

# Adam as the First Priest in Eden as the Garden Temple<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of my book on *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, I discussed the problematic notion that Revelation 21:1-22:5 portrays the equation of the new creation in 21:1 with the following visions of a city that is temple-shaped and garden-like. Some might attribute the apparent oddness of equating the new cosmos to a garden-like city in the form of a temple to the irrational nature that apocalyptic visions and dreams can have, though this would be hard to accept for a vision that John claims has its origin in God (see, e.g., 21:9 with Rev 1:1 and 22:6). Also, how does this vision relate to Christians and their role in fulfilling the mission of the Church, which has been narrated earlier in the Apocalypse?

In order to solve the problem of this strange equation of the new creation and new Jerusalem with the temple and garden we need to look at the purpose of the temple in the Old Testament (OT) and how this purpose relates to the New Testament (NT) conception of the temple. It becomes evident in pursuing this task that the first tabernacle and temple existed long before Israel happened on the scene. Indeed, it is apparent that the first sanctuary is discernible from the very beginning of history.

## THE GARDEN OF EDEN WAS A TEMPLE IN THE FIRST CREATION

The first sanctuary was in Eden. But how could we possibly know this, since there was no architectural structure in Eden nor does the word “temple” or “sanctuary” occur as a description of Eden in Genesis 1-3? Such a claim may sound strange to the ears of many. A number of scholars recently have argued this from one angle or another.<sup>2</sup> The following nine observations, among others that I do not have space to mention, shows that Eden was the first holy sanctuary.

First, the temple later in the OT was the unique place of God’s presence, where Israel had to go to experience that presence. Israel’s temple was the place where the priest experienced God’s unique presence, and Eden was the place where Adam walked and talked with God. The same Hebrew verbal form (hithpael) used for God’s “walking back and forth” in the Garden (Gen 3:8), also describes God’s presence in the tabernacle (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14 [15]; 2 Sam 7:6-7; Ezek 28:14).<sup>3</sup>

Second, Genesis 2:15 says God placed Adam in the Garden “to cultivate it and to keep it.” The two Hebrew words for “cultivate and keep” (respectively, *‘ābad* and *šāmar*) are usually translated “serve and guard.” When these two words occur together later in the OT without exception they have this meaning and refer either to Israelites “serving and guarding/obeying” God’s word (about 10 times) or, more often to priests who “serve” God in the temple and “guard” the temple from unclean things entering it (Num 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chron 23:32; Ezek 44:14).<sup>4</sup> Adam also is portrayed as wearing priestly attire in Ezekiel 28:13, though some identify this figure as Satan. That this figure is Adam is pointed to by analyzing the description in Ezekiel 28:13. The jewels that are said to be his “covering” in Ezekiel 28:13 are uniquely listed in Exodus 28:17-21, which describe the jewels on the ephod of Israel’s high priest, who is a human and not an angel. In fact, either the Ezekiel list is an allusion to the human priest’s bejeweled clothing in Exodus 28 or Exodus 28 has roots in an earlier tradition about Adam’s apparel, which is represented by Ezekiel.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, since the figure in Ezekiel 28:11-19 is addressed to a figure standing behind “the king of Tyre” (v. 11), who has sinned like the human king, it is more likely that the figure in Eden is also human.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, Adam was to be the first priest to serve in and guard God’s

temple. When Adam fails to guard the temple by sinning and letting in an unclean serpent to defile the temple, Adam loses his priestly role, and the two cherubim take over the responsibility of “guarding” the Garden temple: God “stationed the cherubim ... to guard the way to the tree of life” (so Gen 3:24). Their role became memorialized in Israel’s later temple when God commanded Moses to make two statues of angelic figures and station them on either side of the “ark of the covenant” in the “Holy of Holies” in the temple. Like the cherubim, Israel’s priests were also to “keep watch” (same word as “guard” in Gen 2:15) over the temple (Neh 12:45) as “gatekeepers” (2 Chron 23:19; Neh. 12:45).

Third, the “tree of life” itself was probably the model for the lampstand placed directly outside the “Holy of Holies” in Israel’s temple: it looked like a small tree trunk with seven protruding branches, three on one side and three on the other, and one branch going straight up from the trunk in the middle.

Fourth, that the Garden of Eden was the first temple is also suggested by observing that Israel’s later temple had wood carvings which gave it a garden-like atmosphere and likely were intentional reflections of Eden: 1 Kings 6:18, 29 says there was “cedar ... carved in the shape of gourds and open flowers” (v. 18); “on the walls of the temple round about” and on the wood doors of the inner sanctuary were “carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers” (v. 29, 32, 35); beneath the heads of the two pillars placed at the entrance of the holy place were “carved pomegranates” (1 Kgs 7:18-20).

Fifth, just as the entrance to Israel’s later temple was to face east and be on a mountain (Zion, Exod 15:17), and just as the end-time temple of Ezekiel was to face east (Ezek 40:6) and be on a mountain (Ezek 40:2; 43:12), so the entrance to Eden faced east (Gen 3:24) and was situated on a mountain (Ezek 28:14, 16).

Sixth, the ark in the Holy of Holies, which contained the Law (that led to wisdom), echoes the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (that also led to wisdom). The touching of both the ark and this tree resulted in death.

Seventh, just as a river flowed out from Eden (Gen 2:10), so the post-exilic temple (*Letter of Aristeas* 89-91) and the eschatological temple in both Ezekiel 47:1-12 and Revelation 21:1-2 have rivers flowing out from their center (and likewise Rev 7:15-17 and probably Zech 14:8-9).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Ezekiel generally depicts latter-day Mt. Zion (and its temple) with descriptions of Eden in an attempt to show that the promises originally inherent in Eden

would be realized in the fulfillment of his vision.<sup>8</sup> Fertility and “rivers” are also descriptions of Israel’s temple in Psalm 36:8-9:

They drink their fill of the abundance of your house [temple];  
And you give them to drink of the river of your delights [literally, “the river of your Edens”!].  
For with you is the fountain of life,<sup>9</sup>  
In your light we see light [perhaps a play of words on the light from the lamp-stand in the Holy Place].

Jeremiah 17:7-8 also compares those “whose trust is the Lord” to “a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream,” with the result that “its leaves will be green” and it will not “cease to yield fruit” (cf. also Ps 1:2-3). Then vv. 12-13 refer to “the place of our [Israel’s] sanctuary” and virtually equates it with “the fountain of living water, even the Lord.”<sup>10</sup>

Eighth, like Israel’s later temple, the Garden of Eden may be discerned to be part of a tripartite sacred structure. In this respect, also in connection with the presence of water, it may even be discernible that there was a sanctuary and a holy place in Eden corresponding roughly to that in Israel’s later temple. The Garden should be precisely viewed as not itself the source of water but adjoining Eden because Genesis 2:10 says “a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden.”

Therefore, in the same manner that ancient palaces were adjoined by gardens, “Eden is the source of the waters and [is the palatial] residence of God, and the garden adjoins God’s residence.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Ezekiel 47:1 says that water would flow out from under the Holy of Holies in the future eschatological temple and would water the earth around. Similarly, in the end-time temple of Revelation 22:1-2 there is portrayed “a river of the water of life ... coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb” and flowing into a garden-like grove, which has been modeled on the first paradise in Genesis 2, as has been much of Ezekiel’s portrayal.

If Ezekiel and Revelation are developments of the first garden-temple, which we will argue later is the case, then Eden, the area where the source of water is located, may be comparable to the inner sanctuary of Israel’s later temple and the adjoining Garden to the Holy Place.<sup>12</sup> Even aside from these later biblical texts, Eden and its adjoining garden formed two distinct

regions. This is compatible with our further identification of the lampstand in the Holy Place of the temple with the tree of life located in the fertile plot outside the inner place of God's presence. Additionally, "the bread of the presence," also in the Holy Place, which provided food for the priests, would appear to reflect the food produced in the Garden for Adam's sustenance.<sup>13</sup>

I would add to this that the land and seas to be subdued by Adam outside the Garden were a third distinct region roughly equivalent to the outer court of Israel's subsequent temple, which is, indeed, symbolic of the land and seas throughout the entire earth.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, one may be able to perceive an increasing threefold gradation in holiness from outside the garden proceeding inward: the outermost region surrounding the garden is related to God and is "very good" (Gen 1:31) in that it is God's creation (= the outer court); the garden itself is a sacred space separate from the outer world (= the Holy Place), where God's priestly servant worships God by obeying him, by cultivating and guarding; Eden is where God dwells (= the Holy of Holies) as the source of both physical and spiritual life (symbolized by the waters).

Ninth, in the light of these numerous conceptual and linguistic parallels between Eden and Israel's tabernacle and temple, it should not be unexpected to find that Ezekiel 28:13-14, 16, 18 refer to "Eden, the garden of God ... the holy mountain of God," and also allude to it as containing "sanctuaries," which elsewhere is a plural way of referring to Israel's tabernacle (Lev 21:23) and temple (Ezek 7:24; so also Jer 51:51). The plural reference to the one temple probably arose because of the multiple sacred spaces or "sanctuaries" within the temple complex (e.g., courtyard, Holy Place, Holy of Holies).<sup>15</sup> It is also probable, as we saw above, that Ezekiel 28:14 views the glorious being who had "fallen" to be Adam. Thus, Ezekiel 28:16 is also referring to Adam's sin: "you sinned; therefore, you have been cast down wounded from the mount of God [where Eden was]." That Ezekiel 28:13 pictures Adam dressed in bejeweled clothing like a priest (28:13, alluding to Exod 28:17-20) corresponds well to the reference only five verses later to Eden as a holy sanctuary. Ezekiel 28:18 is probably, therefore, the most explicit place anywhere in canonical literature where the Garden of Eden is called a temple and Adam is viewed as a priest.

All of these observations together point to the likelihood that the Garden of Eden was the first sanctuary in sacred history.<sup>16</sup> Not only was Adam to "guard" this sanctuary but he was to subdue the earth, according to Genesis

1:28: “And God blessed them ... Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that creeps on the surface.” As he was to begin to rule over and subdue the earth, he was to extend the geographical boundaries to the Garden of Eden until Eden extended throughout and covered the whole earth. This meant the presence of God that was limited to Eden was to be extended throughout the whole earth. God’s presence was to “fill” the entire earth.

In this respect, Walton observes that

if people were going to fill the earth [according to Genesis 1], we must conclude that they were not intended to stay in the garden in a static situation. Yet moving out of the garden would appear a hardship since the land outside the garden was not as hospitable as that inside the garden (otherwise the garden would not be distinguishable). Perhaps, then, we should surmise that people were gradually supposed to extend the garden as they went about subduing and ruling. Extending the garden would extend the food supply as well as extend sacred space (since that is what the garden represented).<sup>17</sup>

The intention seems to be that Adam was to widen the boundaries of the Garden in ever increasing circles by extending the order of the garden sanctuary into the inhospitable outer spaces. The outward expansion would include the goal of spreading the glorious presence of God. This would occur especially by Adam’s progeny born in his image and thus reflecting God’s image and the light of his presence, as they continued to obey the mandate given to their parents and went out to subdue the outer country until the Eden sanctuary covered the earth. At this early point, we can already see a beginning answer to our initial question about why Revelation 21:1-22:5 equates the new cosmos with the garden-like temple: because that was the original universal design of the Eden sanctuary. But we must trace the development of Genesis 1-2 throughout Scripture before making final conclusions.

As we know, Adam was not faithful and obedient in subduing the earth and extending the garden sanctuary, so that not only was the Garden-Temple not extended throughout the earth, but Adam himself was cast out of the Garden and did not enjoy anymore God’s presence and lost his function as God’s priest in the temple.

After Adam's "Fall" and expulsion from the Garden-Temple, mankind became worse and worse, and only a small remnant of the human race were faithful. God eventually destroyed the whole earth by a Flood because it had become so thoroughly wicked. Only Noah and his immediate family were spared. As a result, God starts the creation of the world over again.

It is possible that God started building another temple for his people to dwell in and to experience his presence during Noah's time.<sup>18</sup>

Noah and his sons, however, were not faithful and obedient, so that if God had begun another temple building process, it was immediately stopped because of the sin of Noah and his sons. They followed in Adam's sinful footsteps. In fact, Noah's "fall" is reminiscent of Adam's "Fall:" they both sin in the context of a garden: Genesis 9:20-21 says that "Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. And he drank of the wine and became drunk," and then this led to further sin by his sons.

After the disobedience of Noah and his family, God starts over again and chooses Abraham and his descendants, Israel, to re-establish his temple.

### **ADAM'S COMMISSION AS A PRIEST-KING TO RULE AND EXPAND THE TEMPLE IS PASSED ON TO THE PATRIARCHS**

As we will see, after Adam's failure to fulfill God's mandate, God raises up other Adam-like figures to whom his commission is passed on. We will find that some changes in the commission occur as a result of sin entering into the world. Adam's descendants, like him, however, will fail. Failure will continue until there arises a "Last Adam" who will finally fulfill the commission on behalf of humanity.

Adam's commission was passed on to Noah, to Abraham and on to his descendants. The following references in Genesis are a sample of this:<sup>19</sup>

Genesis 1:28: And God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'

Genesis 9:1, 6-7: And God blessed Noah and his sons ... 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth ... be fruitful and multiply; populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.'

Genesis 12:2-3: And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and

make your name great; and so be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Genesis 17:2, 6, 8: And I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly ... And I will make you exceedingly fruitful ... And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan.

Genesis 22:17-18: Indeed, I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of his [sg. pronoun] enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.

Genesis 26:3: Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.

Genesis 26:4: And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

Genesis 26:24: And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, for the sake of my servant Abraham."

Genesis 28:3-4: And may God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you; that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.

Genesis 28:13-14: I will give it [the land] to you and to your seed. Your seed shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east ... and in you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Genesis 35:11-12: God also said to him, 'I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come forth from you. And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you.'

Genesis 47:27: Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous.

In fact, the same commission given to the patriarchs is restated numerous times in subsequent OT books both to Israel and the true eschatological



people of God. Like Adam, Noah and his children also failed to perform this commission. God then gave the essence of the commission of Genesis 1:28 to Abraham (Gen 12:2-3; 17:2, 6, 8, 16; 22:18), Isaac (26:3-4, 24), Jacob (28:3-4, 14; 35:11-12; 48:3, 15-16), and to Israel (see Deut 7:13 and Gen 47:27, Exod 1:7, Ps 107:38, and Isa 51:2, the latter four of which state the beginning fulfillment of the promise to Abraham in Israel).<sup>20</sup> The commission of Genesis 1:28 involved the following elements:

- (1) “God blessed them;”
- (2) “be fruitful and multiply;”
- (3) “fill the earth;”
- (4) “subdue” the “earth;”
- (5) “rule over ... all the earth” (so Gen 1:26, and reiterated in 1:28).

The commission is repeated, for example, to Abraham: (1) “I will greatly bless you, and (2) will greatly multiply your seed (3-5) and your seed will possess the gate of their enemies [= “subdue and rule”]. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 22:17-18).<sup>21</sup> God expresses the universal scope of the commission by underscoring that the goal is to “bless” “all the nations of the earth.” It is natural, therefore, that in the initial statement of the commission in Genesis 12:1-3 that God commands Abraham, “Go forth from your country ... and so be a blessing ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Commentators apparently have not noticed, however, something very interesting: that the Adamic commission is repeated in direct connection with what looks to be the building of small sanctuaries. Just as the Genesis 1:28 commission was initially to be carried out by Adam in a localized place, enlarging the borders of the arboreal sanctuary, so it appears to be not accidental that the restatement of the commission to Israel’s patriarchs results in the following:

- (1) God appearing to them (except in Gen 12:8; 13:3-4);
- (2) they “pitch a tent” (literally a “tabernacle” in LXX),
- (3) on a mountain;
- (4) they build “altars” and worship God (i.e., “calling on the name of the Lord,” which probably included sacrificial offerings and prayer)<sup>22</sup>

- at the place of the restatement;
- (5) the place where these activities occur is often located at “Bethel” – the “House of God” (the only case of altar building not containing these elements nor linked to the Genesis 1 commission is Gen 33:20).

The combination of these five elements occurs only elsewhere in the OT in describing Israel’s tabernacle or temple!<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, though “occasions for their sacrifices were usually a theophany and moving to a new place,”<sup>24</sup> there seems to be more significance to the construction of these sacrificial sites. 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 Genesis 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.

These informal sanctuaries in Genesis pointed then to Israel’s later tabernacle and temple from which Israel in reflecting God’s presence was to branch out over all the earth. The patriarch’s commission, like Adam’s in Genesis 1:28 in connection to Genesis 2, also involved the building of a temple.

That these miniature sanctuaries adumbrated the later temple is also suggested by the facts that “before Moses the altar was the only architectural feature marking a place as holy” and that later “altars were incorporated into the larger [structural] sanctuaries, the tabernacle and the temple.”<sup>25</sup> The small sanctuary in Bethel also became a larger sanctuary in the northern kingdom of Israel, though it subsequently became idolatrous and was rejected as a true shrine of Yahweh worship (see Amos 7:13; cf. also 1 Kgs 12:28-33; Hos 10:5).

The result of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob building altars at Shechem, between Bethel and Ai, at Hebron, and near Moriah was that the terrain of Israel’s future land was dotted with shrines. This pilgrim-like activity “was like planting a flag and claiming the land”<sup>26</sup> for God and Israel’s future temple, where God would take up his permanent residence in the capital

of that land. Thus, all these smaller sanctuaries pointed to the greater one to come in Jerusalem.

The preparations for the re-establishment of a larger scale tabernacle, and then temple, begin at the Exodus, where again God brings about chaos in creation on a small scale and delivers Israel to be the spearhead for his new humanity. Upon them is placed the temple-building commission originally given to Adam.

### **ISRAEL'S TABERNACLE IN THE WILDERNESS AND LATER TEMPLE WAS A RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN'S SANCTUARY**

Israel's tabernacle and temple was an organic development of the earlier garden sanctuary in Eden. There is much to say here, but we cannot elaborate further, except to say that Israel's temple was a foreshadowing of Christ and his people as the new, end-time temple, which was inaugurated at Christ's first coming and will be consummated at his final coming.

### **THE PROBLEM OF JOHN SEEING A NEW CREATION IN REVELATION 21:1 AND THEN SEEING IN THE REMAINDER OF THE VISION ONLY A CITY IN THE FORM OF A GARDEN-LIKE TEMPLE IS NOW SOLVED**

The mystery of Revelation 21-22 we believe is significantly clarified by our preceding survey of the purpose of temples in the OT and the NT. The new heavens and earth in Revelation 21:1-22:5 are now described as a temple because the temple—which equals God's presence—encompasses the whole earth because of the work of Christ. At the very end of time, the true temple will come down completely from heaven and fill the whole creation (as Rev 21:1-3, 10 and 21:22 affirm). The new creation is equated with an escalated Edenic garden-temple because now Christ has finally caused the garden-temple to be expanded over the whole earth. And the new cosmos is also equated with a city because the temple was to be expanded to cover the whole city of Jerusalem<sup>27</sup> before expanding out to cover the whole world.

In John's portrayal of the consummated condition of the new heavens and earth in Revelation 21:22, he says, "I saw no temple in it, because the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb are its temple." Whereas the container for the divine glory in the OT was often an architectural building, in the new age

this old physical container will be shed like a cocoon and the new physical container will be the entire cosmos. The ultimate essence of the temple is the glorious divine presence. If such is to be the case in the consummated form of the cosmos, would this not begin to be the case in the inaugurated phase of the latter days? The glorious divine presence of Christ and the Spirit among his people comprise the beginning form of the eschatological temple.

**THE ETHICAL IMPERATIVE OF BEING THE ESCHATOLOGICAL TEMPLE OF GOD'S PRESENCE IS FOR CHRISTIAN PRIESTS TO EXPAND THAT TEMPLE**

In contrast to the first Adam, Christ, the Last Adam and true king-priest, perfectly obeyed God and expanded the boundaries of the temple as a new creation from himself to others (in fulfillment of Gen 1:28). In this respect, note that at the climax of the last vision of Revelation God's "throne" is also now in the midst of God's people (Rev 22:1, 3), whereas previously the "Holy of Holies" (or, more specifically the Ark therein) was the "footstool of God's heavenly throne," and only the High Priest could come before that "footstool" (Isa 66:1; Acts 7:49; cf. also Ps 99:5). Now all are high priests and all are victorious "overcomers" (21:7), who "shall reign forever and ever" with Christ and God in the eternal cosmic temple of the new creation (Rev 22:5).

These inextricably linked themes of kingship, priesthood, temple and new creation, as we have seen above, have their primary roots in and are a consummate development of the same constellation of themes in Genesis 1-2.

We are to continue the priestly task of mediating God's presence to others until the end of the age, when God will cause the task to be completed and the whole earth will be under the roof of God's temple, which is none other than saying that God's presence will fill the earth in a way it never had before. This priestly and cultic task of expanding the presence of God is expressed strikingly in Revelation 11. There the Church is portrayed as dwelling in a "sanctuary" (vv. 1-2), as being "two witnesses" (v. 3), and as being "two lampstands" (v. 4), the latter image of which, of course, is an integral feature of the temple. The mission of the Church as God's temple is to shine its lampstand-like light of witness into the dark world. The mention that the witnessing church is also "two olive trees" indicates their priestly and kingly status:<sup>28</sup> the exercise of their witness is also how the church exercises its mediatorial priesthood and kingly reign. In surprisingly similar fashion,

this mission is expressed in 1 Peter 2:4-5, where Peter calls Christ a “living stone” in the temple and his people are “living stones” are “being built up as a spiritual house.” Furthermore, as they are “being built up” and thus expanding, they are a “royal priesthood” (allusion to Exod 19:6 in 1 Pet 2:5 and 9a!) and are to “proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9b). As in Revelation 11 and 21:1-22:5, so also in 1 Peter 2 the notions of God’s people exercising their roles as kings and priests in the end-time temple highlights again that the idea of temple is an essential facet of the new creational kingdom.

Ephesians 2:20-22 asserts that the Church has “been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you are also being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” The Church is growing and expanding in Christ throughout the interadvent age (cf. also Eph 4:13-16) in order that God’s saving presence and “the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known” even “in the heavenly places” (Eph 3:10). And it is through the exercise of her gifts (Eph 4:8-16) that this expansion takes place.<sup>29</sup> Such gifts are given because all believers, Jews and Gentiles, are priests in the end-time-temple, as the OT prophesied (Isa 56:3-7; 61:6; 66:18-21). The various gifts enable them to exercise their eschatological priestly positions.

How do we first experience God’s tabernacling presence? By believing in Christ: that he died for our sin, that he rose from the dead and reigns as the Lord God. God’s Spirit comes into us and dwells in us in a similar manner that God dwelt on his throne in the sanctuary of Eden and Israel’s temple.

How does the presence of God increase in our lives and our churches? How was this to happen with Adam? This was to occur by Adam’s trust in God and his word. Likewise, God’s presence will become increasingly manifest to us as we grow by grace in our belief in Christ and his word and by obeying it.

Do we come to God’s word habitually, as did Jesus, in order that we may be strengthened increasingly with God’s presence in order to fulfill our priestly task of mediation by spreading that presence to others who don’t know Christ?

God’s presence grows in us by knowing his word, by obeying it, and then we spread that presence to others by living our lives faithfully in the world. For example, a persevering and joyous faith in the midst of trial is an

amazing witness to the unbelieving world. In so doing, the body of Christ during the interadvent period “follows the Lamb wherever he went” (Rev 14:4) as a walking tabernacle during his epoch on earth. We are to realize that the Church’s place in the eschatological redemptive-historical story is that of being the inaugurated temple and being priests in that temple, which is designed to expand and spread God’s presence throughout the earth. Believers are images of God in his temple, who are reflect his presence and glorious attributes in their thinking, character, speech, and actions. It is this reflection of God’s glorious presence that extends out through Christian priests and infects others who do not know God, so that they come to be part of this expanding temple.

How does the notion of the expanding temple of God’s presence fit into the NT storyline. I have argued that this storyline is the following: *Jesus’ life, trials, death for sinners, and resurrection by the Spirit has launched the fulfillment of the eschatological already and not yet new creation reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to extend that new creation and resulting in judgment for the unfaithful, unto God’s glory.* Thus, temple forms that part of the biblical storyline in which the role of Christian “witness” and “missions” is to be understood. The temple is an organic aspect of the kingdom of the new creation. Accordingly, the imperative to expand God’s tabernacling presence throughout the world is a priestly imperative and is the main way that the “worldwide commission to the faithful” (a crucial part of the storyline underlined above) is to be carried out.

The focus of this essay has been that *our priestly task as a Church in being God’s temple, so filled with his presence, is that we expand the temple of his presence and fill the earth with that glorious presence until God finally accomplishes this goal completely at the end of time!* The first Adam failed in this mission, but the Last Adam succeeded and we will succeed in him. This is our common, unified mission. May we by God’s grace unify around this goal.

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is a summary of G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 614-648.

<sup>2</sup> For a good overview of these works, see Richard M. Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 47-48.

<sup>3</sup> The precise hithpael form that is used is in Gen 3:8 is a participle (*mithallek*), which is the precise form used in Deut 23:14 [15] and 2 Sam 7:6. Outside of these three uses, the hithpael participial form occurs only in five other passages, which have nothing to do with the tabernacle or temple.

- <sup>4</sup> Cf. Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (Overland Park: Two Age Press, 2000), 54, who sees that only the “guarding” has any priestly connotations, particularly with respect to the priestly “guarding” of the temple from the profane (e.g., Kline cites Num 1:53; 3:8, 10, 32; 8:26, 18:3ff.; 1 Sam 7:1; 2 Kgs 12:9; 1 Chron 23:32; 2 Chron 34:9; Ezek 44:15ff.; 48:11).
- <sup>5</sup> Nine of twelve jewels in Ezekiel 28 overlap with those in Exodus 28. In the LXX, eleven of the jewels in Ezekiel overlap with the Greek version of Exodus 28 (though the Greek of Ezekiel has a total of fourteen jewels).
- <sup>6</sup> There are additional indications that this figure in Eden is Adam. Not only does the Greek OT clearly identify Adam as the glorious figure dwelling in the primeval Eden in Ezek 28:14 (as does the Targum in Ezek. 28:12) but plausibly so does also the Hebrew text as well (as argued, e.g., by D. E. Callender, *Adam in Myth and History* [HSS 48; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000], 87-135, 179-189). The phrase in the Hebrew of Ezek 28:14a, *'att'-k'rūb mimšah hassōkeḳ* (“you were the anointed cherub who covers”), could well be understood as a mere metaphor, which is a suppressed simile: “you were [like] the anointed cherub who covers,” similar to such metaphorical statements as “the Lord is [like] my shepherd” (Ps 23:1). What further points to this figure being Adam in Eden is that Ezek 28:18 says that the sin of the glorious figure in Eden “profaned” Eden. The only account that we have that Eden became unclean because of sin is the narrative about Adam in Gen 2-3. Cf. also Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 115, and M. Hutter, “Adam als Gärtner und König (Gen 2:8, 15),” *BZ* 30 (1986): 258-262. For later Jewish traditions referring to the jewels of Ezekiel 28 as “coverings” or “canopies” for Adam and Eve, see G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1087-1088.
- <sup>7</sup> Later Judaism understood that from “the tree of life” streams flowed (Midr. Rab. Gen 15.6; 2 En. [J] 8:3, 5).
- <sup>8</sup> J. D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40-48* (HSM 10; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976), 25-53.
- <sup>9</sup> See Levenson, *Ezekiel 40-48*, 28, who sees this phrase as an allusion to the “flow [which] welled up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the soil” from which Adam was created in Gen 2:6-7.
- <sup>10</sup> Among other commentators, D. E. Callender, *Adam in Myth and History*, 51-52, especially cites Psalm 36 and Jeremiah 17 as examples of Israel’s temple being likened to Eden.
- <sup>11</sup> J. H. Walton, *Genesis*, (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 167, citing others also for sources showing that ancient temples had gardens adjoining them.
- <sup>12</sup> Discussion of the distinction between Eden and its Garden is based on Walton, *Genesis*, 167-168, 182-183.
- <sup>13</sup> So Walton, *Genesis*, 182.
- <sup>14</sup> I will argue this in the next section. See further T. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 307-312, for a discussion of other commentators who, in various ways, have identified the Garden of Eden with a temple or sanctuary, in favor of which he offers further evidence (ibid., 457-459).
- <sup>15</sup> There were even smaller sacred areas in the temple complex, e.g., of Solomon’s temple (1 Chron 28:11) and of the second temple (1 Macc 10:43). Philo can refer to “the Holy of Holies” as “the Holies of Holies” (*Leg. All.* 2.56; *Mut. Nom.* 192) or “the innermost places of the Holies” (*Somn.* 1.216).
- <sup>16</sup> See Daniel I. Block, “Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of the Biblical Evidence,” in *From Creation to New Creation, Essays in Honor of G. K. Beale* (ed., D. M. Gurtner and B. L. Gladd; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2013): 3-29, who argues against the view that Eden was a temple. There is not space for a full response to Block, though he fails to acknowledge Ezek 28: 13-14, 16, 18, which is the strongest argument that Eden was considered to be a “sanctuary” and Adam a priest in this temple.
- <sup>17</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 186.
- <sup>18</sup> That this is plausible is apparent from, among other reasons, the affinities of Noah’s altar building and associated activities with that of the subsequent similar patriarchal activities, which can actually be viewed as inchoate or small-scale temple-building (on which see further the following section).
- <sup>19</sup> Underlinings in the following references represent unique verbal and conceptual parallels with Gen 1:28.
- <sup>20</sup> This was first brought to my attention by N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 21-26, upon which the above list of references in Genesis is based. Wright sees that the command to Adam in Gen 1:26-28 has been applied to the patriarchs and Israel; he also cites other texts where he sees Gen 1:28 applied to Israel (Exod 32:13; Lev 26:9; Deut 1:10f.; 7:13f.; 8:1; 28:63; 30:5, 16). I have subsequently likewise discovered that J. Cohen, “Be Fertile and Increase”: *The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 28-31, 39, makes the same observation in dependence on G. V. Smith, “Structure and Purpose in Genesis 1-11,” *JETS* 20 (1977): 307-319, who both include Noah. See also W. J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 29-30, 37, 72-73, 143, for the notion that the blessings conditionally promised to Adam are given to Israel.
- <sup>21</sup> Notice that the ruling aspect of the commission is expressed to Abraham elsewhere as a role of “kingship”

- (Gen 17:6, 16), and likewise with respect to Jacob (Gen 35:11).
- <sup>22</sup> A. Pagolu, *The Religion of the Patriarchs* (JSOTSup 277; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 62.
- <sup>23</sup> The combination of “tent” (*ohel*) and “altar” (*mizbeah*) occur in Exodus and Leviticus only with respect to the tabernacle and associated altar (e.g., Lev 4:7, 18). “Altar” (*mizbeah*) and “house” (*bayit*) occur 28x in the OT with reference to the temple and its altar. Rarely do any of the words in these two combinations ever refer to anything else other than the tabernacle or temple. The building of these worship sites on a mountain may represent part of a pattern finding its climax in Israel’s later temple that was built on Mt. Zion (the traditional site of Mt. Moriah), which itself becomes a synecdoche of the whole for the part in referring to the temple. We do not mean to say that “tent” in the patriarchal episodes is equivalent to the later tabernacle, only that it resonates with tabernacle-like associations because of its proximity to the worship site.
- <sup>24</sup> Pagolu, *Religion of the Patriarchs*, 85.
- <sup>25</sup> T. Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2001), 16. While some commentators acknowledge that some of these patriarchal episodes involve the construction of small sanctuaries, they do not associate them with Israel’s later large-scale temple (so, e.g., H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis II* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942], 781, 918, with respect to Genesis 28 and 35).
- <sup>26</sup> Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place*, 20 (and, similarly, Pagolu, *Religion of the Patriarchs*, 70).
- <sup>27</sup> On which see Jer 3:16-17: 16 “And it shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares the LORD, “they shall say no more, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ And it shall not come to mind, nor shall they remember it, nor shall they miss it, nor shall it be made again. 17 “At that time they shall call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the LORD,’ and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD; nor shall they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart.” Likewise, see Zech 1:16-17; 2:1-5.
- <sup>28</sup> That the “two olive trees” represent a priestly and kingly figure is apparent from recognizing this as an allusion to Zech 4, where they represent a priestly and kingly figure (see Beale, *Revelation*, 576-577).
- <sup>29</sup> Note the virtual verbatim parallel wording in Eph 2:21-22, “in whom the whole body being fitted together grows ... in the Lord ... you are being built together,” and in 4:15-16, “we should grow in him ... from whom the whole body is being fitted together ... causes the growth ... unto the building up of itself.” The latter passage appears to develop the former passage on the temple (I am grateful to one of my research students, Brandon Levering, for this insight). Also the Ps 68:18 quotation in Eph 4:8, which introduces the list of gifts, is part of a context in which God defeated Israel’s enemies and dwelt in his temple in Zion (Ps 67 [68]:17-19 [LXX]), a passage applied to Christ as the temple in Col 1:19 (see G. K. Beale, “Colossians,” in *A Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [ed., G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007], 855-857). This enhances the link with the temple in Eph 2:20-22. The Psalm in Eph 4:8 appears to be typologically applied to Christ. Could the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 also be linked to the church as a temple in 3:16-17 and 6:15-19 (there is not space to explore this question)?