now? Is it not as nothing in your eyes?

Haggai 2:9 (ESV)

The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts."

Note: 500 years later Jesus comes into this temple, fulfilling this prophecy. Some of God's promises we will not see in our (earthly) lifetime.

Application: We may not see the final results of what God is up to, but the enemy recognizes the power of what is being produced by our **Trust** and **Faithful Obedience** . . .

Ezra 5:8 (ESV)

Be it known to the king that we went to the province of Judah, to the house of the great God. It is being built with huge stones, and timber is laid in the walls. This work goes on **diligently** and **prosper**s in their hands.

Note: If we could only see what our enemy sees!

3) God's Protection and Provision

- **God turns back the curse**

They had been under a curse in their **Complacency** while seeking their own **Comfort** (Shawn) . . .

Haggai 1:6 (ESV)

You have sown much, and harvested little. You eat, but you never have enough; you drink, but you never have your fill. You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm. And he who earns wages does so to put them into a bag with holes.

Now as they restart the work, God assures them . . .

Haggai 2:18-19 (ESV)

[18] Consider from this day onward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month. Since the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider: [19] Is the seed yet in the barn? Indeed, the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree have yielded nothing. But from this day on I will bless you.

- **Zerubbabel and the Signet Ring**

Haggai 2:23 (ESV)

On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts.

Note: Zerubbabel's Family (line of kings), had been broken, removed from the throne, & cast out by God. . .

Jeremiah 22:24-26 (ESV)

[24] "As I live, declares the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet ring on my right hand, yet I would tear you off [25] and give you into the hand of those who seek your life, into the hand of those of whom you are afraid, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and into the hand of the Chaldeans. [26] I will hurl you and the mother who bore you into another country, where you were not born, and there you shall die.

Note: Zerubbabel didn't return to a throne, he is a regional governor appointed by a foreign king. But in God's eyes He is royalty. And He is faithfully serving the Lord and His people in his role as servant-leader.