

There's no place like home. You ever go away for an extended season and then return to the place you call home? The smell, the familiarity, the acceptance, the sights and sounds, resonance, attachment, belonging, and mutuality. / What is God doing in the world? Making a home for himself on his world among his people. The story of Scripture is not us going away to be with God, but ultimately God coming to dwell in and with humanity in the world he made. Making his home on earth.

Next week, we start a series on the book of Exodus. We're calling it: Exodus. And as a primer for that, this morning we are going to walk through the storyline of Scripture tracing the theme of temple. 7 stops as we survey of the home of God. Main point: God's intention has always been to be at home in his world with his people. V Roberts – K: God's people in God's place under God's rule and blessing.

1. Eden<sup>1</sup> – The Garden of Eden was the very first temple. It was the unique place of God's presence. God is present everywhere but he would specially dwell with his people in certain places and Eden was the first. Gen 3:8 says God walked (*halak*) in the garden in the cool of the day. His special presence was in Eden and Adam was the first priest called to work and keep the Garden-temple. We know that because those two verbs "work" and "keep." (Gen 2:15, Num 3:7-8, 8:25-26). We also know Eden was a temple because the entrance ends up being guarded by cherubim like the most holy place in both the later tabernacle and temple (3:24, Exod 25:18-22, 1 Kings 8:6-7).

The later tabernacle would have a lampstand that resembled and represented the tree of life (Exod 25:31-36 - branches with bulbs and flowers). Eden was the first source of water, which will be important for later prophecies about the temple (2:10, Ezek 47:1-12, Rev 21:1-2). Eden was a place of precious stones (gold, bdellium, onyx) that would be included in later dwelling places and on the clothing of priests. Eden was the first mountain and the temple would be on Mount Zion. Eden and later sanctuaries both had Eastern facing entrances. The prophet Ezekiel describes Eden as a temple in ch. 28 (13-14, 16, 18).

Eden was the home of God with his people. God was with us and we were with God. Paradise. Shalom. Home. The way it's supposed to be. But we know that didn't last long. Exile. **Gen 3:22-24**. We are no longer home. In a letter to his son Christopher, J.R.R. Tolkien writes, "We all long for [Eden], and we are constantly glimpsing it: our whole nature at its best and least corrupted, its gentlest and most humane, is still soaked with a sense of 'exile'." We are East of Eden. But exile is never the end of the story God writes.

2. Tabernacle. The whole second half of the book. When we think of Exodus, . . . / **Exod 25:8, 17-22, 29:44-46, 40:34**. God is returning to his people. He wants to be home with them. Like in the Garden-temple. Lev 26:12: "And I will walk (*halak* – Gen 3:8) among you and will be your

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<sup>1</sup> Runs from protological to eschatological temple, humans are *homo adorans* - the worshipping human) and priest of the whole creation. Volf Home 10.

God, and you shall be my people.” [Heb 8:5, 9:24]. God’s dwelling among God’s people is the anticipatory fulfillment of God’s aim for creation.<sup>2</sup>

The tabernacle was a temporary and mobile temple. / **PIC** – artist’s rendition. It was about a quarter of the size of a football field / The tabernacle had an entrance, a courtyard with an altar of burnt offering and a basin. Then in the tabernacle you had the holy place with the table for bread, a lampstand, and an altar of incense. The lampstand is described in botanical language (25:31-36). It’s a pointer back to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden but also a treelike structure with flaming lamps would undoubtedly bring the mind back to Exod 3 and the burning bush where God met with Moses.

A curtain or veil separated the spaces. Cherubim were weaved into the veil at the entrance, like in Eden (26:31). Inside the curtain was the most holy place – the throne room of God, where there was the ark of the covenant, which was a box with two cherubim on top as guards – just like in Eden. In it was a pot of manna, Aaron’s staff, and most importantly the tablets containing the Ten Commandments. God sat enthroned on the winged cherubim and the lid or the mercy seat of the ark was his footstool, where one man would apply the blood one time a year to make atonement.

But in the middle of this narrative of the construction of the tabernacle, we have another Fall. Israel creates a god out of gold and gives it glory. Israel is taken out of Egypt but Egypt has not yet been taken out of Israel. Still east of Eden.

3. Temple. Solomon builds a temple, a permanent tabernacle. Solomon takes 13 years to build his own house and 7 to build God’s house. You can read about it in 1 Kin 5-8 (or 2 Chron 2-7). When one carefully reads the narratives about the building of the tabernacle and then the temple, you’ll notice some differences, specifically in God’s role in it, the attitude of the Israelites, and the craftsmen involved.<sup>3</sup> In Exodus and the tabernacle, again and again one reads “the Lord said, the Lord said, the Lord said” or “the Lord commanded.” But with Solomon’s temple, God is not involved. He doesn’t initiate it, he doesn’t give any design input, or superintend the construction.

In Exodus, the Israelites are eager and willing and involved in the building of the tabernacle, but Solomon has to force them. Then with the tabernacle the workers are willing Israelites but with the temple there is only one craftsman, Hiram, who is chosen by Solomon not God, and his father is a Canaanite!

The temple itself is similar in many ways to the tabernacle but expanded and permanent. **PIC** The most holy place in the tabernacle is 15’ by 15’ whereas Somomon’s temple is 30’ by 30’. The tabernacle was 15’ high but the temple is 45’ high. Flip over to **1 Kin 6:11-13, 19-20** (cube),

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<sup>2</sup> Volf Home 55.

<sup>3</sup> J. Daniel Hays, *The Temple and the Tabernacle*, 68.

**8:1-22**, then blesses the Lord from v. 23-61, then offers sacrifices. If only we could stop the story at 1 Kin 8. A grand beginning, but it doesn't take long for another Fall.

Solomon becomes Pharaoh-like. **9:15, 16** – a seed of the woman (Solomon) marries the seed of the Serpent (Pharaoh, 9:26). Deut 17 had laid out the rules of the Kings, basically don't acquire a lot of horses, or send people back to Egypt for horses. He shall not acquire many wives lest they turn his heart away from the Lord, nor excessive silver and gold. Look at **10:14, 26-28, 11:1-8**. In ch. 12, as an act of judgment, God splits the Kingdom in two. **12:28** still East of Eden. which leads us to our fourth stop, which is no stop:

4. Ichabod. That word actually comes from 1 Sam 4, when the Philistines capture the ark of the covenant. It means the glory has departed from Israel. But 400 years later, the glory would depart – not due to enemy capture but God's abandonment. **Ezek 8:6a, 10:4, 18-19, 11:23**. God left the temple. His presence left his home.

Solomon's temple was destroyed in 587 by Babylon. Exile again. Cyrus releases the exiles and they do build a second temple [2 Chron 36:23]. Think Ezra Nehemiah. But the second temple was puny compared to Solomon's: Ezra 3:12-13: "But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away."

Haggai tries to encourage them: 2:6-9: "For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts." This prophecy would not come true of that second temple. And you know what was never found after they returned to rebuild? The ark of the covenant. It is not even mentioned. The most important part in the most holy place. The most holy place sat empty (Jer 3:16-17). Same with Herod's temple at the time of Jesus. And you know what else never returned to this second temple? God's presence never returned. The glory of cloud did not descend on the second temple.

But. Exile is not the end of the story when God's the author. The prophets promised a new temple. Eden restored. Isa 2:1-3: "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Micah 4:1-3, Dan 2): Zion will become Everest. The nations shall flow up. Normally things flow down, but geographical realities will be reversed by

the hope of new creation. Isa 56 speaks of the future temple that will have Gentiles as priests ministering in it and the future temple will be a house of prayer for all nations, not just Levites (56:3-7; Jer 7:1-15).

The last 8 chapters of Ezekiel is a vision of a future heavenly temple. Some interpreters take this as a literal third temple, but that won't work for a number of reasons. It begins with a vision of a very high mountain in Jerusalem but there is no very high mountain in Jerusalem, which tips us off from the beginning that this is symbolic, not literal. Plus, there is no actual command anywhere in here for Ezekiel or anyone else to build this temple. It also says that there will be sacrifices there to make atonement, which can't be literal. Can you imagine people offering sacrifices for atonement after Jesus hangs on the cross saying it is finished? That would undermine the whole book of Hebrews. Finally, this symbolic temple is missing 9 key elements of the previous two temples, like the basin, lampstand, table, incense, veil, oil, ark, and cherubim.

A Messiah would come and rebuild this house. Zech 6:12-13: "And say to him, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: for he shall branch out from his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. It is he who shall build the temple of the LORD and shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne. And there shall be a priest on his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Dan 9:24-27).

So, at the end of the OT, we are waiting for the presence of God to return to his temple. How does the gospel of Matthew begin? Matt 1:21-23: "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us)."

Mark 1 quoting Isa 40 and Malachi 3 which are about the return of God to his temple: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" (1:1-3), which leads to step 5:

5. Jesus. Jesus is the temple. Jesus is the place where heaven and earth overlap. Jesus is the place where forgiveness is found.<sup>4</sup> Jesus is the once for all sacrifice, and our great high priest. **John 1:14** (*skēnoō, skēnē*), **2:19-22, 4:20-26, John 7:37-39**: this one is fascinating because there are allusions to creation and new creation.<sup>5</sup> Gen 2:10-14 is a description of Eden and it describes rivers of water *flowing* out of Eden to water the garden. In Ezekiel 47, in his vision of the future new covenant temple, he has a vision of water flowing out eastward and it begins ankle deep, then knee deep, then waist-deep, then a river over his head that flows and gives life

<sup>4</sup> [Mark 11:15-25 (Isa 56:7, Jer 7:1-15), 14:58, 15:38.]

<sup>5</sup> John 20:1, 19-23

wherever it goes producing flourishing trees that have healing in their leaves (47:1-12). Through his people, the life-giving Spirit will begin to spread the glory God as the waters cover the sea. Matt 12:6 Jesus says, "I tell you, something greater than the temple is here." / And of course we know as Jesus dies on the cross, the curtain is torn in two, top to bottom because its all God's doing. [Jesus is the temple, but he is also the great high priest. Heb 10:19-22].

6. Church. The church is now the presence of God on earth. The glory cloud left the temple and never returned to the second temple. Never returned to Herod's temple. We don't find the glory cloud returning until Pentecost. **Acts 2:1-4**. Just like with creation in Gen 1:2 when the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters, the Spirit comes and begins the new creation with the church. Just like in Exod 40 when the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Just like 1 Kin 8:10 when a glory cloud fills the temple, so now the glory cloud fills not a building but a people.

**Acts 2:17** (Isa 2:2), **15:13-19**. Flip to **1 Cor 3:16-17, 6:18-20, 2 Cor 6:14-18**: promises about the future temple from Lev 26, Ezek 37, Jer 32, Isa 52, Ezek 11, Ezek 20, 2 Sam 7, and Isa 43 – **7:1, Eph 2:19-22**: keep building the temple / This word for dwelling place is used 4 times in 1 Kin 8 to describe Solomon's temple as the dwelling place of God (8:13, 39, 43, 49). / **1 Pet 2:4-10**

7. New Earth. Turn to Rev 21. God coming home to be with his people. **21:1-4<sup>6</sup>**. If the temple is God's special dwelling place on earth, one day the whole earth will be his dwelling place. The new earth is Eden 2.0, the Garden-City. The temple becomes a city. The city is composed of precious stones and metals, the same used in the construction of the temple. The city has no temple in it to contain God's presence, because God's glory and presence fill it as they fill the holy of holies. **21:22-27**.

God's throne is there and life-giving water flows from it, feeding the lush tree of life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.<sup>7</sup> That's not all though. **21:16**. Remember, the only other cube in the Bible is the most holy place in Solomon's temple (1 Kin 6:20). The whole new world will be the most holy place. God's intention has always been to be at home in his world with his people. No place like home, / **Benediction**: Now the Creator of heaven and earth, the Redeemer who will one day make all things new, draw you ever nearer to Him as we wait for the final homecoming of God.

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<sup>6</sup> Fulfills Ezek: tabernacling (21:3, 43:7), prophetic commission formula (21:10, 40:1-2, 43:5), glory (21:11, 43:2f), twelve city gates at four points (21:12-13, 48:31-34), measuring of parts of temple (21:15, 40:3-5), four cornered shape (21:16, 45:1-5), illuminating glory (21:23, 43:2, 5), waters 22:1-2, 47:1-9), tree with fruit and leaves (22:2b, 47:12).

<sup>7</sup> Parry, *Biblical Cosmos*, 139.