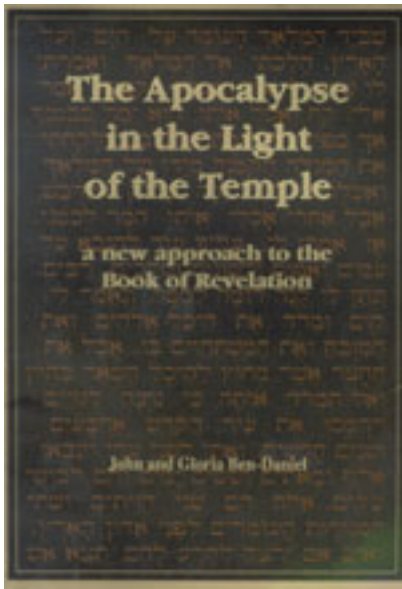


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Ben-Daniel, John, and Gloria Ben-Daniel

The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple: A New Approach to the Book of Revelation

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The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple is an attempt by the authors to “offer a new way of seeing” the book of Revelation that “leads to an understanding of its visions as a whole” (ix). They propose a new approach to Revelation by “applying the traditional method of interpreting Scripture by means of Scripture” (3). *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple* suggests that the theme of the temple and temple worship are strong keys to understanding the theology of Revelation. The Ben-Daniels have based their hypothesis on these observations: (1) religious objects of the temple are recalled with great frequency in the Apocalypse, and (2) the elements of the temple are also seen in the visions of God and the throne of heaven (4–5). The book is divided into three parts that explore texts in the Apocalypse from the perspective of the Jewish temple and priestly worship.

The first section surveys the Apocalypse as a liturgy in the temple of God. Jesus as the slain lamb has become both the high priest and sacrifice for a new Yom Kippur. The beginning of the Apocalypse occurs in the heavenly temple, where Jesus, the Son of Man, is performing the ritual of atonement for the people of God. The seven churches and spirits represent the Holy Spirit’s movement in the world as redemption and atonement for those worshipping God. The trumpets and bowls signal the libation from the victim’s blood (Jesus the lamb), which is poured out upon the world. When the lamb breaks the

seals, it signals the beginning of temple sacrifice. This, according to the Ben-Daniels, is similar to blowing the *magrefah*, which signaled the morning worship (47–48). In the Apocalypse Satan represents the Azazel (scapegoat) that is sent throughout the land to deceive the inhabitants. While Satan deceives the world, Christians are martyred. Yet this is part of the heavenly liturgy that brings atonement to the world.

In part 2 the Ben-Daniels discuss the role of prophet and prophecy in the Apocalypse and the Day of Atonement. In this section the authors suggest that the scroll John ingests, his acts of measuring the temple, and the preaching and death of the two witnesses are reflections of the rule of faith in the community. This rule of faith separates the unbelievers from the community and determines their outcome at judgment. The church is to “prophesy” within the body and separate the true believer from the faithless. Those cast out will take their place with the outsiders and will “trample the holy place” for a short time. The prophets and witnesses will speak until death but will be vindicated by the salvation of God at the end of the world. The center of the Apocalypse, according to the authors, is the 1,260 days and forty-two months that the Gentiles trample the holy temple.

The final section of the authors’ book addresses the fulfillment of God’s mystery. The two witnesses have announced the realization of atonement, but the mystery is fulfilled by the messianic war. The Christian community waits for redemption during the Satanic reign (called a pseudo-messianic reign) of the beast. During this wait, God prepares for atonement through the death and resurrection of Jesus. The end of the world brings judgment on the wicked and salvation to the chosen. They are married to Christ and take part in the new kingdom, feast, and new temple. The emphasis for the reader is to be reconciled during the liturgy of the Atonement rather than waiting to face the wrath of God. The authors attach an appendix that gives an outline of the Apocalypse from their perspective and defends the view that the center of the Apocalypse is 11:1–15:5, which includes the 1,260 days and forty-two months.

I think that the authors have demonstrated their knowledge of the temple and its worship in both biblical and Judaic literature. They have given a different approach to the Apocalypse and have found a way to present the letter as a moving picture or story of the Day of Atonement for the early church, as well as the church today. They have also illustrated points of worship in the Apocalypse as they relate to the Jewish temple and liturgy. Satan as Azazel provides an interesting twist to the suffering of the saints as well as those who suffer today.

I do feel, however, that the authors have placed too much emphasis on the Jewish nature of the text and ignored the stronger evidence of Caesar worship in Asia, Domitian’s

similarity to the beast, and the issues that the Gentile Asian Christians were facing in the first century. I believe that the church in Asia Minor would not have been as concerned with the Day of Atonement (especially if the letter was written post-70 C.E.) or temple liturgy in light of the Gentile issues that they faced in their cities. I also feel that the suffering Jesus in the Apocalypse is the faithful and resurrected Christ rather than the victim in the book. The authors of *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple* seem to emphasize a passive “hold on until the end” view rather than an aggressive “remain faithful even to death” view that the Apocalypse presents to the Asian Christians.

I enjoyed the book and will look forward to presenting it as “another view of Revelation” in my future classes. The Ben-Daniels are part of a growing group of scholars who are forcing us constantly to reinterpret Revelation within scripture. They also challenge the reader to take a fresh look at a book that has lost its *Jewishness* due to the many commentaries and books written from various perspectives. I think that the book is worth buying because it does bring to light hidden meanings that most of us have missed in our usual study of the Apocalypse.