

RATHMINES BIBLE SCHOOL - 1962  
(Magnetic Island)

HAGGAI

Speaker: Bro. HP Mansfield

Class # 1

My dear brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus.

Up to date, we've been swallowed by a fish, we have been dragged through the wilderness and now again, we're going to learn how to build a temple, because that's what the book

of Haggai is about. I want to first of all this morning, present the background of this book. To that end I direct you to 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Ezra. In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Ezra, and in verses 1 and 2, we have the various characters that will be brought to our mind as we study closely the prophecy of Haggai. In Ezra 5 verses 1 and 2, we read, 'The prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadek, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.'

Now in those 2 verses from Ezra 5 verses 1 and 2, we have the background of the prophecy of Haggai, and it speaks of how the 2 prophets stood up in the midst of Israel, and how they stirred up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadek and they began to build the house of God which was at Jerusalem. We have that wonderful picture of these leaders of Israel, the leader with the priest and the prophet, all combined to help to build the temple at Jerusalem. In this narrative there is presented to us, one of the most stirring and interesting incidents in Israel's history. An incident that reveals the hand of Yahweh moving among His people, and shows what faith can do, when harnessed with time and resolution. As we come to study the prophecy of Haggai, I want to make a personal message of this because I feel as it has been stressed in previous sessions, that the truth that we have espoused is a living truth. It is the means that God has resigned to change the character of His people, and truth is useless to us unless it makes some reaction in our lives; unless the power of this book is reflected in our life, then our search is in vain. We were reminded of that by our presiding brother yesterday morning, when he said we carry the banner 'Christadelphians', but what doth it testify to the world about us? and therefore, we want to make a personal matter of the prophet Haggai, as we study it.

We often speak of the regathering under Ezra and Nehemiah, but actually Ezra was something like 63 years after the first return of exiles from Babylon, and why is there something like 42,000 Jews returned under Zerubbabel in the year 536 BC; less than 2,000 returned under Ezra in the year 457 BC. Now those facts are generally understood mistakenly being gathered under Ezra and Nehemiah, but later in that 5<sup>th</sup>

chapter of Ezra and verse 2, the word 'Zerubbabel', he was the leader who led them out of Babylon, and he brought with him something like 42,000 Israelites. Ezra was some 63 years later, he called something like 2,000 Israelites with him. The work of Nehemiah commenced something like 30 years after Ezra.

Now the story really begins in the year 606 BC. Israel was overthrown by Nebuchadnezzar. The captives were taken to Babylon the city of Nebuchadnezzar, and Jeremiah the prophet predicted that they would be there 70 years; God was disciplining His people. This discipline they found was valuable to them; it humbled them before the hand of Almighty

God, they became humbled by verses, and they learnt them to appreciate the privileges that God had set before them, and that's something that we must learn also, b&s. We don't live in a humble age, we live in a time of material well-being, we live in an age where it is nothing for you to fly from Adelaide to Townsville and back again. We live in an age where we have everything that flesh could desire, but we're not disciplined thereby. The Jews when they went forth to the city of Babylon, they learned under the stern discipline of Almighty God the privileges that they experienced in better times in Israel. Thus we have the words of Psalm 137 which speaks of the reaction of those Jews when they were in Babylon and when they were in dispersion and how that they they wept under the willows in the city of Babylon. So we read in Psalm 137, 'By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down; we wept when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there those who carried us away captive, required of us a song; and they that wasted us, required mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion'. And the Jews answered, 'How shall we sing Yahweh's songs in a strange land. IF I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember O Yahweh the children of Edom' etc.

They called upon them to sing a song in the land of their captivity, sing us one of the songs of Zion! but how can we sing the songs of Zion, how can we sing Yahweh's songs in a strange land? They were there for 70 years and then in the year 536 BC. 70 years after the captivity under Nebuchadnezzar, relief came; the power of Babylon fell, Persia took its place, and Cyrus invited the Jews to return back to their homes. They could hardly believe their eyes when they heard the decree of Cyrus calling on them to return to the land of their fathers. They could hardly believe the news, and again, we capture in Psalm 126 verses 1 and 2, their feelings of joy when they heard this news! 'When Yahweh turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, Yahweh hath done great things for us'. So they were like men who dreamed, they couldn't understand, couldn't believe what they heard when the decree of Cyrus went forth to call them to return,

Of course, in all this, as in the wilderness wanderings we have a type of the future. So we read in the book of Ezra, how that with great joy, people prepared to return home again. So 42,000 Jews gathered themselves under Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel as he is called. Zerubbabel was one of the descendants of David, he was a descendant of the

kings of Israel. He was an ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ and we shall see that he was a man of sign; and with him was a priest by the name of Jeshua, whose name we have already been told means Jesus. Jesus the priest was with Zerubbabel the son of David, and they had to lead the people back to the Land. We read in the early chapters of Ezra, how that

a grand procession of Jews left Babylon; they left Babylon in triumph for Palestine, they left riding upon horses, camels and asses. They left bearing the vessels of the temple which Cyrus had gathered and delivered unto them. They left carrying with them a sum of money which Cyrus had given to them to defray their expenses of building the temple. They were filled with zeal and enthusiasm for the work that was before them. They believed that they had the faith, the courage, the power, the courage to conquer all that was before them. They were going to rebuild the temple, they were going to elevate the worship of Yahweh once again. They were going to establish once again, the nation in all its glory! and so they left Babylon with those high hopes, as Israel left Egypt with high hopes.

Four months later we read, the tiring, wearying journey was over, and they entered into the land. They found that land filled with enemies, but that they expected; with sadness they looked upon the ruins of Jerusalem; they saw the charred remains of the temple, they saw how it was overgrown with weeds and covered with debris, but they weren't deterred. They were full of confidence that they could accomplish the work of Almighty God. Was not Yahweh with them? did they not have the power of Persian government behind them? so enthusiastically they gave themselves to the work. So in the 7<sup>th</sup> month the altar was set up and the worship was reinstated; and 7 months later a great rejoicing when the foundations of the temple were laid. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Ezra and at verses 10 and 11 we read of these circumstances, we read in Ezra 3 verses 10 and 11, 'That when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Yahweh, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Yahweh after the ordinance of David their king . And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto Yahweh; because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Yahweh, because the foundations of the house of Yahweh was laid.' This was a time of great enthusiasm, back in the land, pleased and encouraged to do the work; the foundations of the temple laid; nothing was too much trouble, we will conquer all before us. So they thought at that time, as they laid the foundation of the temple.

But amidst the laying of this foundation, and amidst all this rejoicing, b&s, there was a note of discord; you have that in verses 12 and 13 of that 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter. 'But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers who were ancient men, who had seen the first house when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy. So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off'. On the one hand, there was great rejoicing in the new generation who saw something accomplished, but the older generation remembered the glory of Solomon's temple and they wept when they

saw the poverty of the temple they were establishing there. The spirit of defeatism amidst the ecclesia, as we've been reminded this morning, the spirit of defeatism in the midst of the ecclesia grew as the difficulties mounted before them. Their confidence was in the flesh, in themselves, what they were going to accomplish, what they would do, how they would establish the temple; their confidence was in themselves and they were being tested by Almighty God. Therefore, a spirit of defeatism slowly seeped throughout Israel, they found the opposition of their enemies great; we read in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ezra, verses 4 and 5, 'then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building. And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia'. The people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah and hired counsellors against them, there was a spirit of frustration there.

Their enemies even took the matters further. Not only content with bearing that, they appealed to the court of pleasure. They accused the Jews of insurrection and sedition and as a result of all this, the decree of Cyrus was countermanded so that in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ezra verses 23 and 24 we read that, 'Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem and to the Jews and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia'. This was the last straw as far as those Jews were concerned. They had returned full of enthusiasm, they had returned with the power of Persia behind them, they had returned with money from Persia to build the temple; but they had not the faith to surmount the difficulties facing them. They had not the faith and the grim determination to keep on despite all that they might be surrounded with, it was the last straw! they had not the faith to see beyond these crushing difficulties. Their earlier enthusiasm evaporated, their keen zeal became blunted, they became discouraged and defeated by the problems that faced them. They had expected that God would have smoothed the way completely before them; they had expected that God was behind them to such an extent that there would be no difficulties. Wasn't this a work of God? didn't God want that temple to be built? hadn't He appointed them to do that work? Should not all their difficulties be cleared away? shouldn't they have been able to accomplish that which they set themselves out to do? Why should the enemy successfully oppose their work?

We sometimes, b&s, we sometimes think like that, and the work of the ecclesia today is sometimes faced with discouragement because of enemies that would challenge the foundations we are trying to lay, and a spirit of frustration and defeatism enters into our ranks. We lack the courage and grim determination to continue on in spite of all this. And in this case, the work of Yahweh went into discard and it took these men, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, to stand up in the midst of Israel, with a compelling message to force the people back to the work. The message that they gave them was, **CONSIDER YOUR WAYS**. You know, b&s, there's a very powerful and compelling message in the prophecy of Haggai for us! As I said before, why should this work cease? isn't it God's work? We speak like that sometimes! God will bless the effort! and sometimes we're discouraged if we don't receive results. We fail to

appreciate what God requires of us to do, and so we fail to understand that whilst we have a work to do, right down through the ages, Yahweh has tested His workmen. He has chided them, He has done so in order that their characters might be developed, that He might reveal in them, what He requires.

Take the case of Noah! We live in days like unto Noah's. He stood there preaching the truth to a people that never accepted it. He stood there preaching forth the gospel of salvation to a people over whom hung destruction and they wouldn't hear! But did he give

up? did he say, 'we've tried in this district', to his sons, 'look it's no good giving out our leaflets in this district, it's saturated; it's no good us preaching up here, we've done it so often that they won't listen to us'. Did he do that? no, he continued on with grim tenacity because he had the faith to do it. He finds a place in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews, an honoured place there, not because he gained a hundred converts, or spoke to a thousand people, but because he had the courage (I was almost going to say another word, but I'll leave in on paper) courage to keep going in faith, with all that faced him. That's the lesson of Haggai, the lesson I want to impress, and the lesson we have to take away from this camp, b&s.

It's a lesson that the whole of Christadelphia needs to learn today; because as a community we're faced with frustration and defeat, and we need to wake up to the message of Haggai. Listen to what Paul was told in 2 Corinthians 12 verses 7 to 10, he said, 'Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me; lest I should be exalted above measure. For this I sought the Lord Christ thrice that it might depart from me'. Now I can imagine the prayers of Paul on that behalf; I can imagine Paul with this thorn in the flesh, hindering the work of God, as he imagined; he wanted to go out and preach the Word, he didn't want to be hindered whatever, but he had this disability, a thorn in the flesh. He prayed that it might be removed, not because he cared about it, not because of any convenience for himself, but that the truth of God might go forth more powerfully. And Paul prayed, he prayed thrice that God might remove that thorn in the flesh; I can imagine his prayers, 'If you deliver me from this thorn in the flesh, O Lord, what I couldn't do for the truth'. 'I could go forth with greater power; deliver it from me, and then I can go forth and proclaim thy word as it has never been proclaimed before!'. But what did God reply? He said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, My strength is made perfect in weakness', and that was the answer for Paul, My grace is sufficient for thee! My strength is made perfect in weakness!

Now we're in Townsville and it's a small ecclesia in Townsville; we are proud of this ecclesia because it doesn't have leaders, thank goodness, we're proud also that this ecclesia has not wonderful speakers, an excellent thing, because if the ecclesia really appreciated what that means is this, that every individual in that ecclesia is important, every individual in that ecclesia must get back to this Word; and this Word must become as it was in the heart of Jeremiah, a fire, a fire that flamed and flamed forth and couldn't be withheld, as when we come to this Word.

So says God unto Paul, 'My grace is sufficient unto thee', he was taught to lean on Almighty God, 'and My strength is made perfect in weakness'; and when we see a company of people up in Townsville, in spite of all the disabilities, setting forth the gospel message with determination, keeping on with the work, doesn't that demonstrate that the power of God is with that community? There are nearly 500 members in my ecclesia, an amazing number to preach the Word there, you're always guaranteed of an audience, but this is a challenge of God to us, as it was a challenge of God to Haggai, as it was a challenge of God to Paul, and to Noah, and to Moses and David; Moses who fled to the wilderness; Moses who was appointed to lead the people, but he couldn't understand it, and fled to the wilderness; 40 years there to learn that lesson. David who found every person against him at times, to learn this salient lesson, 'my grace is sufficient for thee, David, that My strength is made perfect in weakness'. That's the lesson that we must learn, b&s, and it is sometimes very difficult for us to learn this, in our day and generation. You know, we don't appreciate! we often speak, 'if ever I had the money, if only I had the time, if only I had the ability, how I would serve the truth'. 'If only I was relieved of this pressing burden that lays upon me, what better work I could do'. 'If only I didn't have so many responsibilities, how I would expend myself for God'. All this is an idle boast, God knows full well our limits, God knows that we can labour effectively according to our ability and He asks for nothing more. God will provide the opportunity but it requires of us the faith and courage to implement that; and He says to us, 'My grace is sufficient unto thee, My strength is made perfect in weakness'.

Now when we see that, b&s, then no task we have set to do in the service of the Master is a menial task; every action done in the cause of truth, is of importance! it is a service to the King. How the world about us see Gentiles, how they do appreciate a service to the queen; how they feel honoured if the queen would ask them to do something! The King has asked us to do something, therefore, no task is menial, and so this was the lesson to Israel, we have plenty around us to discourage us, as these people who came back under Zerubbabel, had plenty of them to discourage them. They were aware of the trials of life, there were private problems, there were domestic problems, there were the problems of business, and these problems can depress us! They can sap our zeal and enthusiasm if we allow them. They are the unseen enemy that would render us and find a weak spot in our armour; and so b&s, the lesson of Haggai is that lesson and it was the lesson forced home upon the Jews as they returned back in the days of Zerubbabel.

Zechariah who was contemporary with Haggai, had a similar message. In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Zechariah, I want to direct your attention to some words that I feel you need to mark in your bibles, so that any time you turn to Zechariah you see these words. In Zechariah 4 verses 9 and 10 and in verse 10 in particular, we read these words, 'Who hath despised the day of small things?' who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven!' Who dare despise the day of small things? sometimes we do! the meeting's small, there were few there, these circumstances are drab and I'm disgusted'. We don't appreciate that in our midst there is the key, we despise the day of small things. And this was the prophet who stood up with Haggai. In Haggai we will see that he said, 'consider your ways', and this prophet says, 'who have despised the day of small

things?' They built the foundations of the temple and there was weeping as well as rejoicing. They had a little bit of difficulty and people got discouraged. They said, 'oh, we're not going to do this work; the time's not come to build the house of the LORD! the time has not come for that purpose, let's build up our own circumstances and when the time comes we shall do the work of the LORD'.

But turning back to that 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ezra we find that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah stood up to stimulate the people of the LORD; and we learn in verses 3 to 5 how that the enemy still continued to oppress them, but not so successfully. 'At the same time came Tatnai the governor on this side of the river, and Shetharbozenai and their companions, and said unto them, 'who hath commanded you to build this house? to make up these walls? Then said we unto them after this manner, what are the names of the men that make this building?' Then we read in verse 5, 'That the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius'. So there was an appeal to Darius, 'the eyes of their God was upon the elders of the Jews', and they found out that there were prospects, so that in the 14<sup>th</sup> verse of Ezra 6 we read, 'The elder of the Jews builded and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo; and they builded and finished it according to the commandment of the God of Israel, according to the commandment of Cyrus and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia'. So here we have the completion of the matter, the work of Haggai completed, they builded and finished it according to the commandment of the God of Israel.

And referring back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Haggai now, we find that all this is typical of what yet shall be accomplished in all the earth. So that we read in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Haggai and verses 6 to 8, 'For thus saith Yahweh 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. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine; and the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former, saith Yahweh of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith Yahweh of hosts'. So as they commenced to build that temple, this was the voice of Deity that sounded out to the people of Israel, that what you're doing today is typical of what shall be done in the future. That there shall be a temple built in Jerusalem, a temple in which the glory of Yahweh shall be revealed. There will be a temple there which will be the centre of your government and from this I will give peace, He said unto the people of Israel.

So that is the background of the subject that we're going to consider. We find it in the book Ezra and Nehemiah, and in the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah and of Malachi. We want to take this verse by verse as we consider it and try to impress upon each one of us, the wonder of the message before us. Why should we worry? Why should we worry? what does it matter? what do we care about a company of Jews that left Babylon and found a bit of discouragement in the land of Palestine? Does God intend us to seek all these things out and is it essential to life eternal? Is it necessary for us to know all these things? what's the value of it? can't we live very pleasantly together without all that?

Well, this is the voice of God and the voice of God standing in our midst, is not to be disrespected; 'I've elevated My word above all My holy name', He said. And in that last and wonderful prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of John and at verse 17, He gives us a reason why we should gather like this and why we should be bonded together around the Word in this fashion, because there the Lord Jesus Christ as He prayed unto the Father, He uttered these words in the 17<sup>th</sup> verse of John 17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth' (now these are not my words, these are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ), this is the prayer that He is uttering just prior to the time that He's going to shed his blood on Calvary, and He said, 'Sanctify them through thy truth', and here is the way, and here is the means that God had provided for the sanctification of His saints; this that we're going to study is designed to change our life for the kingdom. Take just the facts that we've outlined to you this morning, don't we get a grand exhortation of what we should do in our circumstances? can't we transmit the lessons of Haggai's point to our own day? can't we find encouragement as we consider that these people went through discouraging circumstances and yet found the courage and the power to rise superior to them? 'Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth' we are what we are because of what we believe, because we believe that Jesus Christ will return and set up the kingdom of God, therefore we must seek the things of Jesus Christ, because we know that Jesus Christ will restore the life about us, we're not going to put much store in the life about us. 'Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth'. And as we look into that mirror of that Word, that Word will change us; we see the character of the Lord Jesus and it will change our life.

So here we see the importance of the Word that we might study it. Take the prayer of Paul, there we have the prayer of Christ, now in Colossians 1 we have Paul's prayer and that is very similar to that of the Lord's; he says in Colossians 1 and verses 9 and 10, 'We do not cease to pray for you and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; be fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.' That was his prayer! increasing in the knowledge of God; it doesn't mean we have to understand all of this book from Genesis to Revelation, nor to be able to stand up and answer any question put to us, nor to be able to give an explanation of every symbol and every difficult facet of the Word of God. But it does mean this, that we must have a progressive knowledge of the things of God; we cannot just remain static in the things of God, we cannot rest upon the foundation laid at our baptism. There must be an increasing in the knowledge of God, and you know, b&s, you want to mark these words in your bible, that's the prayer of Paul, a man dedicated to the faith, and he prayed for that, that they might increase in the knowledge of God, a little bit each day, but in a gradual increase in the knowledge of God.

Listen to what God says in Proverbs 25 and at the 2nd verse, 'It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but it is the honour of kings to search out a matter'. There we have 2 statements, 'it is the glory of God to conceal a thing', look at this book, what does the world know of this book? what do your neighbours know of this book? In the black covers of the bible, God has concealed His wisdom that will give us life eternal! What does the world know of it? It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, He's going to look for



people who are prepared to dig for rich treasure; He's going to look for a people who so esteem and revere the name of Yahweh that they're going to the travail and difficulty and the unravelling of that which He has concealed. You know, God could have set forth His purpose to us in a

16 page leaflet; we do that! we say, 'we've got to simplify this for our friends'; we do it in the form of a declaration or a leaflet. We say, 'here is the truth', 'we can set it out clearly for you', Jesus Christ is going to return (with a lot of references); there's going to be a kingdom of God on earth (with a lot of references); you must be baptized (with a lot of references). There's God's truth! and a stranger gets hold of that and he accepts that and we baptize him, and say, 'you're on the way to life eternal'. That's our method! It's not God's method!

He puts it in the most difficult book that we can possibly read, He couches it in language that conceals His purpose quite frequently. So why does He do that? because He wants us to think upon these things as Paul tells us in the epistle to the Philippians, 'think upon these things'. God deliberately makes it difficult because we have to search through the pages of His word, we have to go from Numbers to Jonah to Haggai right through the pages of God's word seeking it out. Then we think we've made a wonderful discovery when we find a little bit of truth that we feel we haven't seen before; and you know, when you search through God's word in that fashion, you can become really excited! I've become excited as I've had before me a problem; it seems to me that I cannot solve it. Then I get out my concordance and I get the understanding of it, and it seems to me that I'm very excited. You know, God is wiser than us, we say, 'here's a few passages of scripture, here's our declaration or statement of faith, there's the truth'; but God says search and ye shall find. God gives us this book and says, 'it's the glory of God to conceal it, it's the honour of kings to search out a matter', and we hope to be the kings of the future age, and here is the wisdom, here's the means whereby we can do it.

Do you think that Queen Elizabeth is on the throne today without training? Do you think that Queen Elizabeth never had training to get on that throne? Why do you think that Sarah's daughter took Moses and educated him in the courts of Pharaoh for? to become a king! How do you think that kingship is going to be offered to us, if we're not going to go to God's textbooks and find the education that will qualify us for that! That's what God says here, 'it's the honour of kings to search out a matter!' but if we're going to say we're not interested in this, we don't think it's really necessary, it doesn't matter; then we're closing God's Word against ourselves. So we need to study.

Now let us come to another point in scripture found in Nehemiah. In the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Nehemiah and at verse 8 we are told in a few brief words, what we must seek for in the bible. We have here the story of Ezra who stood up to read these words to the people. We read there in Nehemiah 8 verse 8, 'So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading'. Three distinct statements, 1. they read the book distinctly, 2. they gave the sense, 3. they caused them to understand the reading. It wasn't a matter of saying, 'right, we've got the daily readings to do; there's 5 chapters unfortunately for us to read today. So we plough through these chapters very quickly, we read them in a very quick fashion, we close the book and we say, that's good! now we'll switch on the wireless! That's not the idea, b&s,

'they read in the book in the law of God distinctly', they took the time to give the sense to understand the reading, and as they did that, the people that heard them, found that in the things that they listened to, there was great life! and they found a great joy in the very things that they hearkened to! merely because 'they gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading'. You know, b&s, as we come to study the Word of God, that I feel must be our objective. We come to this book to understand it clearly and the message it conveys to us, may be a message that will help us.

Now in brother Martin's session, he said to you all, to open your folders, take out the dates and numbers and put them on top; that means they're on top of Haggai. Now, me being last, I say, take the names of Haggai out and put them on top of Numbers; I do that for one thing only at this stage, is that I do want to impress upon you at this stage, what I feel is very, very vital and necessary, and that is the need to mark our bibles. I want to give a few words on this as we drift along in the next few days. I selected a book with only a couple of chapters in it; because it gives me ample time to flow off to any other subject I want to, (I avoid questions that way and it's a very good idea about debaters, if they can't answer questions, they get onto other subjects, you see). So I want to impress upon you and I want to really put something over in this way, in regard to bible marking. I know what it's meant to me, I know the pleasure that it's given me and I want to convey that to you and I want to give you that message. I want to create in you, if I possibly can, the desire to do it. It takes a lot of time, but it's well worth it! I find not only that it's well worth it, but it helps me immensely. I remember when I went to Costa Rica on one occasion by boat, everyone on that boat before we reached England were bored stiff by the time we passed Mortileigh they were bored to tears, they wanted the journey finished. I wasn't! in my bible here I can show you, I started doing the study on the boat trip to England in 1953 and I've got it marked up. I would mark my bible up; so I couldn't care less if the journey ended on the morrow or not, I wasn't bored and I didn't take part much of in any of the games that went on in the ship, I'd go to my cabin or to the lighting room, I could open my bible and get out my inks and mark up my bible and I was perfectly happy and I wouldn't call the captain my uncle. I was so pleased to be able to get away from him. So you see, I found a great pleasure in marking up my bible in that fashion.

I travelled from Sydney to Hayward with my brother, and you can understand what that would mean! but I had my inks with me and I was able to mark up my bible. I've done it on the way up here, I carry my inks with me, I have three colours with me, black, red and green. I have mapping nibs and I mark my bible with that. In the hotel room, I usually take the coverings over the lights off to give some decent light anyway, and then I can sit around for 20 minutes or so, and I set the world aside and get my mind into that. It's a lovely relaxation, it's better than a good hot strong cup of tea, I can assure you of that! So you see, I want to impress upon you that matter of bible marking. Now in these notes I have set up a system of bible marking. In my bible on Haggai, you will see that I've marked my bible up, there's Haggai. Now this is a wide margin bible, they're very cheap, you can get them for 7 pound 10; now it has a good binding and it has a big wide margin, so you can mark it up well. It's in a special type of paper that you can write in

ink, and as you see in the prophecy of Haggai here, I have marked it up with 3 colours; I use 'green' to underline the point in the text that I'm going to comment upon; I put a number against that commencing with #1 in a chapter, a corresponding number in the same colour in the margin; I put any comments in 'black' and any reference in 'red'. That means this, if I want to pick up a reference quickly, I can do so because of the colours. Now this takes a lot of time, but it's well worth it, and if you dedicate a certain amount of time a day, I say 15 to 20 minutes to the young people! If you spend 20 minutes a day marking up your bible you will be amazed, at the end of the year, how your knowledge has been advanced. You will be amazed at the end of the year, what this book means to you! And I'm not joking when I say I wouldn't take 500 pound for that bible, you can tempt me if you like, but I wouldn't take 500 pound for that bible. I've been offered a 100 pounds for that old bible of mine, and I wouldn't sell it, not for 100 pound, but offer 1000 and I might be tempted, but not for a 100 pounds, that's not an option! that's because that book means a lot more to me, I've poured something of myself in that, and before this man knocks me off this platform I'm going to take you back to the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy and I want you to read the words that were struck by the king of Israel.

He was told he wasn't to multiply horses nor wives to himself, and he was told also other things. In verse 18 of the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy, 'It shall be when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him and he shall read them all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes to do them'. Notice what he had to do! in verse 18 when he came to the throne, the first work he had to do, was to write him a copy of this law in a book. The king of Israel in all his glory and power, was reduced to doing that. He couldn't come to his scribe and say, 'look scribe, write this out; here's the exercise book, write it out for me!' He couldn't do that, he had to get his pen himself, he had to get his paper himself, and he had to labouriously write out that law for himself, because God knew if he did that it would be impressed upon him more completely than if someone else did it for him. The first thing he had to do when he sat upon the throne was to write him a copy of this law in a book. Then he had to read it all the days of his life, what for? #1. to learn to fear Yahweh his God; #2 to keep all the words of this law; #3 that he might not become conceited as you find in verse 20, 'that he might not be lifted up above his brethren'. And when he read this book with understanding it would rob him of all conceit; he learnt for example that he was worth one and thruppence in the eyes of Yahweh. In these days of inflation, one and thruppence doesn't even buy a bottle of Coca-cola; that's what he's worth!

Now here you see, he had to do it himself and that's where the marking of the bible impresses it upon the mind in no other fashion, but more of this as the days go by, God willing.