



+ **YOU**

Sermon Series: Irrefutable: Prophecies that Point Us to Jesus

To be used with: Session 3: The Savior Who Came to Us

Sermon Title Possibilities: Your Best Life Ahead

Scripture: Haggai 2:1-9

Connection with Unit Theme: To complement the small group study *Irrefutable: Prophecies that Point Us to Jesus*, these sermon outlines will follow the same theme as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The Point: Jesus came for our salvation.

Introduction: Both of my parents grew up on farms during the Great Depression, and they would have been the first to tell you that the “good old days” weren’t always so good. My Dad’s in heaven now, but my Mom is still alive, and she often talks about those days. Her parents were sharecroppers, and the houses where they lived were often run down. Mom shared a room with her older sister, and in the winter they would sometimes wake up in the morning with snow on their quilt. It had come in through the cracks in the wall. My Dad’s parents were somewhat better off than Mom’s because they had their own farm, but life still wasn’t easy. They didn’t have all those conveniences that we take for granted today, such as electricity and running water. They used firewood for heat, and they didn’t know what air-conditioning was. When I was growing up, my siblings and I learned very quickly not to grumble about what we didn’t have, because our parents would immediately start in with the “you don’t know how good you’ve got it” speech.

The people of Israel were longing for the “good old days”. Some seventy years before, the city of Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Babylonians, and the beautiful temple that was built by King Solomon now lay in ruins. Many of the people had returned to Jerusalem and laid a foundation for a new temple, but due to political problems in the Persian Empire, work on the temple had ceased. By the time the prophet Haggai wrote these words, the people were about ready to give up. Even if they built a new temple, how could it possibly match the glory of the one built by Solomon? Haggai urged them not to lose heart. When all was said and done, this new temple would be even better than the old one. It would have a special visitor: the Messiah.

I. A frustrating predicament.

A. The Israelites had returned to their homeland.

1. After the Babylonian Empire was defeated by the Medo-Persian Empire, the Persian king Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Israel.
 - a. When they arrived, they found their city in ruins.
 - b. They set to work on building a temple.
 - c. When the foundation was laid, many of the older men wept because they remembered Solomon’s temple (Ezra 3:12).

2. Just a few years later, work on the temple ground to a halt.
 - a. After King Cyrus was killed in battle, Israel's enemies spread rumors that the Israelites were plotting a rebellion.
 - b. When the rumors reached the new Persian king, he ordered all work on the temple to halt.
- B. The people were so focused on their circumstances that they had gotten their eyes off God.
 1. Some were living in the past.
 - a. They didn't believe any new temple could possibly compare with the one that had been destroyed.
 - b. Memories are fine, but we must not let them control us.
 - I've often commented that many churches these days have a bad case of the "usetas". You hear them say things like, "Our church useta be full ever Sunday." Or, "We don't have many kids now, but we useta have a bunch of them." Instead of focusing on how your church "useta" be, why not focus on what it *could* be?
 2. Others were overwhelmed by the difficulties.
 - a. If the Persian government was against them, what could they do?
 - b. God is bigger than any of our adversaries, including the government.
 - What should Christians do when the government gets in the way of doing the Lord's work? At the very least, we should carry the matter before the Lord and seek His guidance. I'm not promoting rebellion against the government; I'm simply saying God has His ways of overruling the government.

II. A faithful promise.

- A. God gave the people a very simple promise: "I am with you."
 1. He was with them even when they were under judgment.
 - a. God had predicted their captivity in Babylon.
 - b. He knew King Cyrus would allow them to return home before Cyrus was even born (Isaiah 45:1).
 2. Do we still believe God is with us?
 - I love what Adrian Rogers used to say about David and Goliath. Others said, "Look how big he is!" David said, "Look how small he is next to God." Others said, "He's too big to hit." David said, "He's too big to miss." It's not that David made light of Goliath's size or strength. He just knew God was bigger!
- B. He reminded them of His past promise to them.
 1. God had to remind them of this promise often, because they often forgot.
 - a. They forgot while they were traveling through the wilderness.
 - b. After they were settled in the Promised Land, they grew so arrogant that they didn't think they even needed God.
 2. Do we believe God's promises are true?
 - a. We often criticize people who deny the biblical miracles, but a more important question is, do we believe they happened?
 - b. The same God who brought Israel out of Egypt is with us today, and His power has not diminished one bit.

III. A fascinating prediction.

- A. God promised they would rebuild the temple, but He gave them another promise that was much more important.
 - 1. He said He would “shake heaven and earth”.
 - a. God meant He was going to do something bigger than the world had ever seen before, or ever would see again.
 - b. “Desire of all nations” – Some believe this refers to the Messiah, but the context suggests otherwise. More likely, God was saying by the time He was finished, all nations would bring their wealth to Israel.
 - 2. He would fill this new temple with His glory.
 - a. Before Solomon’s temple was destroyed, God withdrew His glory from it (Ezekiel 10:18-19).
 - b. He promised He would restore His glory to this new temple.
- B. He said the new temple would be even greater than Solomon’s.
 - 1. Some believe God was speaking of the expansion of the temple that took place during the reign of Herod the Great.
 - a. The expansion continued long after Herod’s death, and it was finally completed in A.D. 66. It was destroyed four years later.
 - b. It was very short-lived!
 - 2. More likely, God was speaking of the coming Messiah.
 - a. The “desire of all nations” does not refer to the Messiah, but the larger context does.
 - b. Through Jesus, God revealed Himself in a way that He had before.

Conclusion: One of the prominent TV preachers talks about having “your best life now”. One of my former school teachers used to say, “Life isn’t always fair. Get used to it.” Alas, he was right. Life in this world is not always fair. People will lie to you and cheat you. You’ll face situations that are beyond your control. Many people struggle with health issues and disease and a whole host of other things. If this is our best life now, then I say we’re getting a raw deal. Aren’t you glad that God has prepared a better place for us? Friends, that’s exactly why our Lord Jesus came into this world. He died on the cross and paid the penalty for your sins so you could be forgiven, and so you could go to heaven when you die. You’ll still have problems and struggles in this world, but you can rest assured that better days are coming. He has prepared an eternal home for us where there is no sickness, sorrow, pain, or injustice. Through faith and trust in Jesus, you can have your best life ahead.

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