

EDEN, THE TEMPLE, AND THE CHURCH'S MISSION IN THE NEW CREATION*

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This address has in mind those OT references where fulfillment is being indicated, but such fulfillment does not appear on the surface to be “literal” from the perspective of the OT author. How can such fulfillment have consistent hermeneutical continuity with the original meaning in the OT, which, on the surface, appears different from the meaning?

I had planned to look at four different examples in the NT in order to address this thorny issue. The time we have now, however, will actually permit me to look at primarily one passage in depth to try to use it as a case study, which I believe sheds light on other similar difficult “OT in the NT” passages.

We are going to look at the use of the OT in Rev 21:1–22:5, where such prophetic passages as Ezek 37:27, 40–48, and Isa 54:11–12 are used. Ezekiel 40–48, for example, predicts what many would say is a literal end-time temple, yet Revelation 21 does not appear to be depicting a literal architectural temple, though this text utilizes a number of references from Ezekiel 40–48. Since Revelation 21, in the eyes of many, does not appear “literally” to interpret Ezekiel 40–48, some believe the Ezekiel prophecy is not being viewed as fulfilled there but merely being compared to the new creation; likewise, others believe that John is indicating that Ezekiel is being fulfilled, but in an allegorical or spiritualized manner. But is it possible that John is indicating that Ezekiel will be fulfilled in the new cosmos and fulfilled in a “literal” manner, so that, somehow, John has hermeneutical integrity in the way he uses Ezekiel? We could ask the same question about the prophecies from Ezekiel 37 and Isaiah 54. My belief is that John neither compares the Ezekiel prophecy to the conditions of the future new creation nor does he allegorize it, but, in fact, he sees it to be “literally” fulfilled there.

To try to demonstrate this, we will need to look at Revelation and, especially, the OT background, not merely of Ezekiel, but of the temple generally in the OT. In so doing, I will try to summarize my 450-page book, *The Temple and the Church's Mission* (Leicester/Downers Grove: IVP, 2004) and

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bring to bear some of the main lines of argumentation in order to try to shed light on the above problem that I have proposed.¹

There is a problem in Revelation 21. Why does John see a “new heavens and earth” in Rev 21:1 and yet in 21:2–22:5 he sees a city that is garden-like and is in the shape of a temple? He does not describe all the contours and details of the new creation—only an arboreal city-temple. Note that the dimensions and architectural features of the city in these verses are drawn to a significant extent from Ezekiel 40–48, which is a prophecy of the dimensions and architectural features of a future temple (so vv. 2, 10–12; 21:27–22:2);² the precious stones forming the foundation in verses 18–21 reflect the description, not only of Isa 54:11–12 but also that of Solomon’s temple which also was overlaid with gold and whose foundation was composed of precious stones (cf. respectively 1 Kgs 6:20–22 and 5:17; 7:9–10; and the dimensions of Rev 21:16 [“its length and width and height are equal”] based on the dimensions of the “Holy of Holies” in 1 Kgs 6:20 [where the “length . . . and the breadth . . . and the height” of the holy of holies were equal in measurement]).

How can we explain the apparent discrepancy that he saw a new heavens and earth in verse 1 and then saw only a garden-like city in the shape and structure of a temple in the remainder of the vision? Why does John not see a full portrayal of the new heavens and earth (valleys, mountains, forests, plains, stars of the sky, etc.)? It is possible, of course, that he merely first sees the new world and then sees a city *in* one small part of that world, and within the city he sees features of a garden and a temple. But this is not likely the solution because he seems to equate the “new heavens and earth” with the following description of the “city” and the “temple.”

This equation is evident from the following considerations. First, it is probable that the vision of Rev 21:2 interprets the initial vision of the new heavens and earth and that what John hears in verse 3 about the tabernacle is the interpretation of both verses 1–2. Thus, the new heavens and earth is interpretatively equated with the New Jerusalem and the eschatological tabernacle. This pattern of visions interpreting one another or being interpreted by a following saying or song occurs elsewhere in the book,³ and is a feature generally of apocalyptic genre. Second, Rev 22:14–15 says that only the righteous inhabit “the city” but that the unrighteous (cf. 22:11) remain perpetually “outside” the city. This unlikely depicts unbelievers dwelling directly outside of the city’s walls but in the new creation; more likely it pictures the

¹ The precursor to the book itself can be found in “The Final Vision of the Apocalypse and Its Implications for a Biblical Theology of the Temple,” in *Heaven on Earth. The Temple in Biblical Theology* (ed. S. Gathercole and T. D. Alexander; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2004) 191–209. Indeed, every part of the following essay is elaborated on in more detail in my book.

² See Beale, *Temple and Church’s Mission* 346–54, for a fuller description and discussion of the use of Ezekiel 40–48 in Rev 21:1–22:5.

³ E.g. see G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans/Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), *in loc.* at Rev 5:5–6, 7–13, and 21:1–3.

impious dwelling outside of the entire new creation, since no unrighteousness can exist in the conditions of the consummate new creation. This implies that the “city limits,” therefore, are co-equal with the boundaries of the new creation. Similarly, Rev 21:27 affirms that “nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying shall ever come into” the city. What further confirms the city’s equation with the new creation is Rev 21:8, where the same category of unrighteous people are said to exist in “the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” The lake of fire and “the second death,” of course, cannot be in the new creation (on which see 21:4), so this places the same category of people in 22:15 outside of the new creation, which is also the new city and, as we have proposed above, the new temple, since no uncleanness could enter Israel’s temple.⁴

The equation seems problematic. Some might attribute the apparent oddness of equating the new cosmos to a garden-like city shaped like a temple to the irrational nature that 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?

In order to solve the problem of this strange equation of the new creation and new Jerusalem with the temple we need to look at the temple in the OT and see what its purpose was and then see how such a purpose relates to the 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.

I. THE GARDEN OF EDEN WAS A TEMPLE IN THE FIRST CREATION

The first sanctuary was in Eden. How do we know this, since there was no architectural structure in Eden? Such a claim may sound strange to the ears of many. The following nine observations, among others that I do not have space to mention, show that Eden was the first temple.

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), *hithallek*, 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).

Second, Gen 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, *‘abad* and *shāmar*) can easily be, and usually are, translated “serve and

⁴ On 21:27 and its resonance with uncleanness in association with the new temple, see Beale, *Revelation* 1101–2.

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 Chr 23:32; Ezek 44:14).⁵

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.

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 Kgs 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” (vv. 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 (*Ep. Arist.* 89–91) and the eschatological temple in both Ezek 47:1–12 and Rev 21:1–2 have rivers flowing out from their center (and likewise Rev 7:15–17 and probably Zech 14:8–9).⁶ Indeed, Ezekiel generally depicts latter-day Mount Zion (and its temple) with descriptions of Eden in an attempt to show that the promises originally inherent in Eden would be

⁵ Cf. M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (South Hamilton: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1989) 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 Chr 23:32; 2 Chr 34:9; Ezek 44:15ff.; 48:11).

⁶ Later Judaism understood that from “the tree of life” streams flowed (Midr. Rab. Gen 15.6; 2 *Enoch* [J] 8:3, 5).

realized in the fulfillment of his vision.⁷ Fertility and “rivers” are also descriptions of Israel’s temple in Ps 36:8–9:

They drink their fill of the abundance of your house [temple];
 And Thou dost give them to drink of *the river of Thy delights* [literally, “the river of your Edens”!].
 For with Thee is *the fountain of life*;⁸
 In Thy light we see light [perhaps a play of words on the light from the lampstand 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. Ps 1:2–3). Then verses 12–13 refer to “the place of our [Israel’s] sanctuary” and virtually equate it with “the fountain of living water, even the Lord.”⁹

Eighth, 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 Gen 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.”¹⁰ Similarly, Ezek 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 Rev 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.¹¹ 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

⁷ J. D. Levenson, *Theology of the Program of Restoration of Ezekiel 40–48* (Harvard Semitic Monograph Series 10; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976) 25–53.

⁸ See Levenson, *Program of Restoration of 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.

⁹ Among other commentators, D. Callender, *Adam in Myth and History* (Harvard Semitic Museum Publications; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2000) 51–52, especially cites Psalm 36 and Jeremiah 17 as examples of Israel’s temple being likened to Eden.

¹⁰ J. H. Walton, *Genesis* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 167, citing others also for sources showing that ancient temples had gardens adjoining them.

¹¹ Discussion of the distinction between Eden and its Garden is based on Walton, *Genesis* 167–68, 182–83.

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.¹²

I would add to this that the land and seas to be subdued by Adam outside the Garden were roughly equivalent to the outer court of Israel’s subsequent temple, which, as I will argue in a following section below, is, indeed, symbolic of the land and seas throughout the entire earth.¹³ Therefore, one may be able to perceive an increasing 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 Ezek 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).¹⁴ It is also probable that the Greek OT version of Ezek 28:14 and 16 views the glorious being who had “fallen” to be Adam: “From the day that you were created you were with the cherub” (v. 14); “you sinned; therefore, you have been cast down wounded from the mount of God [where Eden was]” (v. 16). Ezekiel 28:13 pictures Adam dressed in bejeweled clothing like a priest (28:13), which 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.

All of these observations together point to the likelihood that the Garden of Eden was the first sanctuary in sacred history. Not only was Adam to “guard” this sanctuary but he was to subdue the earth, according to Gen 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

¹² So *ibid.* 182.

¹³ See T. Stordalen, *Echoes of Eden* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000) 307–12, 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 (pp. 457–59).

¹⁴ There were even smaller sacred areas in the temple complex, e.g. of Solomon’s temple (1 Chr 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).

the whole earth. This meant the presence of God which 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).¹⁵

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 Rev 21:1–22:5 equates the new cosmos with the garden-like temple. But we must trace the development of Genesis 1–2 throughout Scripture before drawing 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, Adam himself was cast out of the Garden and did not enjoy God's presence anymore 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 was 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.¹⁶

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: Gen 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.

¹⁵ Walton, *Genesis* 186.

¹⁶ That this is plausible is apparent from 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).

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

II. 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.

As to the nature of the commission and temple building, some commentators have noticed that Adam's commission was passed on to Noah, to Abraham, and on to his descendants:

Gen 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.'"

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

Gen 12:2: "And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so be a blessing";

Gen 12:3: "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."

Gen 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 . . ."

Gen 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 their enemies. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Gen 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."

Gen 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 . . ."

Gen 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.'"

Gen 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.”

Gen 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.’”

Gen 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 *Gen 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).¹⁷ The commission of *Gen 1:28* involved the following elements:

- (1) “God blessed them”;
- (1) “be fruitful and multiply”;
- (1) “fill the earth”;
- (1) “subdue” the “earth”;
- (1) “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*).¹⁸ 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 *Gen 12:1–3* 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

¹⁷ This was first brought to my attention by N. T. Wright, *The 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 1:10–11*; *7:13–14*; *8:1*; *28:63*; *30:5*, 16). I have subsequently likewise discovered that J. Cohen, “*Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It*” (Ithaca and 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) 307–19, 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.

¹⁸ 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*).

what looks to be the building of small sanctuaries. Just as the Gen 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 prayer¹⁹) 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 elsewhere in the OT only in describing Israel's tabernacle or temple!²⁰

Therefore, though “occasions for their sacrifices were usually a theophany and moving to a new place,”²¹ 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 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.

These informal sanctuaries in Genesis pointed then to Israel's later tabernacle and temple from which Israel was to branch out over all the earth.

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

¹⁹ A. Pagolu, *The Religion of the Patriarchs* (JSOTSup 277; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 62.

²⁰ The combination of “tent” (*ōhel*) and “altar” (*mizbēach*) occur in Exodus and Leviticus only with respect to the tabernacle and associated altar (e.g. Lev 4:7, 18). “Altar” (*mizbēach*) and “house” (*bayith*) occur 28 times 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 Mount 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.

²¹ Pagolu, *The Religion of the Patriarchs* 85.

into the larger [structural] sanctuaries, the tabernacle and the temple.”²² 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. 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”²³ 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 temple begins 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.

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

The following considerations show that Israel's tabernacle and then temple was another new temple of another new creation.

First, Israel's temple is explicitly called a “temple” for the first time in redemptive history. Never before had God's unique presence with his covenant people been formally called a “temple.” We have seen how, nevertheless, the Garden of Eden had essential similarities with Israel's temple, which shows that Israel's temple was a development of the implicit sanctuary in Genesis 2.

Something else that is true of the Eden Temple, which has not yet been mentioned, is that it served as a little earthly model of God's temple in heaven which would eventually encompass also the whole earth. This is seen most clearly in Israel's temple in the following ways.

First, Ps 78:69 says something amazing about Israel's temple: God “built the sanctuary like the heights, [he built the sanctuary] like the earth which he has founded forever.” This tells us that in some way God modeled the temple to be a little replica of the entire heavens and earth. Yet, in Isa 66:1 God says, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where then is a *house* you could build for me?” You see, God never intended that Israel's little localized temple last forever, since, like the Eden Temple, Israel's temple was a small model of something which was much bigger: God and his

²² T. Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 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, 1960] 781, 918, with respect to Genesis 28 and 35).

²³ Longman, *Immanuel in Our Place* 20 (and, similarly, Pagolou, *Religion of the Patriarchs* 70).

universal presence, which could never eternally be contained by any localized earthly structure.

Israel's temple was a miniature model of God's huge cosmic temple that was to dominate the heavens and earth at the end of time. That is, the temple was a symbolic model pointing to, not merely the present cosmos, but also the new heavens and earth that would be perfectly filled with God's presence. That it was a miniature symbolic model of the coming temple that would fill heavens and earth is evident from the following features of the temple: the temple was divided into three sections—the Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the outer courtyard.

(1) The Holy of Holies represented the invisible heavenly dimension, the Holy Place represented the visible heavens, and the outer courtyard represented the visible sea and earth, where humans lived.

(2) That the Holy of Holies represented the invisible heaven where God and his angels dwelt is suggested by the following observations. (a) Just as the angelic cherubim guard God's throne in the heavenly temple, the statuette cherubim around the ark of the covenant and the figures of the cherubim woven into the curtain that guards the Holy of Holies reflect the real cherubim in heaven who stand guard around God's throne. (b) The fact that no image of God was in the Holy of Holies and that it "appeared" empty further points to it representing the invisible heaven. (c) The Holy of Holies, in fact, was the place where the heavenly extended down to the earthly; this is why the ark of the covenant was called "the footstool of the Lord": God was pictured to be sitting on his throne in heaven with his invisible feet on the ark of the covenant. (d) The Holy of Holies was cordoned off by a separating curtain, which indicates its separateness from the Holy Place and the outside courtyard, additionally pointing to its symbolism of the invisible heavenly dimension that was separated from the physical. (e) Even the high priest, who could enter only once a year, was prohibited from viewing the light of God's glorious presence by an incense cloud, which underscores again the separateness of this most holy inner space as representing the holy invisible heavenly sphere. The incense cloud itself may have been a further association with the clouds of the visible heaven, which itself pointed to the invisible heaven.

(3) That the Holy Place likely represents the visible heavens which are still separated from the earth is apparent from the following considerations. (a) The curtains of the Holy Place were blue, purple, and scarlet, representing the variegated colors of the sky, and figures of winged creatures are woven throughout all the curtains which are throughout the tabernacle, enforcing the imagery of the visible heavens; (b) the lampstand had seven lamps on it, and in Solomon's temple there were ten lampstands; thus, if people were to peer into the Holy Place, they would see seventy lights, which against the darker setting of the curtains of the tabernacle and temple would resemble the heavenly light sources (i.e. stars, planets, sun, and moon). (c) This symbolism is enhanced by observing that the Hebrew word for "lights" (*m'ōr*) is used ten times in the Pentateuch for the lamps on the lampstand, and the only other place in the Pentateuch where the word occurs is five times in

Gen 1:14–16, where it refers to the sun, moon, and stars. The tabernacle itself appears to have been designed to represent the creative work of God, who, as Isaiah 40 says, “stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in” and “who has created the host of stars to hang in” (Isa 40:22, 26); likewise Ps 19:4–5 says that in the “heaven” God “placed a tent for the sun.” Plausibly, this is the reason that the Holy Place was covered with gold (1 Kgs 6:20–21), on the ceiling, floor, and all the walls; the sheen of the precious metal was possibly intended to mimic the reflection of the stars of heaven (as was true in ANE temples). (d) Perhaps because of this biblical evidence, the seven lamps on the lampstand in the Holy Place were understood by first-century Jews (particularly Josephus and Philo) to represent the seven light sources visible to the naked eye of the ancient person, underscoring that this second section of the temple symbolized the visible heavens.²⁴ Later Judaism equated the seven lamps on the lampstand with the “lights in the expanse of heaven” mentioned in Gen 1:14–16 (so Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Exod 40:4; Midr. Rab. Num 15.7; Midr. Rab. Num 12.13²⁵). Furthermore, the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, who had firsthand acquaintance with the temple, said that the outer curtain of the Holy Place had needlework on it of stars, representing the heavens.²⁶

(4) The courtyard probably represents the visible sea and earth. This identification of the outer court is suggested further by the OT description, where the large molten wash basin and altar in the temple courtyard are called respectively the “sea” (1 Kgs 7:23–26) and the “bosom of the earth” (Ezek 43:14; the altar also likely was identified with the “mountain of God” in Ezek 43:16).²⁷ The altar was also to be an “altar of earth” (in the early

²⁴ Josephus, *Ant.* 3.145; *J.W.* 5.217; Philo, *Rer. Div. Her.* 221–25; *Vit. Mos.* 2.102–5; *Quaest. Exod* 2.73–81; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Book V, Chap. 6.

²⁵ For example, one Jewish paraphrase of Exod 39:37 interpreted the seven lamps on the lampstand “to correspond to the seven planets that move in their orbits in the firmament day and night” (Aramaic Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan). For the seven lamps as symbolic of the planets or heavenly lights, cf. e.g. M. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (London: Routledge, 1955) 6–17; O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* (New York: Crossroad, 1985) 171–76; L. Goppelt, “τύπος,” *TDNT* 8 256–57; for oil lamps symbolizing planets in Mesopotamia and Egypt see L. Yarden, *The Tree of Light* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971) 43.

²⁶ Josephus, *J.W.* 5.210–14, says that the “tapestry” hanging over the outer entrance into the temple “typified the universe” and on it “was portrayed a panorama of the heavens.” The same may have well been the case with the outer part of the curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place, since also according to Josephus, all of the curtains in the temple contained “colours seeming so exactly to resemble those that meet the eye in the heavens” (Josephus, *Ant.* 3.132). That such may be the case may also be evident from the observation in Exodus (above) that all the curtains of the temple were woven of materials that resembled the variegated colors of the sky.

²⁷ See further Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988) 92–93. Translations of Ezek 43:14 typically have “from the base on the ground” but literally it is “from the bosom of the earth [or ground]”; among the reasons for associating “the altar hearth” (literally “Ariel”) of Ezek 43:16 with “the mountain of God” is Levenson’s observation that the same mysterious word “Ariel” occurs also in Isa 29:1, where it refers to “the city where David camped” and is equated by synonymous parallelism to “Mount Zion” (cf. Isa 29:7a with 29:8h), so that it resonates with “mountain” imagery (on the ambivalent meaning of the Hebrew word, see further BDB 72).

stages of Israel's history) or an "altar of [uncut] stone" (Exod 20:24–25), thus identifying it even more with the natural earth. Thus both the "sea" and "altar" appear to be cosmic symbols that may have been associated in the mind of the Israelite respectively with the seas and the earth²⁸ (enhancing the water imagery were the ten smaller wash basins, five on each side of the Holy Place enclosure [1 Kgs 7:38–39]). The symbolic nature of the "bronze sea" is indicated by the fact that it was seven feet high, fifteen feet in diameter, holding 10,000 gallons of water, and would not be convenient for priestly washing (in this respect, the ten waist-high wash bowls would have been the ones for daily practical cleansings). The arrangement of the twelve bulls "entirely encircling the sea" and the "lily blossom" decorating the brim would also seem to present a partial miniature model of land and life surrounding the seas of the earth (2 Chr 4:2–5). The twelve bulls also supported the wash basin and were divided into groups of three, facing to the four points of the compass, which could well reflect the four quadrants of the earth.²⁹ That twelve oxen were pictured holding up the "sea" and designs of lions and oxen were on the wash-basin stands points further to an "earthly" identification of the outer courtyard (though cherubim were also depicted on the basin stands). That the outer court was associated with the visible earth is also intimated by recalling that all Israelites, representing humanity at large, could enter there and worship.

Therefore, the cumulative effect of these observations is that Israel's temple served as a little earthly model of God's temple in heaven that would eventually encompass the whole earth. Specifically, the inner sanctuary of God's invisible presence would extend to include the visible heavens and earth. This is why the latter two sections of the courtyard and Holy Place are symbolized in Israel's earthly temple—to show that they will be consumed by God's Holy of Holies presence!

Whenever a school or business or church decides to expand and build a new building, they sometimes get an architect to make an actual model of the new building. I remember a church that decided to build a new building, and the architect made a model of the new complex: the parking lot with shrubs that surrounded the big church structure, and the roof of the church building was cut off in order to show the actual rooms and what they would look like. These architectural models are not meant to remain only as models: they point to a bigger task and creating a bigger structure in the future.

Israel's temple served precisely the same purpose. The temple was a small-scale model and symbolic reminder to Israel that God's glorious presence would eventually fill the whole cosmos and that the cosmos would be the container for God's glory and not a mere small architectural container.

²⁸ See e.g. E. Bloch-Smith, "Who is the King of Glory?" Solomon's Temple and Its Symbolism," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts* (ed. M. D. Coogan, J. C. Exum, and L. E. Stager; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 26–27, on Solomon's "bronze sea" as representing the primordial sea or waters of Eden; some see it representing the primeval chaos waters that were overcome at creation.

²⁹ Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil* 92–93; *idem*, *Sinai and Zion* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985) 139, 162.

Likely, this was to serve as a motivation to Israel to be faithful witnesses to the world of God's glorious presence and truth, which was to expand outwards from their temple.

The temple was a symbol to Israel of the task God wanted them to carry out; the same task that Adam (and likely Noah) should have carried out but did not, Israel was to execute: to "multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28) by expanding the local boundaries of the temple (where God's special revelatory presence was) to include the entire earth. That is, Israel was to spread God's presence throughout the entire earth. Interestingly, the land of promise, the land of Israel, was repeatedly called the "Garden of Eden" (cf. Gen 13:10; Isa 51:3; Joel 2:3; Ezek 36:35) partly perhaps because Israel was to expand the limits of the temple and of their own land to the ends of the earth in the same manner as should have Adam. That this was Israel's ultimate task is apparent from a number of OT passages prophesying that God will finally cause the sacred precinct of Israel's temple to expand and first encompass Jerusalem (see Isa 4:4–6; 54:2–3, 11–12; Jer 3:16–17; Zech 1:16–2:11), then the entire land of Israel (Ezek 37:25–28), and then the whole earth (Dan 2:34–35, 44–45; cf. also Isa 54:2–3).

Similarly, as we have seen, God gave Israel the same commission as Adam and Noah: e.g. to Isaac, the progenitor of Israel, is said, "I will greatly bless you and greatly multiply you . . . your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies" (Gen 22:17; cf. Gen 12:2–3; 17:2, 6, 8; 26:3–5, 24; 28:3; 35:11–12; 47:27; 48:3–4; on Noah's commission, see Gen 9:1, 7). Interestingly, Gen 1:28 becomes both a commission and a promise to Isaac, Jacob, and Israel.

Israel, however, did not carry out this great mandate to spread the temple of God's presence over the whole earth. The contexts of Isa 42:6 and 49:6 say that Israel should have spread the light of God's presence throughout the earth, but they did not. Exodus 19:6 says that Israel collectively was to be to God "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," going out to the nations and being mediators between God and the nations by bearing God's light of revelation. Instead of seeing the temple as a symbol of their task to expand God's presence to all nations, Israel wrongly viewed the temple to be symbolic of their election as God's only true people and that God's presence was to be restricted only to them as an ethnic nation. They believed the Gentiles would experience God's presence only through judgment.

So God sent them out of their land into exile, which Isaiah 45 compares to the darkness and chaos of the first chaos before creation in Genesis 1 (cf. Isa 45:18–19). So God starts the process of temple building all over again, but this time he planned that the local-spiritual boundaries of all the past temples of Eden and Israel would be expanded finally to circumscribe the boundaries of the entire earth. How did this occur?

IV. CHRIST AND HIS FOLLOWERS ARE A TEMPLE IN THE NEW CREATION

Christ is the temple toward which all earlier temples looked and which they anticipated (cf. 2 Sam 7:12–14; Zech 6:12–13): Christ is the epitome of

God's presence on earth as God incarnate, thus continuing the true form of the old temple, which actually was a foreshadowing of Christ's presence throughout the OT era. Jesus' repeated claim that forgiveness now comes through him and no longer through the sacrificial system of the temple suggests strongly that he was taking over the function of the temple, and, in fact, the forgiveness he now offered was what the temple had imperfectly pointed to all along. In this respect, Christ repeatedly refers to himself in the Synoptic gospels as the "cornerstone" of the temple (Mark 12:10; Matt 21:42; Luke 20:17). John 1:14 says that he became God's "tabernacle" in the world, and then in John 2:18–21 Jesus says to the Jewish leaders, "'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews said, 'it took 46 years to build this temple and you will raise it up in three days.' But he was speaking of the temple of his body."

Incidentally, if Jesus is what the temple prophetically pointed to all along, then it is doubtful whether we can think of a possible future physical temple as any more than a secondary fulfillment, at best. Indeed, 2 Cor 1:20 says, "For as many may be the promises of God [i.e. in the OT], in Him [in Christ] they are yes . . ." Christ is the major beginning fulfillment of the prophecies of the end-time temple.

Will there yet be another architectural temple built right before or after Christ comes back a second time in fulfillment of OT prophecy? Good evangelical scholars disagree about this. But if there is going to be another physical temple to be built at that time, it should not be seen as the primary fulfillment of the prophecy of the end-time temple but part of the ongoing fulfillment, alongside Christ as the fulfillment. To focus *only* upon a yet future physical temple as the fulfillment would be to ignore that Christ at his first coming began to fulfill this prophecy and that he will completely fulfill it in the eternal new creation; so even if there is to be a yet future physical temple built in Israel, it will only point to Christ and God as the temple in the eternal new creation, pictured in Rev 21:22. Therefore, to focus only on a future physical temple as the fulfillment is like focusing too much on the physical picture of the temple and not sufficiently on what the picture ultimately represents.

I remember during my first year of doctoral study in England that my wife-to-be and I were corresponding across the ocean quite a bit. I had a picture of her that she had given me. I endearingly looked at it quite a bit. Who knows, maybe I even hugged the picture. Now, after twenty-seven years of marriage, if she came into our den and saw me looking only at that picture day after day and never looking at her, she would rightly conclude that my focus was wrong. I no longer need the picture, since I now have the embodiment in my wife of everything to which her picture pointed.

Likewise, Israel's temple was a symbolic shadow pointing to Christ and the Church as its end-time substance. If this is so, it would seem to be the wrong approach for Christians to look in hope to the building of another temple in Jerusalem composed of earthly "bricks and mortar" as a fulfillment of the OT temple prophecies. Is it too dogmatic to say that such an approach would be to confuse the shadow with the end-time substance? Would this

not be to want to possess the cultic picture *alongside* of the true christological reality to which the picture points (on which see Heb 8:2, 5; 9:8–11, 23–25)? And would this not be to posit a retrogression in the progress of redemptive history? While it is certainly possible to agree with the overall approach of this essay and still hold to some expectation of an architectural temple, it would seem to be inconsistent with it.

Before moving on to the next point, it will be helpful to embark on a brief case study of 2 Cor 6:16–18. When we believe in Jesus, we become a part of Jesus and the temple: 1 Cor 3:16: “do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” 1 Cor 6:19: “do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in you?” 2 Cor 6:16: “for we are the temple of the living God” (and so likewise Eph 2:21–22; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 3:12; 11:1–2).

The 2 Corinthians 6 passage needs further elaboration with respect to fulfillment. Some commentators speak of the temple in 1 Corinthians only as a metaphor: the church is merely “like” a temple, but it is not part of the beginning fulfillment of the eschatological temple prophecies from the OT.³⁰ Others contend that Paul compares the Church to a temple because he understands it to be the inaugurated fulfillment of the expected latter-day temple, even though the church is not an architectural reality. The problem is that there is ambiguity because there is no introductory fulfillment formula either at the beginning or ending of verses 16–18.

Is Paul also thinking of the temple in 2 Cor 6:16–18 to be among the initial fulfillments of OT prophecy or is he merely saying that the church at Corinth is like a temple? Let us look further at this passage in order to try to shed more light on this question.

Paul’s most explicit reference to believers being identified as a temple is 2 Cor 6:16a: “For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said.” Paul cites several texts from the OT to support this declaration, the first of which is a prophecy of the future temple.

<i>Lev 26:11–12 and Ezek 37:26–27</i>	<i>2 Cor 6:16b</i>
Lev 26:11–12: “I will make My dwelling among you . . . I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.”	“I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.”
Ezek 37:26–27: “I will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.” Cf. Exod 29:45.	

³⁰ See G. D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987) 147, who expresses a perhaps not atypical tentativeness: the notion that the eschatological temple is in mind in 1 Corinthians 3 “is possible, though by no means certain,” yet says in a footnote that such an end-time view “is *probably* correct” (my italics).

This is a combined allusion to Leviticus and Ezekiel, both of which are a prediction of a coming temple.

Paul appends to the Leviticus-Ezekiel prophecy two additional allusions to the OT promise that a temple would be rebuilt when Israel would return from Babylonian captivity. The first is from Isaiah 52:

<i>Isa 52:11; Ezek 11:17; 20:41</i>	<i>2 Cor 6:16b</i>
Isa 52:11: "Depart, depart, go out from there, touch nothing unclean; go out of the midst of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord."	"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you."
Ezek 11:17 and 20:41: "I will welcome you" ³¹ (LXX) ³²	

Isaiah does not prophetically exhort future Israelites in general to "depart" from Babylon, but specifically priests who carry the holy "vessels" of the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from Solomon's temple and had kept in Babylon during the captivity. They are to return the "vessels" back to the temple when it is rebuilt. When Ezekiel repeatedly speaks of God "welcoming" Israel back from captivity, the restoration of the temple is in mind: e.g. Ezek 20:40–41 (LXX) says, "For on my holy mountain, on my high mountain . . . will I accept you, and there will I have respect to your first-fruits, and the first-fruits of your offerings, in all your holy things. I will accept you with a sweet-smelling savor . . . and *I will welcome* you from the countries wherein you have been dispersed." When God will "welcome" Israel back, she will bring offerings to the temple on Mount Zion.

Intriguingly, Ezek 11:16 says that when Israel was in captivity that God "was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone"! This assertion is made in direct connection with Ezek 10:18, in which "the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple" in Jerusalem (Ezek 10:18; similarly Ezek 11:23). It is likely not coincidental that God's glorious presence departed from the temple and then is said to be with the remnant in some veiled manner, who have gone into captivity. His presence would return with the restored people and would once again take up residence in another temple. It is clear that this did not occur in the second temple built after Israel's return. The fact that the "sanctuary" in Ezek 11:16, in which God was to be present among his people in exile, is a non-architectural sanctuary is likely part of the hermeneutical rationale by which Paul can apply the OT temple prophecies throughout verses 16–18 to the people of God in Corinth as God's sanctuary.

³¹ Ezek 11:17 (MT) has "you," while LXX has "them."

³² Perhaps also echoed are the following passages that also refer to God "welcoming" Israel back from restoration: Mic 4:6, Zeph 3:19–20, Zech 10:8, 10, and Jer 23:3, the first two of which have in mind also a return to the temple (cf. Mic 4:1–3, 7–8; Zeph 3:10–11).

Paul's last allusion supporting his contention that the Corinthians are "the temple of the living God" is from 2 Sam 7:14:

<i>2 Sam 7:14</i>	<i>2 Cor 6:18</i>
"I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me."	"And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me, says the Lord almighty."

While 2 Samuel is the primary text, "son" has been expanded into "sons and daughters" under the influence of three passages in Isaiah which foretell the restoration of Israel's "sons and daughters" (Isa 43:6; 49:22; 60:4), the last of which includes in its context the promise that Israel will again worship at a restored temple (Isa 60:7, 13). The 2 Samuel prophecy is concerned with the future king and temple: "He [the coming king] shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam 7:13). Most commentators agree that this prophecy in 2 Samuel was not finally fulfilled in Solomon and his temple.

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.

But let us look further at the preceding context of 2 Corinthians 6 to see if our tentative conclusion can be confirmed. One of the most theologically pregnant statements in all of Paul's writings occurs in 2 Cor 1:20a: "For as many as may be the promises of God, in him [Christ] they are yes." The "promises" most certainly refer to OT promises that began fulfillment in Christ. But which promises are in mind? Perhaps all of God's prophetic promises are implied, but the ones uppermost in Paul's mind are those that he addresses in the following context of the epistle, particularly from 1:21–7:1. Surely

among the prophetic promises that Paul has in mind is that of the new covenant upon which he elaborates in chapter 3. The observation that 1:20 and 7:1 both refer to “promises” plural (the latter introduced with “therefore”) is one of the signposts that it is this section within which he expounds prophetic fulfillment of more than merely one prophecy. As is well known, the establishment of a new temple was prophesied to be part of Israel’s restoration (e.g. Ezek 37:26–28; 40–48).

Some commentators apparently do not link 2 Cor 7:1a directly to the preceding verses at the end of chapter 6 (perhaps they do not do so unconsciously because of the chapter break in English and Greek Bibles). But the “therefore” (*oun*) in 7:1 underscores that foremost among the promises that Paul has in mind in the first six chapters are those of the temple prophecies, since these appear repeatedly in the directly preceding verses (2 Cor 6:16–18): “Therefore, having these promises.” Christ initially fulfilled the temple promise (cf. 1:20), and the readers participate in that fulfillment also, as they are ones “having these promises” (7:1). The reason they and Paul fulfill the same promise that Christ does is because God “establishes us with you in Christ” by “sealing” believers and giving the “Spirit in our hearts as a down payment” (1:21–22). As Paul says in the first Corinthian epistle, the church is a “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). While they have only begun to fulfill the eschatological expectation of the temple, a time will come when they will perfectly realize that hope.

Are the Corinthians “literally” the beginning of the end-time temple prophesied in Leviticus 26, Ezekiel 37, and Isaiah 52? Some might agree that Paul understands the church to be the beginning fulfillment of the temple prophecies but that Paul allegorizes, since OT authors would have had in mind a physically conceived architectural structure as a temple and not people composing a temple. Others, in order to avoid making Paul an allegorizer, conclude that he is only making a comparison. Accordingly, such commentators would not see actual beginning fulfillment here because it is obvious to them that the Corinthian church is not what the OT temple prophecies had in mind. However, we have already seen above that it is probable that Paul is viewing the church as a real and true fulfillment of various temple prophecies, which had already begun to be non-architecturally conceived in the OT itself. Consequently, it is possible to take Paul’s words about fulfillment literally and yet still understand that he had in mind a literal fulfillment that would not have been outside the literal scope of the prophets’ authorial intention. Accordingly, Paul is not allegorizing nor is he merely making an analogy between a temple idea and that of Christians, but he is saying that Christians *are* the beginning fulfillment of the actual prophecy of the end-time temple.³³

Building on what has been said so far, it is appropriate to re-focus attention on the problem with which we started this address: how are the OT temple prophecies to be understood in Rev 21:1–22:5?

³³ See also E. Clowney, “The Final Temple,” *WTJ* 35 (1972) 185–86, who has made a similar point about 2 Cor 6:16.

V. THE MYSTERY OF HOW JOHN CAN SEE A NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH IN REV 21:1, AND THEN IN THE REST OF THE VISION FROM 21:9–22:5 SEES ONLY A CITY IN THE FORM OF A GARDEN-LIKE TEMPLE IS NOW CLARIFIED BY HAVING LOOKED AT THE PURPOSE OF THE TEMPLE THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE

The new heavens and earth in Rev 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 from heaven and fill the whole creation (as Rev 21:1–3, 10 and 21:22 affirm). Revelation 21:1 commences, as we have seen, with John's vision of a "new heaven and new earth" followed by his vision of the "new Jerusalem descending from heaven" (v. 2), and then he hears a "great voice" proclaiming that "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will tabernacle with them . . ." Recalling the initial discussion of this essay, it is likely that the second vision in verse 2 interprets the first vision of the new cosmos and that what is heard about the tabernacle in verse 3 interprets both verses 1–2. If so, the new creation of verse 1 is identical to the "new Jerusalem" of verse 2 and both represent the same reality as the "tabernacle" of verse 3.

Consequently, the new creation and new Jerusalem are none other than God's tabernacle. This "tabernacle" is the true temple of God's special presence portrayed throughout chapter 21. It was this cultic divine presence that was formerly limited to Israel's temple and then the Church, which will fill the whole earth and heaven and become co-extensive with it. Then the eschatological goal of the temple of the Garden of Eden dominating the entire creation will be finally fulfilled (so Rev 22:1–3).³⁴

Why does Rev 21:18 say the city-temple will be pure gold? Because the entire "Holy of Holies" and "Holy Place" of Israel's temple, which were paved with gold on the walls, floor, and ceiling (so 1 Kgs 6:20–22; 2 Chr 3:4–8), have been expanded to cover the whole earth. This is why the three sections of Israel's old temple (Holy of Holies, the Holy Place, and the outer courtyard) are no longer found in the Revelation 21 temple—because God's special presence, formerly limited to the Holy of Holies, has now extended out to encompass the entire visible heavens and whole earth, which we have seen the Holy Place and the court respectively symbolized. This is also why Rev 21:16 says the whole city was "square," indeed, cubic—because only the Holy of Holies was a cubic shape (1 Kgs 6:20). In addition, that the entire creation has become the Holy of Holies is evident from 22:4. Whereas the High Priest, who wore God's name on his forehead, was the only person in Israel who could enter the Holy of Holies once a year and be in God's presence, in the future all of God's people will have become high priests with

³⁴ In striking likeness, 4Q475 (4Q Renewed Earth) affirms that the earth will become Eden: after all sin has been extinguished from the earth, "all the world will be like Eden, and all . . . the earth will be at peace for ever, and . . . a beloved son . . . will . . . inherit it all."

God's "name on their foreheads" and standing, not one day a year, but forever in God's presence.³⁵ 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. This notion of expanding the temple worldwide finds striking similarity to the Qumran community, who were to "honor" God "by consecrating yourself to him, in accordance to the fact that he has placed you as a holy of holies [over all]³⁶ the earth, and over all the angels . . ." (4Q418, fragment 81 [= 4Q423 8 + 24?], line 4).³⁷

Hence, the two outer sections of the temple have fallen away like a cocoon from which God's Holy of Holies presence has emerged to dominate all creation. What kind of use of the OT in the NT is this? Could John be allegorizing? At first glance, to equate the new cosmos with a garden-like city in the shape of the Holy of Holies would appear to be a superb example of allegory or wild spiritualization. In the light of our argument so far, however, this appears unlikely. But could this be a mere comparison of the OT texts about the temple to conditions in the new creation? Well, yes, this is at least the case. Could the use be direct prophetic fulfillment or typological fulfillment? Though some specific OT references in Rev 21:1–22:4 could fall into one or other of these categories,³⁸ the overall view of the temple in Revelation, and the allusions to particular OT temple texts, is not best described by any one of these categories. Rather, the usage might best be described as *completion or fulfillment of intended design* (i.e. *intended design of the OT temple*). In this sense, I think we can refer to this as "literal" fulfillment.

These OT writers prophesying the temple in the new creation are comparable in a sense to people from another planet in a spaceship some distance from the earth. They can see with the naked eye only the earth and its different shading, representing clouds, seas, and land masses. They radio back to their home planet and describe what they see from this distance. When, however, their spaceship approaches closer to the earth and begins to descend into the atmosphere over, let us say, New York City, they are able to make out the rivers, forests, valleys, and particularly the city, buildings, houses, streets, cars, and people. Both the distant and close-up views are "literal."

³⁵ In this respect, note that God's "throne" is also now in the midst of God's people (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. Ps 99:5).

³⁶ The Martinez and Tigchelaar Hebrew-English edition rightly supply the lacunae with "over all" because of the following parallelism with "over all the *angels*" [literally "gods"], though in Martinez's earlier English edition he did not do so and gave an otherwise quite different translation, which does not reflect the Hebrew as well as the later translation.

³⁷ Similarly, 4Q511 (Fragment 35) says that "God makes (some) hol[y] for himself like an everlasting sanctuary . . . And they shall be priests . . ." (lines 3–4). As such, their task is to "spread the fear of God in the ages" (line 6).

³⁸ E.g. Lev 26:12 and Ezek 37:27 in Rev 21:3; Ezekiel 40–48 throughout John's vision; 1 Kgs 6:20 in Rev 21:16; Isa 54:11–12 in Rev 21:19–20.

The close-up picture reveals details that someone with only a distant view could not have seen. The close-up even “looks” like a different reality from the distant vantage point. Nevertheless, both are “literal” depictions of what is actually there.

Similarly, the literal picture of OT prophecy is magnified by the lens of NT progressive revelation, which enlarges the details of fulfillment in the beginning new world that will be completed at Christ's last advent. This does not mean OT prophecy is not fulfilled literally but that the literal nature of the prophecy from the OT vantage point becomes sharpened and the details clarified, indeed, magnified. The above illustration breaks down a bit, since I believe OT prophets also got occasional glimpses of the “close-up” view, which when put together were like fragmentary pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Other visions they had were of the “far-off” view.

Thus, we can say that much of what they saw was the “far-off” perspective, which then becomes sharpened by the details of the progressive revelation unveiled in the fulfillment of the redemptive-historical plan, which shows how the formerly seen “close-up” visionary pieces fit into the whole of the new age. As the revelation progresses toward the “planet” of the new creation meanings of earlier biblical texts become enlarged and magnified. Thus, later biblical writers further interpret prior canonical writings in ways that amplify earlier texts. These later interpretations may formulate meanings of which earlier authors may not have been exhaustively conscious, but which do not contravene their original organic intention. This is to say that original meanings have “thick description”³⁹ and fulfillment often “fleshes out” or gives a close-up view of prophecy with details of which the prophet could not as clearly see from far off.

Accordingly, our contention is that 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.⁴⁰ 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. Like the distant and close-up views of the earth, such a view of the temple should not be misconceived as diminishing a literal fulfillment of the OT temple prophecies.

It must be acknowledged that there do appear to be some end-time prophecies describing what would seem to be a future physical, structural temple, yet we must still ask how can Paul in 2 Cor 6:16–18 and John in his final vision identify Christ, God, and the church as the fulfillment of such prophecies? In fact, it is important also to observe that some prophecies of an end-time temple foresee a non-architectural structure. Hence, there are

³⁹ For further elaboration of this concept, see K. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) e.g. 284–85, 291–92, 313–14, where he discusses “thick description.”

⁴⁰ To paraphrase Clowney, “Final Temple” 177.

temple prophecies that appear to refer to the establishment of a future architectural temple building and others that seem to depict a non-architectural structure.⁴¹ With respect to the latter, some prophecies understand that the temple was to extend over all of Jerusalem (Isa 4:5–6; Jer 3:16–17; Zech 1:16–2:13), over all of the land of Israel (Ezek 37:26–28; similarly Lev 26:10–13), and even over the entire earth (Dan 2:34–35, 44–45), and Rev 21:1–22:5 sees that the entire cosmos has become the temple. On the other hand, Daniel 8 and 11–12, as well as Ezekiel 40–48 and other texts appear to prophesy a physical temple building that will exist in one particular geographical location in the end times.⁴² How can these texts be harmonized? Could it not be that some of the texts predicting an architectural temple represent a “far-off picture” of the future temple and the others portraying an expanding temple represent OT passages having a “closer-up view” of the end-time sanctuary?

To explain some of the “far-off views” of the temple hermeneutically, like that of Ezekiel 40–48, another illustration may be helpful.⁴³ A father promises in 1900 to give his son a horse and buggy when he grows up and marries. During the early years of expectation, the son reflects on the particular size of the buggy he would like, its contours and style, its beautiful red-leather seat and the size and breed of horse that would draw the buggy. Perhaps the father even had knowledge from early experimentation elsewhere that the invention of the “horseless carriage” was on the horizon, but coined the promise to his son in familiar terms that the son could readily understand. Years later, say in 1930, when the son marries, the father gives the couple an automobile, which has since been invented and mass-produced.

Is the son disappointed in receiving a car instead of a horse and buggy? Is this a figurative or a “literal” fulfillment of the promise? In fact, the essence of the father’s word has remained the same: a convenient mode of transportation. What has changed is the precise form of transportation promised. The progress of technology has escalated the fulfillment of the pledge in a way that earlier could not have been conceived of fully by the son when he was young. Nevertheless, in the light of the later development of technology, the promise is viewed as “literally” and faithfully carried out in a greater way than could have earlier been apprehended.

The substantial essence of the new temple is still the glory of God, however that glory is no longer confined within a material building but revealed

⁴¹ Some of the structural temple prophecies include passages where no initial establishment of a temple is mentioned but the existence of a latter-day temple is noted (e.g. Dan 8:11–13; 11:31).

⁴² If the detailed prophecy of Ezekiel 40–48 is jettisoned as such a prediction, then other much less descriptive prophecies usually placed in such a category wane in significance. However, C. L. Feinberg, “The Rebuilding of the Temple,” in *Prophecy in the Making* (ed. C. F. H. Henry; Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971) 109, who sees Ezekiel 40–48 as a reference to a physical structure and, because of its detail, as determinative in defining the other briefer prophecies about the temple as also foreseeing physical structures. In the NT, some see that 2 Thess 2:4 is the clearest prophecy of a future temple building (in response to which see my analysis in *The Temple and Church’s Mission*, chap. 8).

⁴³ See chapter 11 of my *Temple and the Church’s Mission*, where I elaborate on the meaning of Ezekiel 40–48 and its use in Rev 21:1–22:5.

openly to the world in Christ and his subsequent dwelling through the Spirit in the worldwide Church as the temple. The progress of God's revelation has made the fulfillment of apparent prophecies of an architectural temple even greater than originally conceived by finite minds. This is what Hag 2:9 appears to express: "the latter glory of this house will be greater than the former." Such an escalation from an architecturally conceived temple to a non-architectural one is also pointed to by some OT precedents that already understood that a temple could exist without being an architectural reality: among some examples are the Garden of Eden, which is called a "sanctuary" (Ezek 28:13–18); Mount Sinai is understood to be a mountain temple, after which the tabernacle was modeled (note texts already mentioned above that contain non-architectural depictions, most of which are prophetic: Isa 4:5–6; Jer 3:16–17; Zech 1:16–2:13; Ezek 11:16; 37:26–28 [similarly Lev 26:10–13]; Dan 2:34–35, 44–45).

Above all, in John's portrayal of the consummated condition of the new heavens and earth in Rev 21:22, he says that "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.

Thus, we see temple prophecies such as Ezekiel 40–48, Isaiah 54, and Ezekiel 37 fulfilled in the Rev 21:1–22:5 vision in the sense that this vision prophetically depicts the time when the intended universal cosmic design of OT temples, including that of Eden, will be completed or accomplished. In this light, these prophecies are not merely analogical to the new creation nor allegorized by John but "literally" fulfilled.

VI. WE AS GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN TO BE GOD'S
TEMPLE WHERE HIS PRESENCE IS MANIFESTED TO THE WORLD,
AND WE ARE TO EXTEND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE TEMPLE
UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS WHEN FINALLY THEY
WILL BE EXPANDED WORLDWIDE

Christ, as the Last Adam and true king-priest, perfectly obeyed God and expanded the boundaries of the temple from himself to others (in fulfillment of Gen 1:28). We are to continue that task of sharing God's presence with 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 cultic task of expanding the presence of God is expressed strikingly in Revelation 11. There the Church is portrayed as a

“sanctuary” (vv. 1–2), as “two witnesses” (v. 3), and as “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. In surprisingly similar fashion, this mission is expressed in 1 Pet 2:4–5, where Peter calls Christ a “living stone” in the temple and his people are “living stones” who as a “royal priesthood” (allusion to Exod 19:6!) are to “proclaim the excellencies of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

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. 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).

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 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 daily, as did Jesus, in order that we may be strengthened increasingly with God’s presence in order to fulfill our task of spreading that presence to others who don’t know Christ?

God’s presence grows in us by our 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, which is designed to expand and spread God’s presence throughout the earth. This is that part of the biblical storyline in which the role of Christian “witness” and “missions” is to be understood.

A few summers ago, my wife and I bought a “Rose of Sharon” bush and planted it on the north side of our house. The bush was supposed to grow to about six feet high and four feet wide and was supposed to have flowers. After a few months, however, we noticed that our bush was not growing at all, though it began to produce buds. The buds, however, never opened into full flowers. The problem was that our bush was not getting enough sunlight. If we did not transplant it, the bush would not grow to its normal size and would not produce any flowers. Likewise, we as the Church will not bear fruit and grow and extend across the earth in the way God intends unless

we stay out of the shadows of the world and remain in the light of God's presence—in his word and prayer and in fellowship with other believers in the Church, always reminding ourselves of our unique place in God's historical story. The mark of the true Church is an expanding witness to the presence of God: first to our families, then to others in the Church, then to our neighborhood, then to our city, then the country, and ultimately the whole earth.

May God give us grace to go out into the world as his extending temple and spread God's presence by reflecting it until it finally fills the entire earth, as it will according to Revelation 21. Jeremiah 3:16–17 says that in the end time people “will no longer say ‘the ark of the . . . Lord [in Israel's old temple].’ It will never enter their minds or be remembered” because the end-time temple encompassing the new creation will be so incomparable to the old temple.

VII. CONCLUSION

The prophecy of the latter-day temple begins in Christ's first coming and the Church through God's special revelatory presence, the essence of the old temple, which has broken out of the old temple. Christ was the first expression of this divine presence that had left the old temple and then his Spirit indwelling in the church was the continuing ongoing expression of the beginning latter-day temple. All along, the symbolic design of the temple was to indicate that God's “Holy of Holies” presence would eventually fill the entire cosmos, so that the cosmos, instead of a small physical house, would be the container of this glorious presence. Again, the timing of the fulfillment of this prophecy is a bit unexpected. It is not fulfilled all at once, but begins with Christ and then his Spirit indwelling the church. We saw that the Corinthian church was part of this inaugurated indwelling. Then, at the climax of all history, the inaugurated indwelling presence of God completely fills the entire cosmos, which appears to have been the design of the Ezekiel 40–48 temple all along.

Thus, the essence of the temple, the glorious presence of God, sheds its OT architectural cocoon by emerging in Christ, then dwelling in his people, and finally dwelling throughout the whole earth.

I hope, and indeed, believe that this particular study of the use of the OT in the NT is an example of what may be the case with other difficult OT in the New uses, where “literal” fulfillment does not seem to be indicated. That is, I believe the more we do exegesis and biblical theology in both testaments, the more we will see better how NT authors play their part in a consistent and organic interpretative development of OT passages.

I want to end, however, by focusing on the main point of this address for the Church: *our task as a Church is to be God's temple, so filled with his presence that we expand and fill the earth with that glorious presence until God finally accomplishes this goal completely at the end of time!* This is our common, unified mission. May we unify around this goal.