

THE GARDEN TEMPLE: ANALYZATION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDEN AND THE TABERNACLE/TEMPLE

BY

MICAH L. OTTO

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PROF. NOAH HEADRICK, ADVISOR

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

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ABSTRACT

The garden of Eden was God's non-architectural temple of creation. Adam was the first priest. The future blueprints of the tabernacle and temple which God directed to be built were concessions that allowed humans to remain in the presence of God's dwelling place in a context of sin. Israel was called to be a corporate kingdom of neo-Adamic priests. Analyzing the numerous parallels of this correlation between Eden and the tabernacle/temple serves to bring greater clarity to the narrative structure of the Old Testament and all of redemption-history. Seeing the intertextual Edenic elements in the sacred spaces of the tabernacle and temple also provides further depth to the words and works of Christ, the greater temple who tabernacled among men, and his Church of living stones.

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INTRODUCTION

You are a priest of the tribe of Levi in the year 960 BC perusing the site of Solomon’s temple shortly before construction is completed and the grounds are dedicated that year.¹ As you tour through the outer courts to the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place, you notice this is no banal space of white-washed walls. Every pillar, wall, and furnishing is exploding with artistry hinting at a rich theological significance. It is as if you have entered a garden paradise. Pillars sprout pomegranates. Oxen bear basins. Trees speckle the cedar walls and cherubim stand guard on curtains. Each step is an immersive experience. There are no stained-glass windows depicting detailed Pentateuchal scenes; and yet, Hebrew sons and daughters raised on these accounts vividly recall them all the same. The visual impact is unmissable. We were not done with Eden after the exile of Genesis 3. Eden was *here*. This was the *garden-temple*.

The temple is like Eden; Eden is like the temple. The account of the creation of the world and the accounts of the creation of the tabernacle/temple were meant to be read in tandem, yet the average Christian today can read these accounts back-to-back and likely remain blind to any relationship between the two. The garden of Eden was no mere Mesopotamian farmland, as it is often conceived as, but an archetypal sanctuary.² This thesis aims to restore sight to this oft-observed biblical theme of the garden-temple because seeing this key correlation unlocks clarity to so many other pieces of the grand biblical story.

1. Concordia Publishing House, *Lutheran Bible Companion Volume I: Introduction and Old Testament*, ed. Edward Engelbrecht (Concordia Publishing House, 2020) lxxxii.

2. Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in *Proc, 9th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, Aug 1985: Div A - Period of the Bible* (Jerusalem, 1986), 19–25, <https://rb.gy/50rijl>.

This is a study within biblical theology, using Scripture as the primary source of research, supplemented by biblical commentators and scholars. I will primarily analyze the correlation between the garden of Eden and the tabernacle/temple by proposing a number of parallels, noting also how this correlation informs related elements in other biblical texts. Evidence of an Eden and tabernacle/temple relationship will be laid out progressively. I will then briefly reveal how many of the parallels within this correlation find their ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah who tabernacled among men, restoring the mission of the Church as living stones and royal priests in the New Eden. Finally, concluding remarks concerning the significance of this proposed assertion will be offered.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The core works that most closely informed the study of this thesis included: G. K. Beale's *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, part of the New Studies in Biblical Theology (NSBT) series, a series devoted to unpacking various strands of biblical theology, as well as his condensed, distilled version with a practical emphasis written with Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: A Biblical Theology of the Temple*, part of the Essential Studies in Biblical Theology (ESBT) series, a more accessible series dedicated to introducing core and fundamental themes of the Bible; John H. Sailhamer's *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, which aims to trace the narrative strategy of the Pentateuch as one, single book, disclosing how original Jewish readers may have viewed this multivolume work of Moses; J. Daniel Hays' *The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling places from Genesis to Revelation*,³ which traces the theme of God's presence with His people from creation to the new creation of Revelation; and *The Christ Key: Unlocking the Centrality of Christ in the Old Testament*, by Chad Bird, LCMS scholar in residence at 1517, which walks readers through portions of the Old Testament searching for foreshadows of Christ.

This garden-temple theme was directly addressed by all five authors. Their stances rarely opposed one another, but rather they each lent their own unique voice and added additional

3. Hays particularly diverges from this group of authors by dedicating much of his chapter on the temple to a digression on critiquing Solomon's failures as a king and exposing indications that the temple may not have been built with the same reverence as Moses' tabernacle.

details to my research. Where the authors disagreed was typically in the realm of historical critical matters and not concerning the intertextual elements on which this thesis is focused. Additional sources which alluded to the topic of concern or commented on an adjacent point will be cited and quoted to a lesser degree throughout the course of the argumentation. Any uncited assertions are my own observations, typically of the intertextuality of the biblical texts.

METHODOLOGY

Applied Hermeneutic

Before laying out the evidence of a correlation between the garden of Eden and the tabernacle/temple, the matter of hermeneutics ought to be addressed. Conservative and confessional Lutherans are right to adhere to the hermeneutic of strictly interpreting Scripture with Scripture—using clearer passages to interpret less clear passages in order to formulate doctrines. By doing so, we avoid the danger of interpreting the Bible according to what we think and say over what God thinks and says through his human authors.

There is another way in which we can interpret Scripture with Scripture—not to formulate doctrine, per se, but as a means of narrative analysis. This is called *intertextuality*, or, “the layering of the Scriptures.”⁴

The Concept of Intertextuality

As with many concepts, there is a spectrum of understandings as to what intertextuality is. The view in this paper simply “focuses on the biblical author’s intention in appropriating references to earlier texts within a new literary setting.”⁵ Like nesting dolls, the Scriptures have layers to them. We can narrow these layers down to three major components: At the core are the five books of Moses—the Pentateuch, then the rest of the Tanak, and finally the New Testament. The

4. Chad Bird, *The Christ Key: Unlocking the Centrality of Christ in the Old Testament*, (1517 Publishing, 2021), 3.

5. Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier, and Leroy A. Huizenga, eds., *Reading the Bible Intertextually*, Reprint edition. (Baylor University Press, 2015), xii.

Pentateuch is a mini-Bible at the core,⁶ containing everything that is to come later, just condensed and obscured. The rest of the Scripture could be viewed as plainly answering, expanding, contrasting or applying what is in Moses. Luther agreed: “Show us one word in all the books outside those of Moses that is not already found in the books of Moses.”⁷ Even the groundwork for what is revealed in the New Testament is found in the Pentateuch. For instance, notice how the New Testament writers don’t typically refer to the words of Jesus to make an assertion, but rather prefer to reference the Old Testament in order to highlight and clarify Jesus’ identity.⁸

The biblical authors found in each layer are all in dialogue with one another, using a shared vocabulary, conceptual metaphors, and other imagery.⁹ If you fail to be fluent in the biblical way of speaking, you may understand the gist of what’s being communicated, but possessing only a pidgin version of this language,¹⁰ you’ll likely miss the many ways authors are “talking to each other.”¹¹ The concept of intertextuality involves the task of investigating the

6. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 8.

7. Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, Volume 35: Word and Sacrament I*, ed. E. Theodore Bachmann, Volume 35, Part I edition (Saint Louis: Fortress Press, 1960), 132.

8. Jesus said nothing about his presence in the beginning or his embodiment as the image of God, and yet the New Testament authors consistently use Genesis to describe realities of who Jesus is (i.e. John 1, Col 1, Hebrews).

9. Many cases of shared vocabulary, conceptual metaphors, and other imagery can be traced in some way back to the first three chapters of Genesis.

10. This concept of a simplified pidgin Old Testament language is explored in Brent Strawn’s *The Old Testament is Dying: A diagnosis and recommended treatment*.

11. Jon Collins and Tim Mackie, “Live from Milpitas! Design Patterns Part 1, How to Read the Bible,” *BibleProject Podcast, How to Read the Bible*, Ep. 13, (April 2, 2018), <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/design-patterns-bible-live-milpitas-part-1/>.

relationships that a text can have with other texts and analyzing the implications of those relationships for understanding and interpretation.¹²

Aspects of Intertextuality

A key aspect of the dialogue between the layers of the Scriptures is repetition of select words, something often lost on the modern reader. “One of the most imposing barriers that stands between the modern reader and the imaginative subtlety of biblical narrative is the extraordinary prominence of verbatim repetition in the Bible.”¹³ We’re more accustomed to far less obtrusive forms of repetition in the modern West and find material that is restated verbatim to be problematic and poorly written. Therefore, repetition seems to be “the feature of Biblical narrative that looks most primitive to the casual modern eye”¹⁴ because of how different and unfamiliar its approach is to our own. Biblical Hebraic repetition works somewhat like a modern hyperlink on a website. Key words can be pictured as underlined and glowing with a blueish hue. “Selecting” these words or phrases would then send you to entirely separate but highly relevant and often parallel bodies of material. As you follow the hyperlinks, Scripture becomes like “a multilayered web of interconnections.”¹⁵

Although unfamiliar, we do, however, have some examples in modern media to which we can compare. The canon of the Bible contains dialogues of intertextuality; similarly, the canon of

12. Hays, Alkier, Huizenga, *Reading the Bible Intertextually*, 3.

13. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 111.

14. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 111.

15. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 12. However, of course, Jews trained in the Hebrew Scriptures would not need the world wide web to follow such connections. Their minds, steeped in the Scriptures, would do so for them. The more we meditate and study, the more we can do the same.

Star Wars movies contains a dialogue of intertextuality. Just like later books of Scripture quote and reference the original narratives of Moses with shared vocabulary and imagery, later movies quote and reference the original trilogy of George Lucas with shared vocabulary and imagery. Jesus is tested in the wilderness just like his ancestors had been generations before. Rey, a character introduced in 2015, struggles to use the force in a snowy climate just like Luke struggled to do the same before audiences generations before. We, the reader/viewer, make the connection, and we “get it” even more. Now, someone could watch the later Star Wars movies and understand them on a certain level—just like someone could read only the Gospels and understand them on a certain level—but familiarizing yourself with the earlier content (perhaps even somewhat religiously across a lifetime) opens your eyes to so many more details. You can see something with a single eye, but when you have two eyes, the two lines of sight unite to give a clearer perspective of the picture in view. So it is with recognizing the intertextual connections between two narratives of Scripture.¹⁶

These connections are not a boring lack of originality, “rather it is a testimony to the art of a poet who can take language already laden with meaning (for people familiar with the heritage of their Scriptures) and use it to describe new situations.”¹⁷ Recognizing these connections can teach us a great deal, as long as we don’t “make things more explicit than the biblical writer intended.”¹⁸

16. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 2nd edition. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2005) 191–92. Duvall and Hays make a similar point concerning seeing political satire in *The Wizard of Oz*.

17. Jon Collins and Tim Mackie, “Design Patterns in the Bible Part 4: Chaotic Waters and Baptism,” *BibleProject Podcast, How to Read the Bible*, Ep. 16, (April 23, 2018), <https://bibleproject.com/podcast/design-patterns-bible-part-4-chaotic-waters-baptism/>.

18. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 12.

Recognizing the intertextuality of the Scriptures helps to clarify many narrative details, especially of Old Testament narratives, that would otherwise initially strike the modern reader as confusing or strange. The Scriptures are masterpieces of literature and recognizing intertextuality helps uncover that truth. Similarly, anyone can appreciate the works of Beethoven or Mozart and recognize their brilliance, but those who are well-versed in music theory will have a depth of appreciation that others are simply unaware of. “Not only does this make [the Scriptures] more interesting to read—which in itself is satisfying—but it invites us to read more slowly and more deeply, to pick up on the various shades and hues of color, and to ask where they came from.”¹⁹ This is exactly what happens when comparing the accounts of Eden, the tabernacle, and temple.

Addressing Potential Objections to Intertextuality

Does reading the Bible intertextually violate confessional Lutherans’ hermeneutic? Is this turning Scripture into a code that can only be deciphered by experts and not the common man? In David Kuske’s *Biblical Interpretation: The Only Right Way*, he writes, “The inspired words of Scripture must be understood only according to the one obvious sense that they convey in common usage.... If words have more than one meaning at the same time, if words were always double entendres, then communication in words would always be a guessing game.”²⁰

Kuske explains the importance of recognizing the original author’s context for interpreting passages and touches on the topics of genre and specific cultural writing techniques such as chiasm and allegory, but he makes no mention of intertextuality. Kuske also says in the

19. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 14.

20. David Kuske, *Biblical Interpretation: The Only Right Way*, Impact Series (Milwaukee: Northwestern Pub. House, 1995), 70.

onset of his book: “The interpreter’s purpose must always be to determine the meaning that the original writer intended for the original reader—nothing more, nothing less.”²¹ It is proper that Kuske should caution against a hermeneutical view where reader response is favored over authorial intent. Reading the Bible intertextually, however, is not aiming to stray from, add, or change what the author intended to convey in favor of reader response, but it is always aiming to recapture the depth of meaning and connotations the author himself intended to convey.

It is also proper that Kuske should caution against a hermeneutical view where a text’s true meaning is a secret that must be decoded. As mentioned before, however, the plain simple meaning of the words remains—just as a movie in a trilogy has its own self-contained story. Recognizing intertextuality simply offers a broader perspective and helps the reader link texts together to see the Bible as one unified story. Interpreters are not free to see connections in anything and everything they want. We are bound to seek the literary meaning intended by the authors and inspired by the Spirit and cannot invent meaning with our own fanciful imagination.²² Any meaning derived by reading the Bible intertextually must have ample evidence, clear indications of authorial intent, and multiple points of comparison.

Having discussed intertextuality, analyzation of the evidence of this particular concept of the garden-temple follows. I will primarily reference the intertextual parallels of the texts directly describing Eden, the tabernacle, and temple, and will reference related texts when appropriate and beneficial. Additional points of note and more minor thematic linkages will be relegated to footnotes.

21. Kuske, *Biblical Interpretation*, 13.

22. Duvall and Hays, *Grasping God’s Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*, 208.

FINDINGS

As you read through the first chapters of Genesis, a number of features of the garden of Eden and its inhabitants are described that may seem ordinary upon first glance, but as you continue reading in the Scriptures, these features are built into concepts pregnant with meaning. Some features are more obvious; some are rather concealed, needing to be developed over time. In true Hebraic form, the biblical authors down the line refrain from directly stating, “Dear reader, this tabernacle blueprint mirrors God’s first dwelling with men in the garden of Eden.”²³ Instead, through the inspiration of the Spirit, the biblical authors communicate this very same message by expertly crafting their writings with intertextual design patterns that leave the reader with hints to contemplate the connections and contrasts between the linked narratives. Nearly every major design pattern can be traced back to the first pages of Genesis.²⁴ The primary concepts examined in this thesis are as follows: God’s dwelling place, exile from Eden, expanding Eden, constructing Eden, east of Eden, priests of Eden, guardians of Eden, Mt. Eden, rivers of Eden, and the furnishings of Eden. Each concept will be analyzed respectively.

Note that many of these concepts are intimately intertwined—it is difficult to analyze one concept without discussing portions of the concepts to come. For organizational reasons, I am opting to separate each concept as much as possible early on in my argumentation before

23. John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, Illustrated edition, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 299. “[T]he text itself explains very little of the heavenly meaning of the tabernacle and its parts. It appears that we, the readers, are invited to ponder the description of the tabernacle in these chapters with the expectation that they exhibit the pattern of the heavenly temple... there appears to be an intentional mystery about the tabernacle and the meaning of its parts....”

24. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 81.

connecting the dots in subsequent paragraphs where appropriate. Therefore, some links may appear stronger than others, especially when analyzed in isolation. However, just as the Biblical authors wrote, the proposal of this thesis is intended to be viewed in the light of all the angles of reasoning as a whole.

Parallels of the Garden-Temple Theme

What is a Temple?

Operating with an accurate definition of a temple is imperative for understanding Eden as the center of God's cosmic temple. Eden was more than a nice place for humans to live, and temples are more than places where humans go to worship a god. A temple is God's sacred residence on earth.²⁵ In other words, temples are places where God's heavenly realm and human's earthly realm overlap.²⁶

Typically, in the ancient world these temple spaces would be seen as buildings. According to the aforementioned definition, however, *all of creation* is described as God's temple in the words of Scripture. Psalm 78:69 affirms this, revealing that the sanctuaries of the tabernacle and temple were to resemble creation: "He built his sanctuary like the heights, like the

25. J. Daniel Hays, *The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation* (Baker Books, 2021), 30.

26. Jon Collins and Tim Mackie, *Temple Study Notes*, BibleProject, 2. Available at <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/temple/>.

earth that he established forever.”²⁷ Hebrews 9:23–24 also draws a connection between the tabernacle and God’s heavenly sanctuary. Referring to the tabernacle, the writer to the Hebrews says, “Therefore, it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves to be purified with better sacrifices than these. For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands (only a model of the true one) but into heaven itself, so that he might now appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:23–24).²⁸ By calling the tabernacle a space of *copies of heavenly realities* while also saying God built his sanctuary *like the earth*, there is a clear link connecting God’s heavenly sanctuary, the sanctuary of creation, and the constructed sanctuaries of the tabernacle and temple.²⁹ Creation was a macro temple, and the temple was a microcosm of creation—both possessed vertical typology reflecting the reality of his heavenly dwelling place.³⁰

27. Translations from Christian Standard Bible [CSB] unless otherwise noted. See also Psalm 104 and Isaiah 40:22, where the heavens are compared to a tent, לִיָּהּ, a word often used for the tabernacle.

28. Gert Jacobus Steyn, “‘On Earth as It Is in Heaven...’: The Heavenly Sanctuary Motif in Hebrews 8:5 and Its Textual Connection with the ‘shadowy Copy’ [Υποδείγματι Καὶ Σκιᾷ] of LXX Exodus 25:40,” *HTS Theological Studies* 67.1 (2011): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i1.885>. Steyn gathers evidence that the motif of a heavenly temple was well known throughout early Judaism, and that the tabernacle and temple being modeled after the heavenly temple was not a novel teaching for the author to the Hebrews.

29. Richard M Davidson, “Earth’s First Sanctuary: Genesis 1-3 and Parallel Creation Accounts,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53.1 (2015): 68. “Just as the later earthly Tabernacle in the wilderness was built as a copy of the heavenly original (Exod 25:9, 40; Heb 8:5), so earth’s first sanctuary, the earthly garden of Eden, was created by God as a copy of the original heavenly sanctuary...”

30. Jahisber Peñuela-Pineda, “SANCTUARY/TEMPLE IN GENESIS 1-3: A REEVALUATION OF THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 57.2 (2019): 384–85.

God's Dwelling Place

Although God is omnipresent (Ps 139:7–10, Jer 23:23–24), he chooses to manifest his presence in particular locations, such as a burning bush with Moses (Exod 3) or a gentle whisper with Elijah (1 Kgs 19). An apt analogy can be taken from light—light can fill a whole room, and yet a laser pointer of intensified light will still show up in one particular location.³¹ The garden, tabernacle, and temple were all places where human beings could enjoy the fellowship and presence of God.³² The particular manifestation of God's presence typically creates tripartite gradations of holiness.

Tripartite Holy Space

The three tiers of holiness of the tabernacle and temple are identified rather clearly by the names for the inner two spaces: “the holy place and the most holy place” (Exod 26:33). The first and holiest tier, the most holy place, was at the center and held the ark of the covenant. The second tier, the holy place, occupied many of the furnishings such as the menorah and table for the bread of presence. The third tier, the outer courtyard/camp, was where God's people dwelled. Beyond this, God was present, for “the earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the Lord” (Ps 24:1), but he chose not to reveal himself to the same extent.³³

31. Hays, *The Temple and the Tabernacle*, 33.

32. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 98. For direct comparisons of the land of Israel to the garden of Eden, cf. Ezek 36:35, Joel 2:3, Isa 51:3, Zech 14:8.

33. J van (Jacques) Ruiten, “Eden and the Temple: The Rewriting of Genesis 2:4-3:24 in The Book of Jubilees,” in *Paradise Interpreted: Representations of Biblical Paradise in Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden, 1999), 63–94, <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=Isdar&AN=ATLA0001225351&site=ehost-live&scope=site&custid=ns101346>. Especially on page 76, Ruiten observes the parallel tripartite structures of Eden and the tabernacle/temple.

As a microcosm of creation, these gradations of the tabernacle/temple are mirrored in the beginning of Genesis. The first and holiest tier was the center of the garden, where the tree of life was located (Gen 2:8–9).³⁴ The second tier was the garden within Eden, which had many other fruit-bearing trees to eat from.³⁵ The third tier was the territory of Eden itself, the habitable land for God’s first two people that did not need to be subdued. Beyond this was the wilderness. God was present there, but this tripartite sanctuary space was the epicenter of his dwelling place.³⁶ Although “we tend to think of holiness in terms of morality ... the Israelites thought of holiness largely in terms of space. Moving outward from the center, in concentric circles, were spheres of sanctity.”³⁷ This worldview may even be reflected by Ezekiel when he describes Jerusalem as being “at the center of the world” (Ezek 38:12).³⁸

34. Notice the “Garden of Eden” is somewhat of a misnomer. The garden was *within* the territory of Eden, not synonymous with all of Eden.

35. Alexandru Mihăilă, “Temple and Paradise: Some Remarks on the Dynamics of Sacred Place,” *Review of Ecumenical Studies, Sibiu* 13.2 (2021): 145–59, <https://doi.org/10.2478/ress-2021-0018>. “[T]he garden is only part of Eden.”

36. Davidson, “Earth’s First Sanctuary,” 73. The concept of a tripartite structure is evident and agreed upon by many (Josephus, Beale, Mackie, Bird, Davidson, etc.). However, there is no clear consensus on how to label each gradation of holiness in the Eden narrative. One reason for this is that the garden is said to be *in* Eden, yet the river starts within Eden and goes *out* to water the garden and beyond. Despite the varied opinions, the general imagery as a whole is clear. My tier designations were synthesized by my personal evaluation of the biblical evidence but happen to match those of Davidson.

37. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 142.

38. Mihăilă, “Temple and Paradise,” 158.

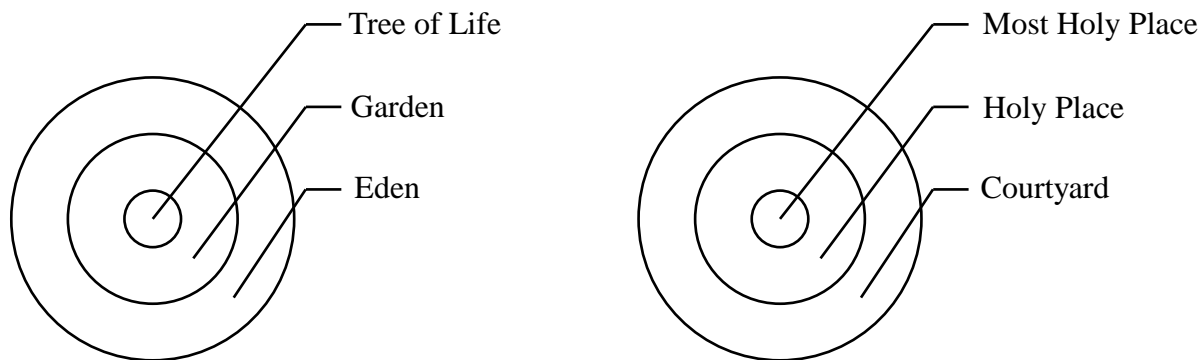


Figure 1. Tripartite Gradations of Holiness

The cosmos and its later-constructed microcosms shared this same tripartite structure. The tabernacle and temple were to replay and recapture the Edenic delight of when God dwelled among mankind in the beginning. As Peter Leithart put it, “Israel’s land is going to be a new Eden, a land flowing with milk and honey. And within the land, Israel is going to build a new garden, the temple, the house of God.”³⁹ Because sinful man cannot dwell within the presence of a holy God, God dwelling behind the curtains of the tabernacle and temple is an act of loving protection for the people. Ironically, these measures are put into place not to distance God from his people, but to be as near to them as possible.⁴⁰ Having established the concept of a tripartite gradations of holiness, the following begins to analyze some of the correlations between the three primary dwelling places of God and man in the Old Testament—Eden, the tabernacle, and temple.

39. Peter Leithart, *A House for My Name: A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2018, 53–54.

40. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 297–98

Sanctuaries of Eden

Ezekiel may allude to the garden of Eden having “sanctuaries” (Ezek 28:18), the same word used in the plural form to refer to the grouping of the courtyard, holy place, and most holy place in the tabernacle and temple (Lev 21:23, Ezek 7:24, Jer 51:51). Concerning this, G.K. Beale writes, “Ezekiel 28:18 is probably, therefore, the most explicit place anywhere in canonical literature where the Garden of Eden is called a temple.”⁴¹ Admittedly, this is a weaker component in the garden-temple relationship, yet it is worthy of note. Additional aspects of Ezekiel 28 will be analyzed in subsequent sections.

God Walking in his Dwelling Place

Genesis 3 casually connotes God’s presence in his sacred dwelling place by mentioning his walking [הלך] ⁴² about the garden, “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking [הלך] in the garden at the time of the evening breeze...” (Gen 3:8). Later in Israel’s history, God assures his people of his continued presence among them in similar language, “I will walk [הלך] among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (Lev 26:12). Furthermore, when speaking to David about building the temple, God reflects on the period of the tabernacle saying, “From the time I brought the Israelites out of Egypt until today I have not dwelt in a house; instead, I have been moving around [הלך] with a tent as my dwelling” (2 Sam 7:6). The fact that a holy God walked in the midst of sinful humans had many

41. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2004), 75–76.

42. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 66. This is a common verb, but each of the occurrences is specifically in the *hithpael* conjugation, denoting “walking back and forth.”

implications—even on bathroom habits: “You are to have a place outside the camp and go there to relieve yourself. You are to have a digging tool in your equipment; when you relieve yourself, dig a hole with it and cover up your excrement. For the LORD your God walks [יְלֵךְ] throughout your camp to protect you and deliver your enemies to you; so your encampments must be holy” (Deut 23:12–14). The repetition of this specific form of יְלֵךְ, together with the evidence to follow, reveals that God walked to and fro among the tabernacle and temple just as he had in Eden.⁴³ This final example from Deuteronomy 23 highlights the problem of sinfulness in the midst of God’s dwelling place and the need to rid holy spaces of impurity. This is the root of the concept of *exile*.

Exile from Eden

If all of creation is God’s temple, what is the need for a specifically designated space for God to tabernacle within creation? This development is the result of sin.

The tabernacle and temple are concessions made by God prompted by his grace. God was not content being a distant and aloof deity but insisted on continuing to dwell among the chaotic wilderness of mankind’s rebellion by establishing Eden-outposts.⁴⁴ Chad Bird comments:

In the midst of a world gone wrong, when sin, like a malignant tumor, had spread into every organ and lymph node of creation, the tabernacle was the location that was still healthy, good, and holy. Here the guilty came for forgiveness. Here the polluted came for cleansing. Here was a little garden of Eden where the Adams and Eves of Israel journeyed to offer their sacrifices, be blessed by the priest, and lift up their voices in prayer and song.⁴⁵

43. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” 20.

44. Collins and Mackie, *Temple Study Notes*, 14.

45. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 113.

Inside the dwelling place of God is life, meaningful work, and abundance of all sorts; outside, however, is death, separation from God, and lifelong struggles with scarcity.⁴⁶ In these spots of diminished Edens, provision would have to be made for sinful beings to remain in the presence of a holy God. Without it, one could never hope to ascend the tiers of holiness and encounter his dwelling place. Without it, sin leads to *exile*.

The first exile belongs to Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve *see* that something is *good* in a way different from how God had *seen* was *good* for them, choosing to discern good and evil according to the wisdom of their own eyes, “[God] drove [שׂרָף] the man out...” (Gen 3:24).⁴⁷ They are driven out *east* of Eden, a direction that will later be conceptualized as the place of exiles. After Cain fails in a similar way to his parents, he is exiled even further east. Since God was “banishing [שׂרָף]” (Gen 4:14) him, Cain “went out from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden” (Gen 4:16).⁴⁸ In order for Israel to enter the promised land, establishing a new dwelling place for God, the sinful people currently inhabiting the land would have to be exiled from it: “You dug up a vine from Egypt; you drove out [שׂרָף] the nations and planted it” (Ps 80:9). When Israel, the corporate Adam and Eve, sins and similarly fails to uphold God’s commands, becoming at times almost indistinguishable from their Canaanite neighbors, they are likewise exiled from the promised land to the *east* in Babylon

46. Hays, *The Temple and Tabernacle*, 35.

47. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 88. “When we read the portrayal of God in chapter one as the provider of all that is good and beneficial, we cannot help but see an anticipation of the author’s depiction of the hollowness of that first rebellious thought: “And the woman saw that the tree was good... and able to make one wise.” (3:6). Here again the verbal parallels between God’s ‘seeing the good’ in chapter 1 and the woman’s ‘seeing the good’ in chapter 3 cannot be without purpose in the text.”

48. Mihăilă, “Temple and Paradise,” 158.

(2 Chr 36:15–21).⁴⁹ Their sin, then, transforms the land itself into a sort of de-created state, as Jeremiah writes, “They are ‘wise’—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not. I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void [בְּהֵימֹן וְרֵקָה, language from Gen 1]; and to the heavens, and they had no light.... the fruitful land was a desert” (Jer 4:23–26).⁵⁰

Exile was not God’s design or intention for his people; but left alone, exile would be the only state in which they could reside. Consequently, God provides a remixed Eden in the context of sin⁵¹ and reports the manner in which they could reenter that holy Edenic space (i.e. Leviticus).⁵² Their calling was not exile, but expansion.

Expanding Eden

If exile from Eden occurs when humans fail to keep God’s commands, expansion of Eden is what happens when they succeed. Thus, Eden is not merely a place, but a mission.

49. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 112. “If chapter 2 portrayed humanity’s earliest state as a prototype of God’s gift of the good land to Israel, then it should come as no surprise that the account of the Fall should also be recounted in terms that bring to mind Israel’s future exile from the land.”

50. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 86.

51. G. K. Beale, Mitchell Kim, and Benjamin L. Gladd, *God Dwells Among Us: A Biblical Theology of the Temple* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2021), 38.

52. L. Michael Morales and D. A. Carson, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2015), 37. Morales speaks about the basis of this thesis specifically in the context of the purification rites in Leviticus. He develops the view that Leviticus, with all of its laws and purification rites, serves the narrative structure of the entire Pentateuch by presenting the key to returning into the dwelling place of God. This could explain why Moses is unable to enter the tent of meeting at the conclusion of Exodus, but at the onset of Numbers he once again has access and is within the tent of meeting.

The Edenic Missio Dei of the Imago Dei

There are many interpretations of the image of God.⁵³ The word used for “image” in Genesis 1:27 is *צַלְמֵנוּ*. An image represents and points to a greater reality. In heathen religions, *צַלְמֵנוּ* were idols placed on altars and in temples to represent their corresponding deities (Amos 5:26, 2 Chr 23:17);⁵⁴ but Yahweh instructed his people to be different in this way: “Do not make an idol for yourself” (Exod 20:4). For Yahweh, mankind was to be his *צַלְמֵנוּ* representing and pointing to the greater reality of himself as they lived as faithful vice-regents in the world—a duty unfit for and unworthy of inanimate wood or stone.⁵⁵ In this state of perfect relationship with the Creator, “humanity demonstrates certain qualities that are properly God’s, so that an outsider looking at us would perceive things that, if they could see God, they would perceive far more clearly.”⁵⁶ Where a human made in God’s image was, there also was an opportunity to see what Yahweh was like. This is also why sanctification in the New Testament is described as being

53. The interpretation of *imago dei* I most closely describe is what is known as the *functional* view. Common interpretations of the *imago dei* include the *substantival* view (man’s reason as it contrasts with the animals), the *functional* view (man’s role as God’s representatives and vice-regents in his world in a way that reflects his character), the *relational* view (man’s quality of being social creatures in relationship with God and man), and what I call the *holiness* view (man’s initial perfection/holiness/wholeness)—the view described by the Lutheran Confessions. The *functional* interpretation with which I am working and describing personally seems safest and is primarily derived from the surrounding textual context, apparent connotation in the original cultural context, and comparative studies. The functional view is not in contention with the holiness view of the Lutheran Confessions, for if someone were to be completely holy, it would mean they are functioning in their role as vice-regents and reflecting God’s character as his representatives to a perfect degree. Simply describing the image of God as perfection or holiness can be misleading and confusing, however, once you read Genesis 9:6 and realize the image of God remains in humans in some way and to some extent. Although the holiness view is correct, the nuance offered by the functional view tempers possible confusion.

54. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 88.

55. G. K. Beale, “Garden Temple,” *Kerux* 18.2 (2003), 4. Both the images in heathen temples and the images in the Edenic temple were animated by the breath of the deity. Where the Bible distinctly contrasts other religions is that Yahweh places *living* images in his temple.

56. Kenneth A. Cherney, Jr. “Distinctively Human: An Anthropology of Genesis 1 and 2,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol.119, No. 1, (Winter 2022): 17.

“transformed into his image” (2 Cor 3:18 NIV), the image of Christ, who is the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15) and “the exact expression of his nature” (Heb 1:3).⁵⁷

Humans would point to the greater reality of Yahweh as they lived as faithful vice-regents⁵⁸ in the world.⁵⁹ A legitimate translation of Genesis 1:26 is “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, *so that* they may *rule* [רָבַדּוּ]” (NIV). This is mirrored in the poetic retelling of creation in Psalm 8: “You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet” (8:5–6).⁶⁰ As God’s image-bearing vice-regents over creation, humans are then blessed with the mission to “be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it (Gen 1:28).” This is a mission of Edenic expansion.⁶¹ “Adam and Eve, with their descendants, were gradually to Edenize the world, to expand the sanctuary of God until it eventually covered the entire earth.”⁶² It is true that “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands” (Ps

57. See also Col 3:10, Eph 4:22–24

58. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 70.

59. Beale, “Garden Temple,” 7. This is similar, but not directly proportional, to the ancient perception that some kings were living images of the gods.

60. Beale, “Garden Temple,” 6. Verse 1 may also hint at the intention of global Edenic expansion.

61. Samuel C. Degner, “*Missio Dei* and *Imago Dei*,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No. 4, (Fall 2022), 250. In his article, Prof. Samuel Degner references the work of G. K. Beale and his use of a functional view of the *imago Dei* as grounds for the *missio Dei* and concludes, “We know that we are a missional church not by analogy but because he has called us to be so, sending us by the same Son through the same Spirit into the world (John 20:21).” This is true. By examining evidence for additional aspects to God’s desired mission for humanity, I am not seeking to offer a preferred basis for a mission mindset over and above Jesus’ direct commissioning of his Church, but to uncover yet another textual feature showing the heights of our calling as Christians in the world and to show that the great commission was not a new concept, but rather one that was rooted in the beginning of time and knit into our nature.

62. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 117–18

19:1), but by being fruitful, multiplying, and filling the earth, more and more places in creation would reflect the greatest depth of his character.⁶³

The Hebrew verbs for “rule” in Genesis 1:26 and “subdue” in 1:28 are *רָדָה* and *כָּבַשׁ*, respectively. Neither is as mild as the more common word for rule, *מָשַׁל*. The former refers to a dominating and authoritative rule (Num 24:19), and the latter is used for forceful conquest (Num 32:22) and bringing into bondage (Neh 5:5, Jer 34:11). For Adam and Eve, the first image-bearers, why was there need to subdue a landscape that had been pronounced good by its Creator? Does this suggest that the land outside Eden was *not* good and perfect? This is not necessarily the conclusion that must be drawn. For example, filling a container with the corresponding contents it is meant to contain does not suggest that the container was flawed in some way before being filled. The container was good before being filled and continued to be good after being filled but was now filled with what it was created to contain all along. Outside of the garden God had planted, the land was still uncultivated, waiting to be filled with what it was meant to contain for “there was no man to work the ground” (Gen 2:5). Not every biome was a lush garden:

[I]f people were going to fill the earth (according to Genesis 1), we must conclude that they were not intended to stay in the garden in a static situation. Yet moving out of the garden would appear a hardship since the land outside the garden was not as hospitable as that inside the garden (otherwise the garden would not be distinguishable). Perhaps, then, we should surmise that people were gradually supposed to extend the garden as they went about subduing and ruling. Extending the garden would extend the food supply as well as extend sacred space (since that is what the garden represented).⁶⁴

63. The tower of Babel, by gathering in one place, was in direct opposition to this mission.

64. John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 186.

As mankind Edenized creation, they would be expanding the garden's borders, filling the good container with the good things it was created to contain.

Though implicit, we see an example of what it means to *subdue* creation as God's vice-regents in a state of perfection in Genesis 2:19–20 when Adam is commissioned by God to name the animals.⁶⁵ With this in mind, then, it follows that the fall into sin is a direct result of failing to properly rule over an animal, namely, the serpent. Before the fall, subduing the earth would be a strictly joyful work to pursue. After the fall, however, the Edenic mission of image-bearers as vice-regents becomes complicated. The creation to be subdued would now fight back and fruitful multiplication would be a painful effort (Gen 3:16–19). Nonetheless, humans were to still fulfill their calling to expand Eden and its blessings according to the image of their God, not to rule over the earth with an iron fist according to the image of sinful man.⁶⁶ This mission is restated in a context of renewed creation for Noah (Gen 9:1–2, 7), Abraham (Gen 12:1–3, 17:1–9, 22:17–18), Isaac (Gen 26:3–4, 24), Jacob (Gen 28:3–4, 13–15, 35:11–12), and so on.⁶⁷ By the time Jacob's descendants, the Israelites, have driven out (most of) the Canaanites in “exile” and formed a nation, the land of Israel serves as a replacement Eden. With the tabernacle/temple at the center of the land, and the people living as faithful images of their God, the blessings of Eden were to flow out into the world—expanding Eden, so to speak. “God's ultimate goal in creation was to magnify his glory throughout the earth by means of his faithful image-bearers inhabiting

65. Cherney, *Distinctively Human*, 25.

66. Understanding humanity's mission to subdue the earth as a license to essentially spiral the world into a state of destruction and de-creation completely fails to see the correlation of vice-regency to the image of God—a God who, especially in recent context, is in the business of *creating*, not *de-creating*. Subduing, in this context, is an act of *fruitful* activity, not *polluting* activity.

67. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” 19. This blessing appears condensed in later iterations, but key word indicators act as hyperlinks and make the intertextual allusion clear (i.e. Gen 48:4, 27; Exod 1:7; Deut 7:13; Ps 1, 107:38, Is 51:2, etc.)

the world in obedience to the divine mandate.”⁶⁸ The specifics of what it looks like to carry out this mission will be continued under the heading *Priests of Eden*.

Constructing Eden

Genesis 2 zeroes in on God’s chosen sanctuary within this creation, Eden, where he has placed (literally in Gen 2:15, “rested”) his vice-regents with whom he dwells in a state of holiness and perfect relationship. Genesis 1 is a highly ordered and precise account of the construction of creation in which Eden is located. Therefore, if we are supposed to see that the temple is like Eden and Eden is like the temple, you would expect precision and order to also be major elements in the accounts of the construction of the tabernacle and temple. That is exactly the case.

In Genesis 1, God creates an ordered world in a series of seven days. Days one through three focus on creating ordered environments. Days four through six focus on the inhabitants of each of those environments. On day seven, God’s presence rests, or “sabbaths [שָׁבַת]”, as he takes up his rule over creation, dwelling with mankind. Reading this creation account is “like reading about a cosmic liturgy overseen by a divine priest.”⁶⁹ Resting with God in a state of ideal purity is woven into the fabric of creation itself.⁷⁰

In the context of sin, then, God instructs Moses, a neo-Adamic figure, “to make a sanctuary for me so that I may dwell among them. You must make it according to all that I show

68. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 82.

69. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 111.

70. Yonatan Miller, “Sabbath-Temple-Eden: Purity Rituals at the Intersection of Sacred Time and Space,” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 9.1 (2018): 46–74.

you—the pattern of the tabernacle as well as the pattern of all its furnishings” (Exod 25:8–9).

The tabernacle, therefore, was precisely constructed in an orderly way in a series of seven acts of obedience to the Lord’s divine commands (Exod 40:19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 32–33), culminating in rest [שָׁבַת] (Exod 40:34–35) as God’s presence took up his rule (Gen 2:2–3, Exod 31:14–15, 1 Kgs 8:56).⁷¹ Construction begins on “the first day of the first month” (Exod 40:2), as if this is ushering in a new “In the beginning” (Gen 1:1).⁷² Similarly, Solomon builds the temple in seven years (1 Kgs 6:38) and dedicates it on the seventh month with a seven-part speech of petitions (1 Kgs 8:31–53).⁷³ Just as God’s Spirit is present at creation (Gen 1:2), his Spirit is present at this new beginning, filling Bezalel son of Uri (Exod 31:2–3).⁷⁴ “As God did his ‘work’ of creation by means of the ‘Spirit of God,’ so Israel was to do their ‘work’ by means of the ‘Spirit of God.’”⁷⁵ And just as God’s presence dwells among mankind in the Edenic temple, God’s presence fills these temple spaces veiled as a cloud (Exod 40:34, 1 Kgs 8:10–11).

Unfortunately, just as Adam and Eve failed in their Edenic mission, their descendants who take after their image also fall prey to temptation. Israel, rather than being God’s images, worships the image of the Golden Calf (Exod 32). Solomon, although he begins strong by receiving the gift of a receptive heart that is able to discern between good and evil according to God’s definition and not his own (1 Kgs 3:9), likewise falls into idolatry (Neh 13:26), corrupting

71. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” 23.

72. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 111.

73. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 61.

74. However, the Spirit goes conspicuously unmentioned in the account of Solomon’s building of the temple. Rather than being crafted and built by Spirit-filled artisans chosen by God, it is crafted and built by the foreign King Hiram of Tyre (1 Kgs 5:1) and forced labor was imposed by Solomon upon enslaved peoples. In this way, Solomon more closely resembles Pharaoh than Moses.

75. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 87.

God's dwelling place, fracturing the kingdom of Israel, and setting the people on course to be exiled from this Edenic promised land to the east once again.⁷⁶ See *Appendix 1* for an organized chart of much of this information and more.

East of Eden

The fact that the tabernacle and temple have their entrances on their eastern sides further links Eden with its later remixed iterations. Genesis 3 makes the point of noting the direction of the land of exiles: "He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword *east of the garden of Eden*" (Gen 3:24). When Cain repeats the failure of his parents by improperly operating as a faithful vice-regent over creation, failing to rule over the sin crouching at his door like the serpent in the garden, he is exiled to the outskirts of the gradations of holiness, "out from the Lord's presence... *east of Eden*." (Gen 4:16). The tabernacle had its entrance to the east (Exod 27:13). The temple was aligned the same way (Ezek 10:18–19, 47:1).⁷⁷ As evidence of the people's sin, God includes a vision of men at the entrance to the temple facing and bowing down to the east (Ezek 8:16).

If going *to* the east is creating distance from the presence of God in this theological framework, then coming *from* the East would suggest drawing closer to the presence of God.⁷⁸

76. J. Daniel Hays, in his book *The Temple and Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation*, dedicates much of his entire fourth chapter to laying out the many hints that Solomon built this temple half-heartedly, despite the grandeur. There are many notable spots implicit in the text where Solomon departs from Moses' procedure of constructing this dwelling place for God, as well as acting as king in ways deliberately contrary to Moses' directive in Deuteronomy (i.e. Deut 17:16). See footnote 42 for more details.

77. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story," 21.

78. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 98–99. "The fact that the garden was 'to the east' in Eden is somewhat striking. It is still unclear how the reference to 'east' in 2:8, which seems positive, is to be associated with the references to 'eastward' in the subsequent narratives, which are all to be taken negatively."

As it turns out, *from the east* is exactly where God calls the man whom he will commission as the father of the great nation of Israel—Abram. Through Abram’s line, Edenic blessing would flow out to the world again. “It’s no accident that Abram came to the land from Ur, a pagan city to the east. Traveling west from Ur, Abram is making his way back toward the garden.”⁷⁹ In the same way, whenever the people of Israel entered through the east side of the tabernacle or temple, in a sense, they were making their way back toward the holy space of the garden.

Since the fall, however, sin threatens to abuse and destroy the holy spaces of God. Therefore, God placed guardians at the eastern entrance to protect humans from themselves, lest they “take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever” (Gen 3:22).

Guardians of Eden

It has been stated that God placed guardians at the eastern entrance to the garden of Eden, keeping sinful humans out from the holy presence of the Lord. These guardians are the cherubim: “He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gen 3:24).

The tabernacle and temple also featured guardian cherubim. The 10 curtains that made up the tabernacle itself had cherubim embroidered into its blue, purple, and scarlet background (Exod 26:1), “intended to recall the theme of ‘paradise lost.’”⁸⁰ Within this, the curtain that separated the holy place from the most holy place featured even more cherubim (Exod 26:31). Then, guarding the very center of the most holy place, the ark of the covenant, were two large

79. Leithart, *A House for My Name*, 53–54.

80. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 303.

cherubim fashioned from hammered gold (Exod 25:18–22). In the same way, the temple featured guardian cherubim on many surfaces, from the ark of the covenant to the walls and cross-piece frameworks—even to the braces and frames of the watercart (1 Kgs 6:23–35, 7:29–36, 8:6–7, 2 Chr 3:7–14).⁸¹ This is further highlighted under the heading *The Furnishings of Eden*.

Because God built his sanctuary like the heights (Ps 78:68–69), and the tabernacle and temple were models of the true heavenly sanctuary (Heb 9:23–24), it follows that whenever God allowed a human to get a peek into his heavenly throne room, they would see a similar sight as the tabernacle or temple they were accustomed to seeing. When Isaiah (Is 6), Ezekiel (Ezek 10), and John (Rev) got such a glimpse, all three biblical authors recorded similar reports about the angelic guardian creatures around the throne where God’s presence rests and rules.

The cherubim, however, were never intended to be the guardians keeping mankind out of the presence of God. The cherubim were only stationed after the humans’ failure to carry out their duty as guardian priests.⁸² That is the topic of the following section.

Priests of Eden

As images of God, humans were to represent and point to the greater reality of the Lord’s heavenly divine presence. As you read on in the Bible, though, three specific roles seem to be developed that all contribute one aspect of that image of God ideal. *Kings* represent God’s

81. Could this be why, in Joshua 5:13–15, as Joshua is entering the promised land from its eastern side, he is met by “a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand” who identifies himself as the “commander of the Lord’s army”? Is this commander of the Lord’s army like a guardian cherub stationed at the eastern entrance of this Edenic space? The command for Joshua to remove his sandals and the mention of holy ground points to this possibility.

82. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 70.

presence and powerful rule on Earth in the context of a group's social and political life.⁸³

Prophets represent God's power and purpose to people on Earth specifically to those in covenant relationship with God.⁸⁴ Then there are the *priests*. Although Genesis 1–3 never explicitly calls the first humans priests [כֹּהֵן], the biblical authors intended for their readers to see them as such all the same.⁸⁵ It had been mentioned that humans were commissioned with the mission of Edenic expansion—to “be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it” (Gen 1:28). However, humans were to have an “*inreach*,” as well as outreach, mindset. When God places Adam in the garden of Eden, he does so for Adam to “work [עָבַד] it and keep [שָׁמַר] it” (Gen 2:15 ESV).

Work and Keep

These verbs, עָבַד and שָׁמַר imply more than a life of gardening. Another acceptable translation for these verbs is “to serve” and “to guard.” John Walton, employing the use of comparative studies, adds:

Maintaining order made one a participant with God in the ongoing task of sustaining the equilibrium God had established in the cosmos. Egyptian thinking attached this not only to the role of priests as they maintained the sacred space in the temples but also to the king, whose task was ‘to complete what was unfinished, and to preserve the existent, not as a status quo but in a continuing, dynamic, even revolutionary process of remodeling and improvement.’ This combines the subduing and ruling of Genesis 1 with the ‘bd and šmr of this chapter.⁸⁶

83. Jon Collins and Tim Mackie, *The Royal Priest Study Notes Collection*, BibleProject, 2. *The Royal Priest Study Notes Collection*, 2. Available at <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/priests-of-eden/>.

84. Collins and Mackie, *The Royal Priest Study Notes Collection*, 2.

85. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 70. “Thus, the implication may be that God places Adam into a royal temple to begin to reign as his priestly vice-regent. In fact, Adam should always best be referred to as a ‘priest-king’, since it is only after the ‘fall’ that priesthood is separated from kingship, though Israel's eschatological expectation is of a messianic priest-king (e.g., see Zech. 6:12–13).”

86. John H. Walton and N. T. Wright, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015), 107.

The only other places these two verbs are used together (or in close proximity with each other) are in reference to priests and Levites at the tabernacle or temple.⁸⁷ They were to *serve* God and *guard* his words and commands (Exod 12:24–25, Deut 11:32–12:1, 13:4, Josh 22:5, Mal 3:14), as well as *serve* and *guard* the tabernacle and temple spaces (Num 3:7–8, 10, 18:3–7, 28, 32, 38, 1 Chr 23:32, Ezek 44:14). Numbers 18:3–7 particularly draws a striking parallel between the tabernacle priests and the Edenic priests:

And they shall perform [שָׁמַר] duties [שָׁמַר] for you and the duties [שָׁמַר] of the whole tent, but they shall not come near the furnishings of the sanctuary and the altar, or both they and you will die. They shall join you and perform [שָׁמַר] the duties [שָׁמַר] of the tent of meeting, for all the service [עָבַד] of the tent; but an unauthorized person shall not come near you. So you shall perform [שָׁמַר] the duties [שָׁמַר] of the sanctuary and the duties [שָׁמַר] of the altar, so that there will no longer be wrath on the sons of Israel. Behold, I Myself have taken your fellow Levites from among the sons of Israel; they are a gift to you, dedicated to the Lord, to perform [עָבַד] the service [עָבַד] for the tent of meeting. But you and your sons with you shall attend [שָׁמַר] to your priesthood for everything that concerns the altar and inside the veil, and you are to perform [עָבַד] service [עָבַד]. I am giving you the priesthood as a service that is a gift, and the unauthorized person who comes near shall be put to death.⁸⁸

Even apart from the surrounding evidence, one could dismiss the repetition of these verbs due to their relatively common use. However, just as immediately after God placed Adam in the garden to שָׁמַר and עָבַד came a threat that failure to carry out these garden responsibilities and instead eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil would result in death (Gen 2:15–17), so also here, failure to carry out proper priestly work described by these verbs would likewise result in

87. Hays, *The Temple and Tabernacle*, 32.

88. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 67. “The Aramaic translation of Genesis 2:15 (*Tg. Neofiti*) underscores this priestly notion of Adam, saying that he was placed in the garden ‘to toil in the Law and to observe its commandments’ (language strikingly similar to the above numbers’ references).”

death.⁸⁹ As a result, it becomes clear that “the duties of later priests are modeled after Adam’s duties. To serve in and guard the sanctuary was to be like Adam as he was serving and guarding in Eden. Adam was therefore the first priest and later priests were all neo-Adams.”⁹⁰ This would designate Adam as the archetypal priest in the first, primeval temple.⁹¹ As a corporate kingdom of priests, all of Israel would be called to keep God’s commands and live in a state of blessing in the land (Deut 30:15–18).⁹² After the fall, the blessing of the fulfilling priestly tasks of working and guarding are inverted for humans. They would now work the ground outside Eden and instead of guarding Eden, the cherubim become the ones guarding Eden *from them* (Gen 3:23–24).

Precious Stones of Eden

Another feature hinting at a link between later priests and Eden is that they physically wore elements of the garden on their bodies. Modern readers of the first chapters of Genesis tend to skim past 2:10–14 and dismiss it as irrelevant “filler” geography, but these features which the narrator makes a point to highlight, too, are pertinent for analyzing a correlation between Eden and the tabernacle/temple.⁹³ In the Eden narrative, stressing the opulence of the land shows the

89. See also 1 Kgs 9:6–7 for similar mention of guarding, serving, being cut off from the land of the temple and cast out of the Lord’s sight.

90. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 114–15.

91. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 68. “...he [Adam] was the archetypal priest who served in and guarded (or ‘took care of’) God’s first temple.”

92. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 101.

93. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 73.

glory of God’s presence through the beauty of the physical surroundings.⁹⁴ As the ideal landscape, the area surrounding Eden was lush and full of precious stones and elements that would later be worn by the priestly neo-Adams of the tabernacle and temple. God directs Moses to craft these “garments ... for glory” (Exod 28:2) featuring an ornate breastplate made with carnelian, topaz, emerald, turquoise, lapis lazuli, diamond, jacinth, agate, amethyst, beryl, onyx, and jasper (Exod 28:17-20). Dressed in such a variety of precious stones, encountering the priest was like encountering the prosperity of the idyllic garden-land.

We are not left only to see Adam as an Edenic priest through implicit analogy. In a poetic repurposing of the Eden account, Ezekiel announces God’s judgment upon the king of Tyre for ruling as a god *himself* in his eyes, rather than an *image* of God (Ezek 28:1–10). Ezekiel places the king of Tyre in the context of the paradise of Eden, clothed like a priest, but by the same token failing to carry out his priestly duties with faithfulness:⁹⁵

You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every kind of precious stone covered you: carnelian, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and emerald. Your mountings and settings were crafted in gold; they were prepared on the day you were created. You were an anointed guardian cherub,⁹⁶ for I had appointed you. You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked among the fiery stones. From the day you were created you were blameless in your ways until wickedness was found in you. Through the abundance of your trade, you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I expelled you in disgrace from the mountain of God, and banished you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud because of your beauty; for the sake of your splendor you corrupted your wisdom. So I threw you down to the ground; I made you a spectacle before kings. You profaned your sanctuaries by the magnitude of your iniquities in your dishonest trade (Ezek 28:13–18a).

94. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 100.

95. Beale, *God Dwells Among Us*, 12.

96. Mihăilă, “Temple and Paradise: Some Remarks on the Dynamics of Sacred Place.” 146. The Masoretic text describes the subject as the cherub, sinning and being expelled from the garden. Old Greek, on the other hand, says the subject is *with* the cherub (μετὰ τοῦ χερουβ).

Although Ezekiel has written this as an indictment of the king of Tyre, the way he repackages the Genesis narrative serves also to connect some of the dots of these Edenic concepts more clearly. First, there is a comparison to Israel's priests, doing the work of the guardian cherubim before their need to replace what should have been the human's priestly task of guarding. As mentioned previously, Eden is compared to a *sanctuary*, the same word used for the tabernacle/temple: "They are to make a *sanctuary* for me so that I may dwell among them" (Exod 25:8). In addition to priestly comparison, we also benefit from seeing an example of the temptation narrative of Genesis 3 serving as a prototypical lens through which to view subsequent cases of temptation and resultant exile. Ezekiel includes one important detail in this picture, though, that has not yet been discussed. He refers to Eden as "the holy mountain of God" (Ezek 28:14).

Mt. Eden

Apart from the temple being constructed on Mount Zion (Ps 24, 74:2), there is no clear mountain imagery within the architecture or artistry of tabernacle or temple themselves. So, why is this pertinent? When analyzing the parallels of a tripartite structure, gradations of holiness were primarily viewed from a *horizontal* perspective; however, Scripture also holds that same conceptual view from a *vertical* perspective. This is the idea behind the development of Eden as the holy mountain of God.⁹⁷

97. Mihăilă, "Temple and Paradise," 148–149. Mihăilă asserts that the Hebrew Scriptures and their conceived cosmology were influenced to view mountains as sacred space by their ancient neighbors, such as the Canaanite Mount Zaphon and similarly the Greek Mount Olympus. However, if the implicit details of the Eden narrative really do point to an elevated Eden, it is no surprise that the peoples would have continued to operate with this understanding as they abandoned worship of the true God. The same peoples who tried to construct the tower of Babel and bring God down to themselves through their mountain-like temple, after their dispersion, would conceivably conceptualize the mountains in their respective new homelands in the same way.

When Eden is first introduced, it's elevation relative to the surrounding land is merely implicit in the text. A river goes out from Eden to water the garden, then splits into four rivers that flow outward into the surrounding lands (Gen 2:10-14). Water flows downward due to gravity. Therefore, we can deduce that Eden was raised up somewhat higher relative to the land around it. That seemingly insignificant detail gets developed in subsequent narratives, but the reader will likely miss this if they are not clued into the aforementioned correlations to Eden as a cosmic temple.

Throughout the narratives spanning from Abraham to Moses, God regularly chooses to reveal himself particularly in places of high elevation.⁹⁸ Abraham almost offers his son Isaac as a sacrifice on a mountain in the land of Moriah (Gen 22:2), the same area with a mount on top of which the temple grounds would be constructed and sacrifices would be offered repeatedly until the coming of the Messiah. Mount Sinai, also known as Mount Horeb, is given the same title as Ezekiel's description of Eden, "the mountain of God" (Exod 3:1). Especially at Sinai is the concept of vertical gradations of holiness that mirror and expand its horizontal counterpart on display. As God veils his presence in the burning bush on Mount Horeb, Moses cannot draw near, for it is "holy ground" (Exod 3:5). The implicit themes of this encounter will be much more overt when Moses brings the people out of Egypt, and they "all worship God at this mountain" (Exod 3:12). After the Exodus, Moses and the Israelites sing with Mt. Eden language: "You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your possession; LORD, you have prepared the place for your dwelling; Lord, your hands have established the sanctuary" (Exod 15:17).

98. According to this spatial theology, it follows that the architects of the Tower of Babel would have sought to build upwards in elevation to make a name for themselves, taking matters into their own hands by reaching the dwelling place of God by the work of their own hands.

As they set off into the wilderness, then, Sinai is described as a mountain-temple. The people are invited to keep God’s covenant, and in doing so, they would be a “kingdom of priests and my holy nation” (Exod 19:6). At the central *summit* of the mountain, God came in a dense cloud with Moses, acting as a high priest (Exod 24:8), being granted access on the seventh day (Exod 24:2, 24:16).⁹⁹ At the secondary *mid-section* of the mountain, the priests and elders not only had access but “they saw [God], and they ate and drank” (Exod 24:11). At the tertiary *base* of mountain, the rest of the people gathered (Exod 19:17, 24:4).

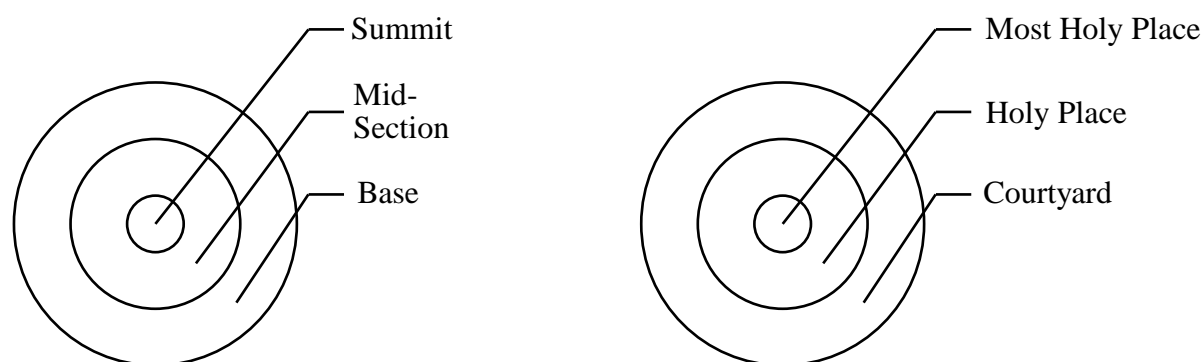


Figure 2. Vertical Tripartite Gradations of Holiness

At every level, the people had to be consecrated, and the Lord attached a clear warning to entering this holy space without granted access: “Put boundaries for the people all around the mountain and say: Be careful that you don’t go up on the mountain or touch its base. Anyone who touches the mountain must be put to death” (Exod 19:12). Just as Adam and Eve were given a divine command with lethal implications concerning wisdom in regard to the tree of knowledge

99. Collins and Mackie, *The Royal Priest Study Notes Collection*, 20. “Moses becomes a narrative image of the image of God resting with God on the high cosmic mountain on the seventh day. No wonder he starts glowing with God’s glory (see 34:29-35).” In addition, when the Lord speaks with Moses “face-to-face, just as a man speaks with his friend” (Exod 33:11), Moses is enjoying the intimacy there was always supposed to be between God and his images.

of good and evil in the middle of the garden, the same is true of Sinai. It is on the central summit of Sinai that God also announces his divine commands with lethal implications for his kingdom of priests (the corporate Adam and Eve), beginning with the 10 commandments—the Law of God which leads to wisdom (Ps 1; 19:7,11; 119). The same concept is then transferred from Eden and Sinai to their constructed counterparts. In the center of the tabernacle and temple, the most holy place housed the ark of the covenant. Here, the stone tablets of the Law given from the summit of Sinai continued to be kept (Deut 10:1–5), and here God would continue to speak his commands for the people to Moses (Exod 25:22). If these divine commands were broken, or if the ark housing them were merely touched, this once again had lethal implications (2 Sam 6:6–7).¹⁰⁰

Having used Mt. Sinai as a sort of neo-Mt. Eden,¹⁰¹ the people would need an “Eden-to-go” for God to dwell among them properly as they journeyed to the promised land.¹⁰² “They are to make a sanctuary for me so that I may dwell among them” (Exod 25:8). Eventually, this “holy mountain” would be established as Mount Zion (Ps 48:1–2). Then, Jerusalem would be a cosmic mountain linking “heaven and earth (as *axis mundi*); from here order was established at creation and was continually renewed and maintained through rituals and ceremonies.”¹⁰³ One day through the work of the Messiah this mountain would be—poetically speaking—raised up

100. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 73–74.

101. Beale, *God Dwells Among Us*, 36–37. “Similarly, Jewish tradition believed that at the final resurrection, ‘the ark will be the first to be resurrected... and be placed on Mount Sinai’ (*Lives of the Prophets* 2:15), implying that this author viewed Sinai itself to be a mountain temple.”

102. Was God not dwelling among them already? Perhaps this is so that, even though God could dwell with them any way he pleased, through the tabernacle system, God could instruct the people about his character and nature, laying the groundwork that would anticipate and prepare for the work of his coming Messiah.

103. Lawrence E. Stager, “Jerusalem as Eden,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 26.3 (2000): 1.

“at the top of the mountains” (Isa 2:1–4) and expand to “[fill] the whole earth” (Dan 2:35). In the meantime, though, the Edenic temple on-the-move they had for their travels was the *tabernacle*.

Rivers of Eden

Just as Eden blessings were to flow out into the world from the hub of God’s people in Eden, Eden was also the source of a river whose life-giving streams flowed out into the world around it: “A river went out from Eden to water the garden. From there it divided and became the source of four rivers. The name of the first is Pishon, which flows through the entire land of Havilah... The name of the second river is Gihon, which flows through the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is Tigris, which runs east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates” (Gen 2:1–14). The tabernacle and temple did not have physical rivers streaming out from their centers (although, there were large basins capable of holding approximately 13,200 gallons of water, according to 1 Kgs 7:26, 38), but the poetry of Israel did conceive of rivers of life going out from the new Eden of Jerusalem.¹⁰⁴ For example, “They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; And You allow them to drink from the river of Your delights [literally: Edens]” (Ps 36:8 NASB), and, “There is a river—its streams delight the city of God, the holy dwelling place of the Most High” (Ps 46:4).¹⁰⁵ Probably the most important element to the rivers of Eden is the vision of Ezekiel 47 picturing a temple with a life-giving river flowing out from it, but that will be addressed under the heading *Fulfillment of the Garden-Temple Theme*.

104. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 72.

105. Perhaps also Jer 2:13, 17:7–8; Ps 1:2–3; Zech 13:1, 14:8–9.

Furnishings of Eden

The author to the Hebrews, after listing several components and furnishings of the tabernacle sanctuaries, wanting to keep his exhortation “brief” (Heb 13:22), says, “It is not possible to speak about these things in detail right now” (Heb 9:5). The following will now expand on the rich iconography of these furnishings with greater detail. The author to the Hebrews was referring to the tabernacle, but because Solomon turned up the volume with even richer Eden imagery, the temple will primarily be discussed in this section. “In short, images of flora, fauna, and cherubim were everywhere. The visual impact was unmissable; it was saying loud and clear, ‘O sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, you are now standing in a new Eden.’”¹⁰⁶

Flora

In the temple, if there was an exposed surface, it was probably adorned with some sort of garden imagery.¹⁰⁷ Concerning the walls, “He [Hiram] carved all the surrounding temple walls with carved engravings—cherubim, palm trees, and flower blossoms—in the inner and outer sanctuaries” (1 Kgs 6:29; See also 1 Kgs 6:18, 30–35). Concerning the pillars, “He made the pillars with two encircling rows of pomegranates” (1 Kgs 7:18), and “the tops of the pillars were shaped like lilies” (1 Kgs 7:22). On the basin, “Ornamental gourds encircled it below the brim ... completely encircling the basin” (1 Kgs 7:24), and “its rim was fashioned like the brim of a cup or of a lily blossom” (1 Kgs 7:26). On the water carts, “He engraved cherubim, lions, and palm

106. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 116–17.

107. The description of Solomon’s palace complex, however, has no such artistic imagery (1 Kgs 7:1–14), highlighting the unique purpose of this iconography for specifically the temple space.

trees on the plates of its braces and on its frames, wherever each had space, with encircling wreaths” (1 Kgs 7:36). There were 400 pomegranates on the gratings alone (1 Kgs 7:42).

Fauna

The garden of Eden, of course, flourished with both plant and animal life. At the temple, the basin “stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east” (1 Kgs 7:25). On the frames of the water carts were “lions, oxen, and cherubim” (1 Kgs 7:29). In addition to the architecture, Solomon “spoke about trees, from the cedar in Lebanon to the hyssop growing out of the wall. He also spoke about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish” (1 Kgs 4:33), and generally is pictured as a new Adam closely resembling the image of God ideal.¹⁰⁸

Precious Stones

Mostly everything in and around the temple was made or overlaid with gold or bronze, recalling the land around Eden, particularly Havilah (Gen 2:11–12).¹⁰⁹ It is possible that the reflective nature of the precious metals had heavenly symbolism, designed to mimic the shining of the sun,

108. Solomon receives wisdom to discern between good and evil from God rather than seizing it for himself. He provides food and provisions in abundance. His kingdom has dominion over a broad expanse of land and continues to expand as was originally intended. However, just as Adam “listened to [his] wife (Gen 3:17)” who had been tempted by the serpent, Solomon is led astray by listening to the serpentine idolatry of his many foreign wives. Solomon falls in the garden just as his ancestors had, and this begins a chain of events that fractures the kingdom and leads to its eventual exile to the east in Assyria and Babylon.

109. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” 22.

moon, and stars.¹¹⁰ Refer back to the heading *Precious Stones of Eden* for details regarding the precious stones decorating the priestly garments.

Lampstands

The lampstand of the tabernacle bore particular resemblance to a flowering tree, described as having buds, petals, branches, almond blossoms—all botanical terms (Exod 25:31–40).¹¹¹ It had seven branches with seven olive-oil lamps burning at all hours (Exod 27:20–21, Lev 24:2).¹¹² The effect of all these elements made this arboreal lampstand a stylized tree of life, bearing fruit that was shining with the light of life.¹¹³ It is also possible there is some connection here to the burning bush.¹¹⁴ The temple had 10 such lampstands (1 Kgs 7:49). It may seem contradictory that the tree of life was said to be in the *middle* of the garden, yet this stylized tree of life lampstand was in the *holy place* rather than the centralized *most holy place*. However, it is important to recognize that the symbolism here in many ways is multivalent and overlapping. Although it can

110. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 56.

111. Hays, *The Temple and Tabernacle*, 38.

112. Beale, *God Dwells Among Us*, 41. “Such an identification may be represented in the Qumran Hymn scroll (IQHVII, 24): ‘I [the Teacher of Righteousness] will shine with a *sevenfold light* in the E[*den* which] Thou had [m]ade for Thy glory.’”

113. Carol L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult*, 2nd ed. edition. (Gorgias Press, 2003). This work of Carol Meyers is often cited by other authors to make this point based on her work in the field of archaeology.

114. Hays, *The Temple and Tabernacle*, 39.

be difficult to draw definite distinctions in all the points of symbolism, the broad picture remains apparent.¹¹⁵

Table

This table holds the bread of the presence—12 loaves of bread probably representing the 12 tribes of Israel. The table with the bread of presence was opposite from the stylized tree of life lampstand, together resembling the abundance of food and provision to sustain the original priests, Adam and Eve, in the primordial temple of Eden.¹¹⁶ As Moses and the seventy elders ate and drank in the *presence* of God in the mid-section of the Sinai mountain temple, so the table of the bread of *presence* is here in the mid-section of the tabernacle and temple for the priests. The 12 tribes of Israel, as a kingdom of new priests, are therefore reminded that God pursues fellowship and relationship with his people when he dwells among them.¹¹⁷

Altar

An altar is an essential component of a sanctuary. Altars to God were constructed before the tabernacle or temple ever came to be. Cain and Abel presumably built altars to offer their sacrifices just outside Eden (Gen 4:3–4). After God recreates the world with the flood and brings

115. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 56. It is also possible that when Genesis 2:9 says that the tree of life was in the “middle of the garden,” it did not mean in the exact center, but rather when viewed from the broad perspective of the entire land of Eden, it was generally *centralized*. Even as the lampstand is in the holy place and not the most holy place, it is likewise still generally centralized when viewed from a similarly broad perspective of the camp/city.

116. Beale, *God Dwells Among Us*, 42.

117. Beale, *God Dwells Among Us*, 42–43.

Noah and the ark “to rest in the seventh month (Gen 8:4)” on the mountains of Ararat,¹¹⁸ Noah leaves the ark and builds an altar (Gen 8:20).¹¹⁹ Then, “when Abraham built altars all over the promised land, he was erecting tiny Edenic sanctuaries wherever he went, claiming the land as God’s holy land.”¹²⁰ Similarly, the altars of the tabernacle and temple were positioned in the outer courtyard area just outside the holier two spaces.¹²¹ “At the place of sacrifice, God visited his people and filled them with blessings. The altar was the axis of heaven and earth.”¹²²

Incense

Every morning and evening when the priests came to tend to the lampstand(s), the holy place was filled with smoke from the altar of incense (Exod 30:7–8). Incense had particular theological significance on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest would access the most holy place. He could only enter the most holy place with a firepan of blazing coals and two handfuls of incense. This would create a cloud that helped veil the mercy seat. Without this cloud of incense obscuring his view of the holy presence of the Lord, he would die (Lev 16:12–14).¹²³ In general,

118. It is also significant that the waters dry up on the first day of the first month of the six hundred and first year (Gen 8:13). This is a new “in the beginning,” once again.

119. G. K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48.1 (2005): 5–31. “It is possible that God started building another temple for his people to dwell in and to experience his presence during Noah’s time.” This is also the first mention of *clean* animals being offered in sacrifice, foreshadowing the future priestly sacrifices in the tabernacle and temple.

120. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 132.

121. Beale, *God Dwells Among Us*, 35.

122. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 133.

123. Hays, *The Temple and Tabernacle*, 116.

however, the smoke of incense is said to represent the prayers of the saints (Ps 141:2).¹²⁴

“Incense wrote prayers in smoke and smell. Petitions became see-able and smell-able.”¹²⁵

While humans were in a state of perfection as the image of God in the garden, humans had a beatific vision and could walk and talk with God. There was no need for obscured views or communication. In many ways, incense was a concession made by God for humans to be able to draw near to him.

Curtain

Traveling from outside the tabernacle or temple grounds inward, this curtain veil would be the final boundary marker before entering into the most holy place of the presence of God (Exod 26:33). With embroidered guardian cherubim and an eastward orientation, this curtain acted as a barrier to the innermost part of Eden-space 364 days a year and entrance one day a year.¹²⁶

Ark

The ark of the covenant was in the centralized most holy place. With two large cherubim on top, the ark served as God’s throne and footstool, sitting “enthroned between the cherubim” (Ps 80:1, 99:1). From here, God would meet with Moses and relay commands for the people of Israel

124. Beale, *God Dwells Among Us*, 43.

125. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 139–40.

126. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 144.

(Exod 25:22). Thus, God was like a king issuing royal edicts from his throne¹²⁷—much like he had done from the garden and the summit of Sinai.

Inside the ark were the core edicts of the king—the stone tablets of the Law. It is possible the tree of knowledge of good and evil finds its parallel in these centralized tablets of Law, for both were related to wisdom (Ps 19:8–9) and both brought death for their misuse (2 Sam 6:7, Num 4:20).¹²⁸ Because this was now an Eden outpost in the context of sin, the law of God was not bare, but had an *atonement cover* over it, which served as a sort of receptacle for the blood of sacrificial bulls and goats to be sprinkled upon it on the Day of Atonement.¹²⁹ On this day, blood is specifically manipulated 49 times in some fashion—seven times seven—and in doing so, “He will make atonement for the most holy place in this way for all their sins because of the Israelites’ impurities and rebellious acts” (Lev 16:16). Because the consequence of sin in the garden was death, and “the life of a creature is in the blood” (Lev 17:11), this was a substitutionary act. The people could then continue to dwell within the vicinity of God’s presence despite having broken the commands God had issued from his throne.

127. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 146.

128. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” 23.

129. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 344. Bulls and goats were the specific idols the Israelites had been tempted to worship (Exod 32; Lev 17). Therefore, “The sin offering of the priests contained a reminder of the great sin of the priests.”

Basins

The basin of the tabernacle courtyard was made “from the bronze mirrors of the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting” (Exod 38:8). This basin held water for Aaron and his sons to wash and be cleansed so they would not die (Exod 30:21).

The temple featured a massive primary basin capable of holding 11,000 gallons of water (1 Kgs 7:26), as well as an additional 10 bronze basins on carts—split with five on the left side and five on the right side of the temple courtyard—capable of holding 220 gallons of water (1 Kgs 7:38). The primary basin was for the priests to wash, and the water carts were for washing the parts of the burnt offering (2 Chr 4:6). Ritual cleansing was a priority for dwelling in the God’s holy space.¹³⁰

Eden Trashed

“[D]o you see what they are doing here ... so that I must depart from my sanctuary?” (Ezek 8:6). Despite the Lord’s perseverance in providing a way to dwell among his people, the Israelites, like Adam and Eve, did not value this blessing chief among all things. They said, “It is useless to serve God. What have we gained by keeping his requirements and walking mournfully before the Lord of Armies?” (Mal 3:14).

Psalm 106 summarizes Israel’s unfaithfulness to God from the Exodus onward, saying, “They despised the pleasant land and did not believe his promise.... so the land became polluted with blood. They defiled themselves by their actions and prostituted themselves by their deeds”

130. Hays, *The Temple and Tabernacle*, 121.

(106:24, 29). “This new corporate Adam and Eve trashed their new Eden. They poisoned the soil. They polluted the ground. God’s new garden devolved into his spiritual horror house.”¹³¹

As a result, the magnificent temple of Solomon was destroyed by the Babylonians, and the people were exiled from the garden of Israel to the east in Assyria and Babylon. Even after they return from exile and the second temple is constructed (Ezra 1:2–3, 3:10–11), there is never any mention of God’s presence dwelling there as the cloud of his presence had rested upon his past temple spaces.

Eden Restored

However, the prophets envisioned a day when the garden-temple would return in a new way.

Isaiah sees a day when “the mountain of the LORD’s house will be established at the top of the mountains and will be raised above the hills. All nations will stream to it” (Isa 2:2). Ezekiel, who was carried off in the first Babylonian attack of Jerusalem, was surprisingly given a vision of the mobile heavenly throne room of God while sitting by a canal in Babylon, of all places (Ezek 1:1–3). After prophesying a renewal of Israel’s spiritual state, he says that “This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden” (Ezek 36:35) and reports these words of the Lord: “I will establish and multiply them and will set my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people” (Ezek 37:26–27). “[T]his homecoming is the reversal of Genesis, when Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden.”¹³²

131. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 120.

132. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 79.

Ezekiel then dedicates the final eight chapters of his book describing a new temple. Although a detailed account, these are not the blueprints for a physical temple, but, like Ezekiel's other visions, this account is highly symbolic (i.e. Ezek 47), pointing to the reality of what the temple always pointed to—a reality that will be inaugurated with the coming of the Messiah.¹³³ In this temple, the glory of the Lord *does* return, entering the temple from the eastern side and filling the inner court. God says that “this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet, where I will dwell among the Israelites forever.” (Ezek 43:7). Ezekiel's final words, “the name of the city from that day on will be The Lord Is There” (Ezek 48:35), sees Eden restored as God once again dwells with mankind as it was in the beginning.

Fulfillment of Garden-Temple Theme

This thesis has the purpose to show the correlation between Eden and the tabernacle/temple. So far, that has been done almost entirely with passages in the immediate context of descriptions of those sacred sanctuaries in the Old Testament. Although revealing the fulfillment of the garden-temple theme in the person of Jesus, the Church, and the new creation is not the primary focus of this thesis, seeing the full picture with additional points of correlation contributes to solidifying the body of argumentation.

133. Hays, *The Temple and Tabernacle*, 138.

New Eden Inaugurated

When “the Word became flesh and dwelt [literally, *tabernacled*] among us” (John 1:14), a new age of the garden-temple was inaugurated. When Jesus, “the glory as the one and only Son from the Father” (John 1:14), enters the temple grounds, the presence of God, Immanuel, returns to dwell in this space for the first time in generations. To the religious leaders, Jesus speaks “about the temple of his body” (John 2:21), and “that something greater than the temple is here” (Matt 12:6). Indeed, it is as if the vague chapters describing the tabernacle and temple were awaiting in eager anticipation “just the sort of spiritual explanation that the NT gives them.”¹³⁴

Israel was the corporate Adam. Now, Jesus is Israel reduced to one—the micro-Israel.¹³⁵ He is called the Son of Man [literally, Son of *Adam*], the Last Adam, finally succeeding as the perfect image of God (2 Cor 4:4, Col 1:15, Heb 1:3) where Adam, Noah, Israel, etc. failed (Rom 5:12-21). He does not fall into temptation in the wilderness (Matt 4:1–11) but rather “trample[s] ... the serpent” (Ps 91:13). As he goes about conducting ministry and miracles with the Spirit of the Lord within him, Jesus is recreating little pockets of the Eden ideal (Isa 61).¹³⁶ “[T]he healings were a beginning reversal of the curse of the old fallen world.”¹³⁷

Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, he stakes his dwelling place among mankind again (Matt 18:20, 28:20). When he died, the eastern facing curtain separating mankind from the

134. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 300.

135. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 172.

136. Isaiah 61 foreshadows the work of the Messiah, which Jesus chooses to read as he launches his public ministry in Luke 4. In this chapter, the Messiah is resetting the states of the people around him like the year of Jubilee, a time when the land of Israel was to be reverted to an Edenic state of peace, with seven acts of recreation (61:1–3). The result of this work is that “they will be called righteous trees, planted by the Lord to glorify him” (61:3). These recreated people are then called to do for the area around themselves what was done for them—rebuild, restore, and renew. They are “called the Lord’s priests” (61:6), and the righteousness and praise that the Messiah creates through them is said to spring up “as a garden” (61:11).

137. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 174.

presence of God was torn in two (Matt 27:51). Believers therefore have direct access to the most holy place of God's throne of grace (Heb 4:16, 6:19) and therefore a seventh day sabbath rest remains for God's people who have been living in exile (Matt 11:28–30, Heb 4:9).

All authority on heaven and earth to rule has been given to him, expanding Eden to the ends of the earth (Dan 7:13–14; Matt 28:18; Acts 1:8). As the true temple, the vivifying river that streams forth from underneath his throne brings the water of life to the thirsty of the world, with banks that burst forth with an abundance of fruit-bearing trees (Ezek 47, Rev 22:17). He rides on the cherubim, and they sing his praises (Ps 18:10, Rev 4:6–8). He is dressed like a cosmic priest (Rev 1:12–16), serving as kingly high priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek, with no need of a successor (Heb 6:20–7:10), ministering in the “true tabernacle that was set up by the Lord and not man” (Heb 8:2). He is the stone that strikes kingdoms of this world, becoming a great mountain that fills the whole earth (Dan 2:35)—a mountain not like Sinai, but a mountain of “festive gathering” (Heb 12:22). He is the son of Adam ruling with everything under his feet—“all the sheep and oxen, as well as the animals in the wild, the birds of the sky, and the fish of the sea that pass through the currents of the seas” (Ps 8:7–8). He dwells among the lampstands of the temple, his churches (Rev 1:13), sending forth his sevenfold Spirit from his throne (Rev 1:4).¹³⁸

His cross is a new “tree” (Acts 13:29, 1 Pet 2:24) of life. He is the once-for-all sacrifice granting believers Eden access (Heb 7:27). He offers his priests an altar and table “from which those who worship at the tabernacle do not have a right to eat” (Heb 13:10) of bread and wine where he is truly present for us to dine with him (Matt 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19).¹³⁹ He

138. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 302.

139. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 137.

washes “our bodies with pure water” (Heb 10:22) through basins that hold the waters of baptism so that we can draw near to him in confidence.

Eden Continued Now and Forever

Just as the Lord’s presence had come to rest in his temples throughout the Old Testament when they had been cleansed and made pure by sacrifices, through the atonement of sacrifice of the lamb of God, the Spirit of God comes to dwell in believers as his temples (1 Cor 6:19, Eph 2:21–22). Jesus Christ is the living cornerstone upon which all believers, as living stones, are built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (1 Pet 2:4–8). The new Edenic temples-on-the-move were first commissioned on the day of Pentecost, when flames of fire rested upon the apostles and the Holy Spirit filled them (Acts 2:1–4).¹⁴⁰ The result of this new kind of indwelling of the Spirit through faith in Jesus is that “the geographically specific, spatially limited Sanctuary in the Old Testament is replaced in the new creation by a city that fills the entire new world.”¹⁴¹ In connection to his resurrection by faith—the ultimate act of new creation—believers are a sort of firstfruits of the coming new creation (Jas 1:18).

The end of Revelation ties a bow on all these garden-temple themes: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among the people, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them” (Rev 21:3 NASB). John does not see any visible temple in the new creation (Rev 21:11), because, just as was intended from the beginning of

140. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 204.

141. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 126.

time, *all creation* is the Almighty's temple. God's glorious divine presence permeates the whole city, not restricted to gradations of holy space.¹⁴² The eschatological city is almost identical to the protological garden: it is decorated with the precious stones of Eden, has the river of the water of life, the tree of life, and God's vice-regents reign with him in peace (Rev 21:18–22:5). And unlike the tabernacle or temple, there is no more veiling by means of incense—the saints get to see him face to face (Rev 22:4)—and its gates/curtains are never closed (Rev 21:25, 22:14).

142. G. K. Beale, "Adam as the First Priest in Eden as the Garden Temple," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22.2 (2018): 20.

CONCLUSION

There is clearly more significance to the garden of Eden than simply being the place where Adam and Eve lived in perfection. To fail to see the correlation between the garden of Eden and the tabernacle/temple is to fail to see so many of the colors that are mixed into the palette used to paint the magnificent portrait that is the work of Christ. You will still see the picture, for there are many additional hues and shades that make up its composition, but you will miss key aspects of its beauty.

This is why study of the Old Testament, a practice too often ignored and in the process of dying in many churches, is so crucial. “The problem has been that the majority of Christians prefer to meander down the well-worn paths of the smaller NT garden than to venture among the weird and wild prophetic fauna of the Tanak.”¹⁴³ The more you venture through the so-called *weird* sections, the less strange the words and works of Jesus and his apostles will be.

Understanding Eden as God’s first sacred garden-temple fixes the narratives of Genesis 1–3 at the beginning of the timeline of a grand Biblical theme that stretches all the way to Revelation.¹⁴⁴ This thesis has analyzed how this protological and eschatological intertextual relationship is especially developed through redemption history in the tabernacle/temple and fulfilled in the Christ Jesus and his Church.¹⁴⁵ God is on a mission to bring redemption-history to

143. Bird, *The Christ Key*, 7.

144. Beale, *God Dwells Among Us*, 4.

145. Peñuela-Pineda, “SANCTUARY/TEMPLE IN GENESIS 1-3: A REEVALUATION OF THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE.” 385.

completion when “the tabernacle of God is among the people” (Rev 21:3 NASB). Then, Eden will be everywhere.

**APPENDIX 1. REPEATED VOCABULARY IN CREATION OF THE COSMOS,
TABERNACLE, AND TEMPLE**

Source: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/temple/>

Creation and Sabbath Genesis 1:31-2:3	Tabernacle Designs and Sabbath Exodus 25-31	Tabernacle Completion and Sabbath Exodus 39-40	Jerusalem Temple Completion 1 Kings 6-8
Repetition of 7's			
Seven days open with divine command: "And God said ..." Day 1 - Genesis 1:5 Day 2 - Genesis 1:8 Day 3 - Genesis 1:13 Day 4 - Genesis 1:19 Day 5 - Genesis 1:23 Day 6 - Genesis 1:31 Day 7 - Genesis 2:1-3 Sabbath	Seven speeches open with divine command: "And Yahweh spoke to Moses ..." Speech 1 - Exodus 25:1 Speech 2 - Exodus 30:11 Speech 3 - Exodus 30:17 Speech 4 - Exodus 30:22 Speech 5 - Exodus 30:34 Speech 6 - Exodus 31:1 Speech 7 - Exodus 31:12 Sabbath	Seven acts of obedience to the divine command complete the tabernacle: "And Moses did ... just as Yahweh commanded Moses. " Act 1 - Exodus 40:19 Act 2 - Exodus 40:21 Act 3 - Exodus 40:23 Act 4 - Exodus 40:25 Act 5 - Exodus 40:27 Act 6 - Exodus 40:29 Act 7 - Exodus 40:32-35 Divine rest	Seven petitions of Solomon upon the completion of the temple: "Blessed be Yahweh who spoke to my father David. " Petition 1 - 1 Kings 8:31-32 Petition 2 - 1 Kings 8:33-34 Petition 3 - 1 Kings 8:35-37a Petition 4 - 1 Kings 8:37b-40 Petition 5 - 1 Kings 8:41-43 Petition 6 - 1 Kings 8:44-45 Petition 7 - 1 Kings 8:46-53 Seven day feasts
Culmination of 7's			
Seventh day culminates in Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3)	Seventh speech emphasizes the "sign of Sabbath" (Exodus 31:12-17)	Seventh act of obedience "completes" the tabernacle	Solomon has two seven-day feasts to dedicate the temple (1 Kings 8:65)
Repeated Words			
"and God saw all that he had done, and behold , very good. And there was evening and morning, the sixth day. " (Genesis 1:31) + "And God blessed the seventh day."		"and Moses saw all the work they had done, and behold , just as YHWH commanded, so they did, and Moses blessed them." Exodus 39:43	"Then the king faced about and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing." 1 Kings 8:14
"and the skies and the land were completed (כִּלְיָה)." Genesis 2:1	"and it came about when he completed (כִּלְיָה) speaking to Moses on Mt. Sinai." Exodus 31:18	"and Moses completed (כִּלְיָה) the work (מְלָאכָה)." Exodus 40:33	"and Solomon built the temple and he finished (כִּלְיָה) it." 1 Kings 6:14
"and God rested (שָׁבַת) on the seventh day ... "		"and the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of YHWH filled the tent." Exodus 40:34	"and the cloud filled the house of Yahweh." 1 Kings 8:10-11
"... from all his work (מְלָאכָה) ... and God blessed (בֵּרַךְ) the seventh day and made it holy (קִדְּשׁ)." Genesis 2:2-3	"you shall keep the Sabbath for it is holy (קֹדֶשׁ) for you ... Six days let the work (מְלָאכָה) be done, and on the seventh day it is a Sabbath of Sabbath." Exodus 31:14-15	Aaron and his sons are brought before the tent for seven days in the ordination ceremony. Leviticus 8-9, see 8:35	"In the eleventh year, in the ... eighth month, the temple was finished throughout all its parts and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it." (1 Kings 6:38) "And the work (מְלָאכָה) of the pillars was finished." (1 Kings 7:22) "Thus all the work (מְלָאכָה) that King Solomon performed in the house of the Lord was finished." (1 Kings 7:51)
Tragic Disruptions			
Temptation and fall narrative: Genesis 3	Temptation and fall narrative: Exodus 32	Temptation and fall narrative: Leviticus 10	Temptation and fall narrative: 1 Kings 9:1-9 and 11:1-13

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