

Proper 28
Cycle A RCL
Revised

Judges 4:1-7

This passage contains the deuteronomistic theory of pre-monarchial Israel. When Israel sinned against the Lord, the Lord would give Israel into the hand of a powerful ruler until they cried unto the Lord for relief. In this case, Jabin, the king of Hazor, in the upper Galilee threatened to divide the Israelites in the Galilee from those in the hill country of Ephraim by taking control of the Plain of Jezreel. To that end he sent his general Sisera to a site on the slopes of Mt. Carmel where he was poised to sweep across the plain to Beth Shean at the eastern end. Deborah foiled this plot by stationing her general Barak on Mt. Tabor, with a view across the plain to the Carmel ridge. When Barak and his soldiers saw the dust raised by Sisera's army departing Harosheth-hagoiim, the Israelites came to meet Sisera in battle. That Deborah was a prophet reminds us both that the prophetic office was not confined to men and that the office of judge was a charismatic office.

Psalm 123

This *community lament* may also be associated with pilgrimage since the psalmist refers to lifting up his eyes to God's dwelling in Jerusalem as in Psalm 121:1. Pilgrimage may account for the general nature of the complaint. So instead of being a prayer for salvation from specific enemies, the psalm would refer rather vaguely to the proud and contemptuous enemies of Israel. This vagueness would make the psalm applicable to many situations of pilgrimage.

OR

Zephaniah 1:7,12-18

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah (640-609 BCE). Just as Amos had turned the traditional "day of the Lord" teaching of the court prophets around on Israel, so too did Zephaniah turn it upon Jerusalem and upon its court more than a century later. Instead of the "day of the Lord" being a day of victory for Judah's armies against their foes, it would be a day of destruction for the holy city because of its sin.

Psalm 90

This *community lament* inaugurates the fourth of the five books in the Psalter. We are reminded of the poetry of Job in the psalmist's complaint that God's righteous anger at Israel's sin is incommensurate with that sin because of the disparity of power and life span between Creator and creature.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

In developing his image of the day of resurrection, Paul drew upon several themes from Jewish apocalyptic literature. In particular, the portrayal of the end time as a time of tribulation (5:2-4), the light/darkness contrast (5:5), and the warnings against inattention to the signs of the times (represented as sleep and intoxication in 5:6-8) derive from Jewish speculation about the end of the world age. The comfort he offered the Thessalonians about the death of others in the Thessalonian community was a hope for the swift coming of God's kingdom in the person of the resurrected Jesus that would commence with the physical resurrection of the dead. In developing

his picture of the tribulations of the end of time, Paul in 5:2 made use of the prophetic “day of the Lord” tradition [to which we referred above in the note on Zephaniah].

Matthew 25:14-30

This parable is also found in Luke 19:11-27 and so belongs to the document of sayings Matthew and Luke used in preparation of their Gospels, the document modern researchers somewhat colorlessly call “Q.” Luke 19:11 applies the parable to the question of when the end of the age will occur. If that is also its aim in Matthew, the parable answers the question by indirection, pointing out that the true household servants put their attention to the daily advancement of the master’s fortunes and did not let fear of the master’s return paralyze them into inactivity.

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