

NEW STUDIES IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY 17

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The Temple and the Church's Mission

A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE
DWELLING PLACE OF GOD



G. K. Beale

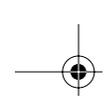


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Series preface

New Studies in Biblical Theology is a series of monographs that address key issues in the discipline of biblical theology. Contributions to the series focus on one or more of three areas: 1. the nature and status of biblical theology, including its relations with other disciplines (e.g. historical theology, exegesis, systematic theology, historical criticism, narrative theology); 2. the articulation and exposition of the structure of thought of a particular biblical writer or corpus; and 3. the delineation of a biblical theme across all or part of the biblical corpora.

Above all, these monographs are creative attempts to help thinking Christians understand their Bibles better. The series aims simultaneously to instruct and to edify, to interact with the current literature, and to point the way ahead. In God's universe, mind and heart should not be divorced: in this series we will try not to separate what God has joined together. While the notes interact with the best of the scholarly literature, the text is uncluttered with untransliterated Greek and Hebrew, and tries to avoid too much technical jargon. The volumes are written within the framework of confessional evangelicalism, but there is always an attempt at thoughtful engagement with the sweep of the relevant literature.

Of the three approaches to biblical theology listed above, this volume follows the third. Dr Greg Beale traces out the theme of the tabernacle/temple across the Bible's story-line, illuminating text after text as he goes. But more, he shows that the significance and symbolism of the temple draw on cultural assumptions, with the result that his theology is well grounded not only in exegesis but also in history. And beyond that, he ventures some suggestions about the meaning of the temple in both the Old and the New Testaments that break new ground, enabling thoughtful readers to perceive connections in the text of Scripture that doubtless escaped them in the past. The importance of this book therefore lies not only in the competent handling

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of its chosen theme, but also in three other things: its evocative unpacking of the theme of the temple in its relations to broader structures of thought, including the kingdom of God; its modelling of the way biblical theology is to be done; and its capacity to cause readers to perceive fresh and wonderful things in the Scriptures, and bow in worship and gratitude.

D. A. Carson
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Author's preface

This book had its birth as a three-page excursus to Revelation 22:1–2 in my commentary on Revelation (see Beale 1999a: 1109–1111). In 2001 I expanded the excursus into an extended paper, which was read at the Tyndale Fellowship Study Group on Biblical Theology in Cambridge, England (whose topic was on ‘The Biblical Theology of the Temple’). The paper, along with other papers at that conference, was subsequently published (see Beale 2004). I am thankful to the conveners of the Tyndale Study Group for giving me opportunity to deliver this paper and for including it in the published volume of papers from the conference.

The extended paper was still only the barest thumb-nail sketch of what I had in mind as a biblical theology of the temple. Therefore, I set out to write a fuller-scale work. I have discovered that some of the book's chapters themselves need even further elaboration, but one has to stop somewhere.

This book has been the most exciting research project on which I have ever worked. It has opened my eyes to themes that I had seen only dimly before. In particular, I have seen more clearly than ever that the themes of Eden, the temple, God's glorious presence, new creation and the mission of the church are ultimately facets of the same reality! It is my hope that the biblical-theological perspective of this book will provide greater fuel to fire the church's motivation to fulfil its mission to the world.

I am indebted beyond words to my wife, Dorinda, who has discussed the theology of the temple with me for the past couple of years, and who remains as excited as I am about the subject. She has been one of the main instruments through which I have been able to understand this topic in more depth.

I also owe a great debt to Don Carson, the editor of this series. Don made a significant investment in reading and carefully evaluating the manuscript. His suggestions for revision were invaluable and have definitely made this a better book than it would have been! In

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addition, his encouragement about the project's viability throughout the editorial process has motivated me to finish it. Along with Don Carson, I must mention Philip Duce, Theological Books Editor at IVP in England, who has also read the manuscript and offered suggestions for improvement and encouragement. I am thankful to both Don and Philip for accepting this book for publication. I am similarly indebted to Jeff Niehaus, Gordon Hugenberger, Dan Master, John Monson and John Walton for reading and commenting on parts of this book, as well as alerting me to some OT and ANE sources.

I am likewise grateful to College Church (in Wheaton), which asked me to deliver the Fall 2001 Missions Sunday sermon on the subject of this book (and invited me to teach in other venues in the church on the theme). Attempting to distil the material for the church community has been essential in helping me to understand it even better. In addition, being able to teach the subject at Park Woods Presbyterian Church (Kansas City), Wheaton College Graduate School, The Greek Bible School of Athens (Greece), the Evangelical Theological College of Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) and the Bethlehem Theological Institute (Minneapolis) has been an enormous benefit, especially with respect to student questions that have sharpened my perspectives.

I also want to offer appreciation to the following research students who either helped do research or double-checked and edited the manuscript of this book: John Kohler, Ben Gladd, Stephen Webster, Kevin Cawley (particularly his research in early Judaism) and Todd Wilson. I am especially indebted to Greg Goss for his stylistic comments and other suggestions to improve the clarity of the book. Thanks must also be given to David Lincicum for creating the indices for the book.

Above all, I am thankful to God for enabling me to conceive the idea for this book and giving me the energy and discipline to write it. It is my prayer that God's glory will more greatly be manifested as a result of the reading of this book.

A few comments about some stylistic aspects of the book are in order. English translations follow the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise indicated or, when different, represent my own translation. With respect to all translations of ancient works, when the translation differs from the standard editions usually referred to, then it is my translation or someone else's (in the latter case I indicate whom).

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

References to the Greek New Testament are from the NA²⁷. In making references to the Septuagint, I refer to the Greek text of *The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament and Apocrypha with an English Translation*, which is dependent on Codex B. This will enable those not knowing Greek to follow the Septuagint in a readily available English edition. Occasionally, reference is made to A. Rahlfs (ed.), *Septuaginta*, which is the standard eclectic text for the Septuagint.

My references to the Dead Sea Scrolls come primarily from A. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran*; reference to more recently published materials comes from the new edition of F. G. Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, and sometimes reference is made to F. G. Martínez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar (eds.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*. In addition, other translations of DSS were consulted and, sometimes, preferred in quotations, though at other times variations from Dupont-Sommer or Martínez are due to the author's own translation.

The primary sources of various Jewish works were ordinarily referred to, and sometimes quoted, in the following English editions: I. Epstein (ed.), *The Babylonian Talmud*; J. Neusner (ed.), *The Talmud of the Land of Israel* (the Jerusalem Talmud), Vols. 1–35; J. Z. Lauterbach (ed.), *Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, Vols. 1–3; *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, translated by J. Goldin; *The Midrash on Proverbs*, translated by B. L. Visotzky; W. G. Braude (ed.), *The Midrash on Psalms*; H. Freedman and M. Simon (eds.), *Midrash Rabbah*, Vols. 1–10; P. P. Levertoff (ed.), *Midrash Sifre on Numbers in Translations of Early Documents*, Series 3, Rabbinic Texts; J. T. Townsend (ed.), *Midrash Tanhuma*, Vols. 1–2; *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu*, translated by S. A. Berman; A. Cohen (ed.), *The Minor Tractates of the Talmud*, Vols. 1–2; H. Danby (ed.), *The Mishnah*; J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vols. 1–2 (though sometimes reference was made to R. H. Charles [ed.], *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2 [Pseudepigrapha]); W. G. Braude and I. J. Kapstein (eds.), *The Pesikta de-rab Kahana*; W. G. Braude (ed.), *Pesikta Rabbati*; G. Friedlander (ed.), *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*; R. Hammer (ed.), *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*; W. G. Braude and I. J. Kapstein (eds.), *Tanna debe Eliyyahu*; J. W. Etheridge (ed.), *The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan Ben Uzziel on the Pentateuch, with the Fragments of the Jerusalem Targum, on Genesis and Exodus*; the available volumes published in M. McNamara (ed.), *The Aramaic Bible: The Targums*.

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References to ancient Greek works, especially those of Philo and Josephus (including English translations), are from the Loeb Classical Library. References and some English translations of the apostolic fathers come from M. W. Holmes (ed.), *The Apostolic Fathers*.

Publication details of all works cited in this preface are given in full in the Bibliography at the back of this book.

G. K. Beale

Preface by Mary Dorinda Beale

Have you ever wondered about some of the people described in the Bible? Some of them frankly seem superhuman, not quite real. For example, it seems odd that Paul and Silas sang in prison. Would I sing if I were in prison? Would I have the attitude expressed in Hebrews 10:34, where it portrays Christians as accepting 'joyfully' the seizure of their property? Would I be joyful if the authorities came and seized my house? In Acts 5:40–41, it says they flogged the apostles and told them not to speak in the name of Jesus any more. Their response is not what I consider a 'normal' reaction. They went away rejoicing because 'they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name'.

Would I rejoice if I suffered shame and was beaten? Why is their response so different? How can they act so totally different from most of us? It is as though their reality was different or they were seeing things that the natural eye cannot see. In 2 Kings 6, Elisha prays for his servant. The two men are surrounded by the army of Syria. The servant of Elisha is, naturally, distressed. Elisha comforts him with these words: 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them' (v. 16). I have never been very good at arithmetic, but I do know that a Syrian army outnumbers two men! Elisha then prays that God would open his servant's eyes. We discover that the servant 'sees' 'the mountain [is] full of horses and chariots of fire all around'. What happened? He was given eyes to see true reality!

What is this true reality that can so alter all that we say and do? When one becomes a Christian, real truth is seen. True reality is the fact that humanity is drowning in a sea of sin with no way to save itself. The only hope is to cry out to God. Only Jesus, the Messiah, can save. If you cling to him as your Saviour, you will not be carried away in the sea of sin because he is the rock of our salvation (Acts 4:10–12).

Second Corinthians 5:17 says, 'if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come'. How is this 'newness' of life as a Christian manifested? It seems

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as though Nicodemus's question to Jesus is understandable: 'how can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb' (John 3:4). Jesus answers this perplexing question in verse 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' The significance seems to be that the Spirit is different. It is not at all like the flesh. So, how can we still remain in our fleshly bodies and yet 'walk' in 'newness of life' (Rom. 6:4)? First Peter 2:11 tells us that we are 'aliens and strangers' on earth, which means earth is not our home. Instead, Ephesians 2:19–22 explains, our home is in heaven, and we are *now* 'of God's household' (see also 1 Tim. 3:15). How can we really be part of God's household *now*? We live on earth. Are we not just in a 'holding pattern' until we actually die or the world ends? Aren't we only looking forward to the future time when we will be part of 'God's household'?

Since Scripture tells us that we are *now* part of God's household and are not just wandering around as 'aliens' on earth, where is God's household, who is there, and what difference does it make anyway? Hebrews 12:22–24 explains very clearly where we are and who is there with us:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly, and the church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

When we, like Elisha's servant, have our eyes of faith opened, the awesome fact is that we are in the presence of God, and Jesus the mediator of a new covenant. 'He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son' (Col. 1:13). We are there now. Christians are 'living stones', 'being built up as a spiritual house' (1 Pet. 2:5).

When my oldest daughter Nancy was three years old, our family lived in England. In the spring of that year, Nancy and I were invited to a picnic at a very large country estate. As we walked around the house and grounds, I realized that she was hardly fazed by the splendour and beauty of this magnificent estate. I pulled her aside and said, 'Nancy, I know you are very young, but this is a special place. Try to remember this day.'

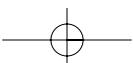
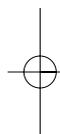
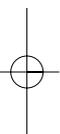
PREFACE BY MARY DORINDA BEALE

We, like my daughter, need to be pulled aside and told that we are in the most special place of all – *now* – God's palatial mountain-temple.

This book will explain in detail where we are and the beauty and splendour of the new Jerusalem, the temple of the living God. Israel's physical temple which was seen by the naked eye was a mere shadow of the heavenly reality (Heb. 9:24)! May God open our eyes to understand:

How blessed is the one whom Thou
dost choose, and bring near to Thee,
To dwell in Thy courts.
We will be satisfied with the goodness
of Thy house,
Thy holy temple.

(Ps. 65:4)



Abbreviations

Ancient sources: standard abbreviations are used; authors and titles are given in full in the 'Index of ancient sources' on p. 450.

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>AnBib</i>	<i>Analecta Biblica</i>
ANE	Ancient Near East
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
ASOR	American School of Oriental Research
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
<i>b.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BAGD	W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament</i> (2nd ed.)
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeology Revue</i>
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (3rd ed.).
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovanensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BibO	Biblica et Orientica
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BRev</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>

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BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
c.	circa
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CE	<i>Critical Enquiry</i>
ConB	Coniectanea biblica
CT	<i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum</i>
CTM	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ErIs	<i>Eretz-Israel</i>
ExpT	<i>Expository Times</i>
frag(s).	fragment(s)
FS	Festschrift
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HSMS	Harvard Semitic Monograph Series
IBD	<i>The Illustrated Bible Dictionary</i> , ed. J. D. Douglas
IBS	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JATS	<i>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSNTS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
LXX	Septuagint
m.	<i>Mishnah</i>
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
MT	Masoretic Text
NA ²⁷	Nestle-Aland, <i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> (27th ed.), Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.
NAC	The New American Commentary
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NCB	New Century Bible
n.d.	no date

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , ed. W. A. VanGemeren
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIV	New International Version of the Bible
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
NT	New Testament
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NumSup	Numen Supplements
OLA	Orientalia Iovaniensia analecta
OT	Old Testament
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RSMS	Religious Studies Monograph Series
SacP	Sacra Pagina
SBLA	Society of Biblical Literature Abstracts
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and its Literature
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SNTS	Society for New Testament Studies
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPB	Studia Post-Biblica
SubB	Subsidia Biblica
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , ed. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren
<i>Tg.</i>	<i>Targum</i>
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>

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<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplement
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentaries
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
y.	Jerusalem Talmud
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

Chapter One

Introduction

The final vision of the Apocalypse and its implications for a biblical theology of the temple

Revelation 21:1 – 22:5 contains the well-known and much discussed final vision of the entire Bible. There is, however, a major problem that has barely been noticed. Why does John see ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ in Revelation 21:1 and yet in 21:2–3, 10 – 22:3 he sees a city that is garden-like, in the shape of a temple? Why does John not see a full panorama of the new heavens and earth? Why does he not see the many forests, rivers, mountains, streams, valleys and the many other features of a fertile worldwide new creation. Some might attribute the apparent discrepancy to the irrational nature that ancient apocalyptic visions and dreams could have, though this would be hard to accept for a vision that John claims has its origin in God (cf. 21:9 with Rev. 1:1 and 22:6, for example). Also, how does this vision relate to Christians and their role in fulfilling the mission of the church, an issue with which John has been absorbed throughout Revelation?

Thus, after initially saying that he saw ‘a new heaven and a new earth’, John focuses only on an arboreal city-temple in the remainder of the vision. The dimensions and architectural features of the city in these verses are drawn to a significant extent from Ezekiel 40 – 48, a prophecy of the dimensions and architectural features of a future temple (so vv. 2, 10–12; 21:27 – 22:2). The precious stones forming the foundation in Revelation 21:18–21 reflect the description of Solomon’s temple which also was overlaid with gold and whose foundation was composed of precious stones: see respectively 1 Kings 6:20–22 (and 5:17) and 7:9–10, and note that the dimensions of Revelation 21:16 (‘its length and width and height are equal’) are based on the dimensions of the ‘holy of holies’ in 1 Kings 6:20 (where the ‘length . . . and the breadth . . . and the height’ of the holy of holies were equal in measurement).

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How can one explain the apparent discrepancy that John, in verse 1, saw a new creation, yet in the remainder of the vision observed only a city in the shape and structure of a temple? It is possible, of course, that he first sees the new world and then sees a city-temple *in* that world. But this is not likely because it is apparent that he equates the 'new heavens and earth' with the following description of the 'city-temple'.

This equation of the new world with the city-temple becomes clearer when one begins to reflect on Revelation 21:27, which declares that 'nothing unclean . . . shall ever come into' the urban temple. In this respect, it is significant to remember that in the Old Testament any uncleanness was to be kept out of the temple precincts (e.g., 2 Chr. 23:19; 29:16; 30:1–20). That the perimeters of the new city-temple will encompass the whole of the new creation is suggested then by the fact that Revelation 21:27 says that no uncleanness was allowed into this unusual temple. This observation probably means that no uncleanness will be allowed into the new world. The equation of the city-temple with the new world is further evident from the exclusion of the unclean from the new city in 22:15, which means they will also be excluded from dwelling in the new creation, since they will be in the lake of fire for ever (see ch. 10 in this book).

Another observation points to the equation of the new cosmos with the city-temple. Revelation 21:1 commences, as we have seen, with John's vision of 'a new heaven and a new earth', followed by his vision of the 'new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven' (v. 2), after which he hears a 'loud great voice' proclaiming that 'the tabernacle of God is among men, and he shall dwell among them'. 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 and 2. If so, the new creation of verse 1 is identical to the 'new Jerusalem' of verse 1 and both represent the same reality as the 'tabernacle' of verse 3.

The 'seeing-hearing' pattern elsewhere in Revelation suggests that verses 1–3 refer to the same reality. At other points in the book either what John sees is interpreted by what he then hears or vice versa. A good example is Revelation 5:5, where John *hears* about a 'Lion that is from the tribe of Judah' who 'conquered'. John *sees* a slain lamb possessing sovereign authority in verse 6, which interprets how the messianic lamb conquered: he won victory ironically by dying as a 'slain lamb'.

That the 'new heaven and new earth' of 21:1 is defined by and

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equated with the paradisaical city-temple of 21:2 and 21:9 – 22:5 is also supported by J. D. Levenson's observation that 'heaven and earth' in the Old Testament may sometimes be a way of referring to Jerusalem or its temple, for which 'Jerusalem' is a metonymy.¹ He quotes Isaiah 65:17–18 in support: '*For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;/And the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind./But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;/For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing*' (emphasis mine).² These two new-creation statements in these verses appear to be in a synonymously parallel relationship. Since Isaiah 65:17 is alluded to in Revelation 21:1, it is most natural to understand that the new Jerusalem of 21:2 is equated with the 'new heaven and earth' of 21:1. That the new creation in verse 1 and new Jerusalem in verse 2 are interpreted in verse 3 to be 'the tabernacle of God' among all humanity, would also be a natural equation, as Levenson noted above, and as we will see throughout this book.

Consequently, the new creation and Jerusalem are none other than God's tabernacle. This tabernacle is the true temple of God's special presence portrayed throughout chapter 21.

As I have continued to reflect on the Apocalypse, and especially my conclusion about the temple of Revelation 21, since the writing of my commentary on Revelation (published in 1999), I have noticed even more connections between the various temple texts in the Old and New Testaments. My purpose in this book is to explore in more depth the significance of the temple in John's Apocalypse and especially in this final vision of the book. My beginning point is a brief answer to the above question about why John equates the new creation with an arboreal city-temple in his last vision of the book. I formulated a brief answer to this in my Revelation commentary a few years ago.³

In this book I will attempt to amplify the evidence adduced in support of this answer in order to enhance its plausibility. My thesis is that the Old Testament tabernacle and temples were symbolically designed to point to the cosmic eschatological reality that God's tabernacling presence, formerly limited to the holy of holies, was to be extended throughout the whole earth. Against this background, the Revelation 21 vision is best understood as picturing the final end-time temple that will fill the entire cosmos. If correct, the thesis provides

¹ A metonymy is the substitution of what is meant with something associated with what is meant.

² Levenson 1988: 89–90; 1984: 294–295.

³ Beale 1999a: 1109–1111.

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not only the answer to the above problem in chapter 21, but also gives crucial insight into an understanding of the biblical theology of the temple in both testaments.

In attempting to substantiate this thesis, I will survey the evidence for the cosmic symbolism of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern temples. Then I will argue that the Garden of Eden was the first archetypal temple, and that it was the model for all subsequent temples. Such an understanding of Eden will enhance the notion that the Old Testament tabernacle and temples were symbolic microcosms of the whole creation. As microcosmic symbolic structures they were designed to point to a worldwide eschatological temple that perfectly reflects God's glory. It is this universally expanded eschatological temple that is pictured in Revelation's last vision. Other relevant passages about the temple in the New Testament will be adduced in further support of this contention.

A brief comment on the interpretative approach of this book

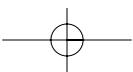
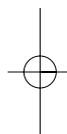
An important presupposition underlying this study is the divine inspiration of the entire Bible, both Old and New Testaments. This foundational perspective means that there is unity to the Bible because it is all God's word. Therefore, there is legitimacy in attempting to trace common themes between the testaments. Though interpreters differ about what are the most significant unifying themes, those who affirm the ultimate divine authorship of Scripture have a common data-base with which to discuss and debate.

Another important presupposition is that the divine authorial intentions communicated through human authors are accessible to contemporary readers. Though no-one can exhaustively comprehend these intentions, they can be sufficiently understood, especially for the purposes of salvation, sanctification and glorification of God. Of this subject, especially as it bears on the subject of the book, we will speak more in a concluding chapter (see ch. 12).

Finally, a typical strategy of argumentation throughout this book will be to adduce several lines of evidence in favour of a particular interpretation. Some of these lines will be stronger than others, but when all of the relevant material is viewed as a whole, the less convincing material should become more significant than when seen by itself. Therefore, it will sometimes be true that some of the arguments in favour of an interpretation will not stand on their own but are

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intended to take on more persuasive power when viewed in light of the other angles of reasoning. And, even when this may not be the case, the design is that the overall weight of the cumulative arguments points to the plausibility or probability of the main idea being contended for.



Chapter Two

Cosmic symbolism of temples in the Old Testament

Some of the best clues to solving the problem posed above about the relation of the new creation to the city-temple of Revelation 21 are to be found in the conception of Israel's temple. We will also look at the symbolic meaning of other ancient temples to enhance the understanding of Israel's sanctuary in the midst of its ancient environment. Though these were pagan temples, it is not likely that their resemblances to Israel's temple were due to coincidence or to Israel's mere dependence on her pagan neighbours for religious ideas. Rather, this resemblance of pagan temples to Israel's temple probably was due, at least in part, to a refracted and marred understanding of the true conception of the temple that was present from the very beginning of human history. As history unfolded, God's special revelation about the temple continued only with the faithful remnant of humanity. The recollection of the true temple by those outside God's covenant community probably continued, but its memory became dim over time. Nevertheless, refracted glimmers of truth may have continued, so that some temples were designed that still retained features corresponding to God's own view.¹ God's people, on the other hand, continued building temples that represented the pristine view of the true cult.² One could say that just as God's image in unbelieving humanity has not been erased but blurred, so their continuing conception of the structure where God should be worshipped was likewise blurred.

Some commentators disagree that the design and symbolism of ancient pagan temples reflected glimmers of God's truth. Even granting such a view, however, it is apparent that Israel intentionally alluded to facets of the pagan religion surrounding them (e.g., Egyptian, Canaanite and Babylonian) in order to affirm that what the pagans thought was true of their gods was true only of Israel's God

¹ In contrast, see Fairbairn 1863a: 219–220, who rejects the notion that symbolic aspects of pagan temples could have significant overlap with that of Israel's temple.

² See Rodriguez 2001: 58–59, who has a similar analysis of Israel's temple in relation to pagan sanctuaries.

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(e.g., Ps. 29 is a well-known example of applying the sovereign attributes of the fertility god Baal to Yahweh in order to demonstrate that only Yahweh possesses such characteristics). The same polemical intention was likely part of Israel's depiction of their temple. Hence, there is a sense in which Israel may have borrowed religious notions and imagery from her neighbours, but it was for polemical reasons and not for lack of religious creativity. That pagan nations, however, could depict their gods with attributes like those of the true God and their temples along the lines of the true God's dwelling probably shows they had some sense of the true God, though certainly in a non-salvific and confused form (as, e.g., in Rom. 1:19–25).

There is, at least, a third way in which pagan cultural ideas could have been related to Israel and even her temple. Some of Israel's ideas were merely shared with pagan peoples because they simply shared a general common culture, though often when Israel employed the concept, it became filled with theological significance. For example, it was likely a widespread custom in the Ancient Near East that certain ceremonies involving the donning of clothes or the removal or leaving of clothes indicated respectively the acquisition of inheritance rights or disinheritance. This may explain a whole host of passages involving clothing in the Old Testament (and the New Testament): the divine provision of clothing to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:21 appears to indicate a gracious reaffirmation of their inheritance rights over creation, despite their former rebellion.³ It is possible that some kind of relationship like this may have existed between the clothing of pagan and Israel's priests and even the adornment of the respective temples.

With these possible relationships between the thought of the ancient Israelites and the peoples surrounding them, we now turn primarily to a study of Israel's temples. After looking at the Old Testament evidence, reflection on Jewish interpretations of Israel's temple may also prove helpful for understanding the Old Testament material. We will also survey pertinent parallels in the Ancient Near East, where examination of the sanctuaries of Israel's neighbours may also shed some light on the subtle symbolism of the Israelite holy place.

Our study of ancient materials outside the Bible to gain a better

³ Cf. also Gen. 9:23 (Noah's garment); 37:3 (Joseph's tunic); Deut. 24:17; Luke 15:22 (the father's robe given to the prodigal son); Gal. 3:27 ('clothed' with Christ); Rev. 21:2–3, 7. For this meaning of 'clothing' in the ANE and biblical literature, cf. Hugenberger 1997. See also Hugenberger 1994: 390, n. 130.

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understanding of the temple does not mean that this material is equal in authority to the Bible. Rather, it indicates that the Bible was written in very specific historical circumstances and the better one understands these surrounding circumstances, the more rich one's understanding of the Bible may become. Christians often use commentaries on the Bible in order to understand the biblical text better. Sometimes such commentaries provide a perspective on a text, which sheds new light and helps us to understand the text better. The new perspective is validated over other previous ones because it makes more sense of the details of the text. Sometimes, however, these commentaries are clearly wrong and are not helpful, and, at other times, these commentaries merely resummaries the biblical text, saying nothing new nor wrong.

The documents of the Ancient Near East and of Judaism function comparably to modern commentaries. Should we not also make use of this ancient commentary material, for example early Jewish interpretations of Old Testament texts, themes, and so on? Such Jewish commentary material has the same potential use (and misuse) as do contemporary commentaries, though they have the potential of picking up early oral interpretative tradition that may stem from Old Testament times itself. We will see that there may be some early Jewish interpretation of the temple that sheds helpful light on the Old Testament notion of the temple. We will propose the same thing for some Ancient Near Eastern views of temples.

Though the discussion of this chapter is rather detailed, it is absolutely crucial to work through and understand it as a basis for the later part of this book.

The Old Testament view of Israel's earthly temple as a reflection of the heavenly or cosmic temple

The rationale for the worldwide encompassing nature of the paradisaical temple in Revelation 21 lies in the ancient notion that the Old Testament temple was a microcosm of the entire heaven and earth.⁴ One of the most explicit texts affirming this is Psalm 78:69: 'And He built His sanctuary like the heights,/Like the earth which He has

⁴ For OT, and, especially, Jewish perspectives, see Patai 1967: 54–139; Barker 1991: 104–132; Levenson 1984: 283–298; 1985: 111–184; Hayward 1996; Koester 1989: 59–63; Fletcher-Lewis 1997: 156–162. The discussion in the section below, 'Judaism's view of the symbolism of the temple', is based partly on these works, which should be consulted.

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founded *forever* (or from eternity)'.⁵ The psalmist is saying that, in some way, God designed Israel's earthly temple to be comparable to the heavens and to the earth. Similarly, the earlier 'pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture' was made 'after the [heavenly] pattern . . . which was shown . . . on the mountain' (Exod. 25:9, 40; cf. Exod. 26:30; 27:8; Num. 8:4; Heb. 8:5; 9:23–24). The following study will attempt to demonstrate that the symbolism of the tabernacle is essentially the same as that of Israel's subsequent temple. This equivalence is implied by their many overt similarities and by comparing Exodus 25:9, 40 with 1 Chronicles 28:19, which say that both the plan of the tabernacle and of the temple came from God.⁶

Jewish tradition, as we will see, also reaffirms the truth of Psalm 78 and Exodus 25, that the earthly temple corresponded in some significant manner to the heavens, especially a heavenly temple.⁷ The primary task of this chapter is to elaborate on how Israel's tabernacle and temple were comparable in symbolic design to the heavens and earth.

General symbolism of the temple

Our thesis is that Israel's temple was composed of three main parts, each of which symbolized a major part of the cosmos: (1) the outer court represented the habitable world where humanity dwelt; (2) the holy place was emblematic of the visible heavens and its light sources; (3) the holy of holies symbolized the invisible dimension of the

⁵ On which see further Levenson 1988: 87–88, and Hurowitz 1992: 335–337. Ps. 78:69 has a striking parallel in the *Enuma Elish* 6.112, where it is said concerning the building of Marduk's temple, 'A likeness of what he made (?) in heaven [let him make (?)] on earth' (the translation of the *Enuma Elish* follows Heidel 1942: 50. Cf. also the translation of Foster 1997: 402: 'He shall make on earth the counterpart of what he brought to pass in heaven.' Jer. 17:12 is another text possibly parallel to Ps. 78:69: 'A glorious throne on high from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.' There is debate about whether the whole verse refers only to a heavenly temple or only an earthly temple. Is it not possible that both are in mind as in the psalm? If so, God's glorious throne in his heavenly temple is being compared to the earthly temple that was to reflect the former.

⁶ The equivalence was also made by early Judaism (so *Wisdom of Solomon* 9:8: the temple was 'an imitation of the holy tabernacle which you prepared from the beginning'); see Haran 1978: 189–204 on the organic correspondences between the tabernacle and temple; cf. also Clifford 1984: 112–115. For the close link between the tabernacle and the temple, see 1 Kgs. 8:1–6 (= 2 Chr. 5:2–5), which may imply that the tabernacle was even incorporated into the temple (on which cf. Cross 1977: 175).

⁷ See *Tg. 2 Chronicles* 6:2; likewise, *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathon Exodus* 15:17; *Midrash Rabbah Numbers* 4:13; 12:12; *Midrash Psalms* 30:1; *Tanhuma Yelammedenu Exodus* 11:1–2. See also, Ego (1989), who elaborates on the correspondence between the earthly and heavenly temples in rabbinic Jewish tradition.

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cosmos, where God and his heavenly hosts dwelt. In this connection, M. Haran has observed an increasing gradation in holiness beginning with the outer court and proceeding to the holy place and then into the holy of holies. Furthermore, he notes that this gradation corresponds to a gradation in dress and furnishings dependent on the position of the person in the temple (respectively worshipper, priest or high priest) or the location of the furnishings (curtains, furniture, etc.).⁸ This observation about increasing gradation indicating increasing holiness may not be inconsistent with A. A. de Silva's view that Old Testament temple-building narratives reflect a three-tiered structure with God at the top, kings (and, I would add, priests) in the middle, and Israel and the rest of the cosmos at the bottom (de Silva 1994: 11–23).

The identification of the outer court as the visible earth and sea is suggested further by the Old Testament 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).⁹ The altar was also to be an 'altar of earth' (in the early stages of Israel's history) or an 'altar of [uncut] stone' (Exod. 20:24–25), thus identifying it even more with the natural earth.¹⁰ 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 earth¹¹ (enhancing the water imagery were the

⁸ Haran 1978: 158–188, 205–221, 226–227, followed by Dumbrell 1985: 43.

⁹ See further Levenson 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 Is. 29:1, where it refers to 'the city where David camped' and is equated by synonymous parallelism to 'Mount Zion' (cf. Is. 29:7a with 29:8h), so that it resonates with 'mountain' imagery (on the ambivalent meaning of the Hebrew word, see further BDB, 72). See also Barrois 1980: 65–66, who renders the respective phrases in Ezek. 43:14, 16, as 'bosom of the earth' and 'the mountain of God', which he sees to be symbolic cosmic names. For virtually identical conclusions, see Mitchell 1980: 36, who observes that Ezekiel's altar resembled a Babylonian ziggurat, which, as we will see later, was designed to resemble a mountain and was considered the top of a temple.

¹⁰ The altar's association with the earth may be enhanced by noticing that it is repeatedly described as having a 'foundation' (Exod. 29:12; Lev. 4:7, 18, 25, 30, 34), imagery typical elsewhere of structures rooted to the earth (e.g., Ezek. 30:4; Mic. 1:6; Ps. 137:7; Job 4:19; Lam. 4:11) and sometimes used of mountains (Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:7). I am indebted to G. P. Hugenberger for these observations.

¹¹ On which see Terrien 1970: 323 for additional bibliography in support. See also Bloch-Smith 1994: 26–27, on Solomon's 'bronze sea' as representing the primordial sea

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ten smaller wash-basins, five on each side of the holy place enclosure [1 Kgs. 7:38–39]). 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 (Levenson 1988: 92–93, and Levenson 1985: 139, 162). 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,¹² could enter there and worship.

There is also reason to view the second section of the temple, the holy place, to be a symbol of the visible sky. The seven lamps on the lampstand may have been associated with the seven light-sources visible to the naked eye (five planets, sun and moon). This identification is pointed to by Genesis 1 which uses the unusual word ‘lights’ (*mē’ōrōt*, 5 times) instead of ‘sun’ and ‘moon’, a word that is used throughout the remainder of the Pentateuch (10 times) only for the ‘lights’ on the tabernacle lampstand. On the same basis, a contemporary commentator on Genesis has made virtually the same observation and proposed that this is the first hint also that the cosmos itself was conceived of as a huge temple.¹³ In addition, John’s Apocalypse

or waters of Eden, though some see it representing the primeval chaos waters that were overcome at creation. Cf. Bloch-Smith (1994: 20–21) and C. Meyers (1992a: 1060–1061), who note both connotations of the ‘sea’, and underscore its symbolic significance, the latter especially pointing out that Solomon’s ‘bronze sea’ was over seven feet high and fifteen feet in diameter, holding about 10,000 gallons of water and weighing between 25 and 30 tons when empty. Priests would have had to climb a ladder to wash in it.

¹² Later we will see that Israel was a ‘corporate Adam’, thus being designed ideally to represent humanity.

¹³ So Walton 2001: 148. Among the three other uses elsewhere in the OT, two also refer to the ‘lights’ of the heaven. The only other use is Ps. 90:8 (‘the light of your presence’), which may suggest that the lampstand ‘lights’ also symbolized the light of God’s glorious presence, just as the stars were held to reflect God’s glory (Pss. 19:1; 148:3–4; cf. Pss. 8:1; 50:6; 57:5). Such an identification may be represented in the Qumran *Hymn Scroll* (1QH 7.24): ‘I [the Teacher of Righteousness] will shine with a seven-fold light in the E[den which] Thou has [m]ade for Thy glory’ (for justification of the translation ‘Eden’, see below at the end of this chapter).

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also closely identifies the seven lamps on the lampstand with stars by saying that each of the seven churches that are symbolized by a 'lampstand' are represented in heaven by an 'angel' who is symbolized by a 'star' (Rev. 1:20) (Beale 1995a: 211–219).

Vern Poythress also contends along similar lines that the lamps signify the seven main lights of the heaven:

The lampstand is placed on the south side of the Holy Place. Perhaps this placement is intended to correspond to the fact that from Israel's point of view, north of the equator, the circuit of the heavenly lights would be primarily to the south. That there are seven of the lamps correlates not only with the seven major lights of heaven . . . but with the general symbolism for time within Israel. The heavenly bodies were made in order to 'serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years' (Gen. 1:14). The whole cycle of time marked by the sun and moon and stars is divided up into sevens: the seventh day in the week is the Sabbath day; the seventh month is the month of atonement (Lev. 16:29); the seventh year is the year of release from debts and slavery (Deut. 15); the seventh of the seven-year cycles is the year of jubilee (Lev. 25). Fittingly, the lampstand contains the same sevenfold division, symbolizing the cycle of time provided by the heavenly lights. (Poythress 1991: 18–19)

That the holy of holies represented the unseen heavenly dimension of the world is apparent from its descriptions. Just as the angelic cherubim guard God's throne in the heavenly temple (e.g., Rev. 4:7–9), the sculpted cherubim around the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies (1 Kgs. 6:23–28), and the figures of the cherubim woven into the curtain that guards the holy of holies reflects the real cherubim in heaven who presently and in the future will stand guard around God's throne in the heavenly temple (cf. 2 Sam. 6:2; 2 Kgs. 19:15; 1 Chr. 13:6; Pss. 80:1; 99:1, all of which may have double reference to the earthly and heavenly cherubim). Furthermore, no human could enter the inner sanctum and look upon the luminous divine glory. Even the high priest, who could enter only once a year, offered incense which formed a 'cloud' so thick that he could not see God's glorious appearance (Lev. 16:13). The 'cloud' itself could easily have been associated with the visible heaven that pointed beyond to the unseen heaven, where God dwelt. Finally, the ark itself was understood to be the footstool of God's heavenly throne (1 Chr. 28:2; Pss. 99:5; 132:7–8; Is.

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66:1; Lam. 2:1). For example, 1 Chronicles 28:2 asserts that 'King David rose to his feet and said, "Listen to me, my brethren and my people; I had intended to build a permanent home for the ark of the covenant of the LORD and for the footstool of our God. So I had made preparations to build it."'

Hence, the ark is part of God's heavenly throne-room, and, appropriately, the space directly above the ark is empty. God cannot be seen, and no images of him are to be placed there, because he has no human form and his special glorious dwelling is primarily in heaven and not on earth (Poythress 1991: 15). Thus, the holy of holies was a representation of God's unseen heavenly dwelling in his temple amidst ministering angels and spirits (Is. 6:1-7; Ezek. 1; Rev. 4:1-11).¹⁴

Heavenly symbolism of the temple

The Old Testament highlights particularly the heavenly symbolism of the temple, both with respect to the visible and invisible heavens. One of the best examples of this is the account of the dedication of Solomon's temple. The 'cloud' that filled Israel's temple when it was completed and dedicated by Solomon (1 Kgs. 8:10-13; cf. 2 Chr. 5:13b - 6:2) may partly be associated with the clouds in the visible heavens that pointed beyond themselves to God's unseen heavenly dwelling place.¹⁵

Two different Hebrew words for 'cloud' are used in this passage, but they are generally synonymous. The repeated mention of the 'cloud' and that the temple was 'a lofty place' points more clearly to an attempt to identify it in some way with the heavens. 'Cloud' obviously refers elsewhere to a constituent part of the visible heavens or sky. For example, Job 26:8-9 says, 'He wraps up the waters in His clouds;/And the cloud does not burst under them./He obscures the face of the full moon,/And spreads His cloud over it' (cf. also Gen. 9:13-14, 16; Job 7:9). And just as 'lightning' is part of literal 'clouds' (Job 37:11, 15), so Ezekiel portrays God's theophanic 'glory' as 'radiance [like] a great cloud with fire flashing forth' and as 'the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day' (Ezek. 1:4, 28). That Ezekiel views such

¹⁴ So also Poythress 1991:31, who cites also in this respect 1 Kgs. 8:30; Job 1:6; Ps. 89:7.

¹⁵ That the visible heavens pointed beyond themselves to the unseen heavens is apparent from Dan. 7:13, where the 'Son of Man' approaches God's unseen heavenly presence 'with the *clouds of heaven*'; likewise, 2 Sam. 22:10: God 'bowed the heavens . . . and came down with thick darkness under his feet'.

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heavenly descriptions of God's presence as occurring in the temple is also clear from the cloud that hides the divine presence in the temple (cf. 10:3–4).

The visible 'cloud' that filled the temple was certainly identified with the visible heaven but likely also pointed to the invisible heaven. The preceding references to the 'cloud' in Ezekiel's vision confirms this, since there the word refers both to a visible meteorological phenomenon and the invisible presence of God in the unseen heaven. Furthermore, it is well known that the same Hebrew word for 'heaven' in the Old Testament is used for both the seen and unseen dimensions.¹⁶ The upper part of the visible cosmos came to represent God's dwelling place, pointing beyond the physical to the divine transcendence and an 'invisible spiritual created order' (cf. 2 Kgs. 6:17; Job 1:1, 16; Ps. 2:4; Zech. 3:1) (Lincoln 1981: 140–141). Thus, again the temple is associated with the physically created firmament and the invisible heavenly dwelling of God to which that firmament pointed.

The same luminescent 'cloud' mixed with darkness that filled Solomon's temple had also hovered over and covered Sinai and the tabernacle during Israel's wilderness wanderings, suggesting that the earlier forms of the temple were also reflective of or associated with the heavens.¹⁷ Hence, the visible bright aspect of the clouds of the heavens came to be appropriate vehicles to express the invisible heavenly, radiant presence of God in the tabernacle and subsequent temple (Exod. 16:10; 40:35; Num. 16:42; Is. 4:5; Ezek. 1:28; 10:3–4).

Solomon's reference to his building of 'a lofty house' in 1 Kings 8:13 refers to an elevated dwelling. The word 'lofty' (*zēbul*) occurs only three times elsewhere in the Old Testament, and always refers to the 'elevated places' in the visible heavens where the 'sun and moon stood' (Hab. 3:11) and to the invisible 'holy and glorious *elevated place*' where God 'looks down from heaven' (Is. 63:15).¹⁸ It is this

¹⁶ Poythress 1991: 17–18, who cites Ps. 19:1–6 as an example where the inaccessibility and majesty of the visible sky points to God's glory.

¹⁷ For Sinai, cf. Exod. 19:16; 24:15–16; for the tabernacle, cf., e.g., Exod. 13:21–22; 14:19; note the 'cloud' descending and covering the tabernacle in Exod. 33:9; 40:35; Num. 9:15–16; 16:42; for the luminosity of the cloud at Sinai and the tabernacle, cf. respectively Exod. 19:16 and 14:20, 24; 40:38; Num. 9:15. For Sinai as a mountain-temple, see pp. 105–107.

¹⁸ The only other usage is in Ps. 49:14, which refers to earth as an 'elevated place' above Sheol; in Qumran the word occurs four times, all pertaining to God's heavenly dwelling. The cloud in 1 Kgs. 8:12 is likely mixed with brightness and darkness, apparently like a dark thunder cloud containing lightning (like that on Sinai, e.g., Exod.

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invisible place that Solomon sees being symbolized in 1 Kings 8 by the earthly temple. Accordingly, he describes the temple figuratively as being in the visible heavens, so that the bright clouds appropriately surround it.¹⁹

The reference to 'winged' figurines around the ark of the covenant in the above-cited 1 Kings passage (8:6–7) may add further to an upper atmospheric symbolism. This symbolism appears to have been enhanced in the tabernacle where its numerous curtains (including the veil before the holy of holies) were all made of the variegated colours resembling the sky ('blue and purple and scarlet material', Exod. 26:31) and had woven into them figures of flying 'cherubim' (i.e., winged bird-like creatures; so Exod. 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35). Apparently the 'scarlet' colour was intended to resemble the fiery colour of lightning and, perhaps of the sun, with the 'blue and purple' resembling sky blue and the dark blue of dark clouds.²⁰ So also the 'screen' for the 'gate of the court' and 'doorway of the tent' was to be made of 'blue and purple and scarlet material' (Exod. 26:36; 27:16; 36:37; 38:18). Even the 'loops' 'on the edge' of some of the curtains were to be of 'blue' (Exod. 36:11). Likewise, the priests were to cover all the furniture of the tabernacle with 'blue' material when dismantling the tabernacle for transport (Num. 4:5–13). All of the colours of these inner tabernacle furnishings were likely reproduced in Solomon's temple, since it was the permanent establishment of the mobile tabernacle and since the first-century historian Josephus testifies that the later Herodian temple of Jesus' day, modelled on Solomon's, contained the numerous curtains that the tabernacle also had (see *War* 5.210–214; *Ant.* 3.132, 183).

19:16; 20:18–21). In this respect, 1 Kgs. 8:53b (LXX) adds to the Hebrew text the following, evidently as an interpretative expansion of 1 Kgs. 8:12–13: 'Then spoke Solomon concerning the house, when he had finished building it – He [God] manifested the sun in the heaven; the Lord said he would dwell in darkness; build thou my house, a beautiful house for thyself to dwell in anew.'

¹⁹ The Jews living in Qumran went so far as to believe that the heavenly light-sources, such as the moon, actually retired to God's unseen 'lofty' temple when they retreated from visible sight at dawn and shone out from it at night: 'When the lights of the holy vault [or lofty place = *zēbul*] shine out, when they retire to the abode of glory; at the entry of the constellation in the days of the new moon . . . it is a great day for the Holy of Holies' (1QS 10.2–4 [Martínez 1994]). This Qumran passage may have been inspired by Ps. 19:4–5.

²⁰ More overtly, Josephus (*Ant.* 3.183) says the 'blue' of the 'tapestries' symbolized 'the air' (so also *War* 5.212), and Philo (*Vit. Mos.* 2.88) interprets 'dark blue' [*hyakinthos*] to be 'like the air, which is naturally black'.

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Symbolism of the priest's robe in relation to the temple

It is apparent that aspects of the priest's robe contained cosmic symbolism. Like the tabernacle curtains, the various parts of the high priests' attire were also woven of 'blue and purple and scarlet material' because it was also to reflect the cosmos. The square shape of the breast-piece corresponded to the square shape (*tetragōnos*) of 'the holy place and temple', the 'altar', and the 'mercy seat' (see LXX of Exod. 27:1; 30:2; Ezek. 41:21; 43:16; and LXX [Alexandrinus] of Ezek. 43:17). Interestingly, the Greek Old Testament even applies the word 'four-square' to the high priest's 'breast piece of judgment' (Exod. 28:16; 36:16). If this symbolic identification of the priest with parts of the temple is correct, then it is natural that the priest's clothing was also of the same colour as the various inner furnishings of the temple (about 12 times parts of his attire are said to be of 'blue and purple and scarlet' and his robe was all 'blue', phrases also used to describe the curtains of the tabernacle; cf. also 'a blue cord' on the turban [Exod. 28:37; 39:31]).

I have argued in an earlier work that the jewels on the priest's breast-piece, which were a small replica of the holy of holies, symbolized the earthly or heavenly cosmos, and the same jewels are part of the new city-temple in Revelation 21.²¹ Accordingly, one needs to picture the precious stones on the priest's breast-piece set within the larger background of the long blue robe as an apt model of the stars set within the cosmic tent of the dark bluish heavens. Correspondingly, the same scene on a larger scale was depicted with the seven 'luminaries' on the lampstand placed within the broader backdrop of the sky-coloured curtains covering the inside of the tent-like tabernacle. The seven lamps on the lampstand especially stood out in the holy place since the four thick curtains so thoroughly covered the tabernacle that no natural light would have come in unless the curtain at the entrance were pulled back (Longman 2001: 55). Both the priest and the tabernacle were designed to represent the creative work of God 'who 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 (Is. 40:22, 26; similarly, Ps. 19:4b–5a: in the 'heavens' God 'has placed a tent for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber').

It is, in fact, discernible that there are broadly three sections of the priest's garment that resemble the three sections of the temple. First,

²¹ See Beale 1999a: *in loc.*, 'The High Priest's Breastpiece', following the discussion of 21:18–20.

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the outermost part at the bottom (the outer court), on which were sewn 'pomegranates of blue and purple and scarlet' along 'with variegated flowers'²² represented the fertile earth. Secondly, the main body of the bluish robe (the holy place), within which and on the upper part of which are set the jewels, symbolized the stars that are set in the sky. Thirdly, the square ephod resembles the square holy of holies, within which were placed the Urim and Thumim, stones representing God's revelatory presence (the priest's crown with 'holy to the LORD' inscribed on it may represent the divine presence in heaven or above the ark in the temple's sanctuary that the ephod symbolized). Given all this symbolism, one can well understand the assertion in the *Letter of Aristeas* that anyone who saw the fully attired high priest 'would think he had come out of this world into another one' (99).

If the precious stones on the priest's breast correspond partly to the lamps on the lampstand, as suggested above, then this identifies them further with the heavenly luminaries, since we have seen that the lampstand lights are likewise identified with the heavenly stars. This link of the precious stones with the starry heavens may provide an important clue to the significance of the precious stones and metals that compose the temple itself. Why is the temple so heavily adorned with these extremely valuable and shiny materials? Before answering this question, it is important to highlight just how much the temple was adorned with these expensive items.

The 'foundation' of the temple building (containing the holy place and holy of holies) was laid with 'gold', 'silver', and 'precious stones': 'they quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house' (1 Kgs. 5:17); 'and the inner sanctuary . . . he overlaid . . . with pure gold . . . So Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with pure gold' (1 Kgs. 6:20–21). He also covered with gold the altar (1 Kgs. 6:20), the cherubim around the ark (1 Kgs. 6:28), the floor of the temple (1 Kgs. 6:30), and the engraved work on the temple doors (1 Kgs. 6:35; see similarly 2 Chr. 3–4). Indeed, '100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 talents of silver' were 'prepared' for the construction of the temple house (1 Chr. 22:14; likewise 1 Chr. 22:16; 29:2–7). First Chronicles 29:1–7 refers to 'gold . . . silver . . . onyx stones and inlaid stones, stones of antimony, and stones of various colors, and all kinds of precious stones' to be used for all the various parts, pieces of furniture, and utensils of the temple.²³

²² *Letter of Aristeas*, 96 adds the phrase 'with variegated flowers' to the biblical description.

²³ See 2 Chr. 3:6 also for 'precious stones and the gold'.

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Thus, the same precious stones and metals used in the construction of the temple were also used in the fashioning of the priest's clothing (e.g., in Exod. 28), enhancing the connection between the two.²⁴ Furthermore, the same precious stones are used to describe the heavenly dwelling of God, further associating the same stones of the temple and of the priestly raiment with the heavenly sphere.²⁵

How does the connection between the precious stones and the starry heavens provide an important clue to the significance of the precious stones and metals that were used to adorn the holy place and holy of holies? It is likely that part of the reason for so many precious stones and metals in one place is that they were intended to remind one of the luminous splendour of the starry sky, which, we have seen, itself pointed to God's transcendent glorious dwelling place that was concealed from human sight (indeed, even today one of the main uses of our English word 'metallic' is to indicate that which is 'shiny, glossy, gleaming, lustrous', etc.).²⁶

Another aspect of the stones on the priest's robe also suggests that the function of such gems in the temple is to reflect divine, heavenly glory. God commands Moses to 'make holy garments for Aaron . . . for *glory and for beauty*' (Exod. 28:2; cf. likewise 28:40). The description of the garments (Exod. 28:4–43) is dominated by descriptions of precious stones or of gold cloth or metal that adorned the robes.²⁷ Certainly, therefore, the goal of the gold and stone-work of the robe was included in the purpose of reflecting the 'glory and beauty', presumably of God. The word for 'glory' (*kābôd*) is the typical word for God's glorious theophanic revelation of himself to Israel at Sinai, at the tabernacle and at the end of time. The word for 'beauty' (*tip'ārâ*)

²⁴ 1 Chr. 29 mentions only gold, antimony and onyx specifically, whereas Exod. 28 mentions explicitly by name each of the various metals and gems. Nevertheless, Chronicles does mention 'inlaid stones . . . and stones of various colors, and all kinds of precious stones', which probably included all the specific stones noted in Exod. 28.

²⁵ Cf. 'sapphire' as a part of the heavenly temple (Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 1:26; 10:1; Rev. 21:19), likely included in the earthly temple (1 Chr. 29:2), and a facet of the priest's clothing (Exod. 28:18; 39:11); cf. onyx as a part of the priestly clothing (Exod. 25:7; 28:9, 20; 35:9, 27; 39:6, 13) and of the temple (1 Chr. 29:2), though not mentioned explicitly in the heavenly visions; cf. 'jasper' as a part of the priest's attire (Exod. 28:20; 39:13) and of the appearance of the heavenly temple (Rev. 4:3; 21:11, 18–19), the latter of which also suggests that 'jasper' (or a stone essentially identical to it) was included among the precious stones of Solomon's temple; cf. 'beryl' as part of the priestly apparel (Exod. 28:20; 39:13) and of the structure of the heavenly temple (Ezek. 1:16; Rev. 21:20; cf. Dan. 10:6), which shows again that it was presumably included among the 'precious stones' of Solomon's temple.

²⁶ E.g., see Rodale 1978: 726.

²⁷ Of the 39 verses, 24 include such description.

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is less often used. Not insignificantly, in the midst of a description of the gems and valuable metals composing the temple (2 Chr. 3:4–10), this word is chosen to explain why the precious stones were so heavily used in constructing Solomon's temple: Solomon 'adorned the house with precious stone for the purpose of *beauty*' (2 Chr. 3:6).²⁸ The common use of this word for the purpose of the stones on the priest's clothing and the stones of the temple further indicates the same function of the two: they were to reflect glorious beauty.

Interestingly, this word 'beauty' is also associated with description of the heavenly light-sources as metaphors for God's beautiful glory. The Isaiah 60 prophecy of Israel's restoration in the new creation is significant in this respect, since it combines the mention of precious metals in relation to 'beautifying' the temple and God, whose lustrous beauty is compared to the light of the sun and moon. God's end-time glorious presence over Israel is described as 'light' that 'has risen' in the midst of 'darkness', so that Israel might experience 'the brightness of ... rising' (Is. 60:1–3). At this time, the nations will bring riches (including 'gold') in order to 'beautify' God's 'glorious house' (60:5–7), and they will bring 'their silver and their gold with them, for the name of the LORD your God [i.e., the temple where God dwelt]²⁹ ... because *he has beautified* you' (i.e., caused his splendid beauty to reflect on Israel; 60:9). The 'wealth of the nations' will pour in to Israel 'To *beautify* the place of My sanctuary .../And *make* the place of My feet *glorious*' (Is. 60:11–13).³⁰ Isaiah 60:16–17 reiterates the same theme: 'You will also suck the milk of nations ... Instead of bronze I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver', which, again, contributes to the goal of divine 'beautification' (Is. 60:19: 'you will have God ... for your *beauty*'). However, instead of explicitly viewing this divine beauty as being centred in the end-time temple, as earlier in the chapter, it is spoken of as replacing the sun and the moon and shining on Israel in a greater way than these former light-sources had ever done:

²⁸ Likewise, part of the purpose of the elaborate description of the precious stones and metals used in the temple in 1 Chr. 29:2–8 is twice stated to be for Yahweh's 'beauty' (29:11, 13; similarly, cf. 1 Chr. 22, where the verbal form in 22:5 occurs).

²⁹ So also in Hag. 2:7–9, God will bring the 'wealth of all nations' to 'fill this house with glory ... silver ... and the gold ... The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former'.

³⁰ Note here the combined use of 'beautify' and 'make glorious', as in Exod. 28:2 (though verbal forms of the respective noun forms found in Exod. 28:2 occur; verbal forms of 'beauty' appear also in 60:7, 9).

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¹⁹No longer will you have the sun for light by day,
Nor for brightness will the moon give you light;
But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light,
And your God for your *beauty*.

²⁰Your sun will set no more,
Neither will your moon wane;
For you will have the LORD for an everlasting light,
And the days of your mourning will be finished.⁷

(Is. 60:19–20)

Here we find God's 'beauty' explicitly compared to the splendour of the sun and moon, though his brightness is incomparably greater, so that the chapter ends with astronomical metaphors as it began (note 'light', 'brightness', and 'rising' in 60:1–3). And, again, the result of this will be that God 'may be beautified' (verbal form of *tip'ārâ*; 60:21). Thus, Isaiah 60 repeatedly refers to God's 'beauty' being expressed as a supernova-like sun and moon primarily in his eschatological sanctuary and outwards, *toward which the bringing in of precious metals contributes*.³¹ The main light sources of the old creation were representations, though only faintly, of the glorious light that God would shine in the new creation.

It is unlikely to be a coincidence that the precious metals of the new creational temple listed in Revelation 21:18–20, which allude partly to the jewels of the priestly attire in Exodus 28:17–20 (see Beale 1999a: 1080–1088), function to reflect God's glory (especially in light of 4:3, 9–11 and 21:11), and that they are directly followed by allusions to the same Isaiah texts crucial to the directly preceding discussion (Is. 60:3, 5, 11, 19) (see Beale 1999a: 1093–1101). Revelation 21 makes the same connections that we have pursued within the Old Testament itself. Accordingly, Isaiah appears to have considered that Israel's earthly temple could be called 'beautiful' (Is. 64:11) because

³¹ In this context, the wealth and valuable metals ultimately find their fulfilment in more than physical metallic reality in a glorious new creation, whereby the ultimate wealth they bring is themselves as worshippers and reflectors of God's end-time glorious presence (on which, see Beale 1999a: 1093–1101, for how Is. 60:3, 5, 11, 19 is fulfilled in the new cosmos). The word 'beauty' is also contextually associated with astronomical phenomena in Is. 62:1, 3 ('brightness . . . a torch that is burning') and Ps. 110:3 ('Thy people will volunteer . . . in the *beauty* of holiness, from the womb of the dawn'). Ps. 96:5–9 strikingly combines elements of the heavens, beauty, the temple, and priestly attire: directly following mention of the created 'heavens', it says, 'splendor and majesty are before Him, strength and *beauty* are in His *sanctuary*', followed by a command to 'bring an offering into His courts' and to 'worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness' (NASB renders 'holy attire').

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it was a reflection of God's 'beautiful habitation' that was in 'heaven' (Is. 63:15), which would eventually descend to fill the earth with divine glory (Is. 64:1–3; 66:1–2)³² and of which Revelation is the fuller explanation.

The following considerations further support the conclusion that the metals in the temple were intended to recall the starry heavens and, ultimately, the luminous glory of God to which the stars themselves pointed. First, the precious materials adorn only the temple house proper and not any part of the courtyard. This fits with our identification of the holy place with the starry sky and inner room there as the unseen heavenly domain. On the other hand, the only metal used in the courtyard is the less expensive and less radiant bronze (e.g., the altar is made of bronze), which is also the only area of the temple complex that common Israelite worshippers could enter (Poythress 1991: 16).

Secondly, Scripture itself describes part of God's glory in his heavenly palace or temple through portrayals of precious stones. The first such depiction occurs at the Sinai theophany: when Moses and the elders of Israel saw God in the cloud at the top of Mount Sinai, 'under his feet there appeared to be constructed tile-work of sapphire, *as clear as the body of the heavens*'³³ (Exod. 24:10; cf. 19:16–20). Here we find a conglomeration of precious stone describing the divine environment of God's heavenly temple that had temporarily descended to the top of Sinai (and we shall propose in a following chapter that Sinai was conceived of as a temple).³⁴ Furthermore, this gem-like pavement is said to be 'as clear [or 'pure' blue] as the body of the heavens'. Thus, the blue colour of the stone is comparable to the majestic appearance of the heavens (see also Cassuto 1967: 314).

Likewise Ezekiel's description of the heavenly dimension that corresponded to the earthly temple includes virtually the same reference as found in the Exodus 24 passage: 'now above the vault of heaven [firmament] that was over the heads' of the living cherubim 'there was something resembling a throne, like sapphire in appearance', which itself was under a human-like depiction of God (Ezek. 1:26). Ezekiel 10:1 has an almost identical description, though there 'something like a sapphire stone . . . resembling a throne' was not

³² For discussion of which, see ch. 4. This discussion of 'beauty' in relation to precious stones on the priestly attire and in the temple has been inspired by the discussion of Kline 1980: 43.

³³ My translation of the Hebrew. LXX reads, 'under his feet there was the likeness of a sapphire slab, and it was just as the appearance of the firmament of heaven in purity'.

³⁴ On which see ch. 3.

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above but 'in the vault of heaven that was over the heads of the cherubim'. Ezekiel 1:27–28 describes the divine figure itself 'like glowing metal that looked like fire ... and there was a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.' It is clear that the sapphire is not only directly compared to the appearance of the heavens but is associated with another startling feature of the sky: the brilliant colours of a rainbow reflective of the sun. Furthermore, the sapphire is part of the immediate heavenly surroundings that, like the 'glowing metal', reflected the radiance of the divine glory.³⁵ The precious stones in Revelation also describe the radiant glory of God's dwelling in the heavenly temple (Rev. 4:3; 21:11, 18–20).

Therefore, though every part of the preceding analysis about the astronomical significance of the precious metals and stones will not necessarily be equally persuasive, it is plausible to understand that the gleaming stones and metals composing the temple and the priest's garments functioned to remind one of the sparkling stars in the heavens, which themselves pointed to God's glorious presence in his invisible heavenly temple-court.

Judaism's view of the symbolism of the temple

Jewish interpreters of the Old Testament reflect on the temple and understand it and develop it in ways that are similar to and consistent with our above analysis. What was more implicit in the Old Testament portrayal of the temple becomes explicitly drawn out by commentators in Judaism.

Symbolism of particular parts of the temple

Somewhat similar to our above analysis of the symbolism of the three parts of the temple, Josephus understood the tripartite structure of the tabernacle to signify 'the earth [= outer court] and the sea [= inner court], since these ... are accessible to all; but the third portion [= holy of holies] he reserved for God alone, because heaven also is inaccessible to men' (*Ant.* 3.181; cf. 3.123). Likewise, in support of the

³⁵ Ezek. 1:16 also refers to the 'workmanship' of the 'wheels' that accompanied the cherubim to be 'like sparkling beryl'. The words 'workmanship' and 'sapphire' also describe the heavenly environment of the theophanic presence in Exod. 24:10, which links the Ezekiel portrayal even more closely to the earlier Exodus appearance.

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idea that the outer court was associated with the visible sea, *Midrash Rabbah Numbers* 13:19 says, 'the court ... encompassed the Tabernacle as the sea encompasses the world'.³⁶ In support of the idea that the outer court represented the earthly habitation, one of the early Aramaic Bibles says that Moses was to 'set up the courtyard round about for the sake of the merits of the fathers of the world who surround the people of the house of Israel round about' (Exod. 40:8 of *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathon Exodus*).

Early Judaism also makes explicit the biblical implication about the lampstand by directly asserting that the seven lamps on the lampstand symbolized the planets (Josephus, *Ant.* 3.145; *War* 5.217; Philo, *Rev. Div. Her.* 221–225; *Vit. Mos.* 2.102–105; *Quaest. Exod.* 2.73–81; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 5.6) or heaven (Philo, *Rev. Div. Her.* 227). These lamps are also equated with the 'lights in the expanse of heaven' from Genesis 1:14–16.³⁷

In addition, Josephus and Philo discuss a number of ways in which the tabernacle or temple, or parts of it, symbolically reflect the cosmos (Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.71–145; cf. *Plant.* 47–50; *Spec. Leg.* 1.66; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.123, 179–187). They also observe that the outer veil of the holy place and curtains of the tabernacle and temple were made to reflect the four elements of the cosmos: earth, air, water and fire (Philo, *Quaest. Exod.* 2.85; *Vit. Mos.* 2.87–88; Josephus, *War* 5.212–214; *Ant.* 3.183).³⁸ Furthermore, the 'tapestry' hanging over the outer entrance into the temple 'typified the universe' and on it 'was portrayed a panorama of the heavens' (Josephus, *War* 5.210–214). Indeed, 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). Likewise, the veil symbolizes the airy covering of the earth that separates the changeable part of the world beneath from the unchanging heavenly region (Philo, *Quaest. Exod.* 2.91). The curtains of the temple were woven of things

³⁶ Likewise cf. a saying attributed to Rabbi Pinhas ben Ya'ir, a talmudic sage of the second century AD: 'The house of the Holy of Holies is made to correspond to the highest heaven. The outer holy house was made to correspond to the earth. And the courtyard was made to correspond to the sea' (cited in Patai 1967: 108); *b. Sukkah* 51b says the variegated blue and white marbled walls of the temple were comparable to sea waves. There is also depiction of a tripartite heavenly temple like that of the earthly Jerusalem in *1 Enoch* 14.

³⁷ *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathon Exodus* 39:37 and 40:4; *Midrash Rabbah Numbers* 12:13; 15:7; cf. Keel 1985:171–176 and Goppelt 1972:256–257.

³⁸ Likewise, *Tg. Numbers* 24:6; *Midrash Rabbah Exodus* 35:6; *Midrash Rabbah Numbers* 4:13; *Midrash Rabbah Song of Songs* 3:10 § 4. Cf. *3 Enoch* 45, where the curtain 'before the Holy One' had printed on it all the events throughout world history.

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that resembled the elements of which the world was made, since the created world itself was the macrocosmic temple after which Israel's small temple was modelled (Philo, *Quaest. Exod.* 2.85). These observations support the larger point strongly suggested in the Old Testament descriptions that the temple is a small-scale image of the entire universe, especially the visible and invisible heavenly dimensions.

In reflecting on the overall significance of the tabernacle, Josephus says, 'every one of these objects [of the tabernacle] is intended to recall and represent the nature of the universe' (*Ant.* 3.180).

Symbolism of the priest's robe in relation to the temple

Just as Judaism further developed the Old Testament perspective on the heavenly significance of the temple curtains, so likewise do Jewish commentators develop further the biblical notion of the meaning of the priest's attire. Both Josephus and Philo understand the jewels on the priestly breast-piece to be symbolic of the twelve constellations.³⁹ Josephus (*War* 4.324) affirms that priests are referred to as leading the 'cosmic worship' (*tēs kosmikēs thrēskeias*). Likewise, both Josephus and Philo understand the garments of the high priest to symbolize the whole cosmos (Philo, *Vit. Mos.* 2.117–126, 133–135, 143; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.180, 183–187). For example, Philo says explicitly that the high priest 'represents the world' and is a 'microcosm' (or 'small world', *brachys kosmos*; so *Vit. Mos.* 2.135). In addition, he states that the priest's 'long robe and ephod' were 'woven ... to represent the universe' (*Vit. Mos.* 2.143), and the 'sacred vesture was designed' to be 'a copy of the universe' (Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.95). The 'garments' that the priest 'puts on as raiment are the world' (*Fug.* 110) and 'is a copy and replica of the whole heaven' (*Som.* 1.215).

Other sectors of Judaism held virtually the same view of the priest's clothing. *Wisdom of Solomon* 18:24 (2nd century BC – 1st century AD) likewise understands the high priest's garment and jewels to be symbolic of the entire cosmos: 'in the long garment was the whole world, and in the four rows of the stones was the glory of the fathers'. The reference to the 'glory of the fathers' is also an allusion to the blessing upon Abraham's seed that would result in blessing to the whole world (so also 18:22). One of the Aramaic translations of Exodus 28:17 and 39:10 affirms a cosmic symbolism of the stones: the

³⁹ Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 1.84–94; *Vit. Mos.* 2.122–126, 133; *Quaest. Exod.* 2.107–114; *Som.* 1.214–215 (cf. also *Fug.* 184–185); Josephus, *Ant.* 3.186–187; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 5.6.

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'four rows of precious gems [were] corresponding to the four corners of the world'.⁴⁰

Comparable to the emblematic meaning of the curtains of the tabernacle and temple, Philo held that the priest's 'gown is all of violet, and is thus an image of the air; for the air is naturally black' (*Vit. Mos.* 2.118). Josephus similarly says the 'blue' of the 'high priest's tunic . . . signifies' the 'arch of heaven' and his 'head-dress appears . . . to symbolize heaven, being blue' (*Ant.* 3.184, 186).

Therefore, early Judaism clearly understood the priests' clothing to be a microcosm of the entire creation. The most likely reason for this is because they also believed the priestly attire was a microcosm of the temple itself, which was also a small model of the entire cosmos.

Conclusion: symbolism of the temple in the Old Testament and Judaism

Taking all of the preceding data into consideration, the three parts of Israel's temple represented the three parts of the cosmos: the outer court symbolized the visible earth (both land and sea, the place where humans lived); the holy place primarily represented the visible heavens (though there was also garden symbolism); the holy of holies stood for the invisible heavenly dimension of the cosmos where God dwelt⁴¹ (apparently not even the high priest who entered there once a year could see because of the cloud from the incense which he was to put on the fire; cf. Lev. 16:32).⁴² As we will see more fully later, this understanding of the temple as a small model of the entire cosmos is part of a larger perspective in which the temple pointed forward to a huge worldwide sanctuary in which God's presence would dwell in every part of the cosmos. The conception also is a linchpin for better understanding why John later pictures the entire new heavens and earth to be one mammoth temple in which God dwells as he had formerly dwelt in the holy of holies.

⁴⁰ *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathon*. See Patai 1967: 112–113, for a helpful synoptic overview of Josephus's various cosmic perspectives of the temple; see also Koester 1989: 59–63, for a synoptic overview of both Josephus and Philo on the same topic.

⁴¹ See more generally Spatafora (1997: 31), who proposes only a twofold symbolism: outer court = the earth, and sanctuary proper = the heaven (he makes no distinction between the visible and invisible dimension of the heavens).

⁴² Philo (*Spec. Leg.* 1.72) expands on the Leviticus text by saying, 'the great quantity of vapour which this naturally gives forth covers everything around it, beclouds the eyesight and prevents it from being able to penetrate to any distance'.

COSMIC SYMBOLISM OF TEMPLES

This cosmic perspective of the temple is discernible in the Old Testament, and it is developed in Judaism. Before concluding this section, a word is in order about the evidence adduced from the Jewish authors Philo and Josephus. While it is true that Philo and Josephus had varying interpretations of the temple symbolism, their views intersect at significant points. Furthermore, they both testify to a general cosmological understanding of the temple held by mainstream contemporary Jewish thought, especially where their views overlapped. Philo himself says that his symbolic understanding of the lampstand was generally acknowledged during his time (*Quaest. Exod.* 2.78; cf. also *Rer. Div. Her.* 224).⁴³ That their perspective was probably not idiosyncratic is suggested also by recalling that other Jewish sources testify to the same cosmic viewpoint (the earliest being Wisdom, followed by the Targum and then the profusion of references in the later midrashic and Talmudic literature). Though every one of their detailed symbolic identifications is unlikely to be correct, their approach generally represented an accurate understanding of the Old Testament temple's emblematic meaning.

Among the admittedly few *explicit* biblical passages supporting the cosmic temple thesis (Levenson 1984: 289–298), Levenson offers Isaiah 6:3: 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.' He contends that this 'glory' is the divine radiance by which God manifests his presence in the temple. The significance of Isaiah's vision of the luminescent smoke filling the temple (6:4) is explained by the seraphim to mean that the whole world manifests Yahweh's cultic heavenly glory that has unique correspondence in the earthly temple. Isaiah 6:3b could well be rendered 'the fullness of the whole earth is his glory' (an alternative rendering proposed by Levenson and the NASB), that is, the entire world reflects God's glory in the temple.⁴⁴ In the same way that God's glory (*kābôd*) filled both the tabernacle and temple at the conclusion of their construction, Isaiah 6:3 affirms with the same terms that God's glory fills the entire cosmos (Levenson 1984: 289). While Levenson grants that the biblical evidence is 'muted and implicit', the Old Testament 'evidence is not quite so lacking as one would think at first glance' (Levenson 1984: 286).

⁴³ See Levenson 1988: 96–99 for additional striking examples of the cosmic symbolism of the tabernacle or temple in rabbinic Judaism; see also Kline (1980: 41–47) and Poythress (1991: 13–35), who, as modern commentators, make many similar observations about the temple and the priestly garments.

⁴⁴ Though Levenson later more speculatively interprets this to mean 'the world in its fulness is the temple' (1984: 296).

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In the light of all the above evidence, R. E. Clements's conclusion about similar evidence is cautious and judicious:

Not all of these supposed symbolic references of features of the temple are convincing, but the essential claim that the temple and its furnishings did possess cosmic, or naturalistic, symbolism must be upheld. Such features were designed to stress the divine power over the created order, and to establish the temple as a source of blessing for the land and people of Israel. The underlying idea was that the temple was a microcosm of the macrocosm, so that the building gave visual expression to the belief in Yahweh's dominion over the world . . . We need not suppose that every Israelite worshipper was conscious of this . . . Thus the temple building . . . signified the cosmic rule of God who was worshipped there . . .⁴⁵

I have tried to discuss the symbolic meaning of the temple as a miniature model of the cosmos by observing features of the structure itself and by tracing the use of words and concepts about the temple that occur elsewhere in the Old Testament in other contexts. As Vern Poythress has concluded at the end of his study of the temple, 'we must of course recognize that some associations and connections are more obvious than others, and that we may possibly be wrong about some details. But the overall picture emerges clearly' (Poythress 1991: 39).

Israel's temple in the light of the Ancient Near Eastern view of the earthly temple as a reflection of the heavenly or cosmic temple

Some scholars like de Vaux (1965: 328–329) allege that early Judaism's explicit cosmic understanding of the temple was a late

⁴⁵ Clements 1965: 67; see also his larger discussion (pp. 64–75), where especially he cites texts from the Psalms underscoring God's rule from the temple; e.g., Ps. 11:4, 'The LORD is in His holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven.' Levenson gives the same qualified assessment as Clements that the temple was conceived as an institution representing the cosmos (1984: 286). The assessments of Clements and Levenson are partly a response to R. de Vaux who concludes that in the Bible there is 'feeble support for these theories' about the cosmological significance of the temple (1965: 328; see Levenson 1988: 82, for further response to de Vaux). He was anticipated a century earlier by Fairbairn (1863a: 220), who asserted that a cosmological view of Israel's temple 'is never once distinctly brought out' in the OT.