

HAGGAI

HAGGAI — POST-BABYLONIAN PROPHET

This is the first of the post-Babylonian prophets — those who prophesied after the return from the seventy years' captivity. To be interested in this book therefore, one needs to read Ezra afresh, particularly chapters 4-5, for the mission of Haggai was to stir up the people of that time to rebuild the temple.

What excuse did the people make for not engaging in the work (v. 2)? What showed their selfishness (v. 4)? What showed their moral blindness (v. 6)? What remedy for the material conditions indicated does God propose (v. 7)? How is the divine judgment upon their neglect extended in verses (vv. 9-11)? What is the result of the prophet's indictment against them (v. 12), and its effect in heaven (v. 13)? How shall we explain this result from the spiritual point of view (v. 14)? How much time is covered by the events of this chapter (compare first and last verses)?

Note the date of the second message beginning chapter 2, and compare ~~
~~Ezra 3:8-13. Some were discouraged because of their weakness and poverty, and felt that the temple could never be completed, and that in any event it would be outclassed by that of Solomon (v. 3). How does God inspire them (vv. 4-5)? Verses 6-10 are messianic, in which the first and second advents of our Lord are blended. The "shaking of the nations" seems future. "The desire of all nations" is taken as a personal designation of Christ, and yet the Revised Version renders it "the desirable things of all nations" which has a millennial flavor. Verse 9 is usually considered fulfilled by Christ's presence in this second temple.

Note the date of the third message (2:10). For the Levitical bearing of verses 11-13, compare the marginal references, ~~
~~Leviticus 10:10-11; ~~
~~Deuteronomy 33:10; ~~
~~Numbers 19:11; ~~
~~Malachi 2:7, etc. Moral cleanness was not communicated by contact, but the same was not true of uncleanness. Israel was unclean in the spiritual sense, and all that they did in the way of divine service was correspondingly so (v. 14), but in God was their help as the following verses prove.

God did not wait until the outcome of their labors testified to their change of heart, but from the day of that change His blessing began to be visited upon them (v. 19). Previously, as the result of their disobedience, they reaped but ten measures of grain where they expected twenty, and twenty vessels of the fruit of the vine where they expected fifty; they had experienced blasting, and mildew and hail. But now all this would be changed, and the harvest plenteous. Let them take it by faith before the seed was in the barn, or the blossoms had come upon the trees (19).

Note the date of the fourth message (2:20). This is in the future, and recalls the forthcoming judgments on the Gentile nations of which the pre-exilic prophets have spoken. The period referred to is the end time. There are those who regard verse 23 as a prophecy of Christ of whom Zerubbabel is the type, though others take the words literally as foreshadowing the resurrection of the governor himself.

QUESTIONS

1. To what period does Haggai belong?
2. With what historical book is this contemporaneous?
3. Have you re-read that book?
4. What was Haggai's mission?
5. How many of the questions on chapter 1 were you able to answer?
6. How would you explain the purpose of the second message?
7. To what period does the fourth message point?