

377 The Lord of hosts

The little book of Haggai has been described as “one of the gems of the Old Testament”. Within it “the Lord of hosts”, (a description found fourteen times in its two chapters), gave four prophecies to His people through His prophet Haggai (1.1-11 / 2.1-9 / 2.10-19 / 2.20-23). This was in the year 520 BC, about twenty years after the first group of exiles had returned to Jerusalem from Babylon. At first the people had made a good start on rebuilding the temple, but then the work had petered out: “Consider your ways” was the Lord’s message (1.5 & 7) – that is, “brace up and return to proper, God-comes-first, priorities”.

The second prophecy of the four (2.1-9) particularly concerns us this time. The temple now being rebuilt was far less magnificent than that of Solomon, as “the old boys” well knew (2.3). But then the Lord gave them these words of great encouragement as to future glories: “For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it [is] a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry [land]; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver [is] mine, and the gold [is] mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts” (Haggai 2.6-9, KJV).

The temple built later on by Herod was certainly very grand, but it was more of “a den of thieves” (Luke 19.46) than a place of God’s glory and peace, and was duly destroyed in AD 70 as the Lord Jesus had foretold, (eg., Luke 21.5-6). So the wonderful promise concerning “the glory of this latter house” - given through Haggai by “the Lord of hosts” in 520 BC - is still to be fulfilled.

We turn next to Joel. Unlike with Haggai, we are given little information as to the period of Joel’s prophetic ministry, (though around 850 BC is probable), meaning that God’s words spoken through Joel are in one key sense timeless, that is, ever-relevant no matter what else may be going on in the world. The book opens (1.1 – 2.17) with news of a great plague of locusts, (just as is happening with devastating effects in East Africa at present), with a question to “ye old men” (1.2) to the effect of “Have you ever seen anything like this?” – (again, just as is being asked around the world now concerning fires, floods, hurricanes, wickedness and now Covid-19). After the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2.18-32), we are then told in Chapter 3 of “the day of the Lord”. This will involve divine judgment of the nations, with special reference to their

treatment of His covenant people (3.1-16a,19). At the same time the Lord will pour out rich blessings upon Jerusalem, being “the hope of his people and the strength of the children of Israel” (3.16b-18,20-21).

And now we come to Psalm 67, one of so many scriptural prayers we can lift to “the Lord of hosts” in our asking and trusting: “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; [and] cause his face to shine upon us; Selah (that is, a pause for reflection before continuing). That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. [Then] shall the earth yield her increase; [and] God, [even] our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him” (Psalm 67).

Just note the features of this lovely Psalm-prayer! - mercy, blessing, favour; knowledge, health; praise, praise; gladness, singing, joy; judgment, governance; praise, praise; abundance, blessing, blessing, fear. This is one description, among all the others we are given in God’s Word, of the beautiful future that Almighty God our Creator has in store for His creation.

This future will come to pass under His gracious hand and in His own good time. It will come to pass through the Jews, still “the apple of His eye” (Deuteronomy 32.10 / Zechariah 2.8). It will come to pass supremely through Jesus of Nazareth, of the tribe of Judah, Son of David, Son of man, Son of God, Messiah and Christ, and Lord and Saviour of all who will believe and trust in Him (eg., Romans 10.9-13).

So in the midst of Covid-19, we can keep washing our hands, caring for one another, and praising “the Lord of hosts”, for in Christ, the best is yet to be!

© 2020 Faithful Sheep Ministries – www.fsmins.org