*02*NEW YEAR STUDY 2020

I WILL FILL THIS HOUSE WITH GLORY

Haggai 2:1-19

I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty. (7)

Last week we accepted the LORD’s word that if the LORD is first priority in our life, then we should **BUILD HIS HOUSE.** Do you remember how we can build the house of the LORD? Let me quickly remind you. In our ministry, there are 4 specific ways to build the house of the LORD. Through weekly 1-1 bible studies with students, writing and sharing bible testimonies, keeping morning devotion and establishing house churches for campus mission. By faithfully and practically keeping these four things in our personal lives and ministry, we can all participate in building the house of the LORD. **The question now is**, what can we expect from the LORD if we practically obey His word and actually build His house in this way? Will life simply continue unchanged? Or will we see and experience the LORD’s presence in our ministry? What about our personal lives? Will things just continue like before? I think, our biggest fear is building the LORD’s house on campus, yet the LORD never shows up! That our effort and faithful labour is all for nothing. However, in today’s passage, we will see that we need not fear this at all. Because, just as the LORD promised the Israelites….that if they faithfully build His house as he instructed them, he would fill it with glory, so the LORD also promises you and me – that if we faithfully build His house on WITS, that He will also fill our ministry with glory! Moreover, that he will bless the work of our hands. This is the LORD’s promise to you and me this morning. I sincerely pray that through today’s message, you accept it in our hearts. Amen.

Look at verse 1. After just 26 days, since the Israelites began to build the house of the LORD (1:14), the word of the LORD again came to the Israelites through the prophet Haggai. Now, after only 4 weeks since the building began, one would expect that the Israelites’ spirits were still riding high. That they were still diligently and positively building the house of the LORD. Yet, surprisingly, we find that in this short period of time, the exact opposite was true for the Israelites. They were discouraged and very pessimistic towards building the house of the LORD. What happened? Why would their attitude towards building the LORD’s house change so quickly? Was it because it was too difficult to build the LORD’s house….. or perhaps because they lacked resources? Not at all! Instead, they lost heart because THEY thought all their hard labour to build the house of the LORD would be in vain. Because the LORD would not show up.

Look at verse 3. The LORD asked the Israelites, Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing? The Israelites thought that building the house of the LORD was all for nothing, because in comparison to the first temple Solomon build, the new temple seemed like nothing. Solomon’s temple was a glorious building, built with unlimited resources, cutting edge technology and a strong workforce. It was a magnificent building, both in appearance and beauty. The new house of the LORD, on the other hand, would in contrast just be an ordinary building. It was to be without any gold or silver or bronze. Build with limited resources and manpower. While building the new house of the LORD, the Israelites naturally began to compare this new temple to the 1st temple. They quickly realised, that the new temple was way inferior to the first. In fact, this new house of the LORD would be so inferior to the 1st house that it **seemed to them like nothing**. Therefore, they thought that the LORD would not be pleased to dwell in it. That it was not the kind of place, where He would yet again work powerfully among His people. Like with the glorious temple Solomon built. So, they were all discouraged. They were demotivated. And reluctant to build the house of the LORD.

But what do you think: was it true that the LORD would not dwell powerfully among the Israelites because of the ordinary appearance of the new temple? Look at verse 4b and 5. The LORD told the Israelites: I am with you…. ‘This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’ Here we can clearly see, that the LORD’s presence among the Israelites did not depend on the outward appearance of His new house. Rather, the LORD’s presence among the Israelites depended on His covenant with the Israelites. Do you remember what that covenant was? The LORD promised to always be their God and dwell among them (Gen 17:7-8) PROVIDED they obeyed Him fully. (Ex 19:5a) And that was exactly what the Israelites did when they began building the house of the LORD. They obeyed the word of the LORD their God, and build His house. Therefore, there was no need to fear that the LORD would NOT dwell among them. In fact, at that very moment, even before the LORD’s new house was completed, the LORD’s Spirit remained among them. So instead of being downhearted and downing their tools, the Israelites could be strong and work hard. Look again at verse 4. …..now **be strong**, O Zerubbabel,’ declares the LORD…….**‘Be strong**, O Joshua ….…..**Be strong**, all you people of the land,’ declares the LORD………… and work!

**It is easy for us to fall in the same trap as the Israelites. Especially if we compare the current UBF ministry to 60 years ago when it was founded in South Korea. Most of us heard how the LORD worked so powerfully through the UBF ministry back then. How many students came for bible studies on campus, how they sacrificially committed their lives to campus mission and some, in obedience to the Great Commission, even went out as missionaries! I think over 3000 missionaries were sent out to Europe, China, Russia, North and South America and Africa. Wow! God worked so powerfully through the UBF ministry back then. But what about now? If we compare our ministry now to the olden days, we too might wonder if we are not working in vain. Why do students not respond the same way to the word of God as back then? Why are people hesitant to commit their lives to campus mission, let alone being a missionary? Is God still with us? Is He still pleased to work through the UBF ministry? What if we compare ourselves to other ministries, the so called mega-churches? So we may wonder, is the LORD still with us? Will he really work in and among us as we build WITS UBF as His house? This kind of thinking can easily creep into our hearts and minds. Then what will be the consequence? Instant spiritual collapse and discouragement…..Weakened faith and weakened commitment to building the house of the LORD. When this happened we too like the Israelites will begin to wonder….‘*But why should I sacrifice my time to meet brothers and sisters for 1-1 bible study? What difference will it make? Why should I spend so much time writing bible testimony and share it with others? What is the use? Why should I establish a house church for campus mission? Isn’t it just all a waste of my life?*’**

**I sincerely pray that not one of us fall into this hole of despair and discouragement. But if we do, how can we come out of it? We must remember the LORD’s promise:** I am with you…….my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.’ So **Be strong…Be strong…..Be strong! And work!**

The question is: what can we…. as a ministry…..expect from the LORD if we remain strong and obediently build the house of the LORD in 2020? Look at verses 6-9. (Read. As he/she read these verses, count the number of times that the LORD uses the phrase **“I will”** or simply the word **“will.”)** How many did you get? I got 6 times! Then why is this important? It is important, because each time the LORD uses the phrase “I will” or “will” He made a promise to the Israelites. So in effect, if the Israelites remain strong and build His house, then the LORD promised to do…… NOT one….NOT two….NOT three……but 6 amazing things! First, look at verse 6. The Lord promised,**I will** once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. Then in verse 7: **I will** shake all nations,….. and the desired of all nations **will** come. He then promises them very clearly: **I will fill** this house with glory,’ so that (look at verse 9) The glory of this present house **will** be greater than the glory of the former house.’ And, lastly, in this place **I will** grant peace.’ Wow! Here the Israelites were thinking that their hard work would be in vain; while all along the LORD stood ready to RESPOND POWERFULLY to their labour. This is God’s promise also to you and me. **Last week we received the LORD’s direction for our ministry, to build His house on WITS campus. We accepted that there are 4 ways we can build the house of the LORD; namely through 1-1 bible study on campus, keeping morning devotion, writing and sharing bible testimonies and establishing house churches. Then what will happen** if we remain strong this year....and practically build His house in this way? Will it be for nothing? Not at all! God stands ready, eager to respond powerfully to our service.

Let’s look again at verse 7. Can we all read our key verse together? I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says the LORD Almighty. Although t**he LORD might not actually shake all the nations around the world if we build His house on campus….one thing He will do is fill this house (the WITS UBF house) with glory! He will do so by shaking the hearts of our brothers and sisters on our campus. He will shake them through His word so they come to Jesus in repentance….. and so receive forgiveness of sin and a new life. Only the LORD can do this! Only He can call students into His house. Only He can shake their hearts. Only He can forgive their sins and give them a new life. When we see all this in our ministry, we indeed see God’s glory in this house. Because this the way, the LORD fills His house with glory. Humanly speaking we can sing and dance, we can have fellowship, attend worship service, dress smartly and have many bible studies. Yet, if no one repents before the LORD and live a new life of obedience to His word, then it is all in vain. Because God’s glory has not filled this house. And that is what we, as builders of His house, most earnestly long for. The good news is that God Promises: if we build His house in obedience to His word, then He will definitely fill this house with glory. Amen!**

**But what about you and me individually? We now heard God’s promise to us as a ministry, if we build His house in 2020. But what about our individual lives; like one on one with the LORD? You will be glad to know, that the LORD will not forget about your life as you build His house. Let’s fast forward to verses 15-19.**

What was the life situation for the Israelites before building the house of the LORD? Look at verse 16. (Read) As we learned last week, prior to building the house of the LORD the Israelites prioritised securing their own lives. They worked so hard and expected so much. Yet, it turned out to be little. When anyone came to a heap of twenty measures, there were only ten. (Half of what was expected) When anyone went to a wine vat to draw fifty measures, there were only twenty. (40% of what was expected) Why was that? Look at verse 17. The LORD struck all the work of [their] hands with blight, mildew and hail. In other words, when the LORD was not first priority in their lives, God’s blessing could not rest on the work of their hands.

But now things would change. Look at verse 19b. The LORD said, *“‘From this day on I will bless you.’”* Why? What caused the LORD to change His attitude towards the Israelites? It was the fact that the now build the house of the LORD. In doing so, they put God as first priority in their lives. . Though the blessings might not have come immediately (19a), the LORD made a clear promise to from that day the foundation of the temple was laid – that He would bless their personal lives. Here we can learn, that building the house of the LORD is the way to place, not only our ministry, but also our personal lives under God’s blessing. Why is that? Because by building the house of the LORD, we practically put God first in our lives. Many of us our so worried about our studies, jobs, finances and future. This worry tends to drive us away from building the house of the LORD. Whereas it should drive us towards building the house of the LORD. Because, building the house of the LORD is the only way to live close to the LORD and so entrust our financial security unto Him.

I want to stand still here for a moment, and ask each one of you two questions based on last week and today’s passages. Firstly: As a member of WITS UBF, are you willing to build the house of the LORD this year? In other words, are you willing to come to this campus and meet students for 1-1 bible studies? Are you willing to write and share weekly bible testimonies? Are you willing to keep morning devotion? And to our leaders, are you willing to establish a house church for campus mission? If so, then the second question I want to ask you is: how do you expect the LORD to respond to your obedience this year? Both in our ministry and in your personal lives?

Personally, I have accepted God’s direction to build His house in 2020. Yet, when thinking about how I expect the LORD to respond to my obedience, I noticed that I do not expect all that much. So I ask myself, why is that? Based on today’s passage, it is because I did not know that the LORD promises to fill this house with glory. Knowing this changes everything! Because suddenly, I expect to see many university students coming into our ministry this year to sincerely repenting of their sins before the LORD. Also, I am confident that the LORD will bless the work of my hands. It quietly excites my heart! And fills me with great hope and optimism for the year ahead. I am sure you feel the same way as I do!

In conclusion: Last week, the LORD has given our ministry clear direction for 2020. We must build His house through 1-1 bible study on campus, write and share bible testimonies, keep morning devotion and establishes house churches for campus mission. Through today’s passage, the LORD is making a promise to us. If we indeed build His house in obedience to His word, then He will fill it with glory. Meaning, that God will send many students who are ready to listen to His word and repent deeply of their sins before the LORD. Also, God promises to from now on bless our personal lives. This morning, let’s accept these promises in our hearts. I sincerely pray that in doing so each one of us here will firmly decide to build the LORD’s house. Not only the shepherds or missionaries…..but each and everyone of us….from the youngest to the oldest…..must obediently build the LORD’s house. Then God will surely bless our ministry and our personal lives. Not only in 2020, but also for the rest of our lives. Amen.