

THE TEMPLE THEME IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

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The book of Daniel continues to spawn numerous studies, and the present article aims to contribute to scholarly efforts at a theological integration of its contents. Such efforts are needed because of the obvious bifurcation of the book into stories (chs. 1–6) and visions (chs. 7–12), a generic division that threatens to compromise the canonical integrity of the book.¹ My thesis is that one of the major themes of the book is that of the temple and that this theme assists in the theological unification of the stories and visions, for it has a prominent place in both halves of the book and is handled in a similar way in both.²

The more obvious references to the temple in Daniel are as follows. The book of Daniel opens with the taking of the temple vessels by Nebuchadnezzar and their transportation to Babylon (1:2). Their later sacrilegious use by Belshazzar is described in chapter 5 (5:2). In chapter 8, the “little horn” stops the Jews worshipping their God and overthrows the sanctuary (8:11–12), but then God’s sanctuary is restored (8:13–14). The prayer recorded in Daniel 9 complains of the desolate state of the sanctuary and contains earnest prayer for its restoration, and the sanctuary is still the focus in the angelic revelation in 9:24–27. According to Collins, “there is no doubt ... that the desecrated temple dominates both chaps. 8 and 9 and that its restoration was the primary focus of the author’s hopes in these chapters.”³ Finally, chapters 10–12 give prominence to the future profanation of the temple (11:31; 12:11). Carla Sulzbach goes as far as to say that the temple is the main theme that runs through the entire book.⁴ This brief survey is enough to

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¹ For an exploration of the divisions of the book (including the generic divide), see G. R. Goswell, “The Divisions of the Book of Daniel,” in *The Impact of Unit Delimitation on Exegesis* (Pericope: Scripture as Written and Read in Antiquity 7; ed. Raymond de Hoop, Marjo C. A. Korpel, and Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2009) 89–114.

² Cf. Tim Meadowcroft, “Exploring the Dismal Swamp: The Identity of the Anointed One in Daniel 9:24–27,” *JBL* 120 (2001) 429–49 (here 435); Luc Dequeker, “King Darius and the Prophecy of Seventy Weeks, Daniel 9,” in *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (BETL 106; ed. A. S. van der Woude; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1993) 187–210 (here 209): “The problem of the temple stays at the centre of the eschatological expectations of Daniel.”

³ John J. Collins, “The Meaning of ‘The End’ in the Book of Daniel,” in *Of Scribes and Scrolls: Studies on the Hebrew Bible, Intertestamental Judaism, and Christian Origins, Presented to John Strugnell on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday* (ed. Harold W. Attridge, John J. Collins, and Thomas H. Tobin; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990) 91–98 (here 94; suspension points mine).

⁴ *From Here to Eternity and Back: Locating Sacred Spaces and Temple Imagery in the Book of Daniel* (unpublished doctoral dissertation; McGill University, 2009) 129; cf. R. G. Hamilton-Kelly, “The Temple and the Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic,” *VT* 20 (1970) 1–15 (here 15): “There is in apocalyptic literature a clear tradition of hostility to the temple of Jerusalem, coupled with a great concern for the temple as a

show that the temple deserves closer examination as a possible integrating theme for the canonical book as a whole.

In the following discussion, I view the temple as a leading “theme” in the book of Daniel rather than simply a “motif,” for motif has the more concrete sense of a recurrent image or object, whereas theme is broader than motif and various motifs may contribute to the one theme.⁵ The temple as a theme may be present even when the temple as an object or image is absent, namely by means of various associated cultic and non-cultic motifs (e.g. the temple vessels in Daniel 5). To identify the temple as a leading theme is to assert that it embodies an important aspect of the fundamental value system expressed in Daniel as a literary work.

I. THE CANONICAL POSITION(S) OF THE BOOK OF DANIEL

The book of Daniel has two alternative placements in OT canons, either following Ezekiel (in Greek canons) or followed by Ezra-Nehemiah (in the Hebrew canon). In the former canon, Daniel is regarded as a prophet (the subscription of Codex Alexandrinus names the book Δανιήλ προφήτου [Daniel the prophet]),⁶ and his book follows that of Ezekiel as the last of the great prophets.⁷ That would seem to be the intent of this canonical placement, on the readerly assumption that material that is juxtaposed is related in some way in meaning. The inclusion of Daniel among the prophets in Greek canons was probably due to the visionary character of Daniel 7–12. Following Ezekiel, which ends with the vision of the new temple (Ezekiel 40–48), the temple theme of Daniel is thereby highlighted, with Daniel commencing with the sacking of the Jerusalem temple. As well, the prayer and the angelic revelation of Daniel 9 results from the hero’s meditation on the prophecies of Jeremiah (9:2), so that the book sheds light on the meaning of the preceding books in the prophetic corpus (to which it belongs in the Greek canonical orders).

On the other hand, in the Hebrew canon Daniel comes after Esther and before Ezra-Nehemiah, that is, between books that are considered histories.⁸

religious idea. . . . The temple as an idea plays an important role in apocalyptic thought” (suspension points mine).

⁵ For this paragraph, see Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981) 95.

⁶ H. J. M. Milne and T. C. Skeat, *Scribes and Correctors of the Codex Sinaiticus* (London: British Museum, 1938) plate 24; F. G. Kenyon, ed., *The Codex Alexandrinus* (Royal MS. 1 D V–VIII) in *Reduced Photographic Facsimile: Old Testament Part III Hosea–Judith* (British Museum; London: Longmans & Co., 1936) plate 417.

⁷ This is the order in Vaticanus and Alexandrinus (Sinaiticus is defective), namely: Ezekiel, Susanna–Daniel–Bel and the Dragon, all viewed as one book in Alexandrinus (the subscription τέλος Δανιήλ προφήτου [the end of Daniel the prophet] only coming after Bel and the Dragon). Papyrus 967 is a Greek manuscript dated c. AD 200 (the earliest witness to the Old Greek version) and has the order: Ezekiel, Daniel, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Esther.

⁸ See R. Raviv, “Concerning the Original Position of the Book of Daniel in the Jewish Bible,” *JSIJ* 6 (2007) 1–12 (Hebrew), who argues that this was its original position. In this article, his main target is Klaus Koch (see the next footnote). One of the points he makes is that many Bible characters are latter designated prophets in rabbinic writings (e.g. David, Solomon), but that does not mean that the books connected to them were deemed prophecy.

Daniel is given a historical focus by its placement after Esther (the chief characters, Esther and Mordecai live at court), with this book (especially Daniel 1–6) amounting to further “court tales”. This reading is reinforced by Ezra-Nehemiah which follows, featuring as it does other Jewish heroes who come from the Persian court (Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah in turn). Most likely, it was the narrative character of the “court tales” of Daniel 1–6 that caused the book to be placed among the post-exilic histories.⁹ The development described in Ezra-Nehemiah following can be viewed as an answer to the prayer of Daniel 9, wherein Daniel prays for the restoration of the sanctuary (especially 9:17–19), for the hoped-for rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple is recounted in Ezra 1–6. As well, the taking of the temple vessels to Babylonia (Dan 1:1, 2) is reversed by the movement recounted in Ezra 1.¹⁰ As in the book of Daniel, it is stated in Ezra that Nebuchadnezzar had placed the sacred vessels in the temple in Babylon (Ezra 1:7; 5:14, 15; 6:5), so they were available for repatriation to Judah.

It is the different character of the two halves of Daniel that has caused the alternate positioning of the book in the Hebrew and the Greek canons. What I have sought to show, however, is that reading the book of Daniel in its (alternate) canonical positioning relative to other biblical books (whether in Hebrew or Greek canons) serves to draw attention to the temple theme in this book.¹¹

II. HOW DANIEL 1 BEGINS AND ENDS

Daniel 1 is regularly viewed as an introduction to the book and is of particular importance for any evaluation of the book’s thematic foci. For example, John Goldingay sees chapter 1 as introducing the three pervasive realities with which the book deals, namely power, learning, and religion.¹² Aaron B. Hebbard notes at least two features of chapter 1 that suggest its character of an introduction: one significant feature is the fact that it is written in Hebrew (unlike chapters 2–7 which are in Aramaic, starting at 2:4aβ); the second feature is that all the stories of chapters 2–6 fit into the temporal frame provided by chapter 1.¹³ Daniel 1 tells the story of the refusal by the four Jewish youths to eat the king’s food.¹⁴ It is

⁹ Klaus Koch views this as a later rabbinic relocation of the book as a reaction to the excesses of Jewish revolutionaries who made use of its eschatological content, see “Is Daniel Also Among the Prophets?,” *Int* 39 (1985) 117–30.

¹⁰ P. R. Ackroyd, “The Temple Vessels: A Continuity Theme,” in *Studies in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (VTS 23; Leiden: Brill, 1972) 166–81 (here 178–80).

¹¹ It is as a guide to reading and interpretation that the question of canonical placement is important. For more on the hermeneutical implications of the positioning of biblical books, see Gregory R. Goswell, “The Order of the Books in the Hebrew Bible” *JETS* 51 (2008) 673–88; idem, “The Order of the Books in the Greek Old Testament,” *JETS* 52 (2009) 449–66.

¹² “Daniel in the Context of Old Testament Theology,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception: Volume II* (ed. J. J. Collins and Peter W. Flint; VTS 83,2; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 639–60 (here 649–50).

¹³ *Reading Daniel as a Text in Theological Hermeneutics* (PTMS 109; Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009) 22–23, 54–55, 75.

¹⁴ For the refusal to eat the king’s food as resistance to royal claims to power, see Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, “Hebrew Satyagraha: The Politics of Biblical Fasting in the Post-Exilic Period (Sixth to Second Century B.C.E.),” *Food and Foodways* 5 (1993) 269–92 (here 285).

important to note how the chapter begins and ends (vv. 1–2, 21). The scene opens with an attack on Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, who desecrates “the house of God” (taking away temple vessels; 1:2). The chapter ends with a leap forward in time to the year of the ascension of Cyrus (“the first year of King Cyrus”), who in that notable year gave permission for the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple. This coda marks the end of the narrational unit by moving far beyond the immediate circumstances of the events narrated in chapter 1, informing the reader that Daniel “continued until the first year of King Cyrus” (1:21).¹⁵ As noted by John J. Collins, this date indicates “the horizon of the tales”, for chapters 1–6 do not go beyond the reign of Cyrus (NB 6:28 [Aram. 6:29]).¹⁶ This precise dating does not absolutely exclude a remoter future (“until” [עד]), and 10:1 in fact shows that Daniel continued at least until “the *third* year of Cyrus”, though on first reading the reader would probably have understood 1:21 to imply Daniel’s demise by this date. Rather than posit a clumsy editorial contradiction between this date and the one in 10:1, as suggested, for example, by André Lacocque,¹⁷ the limitation of Daniel’s tenure to the first year of Cyrus can be understood as intended to highlight this as a particularly significant date within the book.

III. THE FIRST YEAR OF CYRUS (= DARIUS)

Despite the minimal references to Cyrus in the book, the importance of this date (“the first year of King Cyrus”) elsewhere in the OT should cause the reader to pause and take note (e.g. Ezra 1:1; 2 Chr 36:22). As well, when the book of Daniel itself is examined more closely, it is found that this date is by no means ignored nor its significance forgotten (*pave* Collins).¹⁸ Despite the variety of scholarly views as to the identity of “Darius the Mede,” he is probably to be equated with Cyrus, interpreting the conjunction in 6:28 (Aram. 6:29) as a *waw-explicativum* (“the reign of Darius *and* [= that is] the reign of Cyrus the Persian”).¹⁹ On this understanding, the events of Daniel 6 take place during this important year, the first year of Darius (= Cyrus; 5:31 [Aram. 6:1]). This explains Daniel’s deliberate continuation of his pious custom of daily prayers despite the personal risk involved (“When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, ...”; 6:10 [Aram. 6:11]). He prays in an upper room whose windows are “open toward

¹⁵ For this sense of יהוי, cf. Jer 1:3; Ruth 1:2 (references provided by James A. Montgomery, *The Book of Daniel* [ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1927] 139); BDB 226 III.2; Arnold B. Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel: Textkritisches, Sprachliches und Sachliches* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1914) 7.128. Ehrlich finds a similar use of היה (= חיה) in *Baba Bathra* 15a. He also suggests that this understanding of 1:21 lies behind the Old Greek text of Dan 10:1 that has the *first* year of Cyrus rather than the third year (as in MT and Theodotion).

¹⁶ *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 145.

¹⁷ *The Book of Daniel* (London: SPCK, 1979) 33.

¹⁸ Collins provocatively states concerning Dan 10:1: “Here, as throughout the Book of Daniel, the release of the Jewish captives in the first year of Cyrus is ignored” (*Daniel* 372).

¹⁹ For arguments in favour of this identity, see Brian E. Colless, “Cyrus the Persian as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel,” *JSOT* 56 (1992) 113–26; Ernest C. Lucas, *Daniel* (AOTC 20; Leicester: Apollos, 2002) 136–37.

Jerusalem,”²⁰ because he is praying *for* Jerusalem, as shown by the recorded prayer of Daniel 9 (dated the same year, NB 9:1).²¹ Most scholars do not sufficiently emphasise the connection with Daniel 9, seeing 1 Kgs 8:44–48 as sufficient to explain Daniel’s practice of praying toward Jerusalem, however, Daniel 9 lies closer to hand. Commenting on Daniel’s action preliminary to his act of prayer in Dan 9:3, W. Sibley Towner notes, “The notion of ‘turning the face’ suggests an act of orienting oneself directionally toward the Jerusalem sanctuary....”²² The connection with Daniel 9 is also supported by Daniel’s posture in prayer: “he got down upon his knees” (6:10 [Aram. 6:11]), a posture that often denotes intense supplication (cf. 1 Kgs 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Ps 95:6; Lk 22:41; Acts 7:60). The cross-reference in Ezra 9 is the most significant, seeing that Ezra’s prayer shares many features in common with the prayer of Daniel 9, such that in Daniel 6 it is the same type of prayer that our hero prays, namely an earnest prayer of confession over Israel’s present state of shame (see Dan 9:7, 8; cf. Ezra 9:7).²³ As well, in both 6:10 (Aram. 6:11) and 9:3, Daniel makes “petition” and “supplication” (the second word has the root נָתַן in both texts).²⁴ The two words allude to the two main parts of the prayer in Daniel 9 (vv.4–14, 15–19). Daniel 6:10 (Aram. 6:11) is, therefore, an important link between the two halves of the book.²⁵

As well, Gabriel’s temporal reference in 9:25 (“from the going forth of the word”) must refer to the decree from God embodied in the revelation to Dan 9:24–27 (given the parallel expression found in 9:23),²⁶ but the divine decree to restore (the exiles) and build Jerusalem is put into effect by a corresponding decree from a Persian ruler, so that it is best to find here another allusion to Cyrus’s edict of 538 BC.²⁷

What is more, the same key date is mentioned in 11:1a (“in the first year of Darius the Mede”).²⁸ The angelic speaker tells Daniel how he had previously assisted Michael, when (given the date) the overthrow of Babylon by Persia had been effected (cf. 5:31 [Aram. 6:1]). This changeover of temporal power led to the

²⁰ On this feature, see 1 Kgs 8:30, 35, 38, 42, 44, 48; 2 Chron 6:34; also see Tobit 3:11 for praying toward an open window (cf. Pss 5:7; 28:2).

²¹ In Papyrus 967, Daniel 9 immediately follows Daniel 6 in a chronological sequencing of the chapters, see R. Timothy McLay, “The Old Greek Translation of Daniel IV–VI and the Formation of the Book of Daniel,” *VT* 55 (2005) 304–23.

²² *Daniel* (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1984) 130 (suspension points mine).

²³ For the connections between the prayers in Daniel 9 and Ezra 9, see Rodney A. Werline, *Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism: The Development of a Religious Institution* (SBLJL 3; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998) 75.

²⁴ Montgomery, *Book of Daniel* 360–61.

²⁵ Its character as a link-verse is highlighted in the Leningrad Codex, which identifies 6:11 (Aram. 12) in the *masora marginalis* and *masora finalis* as the halfway point in verses of the total book (with 178 verses on either side). Those who read the book of Daniel in this form would perceive that 6:10 (Aram. 6:11) is right at the juncture between the two halves.

²⁶ Collins, *Daniel* 354–55.

²⁷ E. J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949) 201–3.

²⁸ Cf. LXX (Arabic version) “of Cyrus” as noted by the *BHS* textual apparatus. The date is not to be excised as a gloss, see Pablo David, “Daniel 11:1: A Late Gloss?,” in *Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* 506–14, though I do not accept his specific proposal about how to interpret the text.

Jews being able to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple, though the only reference in the book of Daniel to the restoration of the exiles is 9:25 (“from the going forth of the word *to restore* [להשיב] = to cause (someone) to return] and to build Jerusalem”).²⁹

In summary, therefore, repeated mention in the book of this key year suggests that the limitation of the date in 1:21 to “the first year of Cyrus” makes a theological point rather than providing bare chronology about the life of the protagonist Daniel. The result is that the reader is to understand Daniel 1 as moving from temple despoliation (1:2) to the year when permission was given for its rebuilding, the year of the decree of Cyrus (1:21; cf. Ezra 1:1–4).³⁰

This suggests that the book of Daniel is a statement about the crisis years of exile, the period wherein the temple lies desolated and destroyed. Foreign interference with the temple (= God’s palace [היכל]) placed a question mark over God’s sovereignty.³¹ These years called in question God’s kingship, for God’s temple, the definitive symbol of his kingship, is desecrated by Nebuchadnezzar (and later destroyed). There is, however, no implication of God’s powerlessness, for the Danielic narrator reveals that “the Lord gave [נתן]” Jehoiakim and some of the temple vessels into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (1:2). This revelation prevents the Jewish reader sharing the misperception of the Babylonian king, who attributes the victory to his patron god (as implied by his deposition of confiscated vessels “in the treasury of his god” [mentioned twice in 1:2]).³² This view of events is confirmed by the narrator’s disclosure to the reader of God’s superintendence of later action in Daniel 1, such that the faithful and courageous stance of Daniel and his three companions in refusing to eat the king’s food is rewarded.³³ The book of Daniel, like other post-exilic books (cf. Chronicles, Haggai), is temple-focused and as such has a prominent “kingdom of God” theology. In the case of Daniel, this takes the form of an extended exploration of the theme of the clash between God’s kingdom and human kingdoms.

²⁹ Collins, *Daniel* 355.

³⁰ Noted also by Sulzbach, *From Here to Eternity and Back* 101.

³¹ In 2 Sam 7:1 it is noted that “the king [David] dwelt in his house”, namely in the palace built by the Phoenicians for him (5:11), a house understood as proclaiming his kingship (NB 5:12). The logic of David’s implied request to Nathan is that it is even more appropriate for God the King to have a house (7:3), see J. Schelhaas, “II Samuel 7:1–5,” in *The Law and the Prophets* (ed. J. H. Skilton; Philadelphia: P&R, 1974) 283–297; cf. Arvid S. Kapelrud, “Temple Building, a Task for Gods and Kings,” *Orientalia* 32 (1963) 56–62; V. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOTSup 115; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992) 135–139.

³² Philip Chia, “On Naming the Subject: Postcolonial Reading of Daniel 1,” in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader* (ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) 171–185 (172–174).

³³ The theme of God’s providential control is carried by three significant uses of the Hebrew root נתן (“to give”) in the chapter (1:2, 9, 17), see Danna Nolan Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty: A Story of Stories in Daniel 1–6* (JSOTSup 20; Sheffield: SAP, 1988) 35, 42; C. L. Seow, “The Rule of God in the Book of Daniel,” in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts* (ed. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004) 219–46 (here 220–21).

IV. THE THEME OF THE TEMPLE VESSELS

The theme of the temple vessels introduced in 1:2 reemerges in chapter 5, which describes Belshazzar's act of gross sacrilege. As is the case for the Chronicler (cf. 2 Chr 36:7), the most important feature of Nebuchadnezzar's action against Jerusalem for the author of Daniel is the taking of temple vessels.³⁴ His placing of the sacred vessels in "the house of his god" in chapter 1 could be viewed as showing deference toward God (cf. Dan 11:7, 8).³⁵ Belshazzar's act of deliberate profanation is quite another matter and leads to the overthrow of the Babylonian kingdom.

The narrative of Daniel 5 exposes and condemns God-defying arrogance in not recognising God's rule, Belshazzar having failed to learn from his father's experience (5:21–23; cf. 4:25, 32 [Aram. 22, 29]). This father-son relation is stressed in the chapter (5:2, 11 [x2], 13, 18, 22 ["his son"]). The phrasing of verse 2 ("which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple") gives the viewpoint (and the motivation) of Belshazzar. For *Belshazzar*, the Nebuchadnezzar connection is what is important: the vessels represent for Belshazzar his father's greatest success (the capture of Jerusalem).³⁶ Belshazzar by his gross sacrilege is trying to vie with his royal father in importance by showing himself more courageous than his father (who had a superstitious fear of the vessels). On the other hand, verse 3 ("which had been taken out of the temple, which is [יְהוָה] the house of God") shows a significant change in the wording from verse 2 and gives the narrator's viewpoint.³⁷ For the *narrator*, the God-connection is what is important. Belshazzar's action of drinking from the sacred vessels, whatever else it may be, is an affront to God. What is more, the elements of gold, silver, bronze and iron related to the various pagan gods honoured by Belshazzar's toasts (5:4) recall the components of the statue in the vision of chapter 2 and bring the message of the vision to the reader's mind, namely that God is in control of the changeover of kingdoms, and one such changeover takes place at the close of this chapter (5:30–31 [Aram. 5:30; 6:1]).

V. THE "MOUNTAIN" OF DANIEL 2

On first reading, Daniel 2 may appear to lack any instance of temple imagery, but the "mountain" of the vision is most likely a metaphor for God's future universal rule centred on Zion and its temple (2:34–35, 44–45), given the use of this image more generally in the OT (e.g. Isa 2:2–4: "the mountain of the house of

³⁴ Isaac Kalimi and James D. Purvis, "King Jehoiachin and the Vessels of the Lord's House in Biblical Literature," *CBQ* 56 (1994) 449–57.

³⁵ For the same practice by other conquerors, see Lisbeth S. Fried, *The Priest and the Great King: Temple-Palace Relations in the Persian Empire* (Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego 10; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004) 26, 72.

³⁶ Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty* 117–18. In this section, I acknowledge my substantial dependence upon Fewell's fine exposition.

³⁷ Bill T. Arnold, "Wordplay and Narrative Techniques in Daniel 5 and 6," *JBL* 112 (1993) 479–85 (here 481).

the LORD”).³⁸ Within the book of Daniel itself, 9:16 (“your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain”), 9:20 (“the holy mountain of my God”), and 11:45 (“the glorious holy mountain”) confirm the postulated identification.³⁹ Given wider biblical usage, the “stone” that was cut from a mountain and that became a mountain can be viewed as representing the same thing (2:35, 45; cf. Isa 28:16; Zech 12:3).⁴⁰

Daniel 3 is to be read as a continuation of the action in chapter 2, as shown, for instance, by the absence of a date formula in 3:1 (cf. 2:1).⁴¹ The “image” set up by Nebuchadnezzar is a materialisation of the “image” he saw in the dream (cf. 2:31; the same Aramaic word is used for both [צִלְמִים]).⁴² His action is to be understood as an attempt to prevent the vision becoming reality (namely the replacement of his kingdom by subsequent kingdoms). God had revealed that he would “set up (קִים) a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (2:22) but Nebuchadnezzar’s reaction is to “set up (קִים) an image” (note the recurrence of the phraseology in 3:2, 3 [2x], 5, 7, 12, 14, 15, 18). What the temple (= the divine palace) symbolised—God’s effective rule as king over Israel and over all the nations—is resisted by Nebuchadnezzar, who seeks to ensure the loyalty of his subjects and bolster the strength of his kingdom by commanding that they prostrate themselves before the golden image that symbolises his glorious empire (and is not an idol as such).

VI. NEBUCHADNEZZAR IN HIS PALACE

God’s temple is not mentioned as such in Daniel 4, but it is present as a significant subtext. The chapter opens with Nebuchadnezzar at home (“at ease in my house [בֵּית] and prospering in my palace [הַיְכָל]”) (4:4 [Aram. 4:1]), and by the laws of literature the reader expects that he will soon be disturbed. The king’s initial restful position is in sharp contrast to his later state under the judgment of God. The double meaning of the Aramaic word הַיְכָל (“palace/ temple”) suggests a connection with divine sanctuaries, which often include a sacred garden or have vegetative imagery as a decorative feature (cf. 1 Kgs 6:18, 29, 32, 35).⁴³ Connected

³⁸ Cf. Seow, “Rule of God” 225; Lacocque, *Book of Daniel* 49, 124; see the extensive discussion provided by G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling of God* (NSBT; Leicester, UK: Apollos, 2004) 145–53.

³⁹ Winfried Vogel, *The Cultic Motif in Space and Time in the Book of Daniel* (unpublished doctoral dissertation; Andrews University, 1999) 29; see pp. 30–48 for a discussion of the cultic association of mountains in the ancient Near East and in the OT.

⁴⁰ See Sulzbach, *From Here to Eternity and Back*, 157–98, though I do not follow her in equating the stone specifically with the altar.

⁴¹ The notable omission of a date in MT 3:1 is compensated in the Old Greek and Theodotion texts by the supplying of a date in the 18th year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar (probably suggested by Jer 52:29).

⁴² Fewell, *Circle of Sovereignty* 65.

⁴³ Lawrence E. Stager, “Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden,” *Eretz-Israel* 26 (1999) 183–94; idem, “Jerusalem as Eden,” *BAR* 26/3 (2000) 37–47; Elizabeth Bloch-Smith, “‘Who Is the King of Glory?’: Solomon’s Temple and Its Symbolism,” in *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (ed. Michael D. Coogan, J. Cheryl Exum and Lawrence E. Stager; Louisville:

to that imagery, the king is described as “prospering” (רענן), this being a figurative use of an expression more normally applied to trees (cf. Deut 12:2; Pss 92:14 [Heb. 15]; 37:35; 52:8 [Heb. 10]; = “growing green like a tree”).⁴⁴ This cleverly anticipates the king’s dream about the great tree later in the chapter, and the cutting down of trees as a metaphor for the punishing of powerful kings is found elsewhere in the OT (e.g. Isa 10:33, 34; Ezekiel 17; Zech 11:2). The key images of 4:4 (Aram. 4.1), therefore, suggest that this king who puts himself in the place of God needs to be humbled and to come to acknowledge God’s supreme rule (which, of course, is what does happen in Daniel 4).

The palace location at the beginning of Daniel 4 anticipates where the judgment will fall upon Nebuchadnezzar (4:29 [Aram. 26]: “he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon”). This location is perhaps to be connected to the famous “Hanging Gardens.” Such rooftops were also (in part) a sacred space, where sacrifices were offered (cf. Jer 19:13, 32:29; Zeph 1:5; 2 Kgs 23:12; Isa 22:1).⁴⁵ In that significant location, Nebuchadnezzar speaks boastful words that implicitly challenge God’s supremacy (4:30 [Aram. 27]) and precipitate a divine judgment aimed at teaching Nebuchadnezzar where true sovereignty lies (4:17 [Aram. 4:14]: “that the living may know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men”; cf. the similar expressions in 4:25 [Aram. 4:22]; 5:21). The royal encyclical sums up the lesson learned in terms of the recognition of God’s everlasting rule (4:3, 34, 35 [Aram. 3:33; 4:31, 32]). There is also in Daniel 4 a climactic praising of God as “the King (מלך) of Heaven” (4:37 [4:34]).⁴⁶ This is a unique expression in the OT, the closest being Daniel’s designation of God when referring back to the events of chapter 4: “the Lord (מרא) of heaven” (5:23). In summary, the location of the key events in this chapter, namely Nebuchadnezzar’s palace (היכל), is singularly appropriate, for Nebuchadnezzar had to learn to acknowledge God’s kingly rule, which is chiefly symbolised by the temple in the book of Daniel.

VII. DANIEL 7 AND THE HEAVENLY TEMPLE

The obvious parallels between the visions of chapters 2 and 7 that depict a succession of kingdoms and the final establishment of God’s rule, suggest that the throne scene of 7:9–10 takes place in a temple.⁴⁷ For our purposes, it is not essential to decide whether the throne scene is in heaven or on earth (a matter over which commentators differ), for the Jerusalem temple is routinely understood to be a replica of the heavenly temple (cf. Ps 11:4; 123:1; Isa 66:1). The four beasts

Westminster John Knox, 1994) 18–31. So too the word “house” (בית) often refers to God’s house, even in Daniel (e.g. Dan 1:2; 5:3, 23).

⁴⁴ Seow, “Rule of God in the Book of Daniel” 228.

⁴⁵ References provided by Sulzbach, *From Here to Eternity and Back* 210, n. 199.

⁴⁶ This divine title picks up the circumlocution in 4:26 (Aram. 4:23) “that you may know that Heaven rules.”

⁴⁷ Benedikt Otzen, “Heavenly Visions in Early Judaism: Origin and Function,” in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G. W. Ahlstrom* (ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer; JSOTSup 31: Sheffield: JSOT, 1984) 199–215 (204–5).

arising out of the sea are reminiscent of the *Chaoskampf* of ANE mythology (7:2, 3), and this imagery may be linked to the “molten sea” surmounting four sets of three bronze oxen in the Solomonic temple (1Kgs 7:23–26).⁴⁸ The mention in 7:9–10 of the “throne(s)” picks up the earlier mention of Nebuchadnezzar’s “kingly throne” (5:20; כִּרְסֵא in both cases). The vision of the enthronement of God is a way of ascribing kingship to God, the idea of a “throne” belonging to the conception of king.⁴⁹ The “throne” recalls the similar scene in Isaiah 6 and can be connected to the idea that God is enthroned above the Cherubim of the ark, which was housed in the temple (e.g. 2 Sam 6:2; Ps 99:1). The use of “thrones” plural (Dan 7:9) need not refer to a judgment bench (cf. Ps 122:5; Matt 19:28; Rev 20:4) but is best understood as a plural of amplification: God’s enormous throne.⁵⁰ No one is said to be seated except for the “one that was ancient of days” (the myriads of 7:10 are all pictured as standing).⁵¹ As in the vision of Daniel 2, therefore, the temple lies in the immediate background of what is described, for, as stated by Susan Gillingham, the throne scene depicted in Daniel 7 “is an ideal way of reinstating the transcendence of God when his presence in the Temple is very much under threat.”⁵² In other words, this is just the kind of vision needed to assure God’s people of his sovereignty over the nations, given the foreign interference with (and later destruction of) God’s temple as depicted in chapter 1.

VIII. THE PRAYER AND ANGELIC COMMUNICATION IN DANIEL 9

Daniel’s agony over the sanctuary that has been laid waste is on display in the great penitential prayer of chapter 9. The cry: “Cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary, which is desolate ... behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name” (9:17–18) looks back to the destruction of 587 BC, and the angelic revelation in 9:26 looks forward in time to a future destruction of the temple. Within the prayer, the importance of the city of Jerusalem is due to the fact that it is the location of the sanctuary and on that basis is called God’s “holy mountain” (9:16). This designation is immediately followed by the mention of God’s “sanctuary” in 9:17, for what makes this location holy is that it is the site of God’s

⁴⁸ Carol Meyers, “Sea, Molten,” *ABD* V (1992) 1061–62; Bloch-Smith, “Who Is the King of Glory?,” 20–21.

⁴⁹ Cf. Alison Salvesen, “The Trappings of Royalty in Ancient Hebrew,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Day; JSOTSup 270: Sheffield: SAP, 1998) 119–41 (here 131–36) on מֶלֶךְ, and her conclusion: “it is clear that it is the key symbol of monarchy in AH [Ancient Hebrew]” (p. 136; addition mine).

⁵⁰ See Davidson §21 Rem.3; *GKC* §123d–f; Jacques Doukhan, *Le soupir de la terre: Etude prophétique du livre de Daniel* (Dammarie les Lys Cedex: Edition Vie et Santé, 1993) 163–64; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008) 161–62

⁵¹ As also noted by Montgomery, *Book of Daniel* 296.

⁵² “Psalmody and Apocalyptic in the Hebrew Bible: Common Vision, Shared Experience?,” in *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason* (ed. John Barton and David J. Reimer; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996), 147–69 (here 160). Gillingham finds in Daniel 7 some eight mythical motifs that cohere in the theme of God’s kingship (pp.159–63).

(desolated) sanctuary. This is reinforced by the close joining of city and sanctuary in 9:26 (“both the city *and* the sanctuary”).⁵³

The sanctuary is clearly the focus of the angelic communication recorded in 9:24–27, especially when it is noted at what time Gabriel arrives (9:21: “at the time of the evening sacrifice”; cf. 8:13, 14).⁵⁴ It is specifically stated that the prediction concerns “your people and your holy city” (9:24), and, as we have seen, the city is holy because it is the site of God’s sanctuary. As commonly noted by commentators, the six actions of 9:24 provide a panoramic overview of the period described in 9:25–27. The dual references to “the anointed” (9:25, 26 [משיח]) pick up the earlier mention of the *anointing* (למשח) of “a most holy (place),” which is the climatic highpoint of the series of actions in 9:24.⁵⁵ The “most holy (place) (קדש (קדשים))” is most probably the temple, so that the action in 9:24 reverses the predicted treading down of the “the holy place” in 8:13, 14 (both verses using קדש that picks up the earlier mention of the “sanctuary” [מקדש] in 8:11).⁵⁶ On this understanding, the sanctuary is reconsecrated after its defiling, so that the angelic communication is a restatement of the prophetic visions of Daniel 8. The idea that rededication of the temple would involve an “anointing” may be inferred from the anointing of the tabernacle and its utensils (Exod 30:26; 40:9; Lev 8:10, 11). A future destruction of the city and the “sanctuary” (קדש) is again forecast in 9:26 (“desolations [שממות] are decreed”), together with the cessation of sacrifice and offering through the action of a “desolator” (9:27 שמש). Chapter 9, therefore, shares with chapter 8 a focus on the disruption of the temple cult (cf. especially the “transgression that makes desolate [שמש]” in 8:13).

IX. THE VISIONS OF DANIEL 8 AND 10–12

In the vision of chapter 8, the little horn stops the Jews worshipping their God and overthrows the sanctuary (מקדש) “for two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings,” but then God’s sanctuary is restored (8:11–14). That the predicted interference with the temple cult is the focus and climax of the vision is shown by the fact that the vision itself is summed up and referred to under the title “the vision of the evenings and the mornings” (8:26). In chapter 10, the exalted personage who appears and speaks with Daniel is “a man clothed in linen” (10:6; cf. 12:6–7), namely he wears priestly vestment (Lev 6:10 [Heb. 6:3]; 16:4; 1 Sam 2:18; cf. the angelic being of Ezekiel 9, 10). As commented by John Goldingay, “here as

⁵³ This is the sense of the repeated conjunction (1...1; *GKC* §154a). The same construction is found in 8:13 (“both sanctuary and host” [וקדש וצבא]).

⁵⁴ Doukhan views the specified timing as reflective of Daniel’s piety that lies in the hope for the temple’s restoration (*Le soupir de la terre* 199). The liturgical character of the prayer in Daniel 9 (recognised by many scholars) suggests that prayer may be viewed as a bloodless cult, see André Lacocque, “The Liturgical Prayer of Daniel 9,” *HUCA* 47 (1976) 119–42 (here 142).

⁵⁵ Meadowcroft, “Exploring the Dismal Swamp” 436. He argues for a communal interpretation of “holy of holies” in 9:24b, namely the community as sanctuary (pp. 437–40), mainly on the basis of later use of the phrase at Qumran. He goes as far as to suggest that “the anointed” (משיח) of 9:25 and 26 is to be equated with that which is anointed in 9:24 (pp. 444–46).

⁵⁶ קדש קדשים and מקדש are in apposition in Ezek 45:3.

in Ezek 9–10 the servants of the heavenly temple concern themselves with the affairs of its earthly counterpart.⁵⁷ It is no surprise, therefore, that a prominent feature of the vision contained in chapters 10–12 is the future profaning of the Jerusalem sanctuary (מקדש) through foreign interference with the temple cult (“[he] shall take away the continual burnt offering [תמיד]”; 11:31; cf. 8:11, 12, 13; 12:11). Regular worship will be replaced by “the abomination of desolation” (11:31; 12:11; cf. 8:13; 9:27).⁵⁸ The temple focus of the material is further supported by the argument of Arie van der Kooij, who finds a cultic connection in the cryptic expression ברית קדש in 11:28 and 30, which he translates as “the covenant concerning the holy place, the sanctuary.”⁵⁹ On this understanding, these verses describe foreign interference with the temple cult (11:28) and the failure of the priests to do what they should do in the temple (11:30b).

X. CONCLUSIONS

In both halves of the book of Daniel, the main challenge to God’s kingship within history takes the form of foreign profaning of the temple. Such interference with the temple is a direct challenge to God’s rule and appears to call into question the reality of his rule. The alternate canonical positions of Daniel in the Hebrew and Greek canons each in their own way highlight the temple theme of the book. The reader is to understand Daniel 1 as moving from temple despoliation (1:2) to the year when permission was given for its rebuilding, the year of the decree of Cyrus (1:21). Repeated mention (or allusion) is made to this key date throughout the book. This suggests that the book of Daniel is a statement about the crisis years of exile, the period wherein the temple lies desecrated and destroyed. In line with this, the visions depict a similar time of crisis in the future (8:11, 12; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). The importance of the theme of the temple in the prayer of Daniel (chapter 9) and in the visions of chapters 8 and 10–12 is plain. Even in chapters where the temple itself is not mentioned, it is present by means of related motifs: the “great mountain” (Daniel 2), the “palace” of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4), the confiscated temple vessels (Daniel 5), and the throne scene of Daniel 7. The book as a whole (stories and visions) testifies to the fact that, despite what may appear to be the case, God’s universal rule is a reality and will be vindicated, and his faithful people are called on to remain loyal to their King.

⁵⁷ *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas: Word, 1989) 290 (suspension points mine).

⁵⁸ The exact expressions vary. For possible interpretations, see Johan Lust, “Cult and Sacrifice in Daniel: The Tamid and the Abomination of Desolation,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception: Volume II* 671–88.

⁵⁹ “The Concept of Covenant (*Brit*) in the Book of Daniel,” in *Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* 495–501.