

Teacher Training Course

Presbyterian Church in Canada

Under the Direction of the General Assembly's Sabbath School Committee

DEPARTMENT OF SCRIPTURE—I. The Books of the Old Testament; II. Old Testament Geography and Institutions.

N.B.—It is recommended that the Revised Version be consulted in these studies.

LESSON XXV.

HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH

Haggai and Zechariah were contemporary prophets, who appeared in Jerusalem a few years after the return from the captivity, and together urged the people to rebuild the temple, Ezra 5:1. On the first return the people had repaired the foundations and set up the altar, but partly owing to intrigues of the Samaritans at the Persian court, and partly owing to their own preoccupation with other things, the work was stopped, and nothing done for about sixteen years. The two prophets stirred the people up to fresh activity, and within about four years the building was completed.

HAGGAI—Of Haggai's personal history we know nothing with any certainty. There is a Jewish tradition that he was one of those who had been carried away in the captivity, and so at this time would be a very old man, among those who are described in Ezra 3:12, 13 as weeping at the remembrance of the first temple, when the foundations of the second were laid.

Haggai's recorded prophecies are confined to the one subject and consist of four short discourses, delivered within a few weeks of each other. His discourses are simple and easily understood. He goes straight to the point, and there can be no mistaking his practical purpose.

ZECHARIAH—The collection of prophecies bearing Zechariah's name extends to fourteen chapters. The first eight chapters relate to the rebuilding of the temple, like those of Haggai, but, while beginning at the same time, continue over a period of two years, from the second to the fourth year of Darius. Unlike Haggai's discourses, those of Zechariah, in urging the rebuilding, are highly

symbolical, being a series of eight visions, the significant features of which are pointed out to the prophet by an angel. They are all intended, in different ways, to encourage the people to action.

The remaining chapters (9 to 14) present many difficulties. They fall into two groups with separate headings (chs. 9:1; 12:1), but without any prophet's name. Hence, many have supposed that they are really two short anonymous prophetic writings, which have been erroneously attributed to Zechariah, simply because they follow his discourses in the collection of the Minor Prophets. They bear no resemblance to Zechariah's visions in the first part of the book, and seem to relate to an altogether different period of Jewish history. To complete the uncertainty, a quotation is made from one of these prophecies (ch. 11:12, 13) in Matt. 27:9, and is there attributed to Jeremiah. Some would therefore place one or both collections about the time of Jeremiah, before the captivity. Others would put them from one to two hundred years later than Zechariah's time. The allusions are confusing, and the problem of their origin is as yet unsolved.

LESSON XXVI.

JOEL AND MALACHI

JOEL—Of Joel nothing is known, except that he was the son of Pethuel, of whom we have no notice elsewhere. Joel's prophecy was called forth by a plague of locusts accompanied by drought, which caused the severest distress throughout the land. In view of the situation, the prophet exhorts the people to proclaim a fast and to supplicate the Lord for relief. The prophet regards the prevailing calamity as a symbol of the approaching "Day of the Lord," which will be more