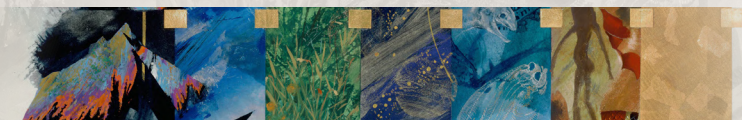


Seven Temples of God

Life as a temple



Dr Jos M Strengtholt



Seven temples of God in the Bible

Seven studies from the Bible

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INTRODUCTION

With pleasure I present to you this small book about God's seven temples in the Bible.

I first presented these studies to the English congregation of St Michael and All Angels Church in Heliopolis, Egypt in 2015.

Clearly, this is just an introduction to the theme of these seven temples, and I am sure that this book is like a small child that will slowly begin to grow.

This growth will be based on more study and also on the comments that I will surely receive from those who read these chapters. Input is highly appreciated.

Utrecht, 6 October 2017

1. God's First Temple: Creation

THE BOOKENDS

In the beginning of the Biblical narrative, 'God created the heavens and the earth.'¹ And in the end, there will be 'a new heaven and a new earth'.² The Christian Holy Scriptures sandwich the whole story of humankind between these two bookends of creation at the beginning and recreation in the end. The overriding theme of this human story and the heart of the stories of creation and restoration, is the presence of God or its reverse, his absence.



In the vision of St John, we read that in the new heaven and the new earth, the holy city, the New Jerusalem, comes down out of heaven, and St John then hears a voice, saying: 'The dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.'³ This is unequivocally *temple language*.

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1. Genesis 1:1
 2. Revelation 21:1
 3. Revelation 21:3

St John writes of the New Jerusalem: 'I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God and the Lamb.'⁴ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.' In eternity there is no need for a temple, as God himself is with the people; or to say it in other words, the whole universe has become his temple.



Beside many temple-references, St John's description of the new creation references, obviously, the Genesis-account of original creation. Later I will go deeper into this, but for now, one example will suffice. John notices the 'tree of life' beside the 'river of the water of life'.⁵ These are themes taken from the creation story of Genesis.

If the second bookend, of the new heaven and the new earth, is presented to us with imagery from the first bookend, the creation story, and if this new heaven and the new earth are also clearly presented to us as the temple of God, should we

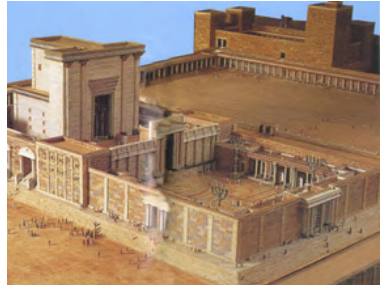
4. Revelation 21:22; the glory of God refers to the column of fire and the cloud above the tabernacle and the temple of Solomon; the light refers to the golden lamp stand (menorah) in the Holy Place in the tabernacle and the temple.

5. Revelation 22:1-2

then not assume that the first bookend might also present the original creation as a temple of God? I think this is the proper way to read the Genesis account.

CREATION AS GOD'S RESTING PLACE

The Holy Scriptures regularly compare the universe with God's temple. For instance, Isaiah writes: 'This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?"⁶ The universe is God's resting place; He is not in need of another temple, the prophet argues.



One of the Psalms gives us another hint: 'For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying, "This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it."⁷ The Temple of Solomon is portrayed here not only as God's *dwelling*, but also as the place where he *rests*. The terms *dwelling* and *resting place* seem to be used as synonyms.

Should we therefore also read the seventh day of creation, in which God 'rested from all his works', as an indication that he had finished the temple of creation and he now made it his dwelling?⁸ John T. Walton, professor of Old Testament at Wheaton College, defends this idea:

Any ancient reader, Israelite or otherwise, would have understood that if [Genesis] talks about God resting, it talks about the temple, because that is where God rests

6. Isaiah 66:1

7. Psalm 132:12-13

8. Genesis 2:2-3

and where the gods rest and that is why temples where built.⁹

So, Walton argues, Near Eastern readers of the Genesis-text would have immediately understood the temple imagery: “Without hesitation the ancient reader would conclude that this is a temple text.”¹⁰ Walton gives many examples from extra-Biblical texts to show how in the Ancient Near East *temple* and *cosmos* were seen as each other’s mirrors.

Any visitor to the temples and graves of Egypt is treated to spectacular, often still rather colorful, images on the ceilings, the walls and the columns. On the ceilings sun, moon and stars were depicted. On the walls we see plants, trees, animals of sea, land and sky, and human beings.



These temples served as models of the cosmos in which the floor represented the earth and the ceiling represented the sky. Columns and wall decorations represented plant life. According to German Egyptologist Jan Assmann, this temple ‘was the world that the omnipresent god filled to its limits.’¹¹

The Egyptian temple was the universe and the images in the temple were Egypt’s divinities; they were all part of the

9. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o26Ad-WdJOw> (accessed 1 March 2015)

10. John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (IVP Academic, Downers Grove 2009), p. 71.

11. Jan Assmann, *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 2001), p. 37.

pantheon of gods and demigods worshiped in the temples of Egypt and the rest of the Near East.¹²

Jeffrey L. Morrow, a Roman Catholic theologian at Seton Hall University, supports Walton's approach. In his article *Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3*, he writes that temples 'throughout the ancient Near East often had cosmological connotations. The building of a temple often accompanied creation' and 'ancient Near Eastern temples [...] also served as places for divine rest.'¹³



Morrow shows also how a heptadic ['sevens'] pattern plays an important role in the creation account, far beyond the listing of the seven days.¹⁴ This links the creation account with temple building and consecration in general: 'The ancient Near East's convention of describing temple construction in terms of seven, means we should not be surprised that creation in Genesis is heptadic.'¹⁵ According to Morrow, creation unfolds as a 'cosmic liturgical celebration' culminating on the seventh day.¹⁶

It is this careful heptadic structure of Genesis 1 that makes Morrow and Walton suggest that Genesis might in fact be a liturgical text for usage in the temple service. Was there an

12. I do hold that Genesis 1-3 should be read in the light of the Egyptian cosmology, not the Babylonian one. A useful introductory article about this matter can be found on <https://bible.org/article/genesis-1-2-light-ancient-egyptian-creation-myths> (accessed 3 March 2015)

13. Jeffrey L. Morrow, "Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3", in Journal of OCABS (Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies), found <http://www.ocabs.org/journal/index.php/jocabs/article/viewFile/43/18> [accessed 1 March 2015]

14. He shows, for instance, how many verses consist of seven words.

15. Morrow, "Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3".

16. Ibid.

annual feast where Genesis 1 was used to remind Israel of the parallels between creation and the temple?

Morrow points to the tabernacle's consecration process that lasted seven days. Key verbal correspondences also exist between Moses' construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 39-40 and the creation of the world in Genesis:

1. Gen. 1:31 ["And God saw all that He had made, (kāl 'ašer 'ašāh), and found it (wěhinēh) very good"]; Exod. 39:43 ["And when Moses saw that they had performed all the tasks (kāl hamēlā'kāh)—as the LORD had commanded, so they had done (wěhinēh 'ašû 'ōtāh)"].
2. Gen. 2:1 ["The heaven and the earth were completed (wayēkulû) and all (wěkāl) their array"]; Exod. 39:32 ["Thus was completed all (watēkēl kāl) the work of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting"].
3. Gen. 2:2 ["God finished the work which He had been doing (wayēkāl 'elōhīm...mēla'kēto 'ašer 'āšāh)"]; Exod. 40:33 ["When Moses had finished the work (wayēkāl mōšeh 'et hamēlā'kāh)"].
4. Gen. 2:3 ["And God blessed...(wayēbārek)"]; Exod. 39:43 ("And Moses blessed (wayēbārek) them").
5. Gen. 2:3 ["And sanctified it (wayēqadaš)"]; Exod. 40:9 ["...and to sanctify (wēqidašētā) it and all its furnishings"].¹⁷

Similar parallels exist between the seven days of creation and Solomon's construction of the Jerusalem temple, including evident cosmic symbolism in the temple construction. This construction was depicted as a new creation, and the temple was seen as a microcosm of world, not unlike the other temples



17. Ibid.

in the Near East.¹⁸ The Jewish historian Josephus says of the objects in the tabernacle: ‘every one of these objects is intended to recall and represent the universe.’¹⁹

The very reason why the tabernacle and temple were seen as allegorical microcosms of creation suggests, reversely, that the creation story contained elements that reminded the Israelites of a temple.²⁰

It is noteworthy that the many creation stories in the Near East usually culminated in a temple being constructed for the gods of creation. The very *absence* of any specific construction for a place of worship in the Biblical description of the creation of the world is remarkable and logical: in a universe that was seen as the temple of God by itself, no other temple was needed.

The conclusion is therefore justified, I believe, that creation in Genesis ‘is described as a temple; it is constructed as an ancient Near Eastern temple would be constructed.’²¹

CREATION AND THE PRESENCE OF GOD

The creation story of Israel shows that there is only one God, the creator of all things. The temple of his universe is filled with the same images as the Egyptian temples, but those images, seen to represent the gods of Egypt, were created by God’s powerful word. The so-called gods of the nations all dwarf in the sight of the one true God of Israel. In the temples of Egypt they are worshipped, in the temple of the universe they were made by the one word of the Creator, ‘be’, hence they deserve no worship.

18. N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Fortress Press, 2013) p. 103; Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, p. 80-81.

19. Josephus, *The Jewish War* 3, 7.7, cited by Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, p. 80.

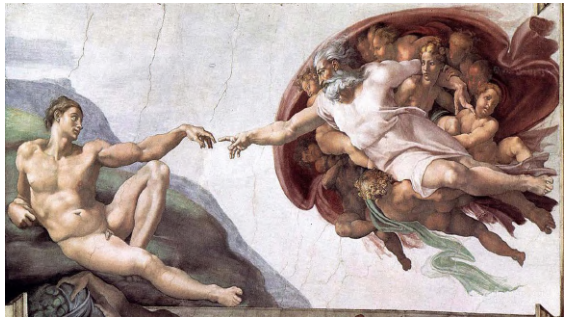
20. The primacy of either the creation story or the building of tabernacle/temple does not impact the view that creation was seen as a temple.

21. Cited in N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, p. 103

All man-made temples and their gods are insignificant as the universe is the real temple of God. This is even true for the sacred places of Israel. Throughout the history of Israel we see tension between the importance of Israel's worship in the tabernacle and the temple, and the concept that God really does not need a house of stone. The universe is his resting place. And this universe is not made for the nation's gods, but for humanity. God gave him 'glory and honor' and he gave him 'dominion over the works of [God's] hands'.²²

Creation is the temple where God resides, and his presence in this temple is obvious in the Genesis-account. First, God is portrayed as the creator of the temple. The Trinity was present in the construction of his own temple. We read of God, of his Word, and of his Spirit.²³ God also said, 'Let us make man in our image.' This plural 'us' stands out as a strange plurality in the fiercely monotheist religion of Israel. And the humanity God created in his image, was also a plurality of men and women.²⁴

Secondly, God saw everything that he had made, and behold, 'it was very good'.²⁵ This indicates God's personal and intimate involvement



in creation. The summit of involvement is the creation of man as God 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of life'.²⁶ He is not presented to us as a distant god but as one who

22. See Psalm 8.

23. Genesis 1:1-3

24. Genesis 1:26-27

25. Genesis 1:31

26. Genesis 2:7

is imminent. This involvement culminates in him taking permanent residence in creation on the seventh day, when he rested.²⁷

Thirdly, God rested on the seventh day; this does not indicate a lack of action. It indicated that some work has been done - the universe has been made a good place for humankind - and now God can engage in the normal activities that can be carried out. The Creator has now taken command and he is mounting to this throne to assume his rightful place and his proper role.²⁸

Finally, God is also presented as ‘walking in the garden’.²⁹ This anthropomorphism designates the intimate presence of God in his creation, especially in his relationship with humankind. This divine walking in the garden of Eden is expressed with the Hebrew form of *hlk*, which is also how God’s presence is described in the tabernacle in Leviticus 26:12 (‘and I will walk among you’) and Deuteronomy 23:14 (‘the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp’). This further indicates the close link between creation and the tabernacle or temple. It is the place where God resides.

GARDEN OF EDEN AND THE HOLY OF HOLIES

The British evangelical Old Testament scholar Gordon J. Wenham also sees this temple imagery in the garden of Eden:

The garden of Eden is not viewed by the author of Genesis simply as a piece of Mesopotamian farmland, but as an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him. Many of the features of the garden may also be found in later sanctuaries particularly the tabernacle or Jerusalem temple.

27. Genesis 2:3

28. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, p. 74.

29. Genesis 3:8

These parallels suggest that the garden itself is understood as a sort of sanctuary.³⁰

Some scholars push this parallelism a bit further. If the whole universe was God's temple, then the garden of Eden was the Holy of Holies, Morrow and other Jewish and Christian biblical scholars argue. According to Morrow,

The Temple, and Mount Zion in general, are frequently associated with Eden, and in some instances actually identified with Eden. Ezekiel 28's discussion of the king of Tyre is the most famous example where Mount Zion, and the temple, are associated with Eden. Sirach also associates Eden with the Temple and tabernacle, where the Temple is the new Eden.³¹

The cherubim on the Ark in the Holy of Holies and on the veil that blocked anyone from entering into the Holy of holies, are a close parallel to the cherubim that blocked access to the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve.³²

Gregory K. Beale adds to this, that the entrance of Eden was in the east, just as the later temple in Jerusalem, and the eschatological temple in Ezekiel 40, were facing east. Eden and the temples were also on a mountain. He also mentions the rivers flowing from Eden and from the temple.³³

30. Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story", in *Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem, World Union of Jewish Studies, 1986), p. 19.

31. Morrow, "Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3".

32. We should not push the comparison between the Garden of Eden and the Holy of Holies too far. The tree of life, in the Garden of Eden, was in Israel seen as a prefiguration of the menorah in the tabernacle and the temple, and this menorah was stylized as a symbol of the tree of life. However, the menorah was not placed in the Holy of Holies, but in the Holy Place.

33. Gregory K. Beale, 'Eden, the Temple and the Church's Mission in the New Creation' in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48/1, March 2005, p. 8.

WORK AS LITURGY

N.T. Wright agrees with this view of creation as God's temple and now, 'with the construction [of the temple] complete, he can "rest" in the sense of "taking up residence"' in his temple.' God 'has finished the work of construction, which is to be



seen as a prelude to all his intended work of developing it through the agency of his image-bearing human creatures.³⁴

So, the universe was God's temple, and humankind was intimately close to God. Interestingly, nothing is said about a priestly role of Adam and Eve. Or rather, we should conclude, work in God's universal temple was the actual liturgy (Gr: *leitourgia*, public works) humankind was made for. There was no special cast of priests, but all of humanity had a priestly task.

In the Genesis account, the priestly task of humankind was twofold: Man was to have dominion over creation by being fruitful and multiplying, by filling the earth and subduing it, by tilling and keeping it on the one hand, and on the other hand, to not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.³⁵ Work was man's priestly task, in loving obedience to God. Morrow argues that this task of mankind was liturgical and priestly, by doing an interesting word-study:

When we look at the Genesis account of Eden, we find other instances of people portrayed as created for worship. Adam, for example, is told to "till" (from the root *'bd*) and "keep" (from the root *šmr*). When *šmr* and *'bd* occur together in the OT (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14) they refer to keeping/guarding and serving God's

34. N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, p. 102

35. Genesis 1:28; 2:16-17

word and also they refer to priestly duties in the tabernacle. And, in fact, *šmr* and *‘bd* only occur together again in the Pentateuch in the descriptions in Numbers for the Levites’ activities in the tabernacle.³⁶

This association of Adam’s task with the work of the priests in the tabernacle reinforces the understanding of Adam as a priest who maintained God’s temple of creation and who served in it.

PARADISE LOST

What was the impact of the fall of Adam and Eve? The author of Genesis presents it in dramatic terms: mankind was banished from God, from paradise, and from eternal life. They were now hiding from God, access to the tree of life was blocked, and life on earth became short and hard. St Paul would later describe life in our world in terms of the ‘suffering of the present time’ and ‘creation was subject to futility’ and ‘the whole creation has been groaning’.³⁷



At the same time, even after the fall, mankind was able to find God. Man was driven out of paradise but Abel sacrificed to God ‘and the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering.’³⁸ Direct access to God was impossible, but through the mediation of sacrifices he could be found.

36. Jeffrey L. Morrow, “Creation as Temple-Building and Work as Liturgy in Genesis 1-3”

37. Romans 8:18-22

38. Genesis 4:4

The universe was no longer one perfect temple for the Creator, but he could still be found. St Paul, when speaking to the Athenians, seems to almost overlook the fall when he says,

[God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'.³⁹

This last quote in the text of Paul is from the Cretan poet Epimenides. It seems that Paul recognizes that even though things have gone dramatically wrong with the universal temple of God, even after the fall and the dismissal of Adam and Eve from Paradise, something of the temple-like aspect of the universe still exists. God can still be found in his creation; even a pagan poet senses this.

This concept can be found throughout Holy Scriptures; especially the Psalms and the Prophets often attest to it.⁴⁰ Earlier I quoted Isaiah 66:1: 'This is what the LORD says: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?"⁴¹ So, even after the fall, Isaiah still sees creation as God's temple, even though he is very aware of the imperfections of the people of God and the problem of the seeming absence of God.

Something has gone badly wrong with the universe, but in spite of that, God is still near. Mankind no longer has access to the garden of Eden, the Holy of Holies has been blocked. But even east of Eden, in the groaning world we

39. Acts 17:26-28

40. Eg, Psalm 8, Psalm 19.

41. Isaiah 66:1

live in, God is still present. The universe is still God's temple, but it is a temple with restricted access to God and a temple that needs repairs.

SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Reading the Genesis account of creation in the first place in theological terms, frees us from the need to harmonize this with modern scientific views. Genesis 1 was never intended as an eyewitness account of the beginnings of the world. It was intended to present our world as the temple of the one true God who made it a good place for mankind to live in and to serve God. This is not a denial that God is the creator of the world, but it is an effort to read Genesis 1 in line with the intentions of the author and the understanding of his contemporaries.

In the Genesis account of creation, there is a remarkable concentration of powerful symbols that begs to be interpreted in the light of later tabernacle- and temple-design. These features combine to suggest that the garden of Eden was an archetypal temple, or even the Holy of Holies, where God was uniquely present in all his life-giving power.

Genesis shows that our daily work has a priestly aspect. There is no inherent contradiction between spiritual and secular. In the Jewish-Christian view of creation as God's abode, the concept of secular actually has no meaning as all that exists is part of God's temple.

Much has gone wrong after the fall of mankind. The fall has made free access to God impossible. God has withdrawn behind the veil as sinful humans cannot meet with him. No longer is the universe God's perfect temple. But the sanctuary-aspect of the universe has not been lost altogether. God, though hidden, can still be found as there is no place in the universe where he is not present.

Living in this God-created world, we are called to give worship to God in all works, thoughts, words, and deeds. Even after the fall, man's work still has an aspect of liturgy, of work for God, though it has been spoiled just as all of paradise was spoiled. God did send Adam away from paradise with work to do, not unlike his work in paradise. The difference is that this work for God, to work the ground, is hard now.⁴² With all of creation, mankind longs for renewal. But God is not far.

42. Genesis 3:17-19, 23

2. God's Second Temple: Adam

THE BOOKENDS

I like to argue in this study that just as the 'bookends' of creation and recreation are presented as a temple in the Jewish and Christian Holy Scriptures,¹ there is also a parallel between Adam and those who are 'in the second Adam', namely, Christians. In the New Testament, Christians are called 'a temple of the Spirit':

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?²

Redeemed mankind is seen as a temple because God Himself, through his Spirit, lives in them. Later we will return to this theme. The first man, Adam, is also presented to us in the Holy Scriptures as a temple of God.



Creation is God's temple, and humankind as the summit of creation was therefore from the outset the ultimate temple where God could 'rest'.

1. See Study One, God's First Temple, Creation.

2. 1 Corinthians 6:19

IN OUR IMAGE

When God created Adam and Eve, he made them ‘in our image’, ‘in our likeness’:

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.³

That man was made into the image of God must be seen as the precondition for man being able to have dominion over all creation. Mankind is part of creation, and at the same time, separate from it. Mankind was made in God’s image in order to take care of this world on behalf of God.

That man was made in the image of God, unlike the animals, suggest that this image of God is specifically that in which man is different from animals. We



should think of our rationality, our will, feelings, our sense of right and wrong, our ability to judge, etc. Important to mention is that the above verse, Genesis 1:26-27, is one of the few in the Old Testament where God speaks about him-

3. Genesis 1:26-27

self using the plural 'us'.⁴ Many Christians believe this is a reference to God being a Trinity. That the 'community' of God created man in his own image, entails that man is also a social being.

How God made man into his own image is described next:

Then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. (ESV)⁵

Man is made of dust and of the Spirit. In a highly personal manner, God blew his breath, or his Spirit (*Ruach*), into Adam. The *Ruach* mentioned here, is the same word used in Genesis 1:2



where we see the Spirit of God hovering over the waters. Note that we do not read of the animals that God blew his Spirit into them; there is obviously a difference between mankind and animals. God poured *of himself* into man.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says this:

Of all visible creatures only man is "able to know and love his creator". He is "the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake", and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God's own life. It was for this end that he was created, and this is the fundamental reason for his dignity.

4. Three other examples are:

"Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever--" (Gen. 3:22, NASB).

"Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech." (Gen. 11:7, NASB).

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isaiah 6:8, NASB)

5. Genesis 2:7

Being in the image of God the human individual possesses the dignity of a person, who is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons. And he is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response of faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.⁶

That mankind was made for intimately relating with the Creator is also expressed in the creation story by the image of ‘the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of day’, assuming that during his walk, He would meet with Adam and Eve; after their Fall, however, they “hid themselves from the presence of the Lord”.⁷ The presence of the Lord was the normal experience for Adam and Eve before they disobeyed.

That mankind was able to commune with God, was because God had poured of Himself in man and made man in His image. It is only because of this presence of something divine in him, that Adam could commune with God.

TEMPLE OF CLAY AND SPIRIT

Most Bible translations use the word ‘dust’; some speak of ‘soil’ as the basic material for man’s creation. There is a wordplay here, because the Hebrew word for soil is *adama*. Josephus writes that *adama* is red earth mixed with water, hence, clay.⁸ So, the image could be of God making Adam just as a potter makes a clay pot. This metaphor occurs a few times in the Holy Scriptures:

But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay,
and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.⁹

6. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 356-357

7. Genesis 3:8; this imagery shows beyond doubt that Genesis 1-3 was never intended to be read as a factual description of history.

8. Josephus, *Antiquities*, I. 1. c.

9. Isaiah 64:8; see also Isaiah 29:16 and Job 33:6. I think Jeremiah 18:2-3 and Romans 9:21 should not be seen in the context of creation, but of God’s covenantal relationship with his people and his freedom to do as He pleases.

I would suggest that we can also, with justification, see in the creation of Adam, *not* in the first place God working as a potter making a pot, but of God building a house of clay where his own Spirit can rest: a temple. Imagine God building a house, or a temple, indwelled by His Spirit.



If all of the universe is portrayed as a temple in Genesis 1-3, and if mankind is its caretaker, then it is hardly surprising that man himself is in an even more intense manner, portrayed as a temple. The Spirit of God *hovered over* the waters at creation to make the Universe a resting place for God; the Spirit of God was *blown into* man at his creation for God to be present in his human temple.

In Judaism, this aspect of man as a temple has been recognized. “The universe, mankind, the nation, and [individual] man are in reality so many stages through which the Holy reveals Itself and in which It dwells. Consequently, it is reasonable to see in these stages so many parts of the temple of God.”¹⁰ This statement is from a *kabbalistic*, mystical, Jewish source; a more mainline Jewish rabbi writes that “as every man is a sort of temple, therefore we do not see Adam specifically as a Temple.”¹¹ That is a circumspect manner of saying, ‘Yes, we see Adam as a temple, as we see all mankind as a sort of temple.’

10. From a description of the view of Elijah (Eliyahu) Benamozegh, 1822 -1900, an Italian Orthodox Rabbi, Kabbalist, on <http://www.saieditor.com/stars/zegh.html> (accessed 19 April 2015)

11. Email by the Dutch Rabbi Evers to the author, 19 April 2015.

St Augustine also saw a Temple in Adam; William Harmless summarizes what St Augustine wrote about this in his *Tractate X on the Gospel of John*:

In Christ's death the old temple (=Adam) was destroyed; in Christ's resurrection a new temple was built. [...] Christ the New Temple thus reconstructed the fallen temple of humankind and reconstructed it by restoring humanity as a true image of God.¹²



A Roman Catholic theologian, Fr. Maximilian Mary Dean, summarizes this idea:

Adam, in the state of original justice, was the first physical temple of the Holy Spirit. Before original sin he walked with God in the earthly paradise.¹³

This means, among other things, that God came to be present in all of Creation, and especially in mankind. Some go quite far in envisioning analogies between Adam and the Jewish temple. The Chinese Christian Watchman Nee, for instance, argues that man in general is also a temple. And according to him, man as a temple is analogous to the Jewish temple in its three parts:

We know that the temple is divided into three parts. [...] Man is a temple of God. Within man there are also three parts. The body is like the outer court; is also a temple and its life is seen by all. It is here that man should obey all God's commandments. It is also here that God's Son died for man.

12. William Harmless, *Augustine and the Catechumenate* (Liturgical Press, 2014) p. 256

13. Fr. Maximilian Mary Dean, F.I., in <http://absoluteprimacyofchrist.org/appendix-ii-creation-of-adams-body/> (accessed 22 April 2015)

Further in, there is man's soul, which is the inward life in man; it includes man's feelings, will, and mind. This is the Holy Place to a regenerated one. His love, thoughts, and desires are all here. In this place there is much light, everything is clear and obvious, and the priests come in and out to serve God.

However, further in, there is the Holy of Holies behind the veil, which is unreachable by human light and is a place invisible to the human eyes. This is "the secret place of the Most High" (Psalm 91:1). It is the habitation of God, a place that no man can reach unless God removes the veil. This is the human spirit. Man not only has a body and a soul but a spirit as well. This spirit is deeper than man's consciousness; it is the place unreachable by man's feelings. It is in this place that man fellowships with God.¹⁴

AFTER THE FALL

Adam and Eve disobeyed God and the immediate result was that the temple of the Universe became spoiled:

To the woman he said,
"I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.
Your desire shall be for your husband,
and he shall rule over you."
And to Adam he said,
"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,

14. Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man*, as on <http://www.ministrybooks.org/books.cfm?xid=UZXH31I7CZTJB> (accessed 20 April 2015)

till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”¹⁵

The earth has never been the perfect temple of God since then, and Humankind also lost its natural relationship with God. The soul of man is no longer the abode of God. Genesis 4 shows us murder (Cain) and hubris (Enoch). Things were clearly not well with the temple of humanity. This is underlined in the book of generations in Genesis 5, where we read:

This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God

created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man [Hebrew: Adam] when they were created. When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.¹⁶



Adam was made in God’s likeness; the generations after Adam were made in Adam’s likeness. This was a radical fracture in the history of humankind. In the Hebrew Scriptures, Adam disappears behind the figures of Abraham and Moses, as the Scripture’s focus was on redemption as promised to Abraham and as effected in the history of Israel. Adam is only mentioned in 1 Chronicles 1:1 in a list of generations, and in Hosea 6:7, where God says of Israel: “But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me.”

15. Genesis 3:16-19

16. Genesis 5:1-3

Interestingly, the persons of Adam and Eve become important again in the inter-testamentary period. They are often mentioned in the Jewish literature after 200BC. In this period, there was a clear interest in the concept that through Adam's sin, sin, death and disease had entered into humanity and into all creation.¹⁷ In the Fourth Book of Ezra we read,

For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome, as were also all who were descended from him. Thus the disease became permanent; the law was in the people's heart along with the evil root, but what was good departed, and the evil remained.¹⁸

In line with this, the Apostle Paul built an important part of his thinking around the person of Adam. He presents modern humanity as a whole, the people of Israel included, as 'in Adam', and therefore as lost sinners in need of salvation. In Romans 5:12-14 Paul says it thus:

[...] Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

Things went so bad from the beginning, that God took a dramatic decision, mentioned in Genesis 6:

When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."¹⁹

At creation, God blew his Spirit into Adam; after the Fall, mankind is no longer the place where God through his Spirit abides (or rests). Many Bible translations, instead

17. Adam is mentioned, for instance, in the *Book of Jubilees*, in the *Life of Adam and Eve*, the *Greekapocalypse of Ezra*, the *Testament of Adam*, 3 *Baruch*, etc.

18. *Fourth Book of Ezra*, 3:20-22

19. Genesis 6:1-3

of saying ‘My Spirit shall not abide in man’, say: ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh. His days shall be 120 years’²⁰ 120 years later, the Great Flood destroyed mankind.



Incidentally, the intertestamentary book of 3 Enoch uses temple-language to describe the God’s withdrawal from mankind at the time of the Flood. God says,

When I saw that the men of the generation of the Flood were behaving corruptly, I came and removed my Shekinah from their midst.²¹

The *Shekinah* was the Hebrew term for the glory of God that appeared as a cloud and as fire above the temple; it was his glorious temple-presence that he withdrew from mankind. Man was no longer a resting place for God, but he had become a battlefield. Man lost his good relationship with God. He has become a temple in bad repair.

MAN ONLY A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE HEAVENLY BEINGS

The Jewish view of mankind after the fall was not pessimistic only. This was mostly, because God continued to look for mankind, with a view of salvation. And in the Jewish Holy Scriptures, we also read about the glory of man as he is presently, even after Adam had sinned:

20. Genesis 6:3

21. 3 Enoch 48:1

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?
Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly
beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him dominion over the works of your
hands;
you have put all things under his feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.²²

The Psalmist underlines that mankind is higher than creation, and only ‘a little lower than the heavenly beings’. He is also crowned with glory and honor. This glory is the same word used for the presence of the Holy Spirit on or in the tabernacle and the temple: “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.”²³



Mankind after the Fall has not fully lost the image of God; man is still essentially different from the rest of creation. The area where things have gone wrong, is in our relationship with God. Man is no longer a temple of the Spirit but rather an empty temple: still a temple, made for serving God, but without the presence of God in his life, and maybe

22. Psalm 8:3-8

23. Exodus 40:34

even filled with other gods. Think for instance of the words of Jesus about a spirit living in a man and not finding rest after he is cast out. Note that Jesus uses temple-language here: Compare this ‘rest’ with God resting in creation on the seventh day, and the Holy Spirit being blown into Adam to abide in him.²⁴

God is very near, but without the divine Spirit in us, we cannot communicate with the Divinity. Man still carries the marks of being a unique creature, made for communion with God, but there is sense of missing something, as Blaise Pascal said so pointedly:



What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.²⁵

Mankind is maybe comparable to a fine computer of high quality, but a virus has damaged the software for communication with the Server. As long as the original software has not been re-installed, communication remains impossible.

MAN NEEDS RENEWAL

In Israel's Scriptures, the prophets promised renewal of the temple of humankind. Joel, for instance, speaks on behalf of God who says,

24. Matthew 12:43-44, Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. "Then it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came'; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order.

25. Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) *Pensées* VII(425)

And it shall come to pass afterward,
that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;
[...] even on the male and female servants
in those days I will pour out my Spirit.²⁶

Jesus also promised that man would become a true temple of God again:

Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.²⁷



After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and said,

"Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."²⁸

The symbolical act of our Lord derives significance from Genesis 2:7 where God breathed his Spirit into Adam. Christ who is "the New Adam," Himself imparts the life-giving Spirit to change those who by birth were mere sons of Adam.

26. Joel 3:28-29

27. John 7:37

28. John 20:22

The promised renewal, namely that man will become a temple of God, with the Holy Spirit within, means the recovery of Adam.

SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Adam, as the prototype of humankind, is presented to us in the Holy Scriptures as a temple of the Spirit. God created him with the ability to communicate with God and to be God's caretaker on earth, by giving the Spirit of God to Adam. This was a wonderful gift of God to humankind that intrinsically placed mankind high above the rest of creation and very close to God.

After the Fall of Adam, things went terribly wrong; man was still made to be a temple, but because of sin, God's Spirit no longer dwelled in the temple. We still notice the majestic aspect in mankind and at the same time we notice that something has gone wrong. Man still has the imprint of being created in a special way by God, but the natural ability to communicate with God has gone. Man is great and the Creator must be praised for each person; but man also gravitates to hiding from God.

Because individual humans are creatures and temples of God, men and women alike, each and every person, deserves respect and respectful treatment. They deserve to be loved for who they are and as God-created beings. Christians must stand in the forefront of defending human rights, of caring for the poor, of healing the sick.

Mankind is in a state of being not-finished-yet; we will only find our true destination as temples of God, when the Spirit of God returns to his or her temple. This promise of the return of the Spirit is part of the message of the prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Man was made for worship; as long as the Spirit of God has not returned to a human being, he or she is incomplete and inwardly, distant from God.

3. God's Third Temple:

From altars to the temple of Herod

INTRODUCTION: ALTARS OF WORSHIP IN GENESIS

God made the universe, and humankind, to be his temples. He wanted to be 'at home' in the universe, and especially with humanity. Something went dreadfully wrong, however, as man disobeyed God. The impact of this was that man could no longer 'walk with God' as a natural thing, and the world was no longer the perfect place God had wanted it to be.



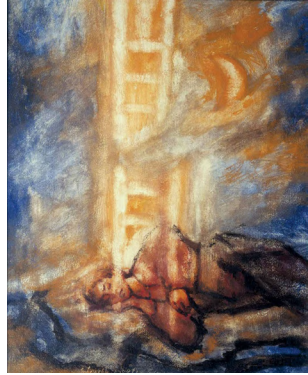
But all hope was not lost. God could still be found, but for this, religious liturgy was needed;

After Adam and Eve were evicted from Paradise, their sons Cain and Abel began to sacrifice 'fruit of the ground' and 'of the firstborn of the flock and of their fat portions'. For some of those offerings, 'the Lord had regard', for others he did not.¹ After the Flood, Noah built an altar to the LORD' and took animals and burnt them on the altar. 'When the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man."²

1. Genesis 4:3-5

2. Genesis 8:26-27

Abraham ‘built an altar to the LORD’ between Bethel and Ai and ‘called upon the name of the LORD’.³ Then God told Abraham to build an altar in the land of Moriah, and offer there a burnt offering. Initially Abraham was asked to sacrifice his son, but God provided a ram in the last moment, testing the obedience of Abraham:



And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide”.⁴

We read of Isaac building an altar and calling upon the name of the LORD in Beersheba, after God had appeared to Isaac.⁵

God appeared to Jacob in a dream when he escaped from his brother Esau, and when Jacob woke up he concluded, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place. [...] How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’⁶ Then Jacob ‘took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called the name of that place Bethel. “[This] stone [...] shall be God’s house.”’⁷

Jacob, when returning from his long time outside Canaan, after leaving Laban, set up a pillar to his covenant with Laban, and there he ‘offered a sacrifice in the hill country.’⁸ Back in Canaan, in Shechem, Jacob bought a piece of land

3. Genesis 12:9

4. Genesis 22:13-14

5. Genesis 26:25

6. Genesis 28:16-17

7. Genesis 28:18-22

8. Genesis 31:51-54

where he pitched his tent; there he erected an altar, which he called *El-Elohe Israel*.⁹ After he while he moved on to Bethel, to make an altar - a pillar- for God. He then called that place El-Bethel. On the pillar he poured a drink offering and oil.¹⁰

After a long time, when Jacob was on his way to Egypt, he sacrificed to God in Beersheba, where Isaac had also sacrificed. God appeared there to Jacob.¹¹

Gregory K. Beale describes the building of these altars as ‘creating sacred space’, in line with the original task of Adam to extend God’s rule beyond the garden of Eden:

The patriarchs appear also to have built these worship areas as impermanent, miniature forms of sanctuaries that symbolically represented the notion that their progeny were to spread out to subdue the earth from a divine sanctuary in fulfillment of the commission in Gen 1:26-28. Though they built no buildings, these patriarchal sacred spaces can be considered “sanctuaries” along the lines comparable to the first non-architectural sanctuary in the Garden of Eden, which may be enhanced by observing that a “tree” is often present at these sites. It will also be important to recall later that a holy piece of geography or a sacred area can be considered a true “sanctuary” or “temple” even when no architectural building is constructed there.¹²

These altars can therefore be seen as the creating of bridgeheads for God. These informal sanctuaries in Genesis also pointed to Israel’s later tabernacle and temple from which Israel was to branch out over all the earth.

9. Genesis 33:19-20

10. Genesis 35:1, 6-15

11. Genesis 46:1-2

12. Gregory K. Beale, ‘Eden, the Temple and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation’ in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48/1, March 2005, p. 14.

TABERNACLE

When Israel began its exodus¹³ and entered into the desert east of Egypt, God showed his presence:

And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.¹⁴

In the desert, after a battle against the Amalekites at Rephidim in Sinai was won with the help of God, ‘Moses built an altar and called the name of it, The LORD is my banner.’ And when Moses and Israel were camped at Mount Sinai, Moses’ father-in-law Jethro came to Moses and Jethro ‘brought a burnt offering and sacrifices to God and Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with [Jethro] before God.’¹⁵

On Mount Sinai God revealed his laws to Moses. He gave Israel some rules for what sort of private altars to build. The general idea seems to be that the altars had to be simple.¹⁶ After God finished giving Moses his laws,

he got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the Lord. Mo-

13. Exodus 12:27: When Israel is about to leave Egypt, God instructs the Israelites that every household has to slaughter a lamb and eat it. The blood has to be applied to the doorposts and the lintels. This was instituted as an annual feast for Israel. Though there was no altar, the lamb was considered ‘a sacrifice of the Lord’s Passover’ [and after Moses finished his instructions] ‘the people bowed their heads and worshiped.’

14. Exodus 13:21-22

15. Exodus 18:12

16. Exodus 20:24-26: “‘Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. And do not go up to my altar on steps, or your private parts may be exposed.’”

ses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he splashed against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.” Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”¹⁷

After this, God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle:

And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. Exactly as I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it.¹⁸

Note that there was a pattern according to which the tabernacle and its furniture and worship had to be made. This is what the book of Hebrews says:

[The Jews in their temple] serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.”¹⁹

The most important part of the tabernacle was the Holy of Holies, with its ark of the covenant; on top of the ark (a sort of golden box) the ‘mercy seat’ was to be placed:

You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. [...] And you shall make two cherubim of gold [...] on the two ends of the mercy seat. [...] The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings, their faces one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And you shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony that I shall give you. There I will meet

17. Exodus 24:4-8

18

19. Hebrews 8:5

with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.²⁰



Here we have the heart of the tabernacle; it was a temple for God, where he was to be present permanently. Not the private altars but the central liturgical tent with its prescribed worship would be the place where Israel could be assured of God's presence.

This ark of the presence of God was to be hidden from the people and could only be accessed annually by Israel's High Priest, as God is too holy and the people too sinful for God to be accessed randomly. The area of the Holy of Holies was separate from the rest of the temple by a curtain:

And you shall make a veil of blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen. It shall be made with cherubim skillfully worked into it. [...] And you shall hang the veil from the clasps, and bring the ark of the testimony in there within the veil. And the veil shall separate for you the [rest of the tabernacle] from the Holy of Holies.

You shall put the mercy seat on the ark of the testimony in the Most Holy Place.²¹



In the tabernacle, the bronze altar was the other most important article for worship. This was where the people of Israel were to sacrifice animals and oth-

20. Exodus 25:17-22

21. Exodus 25:31-34

er offerings for forgiveness of their sins, for sanctification and for thanking God.

The tabernacle was erected in the second year after Israel's exodus from Egypt, on the first day of the first month. 'So Moses finished the work', we read.²² This is a reminder of the creation story, where we read that 'thus the heavens and the earth were finished'.²³ After God finished creation, he rested on the seventh day. After the tabernacle was finished,

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would set out. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.²⁴

So Israel, on its journeys, was guided by the presence of God himself; He rested in the tabernacle, above the ark of the covenant, and in this manner He was in the midst of his people.²⁵

This presence of God was not guaranteed, though. God threatened to 'hide his face' from Israel in case they would not abide by his laws.²⁶ Moses, toward the end of his life, made clear to Israel that if they would not abide by the covenant with God, all God's promises of blessings would turn

22. Exodus 40:33.

23. Genesis 2:1

24. Exodus 40:34-38

25. Exodus 33:9. When Moses would go to the tabernacle, the 'tent of meeting' the 'pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses.'

26. Deuteronomy 32:20

into curses. These curses do not specify what would then happen with the tabernacle, but that seems clear enough. Here just one sample of the threat to the nation:

The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. [...] The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed. [...] And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you. [...] Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and fail with longing for them all day long, but you shall be helpless. A nation that you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually, so that you are driven mad by the sights that your eyes see. [...] The Lord will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known. And there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. And you shall become a horror, a proverb, and a by-word among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away.²⁷



After Israel enters into the land, the tabernacle appears in Bethel, later at Shiloh, then in Ebenezer, when the Israelites were fighting the Philistines.²⁸ During that battle the ark was captured by the Philistines. David recaptured the ark of God, and God

27. Parts of Deuteronomy 28:25-37

28. Judges 20:27; 1 Samuel 1:3, 4:3-5

struck Uzzah because he touched the ark.²⁹ After some more adventures, King David brought the ark to Jerusalem and when Solomon became king, we read of the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant being in Jerusalem.³⁰

The existence of the tabernacle as the regular, public place for meeting with God as that was his resting place, did not mean that with God's blessing no 'private' altars were built. In all cases, at the ark of the covenant and at smaller altars, God was served and He is often seen as revealing Himself at those places when his faithful law-abiding servants sacrificed and prayed to Him.

TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

The building of a stone temple was not God's idea. The tabernacle was in use right up until the time of King David and then it was incorporated into the temple of Solomon. This temple was David's idea. He wanted a permanent building, a temple like other religions had:

Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." And Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you."³¹

Had God been consulted? Had He said anything to either Nathan or David about a temple up to this point? Apparently Nathan thought the idea of building a temple sounded like a good idea, so it appears that he presumptuously endorsed it on God's behalf. That very night God came to Nathan with a strong message:

29. 2 Samuel 6:1-7

30. 2 Chronicles 1:4-5

31. 2 Samuel 7:1-3

But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why have you not built me a house of cedar?”’”³²

Nathan’s message underlined that the choice of God was to move with his people; why ‘fix’ his presence to a stone building? It seems as if God made a joke with David: ‘David, you do not need to build me a house, I will build your house instead.’ At the same time, Nathan prophesies that David’s son, Solomon, would build the stone temple David had asked for. It seems the construction of the temple was not really what God wanted, but he blessed it after all. Just as he originally did not want Israel to have kings, but at their request, He agreed.³³

When Solomon had pacified the region, he decided to build the temple:

You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side, until the Lord put his foes[a] under the soles of his feet. But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor evil occurrence. And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of



32. 2 Samuel 7:4-7; the whole chapter is worth reading in this regard.

33. 2 Samuel 7:13; about the request for a king, see xxxxx

the Lord my God, as the Lord spoke to my father David, saying, “Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall build the house for My name.”³⁴

And the LORD agreed to be present in this temple, but on the precondition that Israel would obey his laws:

Now the word of the Lord came to Solomon, “Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel.”³⁵

The construction of the temple took seven years.³⁶ The temple was full of images of angels, plants, trees and animals, reminding Israel of the original good creation, the original temple of God. And “Israel’s temple served as a little earthly model of God’s temple in heaven that would eventually encompass the whole earth,” according to Beale.³⁷

When the construction and the creation of some utensils was finished, the ‘things that his father David had dedicated, the silver, the gold and the vessels’, were stored in the temple. And then the ark and the whole original tabernacle were brought into the temple.³⁸ These were in the city of David, Zion, which is close to where the temple was built.

There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone that Moses put there at Horeb, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of

34. 1 Kings 5:3-5

35. 1 Kings 6:11-13

36. 1 Kings 6:38

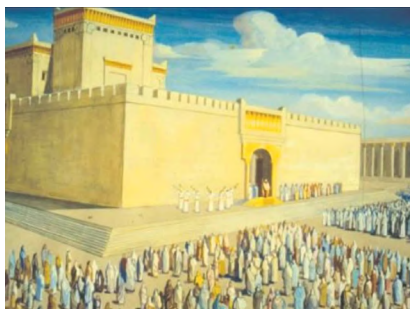
37. Gregory K. Beale, ‘Eden, the Temple and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation’ in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48/1, March 2005, p. 18.

38. 1 Kings 7:51

the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.³⁹

The glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. God had come to rest in his temple. This is the constituent factor for making a place a temple for God. Solomon, in his dedication prayers, underlines that God, however, is not contained in his temple:

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his plea, O Lord my God, listening to the cry and



to the prayer that your servant prays before you this day, that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may listen to the prayer that your servant offers toward this place. And listen to the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. And listen in heaven your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.⁴⁰

DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

And important to notice: the heart of the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, is marked by the laws of God. His presence and obedience by his people are related. This is very clear from the dedication prayers of Solomon and from the words of God to Solomon:

39. 1 Kings 8:9-11

40. 1 Kings 8:27-31

And the Lord said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time. And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and my rules, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’

But if you turn aside from following me, you or your children, and do not keep my commandments and my statutes that I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land that I have given them, and the house that I have consecrated for my name I will cast out of my sight, and Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will become a heap of ruins. Everyone passing by it will be astonished and will hiss, and they will say, ‘Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?’ Then they will say, ‘Because they abandoned the Lord their God who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt and laid hold on other gods and worshiped them and served them. Therefore the Lord has brought all this disaster on them.’⁴¹

God’s promise of blessings for the temple was conditional: ‘If you walk before me...’ And the words about the destruction of the temple should not only be seen as a warning, but as prophecy. Many kings after Solomon did not follow the ways of God, and the temple got into disarray. King Joash had it repaired, and King Hezekiah had it cleansed:

In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east and said to them, “Hear

41. 1 Kings 9:1-9

me, Levites! Now consecrate yourselves, and consecrate the house of the Lord, the God of your fathers, and carry out the filth from the Holy Place. For our fathers have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the Lord our God. They have forsaken him and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the Lord and turned their backs.⁴²

King Josiah also revived the worship of God once again, but the moral downward trend in Judah and Israel was not stopped by these few good kings. Under King Zedekiah the end came:



All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the Lord that he had made holy in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until there was no remedy. Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels.⁴³

42. 2 Chronicles 29:3-6

43. 2 Chronicles 36:14-19

REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Seventy years later, King Cyrus of Persia allowed the Israelites to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple::

Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people,

may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—he is the God who is in Jerusalem. ⁴⁴



Was this the fulfillment of the words of the prophets of Israel who during their captivity envisioned a new temple? Those prophets

had often predicted a glorious future for the people of God and for their temple. Ezekiel, for instance, describes 14 years after the temple was destroyed, that God gave him a vision of a new Israel.⁴⁵ He saw the details of the temple, and the return of God to his temple:

Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. As the glory of the Lord entered the temple by the gate facing east, the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

44. Ezra 1:2-3

45. Ezekiel 40:1-2

While the man was standing beside me, I heard one speaking to me out of the temple, and he said to me, “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people of Israel forever. And the house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoring and by the dead bodies of their kings at their high places.⁴⁶



God did not return to his temple after it was rebuilt; Israel was disappointed. Compared to the former glory, the new temple was ‘as nothing in their eyes’. So the prophet Haggai encouraged the people. The glory of the Lord had not returned to the temple, but his Spirit was in their midst anyhow:

Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the Lord. Work, for I am with you, declares the Lord of hosts, according to the covenant that I made with you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit remains in your midst. Fear not. For thus says the Lord of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. [...] The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the Lord of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the Lord of hosts.⁴⁷

The message of Haggai was, God has not left Israel, but the restoration of the glory of the temple was still a matter of the future.⁴⁸ The temple of God was rebuilt, but it was not

46. Ezekiel 43:1-7

47. Haggai 2:4-9

48. Zechariah has a similar message see Zechariah 2:4f, 10f

truly where God could be found. And the people were commanded to be strong and to work.

Many Jewish theologian of the post-exilic period were so aware of the absence of God from the temple, that they described the period in fact as continuing exile - even though they lived in their own land again. They were waiting for the return of God to his temple.

IN THE TIME OF JESUS

Jesus often visited the temple; this was the same temple built after the Jews returned from Babylon, but greatly enlarged and refurbished by King Herod. Israel still waited for the glory of God to return and King Herod had greatly increased the apprehension of the pious Jews, as his



non-Jewish involvement in enlarging and beautifying the temple was seen as a defilement of the house of God.

While the temple should be a house of prayer for all nations, Jesus called the place “a den of robbers”⁴⁹ and drove the businesspeople out. The Jews asked him with what authority he did this, and he answered them:

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”
The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body.⁵⁰

These words of Jesus show not only that He considered himself to be God’s temple (more about this later) but also

49. Mark 11:15

50. John 2:19-21

that he considered himself a truer temple; the one made of stones, in Jerusalem, had become a house of trade and was no longer a house of prayer for people to find God. His view of the temple was further accentuated when his disciples pointed him to the buildings of the temple for their beauty. Jesus then predicted the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem.

FINAL DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

In Mathew 23 Jesus had first announced God's verdict over the religious leadership of Israel; this should be seen as a repetition of similar passages in the Old Testament where God warned the people that his vengeance would come if they did not abide by the covenantal agreements with God. Then he predicted the end of the temple and of Jerusalem:

I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth. [...] Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'⁵¹

The disciples then pointed to the beauty of the buildings of the temple, but Jesus said:

You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.⁵²

51. Matthew 23:34-39

52. Mathew 24:2

In the Gospel of Luke we have a more detailed prediction of the looming destruction of the temple:

For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.⁵³

In the year 70AD the temple was destroyed as predicted. Josephus was an eyewitness of the destruction of the temple. He describes this in his books *The Wars of the Jews* and *Antiquities of the Jews*, written within a decade after the events. He describes in detail the bloodshed and total destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, not unlike how Jesus had predicted it.

The destruction of the temple was God's covenantal vengeance, fully in line with His warnings through Moses, the prophets, and Jesus.

As I will argue later, there was also no longer any need for a stone temple in Jerusalem. Jesus himself was the true place for people to find God; and He made his church and his followers into temples of God's glory as they are 'in Him'. The temple had lost its relevance, as Jesus said to the Samaritan woman:



The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the

53. Luke 19:43-44

hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”⁵⁴

SOME CONCLUSIONS REMARKS

As the temples of creation and humankind were separated from God and lost the intimacy of the divine presence, there was still a way to relate to God, that is, via the means of liturgy and sacrifice. Through the liturgy of sacrifice, God enabled man to be forgiven and to meet with Him. The place where this sacrifice and meeting took place, became thereby a temple.

Initially, man build his own altars to seek God, without many liturgical preconditions, but during Israel's exodus, God prescribed in great detail how and where He would be graciously present among his people. He 'rested' in a tent that moved with the people, underlining that He is with his people wherever they go.

Solomon build a permanent stone house for God. Just as kingship was not what God originally wanted, so a stone residence was not God's first choice. However, He honored Solomon's desire and rested in the temple as he did in the tabernacle. Solomon himself expressed that he realized that God's presence in the temple was more a signifier than the full reality as God rests in his heavenly abode.

We do need such signifiers, however. The idea that we can have a purely spiritual worship with no habits, rules, images, seems to go against our human nature. In our worship, we all use liturgy. The issue is not whether we use liturgy,

54. John 4

but whether it is *good* liturgy, that is, whether it reflects the spiritual realities in a faithful manner.

As Moses' tabernacle and Solomon's temple were build in accordance with the heavenly example, there must be a pattern in the liturgical worship of Israel that reflects heaven. Does the liturgy we use for our worship reflect the same heavenly pattern?

As Israel did not follow the laws of God, God withdrew his presence from the temple, and He never returned to that stone building; the destruction of the temple in 70AD was God's judgment on his people. He did not want to be in their midst.

Jesus had announced the destruction of the temple; he underlined that the sinful behavior of Israel's leadership was God's reason for his covenantal vengeance. But Jesus had also shown his followers that God would soon be found in a much more meaningful way than in the stone building in Jerusalem. The destruction of the temple was not only God's vengeance but also a pointer that God could be found elsewhere. God had better temples.

4. God's Central Temple:

Jesus Christ

OLD TESTAMENT PROMISES

In the Old Testament, we read of amazing promises about a coming Messiah, for instance in Isaiah 11:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.
And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.
He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,
and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.
[...] the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as
a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations
inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.¹

Note that the *Spirit of God* will *rest* upon him, and his *resting place* shall be glorious. In these verses, we come across

1. Isaiah 11:1-10

references to temple worship. The Messiah is presented to us as a temple where the Spirit of God rests in glory. In Isaiah 61, the Messiah is quoted as saying that ‘the Spirit of the LORD God is upon me’, and Jesus would later claim that these words were actually spoken about Him.²

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN PRESENTS JESUS AS A TEMPLE OF GOD

Especially in the Gospel of John, Jesus is presented to us as a temple of God:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [...] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.³

The Word, i.e., God, became flesh, and *pitched his tent* among us, is what ‘dwelt among us’ means. And the glory of God became visible. This is temple, or rather, tabernacle-language. God made himself a perfect temple in a human person. This immediately raises the question: ‘so what about the *stone* temple, in Jerusalem?’



The same idea is presented to us when Jesus was baptized; John the Baptist testified that he ‘saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.’⁴

Israel had been waiting for the return of God to his stone temple, in Jerusalem. Now, God has returned to his *true*

2. Isaiah 61:1-2, Luke 4:18-19

3. John 1:1, 14

4. John 1:32

temple: He has come in Jesus Christ. In Jesus we meet with God in a more perfect way than in the previous temples mentioned in the Bible, because Jesus was the *embodiment* of God, both by the Logos (Word) entering into the Virgin Mary and also by Jesus' strengthening for ministry by the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, in very direct words, compared himself also with a temple when speaking with Nathanael. Nathanael was impressed by Jesus' prophetic view, but Jesus told him, 'you ain't seen nothing yet!':

Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.⁵

This reminds us of both Jacob's sanctuary and the presence of God in the Holy of Holies of the temple. Jesus pointed at himself.

In John's Gospel we see a fulfillment of the three great feasts of the temple's liturgical, annual worship cycle: Pentecost, Passover, and Tabernacles. In addition to these, the feast of Dedication, which began in the time of the Maccabean revolt, is also included in John's recapitulation of the temple in Christ.



These four major Jewish festivals are all mentioned in John's Gospel. The order goes as follows, and Jesus during

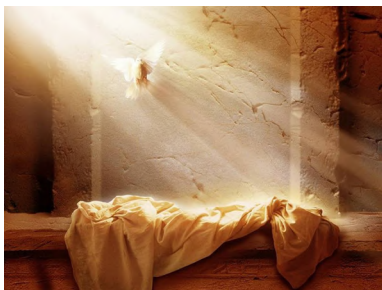
5. John 1:51

those festivals claims that He is the ‘fulfillment’ of those Temple feasts:

Passover (John 2:13-3:21)

Very early on in his ministry, Jesus cleansed the temple in Jerusalem from businesspeople who had turned the temple into ‘a house of trade’. Jesus calls the temple ‘my Father’s house’, but he seems to indicate that this temple is losing its centrality, when he says:

“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”
The Jews then said, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?”
But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.⁶



Jesus seemed to purposely juxtapose the temple build with stones, with his own body indwelled by the Spirit of God. Passover as a festival was a reminder of death (the firstborn of the Egyptians and the sacrificial lambs) and of God’s mercy towards His people. Jesus, however, linked Passover with his own death and resurrection and the re-enactment, or rather the true fulfillment, of both Passover and the temple in Himself.⁷

Jesus did not speak of the destruction of the temple of stone in Jerusalem, but of his own death and resurrection. However, Pope Benedict XVI wrote about this,

6. John 2:19-22

7. I used much of <http://blogs.ancientfaith.com/onbehalfofall/jesus-is-the-temple-2/> [accessed 19 May 2015]

The rejection and crucifixion of Jesus meant at the same time the end of this (stone) Temple. The era of the Temple is over. A new era is introduced, in a Temple not built by human hands. This temple is his body, the Risen One, who gathers the peoples and unites them in the sacrament of his body and blood. He himself is the new Temple of humanity. The crucifixion of Jesus is at the same time the destruction of the old Temple. With his resurrection a new way of worshipping God begins, no longer on this mountain but 'in spirit and in truth'. (John 4:23)⁸

Note that Pope Benedict links Jesus as a temple with the church as a temple (more about this later) and with Adam, or mankind, as a temple. Humankind was supposed to be a perfect abode for God, but things went wrong because of sin. Jesus Christ was the true Human Temple. He was sinless and God dwelled fully in him. What went wrong because of the first Adam was restored by Jesus, who is therefore called the second Adam.



Passover (John 6:1-71)

Christ speaks of Himself as the true bread from heaven, a fulfillment of the Passover festival (which involved bread and wine), and also revealed the Eucharistic festival to his followers before the time for such a feast had come. At Eucharist his followers were to eat his body and drink his blood if they wanted to have eternal life, a fulfillment of the mercy of God and life shown to His people in the Passover meal.

Tabernacles (John 7:1-10:21)

During Tabernacles, the priests would pour several gallons of water from the Pool of Siloam upon the altar steps, while

8. Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* Part Two (San Francisco, 2011), pp. 21-22

also keeping the temple courts continually illuminated with candles.

Jesus goes into the temple and teaches during the feast, “If anyone is thirsty, come to me and drink. From within whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, will flow rivers of living water!” (John 7:37-38), which is connected with the water poured out from the Pool of Siloam.



In connection with the lighting of the temple courts, Jesus soon after teaches “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

Dedication (John 10:22-39)

This feast was a reminder of the re-consecration of the temple by the Maccabees while under foreign rule (1 Maccabees 4:56) During this festival, Jesus calls himself “consecrated” by the Father, as he is walking through Solomon’s porch within the temple itself.⁹

Passover (John 11:55-20:31)

When the sacrifice was made on the altar, the blood from the sacrifice would flow through holes in the southwestern corner of the altar, down through a water channel and into the brook of Kidron; In other words, at the time of the sacrifice, blood and water would pour out from the temple itself. In John 19:34, we read: “One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and immediately, blood and water came out.”

9. John 10:36

THROUGH NEW EYES

James Jordan, in his book *Through New Eyes*, shows how in another manner, John presents Christ as the new temple.¹⁰ He suggests that John roughly follows the route of the High Priest in Israel's temple in how he describes the details in the life of Jesus:¹¹

The priest starts with the laver, for his ritual purification, so the first five chapters of John speak of water: baptism of John the Baptist, water into wine, the "cleansing" of the temple, the new birth (water and spirit), John's baptism, the Samar-



itan woman at the well, the resurrection of the dead boy (at Cana, where water became wine, as well as the washings that were necessary when being cleansed from death on the third and seventh day), and the pool of Bethesda in John 5 ends this section.

The priest then turns to the Table of Showbread: John 6 has Jesus feeding the five thousand, calling Himself the Bread of Life, declaring that if we will not eat of His Flesh and drink of His Blood we can have no part in Him; in John 7 He presents Himself as the drink of life (remember the libations that went with the showbread and meal offerings).

10. James B. Jordan, *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc. Brentwood, Tennessee, 1988) pp. 267-269. This book is available online for free, see http://freebooks.entrewave.com/freebooks/docs/a_pdfs/jjne.pdf.

11. In what follows I have used the summary of Jordan's pages 267--269 by <http://evenuntodeath.blogspot.com/2007/07/jesus-as-temple-james-jordan.html> [accessed 19 May 2015]

Then we are at the Lampstand. In John 8 we find that Christ is the Light of the world, in chapter 9 He heals a blind man, and in chapter 10 He is the Good Shepherd (connected to David, who is repeatedly referred to as a light, as well as the connection between the shepherd's voice calling to his sheep and the light in a dark place). John 11 moves on to Lazarus, and we are told that Christ had to call him out of darkness and sleep into light and day. In John 12 Christ says that those who would not believe in Him were blind, but those who did believe would become sons of light.

Then Jesus repeats some of the foregoing, but he goes further. He washes the disciple's feet, breaks bread with them, and speaks of the Holy Spirit (the archetype for the seven lamps in the Tabernacle) in chapters 13-16.

Then comes the High Priest's prayer at the altar of incense in John 17. But after this we travel yet further: His death is the sacrifice as well as the ultimate Yom Kippur, and He is the High Priest who takes the blood into the Most Holy. His resurrection is the High Priest returning from the Most Holy place alive, which means that God had accepted the sacrifice. Also, on Yom Kippur, the High Priest wore a simple linen garment. This is the garment Peter encounters in the tomb in chapter 20, as Christ has returned to His glorified state. The two angels in verse 12 speak of the mercy-seat in Exodus 25: two cherubim, one at either end of God's throne; two angels, one at the head and one at the feet.

We now turn to Eden, the original temple where the first sacrifice took place: outside the tomb was a garden, reminiscent of the garden symbolism so prevalent in the temple, and Christ is the New Gardener, the New Adam Who kept His garden safe and died on a tree, was placed in the dust, traveled to the domain where "the worm (serpent) does not die", and returned, reversing the curse by taking the entirety of it upon Himself. We remain in Eden and find Gen. 2:7 in John 20:22, and the naked Adam hiding in the garden

is found in the naked Peter hiding in the sea; Adam named the animals, the apostles are to feed Christ's sheep. Christ wore the Old Covenant in His death, and His resurrection has created a new heavens and a new earth, "in which righteousness dwells".

THE APOSTLE PAUL ABOUT JESUS AS THE TEMPLE

The apostle Paul links this idea of God dwelling fully in Jesus with Jesus as the place where reconciliation is made by sacrifice:

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him.¹²

God 'dwelled' fully in Jesus and in this temple God reconciled man and God. Jesus has fully taken the role of the temple build with stones in Jerusalem. Not in that stone temple, but in Jesus Christ can we find God, and salvation.

The belief that all liturgical temple-sacrifices are fulfilled in the cross of Jesus Christ, that in him all the underlying intentions of all sacrifices are accomplished, means that Jesus is the real temple. Pope Benedict XVI wrote some important words about this:

Jesus [...] has taken the place of the Temple, [...] he himself is the new Temple: all of this lies at the very heart of Paul's teaching. [...] The most important text is found in the Letter to the Romans (3:23-25): "Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's

12. Colossians 1:19-22

righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”

The Greek word that is here translated as “expiation” is *hilasterion*, of which the Hebrew equivalent is *kapporet*. This word indicated the covering of the Ark of the Covenant. This is the place over which YHWH appears in a cloud, the place of the mysterious presence of God. This holy place is sprinkled with the blood of the bull killed as a sin-offering on the Day of Atonement. [...]

When Paul applies the word *hilasterion* to Jesus, designating Him as the seal of the Ark of the Covenant and thus as the locus of the presence of the living God, the entire Old Testament theology of worship



[...] is preserved and surpassed and raised to a new level. Jesus himself is the presence of the living God. God and man, God and the world, touch one another in him. [...] For Paul, the Temple and its worship is “demolished” with Christ’s crucifixion; its place is now taken by the living Ark of the Covenant - the crucified and risen Christ.¹³

This great theological vision is also worked out in some detail in the Letter to the Hebrews.

THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

We will look at some parts of the Letter to the Hebrews in which Jesus is compared to the temple and to aspects of the temple service. He is presented to us as the ‘better’

13. Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* Part Two (San Francisco, 2011), pp. 38-40

temple, the 'better' High Priest, etc.

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him,
or the son of man, that you care for him?

You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned him with glory and honor,
putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. [...]

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. [...]

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.¹⁴

In the study of humankind as a temple, we saw how in Psalm 8 mankind is seen as very close to God, and crowned with glory, that is, with God's *shekinah* above him. Man is a temple. Here in Hebrews we see how the same passage is treated as a description of Jesus as a temple. He, the true

14. Hebrews 2:5-17

Son of Man, has been made a little lower than angels (his incarnation), but now he is crowned with honor and glory (his ascension).

Jesus was, according to this passage, not a 'mere' man but He 'partook' of flesh and blood. This points at his incarnation, where God came to 'tabernacle' among mankind. And he is also called a high priest who makes propitiation for the sins of the people. But as he is both compared with a temple and with the high priest, it is also clear that it is not possible to *harmonize* all these images. It is also clear, that the writers of the New Testament did see in all those images from the Old Testament, allegories, or types, or prophecies, of the salvation that came in Jesus Christ.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

Jesus Christ is presented in the New Testament as the real place for meeting with God and for reconciliation with God 'in his body and blood'. This is temple language. He is the ultimate temple of God.

In the New Testament, the fact that Jesus is the true temple of God is seen in apposition to the stone temple in Jerusalem with its liturgy and sacrifices. As Jesus fulfilled all intentions of that temple, it was no longer needed. Its destruction in 70AD was closely linked with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The idea of rebuilding that stone temple in Jerusalem is in direct contradiction with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is presented as the temple, as the High Priest, as the Ark of the Covenant and more. These images cannot be reconciled but must be seen as efforts to show that the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus are a fulfillment of all the promises of salvation in the Old Testament. These promises cannot be systemized, just as all Jesus did cannot be put in a simple harmonized 'chart'. This is logical as

God's perfect work cannot be perfectly described by mere humans.

As Jesus is the true temple for meeting with God and for salvation, he is the place where to start when we desire for meeting with God and for salvation. To suggest that there are other starting points or other 'roads' to God, suggests that Jesus is not God's ultimate temple. Outside Jesus, there is no salvation and no meeting with God.

5. God's Fifth Temple: Church

INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to over-estimate the importance of the temple in Jerusalem to the Jews.¹ It was the centre of their religious system, and the centre of their identity as God's people. It was the place that God had chosen to be present with his chosen people,² and was the centre of their sacrificial system.

St Paul was a Jew, so it is not surprising that he used temple imagery in his writing. Temple imagery was useful both to Jews and gentiles. The essence of a temple, in both Jewish and pagan thought, was that was where the presence of a deity was manifest. To enter a temple was to enter into the presence of the deity.



JESUS THE TEMPLE GIVES HIS SPIRIT TO US

We have seen how Jesus referred to himself as the ultimate temple - the place where God could be found and where God and man can be reconciled. Paul also speaks of the church as the temple of God. These two are closely related, Christ and his Church. Because Christ is the ultimate tem-

1. For this study we have generously used Julian Spriggs, *The Temple as a Symbol of the Church*

<http://www.julianspriggs.com/Pages/ChurchAsTemple.aspx> (accessed 6 June 2015)

2. Deuteronomy 12:5

ple, the Church is also a temple.³ And by giving the Spirit that made Jesus into the temple of God to his followers, Jesus made them into a temple, together with Him. The promise of the Spirit to come to His temple, came true in Christ, and through Him, also in his church. NT Wright says,

The Pentecost-scene in Acts 2 takes the long awaited place of a second-Temple scene in which Israel's God comes back at last to live with and among his people.⁴

That was quite unexpected! Israel expected a majestic manifestation of God, returning to his temple in Jerusalem. Instead, He came in Jesus as the crucified Lord. And he came to dwell in his Church:

The Living God, who had said he would put his name in the great House in Jerusalem, has put that name upon and within [these] little surprised communities, dotted about the world of the north-eastern Mediterranean. Unless we are shocked by this, we have not seen the point.⁵



3. Compare the proximity of Christ and the Church in the comparison of the Church with the body of Christ: The Church is called “one body in Christ” in Romans 12:5, “one body” in 1 Corinthians 10:17, “the body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians 12:27 and Ephesians 4:12, and “the body” in Hebrews 13:3. The Church is clearly equated with “the body” of Christ in Ephesians 5:23 and Colossians 1:24.

4. NT Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, p. 356.

5. NT Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, p. 355.

GREEK VOCABULARY: HIERON AND NAOIS

There are two different Greek words for Temple. Although there was not much distinction between them in secular Greek writing, in both the Greek Septuagint and the New Testament they had distinctly different meanings.

The first word for Temple is *hieron*, which is used to refer to the whole Temple complex in Jerusalem, including all the extensive outer courtyards and precincts. In the New Testament *hieron* always refers to the stone Temple in Jerusalem.

The second word for Temple is *naos*, which is the Greek word for a shrine or sanctuary, including a pagan shrine, where the gods were thought to dwell. In the New Testament it is used to describe the special place of God's dwelling, the Holy of Holies in the Jerusalem Temple.⁶ In his speech in Athens Paul also used *naos* for pagan shrines.⁷ This is also the word Jesus used to describe his own physical body,⁸ and it is used many times in Revelation to describe the heavenly Temple, the place of God's glorious presence.

GOD'S PEOPLE AS TEMPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Israel is never directly described as God's Temple in the old Testament, but there are hints about the nation itself being seen as a Temple. During the exodus, God dwelled in the tabernacle which was set up in the midst of his people, who camped around it in their different tribes, so the presence of God was literally in the midst of his people.⁹ The Psalmist described Judah as becoming God's sanctuary:

When Israel went out from Egypt,
the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,

6. eg. Mathew 27:5

7. Acts 17:24

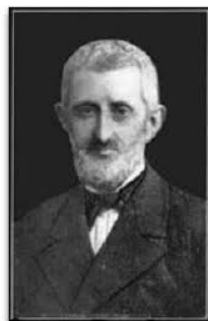
8. John 2:21

9. Numbers 2

Judah became his sanctuary,
Israel his dominion.¹⁰

This concept of the people of Israel collectively being a temple of God, was also mentioned in by the Jewish Rabbi Elijah (Eliyahu) Benamozeg, who said,

The universe, mankind, the nation, and [individual] man are in reality so many stages through which the Holy reveals Itself and in which It dwells. Consequently, it is reasonable to see in these stages so many parts of the Temple of God.¹¹



Even in the time of Jesus, Philo and the Essenes, for instance, spoke of the nation of Israel, or of their own community, as a 'house of God'. The Essenes considered themselves an imitation of the temple in Jerusalem.¹² It was therefore not hard for Jews in the first century, to understand why Paul considered the Church a temple.



Given the importance of the temple in Jerusalem and the different movements that saw themselves as alternatives to this temple, it is obvious that Paul purposely presented the Church as an alternative to the temple. NT Wright says that 'the earliest ekklesia understood itself as, in a sense, a counter-Temple movement.'¹³

10. Psalm 114:1-2

11. From a description of the view of Elijah (Eliyahu) Benamozegh, 1822 -1900, an Italian Orthodox Rabbi, Kabbalist, on <http://www.saieditor.com/stars/zegh.html> (accessed 19 April 2015)

12. Yulin Liu, *Temple Purity in 1-2 Corinthians* (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament 2.Reihe, 2013) p. 117

13. NT Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, p. 355

A few times, Paul speaks explicitly about the church as a Temple. We now look at these three occurrences.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17

Do you not know that you are God's Temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's Temple, God will destroy him. For God's Temple is holy, and you are that Temple.

When addressing issues of disunity in the church, because there were different factions favoring different apostles,¹⁴ Paul challenges the Corinthian believers in their understanding of the nature of the church. He asks, 'Do you not know that you are God's Temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?' Note that the 'you' is plural, referring to the people corporately, rather than individually. This means, the community of the Church is a temple. It is the presence of the Spirit of God in the church that gives them their identity as God's one people.

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul had underlined how important it is for leaders in the church to work for the wellbeing of the temple, and for members of the church to see those leaders in that light. He was addressing their preference for Apollos, and explaining the function of the two servants, himself and Apollos. Both were described as servants who were together constructing God's building. Paul laid the foundation by being the first to preach the Gospel in Corinth and establishing the church there (3:10). Now others were building on that foundation, these being Apollos, the other apostles, and the Corinthian believers themselves. Paul warns that those who build on the foundation must take care how they build on that foundation, which is Jesus Christ, because the quality of the building will be disclosed by fire on the day of judgement (3:12-15).

14. 1 Corinthians 1:10-13

The Church is God's holy temple, therefore the Church should be treated with the same respect that the Jews had for their temple in Jerusalem, and that pagans had for the temple of their favorite deity. The Church has been sanctified by God, as his holy dwelling place.¹⁵

2 COR 6:16-7:1

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said,

“I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.
Therefore go out from their
midst,
and be separate from them,
says the Lord,
and touch no unclean thing;
then I will welcome you,
and I will be a father to you,
and you shall be
sons and
daughters to me,
says the Lord
Almighty.”

Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing

holiness to completion in the fear of God.



Note first, that the quote of God speaking, is a combination of words from different books of the Old Testament that

15. Julian Spriggs, *The Temple as a Symbol of the Church*
<http://www.julianspriggs.com/Pages/ChurchAsTemple.aspx> (accessed 6 June 2015)

all relate to Israel's temple.¹⁶ And that Jewish listeners would hear in these words references to God's covenant with Israel and temple-language. Without blinking an eye, St Paul applies this to the Church of Jewish and gentile followers of Jesus in Corinth.

Here, Paul is arguing that as the Church is God's temple, the believers should not have spiritual fellowship with unbelievers in their pagan temple-meals, otherwise they will be defiled. The temple of God should be a holy place. Although this



passage is frequently used to teach that believers should not marry or have romantic relationships with unbelievers, the original context is the Church as a whole, calling the Church to be distinct from the world and not to compromise with the worship of idols. Being a temple of God must lead to living a holy life together as a community.

16. Leviticus 26:11-12; Ezekiel 11:17, 20:41, 37:26-27; Isaiah 52:11; 2 Samuel 7:14. Beale, p. 23: "Thus, here in 2 Cor 6:16-18, we have a staccato-like rattling off of temple prophecies by Paul. Is Paul saying that the Corinthian church has begun to fulfill these prophecies or is he merely saying that the church is like what these OT passages prophesy about the temple?

In answering this, should not those with a high view of Scripture begin with the presupposition that the NT interprets the OT contextually and with organic hermeneutical continuity, though many in the scholarly guild disagree with such a presupposition? Accordingly, if an OT passage quoted in the New is a prophecy in its original context, would not a NT author like Paul also see it as a prophecy, and would he not see it as beginning fulfillment if he identifies the prophecy with some reality in his own present time? And even if there is no fulfillment formula, would not Paul still see it as fulfillment? Possibly he could use the OT text analogically, but the weight of the prophetic context of the OT passage tilts towards a notion of fulfillment, if there is no clear evidence to the contrary in the NT context (or, if context makes it clear, a NT author could be affirming that an OT prophecy has not been fulfilled yet but assuredly will in the future). If this is a correct hermeneutical approach, then the prophecies about the temple in 2 Cor 6:16-18 should likely be taken as beginning true fulfillment in some way in the Corinthian church."

The Church as a temple has a sacred meal, just as the idols in their temple have sacred meals. The sanctity of the Christian eucharist is undermined when believers participate in the meals that are offered in the temples of the idols.

EPHESIANS 2:17-21

[Jesus] came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.

Keyword in this passage is the togetherness in the temple. Paul describes how the enmity between Jew and Gentile has been broken down by Jesus, to create a new humanity in himself.¹⁷ There is now peace between the previously hostile groups. Paul says that he has 'broken down the dividing wall, the hostility between us.'¹⁸

This is undoubtedly an allusion to the wall in the Jerusalem temple beyond which no Gentile could pass. Gentiles were permitted to enter the Court of the Gentiles, so they could listen to the teaching of the rabbis and hear the worship of God. Surrounding the central sanctuary was a low wall. Beside the gates in this wall was the following inscription, written in Greek and Latin:

No gentile may enter within the railing around the sanctuary and within the enclosure. Whosoever should be caught will render himself liable to the death penalty which will inevitably follow.

17. Ephesians 2:15

18. Ephesians 2:14

This wall became a symbol of the deep division between Jew and Gentile in the first century which has been torn down in Christ, so both Jew and Gentile can now enter the presence of God in Christ, and become one new community. Paul describes this community as a living structure which grows into a holy temple (sanctuary), which is the dwelling place for God.

In this passage, Paul is using the same temple imagery that he used to describe the Corinthian Church, but here he is applying it to the entire world-wide Church. The Church is a living community, which continues to grow and develop, but it is a community where God's Spirit dwells, making it a holy and sanctified temple. This new community transcends all divisions between peoples, whether of status, culture or gender.

The 'growing together' is important for this temple to become a better temple. It needs to grow in numbers of people and in spiritual obedience, and it needs to do this in unison. This is not possible without Christ being the cornerstone and without an apostolic ('New Testament') and prophetic ('Old Testament') foundation.

THE PEOPLE

The Roman Catholic Pope Francis, when speaking of the Church as the temple of God, said:

If we ask ourselves, "Where we can meet God? Where can we enter into communion with Him through Christ? Where can we find the light of the Holy Spirit to enlighten our lives?" the answer is, "in the People of God, among us, for we are Church – among us, within the



People of God, in the Church – there we shall meet Jesus, we shall meet the Holy Spirit, we shall meet the Father.¹⁹

This is an important emphasis we must take at heart. In all talk about the Church as the temple of God, we do not speak of the church *building* but about the community of people.

Mankind, as the pinnacle of Creation was intended to be the temple of God; Thanks to Jesus Christ, the leader of the new mankind, we as Church are now God's temple. We are the place where God can be found, and in this context it is good to remind us of the ancient Christian maxim, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church no salvation).

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

On the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2, Jesus gives his Spirit to the community of his followers, thus constituting them into being a temple of God. This is direct fulfillment of the promises in the Hebrew Scriptures that God was to come for being with his people.

The temple of God should be one, holy, catholic and apostolic. These are all-important ingredients for the Church as the temple of God. The leaders in Church should build the congregation with a focus on these creedal marks.

The Church is not the building; the Church-building is not a temple; the community of believers constitutes the temple. This does not militate against institutes, as the community of believers needs regulations etc, but it does create a set of priorities. Church life is about people.

It is important for us to grasp the idea that the Church is the holy temple of God, his dwelling place on earth, and treat it with awesome respect. The Church should be a radical community of people amongst whom the presence of

19. Pope Francis' catechesis at his Wednesday audience (6/26/13)

the Spirit is real, which attracts people to forsake the pagan world to find the genuine presence of God.

The community of believers is the place where people find the genuine presence of God; it is the place where God is praised, and where people are reconciled with God.



6. God's Sixth Temple:

Individual Christians

A SERIES OF TEMPLES

We have seen how God created the universe and humankind as his temple; the world and mankind was made to be the place where God and man could be 'at ease' with each other. Moral darkness entered the world and mankind, so that the 'natural' presence of God was no longer there. There is always a sense of distance.

For meeting with God, man needed *liturgy* with sacrificial worship at the heart. There was a price to be paid for man and God coming somewhat close to each other. The stone temple in Jerusalem was the most important place where God could be met with. Israel, however, always understood that this was not yet the final 'resting place' of God.

Jesus presented himself as the true temple of God. He truly united God and mankind in himself; He was the perfect sacrifice; He led the true liturgy as the eternal High Priest. He came to restore the Universe and the New Mankind to be God's temple again.



The Church is so intimately connected with Christ that it can also truly be called the New Creation, the New Mankind, and it is the temple of God. He is present among his people; in the Church, people can be reconciled with God; there, they can be ‘at ease’ with God again. However, not only the community of the Church is God’s temple; the individual members in the Church are also, each individually, God’s temple.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-25

“All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything. “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! [...] Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

‘Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you.’ Paul addresses individual Christians here - the ‘you’ is singular. He makes a few statements that are important for understanding his views.

First, he makes clear that the body is important, by pointing to the fact that the body will be raised from the dead just as Jesus was raised from the dead. This is in line with the Jewish view of man, which does not look down on physicality.



The Greek culture of those days looked with contempt at the body as the prison of the human spirit.

‘The human body is made for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body’, shows that our body is highly important.

Paul also says that our bodies are ‘members of Christ’, meaning, they are part of the body of Christ. Note, again, that the body is important. We belong to Christ with spirit and body.

Then Paul says that our bodies are not our own; we have been bought by the death of Christ. This includes the body; He owns it.

The central concept in this part is that our bodies are called a “temple of the Holy Spirit within you.” After Paul had first stressed that our physical body is important for God, his statement about our body being a temple of God can only mean that Paul thinks here in very physical terms. Our body is not a prison of the Spirit, but the temple of the Spirit. He is present ‘within you’.

Paul does not write this to the Corinthians to teach them *Christian Anthropology 101*, but he wants to convince them to not engage in temple prostitution in pagan temples: ‘Glorify God in your body’. Some people in those days suggested that temple prostitution was no problem for Christians because sexuality is like food: ‘The body needs it and so what. It is the Spirit that is truly important’, was their idea. Paul flatly and strongly negates this Greek concept.



JEWISH VIEW

The Jewish website 'My Jewish Learning' speaks of the Jewish view of the body:

Judaism teaches that the body and soul are separate yet indivisible partners in human life. Rather than imprisoning or corrupting the soul, the body is a God-given tool for doing sacred work in the world. It requires protection, care, and respect, because it is holy.¹

Given this Jewish view of the inseparability of body and soul, I would suggest that when Paul speaks of our body being the temple of the Spirit, we should not think in 'mechanical' terms, as if with our body he means our bones, our nerves, our sinews, our lungs, our skin. It does include our soul. I suggest that the term 'your body is a temple' should be understood to mean: 'Your whole individual being is a temple.' But important to take note, it certainly includes our physical existence.

Halakhah (Jewish law) teaches us that the paramount holiness of human life extends to the human body. *Mitzvot* (commandments) cover mundane bodily matters such as clothing, eating, and sexual habits precisely because care of the body is also care for the soul. Healthcare is the maintenance and upkeep of the soul's home. Torah law prohibits mutilations of the body, including tattooing (Leviticus 19:27-28, Deuteronomy 23:3). Not only medical but even hygienic treatments are often elevated to the level of commandment. Maimonides deemed it obligatory to provide proper sustenance and respectful clothing for the body.

Judaism offers an optimistic view of life, the union of body and soul. The body is a gift from God to be protected and tended. Only with our pure, holy bodies can we bring the commitments and truths of our souls into every action.²

1. www.myjewishlearning.com/article/body-soul/ [accessed 15 June 2015]

2. www.myjewishlearning.com/article/body-soul/ [accessed 15 June 2015]

That is exactly Paul's point. To subject our body to anything that is against the will of God, like sexual immorality, is unacceptable as it damages the temple and dishonors God who lives in this temple.

And who can separate body from soul anyway? Modern psychology underlines that we can speak separately of body and soul, but they are intimately interconnected. What we do with our body is important for God, as he inhabits our whole being, our life.

Can we therefore extend the concept of God living 'in us' by saying that he inhabits our whole social life? Western individualism was unknown to the writers of the Bible; they would never dream of thinking of man, or woman, as the hyper-individual that seems to be the image of man nowadays. Man was always seen *in his relationships* - in the totality of his social life. I suggest that this is the meaning of the idea that we are a temple of the Spirit. God has come to dwell in the totality of our existence.

GALATIANS 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

In this passage, the Christian is compared again with a temple - but now with a temple of Christ. Christ lives 'in me', Paul says. The Apostle calls us a temple *of the Spirit* in 1 Cor 6, and now a temple *of Christ*. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, when he speaks of the community of the church, he says: "Do you not know that you are a temple *of God* and that *the Spirit of God* dwells in you?"³ For Paul it seemed easy to switch between speaking *of God*, Jesus and the Spirit in

3. See also: "For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure", Philippians 2:13

regard to us, His temple; we are, really, a temple of the Holy Trinity.

ROMANS 8:9-11

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Note again, how Paul speaks both of Christ and the Spirit living in us, as exchangeable expressions.

And see how for Paul, there is no distinction between belonging to Christ, and having the indwelling of the Spirit.



A Christian has the Spirit living in him or her, without any doubt. A Christian is a temple of God.

And vice-versa. By the the Spirit in us, we are assured that God is our Father, and therefore that we are heirs

with Christ. Everything that Christ owns, is ours.

It is also the Spirit in us who also motivates us inwardly to live a life worthy of God.

HOW DID WE BECOME A TEMPLE OF THE SPIRIT?

We became a temple of the Spirit when we became part of (the body of) Christ. On the day of Pentecost, when Jesus sent his Spirit to live in the temple of the church, Peter said this to the mass of guilt-ridden Jews:

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, “Save yourselves from this crooked generation.” So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.⁴



4. Acts 2:36-41

The key words are: repent and be baptized. This is the practical language of Peter on the day of Pentecost, to the crowd of Jewish non-Christians. To the Christians in Ephesus Paul, about 20 years later, gives a more theological explanation of how Christians have become a temple of the Spirit. He wrote,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.⁵

The key word in this passage is ‘in Christ’ or ‘in Him’. By being ‘in Him’, all things that belong to Christ, now also belong to us. “In him you [...] when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee

5. Ephesians 1:3-14

of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.” The Spirit has come into our lives, we have become a temple of God, when we ‘entered into (the body of) Jesus Christ’, the true temple of God. This entrance into Jesus Christ, the true temple, occurs at the moment of baptism and faith, as Peter said in Acts 2.

INDIVIDUAL, NOT INDIVIDUALISTIC

The purpose of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you, is to build you up in the body of Christ to the glory of God. He therefore works in you:

- 1 He empowers (Micah 3:8).
- 2 He sanctifies (Rom. 15:16).
- 3 He comforts (John 14:16-26).
- 4 He gives joy (Rom. 14:17).
- 5 He gives discernment (1 Cor. 2:10-16).
- 6 He bears fruit (Gal. 5:22-23).
- 7 He gives gifts (1 Cor. 12:3-11).

The fact that each individual believer is a temple of God, is not an individualistic matter. We are a temple because we are related to (the body of) Jesus Christ, the ultimate temple.

In his first letter, Peter speaks about us being part of the temple, Jesus Christ, and that we, each individually, are ‘little temples’:



As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Each Christian is part of the temple, (the church of) Jesus Christ. The Spirit is at work in each of us - we are all 'living stones' for the building of the spiritual house - the temple of God. That is, the body of Jesus Christ. All Christians together are a holy priesthood, and each Christian individually is therefore, a priest. The task of the priest is to bring spiritual sacrifices.

The Old Testament stone temple and its temple service is an example for us individually. The New Testament uses its imagery to describe what the Christian life should be like. God has given his Spirit in us, to serve him as holy priests with spiritual sacrifices. In Romans 12:1-2 Paul summarizes this:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Notice that Paul speaks of the need for us to present our bodies to God. They are to be a living sacrifice for God; that is the manner in which we are to worship Him. Paul uses temple-language to encourage us to make ourselves available for the service of God.



SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

Every Christian who has been baptized and who believes in Jesus Christ is a temple of God. The Spirit lives 'in' such a person. I think it is proper to say that the Holy Spirit of

God inhabits our life: our physical life as well as our soul. Or maybe it is possible to say: the Spirit dwells in our whole being - physical, mental, social.

Our body is crucial for God; it is to be treated with great care. Both in the moral sense we have to take care of it, and also health-wise. It is (part of) the temple of God and the temple deserves great care.

'The body as a temple' helps us to not glorify and worship the body. It deserves attention, but not as if it is autonomous. It is an instrument for the service and worship of God.

We are, each individually, called to live for God by making our whole being available to God as a spiritual sacrifice. This means, we endeavor to do what is good, acceptable and perfect in the eyes of God.

We are, each individually, compared with the temple, with the sacrifices of the temple, and with the priests in the temple. We saw exactly the same when we discussed Jesus being the temple of God. By our baptism and our faith in him, we have become part of (the body of) Christ, and we are so connected with him, that what He is, we are.



7. God's Final Temple: New Jerusalem

GOD AIMS FOR THE UNIVERSE

God created the universe and humankind as his temple; God and man were destined to be 'at ease' with each other. This paradisiacal situation changed after mankind went its own way, but through the liturgy of sacrifices, God could still be approached. God provided the ultimate sacrificial Lamb, Jesus Christ, who in himself reconciled God and man. He became the perfect temple where we can meet with God.



The Church, and all those in the Church, are also temples of God, because what Jesus Christ is, they are. In the Church, that is, in the community of Christians, God can be found. But this is not perfect yet. We still live in the time between the disobedience of mankind, and the restoration of our world to its God-intended status of perfection.

The Church and its people belong to that perfect future of God, as we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. 'If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation', St Paul affirms.¹

1. 2 Corinthians 5:17

PARADISE RESTORED: REVELATION 21:1-5

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

The apostle John receives a magnificent vision from God of the Christian hope; one day, God will make all things new. Some comments based on the above passage:

First, we notice the temple language. “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”

Second, the Christian hope is that one day, heaven and earth will be united fully again, as it was in the beginning. This is not because the earth will be destroyed but because heaven will ‘overwhelm’ the earth by coming ‘down’. Throughout the entire Bible, the ultimate destiny of God’s people is an earthly destiny. [It ‘always’ always places man on a redeemed earth, not in a heavenly realm removed from earthly existence’, according to George Eldon Ladd.²

2. George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, 1972, 1987), p. 275.

The idea of a 'heavenly Jerusalem' was, by the way, not 'invented' by John. He used language that was rather common in Judaism in his days. In the book *2 Baruch* (1-2 century AD?) for instance, we read that God made the heavenly Jerusalem before he made Paradise, that Adam saw it before he sinned, that it was shown in a vision to Abraham, that Moses saw it on Mt Sinai, and that it is now present with God.³

Thirdly, the consummation of the Christian hope is supremely social. It is no 'flight of the alone to the Alone' but life in the redeemed community of the people of God. Interestingly, John in Revelation 21:3, says literally, 'they shall be his peoples (plural)'. He changes the quote from the Hebrew Scriptures about Israel being God's people, into a plural. God will be in the midst of all nations.

The New Jerusalem will come down from God, 'prepared as a bride adorned for her husband'. Israel, and later the Church, are described in the Bible as the 'bride' of God and Christ. The New Jerusalem and the people of God are very intimately connected. "The heavenly Jerusalem is the multitude of saints who will come with the Lord, even as Zechariah said: 'Behold, my Lord God will come, and all his saints with him'", according to Apringius of Beja (6th century).⁴ Martin Kiddle agrees with this view:



3. 2 Baruch 4:2-6

4. Apringius of Beja, *Tractate on the Apocalypse* 21.2

It is a city which is a family. The ideal of perfect community, unrealizable on earth because of the curse of sin which vitiated the first creation, is now embodied in the redeemed from all nations.⁵



Fourthly, we see Paradise restored: God dwells with humankind again. they will be his people, and God will be with them as their God.⁶ This community of people and the presence of God is the essential feature of the age to come.

NEW JERUSALEM AS PEOPLE OF GOD: REVELATION 21:9-16

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, “Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb.” And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the

5. Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St John* (London, 1940), pp. 415-416.

6. “The New Testament conceives of a heavenly Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God, the true homeland of the saints, and the dwelling place of “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22; see Gal. 4:26; Phil. 3:20. While this heavenly Jerusalem is represented as the dwelling place of the departed saints, heaven is not their ultimate destiny, but only the temporary abode of the saints between death and the resurrection (Rev. 6:9-11; II Cor. 5:8; Phil 1:23).” George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, 1972, 1987), p. 276.

twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed— on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.



It seems that we now take a closer look at the New Jerusalem. The view is introduced with words that make explicit that this New Jerusalem is really the Church of God, ‘the bride, the wife of the Lamb’.

Then we learn more about this New Jerusalem, as we read that it ‘has the glory of God’. Again, this is temple language.

The gates have the names of the tribes of Israel written on them, while the apostles are the foundation of the walls. This indicates the unity of the people of God, and underlines that this New Jerusalem really is the people of God, the Church.

THE NEW JERUSALEM IS A TEMPLE: REVELATION 21:22-27

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the

nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

There is no temple in the New Jerusalem, and for that matter, in the New World; a temple is no longer necessary. The Lord God and the Lamb 'is the temple'. If they fill the earth with their presence, mankind has no need for any specific meeting place with God.

Sun and moon are no longer needed, and lamps are not needed, because God and the Lamb are its light. The glory of God fills the place. The world has become a temple again, as it was in the garden of Eden.

This description of the New Heaven and the New Earth and of the New Jerusalem is metaphorical. The fact that there seem to be nations outside the New Jerusalem, means that John's vision shows how the metaphors of the Hebrew Scriptures, about a perfect world with



no more war, is finally coming about: The Kingdom of the world has now become the Kingdom of God. Finally, all is well.

THRONE OF GOD ON THIS EARTH: REVELATION 22:1-5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The

leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Some more temple-details. The river of life is a reference to Ezekiel 47, which is part of the prophet's long description (Ezekiel 40-48) of the expected eschatological New Temple.⁷ This 'river of life' is also an echo of the river mentioned in regard to the Garden of Eden: "A river flowed out of Eden to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers."⁸

Then, we read in John's vision of the 'tree of life', also a reference to the Genesis-story. After mankind's disobedience, access to this tree of life was blocked by cherubim:

Then the Lord God said, [...] Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.⁹

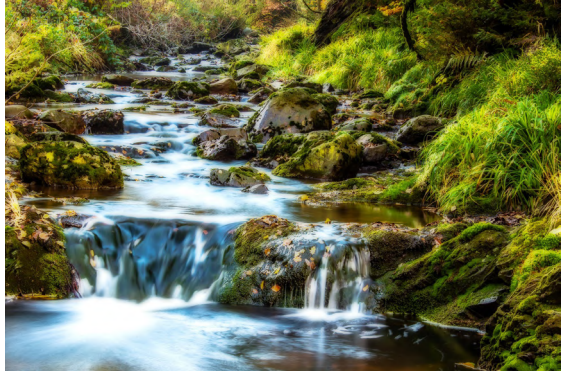
In the New Heaven and the New Earth, man has access to the tree of life again, as well as to the waters of life. Many theologians see these as references to the Holy Spirit and to Jesus Christ.

7. Ezekiel 47:1,12 Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar.[...] And on the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither, nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing."

8. Genesis 2:10

9. Genesis 3:22-24

The throne of God and the Lamb is mentioned once again; God himself is present and this ensures that there is no longer anything accursed in heaven and on earth. The curse of Genesis 3 has been reversed; all is well



now. Adam and Eve were originally told to ‘subdue the earth and have dominion’ and they messed up. But in the New Heaven and the New Earth, the servants of God “will reign forever and ever”.

And what the saints throughout the centuries have strived for, will become a reality: “They will see God’s face, and his name will be on their foreheads.” Even the great prophet’s of the people of God, were not able and allowed to see God’s face.¹⁰ We will have that privilege and joy one day.¹¹ This sight of God is what causes the righteous to be forever happy. In the words of St Chrysostom:

There are no words to explain the blessedness which the soul enjoys, the gain which he obtains once his true nature has been restored to him and he is able henceforth to contemplate the Lord.¹²

God’s ‘name on their foreheads’ may be an allusion to the inscription on the mitre of the high priest’s forehead, “holiness to the Lord”. All believers participate in the eternal priesthood. And all will be standing - not one day each year but forever, in God’s presence. G.K. Beale concludes:

10. Exodus 33:20, 23.

11. Cf 1 Corinthians 3:12; 1 John 3:2

12. Chrysostom, *Ad Theodorum lapsam*, 1,13

It is God's people who have continued to extend the borders of the true temple throughout the church age, as they have been guided by the Spirit, as a result of the Father's plan that was expressed in the redemptive work of the Son, who also consummates the temple building process.¹³

BEFORE THAT DAY

This world will become a temple when heaven joins earth again, as it was in the beginning. But before this moment of the ultimate reconciliation of God with mankind, it is interesting to see how the abode of God is described by John:

After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.¹⁴

John is allowed a view of heaven, and what does he see? First, the throne of God. John proceeds to describe that 'before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God, and before the throne were as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.'¹⁵ Around the throne, 'on each side of the throne' John sees 'four living creatures [...] each of them with six wings, and day and night they never cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy'. These angelic beings remind us of the temple-scene in Isaiah 6, just as the whole description of John is a temple-scene.

The throne of God is like the ark in the holy of holies, and the angels remind us of the cherubim that cover the ark;

13. G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission' a biblical theology of the dwelling place of God* (IVP Academic, 2004) p. 26

14. Revelation 4:1-2

15. Revelation 4:5-6

the seven torches remind us of the candle with seven arms before the holy of holies; the sea of glass is the basin for washing that stood in the temple.¹⁶

John then sees the Lamb, ‘standing as if it had been slain’.¹⁷ The Lord Jesus Christ stands there as the reminder of the ultimate sacrifice in the heavenly temple. And just as in the earthly temple incense was sacrificed continually, we read of ‘golden bowls full of incense’ before the throne of God.¹⁸ We also read of an altar, possibly referring to the same altar for the incense in the temple.¹⁹



So when John had his vision of the heavenly abode of God, it was clear for him; he saw heaven as a temple. Remember that Moses was told to construct the tabernacle and its service ‘exactly according to the pattern that was shown to [him] on the mountain’ where God revealed himself and his laws to Moses.²⁰

WHAT JESUS DID

The letter to the Hebrews explains how the earthly liturgy of the temple was just a dim reflection of the real heavenly temple:

When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this

16. Exodus 30:18

17. Revelation 5:6

18. Revelation 5:8

19. Revelation 6:9

20. Hebrews 8:5, Exodus 25:40

creation) he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you." And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation

of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.²¹

The death of Christ was a sacrifice to God; he secured our eternal redemption by coming with his blood before the throne of God in the heavenly holy of holies. In the heavenly temple, the reconciliation between God and man has been eternally secured, once and for all. In the words of G.K. Beale,

Christ not only fulfills all that the OT temple and its prophecies represent but that he is the unpacked meaning for which the temple existed all along. Christ's establishment of the temple at his first coming and the identification of his people with him as the temple, where God's tabernacling presence dwells, is a magnified view of the beginning form of the new creational temple, and Revelation 21 is the most ultimate highly magnified picture of the final form of the temple that we will have this side of the consummated new cosmos.²²

It is *this* heavenly temple that descends to earth as the New Jerusalem. Just as presently, heaven can be called a temple, one day the whole earth will be God's temple. But then, we no longer need all the metaphors, all the efforts to explain, all images to indicate. Then the earth no longer needs a temple, because humankind will be able to see God face to face.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

We cannot do without metaphors when describing God and his dwelling place. The Hebrew and Christian Holy Scriptures are consistent in using the temple-metaphor for describing God, redemption, and eternity.

21. Hebrews 9:11-26

22. G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission' a biblical theology of the dwelling place of God* (IVP Academic, 2004) p. 27

Heaven, the abode of God, is like a temple; the temple in Jerusalem was modeled after God's eternal resting place. In heaven we see references to altars, candles, incense, sacrifice, the ark of the covenant, etc.

Eventually, the heavenly temple will descend and fill the earth. We will not build a new earth; the earth will be renewed when the New Jerusalem descends; then heaven and earth will be new.

The perfection of the new earth entails that there is no more evil, and that God is all in all. A temple is no longer needed. There is free access to God for all people. The universe has become a temple again; Paradise has been restored.

This renewal, this reconciliation between God and man is only possible because of the eternal sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who was not only perfectly human, but he also perfectly represented God. That is why he is the perfect expression of the heavenly temple. By looking at him, we know what God is like.

What to do with all this as Christians today? First,, we should unashamedly use sacrificial language when speaking of redemption through Jesus Christ. It is the ABC of biblical language.



Also, we can rejoice in the future: What the universe and mankind once were, they will be again: the perfect temple where God rests. And we will be so changed and perfect, that we will be able to 'face God'.

Finally, the 'to be or not to be' issue is how we can be sure we will participate in the coming New World. For that, today we need to be part of the New Jerusalem, that is, the people of God - the church.

