

“The Word of the Living Temple”

1. **Creation:** As we launched this study, we noted how John brought both the Creation of the Word and the Tabernacle of the Word together in the opening of his Gospel account (1:1, 14).
2. **Resurrection:** In *John 2* we see Jesus cleansing the Temple and prophesying that they “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (v. 19). John explains in the following verses that Jesus referred to His future resurrection.
3. **Visitation**
 - a. The Logos (Word) of God was incarnated to die! The Prophets foretold of YHWH’s visitation to Zion, the Temple. However, they could not see that the LORD Himself would be the living Temple – much less the sacrifice itself! One of the prophets, Malachi, prophesied that the LORD would come to His Temple (Mal. 3:1) to purify His people (Mal. 3:2-3) and *John 2* mentions the fulfilment of it. Later, Jesus would warn the Jews that they were facing immanent judgment because they didn’t recognize the time of their visitation (Lu. 19:41-44) His arrival at Zion, as seen in Mat. 21:1-5.
 - b. Jesus is God in flesh and thus Jesus’ visitation was, indeed, God’s literal visitation (see Mic. 4:1-2ff.).¹
4. **Incarnation:** Understanding the two natures (divine and human) of Jesus enables us to clearly understand the old cryptic prophesies and pictures of Him in the OT. The Temple of the LORD is where God meets man and in Jesus, the divine resides with human nature. Jn. 1:14. “Jesus is fully human but not merely human. He is essentially human but not commonly human.”²
5. **Preparation:** Heb. 10:5, 7a reads, “Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired but a body you prepared for me’ ... I have come to do your will, O God” (ESV). The prepared body is the Tabernacle of which John wrote. Jesus’ body was the means of our reconciliation and of which both the old Tabernacle and Temple pointed.
6. **Communion:** Both the Tabernacle and Temple encompass multiple types regarding the Body and Building of Christ. The portable Tabernacle illustrates God’s personal indwelling with His people, moving along with them on their journey; and the stationary Temple signified a permanent security of residence. Among other realities the structures picture a household of priests, worship, beauty, the harmony of nature and civilization, and (our topic) Incarnation.
7. **Redemption:** Consider the following outline of the illustrations of incarnation which both the Tabernacle and Temple picture
 - a. As noted in the Tabernacle considerations, the Temple is a microcosm of the universe and pointed to God’s plan of creation’s environments (space, galaxies, earth, land, sea, air, etc.) and creation’s crown (mankind and angels) and God living in harmony. Such is why the décor on and in the Temple included nature art. However, the Temple located in the city built by humans and itself built by humans demonstrates God’s intent that the New Creation includes both the provided perfect environments and our contributions of constructed cities – the perfect balance of God’s nature and man’s innovations. Such is why the end of *Revelation* pictures the New Creation as a city, a bride, and a paradise (Rev. 21-22).
 - b. The place which can endure the otherwise unbearable and terrifying presence of God.
 - c. The sacrificial provision of God cloaking Himself in the condescension of creation. This is seen more in the Tabernacle than Temple.

¹ It is significant that the LORD is also depicted as going *out* from Zion. The following references depict the One who would come to, for, and out of Zion (Ps. 14:7; 50:2; 53:6; 110:2; Isa. 2:3-19; Joel 3:16; Mic. 4:1-13).

² Cole, G. A. (2013). *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation*. (D. A. Carson, Ed.) (Vol. 30). England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press.

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- d. The place of healing, cleansing, offering
- e. The place of reconciliation of God and man.
- f. The place which holds the unveiled presence of God in the Holy of Holies (Rev. 21:3, 22; 1 Jn. 3:1-3)
- g. The singular prescribed and provided place of worship/sacrifice. This has not changed. Although we need not go to a particular building of worship, we must worship God in spirit and truth by being the portable Tabernacles which in earnest make up the building of Christ (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5). Therefore, we must still come to God His prescribed way which is through His Temple. “The Word is God...and tabernacled among us.” The Word is not only the High Priest and the unblemished offering, He is also the *only* true and living Temple in whom we reside and through whom we can worship God.
- h. The entire New Creation in which there is no need of a Temple building (Rev. 21:22).

Why again is such necessary? Sin is a big deal (Ro. 6:23)! When Adam sinned in the temple of Eden there was a rupture of relationships for which God is currently reconciling through the mediatory Temple – and ‘Body’ – of Christ. Below are the effects of said rupture:

- God and Man: man’s fellowship turned from communion and safety to guilt, fear, and flight. Adam and Eve hid from God (Gen. 3:8)
- Man and Woman: the two as one flesh begin to blame, strive, and struggle against on another (Gen. 3:12-16).
- Man and Nature: ground now cursed – making work toilsome and man now destined to ultimately succumb back to the dust from which he came. Furthermore, creation itself groans as it has been and continues to be effected by sin (Gen. 3:17-19; Ro. 8:20-22).
- The curse includes the Serpent of old: “Eat dust” (Gen. 3:14). The serpent will experience abject humiliation. Metaphorically eating dust is what happens to one’s enemies (cf. Ps 72:9; Isa 49:23; Mic 7:17).³⁸ Furthermore, the ‘enmity’ in view suggests a long period of conflict rather than a short one (cf. Num. 35:21–22; Ezek. 25:15; 35:5).^{39 3}
- Regarding Satan and fallen angels and their punishment with regard to the Word of God, see **Appendix 4**.

8. Commission

- a. Adam’s sin caused relational ruptures with God, creation, and creatures but Jesus is restoring and making all things new (2 Cor. 5:17; Rev. 21:5).
- b. Death came through Adam and resurrection through Christ (1 Cor. 15:21-22).
- c. Adam with Eve failed their commission to expand Eden’s Temple paradise. The new Gardener commissions us to expand His living Temple (Mat. 28:19-20; Eph. 2:19-22).
- d. This is why the Bride joins the Spirit in one voice to call new living stones (1 Pet. 2:5) into the Building of Christ’s Body (Rev. 22:17).
- e. There is thus no need of a structural Temple (Rev. 21:22) for everything in the cosmos will be holy unto the LORD (e.g. Zech. 14:20).

³⁸ Wenham 2004, comment on Gen. 3:14.

³⁹ Ibid., comment on Gen. 3:15.

³ Cole, G. A. (2013). *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation*. (D. A. Carson, Ed.) (Vol. 30, p. 42). England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press.

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As previously noted w/ regard to Adam forfeiting the communion in Eden, he also thus failed the commission to have dominion via spreading Eden to be a dwelling place for God with all creation. “Significantly the garden sanctuary does not appear to constitute the geographical limits for the Adamic task. Following the logic of the narrative that begins in the previous chapter [of the book quoted here], humankind is to exercise dominion over the fish of the sea. This is hardly satisfied by a horticultural existence. In other words, the garden sanctuary is best seen as a staging post for the task of Edenizing the entire world. William J. Dumbrell makes the point well: ‘As a paradigm of the end, *Genesis* 2 thus displays the harmony that humankind’s dominion was to secure the world at large. Adam’s role in Eden was to extend the contours of the garden to the whole world.’”^{8 4}

God had planted a garden and put Adam there to tend and expand it yet he failed. But there is a last Adam who is the new Gardener (Jn. 20:15), so to speak, who is making men and women new creations (2 Cor. 5:17). But before that, Jesus had to bear the sin burden in His own body. See Heb. 9:11-12, 23-28; 1 Pet. 2:24. Therefore, between the Garden of Eden and the Garden of the empty tomb, Jesus had to endure the Garden of Gethsemane (and the tree of Calvary). Thus Jesus – the eternal living Word – was given a body in which to tabernacle and sacrifice and fulfill the Adamic commission to expand the Temple/household of God throughout the entire world (Gen. 1:28-30; Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 6:16-18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Tim. 3:14; 1 Pet. 2:5).

PC: We considered the Word of the Tabernacle and how the Church is a large part of the fulfillment of it. Perhaps a little less foreign is the concept of Jesus himself being the Temple. No doubt that the Temple pointed to Jesus. But not unlike the Tabernacle, the Temple means nothing without us because there is no need of a Temple without creation. The Temple was obviously built for our sakes and not God’s. He does not live in something which cannot contain Him (cf. 1 Kgs. 8:27; Isa. 66:1; Acts 17:24). The living eternal Word came to offer His Temple as a sacrifice for us so that He could build (Zech. 6:12-13) a permanent incorruptible Temple with “living stones [who] are being built up as a spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5) in which we will “dwell ... forever” (Ps. 23:6). Amen.

The keystone epistle of *Hebrews* highlights both natures of Christ by referencing the OT. “No angel can match this Son, as the catena (*ḥārūz*, ‘string of pearls’) of Old Testament quotations makes plain: Psalm 2:7 (v. 5); 2 Samuel 7:14 (v. 5); Deuteronomy 32:43 (v. 6); Psalm 104:4 (v. 7); Psalm 45:6–7 (vv. 8–9); Psalm 102:25–27 (vv. 10–12); Psalm 110:1 (v. 13).²² Angels are divine beings but are not God. This Son is both a divine being and God. Angels worship the Son (Heb. 1:6). The Son does not worship angels. The very next chapter of *Hebrews* makes it clear that this Son is also truly human. He fulfils the divine expectations of humanity as Psalm 8:6–8 portrays it (Heb. 2:6–8).”⁵

- The Hebrew Bible [OT] is awash with architectural imagery when describing creation. It speaks of the **foundations** of the earth (Ps 18:15; 82:5; 102:25; 104:5; Prov 8:29; Isa 51:13, 16; 2 Sam 22:8, 16; Zech 12:1; cf. 2 Sam 22:8), the **pillars** of the earth and of the heavens (1 Sam 2:8; Job

⁸ Dumbrell in Hafemann 2002: 62.

⁴ Cole, G. A. (2013). *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation*. (D. A. Carson, Ed.) (Vol. 30, p. 31). England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press.

²² For a discussion of how the writer of Hebrews uses Old Testament Scripture and of the nature of the *ḥārūz* method see G. H. Guthrie 2007: 923. Also see the fine discussion of how the writer to the Hebrews uses Ps. 45:6–7 in application to Jesus in a way that goes beyond but not against the psalm when set in its Old Testament context, where in that context it applied to the Davidic king’s acting in a Godlike way with a Godlike character. See Harris 1992: esp. 200, 202, n. 73, and 227.

⁵ Cole, G. A. (2013). *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation*. (D. A. Carson, Ed.) (Vol. 30, p. 105). England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press.

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9:6; Ps 75:3; Job 26:11), the heavens’ **windows** (Gen 7:11; 8:2; Isa 24:18; Mal 3:10; 2 Kgs 7:2; Ps 104:2), the stretching out of the heavens like a **canopy/tent** (Isa 40:12, 22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:13; Jer 10:12; 31:37; 32:17; 51:15; Amos 9:6; Zech 12:1; Job 9:8; Ps 102:25), and **storehouses** (Deut 28:12; Jer 10:13; 50:25; 51:16; cf. Ps 33:7; 135:7; Job 38:22).^{30 6}

- Isa. 66:1; Ps. 93 depict the cosmos as a heavenly throne/temple.
- In redemptive history, God is in process of redeeming all that sin has defiled thus reconciling nature unto Himself (Ro. 8:19-22). The Temple theme runs through the whole of Scripture and encompasses both the end and means of said reconciliation.

Appendix 4

The Word of God given to men not angels:

Even though some believe Ps. 82 is solely about God’s judging of angels, Jesus said it spoke of those to whom the Word of God came. God’s Word came through not to angels (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2). Furthermore, there are passages with regard to the exclusion of angels for opportunity to redemption (e.g. Mat. 25:41; Heb. 2:16; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). The Son of God became the Son of Man to redeem men. Mankind must come to God by faith as God is unseen to us yet the angels perceived God’s glory without faith (spiritual sight) and thus their sin is such solidified.

³⁰ R. E. Watts 2002.

⁶ Cole, G. A. (2013). *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation*. (D. A. Carson, Ed.) (Vol. 30, p. 38). England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press.