

Proper 27
Cycle C RCL

Haggai [1:15b] 2:1-9

Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 are a single collection of prophecies laid out with unusually precise dates in terms of the years of the reign of the Persian Emperor Darius I (522-486 BCE). The dates in Haggai occur only within Darius' second year or 520 BCE by our reckoning (Haggai 1:1, 15; 2:1, 10). The present passage is the second prophecy Haggai delivers to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest. As a response to the first oracle (1:1-11), the people of Jerusalem had found the gumption to return to the rebuilding of the destroyed temple (1:12-15). The present oracle assures Zerubbabel and Joshua that God knows the difficulty of the task yet will be with them and the people of Judah to construct a temple arguably more beautiful than the one destroyed in 586 BCE by Nebuchadnezzar.

Psalm 145:1-5, 18-22

This hymn is an alphabetic acrostic, *i. e.* each of its 21 verses commences with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The poetic constraints the acrostic format placed upon the poet may have found compensation by ease of learning and transmission; but it is equally likely that the acrostics were considered beautiful in their own right. Our selections are comprised of the verses from the letter *alef* to *he* and *tsade* to *tav*.

or

Psalm 98

This *hymn* shares so much of the imagery of the Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-55) that some consider the poem to be to be post-exilic. The focus of the psalm is upon the reestablishment of a righteous judgment not only for Jerusalem but for the entire earth over which Yahweh reigns

OR

Job 19:23-27a

The Book of Job contains meditations of an ancient wisdom school on the justice of God. Chapters 3-31 are a conversation between Job and each of three friends who have come to encourage him to admit his sin so that God will stop punishing him. Although Job nowhere claims to be sinless, he insists that he could not have possibly done anything to warrant the punishment he has received. His one hope is that God will give him an audience so that he could plead his case directly. In the current passage, though, Job sadly laments that even if he gained such an audience, it would likely be too late to save his life.

Psalm 17:1-9

This is a *lament*, a prayer designed to rouse God to action on behalf of the worshiper. In this case the prayer is for deliverance from personal enemies.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Some have doubted that Paul would exhort the Thessalonian Christians to hold fast to "traditions" (*paradosis*, 2:15), but much of Paul's missionary activity was indeed to pass on tradition to his new churches. Sometimes, as in 1 Corinthians 11:23, he must remind his readers

of the content of that tradition in order to correct them. Paul's difficulty in 2 Thessalonians is with those who teach that the end of the age has already arrived and that Christians can live in perfect freedom from all constraints of law and social structure. Paul's teaching about the end of the age is extremely important in combating this pernicious misunderstanding.

Luke 20:27-38

Luke has Jesus repeat here a common Pharisaic defense of the idea of the Resurrection. Although the Sadducees, a political/religious party associated with the Temple and its priesthood, did not accept the idea of the resurrection of the body, their flirtation with Greek philosophy and religion may have allowed them to believe in the immortality of the soul. In the time of Jesus the Pharisees were the majority party in the Jewish senate or "Sanhedrin" in Jerusalem; the Sadducees were the minority.

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