

“Is the seed still in the barn?”

My father had a specific way in which he communicated a serious instruction when he wanted us to clean up the yard. “You will clean this place up...if I find one cigarette butt or match...” and on inspection day, should he find anything he would ask: “What is this?!” We knew what the question really meant: “Why is this still here after I very clearly instructed you to clean up this place?!”

A question may be asked to gain information, to learn. A question may be asked to cause reflection. It may also be asked as a prelude to a challenge, or purely as a challenge. A question may also be asked for a combination of these reasons, and ultimately it may be argued that questions are asked to teach or instruct. Consider the question God posed through the prophet **Haggai (2:19)**. **“Is the seed still in the barn?”**

The question was obviously not asked because God did not know if, or why it was the case. After considering the context it becomes obvious that the question was asked to cause reflection and as a powerful interlude to a challenge. Things were not going well for Israel: ***‘I smote you and every work of your hands with blasting wind, mildew and hail; yet you did not come back to Me,’ declares the LORD. (Haggai 2:17)***

The book of **Job** illustrates that not all misfortune is punishment from God. The following statement suggests those who decide to seek God will not have an easy life: ***Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2Timothy 3:12)*** Living God’s way requires self-control, a scarce commodity in the world since its beginning. Those who make a serious effort to serve God from a clear conscience will run into opposition simply because they make others feel guilty.

The Hebrew writer quotes from the Scriptures to illustrate that misfortune may indeed be part of God’s punishment; however it is to produce endurance for those who understand that punishment in this case confirms their legitimacy as children of God, for God punishes those whom He loves. **Hebrews 12:6**

Arrogance may cause us to view ourselves as Job rather than being punishment for our sin unknown to ourselves because of our arrogance. Israel suffered misfortune, however it did not cause them to reflect and return to God. God sends the prophet to declare the reason for their misfortune to them. The question then follows to cause them to, first of all reflect on the reason why it is there.

Is it because of the blasting winds, mildew and hail removed their confidence – why put the seed in the ground if the crops is going to be destroyed? Is the solution to leave the seed in

the barn, or to work on the reason for the blasting winds, mildew and hail? The answer is obvious from what the Lord said as recorded in **Haggai 2:17**, however they did not get it.

The challenge aspect follows immediately after the question: **"Yet from this day on I will bless you."** This promise is a prophecy to establish that God is in control – even before the seed taken out of the barn, **or the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate and the olive tree**, bears any fruit, He confirms that it will yield a good crop. This in response to them turning back to God.

What may we learn from this? I would like to stretch the scope of application to the temple we should be busy building, and the seed required for that. Why are we having a difficult time converting the lost? There are a few reasons I would like for us to briefly consider. First off all we may ask ourselves the question whether we, like Israel, have become too busy with our own lives to give the kingdom the serious consideration it not only deserves, but requires? Are we too busy trying to make it in this life to be concerned about the life hereafter?

Have we lost our faith in the seed, the word of God to convert people? People are just not interested anymore.

Is it not striking that we are to merely sow it, and water it, and that it is God who causes the growth. The challenge is to keep the seed pure. If we work on the cultivar, change the seed to suit our conditions and preferences, God will not bless it with growth – it then no longer is His seed.

We are discouraged thinking that we live in a worst society ever. Have you had the people of the city come up to your door to demand your guests to commit illicit sexual acts with them? Do the people sacrifice their children to some god or another? Let us get over the excuses of why we are leaving the seed in the barn and spread it everywhere, even on the rocky ground...