



# SUNDAY SCHOOL NOVEMBER 9, 2025

Prayer:

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## Old Testament

### Haggai 2:1-9

#### *The Prophet Haggai speaking to the disheartened exiled people*

#### ENCOURAGEMENT FOR A NEW TEMPLE

In the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Haggai, saying:

“Speak now to Zerubbabel **zuh-ROO-buh-bell** (son of Shealtiel **shee-AL-tee-el**, governor of Judah), and to Joshua (son of Jehozadak **juh-HOZ-uh-dack**, the high priest), and to the remnant of the people, and say:

“Who is left among you who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear.

“For thus says the Lord of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land, and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts.

“The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts, and in this place, I will give prosperity, says the Lord of hosts.”

#### OVERVIEW

Haggai 2:1–9 records God’s message to a weary people struggling to rebuild the Temple after returning from exile. Speaking through Haggai, the Lord acknowledges their disappointment — the new structure doesn’t compare to Solomon’s grand temple — but He urges them to “be strong” and continue, promising that His Spirit is with them. God foretells that He will “shake the heavens and the earth” and fill this humble temple with greater glory and peace than before.

At its heart, this passage contrasts **external splendor** with **divine presence**, teaching that the true glory of God’s house lies not in gold or stone but in faithfulness and the Spirit dwelling among His people.

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Haggai is one of the post-exilic prophets, ministering around 520 BCE, about 18 years after the first group of Jews returned from Babylon. The rebuilding of the Temple had stalled due to discouragement and opposition.

In this chapter, God addresses three groups through Haggai:

- **Zerubbabel**, the governor (political leader)
- **Joshua (Jehozadak’s son)**, the high priest (spiritual leader)
- **The remnant of the people** (the community itself)



Verses 3–5 speak directly to their discouragement, comparing the current temple’s plainness to the former glory of Solomon’s. God reminds them of His covenant — “My Spirit remains among you; do not fear.”

Verses 6–9 expand the vision: God will “shake all nations,” bringing their treasures and ushering in peace, symbolizing divine sovereignty and restoration beyond Israel’s borders.

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

Following Cyrus’s decree (539 BCE) allowing exiles to return, the Jews began rebuilding the Temple around 536 BCE but stopped amid political resistance and economic hardship. Under **Darius I** (522–486 BCE), the project resumed with official Persian approval and prophetic encouragement from Haggai and Zechariah.

Jerusalem, though, was still impoverished — a city of ruins surrounded by stronger neighbors. The people’s morale was low, and older generations remembered the majestic first temple. Haggai’s message therefore served both a **spiritual** and **socio-political** purpose: to rekindle courage, unify the people, and restore their sense of purpose under Persian oversight.

The promise that “the silver is mine, and the gold is mine” (v. 8) also countered the fear of scarcity — reminding them that divine providence, not imperial wealth, sustains their future.

#### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **586 BCE:** Babylon destroys Jerusalem and Solomon’s Temple.
- **539 BCE:** Cyrus the Great conquers Babylon and issues an edict allowing Jews to return and rebuild.
- **536 BCE:** Temple reconstruction begins but soon halts due to opposition.
- **520 BCE:** Under Darius I, Haggai delivers his prophecies (including Haggai 2).
- **515 BCE:** The Second Temple is completed.

Haggai 2:1–9 was spoken **on the 21st day of the seventh month** (the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, roughly October 520 BCE) — a feast commemorating God’s dwelling among His people in the wilderness. The timing deepens the symbolism: God is again dwelling among His people, even in their incomplete, humble temple.

#### SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Scholars view this passage as a layered metaphor of **renewal, perseverance, and divine presence amid human limitation**. The shaking of the nations represents not merely political upheaval but the transformative movement of God in history — the reordering of values where spiritual endurance surpasses material wealth.

Applied to **modern communities like Grant County, Indiana**, the message speaks powerfully to towns, churches, and institutions rebuilding after loss or decline. Many remember “former glory days” — bustling factories, fuller pews, livelier downtowns — and may feel that what’s being rebuilt today is smaller or humbler. Yet, just as God told Haggai’s listeners, **the new work is not lesser when God’s Spirit dwells within it**.

*When God says, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former,” He invites faith communities to see renewal not in outward success but in spiritual depth,*



*compassion, and peace. A smaller church that builds connection and service may, in truth, reflect greater glory than a grander past defined by numbers alone.*

In local terms: rebuilding a community garden, a small-town mission, or a Sunday School class with heartfelt devotion can carry divine significance beyond visible scale. The message to Haggai's Jerusalem is the same to Grant County today — *be strong, work, for I am with you.*

## SUMMARY

Haggai 2:1–9 captures a divine pep talk to a weary people rebuilding what once was glorious. God tells them to take courage and continue, for His Spirit is with them. Though their new temple seems unimpressive, He promises that its future glory and peace will surpass the past. Historically, this marked a turning point in Israel's restoration; spiritually, it remains a timeless reminder that **God's presence transforms humble effort into holy purpose.**

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## Gospel

Luke 20:27-38

### *Jesus Responds to the Sadducees' Trick Question*

#### THE QUESTION ABOUT THE RESURRECTION

Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question:

*"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married a woman and died childless; then the second and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. Finally, the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her."*

Jesus said to them:

*"Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage.*

*"Indeed, they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*

*"Now he is God not of the dead but of the living, for to him all of them are alive."*

## OVERVIEW

Luke 20:27–38 records a conversation between Jesus and the Sadducees—a Jewish sect that denied the resurrection. They attempt to trap Jesus with a hypothetical question about a woman who marries seven brothers, each dying childless, and they ask whose wife she will be in the resurrection. Jesus responds that earthly marriage doesn't apply in the resurrection because those who are resurrected are "like angels" and cannot die anymore. He then rebukes their misunderstanding of scripture by citing Moses'



reference to God as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,” emphasizing that God “is not the God of the dead, but of the living.”

This passage is not just about resurrection; it’s about the nature of eternal life and the character of God—one who sustains life beyond earthly categories.

*See Resurrection Addendum*

#### BIBLICAL CONTEXT

This dialogue occurs during Jesus’ final week in Jerusalem, following His triumphal entry and just before His arrest. The religious leaders—Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, and others—are challenging Jesus’ authority and trying to trap Him with theological and political questions (e.g., paying taxes to Caesar, resurrection debates, etc.).

The Sadducees were aristocratic and priestly, controlling the Temple and favoring cooperation with Rome. Unlike the Pharisees, they rejected oral traditions and only accepted the Torah (the first five books of Moses) as authoritative. Because the Torah makes few explicit references to resurrection, they denied it entirely.

In this context, their question was not sincere—it was meant to ridicule the concept of resurrection by presenting an absurd scenario. Jesus’ reply turns their own scriptural source (Moses’ writings) against them, showing that even within the Torah, God’s covenantal relationship implies life beyond death.

#### HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT

By Jesus’ time (early first century CE), Jewish beliefs about the afterlife varied. Pharisees believed in resurrection, angels, and a final judgment; Sadducees denied all three. This theological divide mirrored a political one:

- **Pharisees** represented the common people and emphasized moral and ritual purity.
- **Sadducees** were the Temple elite—wealthy, conservative, and aligned with Roman power to maintain their influence.

The Roman occupation (since 63 BCE) made Temple leadership both political and religious. The Sadducees had much to lose if messianic or resurrection beliefs stirred rebellion, as these ideas often motivated resistance movements. Thus, their denial of resurrection conveniently preserved social order and their own status.

In this sense, Jesus’ affirmation of resurrection was both theological and radical—it declared that divine authority transcends Rome, death, and institutional control. God’s kingdom operates on eternal terms, not political preservation.

#### HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME

- **Timeframe:** Circa **30–33 CE**, during the last week of Jesus’ life, likely Tuesday or Wednesday before the crucifixion.
- **Setting:** Jerusalem, within the Temple complex, where public debates between rabbis and teachers were common.



- **Historical backdrop:** The Passover festival was approaching; the city was crowded, and tensions between Jewish authorities and Jesus were at their peak.

## SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION WITH MODERN-DAY & GRANT COUNTY CONTEXT

Scholars often interpret this passage metaphorically as a teaching about **the transformation of human identity and relationships in God's eternal kingdom**. Resurrection is not merely a return to physical life—it represents **a new order of being**, where earthly structures like marriage, social class, or gender roles are transcended.

### Metaphorical Reading

- **Marriage and Resurrection:** Earthly relationships serve a temporary purpose, but resurrection life reflects union with God rather than human institutions.
- **The Living God:** Jesus reframes faith as a living relationship with a living God. Death does not end this relationship; it is continuous.

### Modern and Grant County Context

In communities like Grant County, Indiana—where traditional Christian beliefs are strong and family, marriage, and work define much of social identity—this passage challenges a comforting but limited view of heaven as a continuation of earthly life.

Jesus' words remind believers that **heaven is not an extension of earthly systems** but a transformation of them. It's not about preserving our status, titles, or even family structures, but about living eternally in God's presence—where **dignity and belonging come from divine relationship, not social hierarchy**.

This could prompt reflection on how faith communities sometimes cling to institutional stability (like the Sadducees) rather than embracing the radical, living hope of transformation that resurrection represents. It can also speak to how we treat one another now—whether our relationships mirror God's eternal life or protect earthly comfort zones.

## SUMMARY

In Luke 20:27–38, Jesus confronts the Sadducees' denial of resurrection by exposing their limited understanding of both scripture and God. Using their own sacred texts, He proves that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is a **God of the living**, affirming that resurrection is real and that eternal life transcends earthly categories like marriage.

The passage serves as a theological hinge: it redefines life, death, and relationship with God. For modern readers—especially in communities grounded in tradition—it invites us to consider whether our faith reflects a **living God of transformation** or a **static God of preservation**. Jesus' answer calls believers to live now with resurrection hope, courage, and compassion rooted in eternal truth rather than temporal order.

*See Addendum on Jesus the Trickster*



## Addendums

### Common Message from Today's Scriptures

Both Haggai and Jesus remind us that God's presence brings new life and greater glory—not by restoring what once was, but by transforming it into something eternal and alive in Him.

These two passages really *deserve* a bit more depth because they mirror each other in tone and theology: both confront disappointment, doubt, and the limits of human imagination about what God can do next.

Both **Haggai** and **Luke** speak to people who have lost sight of hope. In Haggai, the people stand before the rebuilt Temple's foundation, smaller and less grand than Solomon's, wondering if God's glory could ever return. God's response is both comforting and challenging: "*My Spirit remains among you; do not fear... the glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former.*" God's promise isn't to restore the old but to **fill the new with His presence**, revealing that holiness doesn't depend on grandeur—it depends on God dwelling with His people.

Centuries later, in **Luke 20**, the Sadducees cling to the past in a different way. They mock the idea of resurrection because it doesn't fit their logic or tradition. Jesus answers not with speculation but revelation: "*He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*" Just as God once renewed His dwelling among a discouraged people, Jesus reveals that **life with God transcends death, tradition, and earthly limits**.

Together, these passages form a unified truth:

God's presence is not trapped in the past or confined to earthly structures. Whether rebuilding a Temple or reimagining life beyond the grave, **God is always in the business of transforming what feels finished into something living, holy, and new.**

### Name Meanings Addendum

**Zerubbabel** — "*Seed of Babylon*" or "*Born in Babylon.*"

He was born during the Jewish exile, and his very name symbolizes **hope born out of captivity** — a reminder that God can raise leaders even from foreign soil.

**Shealtiel** — "*I have asked of God*" or "*Requested of God.*"

This name carries a prayerful tone, suggesting a child longed for and granted by divine favor. It reflects **faithful dependence on God's mercy**.

**Jehozadak (or Josedech)** — "*The Lord is righteous.*"

A declaration of God's moral and covenantal faithfulness — fitting for a high priestly lineage. His name embodies **trust in God's justice amid hardship**.

### Resurrection

In **Luke 20**, the "resurrection" under debate is not yet *Jesus'* resurrection, but the broader Jewish concept of *resurrection of the dead at the end of time*. The Sadducees already denied that belief long before Jesus' own resurrection occurred.

So, when the passage says they "denied the resurrection," it refers to their **theological stance** — they didn't believe anyone would rise again *ever* — not specifically that they denied *Jesus'* resurrection (which hadn't happened yet).





Here's how it could be phrased more precisely:

- **Keep it time-accurate:**  
“The Sadducees, who denied that there would be any resurrection of the dead, challenged Jesus with a trick question.”
- **Emphasize Context & Summary:**  
“The Sadducees—who did not believe in resurrection at all—tested Jesus’ teaching about life beyond death.”

**So: they denied resurrection in principle, not Jesus’ resurrection (yet).**

## Jesus the Trickster

In this passage, Jesus *does* outwit the Sadducees, but the tone can come across as smug or one-upmanship if we only read it at face value.

Here's a more nuanced way to see it that avoids portraying Jesus as self-righteous or “trickster-like”:

### 1. The Difference Between Outsmarting and Revealing

The Sadducees’ question was a **riddle designed to trap**, not a sincere search for truth. Jesus doesn’t play their game to win; he redirects it. He refuses the premise altogether—He doesn’t say, “You’re wrong because I’m smarter,” but rather, “Your whole framework misunderstands God.” In that sense, He’s not *tricking back*; He’s **lifting the conversation from human logic to divine reality**.

### 2. Tone and Purpose

If we imagine His tone not as sharp sarcasm (as some readers do), but as patient revelation, the passage changes completely. He’s exposing the limits of their thinking **so they can glimpse something truer**, not humiliating them. His final statement—“He is not the God of the dead, but of the living”—is not a punchline, it’s a **pastoral correction**. He’s inviting them to see God as a living relationship, not as an ancient doctrine.

***So ... how can we read this using the appropriate tone?***

### 3. The Moral Shift

In that light, Jesus doesn’t become a trickster; He becomes a **truth-revealer**. He shows that divine truth doesn’t depend on who “wins” an argument but on **who lives in relationship with the Living God**. It’s a subtle but profound shift from “winning the debate” to “awakening the heart.”

### 4. Modern Parallels

In modern Grant County terms: imagine a conversation where someone corners you with a legalistic or literal question about faith. Let’s **change the ground of the discussion entirely**: from the rulebook to the relationship. That’s what Jesus does here. He’s not playing their game better; He’s **changing the game altogether**—from a contest of intellect to a call to encounter the living God.

***Jesus comes across not as clever or self-righteous, but as deeply compassionate—refusing to let small-minded debate block the larger truth of resurrection hope.***