

THE WESLEYAN HERITAGE LIBRARY  
COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY ON  
HAGGAI

*by Adam Clarke.*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World

Wesleyan Heritage Publications

© 2002

# A COMMENTARY AND CRITICAL NOTES

ON THE

# HOLY BIBLE

## OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

DESIGNED AS A HELP TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING  
OF THE SACRED WRITINGS

**BY ADAM CLARKE, LL.D., F.S.A., &c.**

A NEW EDITION, WITH THE  
AUTHOR'S FINAL CORRECTIONS

**For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.—Rom. 15:4.**

Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments  
A derivative of Adam Clarke's Commentary for the Online Bible

produced by

Sulu D. Kelley  
1690 Old Harmony Dr.  
Concord, NC 28027-8031  
(704) 782-4377

© 1994, 1995, 1997

© 1997 Registered U.S. Copyright Office

## **THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET HAGGAI**

### *Chronological Notes relative to this book*

- Year from the Creation, according to Archbishop Usher, 3484.
- Year of the Julian Period, 4194.
- Year since the flood, 1828.
- Year from the vocation of Abram, 1301.
- Year since the first celebration of the Olympic games in Elis by the Idæi Dactyli, 934.
- Year since the foundation of the monarchy of the Israelites by the Divine appointment of Saul to the regal dignity, 576.
- Year from the foundation of the temple, 492.
- Year from the division of Solomon's monarchy into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, 456.
- Year since the re-establishment of the Olympic games at Elis by Lycurgus, Iphitus, and Cleosthenes, 365.
- Year since the conquest of Corœbus at Olympia, usually called the first Olympiad, 257.
- First year of the *sixty-fifth* Olympiad.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to the Varronian or generally received computation, 234.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Cato and the Fasti Consulares, 233.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Polybius the historian, 232.
- Year from the building of Rome, according to Fabius Pictor, 228.
- Year of the era of Nabonassar, 228.
- Year since the destruction of the kingdom of Israel by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, 202.
- Year since the destruction of the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, 68.
- Year since the destruction of the Chaldean empire by the Persians, 18.
- Year before the birth of Christ, 516.
- Year before the vulgar era of Christ's nativity, 520.

- Cycle of the Sun, 22.
- Cycle of the Moon, 14.
- Second year of Darius I., king of Persia.
- Twenty-eighth year of Amyntas, king of Macedon.
- Seventh year of Demaratus, king of Lacedæmon, of the family of the Proclidæ.
- Eleventh year of Cleomenes, king of Lacedæmon, of the family of the Eurysthenidæ.
- Fifteenth year of Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of the Romans.
- This was about twelve years before the abolition of the regal government of the Romans by the expulsion of the Tarquins.
- Confucius, the celebrated Chinese philosopher, is supposed to have flourished about this time.

## CHAPTER 1

*The prophet reproves the people, and particularly their ruler and high priest, for negligence and delay in rebuilding the temple; and tells them that their neglect was the cause of their having been visited with unfruitful seasons, and other marks of the Divine displeasure, 1-11. He encourages them to set about the work, and on their doing so, promises that God will be with them, 12-15.*

We know nothing of the parentage of *Haggai*. He was probably born in Babylon during the captivity, and appears to have been the first prophet sent to the Jews after their return to their own land. He was sent particularly to encourage the Jews to proceed with the building of the temple, which had been interrupted for about *fourteen* years. *Cyrus*, who had published an edict empowering the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their city and temple, revoked this edict in the second year of his reign, through the evil advice of his courtiers and other enemies of the Jews. After his death *Cambyses* renewed the prohibition, but after the death of *Cambyses*, *Darius*, the son of *Hystaspes*, renewed the *permission*; and *Haggai* was sent to encourage his countrymen to proceed with the work. *Darius* came to the throne about the year B.C. 521, and published his edict of permission for the Jews to rebuild the city and temple in the second year of his reign, which was the *sixteenth* of their return from Babylon.

## NOTES ON CHAP. 1

**Verse 1. In the sixth month]** Called *Elul* by the Hebrews. It was the *sixth* month of the ecclesiastical year, and the *last* of the *civil* year, and answered to a part of our *September*.

**Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel]** Who was son of *Jeconiah*, king of Judah, and of the family of David, and exercised the post of a governor *among* the people, but not *over* them, for both he and they were under the Persian government; but they were permitted to have *Zerubbabel* for their own governor, and *Joshua* for their high priest; and these regulated all matters relative to their peculiar political and ecclesiastical government. But it appears from Ezra, <sup><15708></sup>**Ezra 5:3**, that *Tatnai*, the governor on this side the river, had them under his cognizance. None of their own governors was absolute. The Persians permitted them to live under their own laws and civil regulations; but they always considered them as a colony, over which they had a continual superintendence.

**Joshua the son of Josedech]** And son of Seraiah, who was high priest in the time of Zedekiah, and was carried into captivity by Nebuchadnezzar, <sup><13615></sup>**1 Chronicles 6:15**. But Seraiah was slain at Riblah, by order of Nebuchadnezzar, <sup><122518></sup>**2 Kings 25:18-21**.

**Verse 2. The time is not come]** They thought that the *seventy years* spoken of by Jeremiah were not yet completed, and it would be useless to attempt to rebuild until that period had arrived. But Abp. *Usher* has shown that from the commencement of the last siege of Jerusalem unto this time, precisely *sixty-nine* years had been completed.

**Verse 4. Is it time for you]** If the *time be not come* to rebuild the *temple*, it cannot be come for you to *build yourselves comfortable houses*: but ye are rebuilding your houses; why then do ye not rebuild the house of the Lord? The foundation of the temple had been laid *fourteen* years before, and some considerable progress made in the building; and it had been *lying waste* in that unfinished state to the present time.

**Verse 5. Consider your ways]** Is it fit that you should be building yourselves *elegant houses*, and neglect a *place* for the *worship* of that God who has restored you from captivity?

**Verse 6. Ye have sown much]** God will not bless you in any labour of your hands, unless you rebuild his temple and restore his worship. This

verse contains a series of *proverbs*; no less than *five* in the compass of a few lines.

**Verse 8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood]** Go to Lebanon, and get timber. In the second year of the return from the captivity, they had procured cedar trees from Lebanon, and brought them to Joppa, and had hired masons and carpenters from the Tyrians and Sidonians; but that labour had been nearly lost by the long suspension of the building. <sup><15107></sup>**Ezra 3:7.**

**Verse 9. Ye looked for much]** Ye made great pretensions at first; but they are come to nothing. Ye did a little in the beginning; but so scantily and unwillingly that I could not but reject it.

**Ye run every man unto his own house.]** To rebuild and adorn it; and God's house is neglected!

**Verse 10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew]** It appears from the following verse that God had sent a drought upon the land, which threatened them with scarcity and famine.

**Verse 12. Then Zerubbabel]** The threatening of Haggai had its proper effect.—The civil governor, the high priest, and the whole of the people, united together to do the work. When the authority of God is acknowledged, his words will be carefully obeyed.

**Verse 13. Then spake Haggai]** He was the *Lord's messenger*, and he came with the *Lord's message*, and consequently he came with *authority*. He is called **hwhy Ēal m malach Yehovah, the angel of Jehovah**, just as the *pastors* of the seven Asiatic churches are called **ANGELS of the Churches**, <sup><1012></sup>**Revelation 1:20.**

**I am with you, saith the Lord.]** Here was high encouragement. What may not a man do when God is his helper?

**Verse 14. And the Lord stirred up the spirit]** It is not only necessary that the *judgment* should be enlightened, but the *soul* must be *invigorated* by the Spirit of God, before any good work can be effectually done.

**Verse 15. In the four and twentieth day]** Haggai received his commission on the *first* day of this month and by the *twenty-fourth* day he had so completely succeeded that he had the satisfaction to see the whole people engaged heartily in the Lord's work; they left their own houses to

build that of the Lord. Here was a *faithful reprov-er*, and he found *obedient ears*; and the Lord's work was done, for *the people had a mind to work*.

## HAGGAI

## CHAPTER 2

*When this prophecy was uttered, about four years before the temple was finished, and sixty-eight after the former one was destroyed, it appears that some old men among the Jews were greatly dispirited on account of its being so much inferior in magnificence to that of Solomon. Compare <sup><15B12></sup>**Ezra 3:12**. To raise the spirits of the people, and encourage them to proceed with the work, the prophet assures them that the glory of the second temple should be greater than that of the first, alluding perhaps to the glorious doctrines which should be preached in it by Jesus Christ and his apostles, 1-9. He then shows the people that the oblations brought by their priests could not sanctify them while they were unclean by their neglect of the temple; and to convince them that the difficult times they had experienced during that neglect proceeded from this cause, he promises fruitful seasons from that day forward, 10-19. The concluding verses contain a prediction of the mighty revolutions that should take place by the setting up of the kingdom of Christ under the type of Zerubbabel, 20-23. As the time which elapsed between the date of the prophecy and the dreadful concussion of nations is termed in <sup><31216></sup>**Haggai 2:6**, A LITTLE WHILE, the words may likewise have reference to some temporal revolutions then near, such as the commotions of Babylon in the reign of Darius, the Macedonian conquests in Persia, and the wars between the successors of Alexander; but the aspect of the prophecy is more directly to the amazing victories of the Romans, who, in the time of Haggai and Zechariah, were on the VERY EVE of their successful career, and in the lapse of a few centuries subjugated the whole habitable globe; and therefore, in a very good sense, God may be said by these people to have shaken “the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;” and thus to have prepared the way for the opening of the Gospel dispensation. See <sup><31225></sup>**Hebrews 12:25-29**. Others have referred this prophecy to the period of our Lord’s second advent, to which there is no doubt it is also applicable; and when it will be in the most signal manner fulfilled. That the convulsion of the nations introducing this most stupendous event will be very great and terrible, is sufficiently plain from Isaiah xxxiv., xxxv., as well as from many other passages of holy writ.*

## NOTES ON CHAP. 2

**Verse 1. In the seventh month]** This was a *new* message, and intended to prevent discouragement, and excite them to greater diligence in their work.

**Verse 3. Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?]** Who of you has seen the *temple* built by *Solomon*? The foundation of the



present house had been laid about *fifty-three* years after the destruction of the temple built by Solomon and though this prophecy was uttered *fifteen* years after the foundation of this second temple, yet there might still survive some of those who had seen the temple of Solomon.

Is it **not in your eyes**] Most certainly the Jews at this time had neither *men* nor *means* to make any such splendid building as that erected by Solomon. The *present* was as nothing when compared with the *former*.

**Verse 4. Yet now be strong]** Do not let this discourage you. The chief glory of the temple is not its splendid building, but my *presence*; and as I *covenanted to be with you* when ye came out of Egypt, so I will fulfil my covenant; for *my Spirit remaineth among you, fear not*; <sup><37015></sup>**Haggai 2:5**. What is the most splendid cathedral, if God be not in it, influencing all by his presence and Spirit? But he will not be in it unless there be a messenger of the Lord there, and unless he deliver the Lord's message.

**Verse 6. Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens]** When the law was given on Mount Sinai, there was an earthquake that shook the whole mountain, <sup><121918></sup>**Exodus 19:18**. "The political or religious revolutions which were to be effected in the world, or both, are here," says Abp. *Newcome*, "referred to; compare <sup><37021></sup>**Haggai 2:21, 22**; <sup><41219></sup>**Matthew 24:29**; <sup><81226></sup>**Hebrews 12:26-28**. The political ones began in the overthrow of the Persian monarchy by Alexander, within two centuries after this prediction; and if the Messiah's kingdom be meant, which is my opinion, this was erected in somewhat more than five centuries after the second year of Darius; a short period of time when compared with that which elapsed from the creation to the giving of the law, or from the giving of the law to the coming of the Messiah's kingdom. It must be understood that the word **tj a achath, once**, has a clear sense, if understood of the *evangelical age*; for *many* political revolutions succeeded, as the conquest of Darius Codomanus, and the various fortunes of Alexander's successors; but only one great and final *religious revolution*."—*Newcome*.

**Verse 7. And the Desire of all nations shall come]** The present Hebrew text is as follows: **μywgħ l k tdmj wabw**. This is a difficult place if understood of a *person*: but **tdmj chemdath, desire**, cannot well agree with **wab bau, they shall come**. It is true that some learned men suppose that **twdmj chemdoth, desirable things**, may have been the original

reading: but this is supported by no MS., nor is **wab** found in the *singular* number in any. It is generally understood of the *desirable* or *valuable things* which the different nations should bring into the temple; and it is certain that many rich presents were brought into this temple. All are puzzled with it. But the principal difficulty lies in the verb **wabw ubau**, *they shall come*. If we found **tdmj habw ubaa chemdath** in the singular, then it would read as in our text, *And the Desire of all nations shall come*: but no such reading appears in any MS.; nor is it *fairly* acknowledged, except by the *Vulgate*, which reads, *Et veniet desideratus cunctis gentibus*, “And that which is desired,” or the desired Person, “shall come to all nations.” In <sup><3017></sup>**Haggai 2:7** God says *he will shake* or stir up *all nations*; that these nations shall *bring their desirable things*; that the house shall be *filled with God’s glory*; that the *silver* and *gold*, which these nations are represented as bringing by way of gifts, are *the Lord’s*; and that the glory of this latter house shall exceed the former. Bp. *Chandler* labours to vindicate the present translation; but he makes rash assertions, and is abandoned by the Hebrew text. The **ab ba**, *to come*, is often used in the sense of *bring*, and that **tdmj chemdath**, *desire*, may be considered as the *plural* for **twdmj**, having the point *holem* instead of the **w vau**, and thus mean *desirable things*, will not be denied by those who are acquainted with the genius and construction of the Hebrew language. Bp. *Chandler* thinks that **ab**, *he came*, cannot be used of *things*, but of *persons* only. Here he is widely mistaken, for it is used of *days* perpetually; and of the *ark*, <sup><1013></sup>**2 Samuel 6:9**; and of *mounts coming* against Jerusalem, <sup><3324></sup>**Jeremiah 32:24**; and of *trees coming* to adorn the temple, <sup><2313></sup>**Isaiah 60:13**; and of *silver* and *gold coming* into the temple, <sup><01519></sup>**Joshua 6:19**; and <sup><2151></sup>**Jeremiah 6:20**, Why doth *incense come* to me? See Abp. *Secker’s* notes. I cannot see how the words can apply to Jesus Christ, even if the construction were less embarrassed than it is; because I cannot see how he could be called THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS. The whole seems to be a metaphorical description of the *Church of Christ*, and of his filling it with all the excellences of the Gentile world, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in.

**Verse 9.** And in this place will I give peace] **µwl v shalom** a *peace-offering*, as well as *peace* itself; or *Jesus Christ*, who is called the *Prince of peace*, through whom *peace* is proclaimed between God and man, between man and his fellows; and through whom *peace* is established

in the *disconsolate soul*. And at this temple this *peace* was first promulgated and proclaimed.

But it is said that *the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former*. Now this cannot be said because Jesus Christ made his *personal* appearance in that temple, or rather in that built by Herod; for, though we allow that Jesus Christ is *equal* with God, we do not grant that he is *greater*. Now the *first temple* was the *dwelling-place of God*: here he manifested his glory between the cherubim, and it was his *constant residence* for more than *four hundred years*. But the *glory of this latter house was greater* because under it the grand scheme of human salvation was exhibited, and the redemption price paid down for a lost world. As all probably applies to the *Christian Church*, the *real house of God*, its glory was most certainly *greater* than any glory which was ever possessed by that of the Jews. See on <sup><37022></sup>**Haggai 2:22, 23**.

**Verse 10. In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month]** Three months after they had begun to rebuild the temple, Haggai is ordered to go and put *two questions* to the priests. 1. If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and he touch any thing with his skirt, is that thing made holy? The priests answered, No! <sup><37012></sup>**Haggai 2:12**. 2. If one has touched a *dead body*, and thereby become unclean, does he communicate his uncleanness to whatever he may *touch*? And the priests answered, YES! <sup><37013></sup>**Haggai 2:13**.

**Verse 14. Then answered Haggai—So is this people]** As an *unclean* man communicates his uncleanness to every thing he touches, so are ye unclean; and whatever ye have hitherto done is polluted in the sight of God. For your neglect of my temple has made you unclean, as if you had contracted legal pollution by touching a dead body.

**Verse 16. Since those days were]** I have shown my displeasure against you, by sending *blasting* and *mildew*; and so poor have been your *crops* that a heap of corn which should have produced *twenty measures* produced only *ten*; and that quantity of *grapes* which in other years would have produced *fifty measures*, through their poverty, smallness, &c., produced only *twenty*. And this has been the case ever since the *first stone was laid in this temple*; for your hearts were not right with me, and therefore I blasted you in all the labours of your hands; and *yet ye have not turned to me*, <sup><37017></sup>**Haggai 2:17**.

**Verse 18. Consider now from this day]** I will now change my conduct towards you: *from, this day* that ye have begun heartily to rebuild my temple, and restore my worship, *I will bless you*. Whatever you *sow*, whatever you *plant*, shall be blessed; your land shall be fruitful, and ye shall have abundant crops of all sorts.

**Verse 20. Again the word of the Lord came]** This was a *second* communication in the same day.

**Verse 21. I will shake the heavens and the earth]** *Calmet* supposes that the invasion of *Cambyses*, and his death, are what the prophet has in view by this *shaking of the heavens and the earth*: but this invasion and defeat happened *three years before* they had begun to work at the temple; and how could it be made a matter of *interest* to *Zerubbabel*? *Calmet* answers this, by translating the words in the *past tense*; and shows that the fact was recalled to *Zerubbabel*'s attention, to fix his confidence in God, &c. Bp. *Newcome* says we may well understand this and the *twenty-second* verse {<sup><3122></sup>**Haggai 2:22**} of the calamity undergone by *Babylon* in the reign of *Darius*; of the *Macedonian* conquests in *Persia*; and of the wars which the successors of *Alexander* waged against each other: others understand it of the *Romans*.

**Verse 23. In that day, saith the Lord]** Some think, says this same learned writer, that *Zerubbabel* is put here for his *people* and *posterity*: but it may well be said that the commotions foretold began in the rebellion of *Babylon*, which *Darius* besieged and took; and exercised great cruelties upon its inhabitants.—*Herod.* lib. iii., sec. 220. *Justin.* i. 10. *Prideaux* places this event in the *fifth* year of *Darius*; others with more probability, in the *eighth* year. Compare <sup><3119></sup>**Zechariah 2:9**.

**And will make thee as a signet]** I will exalt thee to high dignity, power, and trust, of which the *seal* was the instrument or sign in those days. Thou shalt be under my peculiar care, and shalt be to me very precious. See <sup><3224></sup>**Jeremiah 22:24**; Cant. <sup><3186></sup>**Song of Solomon 8:6**; and see the notes on these two places.

**For I have chosen thee]** He had an important and difficult work to do, and it was necessary that he should be assured of God's especial care and protection during the whole.

ON the *three* last verses of this prophecy a sensible and pious correspondent sends me the following illustration, which I cheerfully insert. Though in many respects different from that given above, yet I believe that the kingdom of Christ is particularly designed in this prophecy.

“I think there is an apparent difficulty in this passage, because the wars of the Persians and Babylonians were not so interesting to the rising commonwealth of the Jews as many subsequent events of *less* note in the world, but which were more directly levelled at their own national prosperity; and yet neither the one nor the other could be termed ‘a shaking of the heavens and the earth, and an overthrow of the throne of kingdoms.’

“I know not if the following view may be admitted as an explanation of this difficult passage. I take ‘the shaking of the heavens and earth’ here (as in <sup><3716></sup>**Haggai 2:6**) to have a more distant and comprehensive meaning than can belong to Zerubbabel’s time, or to his immediate posterity; and that it extends not only to the overthrow of kingdoms *then* existing, but of the future great monarchies of the world; and not excepting even the civil and ecclesiastical establishments of the Jews themselves. For I take ‘the heavens,’ in the prophetic language, uniformly to denote the true Church, and never the superstitions and idols of the nations.

“What, then, are we to understand by the promise made to Zerubbabel, ‘I will make thee as a signet?’ In the first place, the *restitution* of the religious and civil polity of the people of Israel, conformably to the promises afterwards given in the *four* first chapters of Zechariah. And, secondly, as the royal signet is the instrument by which kings give validity to laws, and thereby unity and consistence to their empire; so Jehovah, the God and King of Israel, condescends to promise he will employ *Zerubbabel* as his instrument of gathering and uniting the people again as a distinguished nation; and that such should be the *permanency* of their political existence, that, whilst other nations and mighty empires should be overthrown, and their very *name* blotted out under heaven, the Jews should ever remain a distinct people, even in the wreck of their own government, and the loss of all which rendered their religion splendid and attractive.

“In confirmation of this interpretation, I would refer to the threatening denounced against Jeconiah, (called Coniah, <sup><4224></sup>**Jeremiah 22:24**,) the *last* reigning king of Judah, and the progenitor of Zerubbabel. I apprehend I may be authorized to read <sup><4224></sup>**Jeremiah 22:24** *thus*: ‘As I live, saith the

Lord, though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, *be the signet* upon my right hand, yet will I pluck thee thence, and I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life,' &c.

“If it be considered that the kings of Judah were in an *especial* and peculiar manner the delegates of Jehovah, governing in his name and by his authority, a peculiar propriety will appear in their being resembled to *signets*, or royal seals contained in rings. Compare ~~<0144>~~ **Genesis 41:42**; ~~<07810>~~ **Esther 3:10, 12; 8:2, 8**; ~~<27067>~~ **Daniel 6:7**. And the promise to Zerubbabel will be equivalent to those which clearly predict the preservation of the Jewish people by the Divine command. see ~~<8014>~~ **Zechariah 2:4-13**; and the faithfulness of God to his covenant concerning the Messiah, who should be born of the seed of Abraham, and in the family of David, of whose throne he was the rightful Proprietor.

“According to this view, by the promise, ‘In that day;—I will make thee as a signet,’ &c., must be understood, that the preservation of the Jews as a distinct people, *when all the great empires of the heathen were overthrown*, would *manifest* the honour now conferred on Zerubbabel as *the instrument of their restoration* after the Babylonish captivity. Thus the promise to Abraham, ~~<0112>~~ **Genesis 12:2, 3**, ‘I will make of thee a great nation—and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed,’ evidently referred to a very distant future period and the honour connected with it could not be enjoyed by Abraham during his mortal life.”

*M. A. B.*

I think, however, that we have lived to see the spirit of this prophecy fulfilled. The earth *has been* shaken; another shaking, and time shall be swallowed up in eternity.