

A Survey of the Old Testament
Prophetic Books
by Pastor Richard H. Jones

7 "Haggai"

I. THE PROPHET

Haggai whose name means "festive" was the first prophet to the Jews in their land after King Cyrus had decreed their return in 536 B.C. Along with Zechariah, Haggai prophesied concerning the work which had stopped on the temple and urged the people to continue the rebuilding (Ezra 5:1; 6:14).

Jewish tradition held that Haggai was a member of Ezra's great synagogue who was buried, with honor, in the sepulcher reserved for the priests.

II. THE PROPHECY

Haggai's prophecy was directed to the returned remnant and challenged them to rebuild the temple. By order of King Artaxerxes work on the temple had been suspended 15 years (Ezra 4:17-24). This had caused the people to become complacent about the things of the Lord and selfish. Haggai addresses the people with five messages from the Lord. The first message rebuked them for indifference (1:1-12). A second message stirred them with the fact that God was with them (1:13-15). A Third message comforted them concerning the temple's appearance (2:1-9). A fourth message promised blessings upon finishing the temple (2:10-19). Finally, a fifth message prophesied exaltation over the Gentiles and safety for Isreal (2:20-23).

III. THE PERIOD

The Babylonian Kingdom which had taken Judah captive came to an end in 539 B.C. Cyrus, the Mede, swept across Asia and founded the great Persian Empire which dominated the world for two hundred years (539 - 331 B.C.).

In the first year of his reign, Cyrus made a decree for the Jews to return and gave them what was needful (Ezra 1:1-6). The actual return must have been in 536 B.C. (606 - 536 for 70 years captivity).

Zerubbabel led the people back to Palestine (Ezra 1:11; 2:2). After returning, the people set up an altar to worship (Ezra 3:2) and later laid the foundation of the temple (3:11). When the Samaritans, who arose during the captivity, wanted to join with the Jews to rebuild the temple, the Jewish leaders refused their request (Ezra 4:3). The adversaries reacted by writing a letter to the King of Persia stating if the Jews were allowed to rebuild, they wouldn't pay their taxes (Ezra 4:13). The King then ordered the work to cease (4:21). Fifteen years passed until this suspension was lifted by King Darius in the second

year of his reign (Hag. 1:1) Ezra 6:1-14). In the sixth year of Darius (516 B.C.) the temple was completed (Ezra 6:15).

Around 520 B.C. Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to resume rebuilding of the temple. The people had lost their zeal during the suspension and were seeking things of self-interests.

IV. NOTABLE THINGS

- A. Note Haggai's prophecy should be studied along with the books of Ezra and Zechariah. Study Hag. 1:1-11 with Ezra 4:24-5:1; Hag. 1:12-15 with Ezra 5:2 and Zech 1:1-6; and finally Hag. 2:10-23 with Zech. 1:7-6:15.
- B. Note the precise dating of Haggai's messages gives us the time and state of Israel after the captivity (1:1, 15; 2:1, 10, 20).
- C. Note Haggai's ministry is an Old Testament illustration of I Cor. 15:58.
- D. Note the reason for Israel's poverty in chapter one (1:9).
- E. Note the way the work of the Lord is carried out (1:13,14).
- F. Note the principle that dishonored the Lord and brought chastening (1:4).
- G. Note how the people could glorify God and experience blessings instead of chastening (1:8).
- H. Note what happened to the things gathered by those who left out the Lord (1:6,9).
- I. Note that God's chastening is corrective (2:17).

V. PERSONAL LESSONS

- A. God must be given the pre-eminence in our lives and service for blessing.
- B. Obeying the words of the Lord's messenger is obeying the Lord's words (Hag. 1:12)
- C. Complacency and indifference, to the things of the Lord, are dishonoring and result in disappointments (1:6, 9-11).
- D. What time is it according to you? (1:2,4)
- E. Disobedience results in chastening while obedience results in blessing (1:3-11; 2:14).

OUTLINE

I. SERMON ON SELFISHNESS (1:1-11)

II. SERMON TO STIR (1:12-15)

III. SERMON TO STRENGTHEN (2:1-9)

IV. SERMON TO SEE (2:10-19)

V. SERMON ON SUCCESSION (2:20-23)

