

Daniel and Temple Theology

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Abstract

This article serves to introduce *God is Judge*, a commentary on the book of Daniel and companion to a new commentary on Revelation, *Pattern Recognition in the Apocalypse*, (Biblaridion Media, 2018).¹ The thrust of the commentary on Daniel seeks to demonstrate that all the conflict stories and court tales in the first half of Daniel are situational midrash related to the fall and restoration of the temple (the three in the fire) during Nebuchadnezzar's reign and the "resurrection" of temple hope (the lion's den) during the reign of Darius Hystaspis. The problem of Cyrus as temple restorer and Jewish liberator is examined in depth and reaches the conclusion that Isaiah prophecies concerned with Hezekiah (the suffering servant) were manipulated by elements that promoted an early restoration to portray Cyrus as the great liberator. Cyrus's input was ineffective and minimal and the temple was restored 21 years later by Darius (the 21 days of Dan 10.13). The writings of Daniel reflect factional infighting between elements that pushed for a swift initial restoration under Cyrus and those (like Daniel) who sought an answer for frustrated hope at the failure of the Cyrus restoration. Daniel lived to see the commencement of restoration 21 years later but was informed that and even longer delay (70 weeks) was necessary before the true temple (the messiah) would be revealed and a great Jubilee of Atonement inaugurated.

¹ *God is Judge (GID)* and the companion commentary *Pattern Recognition in the Apocalypse (PRITA)* are available online here: <http://www.biblaridion.info/index.html>

Calendrical manipulation

Seder Olam, the Jewish calendar of a later era, was manipulated by omitting Persian era monarchs so that the interval between temple destructions equated to the 490 years of Daniel's prophecy allowing the Rabbi's to view completion of the Mishna as the end of the "Torah era" thus issuing in the "Talmudic era, which predominately found a home in Babylonian academies. Such revisionism was necessary because the expected messiah had (in their view) not appeared to inaugurate the new era (as predicted by Daniel).

Jewish history is replete with such revisionism and Daniel's prophecy featured large in messianic calculations and uprisings. The Maccabee uprising occurred 420 years after the destruction of the first temple – the timing no doubt influenced by Daniel, with the last "seventy" no doubt meant to herald the new era – but that also (like Cyrus the "temple builder") proved to be a red herring. The divine time table cannot be forced or usurped.

The prophetic timetable was "reset" during the Jubilee year of 424/5² when Nehemiah reconfirmed the *Abrahamic covenant* with the people. Scholars frequently group Nehemiah 9 together with Daniel 9.³ The covenant is proposed in Neh. 9.38 and pledged in Neh. 10. Eskenazi comments as follows; "Like Abraham, and in sharp contrast to all the previous generations for whom you did so much, we are faithful. How is our faithfulness demonstrated? With the pledge that follows in chapter 10. Abraham was faithful, אֱמַנָה. We are faithful, we sign a pledge – אֱמַנָה"⁴

The covenant was confirmed in 424/5 BCE and 420 years later (6x7) *John the Baptist and Christ were born*. The Jewish Roman War commenced 70 years after their birth of

² For 424 as a Jubilee year see; Margaret Barker, *The time is fulfilled: Jesus and the Jubilee*, (first published SJT 53.1, (2000), pp.22-32). <http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/barker.pdf> (see page 3).

³ Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, *Nehemiah 9-10: Structure and Significance*, Journal of Hebrew Scriptures - Volume 3: Article 9 (2001); §1.8 "In a most helpful appendix, Boda charts the numerous designations that scholars have used to classify Nehemiah 9 and the various texts with which they group Nehemiah 9. It can be noted as a result that the vast majority of studies group Nehemiah 9 with Daniel 9 and Ezra 9. Among the 44 studies that Boda lists, 36 group it with both Daniel 9 and Ezra 9 and another six with either Daniel 9 or Ezra 9. In addition, nine groups also include Psalm 106 with Nehemiah 9".

⁴ *Ibid.*, Eskenazi, §3.3 and §2.18 - Eskenazi adds a reference to Gilbert in a footnote, "Le place de la loi dans la priere de Nehemie 9", M. Carrez, J. Dore, and P. Grelot, ed., *De la Torah au Messie*. Paris: Desclee (1981), 307-316

Christ and 3½ years after that the second temple was destroyed leaving the remaining 3½ years of Daniel's prophecy unfulfilled.

Lights and Pentecost

The Angelic annunciation of the Baptist's arrival occurred when his father (Zacharias) was performing his temple duties in the Passover month of Nissan⁵ during the allotment of the priestly course of Abijah. John the Baptist was subsequently born during the Feast of Lights (but he was not "*that light*", John 1.8) as a witness⁶ to the dedication of a new temple and six months later Jesus was born in the second week of Elul and presented at the temple eight days later (as the fruit of the Spirit, the word made flesh) during Pentecost.

Dedicating a new Temple

The Feast of Lights, or *Chanukah* was instigated by the Maccabees to rededicate the temple after the profanations wrought by Antiochus Epiphanes. The Maccabees were mindful of Danielic prophecies and also of the blessing accorded Haggai concerning temple restoration **given the day before Chanukah**; "...from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month (Hag 2.18).....from this day will I bless you (Hag 2.19)..."

The Maccabee's choice of the the 25th of the ninth month for the "Feast of Lights" was therefore propitious, religiously motivated and politically expedient. It speaks of the blessing accorded to restoring the fortunes of the temple. It is fitting then that John the Baptist was born on this day. The Baptist was himself an Aaronic priest but he came as the messenger of the covenant to *dedicate a greater priesthood and temple*.

⁵ This can be calculated by working backwards from the course of Jehoiarib who was serving on the 5th of Ab when the second temple was destroyed (*Ta'anith 29a*)

⁶ Compare the two lamp-stands of Rev 11. In the first century both John and Jesus performed the function of witnessing for a 3½ year cycle. Jesus is the "faithful witness" (Rev 1.5). The pattern established by Jesus (and the Baptist) is followed by the "two witnesses".

Destruction of the temple and time periods

The enigmatic time periods of Daniel (1150, 1260, 1135,) are not *ex-eventu* prophecy or successive Maccabee era “corrections” hastily updated during the Antiochene crisis. They represent intervals on the Jewish lunar calendar between temple feasts. The starting point is always the *fast for the destruction of the temple* on the 9th of Ab and this is taken as year one of a 3½ year cycle; allowing for different combinations of deficient, regular and leap years, the different time periods **always terminate on a prominent feast day** (either on the Day of Atonement, Chanukah, Purim or Passover).

Conclusion

The theology of Daniel is concerned with temple restoration and atonement. In order for a new temple to be revealed the old temple had to be removed. That new temple was Jesus Christ; “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*” (John 2.19). The history of the Jewish people is schematized and interrupted by 3½ year cycles of intense persecution and temple profanation/destruction/attempted restoration (Antiochus, Roman War, Kochba Revolt) in a series of repeat patterns.

These patterns were interrupted by a 2,000 year lacunae during which Babylonian Judaism was developed and the gospel was preached to the gentiles. The remaining 3½ year cycle of Daniel’s prophecy remains (at present) unrealized; the phenomenon of recurrent patterns is examined in a new commentary on Revelation, *Pattern Recognition in the Apocalypse*.