

## WHAT'S LIFE ABOUT?

### INTRODUCTION

It's months since this virus crisis began. We have been through the initial shock caused by radical change. People now wear face masks everywhere, sanitise everything and avoid close contact with each other. Some people speak about a "new normal".

While things are not as they were, there seems to be an acceptance of this new reality. People say that things like hugging and kissing are a thing of the past. We speak a new language including words like "distancing", "sheltering", "sanitizing" and we understand things about this virus such as "surge", "infection rate", "recovery rate", "mortality rate" and "co-morbidities".

Our society has new rules about how often we can see each other, having to get permission to do certain activities and there is even an evening curfew.

Life has become about these things which necessary for our protection and survival. But... as we settle into this so called "new normal", alarm bells should be ringing. This morning I want to focus on the reality that this virus and its consequences are not from God. I also want to encourage us to redirect our attention to what life is really about.

### MESSAGE

#### IS THIS JUDGEMENT FROM GOD?

I don't believe so. Let us have a look at this virus and why I say it's not from God.

1. In the Old Testament there are accounts of God allowing His people to be conquered and carried off into captivity because they kept turning to idol worship and other sinful behaviour. But, in the Old Testament, the people had not yet had Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross for their sins. We live under the New Covenant set in place by Jesus blood shed for us on Calvary and are already forgiven. We are living under grace and not the Law and because of that, I believe that the blood of Jesus protects us from God's judgement.
2. **John 10:10** (NKJV) The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.
  - This virus has all the attributes of the thief – it kills our loved ones, steals our livelihood and destroys our fellowship with family, friends and other believers.
  - Jesus came to give life in abundance, the very opposite.

3. **Genesis 2:7** (NKJV) And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
  - This virus robs people of the breath that God gave man when He created us – it opposes God’s very life-giving power in us.
4. **Hebrews 10:25** (NKJV) not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.
  - We have not willingly stopped assembling ourselves together, but we have been forced to do so for everyone’s safety because of the virus.
5. **Hebrews 6:1-2** (NKJV) Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.
  - Here we see that because of the virus we cannot carry out two of the very foundations of our Christian doctrine – baptisms and the laying on of hands.
6. Families are also under attack because of separation rules in place. Its ok to eat with a person in a restaurant, but your family cannot visit with you in your home.

I believe that these Bible-based points prove that the corona virus crisis that we are dealing with right now is not from God, nor is He allowing it as a result of His divine judgement.

### **WHAT’S YOUR LIFE ABOUT RIGHT NOW?**

So what’s your life about right now? Most employed people, are back at work. In some cases, people have “repurposed” themselves. There seems to be a settling in and acceptance of this new reality we are living in. We were like exiles in the initial lockdown and now that it’s over many are hard at work rebuilding what was lost as a result of lockdown through retrenchment, reduced salaries and so on.

We are like the people of Judah when they came out of exile in Babylon. They got busy rebuilding their ravaged lives. They were focused on repairing their homes, restoring their livelihood and wealth, but they neglected rebuilding God’s temple and God spoke to them through the prophet Haggai.

**Haggai 1:1-5** (NKJV) In the second year of King Darius, in the sixth month, on the first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua

the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, 2 "Thus speaks the Lord of hosts, saying: 'This people says, "The time has not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built." ' " 3 Then the word of the Lord came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" 5 Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways!

- To the people of Judah, life had become about rebuilding their own lives – they had already been focusing on this luxury for 16 years!
- In their apathy they said – "it's not time for the things of God right now".
- And God said to them, "consider your ways!".

***Possibly the same thing is happening with the church today. In the effort to recover from the lockdown losses and restore the personal damage suffered during this pandemic, people may have grown cold in their commitment to the Lord.***

***We need to consider our ways today. What is OUR life about right now? Where is OUR focus right now? Where do our priorities lie?***

**Life is all about priorities, and priorities have consequences.**

**Haggai 1:1-5** (NKJV) "You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes." 7 Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! 8 Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified," says the Lord.

The consequences of putting themselves first were devastating:

- Their efforts to provide were producing little fruit.
- They lacked, not having enough food, drink and clothing.
- The money they did have, didn't seem to be enough, it seemed like their bank account remained empty regardless of their efforts!

God said, "rebuild the temple, prioritise My things so that I can take pleasure and be glorified".

As Christians, we ourselves are the temple of the Holy Spirit. It's our spiritual life that requires attention, not a building! We need to consider whether we have been focusing too much on the needs, pleasures and wants of our flesh at the expense of looking after our spiritual wellbeing and our relationship with Jesus.

***Have you possibly felt that the devourer is at work? Are unexpected expenses possibly eating up your hard-earned money that you so desperately need to meet your basic needs at this time? This could be the result of neglecting your relationship with the Lord as a result of this virus crisis.***

## WILL WE HONOUR GOD?

**Haggai 1:1-5** (NKJV) Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him; and the people feared the presence of the Lord. 13 Then Haggai, the Lord's messenger, spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, "I am with you, says the Lord."

How simple is this? The people realised their error and obeyed God. Immediately God gave another word, "I am with you, says the Lord."

***If we are willing to obey what the Lord is telling us this morning, we will have His presence and help with us too! Things will change!***

## THE LATTER GLORY

**Haggai 2:3-4** (NKJV) 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? In comparison with it, is this not in your eyes as nothing? 4 Yet now be strong, Zerubbabel,' says the Lord; 'and be strong, Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land,' says the Lord, 'and work; for I am with you,' says the Lord of hosts.

God addressed the leaders, the priests and the people individually. He is speaking to us again today. It may seem that the damage caused by this crisis and any other challenges we face is so severe that we will never recover. Things may never be the same again. The people of Judah felt like that. They had come out of exile and were completing the restoration of the temple, but it didn't have the splendor of the original. This disheartened the people massively. But God said to them "be strong, for I am with you".

Today God says to us, "Put me first again and be strong, for I am with you!"  
**Declare it:** "I will be strong and because my God is with me. I put Him first!".

**Haggai 2:6-9** (NKJV) "For thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory,' says the Lord of hosts. 8 'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts. 9 'The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts. 'And in this place I will give peace,' says the Lord of hosts.

God is the Glory of the temple, not the silver and gold and furnishings. We may feel like things will never be the same, but God said, "the latter shall be greater than the former".

- You may have suffered financial damage, but the silver and gold belong to God, He is able to restore.
- We are not of this world's economy, we are of God's economy!

- We may not be able to see how things can come right, but with God things can be even better than before!
- Think of Job, he lost everything, but in the end, God gave him double back!
- Don't accept the world's conditioning that things will never be the same!

***Are you willing to trust Him to bring a restoration that will grant more peace, more grace and more of His presence than before? Ask Him for it today! But be willing to put God first!***

## **A SIGNET RING**

**Haggai 2:23** (NKJV) 'In that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,' says the Lord, 'and will make you like a signet ring; for I have chosen you,' says the Lord of hosts."

- A signet ring was a symbol or mark of delegated authority and it was an honour to wear it.
- Our signet ring is the Holy Spirit. God has invested His confidence, His power and His authority in us by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit!
- Not only is God able to restore us to a greater glory, but He has given us authority to display His glory. People around us will see that something is different, we are coping better, we are well provided for, we are healthy and well. His presence and work in us will be so undeniable that we will bring Glory to our heavenly Father.
- For He has chosen us! Say it, "My God has chosen me!"

## **CONCLUSION**

The book of Haggai is about seeking God first.

- Life is about what is important, and we need to return to what's important.
- When we put ourselves first we will always be lacking but when we put God first, we will have an abundance for every good work: 2 **Corinthians 9:8** (NKJV) And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.
- God's kingdom economy is not the same as the world's. To access His gold and silver, we need to focus on building His temple, not our flesh.
- If we can take our eyes off this crisis and re-focus on God, and put Him first, we will experience a latter glory that far outshines anything we've know thus far.

David Pawson's book, "Unlocking the Bible" gives the answer to the question, "What's life about?" *"Life is not about staying alive or making a living, but about living right and living for God."* Let us choose from this moment on, to live for God.