

dreadful to them still, if they do not repent, ch. 1: 15. The people seem to have responded to his appeal, for the second half of the prophecy (from ch. 2: 18 to the end) describes Jehovah's gracious change of purpose, and gives his answer to the peoples' prayer,—a promise of abundant blessing, both temporal and spiritual. When the day of the Lord comes it will have terror only for their enemies, who are to be all destroyed.

Some take the locusts to be a figurative description of a foreign invading army. But plagues of locusts were common enough and sometimes serious enough to furnish an occasion for the prophet's appeal, and there seems no good reason why the description should not be taken literally.

The date of Joel is wholly unknown, and is a matter of little consequence, as the appeal and the promise would both be equally appropriate at any such time of national calamity.

MALACHI—The prophecies of Malachi contain a denunciation of three prevailing evils, the degeneracy of the priests, inter-marriage with foreign women, and the withholding of tithes. He urges reform on two grounds, the Lord's love for them as a people, and the certainty of judgment for evil-doers at the coming day of the Lord, however well they may fare in the meantime. He concludes with the promise of the return of Elijah before that day, to lead them to repentance, in order that the curse on them may be averted.

The book does not directly give us any information as to the time when Malachi prophesied. But the evils of which he complains are those which prevailed in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. It has always been the opinion of scholars and critics that he belongs to that time.

There has always been a good deal of doubt, however, whether Malachi was the real name of the prophet. The name does not occur elsewhere and means simply "my messenger," in which sense it is used in this very book, ch. 3: 10. Jewish tradition supposed him to have been really Ezra. But had Ezra been the author of the prophecy, it is difficult to think that the authorship would have been thus concealed. Even if

Malachi was his real name, it does not help us much, for we know nothing further about his history or work.

LESSON XXVII.

THE KINGSHIP

At the time of their settlement in Canaan, described in the Book of Judges, the tribes of Israel formed separate communities. But the attacks made upon them by the people of Canaan, and especially by the Philistines, soon showed the need of a confederation of the tribes for purposes of defence.

In the time of Deborah and of Gideon we see one tribe helping another. And so clear has become the need of unity, that the elders offer kingship to Gideon. He wisely refuses, for though the need was great, the people were not ready. His son, Abimelech, however (Judges 9: 1-6) to his later sorrow, secured the appointment of himself as a king. The dignity lapsed with his death.

Samuel, by his ability, made himself an authority to all Israel, and showed that union was practicable. His age, the incapacity of his sons, and the pressing need of the times brought the crisis. The leaders believed that it was either a king or extinction.

To Samuel the demand was infidelity to Jehovah, but the people persisting, at God's bidding he yielded to their demand and ordained a king whom God pointed out.

The king chosen at first promised to be the very man the times needed. The people were broken in spirit, afraid to carry weapons, forced even to go to the smithies of the enemy to have their implements made or mended, but Saul's brave call (1 Sam. 11: 7) proclaimed the birth of a new Israel. The first king made Israel know its nationality, and gave it greater faith in itself, and its God. Unfortunately the latter part of his reign was clouded, the failure of its close presenting a sad contrast to the splendor of its commencement. Saul's had been a herculean task, but he might have achieved success had not his trust in God given place to a foolish self-confidence.

The career of David was one of conquest. He raised Israel to its greatest political