

DECEMBER 29, 2019 28TH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PROPHET HAGGAI



On the Eastern Orthodox liturgical calendar, **Haggai** is commemorated as a saint and prophet.

Haggai was a Hebrew prophet during the building of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, and one of the twelve minor prophets in the Hebrew Bible and the author of the Book of Haggai. He is known for his prophecy in 520 BCE, commanding the Jews to rebuild the Temple. His name means "my holiday." He was the first of three post-exile prophets from the Neo-Babylonian Exile of the House

of Judah (with Zechariah, his contemporary, and Malachi, who lived about one hundred years later), who belonged to the period of Jewish history which began after the return from captivity in Babylon.

Scarcely anything is known of his personal history. He may have been one of the captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. He began God's prophesy about sixteen years after the return of the Jews to Judah (ca. 520 BCE). The work of rebuilding the temple had been put to a stop through the intrigues of the Samaritans. After having been suspended for eighteen years, the work was resumed through the efforts of Haggai and Zechariah. They exhorted the people, which roused them from their lethargy, and induced them to take advantage of a change in the policy of the Persian government under Darius I.

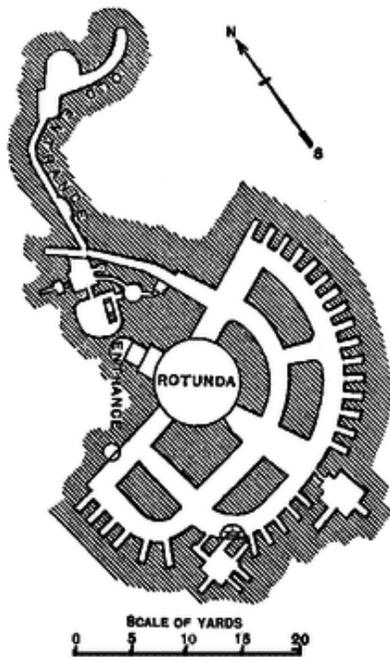
Haggai prophesied in 520 BCE Jerusalem, about the people needing to complete building the Temple. The new Temple was bound to exceed the awesomeness of the previous Temple. He claimed if the Temple was not built there would be poverty, famine and drought affecting the Jewish nation.



The **Second Temple** was the Jewish holy temple which stood on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem during the Second Temple period, between 516 BCE and 70 CE. It replaced Solomon's Temple (the First Temple), which was destroyed by the Neo-Babylonian Empire in 586 BCE, when Jerusalem was conquered and part of the population of the Kingdom of Judah was taken into exile to Babylon. Much as the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple, the Romans destroyed the Second Temple and Jerusalem in 70 CE as retaliation for an ongoing Jewish revolt.

On August 29* of the second year of King Darius's reign, the LORD gave a message through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Jeshua* son of Jehozadak, the high priest. ² "This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says: The people are saying, 'The time has not yet come to rebuild the house of the LORD.' "

³ Then the LORD sent this message through the prophet Haggai: ⁴ "Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins? ⁵ This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says: Look at what's happening to you! ⁶ You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes! ⁷ "This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says: Look at what's happening to you! ⁸ Now go up into the hills, bring down timber, and rebuild my house. Then I will take pleasure in it and be honored, says the LORD.



The site has been venerated by the Jews since medieval times, and they often visited the site. In 1882, Archimandrite Antonine (Kapustin) acquired the location for the Russian Orthodox Church. He planned to build a church at the site, which aroused strong protests by the Jews who visited and worshipped at the cave. The Ottoman courts ruled in 1890 that the transaction was binding but the Russians agreed not to display Christian symbols or icons at the site which was to remain accessible for people of all faiths.

The Tomb of the Prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi is an ancient burial site located on the upper western slope of the Mount of Olives, Jerusalem. According to a medieval Jewish tradition also adopted by Christians, the catacomb is believed to be the burial place of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the last three Hebrew Bible prophets who are believed to have lived during the 6th-5th centuries BC. Archaeologists have dated the three earliest burial chambers to the 1st century BC, thus contradicting the tradition.

EPISTLE

Colossians 3:4-11

⁴ When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

⁵ Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, ⁷ in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

⁸ But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, ¹⁰ and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, ¹¹ where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all.

Commentary: COLOSSIANS: THE SURVIVAL OF CHRISTIANITY IN COLOSSE

The budding congregation of Christians in the city of Colosse (in today's Turkey) was threatened by the temptation to relapse to paganism. It was a belief in angels which called forth Paul's epistle. St. Paul steps in by writing this letter to warn them against apostasy, as well as other philosophies (such as Judaistic ceremonialism, angel worship, and an improperly harsh form of asceticism). The singular message St. Paul wanted to impress upon them was: Christ is the fullness of God and is the all-sufficient Savior.

GOSPEL

Luke 14: 16-24

¹⁶ Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, ¹⁷ and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'

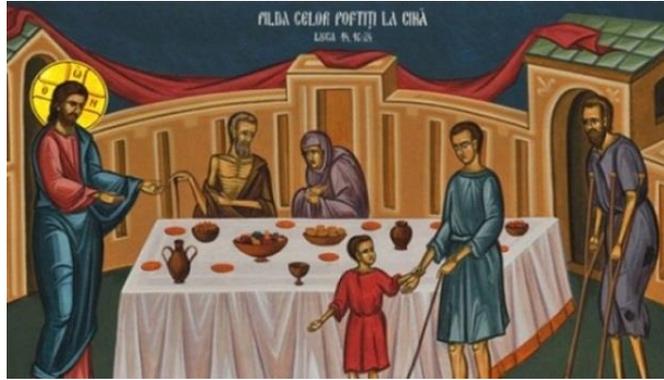
¹⁸ But they all with one *accord* began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'

¹⁹ And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' ²⁰ Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

²¹ So that servant came and reported these things to his master.

Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here *the* poor and *the* [la](#)maimed and *the* lame and *the* blind.'

²² And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' ²³ Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel *them* to come in, that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' "



Commentary on Luke 14: 16-24 by Fr Anthony M. Coniaris

The master of the feast made doubly sure that the guests received the invitations. He issued two invitations to each: the first was to tell each one that he was invited; the second, on the day of the dinner, to announce that all was ready: "Come; for all is now ready. "

"Come!" The Gospel is not so much a command as an offer; not so much a demand as a gift - an invitation to share in the unbelievable joy of the kingdom. "Come!" God is expecting you! He is ready for the poor, the maimed, the blind, the lame. He is ready for those who have spent their lives in the highways and byways of life. He invites all: "Come; for all is now ready."

When Jesus says, "Come," He does not stand on the top rung of a long, high ladder in heaven to signal us to start climbing. For He Himself has climbed down the ladder to stand at our very elbows. He has come to us. Far from being accepted, this gracious invitation was rejected. We miss the banquet, the abundant life of Christ, and settle for the lesser, and the fleeting. And Jesus still laments, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not " (Matt 23 37).

"Come, for all is now ready. " "But," you object, "I am not worthy to come. My clothes are not suitable. I wouldn't know how to act in the Master's palace." None of this makes any difference. The invitation goes out to all. The good news is that you don't have to be perfect to come. Come as you are - with all of your sins and sorrows, weaknesses and failures, problems and anxieties. Come to the only One who can forgive you and heal you. Come to the only One who can make you worthy.

"Come, for all is now ready. " Coming to Jesus is a way of life. It begins with baptism. It involves daily commitment, repentance, obedience, worship, prayer, Bible reading, and regular communion. It involves a daily walk with Jesus. It involves not only "Come!" but also "Go!" "Go out into the world and be my disciples. Be servants. Be lights. Be salt."

None of us will ever know the wonder of the brightly lighted banquet hall, the goodness of the food, and the joy of being a part of this amazing fellowship unless we lay aside the excuses and dare to accept the invitation.

Lord, I'm coming. No excuses. No alibis. I know I'm not worthy. Without You, I have lived as if I were blind and lame. I come hungry and thirsty. I come to be fed. Amen. *.orthodoxchristian.info*