

Dr. Elaine Phillips, OT Lit., Lecture 36

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Well good morning, our last time to say, “The Peace of Christ be with you.” And since we’ve done that, let’s do *boqer tov* too. Ahh, this is great. Here are the announcements, straightforward. Any questions that you need to have answered at this point on the final exam? Other than ‘What’s on it?’ Yea, Suzanna? Just make sure you study your old exams, alright? And in terms of the post-exilic history, know the names that I was pointing out last time, key figures, and in terms of post-exilic prophets; well, I’m sorry, all the prophets that we’ve done since the previous exam, just use that review sheet – that’ll come in handy I’m sure. It’ll be the same format in terms of fill in the blank with the prophet’s name, so you’re going to want to do some good review on that.

Kerry will be doing the course evaluation, so we’re going to aim to stop class about ten to ten, to give you a good twenty minutes or so. I say this every year, so I feel like a broken record to myself but you haven’t heard me say it– I don’t think – I take very seriously written comments on these evaluations. Numerical scores are fun, I mean that’s all interesting, but if there are things that you really feel compelled to comment on, please realize that those are the ones that I really do look at probably more than anything else, so write prolifically if you feel so led to do so.

You know, it’s our last day together, so we have to have a little Psalm recital, won’t we? We’re not going to sing them all, but I’ve chosen three and I hope there are at least one or two of those you might like. [singing]

[Prayer]

Father we’re eminently grateful that you have brought us together through a semester, that you’ve protected us and guided us, that your spirit has taught us. Lord we know we have much to be grateful for, so even in these last days when the pressures are high, we pray that you would continue to instill in us the joy of your salvation. Lord, help us really to be joyful, to be thankful, to recognize that all the good gifts we have do indeed come from you – they’re not just happenstance. We thank you for one another, and we do pray for each other – we pray for peace for those who are troubled, we pray for prodding for those who may need it, we pray for

encouragement and comfort, we pray for restoration. Lord may your spirit be profoundly active in each one of us and in our community. And Father, as we go our separate ways in this summer we ask for your guidance and protection – keep each one of us close to you, embrace us. May we be near your heart. Father we are also mindful of troubled spots in the world – where your truth is so desperately needed. And we pray for those who are actively involved in bringing that truth to bear on cultures that are dark. And so we ask for your light to come into those places. Lord we ask this, not because we have any merit but through the merit of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Well we're going to pick up and do our last three prophets. And as I said, we are going to try to deal with these three in about thirty-five minutes. So we are going to be doing Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. We need to do just a little bit of background before we do that, just reviewing from last time in terms of the historical context into which these three prophets are going to fit. As you're going to see, each one of these has a bit of a focus on the Temple. They are going to be different perspectives; in fact you may want to think, especially as we do first Haggai and then Zechariah, of different lenses, through which we are going to look at temple issues. Keep that in mind – and then Malachi is going to have his own take on this as well.

But here we go. A few pictures first of all, to get us going. I think we have seen this one before. This is actually a model of the temple area. Here is the temple right here, and here is the temple area -as it was in Jesus' day. And the reason I'm showing this is because as Haggai, and particularly Zechariah, are talking about the temple being re-established, as it needed to be. It had to be finished and completed in their day. They're not only focused at that point, there is also these threads that are underlying their prophecies that are looking ahead to the temple to which Jesus would come. Now, interestingly enough, this model is just not any old model, it is based very carefully on work of archeologists and on work of the people who have been looking at the historical sources, particularly Jewish sources, particularly a text called the Mishnah, that describes measurements, even, of the temple as it was – the second temple. So as you see this model, and you see this whole area of platforms and then the temple itself, this is the royal stoa. Just behind it, on the eastern side, you can't see it, is Solomon's portico. We actually have, as we read the gospels, Jesus teaching in this context. So keep this in mind. Now after that we are going to back up a little bit. And by the way, this is something that you did in

New Testament probably, so this isn't new to you at all, but it is my little tease to get you to consider coming to Israel again. The last chance I have to do this.

We are going to back up chronologically a little bit, and think of what it would have been like for God's people living in the City of David during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The city has shrunk again. You may remember that when we talked about Hezekiah, we talked about the expansion of this city, actually off this photograph into areas up here. When Nehemiah comes back and starts working on those walls that you've read about if you've read the material for today. It's a shrunken city again, so we're talking about this small area right here, and then of course the temple mount, as we see it today, would have been the area where they would have begun to rebuild the second temple as well.

The temple that we are reading about under Darius, it gets finished, is the same foundations. I need to say that carefully, because although it is called the Second Temple all the way from 516 B.C. when it gets completed through its destruction in A.D. 70 when Herod the Great comes along and does this business here. He so monumentally changes it and expands it, that in some ways it is really a third temple. But nobody talks about it that way, so we are going to use the word "same," maybe with some quotations around it.

Okay, ready to go on? Super. Let's talk first of all about our review of historical contexts. This picks up from last time just reminding ourselves of where these prophets work is going to fit. Alright? So, we talked about the decree of Cyrus in 539 B.C., and as we read Ezra chapter three, you'll remember that what you've got going on there is a joyful beginning on the temple. They lay the foundation, they rebuilt the altar, they celebrate the festival, but then the opposition starts. And from 539 approximately down to 520, they have stopped because of that. Under Darius the first, we do indeed have the completion of this. As I indicated to you last time, this might be a political maneuver on his part, because he knows that if he wants to expand West and South, particularly to Egypt, he is going to have to have some people on his frontier who are favorable to him. What better way to get that than to keep them happy by encouraging their temple rebuilding. So it is during the reign of Darius the first, Jeshua and Zerubbabel are the key figures. We talked about them last time as they appeared in the book of Ezra. We also see them in the prophets that we are going to be breezing through this morning. Then of course, Haggai and Zechariah, are our key prophetic voices. We are going to pick up

with Haggai first, after one more thing to say.

Just a reminder from last time, there is an interval in between the completion of the temple and what happens when Ezra and Nehemiah come along because we've got a good 50 years, maybe a little bit more here, 65 years happening when Ezra first comes it seems to be around 465 B.C. But the reform itself doesn't seem to take place until about 450 although there is some issues on dating. Keep in mind that the whole Esther narrative takes place in between here. We've got Esther in this blank space right here. King Xeres the first is living in the 480s so that gives us our historical framework.

Now let's just pick up our three prophets that we want to talk about. Haggai is first, or if you want to speak it in terms of Hebrew pronunciation, it's *Haggai*. He starts out with a stunning contemporary message. Get your priorities straight. Verse 4, Chapter 1: "Is it time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses while this house", ie the temple "My house, [God says], remains a ruin?" Now, the reason I say that it is stunningly contemporary is, we see it in our selves all the time. We're busy serving ourselves first. We are buying all the clothes we want, we're doing this, we're doing that. We're getting a new car, we're all concerned about mortgages on our house, but sometimes our concern for God's work and kingdom work takes second, third, or fourth place. So let me just say that however you want to restructure this for our own contemporary context, Haggai is not only talking to things 2500 year ago, he is speaking to things now as well. "Give careful thought to your ways. You've planted much but you've harvested little. You eat much but you never have enough." In other words, the fact that they're not dealing with their covenant position as they should be means that they are suffering the consequences, right? Again, "Give careful thought to your ways" Verse 7. "Go up in the mountains, bring down timber and build this house so that I may take pleasure in it."

And so, obviously they are going to pick up and do that because Haggai is prompting them. The next thing he has to say, and this is actually the middle of chapter 2. In some ways, I'm going to come back to the first part of chapter 2 in a moment. In some ways what he's doing is giving the temple personnel a little test. When you read chapter 2, basically what is happening is the priests are a test to see if they are ready to start functioning in the temple again. "Ask the priests what the law says," chapter 2 verse 11. "If a person carries consecrated meat in the fold of their garment and that fold touches something else, does that holiness

transfer?” That’s a test! Do they know these principles of contagiousness of sin, and transferability of holiness? The answer is: No. On the other hand, the next question not only has a task for the priest to see if they are ready to function, it’s also got a message. Notice, “If a person defiled by contact with a dead body touches one of these thing, does it become defiled itself?” Yes, it does. Then Haggai goes on with a more stringent lesson that I just noted up here. So it is with this people and this nation, whatever they do and whatever they offer is defiled because they have been defiled and they’re going to need some purifications. So some very interesting lessons that are build right into chapter 2 there.

Then finally we have some promises, and they are kind of bookending the center part of chapter 2. First of all, there is an emphasis on the spirit. Verse 2 of chapter 2, “Speak to Zerubabel,” remember he’s the one who’s in the kingly line, the royal line. And he says “Who of you saw this house in its former glory,” in other words, Solomon’s temple which really was a glorious temple, and this one’s smaller. But he says don’t worry, be strong “My spirit remains among you,” verse 5, don’t fear. That whole concept of the Spirit’s helping is going to show up again in Zechariah really profoundly. So as our focus is on the temple, in spite of their opposition, in spite of their fear, God is saying through Haggai here, and Zechariah later on, my Spirit is going to be part of this picture. My Spirit remains among you, don’t be afraid. And then carrying right on, in a little while, “I’m going to shake the heavens and the earth”. That’s an expression we had in Amos as well. It introduces God’s interventions. “I’m going to shake the heavens and the earth,” he says “I’ll shake all the nations and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory.”

Now, some people interpret that as simply saying lots of wealth is going to stream into this temple. The desired of all nations could be interpreted simply as wealth coming into the temple. And it does, in Herod’s temple later on. There’s a lot of opulence there. But let me suggest to you that there is something else going on as well, because the “desired of all nations” could have some implications on who’s going to come, and especially when it says “I will fill this house with my glory” in verse 9. “The glory of this house will be greater than the glory of the previous one,” even though this one looks small. Again it may well be an allusion to the fact that Jesus is going to come to this temple.

And then finally, right at the end of the book there are some promises for Zerubabel as

well. “I will take you Zerubabel son of Shael-altel. I will make you like a signet ring on my finger because I have chosen you.” Now the figure of Zerubabel is going to be important as we transition to the book of Zechariah. But that’s Haggai in a nutshell, got it? Remember all these things you need to work on, the key issue for each of these minor prophets, otherwise they all get jumbled up. Think of Haggai, think of rebuilding the temple now, that was Haggai’s real message. Get your priorities straight.

Alright, we are going to move on to Zechariah where we get a little bit more of an eschatological perspective. He’s talking about rebuilding it then, but there’s going to be a bigger focus on some long term things that are going on. Guess what, Zechariah is going to use apocalyptic, and we are going to review what that is just a moment. So, the first part of Zechariah: apocalyptic visions. They’re not only to address Jerusalem, as I noted, in the present, but this longer look ahead, a future look at Jerusalem as well in the context of surrounding evil.

What are the characteristics of Apocalyptic? We just got to know this again, as we have Apocalyptic visions again. The primary characteristic looks forward to a time when good is going to triumph because things are pretty grim at times when this shows up. What else?--fantastic imagery and symbolic visions. Visions, dreams, symbols, symbolic numbers, and you’re going to see that in Zechariah, and not only in these first chapters, but later on when we talk about shepherds as well. So Zechariah is going to employ a fair amount of apocalyptic material.

Let’s kind of get a sense in terms of how these particular visions work out. I’m focusing now in on the 6 chapters, well 5 and a half chapters. As you’ve read those for today you’ve seen that they are bookended. They are bookended by horses and horsemen, and that’s going to say something. There is a framework and its talking, I would suggest to you, about God’s sovereign control over all these things that are about to unfold. We are going to come back to those in a minute but I want us to see the structure first. In the middle of this framework, again illustrate the fact that God is sovereign controlling all these things that are forthcoming. As you look at these intervening visions, first of all, there is a focus of Jerusalem.

And there are a couple visions that address that. Then they zero in on temple and personnel associated with the temple. Personnel not only associated with functioning in it, but

also with getting it rebuilt. That's going to be specifically Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel. So chapters three and four are going to do that. Then finally it's going to work on the transformation of the people who were going to see some visions that have to do some the transformation of the people. Clearly you've got to have a temple with a functioning priesthood, because what does that symbolize? Let's just go all the way back to Torah, "The presence of God." The sacrificial process was there in order to effect remediation needed for a sinful people to come to a holy God. So the temple has to be functioning before we can even talk about these visions that illustrate the transformation of the people.

So the whole set of apocalyptic visions have a nice order to them, a nice framework if you will. Well, let's look at the visions, I'm actually going to zero in on just a couple of them, we'll run through them fast, but I want to focus on the ones in chapters three and four especially and you'll see why. Those are the ones that have to do with the temple personnel. But here we go four horsemen on patrol, that's the first one I'm suggesting to you that that is illustrative of God's protection. Again remember our framework shows God's sovereignty and so here God is protecting his people. That's what these four horsemen are illustrating. You also have four horns. The horns are bad forces, the text tells us chapter one verse nineteen, these are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem, but the craftsmen are going to be the ones who are going to throw those horns down, and get rid of them. Those foreign forces have hurt Jerusalem. So that's the first set of materials. Now we're going to zero in on one more Jerusalem village,

I forgot the measuring one. Put a little note there after four horns and craftsmen, Jerusalem is measured. I missed that one, that's chapter two. Because what it goes on to say is not only are they measuring for that particular point in time, verse five of chapter two, "I myself will be a wall of fire around it, and I will be its glory within," so a promise long term, not just there, but something that's fairly expansive I would suggest here. Then verse ten of chapter two, "I'm coming, I'll live among you, God says, many nations will be joined in the lord of that day and they will become my people," so forgive my forgot that one.

Where we really want to spend our time, however, is with chapter three, because now we've got Jerusalem taken care of, and we have to have our temple personnel functioning. So let's read this a little bit. Chapter 3 verse 1, "Then he showed me Joshua, the high priest

standing before the angel the Lord,” and whose there? The accuser, *hasatan* in Hebrew means the accuser, the same word that showed up in Job chapter one. “Satan is standing at his right hand to accuse him,” verse two, “the Lord said to Satan, ‘The Lord rebuke you Satan! ... Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?’” Verse 3, “Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes,” Why’s the high priest dressed in filthy clothes in this vision? It’s kind of odd isn’t it, remember the high priest was supposed to have all that wonderful vestment on and the purple robe and the ephod and the breastplate and the miter. Why does he have filthy clothes on in the vision? Okay, that can be one thing, an outward representation of his inner sin, but we can push it even further I would suggest.

In what way is he representing Christ? Because Christ obviously doesn’t have filth intrinsic to himself. What is the ministry of Jesus on our behalf? Push it even further, he’s bearing our sins isn’t he? And if in any way, this Joshua is looking forward, and I’m going to suggest to you in a moment that he is for reasons that are in the text, if in any way this Joshua was looking forward then this filthy clothing that he is wearing is not only his own inner imperfections and sins, but it could well be representative of his bearing the weight of human sin on him. Joshua is dressed in filthy clothes, the angels said, take off his filthy clothes, he says to Joshua, “I have taken away your sin and I will put rich garments on you,” A clean turban and so forth. Now listen to what it says after that starting at verse eight, “Listen, O high priest Joshua and you’re associates who are men symbolic of things to come.” That’s why we are going to say that this is not just Joshua, it’s not just about that particular context. You are symbolic of things to come, the text says.

It goes on, “I’m going to bring my servant, the branch.” Now we have already seen in Jeremiah, that this term “the branch,” refers to a messianic figure, and so here it is again. “See the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone and I am going to engrave an inscription on it.” This shows up in the book of Revelation among those promises that are made to the churches when they’re faithful. So there are some very interesting things that are going to be long term as well as germane to that particular point in time.

At this point, if you have your Bibles on your computer or elsewhere, skip ahead to chapter six. The section I have got noted up here, because although at this point we are beyond the apocalyptic visions it is going to develop the same theme a little bit and we want to look at

it. Chapter 6 verse 11, “Take the silver and the gold, make a crown and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua.” So there’s a crown on the head of the high priest, “Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord. It is who will build the temple of the Lord, and he’ll be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And He will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two.’” Again, just think for a moment, when the Jews returned to the land, you had one man who was the priest, you have another man who is representing the kingly line, two separate individuals, but here we are looking at somebody who is going to draw both of those things together into one person, wearing a crown representing his kingly and priestly roles all together. And of course, you wind that together with what we just looked at in chapter three and there are all sorts of adumbrations of what we see in the ministry and the work of Christ.

Next vision, I should keep my Bible in hand because this one is just as interesting. This one addresses Zerubbabel, previous one Joshua. But here in chapter 4 verse 6 was Zerubbabel we have some very interesting things. The angel says what do you see? And of course Zacharias sees a gold lampstand, bold the top, seven lights on it, seven channels to the light, and two olive trees. And again as we read through this, and I’m not going to read the whole thing, but we see the profound involvement of the Spirit. The angel says, do you know what this stuff is? And of course Zechariah says, “No, I don’t.” So the angel responds with verse six, and this I am sure if your grew up in the church singing little songs, this is one you sang, part of it. “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel, not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit.” It’s a tiny little community, these people have been beleaguered, they have been fighting opposition, and yet God says it’s not going to be might, it’s not going to be power, it is by my Spirit this stuff is all going to get done, echoing exactly what we saw in the book of Haggai. God’s Spirit will inspire them to do what needs to be done. There are tremendous promises going on there. And then of course, they go on and talk about the eyes of the Lord ranging throughout the earth and the olive trees and the olive branches and the olive trees being persons anointed.

It’s all in chapter four that I’m sort of summarizing here, I should have given you that. Chapter 4 verse 14 says, “The olive trees are those who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the

earth,” so in some way again we have an illusion to two messianic offices coming together. Now there is a lot of stuff as to how this might be understood, and what it all means and the fact that it’s all going to show up in the book of Revelation. Perhaps you’ve dealt with these in New Testament, but guess what we need to go on, isn’t that sad. Take Dr. Wilsons Class on the prophets.

Do you remember after we talk about the temple on temple personnel then I said we’re ready to talk about transformation of the people, and that’s what you’re going to see in chapter five. First of all there is the flying scroll. What on earth is the flying scroll all about? And by the way don’t be like one of my student’s years ago who called it a flying carpet, it’s a flying scroll and it’s got curses written on it, and those are the curses of the covenant. But there’s going to be a destruction of evil, that’s what going on with this. Verse 4: “I’ll send it out it will enter the house of the thief and the house of him who swears falsely by my name. It’s going to destroy those people, the curses of the covenant will come to pass, the covenant will be effected here.

Another one a basket that has a lead cover, lead being heavy. What’s in the basket? It’s a fascinating vision. It’s a woman whose representative of evil interestingly enough, and notice that she’s powerful enough (i.e evil is powerful enough) to push this lead cover up. And what’s going to happen? Two other women come along and they grab the basket and they take evil away, in fact interestingly enough they take it back to Babylon. But we have the removal in those rather dramatic terms of that basket that has all that evil stuffed into it, the removal of that basket of evil

Then finally, in terms of our closure, chapter six, the first art of it are our chariots, the four chariots, the horsemen. Again this is an image, if you remember your New Testament content, that gets picked up from the book of Revelations at chapter six. The classic four horsemen of the apocalypse, it’s coming right out of Zechariah. Now those are the apocalyptic visions, now we need to move on to the rest of the book.

During the Inter-Testamental Period, there were members of the Hasmonian dynasty about whom you’ve read for new testament, who become both king and priest. They were appointed, but that’s not the completion of it, in fact it makes a lot people mad at that point as well.

Carrying on, we have some other things that are very important that Zechariah has to say. Chapter 7 and 8, terrific preaching material, because if you don't think that one of the major problems of humankind is falsehood, then you've been living with your head in the sand. We all struggle with it, and one of the strong exhortations in these two chapters is being people of truth, justice as well. But being people of truth is extremely important. In chapters 9 and 10 some of the surrounding nations are addressed, you will see some key cities that you've heard of before, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gaza, major Philistine cities being mentioned, but others as well, so Zechariah is going to address the nations that are surrounding.

In chapter 11 he picks up an image that is familiar to us from reading Jeremiah as well, this whole idea of shepherds and shepherds representing kings. Now, Matthew is going to draw on that too, those images that show up in chapter 11, and texts that show up in chapter 11, and reappear in the Gospels with regard to the last events of Jesus life during passion week, I'll say more about that in a moment.

Then, finally chapters 12 through 14 where we have the restoration or reestablishment of Jerusalem. Now a lot of things are said here, but let me just mention about three that are important. First of all, this is all based on God's sovereign design, chapter 12 verse 1, "The Lord who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth and who forms the spirit of human kind within them" God as creator is now going to say, I'm going to make Jerusalem something, first of all its going to be a cup of reeling to those people around him, but Jerusalem is going to be restored based on God's decree as sovereign Creator and Master of the universe.

The second thing we want to note about this is that there is going to be something important for the house of David. Verse 8 of chapter 12: "On that day the Lord will shield those who live in Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them will be like David, and the house of David will be like God." "Like the angel of the Lord going before them." And then it carries on to something even stronger, and says, "And I'm going to pour out on the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced." That's God speaking, got it. "And mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first born son." Again, don't think there aren't some allusions here that get picked up in the Gospel narratives and beyond, very

important stuff.

Well just one more thing. I said there were two things, I meant three, and we've done two already. Chapter 14 talks about the gathering of people's to Jerusalem and one final cataclysmic battle. In the context of that it says: Chapter 14, Verse 4. "On that day, the Lord's feet will stand on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west." Then it goes on to describe what is going to happen after that. The very fact that the text says, "the Lord's feet are going to land on the Mount of Olives." For those of you who will go to Israel some time, one of the things you're going to see is that the Mount of Olives is covered with graves, it is just littered with graves. There are centuries and centuries and centuries of burials there. The reason is that Orthodox Jews want to be where God's going to come back. In their minds, when the Lord returns, this text is saying, he's going to come to the Mount of Olives and they want to be right there. In fact there's a wonderful rabbinic legend that says that if you're not buried in Jerusalem, in some way you're going to tunnel through underground and get to the Mount of Olives. So you're going to be there when the Lord returns, that's a nice rabbinic legend.

Alright, we need to just pick up quick references in terms of both Zechariah and the Gospels and as I said, these are fascinating because they all, the Gospel writers, are picking up on Zechariah's materials in conjunction with Jesus and the passion week. So, real quickly and I think you've got these in the lecture outline, in chapter 9, when Zechariah says, "Rejoice, daughter of Zion, your king comes to you riding on a colt on the foal of a donkey." And of course, that's picked up in terms of Palm Sunday, with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

What's interesting about chapter 9, if you keep on reading, the verses right after that talk about coming in peace and this person being a king of peace. But then, about four verses later, it seems to be alluding to his second coming, which is going to be a time of warfare and battle if you read the book of Revelation. Secondly, Jesus' betrayal by Judas for thirty pieces of silver; that's coming straight out of Zechariah. Now, the way that's dealt with in Matthew is absolutely fascinating and I hope you get into it in New Testament because we don't have time to do it here. Third, and I just read this: "Looking on him whom they have pierced." And of course, this picks up right with the Gospel's references in John. And then finally, when we have all the disciples scattering in terror at Jesus' arrest, Matthew will tell us, quoting specifically

Zechariah, “This was done to fulfill as prophesied, smite the shepherd and the sheep will scatter.” So all these prophetic references are coming into play in conjunction with Jesus and passion.

Now, we have three minutes to do Malachi, ready? Get your sprinting shoes on, here we go. The name means “my messenger,” a *malach* is a messenger. Add that ‘e’ on the end of it, it’s “my messenger.” Some people think, therefore we don’t really have a person, but we simply have this being the messenger of the Lord who is speaking. Of course, there’s some messenger themes that go throughout this, probably during Nehemiah’s time. The real message here is, since we’re talking about messengers, what happens after a generation or two of revival and fervor and love for God? Well, the Church seems to grow complacent. God’s people grow complacent. That’s what was going on in this context as well, and therefore Malachi is sent to pose challenges, God’s challenges, to these people. He does it in the following way: There’s a challenge, and the people have the audacity to come back and say, basically, ‘Oh yeah?’ Now they do it a little more nicely, “How have we done this? How have we despised your name? How have we robbed God?”

There’s a response in terms of how they have done that, and usually it’s in the context, well it follows the same pattern in Haggai’s day. They despise his name cause they’re not bringing the best for sacrifices. Malachi says, “Try bringing the lame, and the crummy sacrifices to your employer, to your boss, to your governor. See if you can get by with that.” Obviously you can’t, it would be the stupidest thing to do in the world. You’d lose your job. Yet they’re trying to do that with God and the sacrifices they’re bringing to Him. So there’s a series of challenges throughout Malachi that’s countering their complacency and lack of interest in what it is God would have them be and do.

Then finally, just a quick note on what we have in the New Testament, chapter 3. This by the way is not in your notes, it should have been. “See I will send my messenger.” Again, the name coming through right here. “I will send my messenger, who’s going to prepare the way before thee.” Gospel of Mark picks up on that. Then he’s going to go on, Mark’s going to weave that together with Isaiah, Chapter 40. “Comfort thee, comfort thee, my people preparing the way of the Lord.” But he starts off with a reference to Malachi.

We’ve already looked at the business in chapter 4 about sending Elijah. Verses 4 and 5

of Malachi chapter 4. This is how the prophetic word of God, in the prophetic section closes down, ready for it? “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb.” That’s the last reference in the Hebrew scriptures, in terms of the prophetic voice, that we have to the Torah. “Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb, for all Israel,” and then, here comes the next thing, “I’m going to send you the prophet Elijah, before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.” Of course, this gets drawn together in the prophesy that John the Baptist’s father, Zechariah receives from the angel. It’s alluded to right here, and we know that John the Baptist is indeed the forerunner, which is why of course as Mark’s talking about John the Baptist, he references chapter 3, Verse 1. But notice how this closes: Luke doesn’t quote the next part. After, it says, “He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, or else I will come and strike the land with *herem*. Remember what *herem* was? Something that is devoted to destruction, because it’s been rebellious against God, *herem*. NIV translates it, “strike the land with a curse.”

Well we have one more thing: in the context of the covenant, the book of Malachi actually starts out with the following: “‘I’ve loved you’, says the Lord, ‘but you ask, ‘Have you loved us?’” I mean talk about audacious, right. They’ve got the covenant. “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother,’ the Lord says, ‘yet I’ve loved Jacob, Esau I have hated.’” And as I’ve noted for you here, Paul’s going to pick that up in Romans 9. Now, “hate” here, I would suggest, doesn’t mean “hate” the way we often think about it. It means, that they are outside of God’s covenant, *hesed*. That’s what’s going on. In other words, God has in his absolute grace and mercy, bestowed his *hesed*, his unfailing covenant love onto Israel as a people. It’s the contrast to that. Edom’s outside of that, and therefore, that’s where the word “hate” fits in.

Well that’s probably not a very happy way to end, but you see we always end up in this kind of circumstance, don’t we? Let’s go back, and let’s think about Elijah, cause Elijah’s the forerunner and of course, the panorama of the Gospels unfolds with Elijah as the forerunner. That’s ending on a little more positive note.