



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS  
BAPTIST CHURCH**

**LET THE CHURCH ARISE!  
MESSAGES FROM HAGGAI**

Daily Scripture Readings for

April 5 - May 2

## **ORACLE 1: GET TO WORK!**

### **Monday, April 5 - Haggai 1:1-15**

What happens when the people of God get distracted with their own lives instead of focusing on God? The Temple lies in ruin while the houses of the people get a fresh coat of paint. This is what is happening at the beginning of the Book of Haggai. This short, two chapter book will be our focus for the next month. Divided into four oracles, Haggai speaks a message to the Israelites who have returned from exile. It is about 20 years after they have returned when Haggai delivers these messages from God. This first message in Haggai 1 is to rebuild the Temple. As we will see later in the week in a reading from Ezra, the work on the Temple had started and stopped several times. It was work that was done when the people had extra time on their hands. Haggai preaches a word from God that their priority must not be on their personal homes but on the dwelling of God.

Even though Israel has returned from Exile, they have not made the inward, spiritual change of devotion to God. It is this change which God seeks from their lives. This is the change which God seeks from our lives. Let us always be faithful to God and the work of God no matter the circumstances of life. Let us not have seasons of devotion to God and seasons of drifting away, but let us always be seeking the Lord.

This may sound like hard work. In a way, it is. But in another way, it is the easiest work we can do. Haggai 1:13 says that God is with us in this work. When we are working with God instead of working against God, the power of God is doing the work. Jesus tells us in Matt. 11:30 “my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Are you joining with God in his work? Or are you more worried about what’s happening in your own house?

### **Tuesday, April 6 - Deuteronomy 28:15-24**

In addition to the prophecies which Haggai preaches, we will be reading selected Scriptures which support the words from God in Haggai. One of the things we learned

in *Experiencing God* this winter was that God's actions are supported by God's characteristics; God's work is never contrary to God's character.

It is in Deuteronomy 28:15-24, where we learn that God had clearly told the Israelites that famine and drought would be curses upon the people and the land if they did not obey the commands of the Lord. This is what is happening in Israel during the years of Haggai. Because the people of God have not devoted their resources to the Temple, the Lord is taking away what they have.

There is a purpose to God's punishment. This is not God being vindictive, but it is to get the people's attention. The purpose is to have the people turn from their selfish ways and to "bring their tithes into the storehouse" as Haggai's contemporary Malachi would say. Malachi 3:8-10 tells us that by focusing on our own lives instead of God, we are robbing God. To turn back from these selfish ways, God needs to get our attention. What we see in Haggai 1 is that the people's attention was reached and rebuilding the Temple restarted. What about us? How is God getting our attention? Is the church ready to rise?

### **Wednesday, April 7 - Romans 14:1-23**

Tonight, we will start the last point made in Romans' section on Christian Conduct. Paul begins a plea for unity in these verses, which we will continue to discuss next week as well. Much of what we read in Romans 14 is a desire for the church to not judge one another but instead to promote fellowship with one another. Do not condemn one another but help one another grow in the Lord.

As Christians, we are to come together not to degrade one another but to build one another up in the Lord. None of us are perfect. We are truly the blind leading the blind. We are beggars telling other beggars where to get food. Let us grow together tonight by studying Romans 14 in depth.

## **Thursday, April 8 - Numbers 28:11-15**

What's the big deal about the Temple? Why was it such a big deal that the Temple laid in ruin for almost twenty years while the people rebuilt their lives? Passages such as this one in Numbers remind us of the central importance the Temple had in Israel. This was the dwelling place of God. This was where worship took place. Part of worship were the sacrifices made every month. Without the Temple, no sacrifices were being made; in other words, without the Temple the people were not worshipping God.

Today's church is not a building. We are not focused on the walls but on the Lord. Our worship can take place anywhere; the people of Israel had specific instructions to worship at the Temple with certain sacrifices at certain times. So how can the devotion which God is demanding in Haggai 1 translate to our current day? The answer is not to devote our lives to a church building; the answer is to devote our lives to the worship of the Lord. The Temple is where God resides. With the descending of the Holy Spirit into the world, God now resides in the hearts of those who have faith in God. This means we devote attention to the Lord who resides in us instead of putting trust and focus on a building. Don't mistake Haggai for being focused on building projects; Haggai is focused on God. What is your focus: a building or God?

## **Friday, April 9 - Ezra 5:1-3; 5:17-6:7**

What we find in our reading today is another telling of the restart of rebuilding the Temple. We see the historical narrative in Ezra of the same event happening in Haggai. This corroboration is one of the things I love most about the Bible. It reaffirms my trust in Scripture. Haggai and Ezra tell about the same event and corroborate each other's story.

When the people of God obey God by listening to Haggai, immediately Satan steps up his work. Several of the governors of neighboring vassal kingdoms to Persia question the authority of the Israelites to rebuild the Temple. They seek an injunction

on the rebuilding by asking King Darius if King Cyrus really decreed that the Temple could be rebuilt. King Darius finds the decree and re-decrees that they can rebuild. This is not the last time Israel will face adversaries as they rebuild Jerusalem.

When we follow the will of God, we will face opposition. What we can be sure of, though, is God is on our side. If God has led us to a place, God will see us through. If God has given you a task to complete, He will defeat the opposition. What is standing in your way from living as God requires? Have faith that God knows your needs and is walking ahead of you to defeat your enemies.

### **Saturday, April 10 - Philippians 2:20-21**

We need more Timothys in the world. Paul speaks highly of him in these two verses in that he will actually be concerned about the Philippians as opposed to only being concerned about his own interests. We need more people who actually care about others more than they care about themselves.

The work on the Temple was impeded by selfishness; the Israelites cared more about their own homes and lives than God's House and the nation. When people are only concerned about their well-being instead of the community, there is no hope for that group. The people in Haggai heard the voice of God and changed their ways. They started caring about each other and God again.

Do you choose to care about the interests of Jesus more than the interests of yourself? The people of God are supposed to be the body of Christ with our head, our controller being Christ himself. Is that how you live your life? I hope it is because if we don't, we have no hope.

Our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

If we don't allow Jesus to be our head, our controller, then we are not standing on the solid rock of Jesus. Where will you choose to stand?

## **Sunday, April 11 - Psalm 88:1-2**

### **ORACLE 2: CHEER UP!**

## **Monday, April 12 - Haggai 2:1-9**

The people got to work on the Temple. Things were going great. Then they took a look at their progress and their hearts sank. Compared to Solomon's Temple this new Temple looked like a shack. The people became depressed about this next era of Israel.

During this time, about 3 months after the initial word of the Lord, Haggai receives another word from God to give to the people. This word is a cheerful word; it is a word of encouragement. This word starts to tell the people that it is not about the outside splendor of the building but about what the building represents and the action which takes place in the building. God reminds the people that all of the silver and gold in the world is God's. God reminds the people that God has a plan and their obedience is only the first part!

We need to remember that we do not get our marching orders from God and then God expects us to do everything. God is working alongside us. Let us not compare what God is asking us to do with things in the past. Cheer up! It may not be as wonderful and splendid as what it was in the past, but take courage, the Lord is still with us.

## **Tuesday, April 13 - Ezra 3:10-13**

It is really emotional to remember a magnificent place and see it in current ruin. LaGrave Field in Ft. Worth was home to the Ft. Worth Cats in its several iterations over the course of almost 100 years. A formerly beautiful ballpark which was built, left

abandoned, built, and again left abandoned is nothing like it used to be. Weeds grow in the infield; cracks are seen in the cement; a fire burned down part of the concession stand in 2017. If you saw the field in the 1930s and 1940s, you would be heartbroken to see it today. Even if it were to be rebuilt to be the home of another baseball team, it would never regain the glory of yesteryear.

This feeling is what the people were feeling when they were watching the Temple be rebuilt. "This isn't the same," they said. While there were some celebrating the provision of the Lord, those who had been there to see the original Temple were very disheartened.

In our lives and in our church, the former glory of what was may never be again. But that's ok! Just because we are not as big and strong as we used to be doesn't mean God has forgotten us. God is still with us. The promise of Scripture is that God has always been with us, is with us, and will always be with us. Do you trust in that promise? Don't lament the loss of the glory of the past; trust in the presence of God in your life and in our church.

### **Wednesday, April 14 - Romans 15:1-13**

We close the instructional portion of Romans tonight by reading Romans 15:1-13. These verses continue the theme of a plea for unity which we discussed last week. Romans 15 continues the discussion of the weak and the strong and how Christians are supposed to help one another in this life. The first six verses focus on the need to put others first. This principle of being a servant and putting others first is exemplified by our Lord, Himself. Mark 10:45 tells us that "...the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve..." Are you living your life in the same way?

The last seven verses continue this desire for unity by "receiving one another." As Christ has received us, we must receive all people as well. This is difficult work. It goes against our nature not to judge and to receive all people equally. However, Romans 15:13 gives us hope because it is not our work which forms unity, but it is the

work of God inside us. God fills us with joy and peace by the power of the Holy Spirit. Embrace the power which God is giving you. Let us use that power for unity as God desires. Let's continue this conversation tonight!

#### **Thursday, April 15 - Luke 2:22-38**

It is wonderful what God can let us see if we remain faithful to Him and His work for the entirety of our lives. Anna and Simeon are examples of this. Both were senior adults who devoted themselves to God for all of their life. It was their devotion which led them to being able to see baby Jesus when he was dedicated at the Temple.

This Temple where Jesus was dedicated is the Temple whose foundation was being laid and structure rebuilt during the days of Ezra and Haggai. In Haggai 2:9, God says "the latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former..." Do you think these words have in mind God incarnate being in this Temple? Do you think the splendor of this Temple is fulfilled in the Son of God teaching in the courts of this Temple which the people didn't think was as good as Solomon's Temple?

When people remain faithful to God, it is wonderful what God can do. God promises that this Second Temple will be better than the first; Jesus brings that to fruition. Anna and Simeon hold on to the promises of the coming Messiah, wait patiently, work diligently, and are rewarded by God.

Anna and Simeon are great examples of faithful people who have lived long lives. Both lived lives of devotion to God. Both did as God required. If you find yourself in a similar age bracket as Anna and Simeon, are you staying strong in the Lord? It would be easy to lament what you have lost and just give up. Anna and Simeon are examples of never giving up on the Lord. Are you following them?

#### **Friday, April 16 - Hebrews 12:25-29**

"We are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken." There was a common misconception about Jesus' teachings in his lifetime (and still today, to be honest). The



thought was that the Messiah which God had promised would come to establish a kingdom on this earth. This is what everybody, including the disciples, thought the Messiah would do, so this was their hope in Jesus. The disciples eventually figured out where the Kingdom of God was, but most of the Jews missed the Messiah because of their assumptions.

The Kingdom of God is anywhere where the people of God gather. God does not live in a church or a temple, but in the hearts and minds of Christians around the world. The people rebuilding the Temple in Haggai were too focused on the building. We must focus on the Kingdom which cannot be shaken; whose cornerstones cannot be moved.

When we focus on the church building, we are missing the point of the building. The building is just a convenient place to gather; it is not the church. If a tornado came through and demolished the building, the church would still go on! Let us not be concerned about a building which is not as good as it once was, let us be concerned with the body of Christ growing among us! Let us be encouraged that the body of Christ does not rely on a building, but on the Kingdom of God which resides among us without walls. Let us not be consumed with worry about things of this earth, but let us devote our attention to the Kingdom of God.

### **Saturday, April 17 - Matthew 28:18-20**

In Ezekiel 10-11, there is the story of God's presence leaving the Temple because of the disobedience of the people of Israel and the impending Exile. God's presence leaves the city to the east stopping on the Mount of Olives before bringing Ezekiel into another vision. It is no accident that when Jesus enters Jerusalem for the final time, he enters from the east coming from the Mount of Olives. It is symbolic of God's presence once again entering the holy city and the return of Exile for God's people.

Now that Jesus has died and rose again, he is ascending to heaven. Before he does that, he gives his disciples some final instructions to wait for the Holy Spirit to

come to them. As Jesus leaves, it seems as if the disciples are concerned about the mission that Jesus has given. Will they be able to do the work? What do they do now that Jesus is gone?

Unlike in Ezekiel when God leaves Jerusalem, Jesus is making the disciples a promise. God will be with them always until the very end of the age. It's the same promise that God gives Israel in Haggai 2:4-5. God is with them, God has always been with them. God has with them in the wilderness; God is with them in Jerusalem. God was with them in Exile; God is with them in the rebuilding. God walked the face of this earth; God will live in the hearts of His people forever.

What do you think of when you hear the promise I am with you always? Does it give you comfort? Does it give you hope? It reminds me that I am not alone in God's work. God does not give us marching orders and sit back. God is not a coach on the sidelines but a player in the game. I am so glad God is working and is with me always. Thank God for His wonderful gift of presence.

## **Psalm 89:1-2**

### **ORACLE 3: Dedication to the Lord**

#### **Monday, April 19 - Haggai 2:10-19**

Another two months or so has passed since the last oracle Haggai when Haggai gave encouragement to the people about the building of the Temple. A problem has developed, however: the people are doing the work, except they don't want to do the work. This leads to this third oracle Haggai gives which says that drought has been upon the land because of this lack of desire to serve God.

Remember when you would reprimand your kids and they'd say they were sorry even though they didn't mean it? Did you ever make your kids apologize again until you believed they were actually sorry? This act of going through the motions is what Israel was doing and why the drought occurred. The good news is that after this

moment of pastoral council from Haggai, the people realized they were wrong, repented, and God will now bless their land and crops.

What does this mean for us? This week, we will focus our attention on the need to be truly dedicated to the Lord. Yes, the outward work is important, but what is needed is the inward desire to do the outward work as well. What's your heart commitment to the Kingdom of God? Are you living as God requires because church leaders are telling you to do that or do you really love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength? The work does not appeal to God until the heart for the work matches the work itself. This week, we focus on devoting our hearts to God.

## **Tuesday, April 20 - Amos 4:1-13**

If you were wondering, calling someone a cow has always been an insult. The theme this week is being wholly dedicated to God. As followers of Christ, we need to be clean on the inside and outside. The point that Amos 4 is making is that the people of that day were "doing church." They were heading to Bethel and Gilgal and offering the right sacrifices. The problem was that their lives were not following God.

Bashan was a rich area of Israel known for its fertile land which allowed the cows to grow and be sold for high prices. This insult is telling the people that they are oppressing others with their riches. One of the main points of Amos is that the rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer and God is going to bring justice to stop the oppression of the poor.

God has tried to get the people's attention. He sent famine and the people did not change their ways. He sent drought and the people still ignored God's commands. Time after time, God tried to get Israel's attention and they ignored him so finally he allowed the people of Israel to fall into the hands of oppressors.

Please hear me and hear the point of Amos: the people were going to church. They were bringing their tithes and offerings to the storehouse. They were packing the pews, singing the songs, and even saying "Amen" to the sermon. Then, they left

church and went to lunch and forgot all about God. Their faith did not lead to action. Their spiritual life did not impact their daily life. They were dedicated to going to church but not to living for God. Let those with ears hear the message God has given us from Amos today!

### **Wednesday, April 21 - Romans 15:14-16:27**

We finish our study of Romans tonight. Much of what we read is typical of conclusions of first century letters. It discusses Paul's future plans along with well wishes he wants to give to the readers; it gives prayer requests and greetings from others who are with Paul. By my count, Paul mentions 27 brothers and sisters in Christ in Romans 16. I'd like to spend some of our time tonight discussing these godly men and women who have gone before us in the faith.

The last three verses of Romans is a beautiful doxology which proclaims the majesty and glory of God. Read over these verses today. Meditate on them and make them your prayer to God. What an amazing, mighty God we serve!

### **Thursday, April 22 - 1 Peter 1:13-21**

The message of 1 Peter 1:13-21 is that a holy God requires a holy people. Earlier in 1 Peter, the Lord our God is praised because he has given us hope and an inheritance that is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Pet. 1:4). What God has done for us requires devotion and obedience in return. We must "prepare our minds for action and discipline ourselves" (1 Pet. 1:13).

First Peter draws from Leviticus by declaring that we must be holy because God is holy. This law has been since the giving of the Law and yet God's people continue to disobey it. Israel during the period of the judges disobeyed. Israel during the days of Saul, David, and Solomon disobeyed. Israel during the days of the prophets disobeyed. Israel after exile disobeyed. Israel during the days of Jesus disobeyed. The people of the early churches disobeyed. We disobey. We don't conduct ourselves in a holy way.

We say we serve a holy God and do not observe his statues. We trust in God for our salvation, then we don't obey Him. Our salvation is never under threat of being taken away because of disobedience, but we have missed a great calling in our lives if we do not obey God and submit ourselves to His leadership. It's not about attending church and checking all the boxes. It's about total obedience to God. "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct..."

### **Friday, April 23 - Romans 2:25-29**

One of the most concerning passages of Scripture I read is Matthew 7:21-23. At first it says that not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" will enter heaven. Just from Matt. 7:21 it seems that we need to do and act in order to have a place in the family of God. Great, you might think. The focus is not on the words we say but the actions in our life. But then, in Matt. 7:22-23, it says that some who prophesy, cast out demons, and do deeds of power will be cast aside. So it's not about actions then? How can you know if you are "doing the will of [the] Father in heaven?"

Romans 2:25-29 is the answer. Even if you are doing the right thing does not mean you are obeying God's will. What matters is not outward actions but inward obedience. For the Jews and Gentiles in the first century, circumcision was the major topic of discussion. For many Jews, the belief was that outward circumcision is what brought salvation. It was a physical mark to determine if you were part of the family of God or not. They'd been doing it this way since the days of Abraham. Paul specifies clearly that outward marks of faith have no bearing on one's salvation. It is only "circumcision of the heart" which can save a person.

Going backward in time to the days of Haggai and going forward in time to today, we get too caught up with the marks of a follower of God on the outside. The people of

Israel in Haggai were rebuilding the Temple, but they weren't having a heart change. They were caught up with the outward work and not focused on the inward change. Today, we do the same. We say a Christian should act this way and dress that way. A Christian should sing this type of song and listen to that type of message. We only look on the outside of a person and forget that what makes a person a Christian is God living inside of them. Our salvation is a matter of inward transformation. The work we do on the outside is a sign of what is on the inside. The work on the outside is not the only thing we have to do.

### **Saturday, April 24 - Jeremiah 4:1-4**

The point of Jeremiah's sermon here is the message Haggai communicated centuries later. It is also a message we need to hear today: our repentance and devotion to God must be sincere. It is not an act to appease God, but it is a true transformation of our lives. Christians are supposed to live our lives differently than the rest of the world not for ulterior motives but for ultimate motives. This is not about earning salvation, but it is about allowing the Christ who saved us to live within us and that leads us to imitate the actions of Jesus while he was on this earth. Our repentance must lead to living a life that is holy and acceptable to God (i.e. Rmns 12:2).

Point blank question: are you wholly devoted to the things of God? Explore that question in an extended time of prayer today. Write down some thoughts and if you feel led, share those with a trust Christian friend today.

### **Sunday, April 25 - Psalm 90**

### **ORACLE 4: A New Day is Coming**

### **Monday, April 26 - Haggai 2:20-23**

Have you ever seen a signet ring? I think signet rings are really cool. More common in previous eras, a signet ring was a seal of approval from the king or other

authority. If a letter was sealed with the insignia of a king, you knew it was authentic. We have similar seals today. Think of a safety seal of approval for a car or liking a post on Facebook or Instagram. When we put our seal of approval on something, we are signing our name to it, saying we agree with this statement or we endorse this act.

Haggai's fourth oracle is on the same day as the third. At the end of this announcement from God, God says that Zerubbabel is like a signet ring. Zerubbabel is a sign that God has chosen Israel. The people have returned from Exile, rebuilt the Temple, and reestablished God's reign in their hearts. Zerubbabel is a sign of this relationship in two ways. One way is the work God has done through Zerubbabel in his life. The acts that have occurred in these years after Exile show that God is still with Israel.

But there's another way that Zerubbabel is a signet ring, a sign of Israel's status. When you look to Matthew 1:13 we see a familiar name: Zerubbabel! Zerubbabel is part of Jesus' lineage. Less than 500 years after the life of Zerubbabel, Jesus is born. Zerubbabel is a promise to the people of Israel that God has kept his promise to the family of David that his family will rule forever even after Exile. Zerubbabel is a sign that the Savior is still on the way; the Messiah will be born.

Oracle 4 tells us that a new day will dawn in the future and Zerubbabel is a promise that this new day will be fulfilled in due time. Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy. As we finish the book of Haggai this Sunday, we will get to discuss this new day, this awesome new era where we are entirely devoted to the Messiah and his Kingdom. Haggai has rejuvenated the people back to the work of the Lord, he has encouraged them to turn their hearts over to God, now they get to hear the promise of a future with hope, a future of salvation.

## **Tuesday, April 27 - 2 Samuel 7:1-17**

Zerubbabel in Haggai is a continuation of a promise which God makes to David in 2 Samuel 7. It's my opinion that David thinks he needs to earn God's favor and that's

why he wants to build him a temple. God tells him, you don't have to do anything to earn my love; I will be with you and love you always. When I read 2 Samuel 7, it reminds me of what Israel was thinking in the days of Haggai: we need to rebuild this Temple so that God will love us again! The message of Haggai is not about God loving us again; it's about us loving God! We would do well to remember this message.

Notice something else about this passage. Notice the prophet Nathan who thinks he knows what God would say. At first, he tells David to go ahead and build the Temple. Then God has to tell him he was wrong. We can get into a lot of trouble when we speak on behalf of God without talking to God first. When we think we know what God wants instead of asking God, we get it wrong more often than when we get it right.

There was nothing inherently wrong with what David wanted to do. That's probably why Nathan was so quick to give his seal of approval. The problem was that this was not God's seal of approval. God actually had something better in store for David and his family. David and Nathan were thinking too small while God had larger plans. How much trouble we get in when we try to put God in a human sized box! God doesn't need the Temple. God doesn't need church buildings to do his work. God needs His people to love Him and love people.

"Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:20-21).

### **Wednesday, April 28 - Exodus 1:1-2:10**

Tonight, we will begin a study of Exodus. In our study, we will be unable to cover every single verse, but we will read most of the verses in our Daily Scripture Readings. Even the few verses we skip, I hope you will plan to read them in order to have the full picture of Exodus. Exodus is sometimes considered the first book of the Bible. The reason is that it is the origin of the nation of Israel. In that view, Genesis is the prequel to the story. Without the Exodus event, there is no Israel and in that case, Genesis is



irrelevant. Of course, none of the Bible is irrelevant, so I hope you understand what I'm trying to say.

Tonight, we discuss in detail the work of the midwives to save Israelite babies from infanticide. These endangered themselves to protect the vulnerable. In chapter 2, we see the birth of Moses and his mother's work to save him. How can we risk our safety to protect the most vulnerable in our society? I hope we can talk about this and more tonight as we begin to study Exodus.

### **Thursday, April 29 - Matthew 1:1-17**

Paraphrasing Romans 8:28: God works all things for the good of those who love Him. To many people, Matthew 1 is just a list of names; some you know, others you don't. Instead, Matthew 1 is an example of God working all things for the good of those who love Him. Granted, there are some unsavory characters in Jesus' genealogy. Some of the stories of this family are not bedtime stories for my children. Even given that, this genealogy tells the story of God's providence for the people of Israel from Abraham to Jesus. When things were bad for this family/nation, God was still there. When Abraham was old and without an heir, God provided. When Judah and his brothers were in Egypt, God provided. When Ruth was widowed early in her life, God provided. When Israel went to Babylon, God provided. And when the people returned, God provided.

God works all things for the good of those who love Him. There were dark days for the people of Israel and God remained with them. Some of the people died without seeing brighter days, but when we look back on history we see God working generation to generation.

Hold on to the promise that God will take care of you. God has made a promise to His people and nothing can stop the promises of God. Much like Zerubbabel was a signet ring, a sign of the promise for the people in Haggai's day, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was the action which confirms the promise of salvation. Even in

the darkest days, hold on to hope. God works all things for the good of those who love Him.

### **Friday, April 30 - Matthew 27:45-54**

Let's go back to Haggai. The promise is made that God is about to do a new thing; I will shake the heavens and the earth and destroy the kingdoms of this earth. Can you see the similarities in Jesus' death? Can you see the fulfillment of prophecy? Zerubbabel and his family, the family of David would bring about the king which would reign forever and a day was coming and has now come when the mountains shake and earth crumbles. Jesus' death changed the world and the reaction of the earth at his death shows his significance; Jesus is the Messiah, the awaited Savior.

The centurion saw that Jesus was special. The Pharisee and priests still refused to do so. When a heart is hardened, it will not see what is plainly in front of them. What can you see? An amazing earth-shattering event has occurred. Tombs were opened! (Nobody understands what this is about, to be honest.) If you saw all of this happen, would you believe? I hope so. But there were people on that hill who saw and didn't believe. A new day dawned at noon on that Friday. A darkness came over the sky, but the sun (Son) would rise again. Can you see the new day? Have hope Church! A new day is upon us. I can see it. I hope you can too.

### **Saturday, May 1 - Ezekiel 34:20-31**

The oracles of Haggai are timely for the church today. Some Christians are too busy to be part of the church (oracle 1). When Christians do work together as the church, they get discouraged that "it's not like it used to be" (oracle 2). Sometimes Christians get so caught up in "church-maintenance" they forget about the actual work, service, and worship that is part of the Kingdom of God. They forget about having the heart to being the church (oracle 3). We need the promise of Oracle 4 which reminds us that God has a plan and it is to establish His Kingdom forever.

Ezekiel 34:20-31 is another promise similar to the end of Haggai. There is criticism of the current leaders of Israel in Ezekiel 34 and then a promise: God has better days prepared for His people ahead. "You are my sheep," God says in verse 31. We know from throughout Scripture that the Shepherd takes care of His sheep.

When times get difficult and when nothing seems to be going right... When we get discouraged that churches aren't growing like we think they should, take heart. Have hope. The Lord is our God. He is our Shepherd. We are His sheep.

**Sunday, May 2 - Psalm 91**