

*Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile:
Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the
Atonement*
Brand Pitre

WUNT 2.204; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2005, xii + 586 pp., € 79.00, pb, ISBN 3161487516

SUMMARY

This volume examines the themes of the messianic tribulation and the end of the exile in second temple Judaism and for the historical Jesus. Pitre concludes that the expectation of an eschatological tribulation influenced constituent aspects of Jesus' eschatology and Jesus' understanding of his own death as redemptive.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Band untersucht die Themen der messianischen Drangsal und des Endes des Exils im Judentum des zweiten Tempels und im Hinblick auf den historischen Jesus. Pitre kommt zum dem Schluss, dass die Erwartung einer eschatologischen Drangsal konstituierende Aspekte der Eschatologie Jesu und seines Verständnisses seines eigenen Todes als eines erlösenden Todes beeinflusste.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage est une étude des thèmes des tribulations messianiques et de la fin de l'exil dans le judaïsme de l'époque du second temple et de leurs implications pour la recherche sur le Jésus historique. Pitre parvient à la conclusion que l'attente de tribulations eschatologiques a exercé une influence sur des points constitutifs de l'eschatologie de Jésus et sur sa compréhension du caractère rédempteur de sa mort.

* * * *

Pitre identifies a lacuna in scholarship in relation to studies on the tribulation/messianic woes. His objective is to map the development of the tribulation in late second temple Judaism and to determine whether the historical Jesus viewed his own death as being part of the eschatological tribulation. His overall approach can be located somewhere between Albert Schweitzer, Dale C. Allison, and N.T. Wright. The chapter finishes with an excursus on N.T. Wright and the end of the exile. Pitre critiques Wright's understanding of a metaphorical exile and provocatively suggests that 'Wright has the *right insight* but the *wrong exile*' (p. 35). It was the Assyrian exile and not the Babylonian exile which was continuing. This section represents a stark contrast to Steven M. Bryan's evaluation of Wright's still-in-exile motif (*Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgment and Restoration* [SNTS 117; Cambridge: CUP, 2002], pp. 12-20).

In chapter 2, Pitre presents a rigorous survey of the messianic tribulation in second temple literature. Some may question his inclusion of Daniel in this body of writings (pp. 51-62), however, Pitre successfully demonstrates that a tribulation and messianism are embedded in Daniel. He draws the conclusion that (*contra*

E.P. Sanders) there is good evidence that expectation of a messianic tribulation precedes 70 AD. Reference to a messianic tribulation is found in a wide range of literary genres such as apocalypses, psalms, visions, *pesharim*, etc. Pitre catalogues the common elements of the messianic tribulation in this literature and contends that the messianic tribulation was a constituent aspect of Jewish messianism and restoration eschatology.

Several enigmatic sayings in the Jesus tradition come up for analysis in chapter 3. The burden of Pitre is to demonstrate that the coming of the kingdom of God would be preceded by a period of tribulation and that this time of tribulation had begun with the execution of John the Baptist.

In chapter 4 Pitre addresses pertinent themes in Mark 13 which he understands as containing a body of authentic tradition. He contends that Jesus envisaged a time of suffering prior to the end. This period is accompanied by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, intra-family division and missionary witnessing. Finally Jesus saw the messianic tribulation as nothing less than the climax of Israel's exilic sufferings that precedes the end-of-exile.

The focus of chapter 5 is on how Jesus understood his own death in relation to the tribulation. To this end he discusses the ransom logion and its context (Mark 10.34-45), Jesus' words about the scattering of the sheep (Mk. 14.26-27), and part of the Last Supper tradition (Mk. 14.32-42). Pitre surmises that Jesus spoke of himself as the Son of Man and Messiah who would suffer to atone for the sins of Israel and inaugurate a New Exodus and an eschatological Passover.

The implications that Pitre draws, accordingly, are that the historical Jesus should be understood via the grid of Jewish restoration eschatology, the Olivet Discourse of Mark 13 is largely authentic, Jesus embraced a form of remnant theology, "Son of Man" is a messianic title for the one who inaugurates the kingdom, and Jesus taught that his death would have redemptive efficacy.

This book is well researched and effectively argued. It represents a constructive engagement with Wright's still-in-exile thesis and locates the historical Jesus amidst Jewish apocalyptic expectations. I question the validity of his approach in exegeting a passage prior to establishing its authenticity, which could imply that questions of authenticity are an afterthought. Otherwise, this volume makes a valuable contribution to studies on the historical Jesus, early Christian eschatology, and atonement theology.

Michael F. Bird, Dingwall, Scotland