

Just a few words on the history of the book. The captivity of Jerusalem was accomplished in the year 586 or 587 by the Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar. The people were held in bondage from that time until approximately 538, 537, 536, within one year or another, we are not sure of the decree of Cyrus that told the people to go home. But say 537 for a convenient date, a convenient date in figuring the 70 years of captivity, say 537 for a convenient date for the end of the Babylonian captivity. The children of Israel returned from Babylon, that is, a goodly portion of them - some 14 or 15,000 at one time, and perhaps as many as 40 at another time, returned from Babylon back to Jerusalem. They come back not because they are mere patriots, but they ^{come back because they} remembered Jerusalem as the seat of worship, and the first thing they do when they get back to Jerusalem, we are told in the book of Haggai, is that they begin building a temple in Jerusalem and the temple construction begins about 536. Cyrus, who had given them the permission to go back, dies about 531 and at the time that Cyrus dies, the temple construction stops and nothing is done with the temple for the next, well, say the next 12 years, at least, maybe 13 years, maybe 14 years, but in that general period of over a decade nothing was done in the temple. When Zechariah, the prophet, arrives on the scene, along with Haggai, their ministry is to whip up the children of Israel to build the temple, and this temple construction in Jerusalem is a passage which has often found its way into my thinking, and into my preaching, as well. And I often say, what hindered the temple rebuilding? Just by way of historical background in the book of Zechariah this much is plain, that the temple building was hindered by the fact that there was outward opposition, there were people in Jerusalem who didn't want it built, and they openly