

Liberty University

Abiding Presence, Abundant Provision
Water Imagery within the Temple Motif

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

From the very first chapters of Genesis to the last chapter of Revelation, God pursues relationship with humankind. The original intent of Eden was unbroken fellowship between the holy Creator God and his creation – God dwelling with humankind – and the abundance of life that was available in his presence. After the fall shattered their connection, God continued to reveal himself to humanity and open the way for relationship through covenant. Throughout the history recorded in Genesis, from Adam to Noah to the patriarchs, God kept reaching out to establish connection with those he had created in his own image. Each covenant was broken by humans and, although there were points of connection with God, the wall of sin that prevented unhindered fellowship and vibrant life was not broken down. Eventually, as the nation of Israel was established to be God’s chosen people through whom he would reveal himself to the entirety of humanity, the Tabernacle and later the Temple were commissioned as the physical space where the glory of God dwelt among his people, the place where they could commune with him, and the source of his unending blessings. However, these covenants and physical structures were mere shadows of the reality that was to come in Christ. John brings this to the forefront as he writes, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt [*tabernacled*] among us” (Jn 1:14),¹ revealing in the Prologue a central theme of his Gospel – God dwelling with humankind – the key purpose to which the Tabernacle and Temple had pointed. Mary Coloe states that “in the person of Jesus, the divine presence which Israel sought to see, to hear and to experience, came and dwelt in the midst of humanity...the key institutions of Israel, her Law and her Temple, have now fulfilled

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

their promise.”² The incarnation brings the presence of God into intimate proximity with his people, and with his indwelling presence also comes the offer of abundant life through his Spirit.

Continuing the Temple motif in Revelation, John provides the eschatological vision of a time when all will be made new, and the intent of Eden will finally be fully realized: unbroken fellowship between the Creator God and his creation, made possible by the mediation of the Incarnate Son, and an endless river of delights in his permanent presence. G.K. Beale writes, “John’s Apocalypse sees the consummate future fulfilment of Ezekiel’s, Joel’s, and Zechariah’s prophecies and restoration of an escalated Eden, in which ‘a river of the water of life, clear as crystal’, comes ‘from the throne of God and of the Lamb’ (Rev. 22:1).”³ Beale’s work argues extensively that the Temple theme is a major thread tying the Garden to the Eschaton.

Following this thread from the beginning of Scripture to its end, this thesis explores the ways in which John communicates the significance of the incarnation of Christ through his use of Temple themes, with particular attention paid to his use of water imagery connected to the visions of Ezekiel and subsequent Second Temple traditions. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, it was no longer possible for the worshippers of Yahweh to commune with him in that place. Their very identity as the people of the covenant was threatened. One group of post-Temple Jews turned their focus to keeping the Torah as the way to move forward in relationship with Yahweh. Moses became the central figure in their religion and rabbinic Judaism was established.⁴ In contrast, John writes to persuade fellow Jews that there is a new and superior

² Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 28.

³ G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 215, ProQuest Ebook Central.

⁴ Mary L. Coloe, “Temple Imagery in John,” *Interpretation* 63, no. 4 (October 2009): 369.

way to worship the God of their fathers. In the absence of the physical Temple, he faces the challenge of convincing his countrymen that everything they know from their history and traditions led directly to the person of Jesus Christ, God in the flesh. Alan Kerr posits that “John offers a Christian (more precisely 'christological') response to the Fall of the Temple in 70 CE. He presents Jesus as the one who fulfils and replaces the Temple and its associated festivals.”⁵ By using language and imagery that would direct his readers back to the meaning of the Tabernacle and Temple, John demonstrates that Jesus fulfilled, replaced, and completed everything for which their ancestors had waited and longed from the very beginning of time. In addition, he seeks to point a way forward for those who would believe his message and become the new ‘household of God’ through the promise of the indwelling Spirit. John argues in his Gospel that God had indeed come to dwell with humankind, and that the way to unbroken fellowship with him and the vibrant life he had promised was through the ‘living water’ offered by his Incarnate Son. This thesis evaluates John’s argument with a particular focus on his use of water imagery within the Temple motif.

Statement of Purpose

The aim of this thesis is to highlight the richness of the New Testament Christological truths in the Fourth Gospel and Revelation by tracing the connections John makes with Old Testament history and traditions. John wrote his Gospel account and his end-time vision after nearly a lifetime of reflection on the Christ-event and its significance. What had been misunderstood while Jesus walked among his disciples had been illuminated by the Spirit through many years of reflection and study. The New Testament, including the Fourth Gospel

⁵ Alan Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus’ Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John*, (New York: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 34, ProQuest Ebook Central.

and Revelation, was not written in a vacuum but drew on a rich and colorful history of God's revelation to his people that spanned millennia. The Evangelist's deep knowledge of Israel's history and traditions is applied in his Gospel as he explains to his first century audience the many ways in which Christ fulfilled, replaced, and completed all that the Old Covenant had anticipated. Neither was John's account received by its original readers in a vacuum. Coloe states simply that "the gospel presumes its readers are very familiar with the Scriptures of Israel, Jewish religious festivals, and customs and methods of rabbinic argument."⁶ Many details were not included in the narrative because the writer and readers shared a plethora of common cultural and linguistic knowledge that is less accessible to the modern reader. This gap may be bridged for the modern reader by understanding John's allusion to Old Testament history and traditions, namely the significance of water throughout the Gospel narrative, with particular attention to its use within the Temple motif. This imagery may then also be connected to its use in Revelation, as John offers a vision of the consummation of redemptive history.

What does John's use of water imagery in the context of the Temple motif explain to his audience about the role of Jesus? This study proposes that John portrays Jesus as the living water depicted by the rivers in Eden, Ezekiel's temple vision, and John's own eschatological temple vision in Revelation. Those who abide in Christ (cf. John 15) are planted by this river (cf. Psalm 1) and enabled by his Spirit to be fruitful (cf. John 15). This gift of the life-giving Spirit, offered by the Incarnate Christ and symbolized by 'living water,' opens the way for God's presence to dwell with humankind and for his blessing to flow to and through his people, the original intent of Eden and the end goal for when all things are made new in the Eschaton.

⁶ Coloe, "Temple Imagery in John," 368.

Statement of Importance of the Problem

Making connections between the Old and New Testaments helps the contemporary believer in the Incarnate Christ to better appreciate the vantage point of the New Testament writers and to better understand the claims they were making within their own cultural and historical context about the identity of the Messiah. John's understanding of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings informs his understanding of who Jesus claimed to be and influences his writing as he endeavors to convince his Jewish readers that Jesus was indeed the Messiah for whom they had been waiting. One of John's central arguments is that Jesus fulfilled all that the Temple, which had been recently destroyed by the Romans at the time of the Gospel's writing, had signified to the Jewish people.⁷ The Temple had been the place where God's glory dwelt among his people, where they would worship him as he had instructed, and where his blessing would be poured out upon them, but Jesus replaced the shadow of the old covenant with the substance of himself.⁸ In him, a new covenant had been inaugurated and a new age of God dwelling with humankind had begun. John draws on the ancient history and traditions of the people of Israel to demonstrate that this had been Yahweh's plan and purpose all along – to dwell with his people as he had intended in the Garden beginning. Not only that, but what had been inaugurated in Jesus would be ultimately fulfilled at the end of the age when all things would be made new, and God would permanently and perfectly dwell with his people.⁹

⁷ Paul M. Hoskins, *Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Temple in the Gospel of John*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs, (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2006), 2.

⁸ G.K. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 20.

⁹ G.K. Beale, "Adam as the First Priest in Eden as the Garden Temple," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 22, no. 2 (Sum 2018): 19.

Statement of Position on the Problem

It is the position of this thesis that John clearly and purposefully uses language reminiscent of the Temple, influenced particularly by the account of Eden in Genesis and Ezekiel's Temple visions, in his Gospel narrative. One of the reasons for this focus was the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 CE, precipitating a cultural and religious identity crisis for the Jewish people in the first century. In this context, John writes to his fellow countrymen, highlighting the incarnation of Christ as the fulfillment of everything the Temple had represented to them,¹⁰ specifically drawing out water imagery that was familiar within the rituals and traditions of the Temple to illustrate the role of Christ in the newly inaugurated covenant.

Thus, John's use of water imagery is one critical facet of the temple motif in his Gospel and reflects his understanding of the significance of the incarnation of Christ in the grand narrative of Scripture. God's dwelling with humankind is the original intent of the Garden and the culmination to which God will bring all things, pivoting on the idea that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). John's Gospel functions as the hinge point between the Garden and the Eschaton. He ties the two together by focusing on Christ as the fulfillment of the Temple and the realization of the hopes of return to unbroken fellowship between God and humankind, made possible by the 'living water' of the Spirit provided by Christ. By using this familiar imagery, John sends a clear signal to his readers of the purpose and significance of the Incarnation: God had intended all along to dwell with his people and give them abundant life, and Jesus, as God in the flesh, makes that reality possible.

¹⁰ Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 2.

Limitations/Delimitations

This thesis focuses on John's use of themes from Ezekiel, particularly water imagery as it pertains to the Temple and its function, with connections made to the account of Eden in Genesis, the encounters between God and the patriarchs, the Wilderness Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temple, and the eschatological Temple described in Revelation. The main passages in John's Gospel to be examined are Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in chapter 4 along with his declaration about living water at the Feast of Tabernacles in chapter 7. Other passages in the Fourth Gospel that pertain to water imagery and the Temple motif are also studied for possible connections. The Synoptic Gospels are not included in this study. Selected Old Testament streams of thought that flow into John's writing are explored, including the Genesis account of the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-3) and Ezekiel's prophesy of the eschatological Temple (Ezek. 27-47). A survey of extra-biblical Jewish literature is briefly consulted for information about intertestamental Temple beliefs and traditions. Furthermore, this thread is traced to its prophesied fulfillment in Revelation 21-22.

For the purpose of this study, it is assumed that John has written a true, accurate, and historical account of the life of Christ with the purpose of drawing out the theological implications of Christ's life, death, and resurrection for his readers. In addition to the biblical portions and literature mentioned above, recent scholarly material regarding the Garden as the first Temple, Ezekiel's Temple visions, the Temple motif and water imagery in John's Gospel, and the eschatological Temple vision in Revelation were analyzed for this study, including journal articles, books, theses, dissertations, and commentaries.

Research Methods

This thesis is a library thesis, comparing and analyzing existing literature on the proposed topic. Primary sources include relevant Old Testament passages, extra-biblical literature, the Gospel of John, and Revelation. Recent scholarly journal articles, books, theses, dissertations, and commentaries were also consulted.

Tests or Questionnaire

No tests or questionnaires were used in the research for this thesis. All information was gathered by analyzing relevant literature.

Summary of Each Chapter

Introduction: In addition to an overview of the topic of the thesis, the introduction includes the statement of the problem, statement of the purpose, statement of the importance of the problem, statement of position on the problem, limitation/delimitations, research method, and chapter summaries.

Chapter 1: Water Imagery within the Temple Motif in the Old Testament – This chapter provides a survey of temple symbolism in the Old Testament, with a particular focus on water imagery, demonstrating the connection between the Garden of Eden (which some scholars contend was the first and prototypical temple),¹¹ the Wilderness Tabernacle and Jerusalem Temple, and Ezekiel’s vision of the eschatological Temple yet to come. The Garden of Eden, as originally created, was meant to be a place of mutual fellowship between God and humankind and provides the pattern after which all subsequent intersections between heaven and earth are designed. According to Jahisber Peñuela-Pineda, Eden is “the archetypal framework from the

¹¹ Beale, Peñuela-Pineda, Schachter, Barker, Lioy, Kang, contra Block.

beginning of the biblical narrative to the end of it.”¹² After the connection between the divine and the human was shattered by the Fall, God continued to make a way for men and women to approach his presence, even in a sinful condition. He initiated connection with Noah and the patriarchs throughout the book of Genesis. Once God called the people of Israel out of Egypt and began to establish them as a nation set apart, he gave detailed instructions to them for building the Tabernacle and later the Temple, which became the place where his glory would dwell among them and his blessings would flow to them, as long as they followed his instructions for holy living. In the later periods of OT history, the prophets had much to say about God’s presence in the Temple and the departure of the nation from the instructions Yahweh had given. Ezekiel, in particular, prophesied judgment against the people and the destruction of the earthly dwelling place of God. However, he also offered hope of a new age and a new Temple in which God himself would cleanse the people and provide healing and life-giving waters in abundance.

Chapter 2: Water Imagery within the Temple Motif in the Gospel of John – In this chapter it is argued that one of John’s central propositions in the Fourth Gospel is that Jesus is the replacement of the Temple, and that the incarnation of Christ is the fulfillment of everything to which the water imagery within the Temple motif of the Old Testament had pointed. As God in the flesh, Jesus becomes the new locus of God’s presence among his people. Furthermore, as the ‘living water,’ Jesus provides the internal cleansing of sin that the Law and Temple traditions could not provide and is himself the source of the abundantly fruitful life promised from the beginning.

¹² Jahisber Peñuela-Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3: A Reevaluation of the Biblical Evidence," PhD diss., Andrews University, 2019, ProQuest (13901905), 3.

To set the stage, the date of the writing of the Gospel is explored as a possible motive for John's focus on the Temple, particularly to a Jewish audience. Then highlights of the Evangelist's use of water imagery and the Temple theme are analyzed, including John's introduction of Jesus as the 'tabernacling' presence of God in the Prologue, the reference to Jesus' own body as the Temple in chapter 2, his conversation with the Samaritan woman in chapter 4, the various feasts connected to the Temple that John includes, and references to the 'Father's house' in chapters 2 and 14. The theological/salvific implications of the Fourth Gospel's proposition include the requirement that those who desire to dwell with God both now and in the age to come believe in Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament Tabernacle/Temple symbolism and as the eschatological Temple promised through the prophets. It is through Christ and the cleansing he provides that the Garden Temple, with the presence of God and the abundant life available in him, will finally and fully be restored.

Chapter 3: Water Imagery within the Temple Motif Fulfilled in the Eschaton – This chapter brings the thread of the Temple theme full circle to its prophesied consummation in Revelation 21-22, focusing on the 'already-but-not-yet' nature of the fulfillment of Temple imagery that was inaugurated in Christ but has not been completely realized as the prophets and John envisioned. In Revelation, John looks forward to the day when Christ will physically return and restore Creation to its original state and intended purpose, namely unbroken communion between the Creator God and humankind. He describes the result of the final victory of Christ using the same Garden and water imagery as Genesis and Ezekiel. God, having provided complete cleansing through the 'living water' of Christ, will once again dwell fully with humankind without the polluting effects of sin. Consequently, men and women will enjoy the presence of God and abundant life as intended in the Garden. As put forth in the Fourth

Gospel, this is only made possible by the incarnation of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, and the ‘living water’ of the Spirit provided through him.

Summary and Conclusion: This summarizes the results of the study and offers concluding thoughts and application.

This thesis demonstrates that John intends to establish Jesus Christ as the replacement and fulfillment of the Temple as his first-century Jewish readers would have understood it. Beale pointedly states that “it is no understatement to say that the symbolism of the temple in both testaments is a highly significant strand of biblical theology,”¹³ and the Fourth Gospel repeatedly highlights the connection between Jesus and the Temple, at times in the words of Jesus himself (2:19) and at other times in association with Temple symbolism and water imagery (Chs. 4, 7-8, 10). John purposefully uses themes from Genesis and Ezekiel, as well as other prophets, to establish his argument that the cleansing, healing, and abundant life promised by God to his people from the Garden beginning and pictured in the water rituals they continually repeated in the Temple was exclusively and completely available in Jesus. God had indeed come to dwell among them, cleanse them of their sin, and make their lives fruitful. It was not necessarily the way they had expected it to happen, but John demonstrates that this was God’s intention from the beginning. He had established the patterns of dwelling among his people in the ages past, in which the people had consistently failed to uphold their part of the covenant. In Christ, however, God dwells among his people and fulfills the covenant himself. This central theme of John’s Gospel – God dwelling with humankind – is made explicit by John’s use of water imagery within the Temple motif to connect Christ to the Garden beginnings of Creation and to the hope of return to the Edenic state in the Eschaton.

¹³ Beale, *Temple and Church’s Mission*, 413.

Chapter 1: Water Imagery within the Temple Motif in the Old Testament

The Temple motif in the biblical narrative begins at the very beginning. There is ample evidence pointing to the Garden of Eden as the first and prototypical Temple on earth.¹⁴ Before sin shattered the connection between humankind and their Creator, the Garden was the place where the glory of God dwelt on earth and where humankind could enjoy unhindered fellowship with him. It was the intersection between heaven and earth. Everything men and women needed to thrive was available to them as they fulfilled their purpose of the Creator's viceregents on earth, keeping and caring for the garden and subduing the entire earth to bring it under his benevolent rule and reign. Unfortunately, the first man and woman failed in fulfilling their divine commission, and the point of connection between heaven and earth was impeded by the corruption of sin. The holy Creator-God could no longer dwell with humanity as intended, and access to the abundant life he provided was no longer freely available.

From this Garden beginning, this chapter traces the thread of the Temple motif as it was experienced by the people of God throughout the Old Testament until the time the Creator-God would himself take on flesh and, as the second Adam, would come to dwell among those he had created. He would begin to fulfill the commission of Eden to spread the rule and reign of God to the ends of the earth and would himself become the source of life-giving water to all who would follow him. In him, the connection between heaven and earth would once again be restored. Before this second Adam arrived, however, God would continue to reach out to his people, offering a way for them to approach and experience his presence and the flourishing life he alone could provide.

¹⁴ Peñuela-Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1-3," 5.

The Garden of Eden as the First Temple

A number of scholars agree that the Garden of Eden may be considered the first Temple on earth. Dan Liroy contends that “the original pristine universe that God brought into existence served as a prototype and archetype that looked ahead to future venues in which the Lord and the covenant community would enjoy fellowship together.”¹⁵ In other words, the Garden was the first place of interaction between God and humanity. The places that would follow, most notably the Wilderness Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple, shared a connection with and were patterned after this first sanctuary. C. John Collins goes so far as to say that the Temple motif, beginning in the first chapters of Genesis, “is a controlling image for the entire Bible story”¹⁶ and many scholars agree. Evidence for this view abounds, the most prominent of which will be discussed below.

First and foremost, the Tabernacle and the Temple, established later in the nation of Israel, became the place where the glory of God would ‘dwell’ on earth. One may argue that this is the main purpose for these physical structures. In fact, this is not unlike the purpose of sanctuaries in other Ancient Near Eastern cultures that were built so that a god would have a dwelling-place among his people.¹⁷ However, long before any edifice had been dedicated to any deity, the Creator-God dwelt with his people in the Garden sanctuary. This is the origin of the concept. Genesis 2-3 provides a picture of perfect communion between God and humanity as God would ‘walk back and forth’ in the Garden (Gen. 3:8). Seung Il Kang notes the linguistic

¹⁵ Dan Liroy, *Axis of Glory: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Temple Motif in Scripture*, in *Studies in Biblical Literature* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2010), 30.

¹⁶ C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?: Who They Were and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 69.

¹⁷ Lifsa Block Schachter, “The Garden of Eden as God’s First Sanctuary,” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (April 2013): 74.

parallel between the verbal form in Genesis 3:8 with the verb used later to describe the God's presence among his people (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:15; 2 Sam. 7:6-7; Eze. 28:14).¹⁸ Peñuela-Pineda expounds further on the linguistic particulars:

The *hitpa'el* of הָלַךְ [*halakh*] has the common meaning of 'going to and fro,' suggesting the repeated or habitual presence of someone. In Gen 3:8, as in its other occurrences, מִתְהַלֵּךְ [*mithallekh*] is used with a specific purpose and context...The argument for the sanctity of the [Garden of Eden] is dependent upon the meaning of מִתְהַלֵּךְ, [*mithallekh*] where the 'primary evidence for the garden's sanctity is the presence of the deity.' The semantic domain that surrounds God's pervasive presence (going to and fro) describes a repeated or habitual action in the [Garden of Eden]. God's presence is known and manifested by his walking. The walking motif is later employed in the Old Testament when Israel acknowledges that God requires holiness and obedience if he is to continue to 'walk' among his people (cf. Lev 26:12; Deut 23:15; 2 Sam 7:6-7). Consequently, the walking motif seems to be associated with the sacred character of the [Garden of Eden]...conceptualizing a contextual frame where God's pervasive presence is the central locus.¹⁹

Because God's presence in the Garden is the overarching theme, one may appreciate the weight of the consequences for sin that were announced after Adam and Eve had chosen to disobey. When they were expelled from the Garden, they were cast out of the presence of God. There could be no more terrifying consequence. From that point on, the biblical narrative would center around regaining entrance into his presence and access to the abundant life only he could provide. The fulfillment of each covenant God would make with his people would be the "restoration of the Edenic communion"²⁰ that had been tragically lost.

Another parallel between the Garden of Eden and the Tabernacle/Temple can be seen in the commission given to Adam and Eve in Genesis and the role of the priests in the Tabernacle and Temple. The words עָבַד and שָׁמַר (*'ābad* and *šāmar*), usually translated in Genesis 2:15 as

¹⁸ Seung Il Kang, "The Garden of Eden as Israelite Sacred Space," *Theology Today* 77, no.1 (2020): 90.

¹⁹ Peñuela-Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 91.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 93.

‘to cultivate and to keep’ in reference to Adam’s work in the Garden, are the same Hebrew words later translated ‘to serve and to guard’ in reference to the priests’ duties in the sanctuary (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chron. 23:32; Eze. 44:14).²¹ This leads to the conclusion that Adam’s assignments are more than merely agricultural tasks; his duties are related to the sanctity of the space he had been given charge over. Accordingly, Beale argues, Adam can be considered the first priest in the Garden Temple.²² The Lord had commissioned the first man and woman to ‘serve’ in the Garden, which encompasses not only caring for the physical well-being of the sacred space but also the function of worship.²³ The Garden was the first and primary place of communion with God in which the created beings were to uphold Creation and venerate the Creator. In addition, the task of ‘keeping’ the Garden included ‘guarding’ and ‘protecting’ the sanctuary. In reference to the priests’ duties described in later texts, this is understood to encompass preventing the sacred space from being defiled by any profane objects.²⁴ One may easily recognize how, in interacting with the serpent and allowing his presence and influence in the Garden, Adam and Eve failed in this priestly commission.

Not only were they to care for and protect the Garden, it would seem they were also tasked with extending the boundaries of the sacred space throughout the earth. According to Beale, this is implicit in the command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen. 1:28). As the vice-regents of the Creator and his

²¹ Lioy, “The Garden of Eden,” 38.

²² G. K. Beale, “Garden Temple.” *Kerux* 18, no. 2 (September 2003): 1.

²³ Peñuela-Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 74.

²⁴ Lioy, “The Garden of Eden,” 38.

representative rulers on earth, the first man and woman, and their children with them, were to extend his rule and reign from the Garden to the outermost regions. Beale expounds, “The outward expansion would include the goal of spreading the glorious presence of God. This would occur especially by Adam's progeny born in his image and thus reflecting God's image and the light of his presence, as they continued to obey the mandate given to their parents and went out to subdue the outer country until the Eden sanctuary covered the earth.”²⁵ Needless to say, Adam and Eve failed in this task as well. When they were expelled from the Garden due to their disobedience, they lost the opportunity to expand the blessings and abundance they had experienced in Eden. Later, God would again give a similar commission to Abraham and subsequently the nation of Israel as he blessed them in order that they would become a blessing to the nations (Gen 12:2-3; 22:17-18; 26:3-4; 28:14). Following the thread of these blessing/commission statements leads eventually to the Tabernacle and Temple “from which Israel was to branch out over all the earth.”²⁶ Just as their forefathers had, the nation also failed in this task. It would not be completed until the True Man and True Israel would arrive in the person of Jesus Christ and fulfill these roles perfectly and permanently as God in the flesh.

In addition to the presence of God in the Garden and in the Tabernacle/Temple, and the linguistic similarities between the commissions given to Adam and to the priests, further evidence pointing toward the Garden of Eden being the first and prototypical Temple is the garden imagery that abounds in the instructions for building both the Tabernacle and the Temple (Ex. 25:31-37; 1 Kgs 6:18, 29, 32, 35; 7:18-20). Eden is described as an idyllic garden, full of lush vegetation and abundant wildlife. The LORD God himself had planted it and “made to

²⁵ Beale, “Eden, Temple, and Mission,” 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (Gen. 2:8). The first implication of this imagery is its connection with the presence of God. Kang asserts that:

the very plants speak to its nature as a sacred space. Trees...are closely associated with theophany. Many ancient sacred places, both those of the Israelite religion and other ancient religions, are described as having sacred trees through which divine power manifests. Genesis 12:6-7 reports that when Abram arrives at Shechem, he experiences a theophany at the Oak of Moreh and builds an altar there (12:7). The Lord again appears to him by the oaks of Mamre in Genesis 18:1. Trees, in these stories, are the place of God’s self-disclosure.²⁷

The second implication of the garden imagery is the abundance of life provided by the Creator. The centerpiece of the Garden of Eden was the Tree of Life, of which the first man and woman were free to eat and “whose fruit enabled the first humans to enjoy unending existence in all its beauty and fullness with God.”²⁸ The benevolent Creator God had designed a place where humankind could thrive. He himself provided all that was needed for abundant life. Several scholars agree that the Tree of Life is later reflected in the Tabernacle/Temple by the lampstand (menorah) with its seven branches that was situated just outside of the Holy of Holies.²⁹ Not only is the Tree of Life represented, but some also contend that the ark of the covenant, “which contained the Law (that led to wisdom), echoes the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (that also led to wisdom). The touching of both the ark and this tree resulted in death.”³⁰ Garden-like, arboreal imagery abounds in the Tabernacle and Temple, and Beale argues that this “gave it a garden-like atmosphere and likely were intentional reflections of Eden....Israel’s tabernacle and

²⁷ Kang, “The Garden of Eden,” 91.

²⁸ Liroy, “The Garden of Eden,” 35.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Beale, “Adam as the First Priest,” 19.

temple was an organic development of the earlier garden sanctuary in Eden.”³¹

Although there are other possible parallels between the Garden of Eden and the Tabernacle/Temple, the final feature to mention here, and the most pertinent for the present study, is the river that flows from the Garden (Gen. 2:10-14). The singular river originates in Eden, where it provides its life-giving waters before splitting into four rivers that flow out into the land beyond the Garden. Stephen Um notes that “the four branches of the river suggest spatial completeness in that they flowed out of the garden to encompass the whole earth.”³² These four rivers represent the totality of the earth, where the rule and reign of God was meant to spread.³³ As the rivers go out, they would water the land, which would then become fruitful as it was intended to be. The water of the rivers brings life everywhere it goes and “since water represented the source of life, a river in the garden was not an insignificant afterthought for the Israelite community.”³⁴ Rather, it is an integral component of the picture of God’s presence and provision. This life-giving essence of the river flowing from Eden is a theme continued throughout the Old Testament writings. The psalmists write about the river in the city of God (46:4) that is a river of ‘delights’ [literally *Eden*] (36:9) and describe the Lord intentionally watering the land to provide food (65:9). Isaiah describes the Lord reigning from Jerusalem where there are ‘broad rivers and streams’ (33:20-22).³⁵ Interestingly, however, neither ancient

³¹ Beale, “Adam as the First Priest,” 19.

³² Stephen T. Um, “The Theme of Temple Christology in the Fourth Chapter of John’s Gospel in Light of the Early Jewish Understanding of Water and Spirit,” PhD diss., University of St. Andrews (United Kingdom), 2001, ProQuest (28197011), 27.

³³ Beale, “Eden, Temple, and Mission,” 11.

³⁴ Um, “Theme of Temple Christology,” 28.

³⁵ Peñuela-Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 58.

nor modern-day Jerusalem contains a river. This dilemma can be rectified by tracing the Temple theme from these first chapters of Genesis throughout the Hebrew scriptures and by recognizing the connection between the Garden, the river of life-giving water, and the ideal/eschatological Temple situated in the ideal/eschatological city of Jerusalem.

Coloe explains this connection between the Temple and vivifying water that was deeply imbedded in Hebrew patterns of thought:

An aspect of the temple's significance lies in its mythological meaning as the Earth's navel, the very centerpoint of God's life-giving contact with the earth. The mythic understanding of the temple transcends the history of a particular building in Solomon's Jerusalem. The mythic view perceives the temple in cosmic terms as the link between heaven and earth, as the place in this world that corresponds to the heavenly throne of God and where the life-giving waters of God's throne make first contact with earth. Within the holy of holies rests the foundation stone, the *ceven shtia*, which plugs the great fissure that leads down into the Deep. In rabbinic literature, this foundation stone is linked with the altar Noah erected after the flood (Gen 8:20), the stone on which the ark of the covenant rested in the first temple (1 Kgs 6:19), and even the altar of sacrifice that stood in the priests' court of the temple... The temple, as a cosmic symbol of God's presence, reaches back in time to the first acts of creation, when God's Spirit hovered over the waters of the Deep (Gen 1:2) and YHWH caused water to rise and form the four rivers bringing life to Eden (Gen 2:6,10-14).³⁶

Just as the idea of the Temple as the dwelling place of God began in the Garden and filtered out to other ANE cultures even after the Fall, so the connection between the Temple and the river of the waters of life influenced the surrounding ancient societies. Walton points out that, although the understanding of the true God and the true Temple may have been changed and distorted, there is a widespread association between temples and spring waters in ANE cultures. This can be seen in Ugaritic, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian literature, to name a few. In these stories, temples had been founded upon the springs of primeval waters, which would then issue forth from the structures themselves. "Thus," according to John H. Walton, "the symbolic cosmic

³⁶ Coloe, "Temple Imagery in John," 371.

mountain stood upon the symbolic primeval waters. On this point, then, the ancient world and the biblical picture agree.”³⁷

As the Temple theme is examined in the Hebrew Scriptures, a solid argument can be made that the motif begins at the very beginning, in the Garden of Eden. As the dwelling place of the presence of God among his people, where he walked among them day to day, Eden parallels the Wilderness Tabernacle and the Jerusalem Temple. Adam’s work in the Garden, commissioned directly by the Creator, and the imperative to the first humans to expand the Garden’s boundaries, finds a connection to the priests’ duties in the Temple and the nation’s charge to be a blessing beyond its borders. Finally, although images abound that provide examples of God’s presence with and provision for humankind, the river in the garden that brings life along its banks and that goes out to water the four corners of the earth and provide life-giving sustenance to all it touches is the primary focus throughout this thesis.

The Tabernacle/Temple as God’s Dwelling Place on Earth

After the tragic expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, Genesis records humankind’s swift descent into depravity as they stray further and further from the knowledge of their Creator and the experience of his presence. By chapter 6, God decides to punish their rebellion by plunging the world back into the chaos that had abounded before he spoke the orderly world into being. After the flood recedes, Noah offers thanksgiving and praise for his salvation by building an altar and offering a sacrifice. This is the first of several encounters between God and humanity that constitute Temple-like experiences. These encounters involve the building of an altar on a mountain, the presence/appearance of God, a divine commission

³⁷ John H. Walton, “Garden of Eden,” of *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. Edited by T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity. 2003), 205.

and blessing reminiscent of that given to Adam and Eve, and the pitching of a tent or ‘tabernacle’. Interestingly, the place of these encounters is often called “Bethel,” meaning *the house of God*.³⁸ Because of these characteristics, some have seen in these encounters remnants of Eden as well as precursors of the Tabernacle/Temple yet to come.

After the flood, Noah’s progeny once again begins to spread throughout the earth, although they do not remember the LORD or worship him. God calls Abram out of a pagan nation and begins to establish his covenant people through this one man. Abram has several encounters with God during which he receives the divine blessing and an Adamic commission. His response is to pitch a tent, build an altar, and worship the LORD (Gen 12:2-3; 17:2, 6, 8,16; 22:18). His son Isaac and grandson Jacob have similar experiences (26:3-4, 24; 28:3-4, 14; 35:11-12; 48:3, 15-16). Yves Congar describes the import of these experiences for the patriarchs and for the Church today:

Jacob’s experience at Bethel stands as a type of the real Presence of God among men...Moreover, it is marked by two characteristics of the Judeo-Christian religious economy, namely, transcendence and proximity, or better, transcendence and communication. The God of Abraham and of Jacob is the Most High God but he is at the same time the God who comes to meet us and enters into our history...At one and the same time he will reveal to us that God is a Father in the mystery of his transcendent life and that by virtue of this very fatherhood of his, he communicates himself to men in a way we should never have dared to imagine.³⁹

The pattern of God’s self-revelation to his people did not stop when the first man and woman were expelled from the Garden, nor did it begin with the building of the Tabernacle and Temple. All along, the LORD continues to reach out and to provide a way for humanity to approach him, even after sin had entered the picture.

³⁸ Beale, “Eden, Temple, and Mission,” 14.

³⁹ Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple: Or the Manner of God’s Presence to His Creatures from Genesis to Apocalypse* (London: Bums and Oates, 1962), 5.

As they respond to God's revelation of himself in these encounters, the patriarchs set a precedent for the nation that would eventually be established many generations later. Beale posits, "the result of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob building altars at Shechem, between Bethel and Ai, at Hebron, and near Moriah was that the terrain of Israel's future land was dotted with shrines. This pilgrim-like activity 'was like planting a flag and claiming the land' for God and Israel's future temple, where God would take up his permanent residence in the capital of that land. Thus, all these smaller sanctuaries pointed to the greater one to come in Jerusalem."⁴⁰ These encounters of Noah and the patriarchs are links in the chain that connect the Garden Temple with the sanctuary that would later be built. Although there were no buildings erected at these sites, they were holy, nonetheless. As such, they highlight the fact that a physical structure is not a necessary component of sacred space.⁴¹ This is important to note in relation to the Garden of Eden as a Temple, as argued above, as well as in relation to the non-architectural nature of the Temple's fulfillment in Christ to be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

At the end of the patriarchal era, the children of Abraham found themselves sojourners in Egypt, and several centuries later they had been enslaved by a pharaoh who feared their numbers. Despite the harsh conditions, God's promise to Abraham had been fulfilled and they had indeed become a great multitude of descendants. When the time was right, another man, Moses, was chosen by God and given the task of leading the people to freedom and establishing them as a nation. An integral piece of their national identity was the dwelling of the glory of God in their midst. Moses was given very specific directions for the construction of the tabernacle, as well as detailed instructions about cleansing and ritual purity that would allow

⁴⁰ Beale, "Eden, Temple, and Mission," 15.

⁴¹ Beale, "Garden Temple," 13.

sinful men and women to be able to approach the holy God. Yahweh provided the design of the Wilderness Tabernacle, which seems to have pointed both backwards to the Garden Temple as well as forward to the End-Time Temple where Eden would finally be realized. For the purposes of this study, Solomon's Temple is treated as a more permanent version of the Tabernacle, built when the Promised Land had been settled and there was a time of peace.

There are numerous parallels drawn between the Garden of Eden and the Tabernacle/Temple. First and foremost, the Tabernacle and Temple were the specific places on earth where the glory of God was present. Lioy writes that “whether it was the tabernacle or temple, the ultimate goal of the Israelites was to build a sanctuary in which the Lord could manifest His glorious presence among His people.”⁴² It was the place men and women could approach his presence and commune with him. Notably, this communion was not unhindered or without restriction as it had been in the Garden. A plethora of regulations governed the interaction between humanity and the divine, mostly directed toward providing external cleansing and ritual purity. Nevertheless, Yahweh's presence in the Tabernacle/Temple was described with the same Hebrew verb, הָלַךְ [*hālāk*; “go,” “walk”; see above], as was used to describe his presence in Eden (Lev 26:12; Deut 23:14; 2 Sam 7:6-7; Ezek 28:14).⁴³ God dwelt among his people in these specific places. Congar is careful to note, however, that even in the Tabernacle and Temple, as important as they were to the life of the Israelite people, it was not a place that was the key, but that Yahweh committed himself to dwell *among his people*, an idea that would be expanded in the New Testament.⁴⁴ Craig Koester furthers this concept as he writes

⁴² Dan Lioy, “The Garden of Eden as a Primordial Temple or Sacred Space for Humankind,” *Conspectus* 10 (September 2010): 34.

⁴³ Peñuela-Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 91.

⁴⁴ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 15.

that “God had bound himself to a people, not to a place or a kingdom, and could meet his people in many different locations.”⁴⁵ Not only is this reality manifest in the Edenic sanctuary, it may be traced in the Lord’s interactions with Noah and the patriarchs, throughout the exodus experience, and later during the exile.

Because Yahweh dwelt among his people, it was therefore incumbent upon them to maintain righteousness and purity in their own personal lives, as a people collectively, and with respect to the Tabernacle/Temple. Paul Hoskins writes, “the Tabernacle is a place where the mundane and the miraculous intersect.... established by God to be a central part of the ongoing relationship between himself and his people. The privilege of being God’s chosen people and of having God dwell in their midst cannot be separated from the ethical demands that accompany the covenant between God and his people.”⁴⁶ In order to approach the holy God, sinful people would have to be purified from the uncleanness of their sin so as not to defile the sanctuary and the presence of his glory within it. This was accomplished through sin offerings, also called purification offerings, the blood of which was “offered to atone for sins, to render unclean persons clean, and to purify God’s sanctuary.”⁴⁷ While the many requirements of the Law have been regarded by some as either an attempt to manipulate the deity on one extreme or as harsh and unattainable demands forced upon the people by a cruel sovereign on the other, Coloe maintains that the cult is a benevolent gift bestowed upon beloved children by the Creator God

⁴⁵ Craig R. Koester, *The Dwelling of God: The Tabernacle in the Old Testament, Intertestamental Jewish Literature, and the New Testament* in Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series 22 (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Assoc of America, 1989), 10.

⁴⁶ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 59.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

whose desire is to dwell among and experience relationship with his people.⁴⁸

Along with the gift of his presence and instructions for approaching it, Yahweh was the source of bountiful provision for his people. The Tabernacle and Temple were full of garden imagery reminiscent of the abundant life in Eden. Arboreal imagery abounds in the artistic design of the Tabernacle and Temple, calling to mind the Garden beginnings of the relationship between humanity and their Creator. Although he casts doubts on the idea that Eden may be considered the first earthly temple, Daniel Block concedes that “while functioning as replicas of YHWH’s heavenly residence, both tabernacle and temple were also constructed as miniature Edens. Decorated with images of cherubim and palm trees, lit by the menorah – a symbol of the tree of life – and served by a priest decked out in royal colors and precious stones, these motifs hark back to the garden where God first put human beings.”⁴⁹ There is a clear connection, especially as the scope of text is widened to include the psalms and the prophets. The psalms use garden imagery in connection with the Temple to highlight the abundance of God’s provision for his people. Psalm 36:8 says, “They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights” (literally ‘*edens*’). Psalm 65:4 similarly connects the Temple and abundant provision: “Blessed is the one you choose and bring near, to dwell in your courts! We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple!” Interestingly, Psalm 46:4 describes a river in the city of God and his “holy habitation,” even though there was no river in Jerusalem or near the Temple. Hoskins notes that “the river image of Pss 36:8, 46:4 is language of divine blessing and provision that recalls the river of

⁴⁸ Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 51.

⁴⁹ Daniel I. Block, “Eden: A Temple? A Reassessment of the Biblical Evidence” in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis*. Ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2013), 4.

Eden (Gen 2:10).”⁵⁰ Thus the Temple was not only viewed by the people as the locus of the presence of Yahweh among them, but also as the source of the abundant life and blessing only he could provide.⁵¹

As had been true for Adam, Noah, and the patriarchs, the Lord continued to commission his people once the Tabernacle and Temple had become the designated place for humanity to interact with the divine. Reminiscent of the directive given to Adam in the Garden sanctuary, the priests were tasked with “serving” [עָבַד] (*‘abad*) and “guarding” [שָׁמַר] (*šamar*) the Tabernacle and Temple (Num 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chron 23:32; Ezek 44:14). While these particular words may also be applied to serving and guarding/obeying God’s Word,⁵² it is clear that these passages “focus on priests performing their duties in the sanctuary and keeping it undefiled from profane objects.”⁵³ A brief survey of the history of the nation of Israel (and Judah, once divided) demonstrates how far the priests and the people strayed from these duties and how miserably they failed.

In addition to serving and guarding the Tabernacle/Temple, Israel was to be a nation that represented the True God to the surrounding peoples. The Lord had made it clear to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would bless them *in order that* they would be a blessing to all the nations (Gen 12:2-3; 22:17-18; 26:3-4; 28:14). Beale argues that “Israel’s temple served precisely the same purpose. The temple was a small-scale model and symbolic reminder to Israel that God’s glorious presence would eventually fill the whole cosmos...Likely, this was to

⁵⁰ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 90.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁵² Beale, “Adam as the First Priest,” 19.

⁵³ Liroy, “The Garden of Eden,” 37.

serve as a motivation to Israel to be faithful witnesses to the world of God's glorious presence and truth, which was to expand outwards from their temple.”⁵⁴ However, again humankind would fail to obey the Lord’s directives as they allowed selfish interests to cloud their thinking. Beale goes on to explain that “Israel wrongly viewed the temple to be symbolic of their election as God's only true people and that God's presence was to be restricted only to them as an ethnic nation. They believed the Gentiles would experience God's presence only through judgment.”⁵⁵ This failure eventually led to the oppression of the nation, exile, and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Ezekiel’s Temple Vision

Although in the Tabernacle and Temple Yahweh had provided a way for humanity to approach his presence and commune with him in spite of their sinful condition, his own people rejected his instructions and worshipped other gods. They profaned the Temple and abandoned the ways of their Creator. Throughout the era of the monarchy and divided kingdoms, the biblical historians highlight the failure of the people, especially the kings, to honor Yahweh as they should. The LORD sends prophet after prophet to warn them of the consequences of spurning his presence and his provision. Eventually, first Israel and then Judah fall to foreign nations and the Temple in Jerusalem is destroyed. Ezekiel records his dramatic vision of the presence of God departing from the Temple as the people exiled in Babylon mourn their loss (Ezek. 8-11). Israel, Yahweh’s chosen people, had failed to keep covenant with their God, and the time of judgment that had long been predicted had finally arrived. Hoskins concludes that

⁵⁴ Beale, “Eden, Temple, and Mission,” 19.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

“the people’s perseverance in unrighteousness eventually disqualifies them from experiencing the Lord’s blessings, including the land and the Temple (Jer 7:14-15). The Temple itself cannot confer righteousness upon the unrighteous (Jer 7:4-8).”⁵⁶ Tragically, the Temple had been destroyed and the presence of the LORD had departed from his chosen city.

Amid this dark era, while the people are experiencing the dire consequences of their own sin, Ezekiel also offers a vision of hope. He records another vision of another Temple and the presence of the LORD coming to dwell among his people once again (Ezek. 27, 37, 43). It is a vision of a time when perfect communion between humankind and their Creator will again be restored, without hinderances or restrictions. Similar prophesies are offered by Micah (ch. 4), Isaiah (2:1-5; 25:6-9; 56:7), and Jeremiah (31:31-34). The prophets record ‘eschatological’ visions, pointing “to the coming of a decisive change in the course of history....the lasting fulfillment of a divine plan...that is ultimately unfettered by the constraints of history and the present order of things.”⁵⁷ These prophesies become the bedrock of end-time hope for the Jewish people, carrying them forward after the exile had shattered so much of what they had known. John Martin Shimkus offers an explanation of the prophets’ visions of the last things that is helpful to the present study:

Biblical eschatology is not mere theological speculation outside the context of human history. It is God’s plan revealed to humankind as it addresses the deepest yearnings and hopes of the human heart. Thus, eschatology, like all revelation, grows in a sense “organically” from the soil of human experience and historical events. But it is not fundamentally a human message. It is a divine message given in human language and developed gradually over the course of time as God’s people are prepared inwardly to listen to his voice. The seed ground for eschatological prophecy in both New and Old Testament are the dramatic historical situations involving divergence between the reality in which God’s people find themselves and the legitimate hopes of these people. In such

⁵⁶ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 100.

⁵⁷ John Martin Shimkus, “The Wonderful Stream: The Eschatological Perspective of Ezekiel 47: 1-12,” *The Dunwoodie Review* 24 (2001): 185.

context a prophet arises who delivers God's message of hope and salvation, the message that God will act to save his people.⁵⁸

In this case, the historical reality in which the people found themselves was the absence of the Temple, the place where the glory of Yahweh had dwelt among them for centuries, and the loss of their ancestral land, a fundamental part of the promise God had made to their forefathers. How, then, would a covenant-keeping God keep his covenant? The prophets, especially Ezekiel, paint a picture of how that would be possible. However, it would not be until the events of the New Testament unfold that the picture would become much clearer.

As the Temple thread is traced throughout the Old Testament, it is interesting to observe that Ezekiel's temple vision bears many similarities to the Jerusalem Temple, the Wilderness Tabernacle, and the Garden of Eden that have already been discussed. First and foremost, the New Temple would be the place where the glory of God would dwell among his people (Ezek. 37:26-28). This is the culmination of a series of promises from this and the preceding chapter that would have given a despondent people hope. They would be resettled in their land (36:24, 28; 37:4, 21, 25) and be cleansed from impurity (36:25-27, 33; 37:23). Their cities would be rebuilt (36:33) and the fruitfulness of the land would be restored (36:29-30). Above all, God promised, "My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (37:27).⁵⁹ The presence of God is the foundation of each and every promise he makes.

Yahweh will not only be present; he will also abundantly provide. His presence is always tied to his provision, as in the original Garden sanctuary. Arboreal imagery abounds in Ezekiel's description of the eschatological Temple (chs. 28, 41, 47), which serves to tie this

⁵⁸ Shimkus, "The Wonderful Stream," 183.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 193.

Temple to the Garden beginning and to Israel's physical sanctuaries, as well as to carry the theme through to the end of Scripture, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters. While other aspects of the garden imagery may be highlighted, Ezekiel spends a considerable portion of his time describing the river that issues forth from the Temple in his vision (chs. 36, 47). This water is an abundant source of cleansing and healing for all nations, and as it flows, it brings fruitfulness to the entire earth. Zechariah describes a similar scene when "living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea" on the coming day when "the LORD will be king over all the earth" (14:8-9). In Jeremiah's writing, the source of the spring of living water is God himself. Ezekiel, along with Zechariah and Joel, specifically connects the source of the living waters with the Temple.⁶⁰ Kang writes that "From ancient times, the Temple has been considered the center of the world, serving as an *axis mundi* where the divine and human spheres converge...the new Temple in Ezekiel's vision represents the point where terrestrial and subterranean realms intersect both horizontally and vertically with the life-giving stream issuing from below the Temple threshold. This stream waters the entire land, turning it into a paradise (Ezek 47:1-12)."⁶¹ Not only would the river water the land, but its vivifying flow would also heal and bring life where there had previously been only desolation and destruction. According to Shimkus, the final destination of the river in Ezekiel's vision can only be the Dead Sea, where the life-giving water of the river supernaturally transforms the stagnant water of this sea into fresh water teeming with life (47:8b).⁶² He argues that the nature of the sea into which the river from the Temple flows must

⁶⁰ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 75.

⁶¹ Kang, "The Garden of Eden," 91.

⁶² Shimkus, "The Wonderful Stream," 189.

be considered to realize the full impact Ezekiel's words. The name of the sea is an apt description of the body of water itself, as well as of the environment surrounding it. The Dead Sea lies at the lowest elevation in the Jordan River valley and, at 1,300 feet below sea level, it also bears the distinction of the lowest point on earth. With its extreme heat and the arid conditions, the entire area around the sea is lifeless. The salinity of the sea's water is 26-35 percent, compared to the ocean's 3.5-5 percent, rendering the sea unable to sustain life within its waters. Furthermore, sulfurous springs feed into the sea, whose water evaporates at a rapid rate and has no natural outlet. The combination of all these conditions has left the sea and its environs "virtually incapable of sustaining life."⁶³ Shimkus goes on to describe the effect of the river from the Temple upon this desolate scene:

Against this backdrop of curse and death appears the stream of blessing and life. The effect of this living water as it enters the 'stagnant waters' of the Dead Sea is a complete transformation of the scene. The transformation is by no means a mere natural process whereby the fresh water gradually dilutes and dissipates poisoned water. The effect of the fresh water stream is clearly meant as something beyond the normal manner in which nature proceeds...in the Hebrew text the transformation is denoted by the word '*rapa*' or 'healing'. This is a word normally used in the context of the healing a diseased body. Yet it seems quite appropriate here as a description of life brought back to the unhealthy sea and its surroundings. The passage continues with a rather quaint pictorial description of the commerce that thrives on the sea that is restored to health. The guide tells Ezekiel of the fishermen who will stand beside the sea "from En-gedi to En-eglaim", spreading their nets in the sea (47:10a). This, of course, is an unthinkable scene that serves to further confirm the radical nature of the transformation that takes place.⁶⁴

The symbolism used here by Ezekiel, Shimkus points out, signifies a complete transformation of the entire created order. There will be a restoration of the land (physical creation), to be sure.

More importantly, however, is the inner healing and purification of the hearts of the people, "a

⁶³ Shimkus, "The Wonderful Stream," 189.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

final resolution for the human condition.”⁶⁵ In this sense, Ezekiel’s vision is truly eschatological, as defined above. It was a prophetic word that brought hope, even in the post-exilic era when the anticipated resolution of the exile still looked bleak.

Although a remnant of the exiles had returned to Jerusalem and had rebuilt the city and constructed a new Temple to replace the one that had been destroyed, post-exilic Israel certainly did not come close to the ideal conditions described in Ezekiel’s vision. C. Hassell Bullock argues that:

To view his new temple and community as limited to the historical restoration from the exile is to ignore the supernatural elements in the account—for example, the river flowing from the temple and transforming the Dead Sea (47:1-12), and the abiding presence of the Lord (48:35)...On the other hand we must not assume that the prophecy went entirely unfulfilled in the post-exilic period. For the temple is real and represents a continuation of the religious life and hope of Israel. This prophecy is fulfilled in part by the historical restoration but its meaning is not exhausted by any means in the post-exilic events...Justice can only be done to the prophecy if we recognize this commingling of the historical and the eschatological.⁶⁶

In other words, while elements of the vision had come to pass after the exile, the full fulfillment of the promises of this prophecy were yet to come. Hoskins concludes that the fulfillment of this vision would necessitate a “decisive act of God,” which is, namely, the coming of the God-Man, Jesus, whose incarnation inaugurates the beginning of the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s vision.⁶⁷ According to Hoskins, the consummation of its fulfillment is not realized until the final two chapters of Revelation.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Shimkus, “The Wonderful Stream,” 197.

⁶⁶ C. Hassell Bullock, “Ezekiel, Bridge between the Testaments,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 25, no. 1 (March 1982): 29.

⁶⁷ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 117.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Water Imagery Within the Temple Motif in Extra-Biblical Jewish Literature

Before turning to examine the use of the Temple motif in the Fourth Gospel, a brief overview of extra-biblical Jewish literature and traditions pertaining to the Temple, along with water imagery within the Temple motif, would be helpful. Even after the return from exile and the rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple, there was a palpable disappointment within the minds of the people of Israel because of their unmet expectations. Beale notes that, “since the building of the second temple did not excel the glory of the Solomonic temple nor fulfill the expectation of Ezekiel's prophesied, eschatological temple (see Ezekiel 40-48), ‘intertestamental’ Judaism naturally awaited a future eschatological time when this would finally happen.”⁶⁹ Consequently, the theme of a future Temple, which would usher in the perfect and permanent presence of Yahweh and abundant provision in his presence, can be found in a plethora of extra-biblical Jewish literature.

One of the first sectarian groups to settle near Qumran during the Maccabean era had rejected the Second Temple because of the appointment of a non-Zadokite High Priest. Since they considered the Temple to be defiled in this way and no longer an appropriate dwelling place for Yahweh, the community viewed itself as the Temple and their keeping of the Law as equivalent to the mandated sacrifices (1 QS IX:4-5).⁷⁰ Coloe observes that “the community constituted the eschatological Temple, the true Temple; and the former function of the Temple as God’s dwelling place, was now replaced by perfect obedience to Torah....The proscriptions laid down for the holiness of the Temple priesthood became the proscriptions for initiates into the community, for the community, or at least part of it, lived as if it was the Temple, thus

⁶⁹ Beale, “Garden Temple,” 26.

⁷⁰ Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 57.

preserving the means of Israel's sanctification and redemption."⁷¹ This line of thinking was carried into the thought and practice of the Pharisees of first century Judaism, enabling them to carry on with their Torah-focused practices even after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.⁷² The idea can also be traced to the Fourth Gospel where the Evangelist gives it a Christological interpretation as primarily Jesus and subsequently his followers become the new locus of the abiding presence of God on earth (Jn 14-15). In addition, Margaret Barker explains that another tradition in first century Jewish culture, with its origins in 1 Enoch 90:28-29, expected "the Messiah, the Good Shepherd, would destroy and rebuild the temple."⁷³ Again, the author of the Fourth Gospel may be capitalizing on this understanding and reinterpreting it through a Christian lens as he describes Jesus' dialogue with the Jews in chapter 2.

Though perhaps less on the fringes of society than the communities at Qumran, many mainstream Jews lamented the disparities between the Second Temple and the one built by Solomon, leading directly to an eschatological hope for a future, glorified Temple. Hoskins observes that "even 2 Maccabees, which elsewhere affirms the legitimacy of the post-exilic Temple, allows for its deficiencies. It did not contain the Tabernacle or the ark, nor was its consecration completed by the miraculous appearance of God's glory in a cloud (2 Macc 2:4-8). Instead, the ark, the Tabernacle, and the incense altar were hidden by Jeremiah before the destruction of the first Temple (2 Macc 2:4-5)."⁷⁴ Along the same lines, although Tobit expresses disappointment over the deficiencies of the second Temple in comparison to

⁷¹ Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 57.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷³ Margaret Barker, *Temple Theology: An Introduction* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Publishing, 2004), 14.

⁷⁴ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 141.

Solomon's Temple, it affirms the institution and its significance within the eschatological hopes of the nation (13:11; 14:5)⁷⁵ Koester observes that "the Psalms sometimes called the Jerusalem temple God's 'tent' or 'tabernacle' (e.g. Ps 26:8; 27:4-6). Tobit recast this imagery in anticipation of the establishment of a new sanctuary in a new era."⁷⁶ Hoskins reaffirms the Temple's importance in the end-time picture and adds that "the hope for a future, glorious Temple is part of a composite picture that also includes the conversion of the nations and the return of all faithful Israelites to the land of Israel."⁷⁷ Among other post-exilic literature to discuss the Temple, the theme of sin and judgement in 1 Enoch sets the stage for the Temple to function as a symbol of divine favor and promised deliverance for those who are faithful to the covenant (89:36; 90:29-36).⁷⁸ 4QDibHam (or the "Words of the Heavenly Lights") also connects the Temple with divine favor (ii 12; iii 6-7). As a possible background referent for Revelation 21-22, this text combines water of life / living water imagery (v 2) with a description of Yahweh's dwelling place in "a utopian Jerusalem under the Davidic monarchy"⁷⁹ in a similar manner to the parallel passages in Ezekiel and Revelation (4QDibHam 1-2 iv 2; Ezek. 37:24-28; Rev. 21). Pss. Sol. 17:21-42 also contains the element of the Davidic king who, in this passage, will bring deliverance for the people and inaugurate an eschatological age of blessing.⁸⁰

In addition to Temple references, water imagery abounds in early Jewish literature and

⁷⁵ Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 24.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 140.

⁷⁸ Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 125.

⁸⁰ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 140.

water “was most commonly understood as the vehicle which brings about life.”⁸¹ This seems logical given the arid climate in and around Israel. Even when it would rain during the rainy season, the ground did not readily absorb the life-giving water. It would quickly dissipate, leaving mostly dry wadies rather than flowing streams and marshes where lakes would otherwise be. Consequently, the imagery of ever-flowing streams and fountains, present throughout all seasons and inexhaustible, was a fitting picture to describe the abundant life-giving provision of Yahweh, especially in contrast to the stagnant cisterns and marshes common in the climate.⁸² Um cites 2 Enoch 8 as a passage that contains a clear parallel to the Garden account in Genesis 2, pointing out that they both attribute the lush growth in the garden to the presence of vivifying water.⁸³ “Thus, when 8:2 refers to the river of paradise with its small, tributary streams flowing throughout the garden regions with the same rate of perpetual flow, this picture denotes the fullness of fertility and the universal effect these bodies of water had upon the land. Similar to the usage found in 2 En 8, ‘streams’ ... in the OT tradition were understood to be a source of water from which God provided nourishment and prosperity for his people (Ps 65:10).”⁸⁴ The Apocalypse of Abraham is another Jewish text containing a picture of a river flowing from the center of a garden, bringing life and fruitfulness to all the vegetation along its banks (21:3-6).⁸⁵ In addition, 1QH 16 includes an eschatological focus and themes that parallel prominent OT themes. According to Um, these are: “[1] an emphasis on barrenness

⁸¹ Um, "Theme of Temple Christology," 14.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 23.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

(desert, wilderness, dry land, or arid place) [1QH 16:4-5; Isa 41:18-19; 44:3; 49:10; cf. 35:7; 58:11]; [2] an abundance of plant life (1QH 16:4-8,11,18-19; Isa 41:19; 44:4; 49:9; cf. 35:7; 58:11); [3] references to water (1QH 16:4-8, 12-14, 16-18, 21; Isa 41:17-18; 44:3-4; 49:10; cf. 35:6-7; 58:11); [4] an eschatological context.”⁸⁶ Finally, the description of the stream that flows from the right-hand side of the garden’s courtyard in *Joseph and Aseneth 2:17-20* calls to mind Ezekiel’s description of the river that flows from the right-hand side of the Temple’s threshold (ch. 47).⁸⁷

Many parallels may be found among these writings, the most important of which for the present study center around the eschatological hopes developed in the minds and hearts of the Jewish people as they anticipated the coming of the Messiah. At that time, they expected a new creational order, including a New Temple, in which the presence of Yahweh would permanently and perfectly dwell within their midst, and an outpouring of abundant provision and blessing, symbolized in the Old Testament, as well as in extra-biblical Jewish writings, by the waters of life in ever-flowing streams.

Summary

The Tabernacle and Temple are central symbols throughout the Old Testament. This chapter has traced their importance from the Garden of Eden, which many scholars consider to be the first and prototypical Temple, to the post-exilic Jewish literature that may give insight into the background and perspective of the New Testament writers. Before the Fall, humanity enjoyed the presence of God within their midst and experienced his unfailing provision for their

⁸⁶ Um, "Theme of Temple Christology," 39.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

every need, two integral aspects of the Temple motif woven throughout the Old Testament narrative and reiterated in the New. By the time of Christ, the Garden Temple that had been lost at the Fall had been translated first to the Wilderness Tabernacle and then to Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem. Because of the unfaithfulness of the people, Solomon's Temple was destroyed, and the presence of God was removed from their midst, along with his blessing. Although a new Temple was built after the exile, the glory of God had not returned to dwell within it, which left the Jewish people waiting and yearning for a future time when they would once again experience the presence and provision of Yahweh. With this background, the next chapter illustrates the ways in which the writer of the Fourth Gospel uses the Temple motif, and water imagery in particular, to describe the import of the incarnation of Christ within the historical and cultural context of first century Judaism.

Chapter 2: Water Imagery within the Temple Motif in the Gospel of John

While all four Gospels recount the events of the life of Jesus of Nazareth and present him as the long-awaited Messiah, each has its own focus and flavor. The Fourth Gospel is the most unique among them in its style and the elements it includes. Like Matthew, John is deeply concerned with the implications of the events of Jesus' life and how they fit into the grand narrative of Scripture. Also similar to Matthew, his thinking is deeply rooted in the Old Testament, with the expectation that his readers would be familiar with the Jewish history and traditions that had been developed from the very beginning of time. The way John writes, however, differs significantly. Martin Hengel observes that, "in accordance with his esoteric, indirectly suggestive style, the emphasis in John (in contrast to Matthew) is on 'allusions', he prefers the bare, terse clue, the use of a metaphor or motif more than the full citation."⁸⁸ This is especially evident when exploring the Evangelist's use of water imagery and the Temple motif throughout his account.

One of John's central themes, to which he alludes throughout his Gospel, is that, as God in the flesh, Jesus is the replacement of the Jewish Temple and its systems and is the fulfillment of everything to which the Temple had previously pointed. Um posits that,

the Gospel of John, without a doubt, has more cultic elements and Temple language and imagery than any other canonical gospel. Temple Christology is a crucial theme in the Fourth Gospel, heightened by the central significance of the Temple in Israelite society. John portrays Jesus as the true Temple (4:10-14) in whom Israel's worship reaches its climactic goal (4:20-24). Jesus, fulfilling the Jewish prophecies concerning the eschatological Temple of God is presented as the ultimate reality of Israel's sacred Temple. The OT expectation for building an end-time Temple is depicted by John in the new creational age when the true messianic Temple will represent the eschatological presence of God.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Martin Hengel, "The Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 12, no. 1 (June 1990): 32.

⁸⁹ Um, "Theme of Temple Christology," 156.

As if picking up a thread that had begun to be woven long ago, John weaves water imagery within the Temple motif throughout his narrative to explain to his readers, well-versed in Jewish history and traditions, the significance of the incarnation of Christ. He contends that the abiding presence of God and his abundant provision, which had not been fully experienced since the Garden, had become a reality in the person of Jesus.

The Destruction of the Temple and the Date of Composition

In its historical context, John's emphasis on the Temple would have been strategic and timely. The general scholarly consensus is that the Fourth Gospel was written near the end of the first century, not long after the Romans had destroyed the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.⁹⁰ The void created by its destruction causes a crisis of religious identity for Jews, including both believers in Jesus and those who rejected him, and many have surmised that John writes to address this crisis. Coloe observes that it is "in this context of two groups with their origins in Judaism, each seeking to understand the action of God in their recent history, and to clarify their religious identity vis-à-vis these events, the Gospel of John took its final form. The Jesus story that this gospel narrates necessarily relates to this historical context as the evangelist addresses his real readers and their religious concerns."⁹¹ Andreas Köstenberger concurs that the temple elements found in the Fourth Gospel, including the Jewish festivals and the symbolism associated with them, make it likely that the destruction of the Temple is one factor that prompts its composition.⁹²

⁹⁰ Coloe, "Temple Imagery in John," 368.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁹² Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Destruction of the Second Temple and the Composition of the Fourth Gospel." *Trinity Journal* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 215

Before 70 CE, Christianity had been viewed and functioned as a subset of the wider Jewish religious community. The first believers in Jesus as the Messiah were Jewish and the early proclamation of the Christian message was within the Jewish context. After the Romans destroyed the Temple, however, the gap between the two groups began to widen.⁹³ Without the Temple, sacrifices could no longer be offered, and priests no longer had a role to play. What had been considered the dwelling place of the glory of God on earth no longer existed and there was no longer a central place of corporate worship. Thus, it became necessary to redefine the religious identity of an entire people. The answer given by the majority group was to turn the focus toward Torah and the figure most closely associated with it, Moses. Within this trajectory, “the Scriptures of Israel, and with them the figure of Moses, the great lawgiver, revealer, and prophet, became the foundation of post-temple rabbinic Judaism.”⁹⁴ It is quite possible that John is writing to offer a Christological alternative to the rabbinic response. He points the community of Jesus followers in a different direction: Jesus did not abolish the Law and the Prophets; he fulfilled them. Though not unimportant, the Law and the Temple system were not an end in themselves; they pointed forward to the coming of the One who would finally keep the Law perfectly and replace the physical Temple as the very presence of Yahweh among humankind. Coloe concludes that “while rabbinic Judaism was reformulating its traditions with a focus on the Torah in place of the Temple, the Johannine community focused on the person of Jesus...The traditions and institutions of Israel were valid but incomplete gifts; in the life of Jesus something new is being offered which brings to perfection the former gifts to Israel.”⁹⁵ Thus, John’s writing

⁹³ Coloe, “Temple Imagery in John,” 368.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Coloe, *God Dwells with Us*, 63.

includes many important elements of Jewish worship, honoring them but also redefining them as they relate to the person and work of Christ.

The Tabernacling Presence of God

John's allusions to the Tabernacle and Temple begin right away in the Prologue of his Gospel. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us, and we have seen his glory (δόξαν)" (1:14). John's vocabulary in this verse would have arrested the attention of readers familiar with Old Testament language and traditions as it deliberately points to the OT Wilderness Tabernacle. The term ἐσκήνωσεν (*eskēnōsen*) is more literally translated 'tabernacled,' recalling the way the presence of God had dwelt among his people during the exodus. It is a rare verb in the New Testament, used only by John, only here and in Revelation.⁹⁶ Although the Temple is the main emphasis in John, he begins here by alluding to its predecessor, the Tabernacle. This same Greek verb is used to translate the Hebrew of Ex 25:8-9 and 33:7 (also Ex 33-40; 2 Sam 7:6; Ps 15:1; 26:8; 27:4-6; 43:3; 74:7; 84:1; Ezek 37:27-28) in contexts where the people are instructed to pitch a tent in order that the Lord might come to dwell among them. The verb's use here also echoes the promises of Ezek. 43:7; 37:27, Joel 3:17, and Zech. 2:10, 14 in which the prophets record the end-time promise of God to dwell with his people in the ideal, eschatological Temple.⁹⁷

The term δόξαν (*doxan*) also harkens back to the Tabernacle, when at its completion the glory of God descended and filled the sacred space (Exod. 40:34). Coloe simply states that "the choice of the terms *skene* and *doxa* to describe the incarnation, evokes long traditions of God's

⁹⁶ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 171.

⁹⁷ Um, "Theme of Temple Christology," 157.

presence in Israel's midst and the physical symbols for that presence—the ark, the tabernacle, and temple.”⁹⁸ However, John assigns a new interpretation to these theologically loaded terms. He contends that the presence and glory of God has now been localized in the person of Jesus, in his physical body. Hoskins argues that by presenting Jesus as the dwelling place of God among his people in 1:14, the Evangelist effectively introduces Jesus as the fulfillment and replacement of the Tabernacle and Temple. Not only does Jesus take on the role of the Temple as God’s dwelling place among his people, but he is also able to reveal the glory of God, which had traditionally resided in the Temple.⁹⁹ Hoskins summarizes the import of this one verse in John’s overall argument:

The net effect is that John presents Jesus as the fulfillment of patterns and prophecies associated with the Tabernacle, Temple, and new Temple. These patterns and prophecies anticipated Jesus and he fulfills them...when Jesus fulfills and replaces the Tabernacle and the Temple, he does not merely recapitulate that which preceded him. He brings a new and unexpected twist to the dwelling of God among his people. God makes himself accessible to people in an unprecedented form, a body. The same God who dwelt on Mount Sinai in a ‘thick cloud’ and then in the most restricted area of the Tabernacle and the Temple, the holy of holies, has now come to dwell among his people as the incarnate Word.¹⁰⁰

Not only had Jesus become the new locus for the presence of God; he had also become the place of the revelation of God’s nature and the manifestation of his glory. This is the Evangelist’s introduction to the Temple theme in his Gospel, which he will proceed to weave throughout his account.

⁹⁸ Coloe, “Temple Imagery in John,” 370.

⁹⁹ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 181.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

The Incarnate Messiah as the Replacement of the Temple

The narrative of the Fourth Gospel does not progress much further before other allusions to the Temple can be found. John the Baptist's proclamation, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (1:29) echoes the Temple festival of Passover and the lambs sacrificed in remembrance of the night the Angel of Death had passed over the people of God (Exodus 12). Also, the One upon whom the Spirit of the Lord descends and remains (1:32-33) calls to mind the presence of God descending and filling the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11). Adam Johnson notes that "just as the Temple was filled with the presence of God, so Jesus Christ was filled with the Holy Spirit. The connection between the indwelling of the Spirit and the Temple is a significant one."¹⁰¹ Reading further, Jesus claims, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man" (1:51). He is effectively telling Nathanael that he would now be the point of connection between heaven and earth. According to Hoskins, "when the Son of Man replaces the ladder, he also fulfills its purpose...the Son of Man makes communication between heaven and earth possible...His location on earth therefore becomes the true Bethel ('house of God') and the true gate of heaven (Gen 28:17)."¹⁰² It is also interesting to note in this instance that, much like the self-disclosures of God to the patriarchs that were connected to trees in the OT (see previous chapter), Jesus' revelation of himself to Nathanael begins as the latter is seated under a fig tree (1:48).

As the narrative continues to progress, the Evangelist provides significant allusions to Jesus' replacement of the Temple and its accompanying rituals at the wedding scene in Cana.

¹⁰¹ Adam J. Johnson, "A Temple Framework of the Atonement," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54, no. 2 (June 2011): 233.

¹⁰² Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 194.

Here, when the wine for the wedding feast had run out, Jesus instructs the servants to fill jars that were intended for ceremonial washing with fresh water and then he proceeds to provide superior wine in its place. D.A. Carson notes the significance of this event and its symbolism in that the purpose of the jars (ceremonial washing) “provides a clue to one of the meanings of the story: the water represents the old order of Jewish law and custom, which Jesus was to replace with something better (cf. 1:16)”¹⁰³ C.H. Dodd sees this as the first occurrence in John 2-4 of a replacement motif in which the Evangelist is asserting the same sentiment as Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (“the old has passed away; behold, the new has come”).¹⁰⁴ The water in the jars had served its ceremonial cleansing purpose, but now the wine of the messianic wedding banquet had come, rendering the cleansing rituals obsolete. Jesus is introducing a new covenant and a new, messianic age in which the ‘wine’ he provides is far greater than anything offered under the Mosaic law and the old covenant.

Although many such allusions abound in John’s account, all of which contribute to the overall Temple theme, the next major pericope to examine is the Temple cleansing scene in 2:13-22. After the wedding in Cana, the scene shifts to Jerusalem during the first Passover feast mentioned in the narrative. John recounts Jesus’ anger against those who had turned the sacred space of the Temple into a ‘house of trade.’ When confronted by the Jewish leaders about his authority within the Temple, Jesus replies, “Destroy this temple (*naos*), and in three days I will raise it up” (2:19). The Jews are understandably confused, as are likely his disciples, but in hindsight the narrator clarifies that Jesus refers here to his own body that would be destroyed and

¹⁰³ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Chicago, IL: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 155.

¹⁰⁴ C.H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1970), 297.

raised on the third day. It is interesting to note that this event takes place at the beginning of the narrative in the Fourth Gospel, as opposed to in the Synoptics where it appears near the end (Mark 11:15-19 and par.). Also, in the Synoptics, Jesus' claim about raising a destroyed temple is placed on the lips of 'false witnesses' at his trial (Mark 14:58; Matt 26:60), rather than being spoken by Jesus himself. Coloe asserts that "these cryptic words disclose to the reader the highly original Christology of this Gospel along with its unique interpretation of the traditional kerygma of Jesus' death and resurrection. For the plot of this narrative to be effective the reader must see in the death of Jesus the destruction and raising of a temple."¹⁰⁵ John is setting the stage for these events to unfold.

This is the first time in the Gospel that Jesus himself claims to replace the Temple, but it will not be the last. His words and his actions announce that the Temple system is coming to an end. In his flesh, he has become the dwelling place of Yahweh among his people, the revelation of the glory of God on earth, and the source of abundant life for those who follow him. These features that had been exclusive to the Temple would now be exclusive to the person of Christ. According to Block, "when Jesus cleansed the temple, he announced not only its destruction but also its replacement with his own person... The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ rendered superfluous the temple's role as the link between a fallen world and a heavenly court reaching out to that world."¹⁰⁶

The choice of vocabulary in this passage may even further emphasize Jesus' claim to replace the Jerusalem Temple with his own body. According to Kerr, who cites Nereparampil,

¹⁰⁵ Mary L. Coloe, "Raising the Johannine Temple (John 19:19-37)," *Australian Biblical Review* 48 (2000): 48.

¹⁰⁶ Block, "Eden: A Temple?" 28.

the Greek terms *naos* and *hieron* both occur in the Fourth Gospel, but they are not used interchangeably. In Greek, *naos* was used to describe the inner sanctuary of the Temple, the place where the glory of the Lord was known to dwell. *Hieron*, in contrast, was used to refer to the entire Temple complex¹⁰⁷ and may have even been used to refer to pagan temples in the surrounding cultures.¹⁰⁸ Kerr observes, “John always refers to the Jerusalem Temple by *hieron*, never *naos*, except for this enigmatic saying of 2.19. Why? Because, according to Nereparampil, *naos* is no longer applicable to the Jerusalem Temple— it is only a *hieron*. The real Temple (*naos*) is now the [body] of Jesus (2.21). Jesus is the true *naos*. Nereparampil finds support for this from Revelation where *hieron* is never used. The Jewish Temple is completely ignored, while *naos* has been identified with God and the Lamb (Rev. 21.22).”¹⁰⁹ In this incident, Jesus declares that his body has now become the inner sanctuary where the glory of God is present on earth, replacing the Temple in which the Jews worshipped.

Furthermore, in John’s Gospel this event signals the inauguration of the eschatological age. Everything that had been promised through each covenant Yahweh had established with his people and through the words of the prophets would now come to fruition in Christ: inner and complete cleansing of sin, unhindered experience of the presence of God, and abundant life and blessings in him.¹¹⁰ Lioy concludes that “it is through the death, resurrection, and exaltation of the Son that the Father replaces the old temple order with the new temple order. Jesus, as the ‘antitype’ of the Jerusalem sanctuary, has become the ‘locus of God’s presence, glory,

¹⁰⁷ Love, “Literary Function of John 2-4,” 103.

¹⁰⁸ Kerr, *Temple of Jesus’ Body*, 88.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Lioy, “The Garden of Eden,” 73.

revelation, and abundant provision.”¹¹¹ In 2:19, Jesus claims to be the embodiment of all that the previous sanctuaries (Eden, the shrines of the patriarchs, the Wilderness Tabernacle, Solomon’s Temple, and the Second Temple in Jerusalem) had foreshadowed and anticipated. However, although these institutions had been made complete by the incarnation of Christ, they were not without ongoing significance. Their deep and lasting meaning is bound up in the way they had pointed to Jesus, the Messiah, throughout their existence.¹¹²

Jesus as the Source of Living Water for Eternal Life

After contending with the Jewish leaders in chapter 2, John records Jesus’ encounter with one particular Jewish leader, Nicodemus, at night in chapter 3. During this encounter, Jesus makes the statement that one must be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God. While this is less obviously an allusion to the Temple, it is a direct reference to water imagery. The connection here between water and the Spirit ties this reference to the Temple as their source. Carson argues against several interpretive possibilities and asserts that “born of water and the Spirit” refers to one singular birth, not two, as other interpreters claim.¹¹³ According to Carson, there is no contrast between water and spirit in verse 5, but as a unit they are the equivalent to ‘from above’ in verse 3. “The most natural way of taking this construction is to see the phrase as a conceptual unity: there is a water-spirit source that stands as the origin of this regeneration” and one must look to the OT, as Nicodemus would have had to do, to find it.¹¹⁴ There are multiple passages in the OT that connect water and spirit (Nu. 19:17-19; Ps 51:9-10;

¹¹¹ Liroy, “The Garden of Eden,” 74.

¹¹² Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 181.

¹¹³ Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 171.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 172-173.

Is. 32:15; 44:3-5; 55:1-3; Je. 2:13; 17:13; Ezk. 47:9; Joel 2:28-29; Zc. 14:8), the most important of which in this context is Ezekiel 36:25-27. Here the prophet brings together water and spirit to depict the complete inner cleansing and heart transformation promised by Yahweh to his people in the coming eschatological age.¹¹⁵ This water-spirit source, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, was namely the Temple. Jesus, in the Fourth Gospel, makes it clear that he fulfills this symbolism as he replaces the Temple and becomes the source of ‘living water’ for those who would receive it.

In another scene related to water imagery, the Evangelist next narrates an exchange between John the Baptist and some of his disciples in which the Baptist makes clear that his ministry was a forerunner of a greater one to come (3:25-30). While his disciples are concerned that Jesus’ ministry was beginning to surpass John’s, he assures them that it is as God intended. According to Love, the water of John’s baptism and his message of repentance were rendered obsolete with the arrival of Jesus’ baptism with the Spirit. In the same way that the ceremonial water jars were replaced with the new wine of the Kingdom, “now that the Bridegroom has come with the cleansing water of the Spirit, John’s baptism, a form of ritual purification that looks ahead to the Messiah’s baptism, is replaced along with the ceremonial washings of the [Jews] (3:5).”¹¹⁶

Following this, John turns to yet another encounter of Jesus in chapter 4, which is the focus of this section. Traveling through the region of Samaria on his way to Galilee with his disciples, Jesus decides to rest by a well while the disciples go into town for food. While he is there, a Samaritan woman comes to draw water. During the course of their conversation, Jesus

¹¹⁵ Carson, *Gospel According to John*, 173.

¹¹⁶ Love, “Literary Function of John 2-4,” 156.

offers the woman ‘living water,’ which she initially misinterprets as physical water, albeit greater than what she could draw from the well of Jacob. Jesus explains, however, that the water he offers is in a different category altogether than the water from the well. The ‘living water’ he gives is that which had been promised long ago in the prophets, that which would be “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (4:14). The background of water imagery within the Temple motif in both biblical and extra-biblical literature is key for understanding John’s point in this passage.

First, although it may be obvious, the encounters of Jesus recorded by John are certainly not accidental. This interaction happens while those conversing are seated at the well of Jacob and “with possible allusions to the temple being situated above the wellsprings of creation, Jesus offers himself as a source of waters for eternal life (4:10), recalling Ezekiel’s image of the eschatological temple (Ezek 47:1-12).”¹¹⁷ It is not coincidence that Jesus meets this woman at this particular place, asks her for a drink, and then expounds to her the abundance of life available in him. Again, he is asserting that he is the fulfillment of prophecies and traditions associated with ‘living water’ and the Temple (Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 13:1; 14:8). Not only that, Love points out that the fact that this conversation takes place at the site of Jacob’s well may further solidify the replacement motif found throughout the gospel. “The woman had to come to the well of Jacob time and again and yet would never be satisfied. However, in coming to Jesus once, she would receive an abundance of life-giving water through the Son and the Spirit.”¹¹⁸ The systems and traditions of Israel’s religion, symbolized by the water from the well of Jacob, were

¹¹⁷ Coloe, “Raising the Johannine Temple,” 49.

¹¹⁸ Love, “Literary Function of John 2-4,” 155.

being replaced by the life of the Spirit, given by the Son, symbolized by the ‘living water’ he offered the woman at the well.

On this occasion, Jesus is also asserting his identity as God in the flesh and the long-awaited Messiah. In Jewish thought, God was the only giver of life, both in the original creation as well as new-creational/eternal life. By offering ‘living water’ to the woman, Jesus aligns himself with this exclusive identity of God. Um observes that “the so-called divine functions which Jesus exercises, like ‘giving’ life-giving water, are intrinsic to who God is. In other words, Jesus was participating in God’s unique activity of creation and the new creation...the statement, ‘he would have given you living water,’ shows the participation of Christ in the...eschatological identity of God in offering the woman everlasting, new creational life (cf. JosAsen 8:9).”¹¹⁹ Jesus deliberately enters into this encounter at Jacob’s well to make this unprecedented claim.

A second point to note is the contrast between the physical water in the mind of the woman and the ‘living water’ that Jesus offers. In first-century Palestine, there were various sources of water, which were certainly not equal in quality. A cistern was an underground walled container used to collect and hold rainwater; a well would have been dug to tap into an underground source of fresh water; and a spring was a source of ever-flowing, refreshing water similar to a fountain.¹²⁰ Cisterns, the most inferior of the three sources, were prone to breaking and often held stagnant water. Jeremiah uses the cistern as a metaphor for worldly sources of pleasure and meaning that would never satisfy (2:13; 14:3). A well, upon which Jesus and the Samaritan woman sit, was superior to a cistern, providing a dependable source of fresh water, but at times, wells would run dry and have to be abandoned. In contrast to both of these, Jesus offers

¹¹⁹ Um, " Theme of Temple Christology," 148.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 142.

‘living water’ that would become ‘a spring welling up to eternal life.’ This is an inexhaustible source of life-giving water, not natural but supernatural, and clearly a reference to the OT eschatological promises of abundant life and provision associated with the Temple.¹²¹ Jesus points out that those who drink physical water from the well will always thirst again, but those who partake of the ‘living water’ he provides would be permanently satisfied. Citing both biblical and extra-biblical passages, Um posits that

unquenched thirst (4:13) symbolizes the desolate, spiritual condition of individuals who have yet to taste the gift of eternal life. The theological symbolism of desert-like thirst suggests a separation from God and from his blessings of water (1 Macc 1:39; Jub 26:33; SibOr 8:237; TrShem 6:3-4; 7:10-11, 23; 4Q163 Frag. 26:3 [cf. Isa 32:5-6]; 2 Sam 1:21); whereas the ‘absence of thirst expresses the perfect happiness which God’s salvation (‘living water’) generates in the individual. Water was an appropriate symbol for salvific blessing in a land as arid as Israel; what water is to the parched earth, so God’s salvific deliverance is to those dying of spiritual thirst (cf. Isa 8:6; 12:3; 31:21; 35:6-7; 44:3; 55:1; Jer2:13; Ps42:2, 3 [ET 1,2]; 46:5, 6 [ET 3, 4]; Jn 7:37, 38; Rev 7:17).¹²²

According to Um, water as a symbol of the eschatological blessing of life is woven together with the Temple motif to paint a complete picture of the abundant life offered by Christ. The connection between the Garden, the eschatological Temple, and the life-giving waters that flow out of the end-time Temple is crucial to the interpretation of this passage. “Life associated with the water image can be traced in garden/Temple contexts where there is a reference to eschatological life flowing from its source. This source of life in early Jewish traditions, both biblical and post-biblical, is usually associated with God (e.g. Jer 2:13) who is the giver of life (cf. Ps 36:10; 65:10), but the Temple, which symbolizes his divine presence, is also viewed as the source of eschatological life. Jesus, then, is the true Temple who is presented not only as the

¹²¹ Um, "Theme of Temple Christology," 143.

¹²² Ibid., 141.

bringer of eschatological life but also as its source. The typologies and prophecies of early Judaism, now find their realization in the messianic Temple.”¹²³

That which Jesus offers the woman at the well is much more than merely a drink to satisfy her thirst; he offers the very life of God to satisfy her soul. The symbolism is deeply rooted in the Old Testament and intertestamental Jewish understanding of life-giving water and its source. Jesus, in John’s account, is presented as the hinge-point of the grand narrative of history, beginning in the Garden and culminating in the end-time city of God in Revelation, to be discussed in the next chapter. He fulfills the water imagery associated with the Temple in Israel’s history and prophetic writings even as he inaugurates a new era of Yahweh’s relationship with his people in which he will dwell permanently with them and abundantly meet their every need. Um concludes that “the Jewish exegetical technique of associating life-giving water with the Temple motif in an eschatological context supports John’s realized eschatological view of Temple Christology in Jn. 4.”¹²⁴

Worship in Spirit and in Truth as Opposed to in a Particular Location

The Evangelist gives further evidence for his Temple Christology in 4:16-24, using the Samaritan woman’s question about the proper place of worship to reiterate that Jesus has come to fulfill all that the Temple had previously symbolized and foreshadowed. The Samaritans taught that it was proper to worship the Lord on Mt. Gerizim in contrast to the Jewish insistence that the Temple in Jerusalem was the only God-ordained place of worship. While the woman was focused on outward aspects of worship and who was right in this particular inter-racial debate,

¹²³ Um, "Theme of Temple Christology," 166.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 169.

Jesus redirects her attention to the inward posture of worship, cleanliness of heart.¹²⁵ He asserts that the place of worship, and the debate centered around it, would become irrelevant because those who would worship the Father would do so ‘in spirit and in truth.’ Hoskins contends that “it appears that worship in spirit and truth surpasses and replaces worship at the Jerusalem Temple in that it is worship based upon fuller experience of God’s abundant provision (‘spirit’) and fuller revelation (‘truth’). Indeed, this fuller revelation indicates that the Jerusalem Temple is no longer necessary as the special locus for proper worship (4:21).”¹²⁶ Jesus, in his flesh, has now taken on these characteristics of the Temple, and those who would worship the Father must now come by way of the Son (14:6). “True worship has a new Temple; the temporal geographic location has now been replaced by the person of Jesus.”¹²⁷

Furthermore, Jesus’ conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well signifies the fulfillment of prophecies in which all nations would gather to worship the Lord. No people group would be excluded; his abundant life would be available to all.¹²⁸ His incarnation begins to usher in the eschatological age to which the prophets had looked forward and inaugurates a new covenant in which Jesus himself is the new Temple. Worship would not be limited to a particular location or a particular group of people; rather, “the Son makes it possible for the entire creation once again to become a ‘sacramental place’ for redeemed humanity to worship and serve the

¹²⁵ Liroy, “The Garden of Eden,” 75.

¹²⁶ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 213.

¹²⁷ Um, “Theme of Temple Christology,” 194.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

Creator.”¹²⁹ The incarnate Messiah begins to turn the tide back toward Eden, where humanity had enjoyed perfect communion with God and had lived within his life of abundant blessing.

Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Jewish Temple Feasts

As the narrative of the Fourth Gospel moves along, one feature that begins to stand out and distinguish John’s account from the Synoptics is his focus on the Jewish Temple feasts. The feasts specifically mentioned include the Passover (Ch. 2, 6, 12-20), the Feast of Tabernacles (Ch. 7-8), and the Feast of Dedication (Ch. 10). Just as John is intentional about the encounters of Jesus with certain people that he weaves into the narrative, so too is he intentional in including events that occur during these Jewish festivals. One of John’s central propositions in this Gospel is that Jesus fulfills and replaces all that the Temple and its traditions had symbolized. The feasts are intricately connected to the Temple, and John demonstrates to his readers that Jesus also fulfills the symbolism surrounding the Jewish festal calendar. Hoskins notes that Jesus’ fulfillment and replacement of the Temple often overlaps significantly with the fulfillment of the feasts. He posits, “there appears to be a common thread that binds together the three feasts and the Temple: They are all associated with God’s abundant provision for his people...Consequently, the combined evidence from Jesus’ fulfillment of the three feasts creates the impression that Jesus replaces the Temple as the locus of God’s abundant provision for his people.”¹³⁰ This certainly follows the OT portrayal of the Temple, especially the eschatological Temple in the prophets, as the place from which the Lord would pour out his blessings on the faithful. In addition to becoming the place where the presence of God would dwell among his

¹²⁹ Lioy, “The Garden of Eden,” 68.

¹³⁰ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 236.

people, John's Gospel presents Jesus as the source of eschatological abundant provision, fulfilling this role of the Temple as well.¹³¹

The feast mentioned first and most often in the Fourth Gospel is the Passover. It is alluded to in 1:29 as John the Baptist proclaims Jesus' identity as the Lamb of God. In chapter 2, the cleansing of the Temple scene is set during the Passover celebrations in Jerusalem, and Jesus' assertion and John's interpretation of it begin to hint at the manner in which Jesus would become the Passover Lamb, namely, by his sacrificial death. The next mention of the Passover comes in chapter 6, which contains multiple allusions to the feast. Jesus first miraculously provides bread for sustenance to the crowd on the mountain, which then prompts his claim to be the 'bread of life' that can satisfy hunger permanently. Indeed, he is the 'living bread' (6:51) in the same way as he is the source of 'living water' (4:10; 7:38). Reading further, Hoskins observes that "the reference to Jesus' flesh and blood in 6:53-6 is therefore an anticipation of his death on the cross. As was the case in 2:13-25, the second Passover in the Fourth Gospel is linked with Jesus' death, but it adds to the impression created by 1:29 that Jesus will fulfill the Passover as a sacrificial victim."¹³² It is then during the final Passover mentioned in the Gospel (chs. 12-20) that John is able to demonstrate clearly the connection between Jesus' death and the symbolism of the Passover Lamb. He becomes the fulfillment of the Passover sacrifice, satisfying for all time the demands of the entire Temple sacrificial system.

Another feast that John uses as a setting for Jesus' claims about himself is the Feast of Dedication. While not a scripturally mandated feast as are Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, this festival has roots in both Jewish scripture and historical tradition. It came to be celebrated

¹³¹ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 270.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 262.

after the re-consecration of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus in 164 BCE, following the Maccabean revolt to regain control of Jerusalem from the Seleucids under Antiochus Epiphanes, who had desecrated the sanctuary by sacrificing swine on its altar in honor of Zeus. The profanity of Antiochus had so shocked the sensibilities of the Jewish people that they joyously celebrated the victory of the Maccabees and the subsequent rededication of the Temple, and instituted a yearly festival emphasizing the centrality and sanctity of the Temple.¹³³ The fact that John includes this feast gives weight to the fact that Jesus is not working against the Temple and its systems; in fact, he views the Temple with great honor, as did his pious countrymen. He celebrates the Temple feasts, including the Feast of Dedication, as a faithful Jew.

During this feast in chapter 10, Jesus claims to be the One ‘whom the Father consecrated’ (10:36), alluding again to his role as the new Temple. Hoskins contends that John has even more than the rededication of the Temple in 164 BC in view in this passage. “Even if the immediate focus of the Feast of Dedication is the purification, consecration, and rededication of the Temple under Judas Maccabeus, these acts recall the analogous acts by which the Jerusalem Temple and the Tabernacle were previously dedicated (2 Macc 1:19-2:12).”¹³⁴ At these occasions, the Lord had demonstrated his approval of the earthly sanctuaries both visually and verbally. Visually, the glory of God had descended upon both the Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple, indicating that the manifestation of the glory of God makes the sacred space holy (Exod 29:43-44, 40:34-35; 1 Kgs 8:10-11; 2 Chr 5:13-14; cf. Lev 9:23-24 and 2 Chr 7:1-3). The Lord had also verbally expressed his consecration of the Tabernacle and Temple (1 Kgs 9:3; 2 Chr 7:16; cf. Exod

¹³³ Susan Wise Bauer, *The History of the Ancient World* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 646.

¹³⁴ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 255.

29:44). Moreover, these two forms of approval would also be given to the eschatological Temple according to Ezek 43:1-12.¹³⁵ Hoskins concludes that “the celebration of the Feast of Dedication relies upon the visual and verbal assurance given to Solomon that the Jerusalem Temple is God’s chosen, consecrated sanctuary. This assurance undergirds the significance of the rituals of rededication under Judas Maccabeus. It means that Judas was responsible for rededicating the chosen Temple of the Lord, which the Lord himself had consecrated. Against this background, Jesus’ claim that the Father himself has consecrated him resonates with a fundamental belief undergirding the significance of the Feast of Dedication.”¹³⁶ Significantly, John presents both visual (Jesus’ works, 10:25, 32,37-38) and verbal (Jesus’ claim, 10:36) evidence that the Father himself has consecrated the Son, just as he had consecrated the Temple and designated it as the locus of his presence and provision for his people. This feast, then, and Jesus’ words and actions set during it, give further evidence that Jesus fulfills and replaces the Temple and all it signifies.

Finally, the Feast of Tabernacles is the festival that most clearly brings out the water imagery within the Temple motif. At this feast, Jesus makes two startling claims about himself that relate directly to the two main symbols of the festival: water and light. In 7:37, he proclaims, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” Then in 8:12, he says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Again, John alludes to the Scripture, history, and traditions of the Jewish people to describe the Messiah in terms with which they were already very familiar.

¹³⁵ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 255.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 256.

The Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, is a seven-day festival celebrated in autumn to commemorate the exodus from Egypt, and later also the return from Babylonian captivity. It is considered a pilgrimage festival in which the people were to dwell in ‘booths’ in remembrance of the wilderness wanderings when the Israelites did not have fixed dwellings. It also calls to mind the provision of the Lord during these years and is said to be a joyous celebration of the harvest, including various sacrifices, processions, singing, dancing, and the lighting of golden candlesticks.¹³⁷ It is mentioned various times in the Old Testament (Lev 23:34–44; Exod 23:16; 34:22; Deut 16:13–15; 31:10–13; Zech 14:18–19), with different regulations for its observance. Living in booths during the festival is prescribed in Lev 23:42–43 and Neh 8:14–17. Leviticus 23:40 describes the celebration of the Lord’s provision by rejoicing before his presence with fruits and branches of palms, leafy trees, and willows that were cut on the first day of the festival. Numbers mandates the sacrifices to be offered (29:12–38) while Deuteronomy commands that the Law be read (31:10–13). Tabernacles holds a prominent place in Scripture after the return from exile as well, as Nehemiah describes Ezra reading from the Law of God ‘from the first day to the last day’ of the festival (Neh 8:13–18; Ezra 3:4). Much can also be found in extra-biblical literature about the Feast of Tabernacles, from the book of *Jubilees* to Josephus to Philo. It is even mentioned by Plutarch, who “describes Tabernacles (*skene*) as ‘the greatest, most sacred holiday of the Jews.’”¹³⁸

This important and joyous festival setting, with which the first readers of John’s Gospel would have been intimately familiar, “becomes the context for the tabernacling Word (1:14) to

¹³⁷ Marianne M. Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 167.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

reveal himself further in terms of the rituals of this feast, namely, water (7:37) and light (8:12).”¹³⁹ During the late Second Temple period, each of the seven days of the feast included a water libation ceremony during which the priests took water from the pool of Siloam and carried it through the streets in a golden vessel to the Temple. The water was then poured out over the altar in the Temple (*m. Sukkah* 4:9–10).¹⁴⁰ The symbolism of this water ritual represents various instances in the OT when the LORD provided water for his people, most notably the provision of water from the rock during the exodus (Exod 17:6; Num 20:8–11; Pss 78:16, 20; 105:41; Isa 48:21; Neh 9:15, 20) and the water that issues forth from the eschatological Temple in the prophetic writings (Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8, 13:1; Joel 3:17-18).¹⁴¹ Coloe specifically sees a connection with Ezekiel 47 because “there are later rabbinic writings that link the water-libation rituals of Tabernacles with Ezekiel's temple vision (*t.Sukk.* 3:3-18).”¹⁴² Um concurs that the ‘living water’ in Ezek. 47:1 is the primary OT source for this reference, citing Zech 14:8 and Psalm 78:16, 20 as secondary possibilities.¹⁴³ Hoskins notes that Isaiah’s Exodus typology, connecting the water from the rock in the wilderness with the water from the Temple in the eschatological age (48:20-21), is a critical piece to understanding the water libation ritual of Tabernacles. “Thirst, water, hunger, bread, light, and Spirit are all significant elements in Isaiah’s Exodus typology, which anticipates the new age. These elements make Isaiah’s expectation of abundant water in the new age a likely bridge between the events of the Exodus

¹³⁹ Coloe, “Temple Imagery in John,” 372.

¹⁴⁰ Thompson, *John: A Commentary*, 175.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Coloe, “Temple Imagery in John,” 373.

¹⁴³ Um, “Theme of Temple Christology,” 160.

and the rivers of water that Jesus offers in John 7:37-39. Based on this evidence alone, it is possible to see how the water libations of the Feast of Tabernacles could recall the historical incidents of water from the rock while anticipating God's future deliverance of his people."¹⁴⁴ With this backdrop, 'on the last day of the feast, the great day,' Jesus issues his invitation for all who are thirsty to come to him as the source of 'living water' (7:37-38). Congar asserts, "Thus Jesus claimed to be the true Rock from which the water had gushed in the desert...but also, though in a more hidden manner, the true temple from which living water would flow, the water that in Scripture is so constantly an image of the Spirit."¹⁴⁵ Using this festival setting, he makes yet another claim to be the Messiah who fulfills the imagery and symbolism associated with the Temple throughout Scripture and the history of Israel.

The Temple as the 'Father's House'

Before concluding this survey of the Temple motif in the Fourth Gospel, a final aspect to note is John's use of the phrase 'my Father's house,' another allusion to the Temple. The first occurrence of this phrase is in 2:16, where Jesus employs it to describe the Jerusalem Temple. Interestingly, this is not the usual sense of the phrase 'father's house' in the Hebrew Scriptures, which generally refers to a 'household' as in Gen 46:31.¹⁴⁶ Coloe notes that "in speaking of the temple with this phrase, the evangelist began to move away from temple-as-building to something more personal and relational."¹⁴⁷ From the beginning to the end of John's narrative, a shift can be observed in the meaning of the 'Father's house.' In chapter 2 it is applied to a

¹⁴⁴ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 242.

¹⁴⁵ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 75.

¹⁴⁶ Coloe, "Temple Imagery in John," 381.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

physical building, the Temple, and then transferred to a single person, Jesus. However, by chapter 14, during the Farewell Discourse, the phrase is broadened to include the community of believers as the ‘Father’s household.’¹⁴⁸ This, then, is the hinge-point of Temple imagery to which the biblical narrative has been headed. The Incarnate Christ makes a way for the presence of the Creator God to dwell intimately with, and even within, his own people through the life-giving, ever-flowing stream of the Spirit. Johnson posits that “Jesus Christ, the true and eternal temple, is the locus of God’s presence with his people. Atonement in this sense is much closer to its original meaning, at.one.ment, in which the goal is bringing unity of fellowship to God and his people.”¹⁴⁹ The connection to the Garden beginning of Creation and the prophesied eschatological age when the presence of God will dwell perfectly and permanently with his people is clear. Jesus is the bridge between the beginning and the ultimate end.

In this vein, Witness Lee makes an interesting observation about the ‘dwellings’ mentioned in chapter 14. Although originally translated into English as ‘mansions’ in the KJV, ‘abodes’ or ‘dwellings’ gives a better sense of the meaning. He contends that the ‘Father’s house’ in chapter 14 does not refer to heaven as traditionally understood, nor are the ‘mansions’ ideal homes in heaven in which believers will one day dwell. Rather, “the correct meaning of My Father's house is that it is the very habitation of God among his people on this earth...The principle of the temple is that on this earth among God's people there is a dwelling place for God...The many ‘mansions’ are in actuality many abodes. In the Father's house, which is the temple, there are many members, and every member is an abode.”¹⁵⁰ As noted above, this

¹⁴⁸ Coloe, “Raising the Johannine Temple,” 50.

¹⁴⁹ Johnson, “Temple Framework of the Atonement,” 236.

¹⁵⁰ Witness Lee, “The Basic Thought of the Gospel of John,” *Affirmation & Critique* 22, no. 2 (2017): 3-10.

interpretation fits the scriptural motif of the Temple as it has been traced throughout the Old Testament and throughout the Fourth Gospel. Coloe concurs with Lee on this point:

Many commentators see the metaphor as a reference to God's heavenly dwelling where the believers will abide at some future time, but the subject of the verb "dwell" throughout ch. 14 is not the believer but God. The action therefore is not the *believers* coming to dwell in God's heavenly abode, but the *Father*, the *Paraclete*, and *Jesus* coming to dwell with the believers. It is a "descending" movement from the divine realm to the human, not an "ascending" movement from the human to the divine. Given that the emphasis in ch. 14 is on the *divine dwellings* with the believers, it is not surprising that this theology is introduced with an image that draws on Israel's symbol of the divine Presence in its midst—the temple, Israel's House of YHWH, renamed as my Father's house (2:16) and now as my Father's household (14:2)...The divine indwellings in the midst of a believing community makes it appropriate to speak of the community as a living temple, where God can now be found. The community is the house (household) of God.¹⁵¹

The Temple is God's dwelling place among men. The Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple building in Jerusalem were physical manifestations of this reality, but they were not the ultimate reality themselves. The earthly sanctuary had been a symbol pointing forward to the Incarnation of the Messiah all along. When he comes, he renders the physical structures obsolete by replacing the shadows with substance. Furthermore, by giving the gift of the indwelling Spirit, he transfers the dwelling place of Yahweh from the Temple to the community of believers who will become the Church, his new dwelling place on earth.

Summary

Temple Christology is a central focus of the Fourth Gospel. The Temple motif, and water imagery within it, can be observed throughout the narrative, as John picks up the thread that had been woven throughout the Old Testament and intertestamental Jewish literature to demonstrate for his readers the relationship between the Temple and the incarnation of the Messiah. Jesus, as

¹⁵¹ Coloe, "Temple Imagery in John," 376.

the enfleshed Logos, brings the presence of God to dwell intimately with his people. The Temple is replaced by the physical body of Christ, and then by his Body, the Church. In the following chapter, the Church's mission to extend the presence of God throughout the entire earth is examined, as the final chapters of Revelation describe the end of the age, echoing the very beginning chapters of Genesis. In the eschatological fulfillment of Temple imagery, Creation will be restored to its intended Edenic state – the intimate experience of the abiding presence and abundant provision of the Creator – which the Fourth Gospel has made clear is due to the fact that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14).

Chapter 3: Temple Motif Fulfilled in the Eschaton

John offers a vision of the culmination of all of history in the book of Revelation, particularly in the final two chapters. Interestingly, it very much resembles a return to the beginning of all things, to the pristine Garden where God had walked among his people and provided for their every need. Barker connects John's eschatological Temple vision with earlier manifestations of sacred space, including Solomon's Temple and the Garden of Eden, and contends that "the Book of Revelation is the key to understanding early Christianity."¹⁵² Her 'Temple Theology' is based on the idea that "*the Christian vision was set in the original temple....*The Christians remembered and hoped for the earlier Eden – the true temple – and saw themselves returning to the place and the priesthood from which they had been driven. This was their worldview."¹⁵³ The incarnation of Christ had opened a way for them to view the Temple differently and to accept that it had never been about a building or about one singular group of people. The original Temple, Eden, had been the locus of the abiding presence of God on earth and the source of his abundant provision for all of humanity. The New Jerusalem described by John would bring all of history back to the Garden beginning.

This thesis in no way attempts to interpret the entire Apocalypse. It does, however, draw connections between the end of Scripture and its beginning, following the thread woven throughout the Fourth Gospel, the prophets, and the Tabernacle/Temple tradition. As is the case with John's Gospel account, several scholars also note the abundance of references and allusions to OT themes throughout Revelation, and Koester further states that "the author of Revelation did not create his vision of the new Jerusalem from isolated OT verses. He wove together

¹⁵² Barker, *Temple Theology*, 1.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4.

allusions from entire sections of Ezekiel, Zechariah, Tobit, Psalm 46 and other sources.”¹⁵⁴

Themes from Ezekiel have an especially prominent place in the content of Revelation.¹⁵⁵

Elements found in both Revelation and Ezekiel include: a vision of a city/sanctuary (Rev. 21:2, 10; Ezek. 40:2), God’s tabernacle among his people (Rev. 21:3; Ezek. 37:27), the manifestation of God’s glory (Rev. 21:11; Ezek. 43:4), measuring the city/sanctuary (Rev. 21:15; Ezek. 40:3), twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12; Ezek. 48:30-34), a river with abundant, flowing, life-giving water (Rev. 22:1; Ezek. 47:1), and trees bearing fruit each month with leaves for healing (Rev. 22:2; Ezek. 47:12).¹⁵⁶ Koester goes on to note the connection between the city of God as a tabernacle containing the presence of God and an abundantly flowing river in Psalm 46 and Revelation 22, the similarity of Zechariah’s themes of “measuring the city, continuous day, collecting the wealth of the nations and living waters flowing out of Jerusalem (Zech. 2:1-2; 14:6, 8, 14)” with the final chapters of Revelation, and echoes from Tobit of a tabernacle to come, gems in the city, and the wealth of the nations being carried into Jerusalem (Tobit 13:10-18).¹⁵⁷ This is consistent with John’s writing style in his Gospel, as described in the previous chapter. Rather than refer to specific words or passages from the Hebrew scriptures, he employs allusion and metaphor to pull together the many threads of his theme and to demonstrate the consistency of Yahweh’s revelation of himself and his

¹⁵⁴ Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 122.

¹⁵⁵ Beate Kowalski, “Transformation of Ezekiel in John’s Revelation,” In *Transforming Visions: Transformations of Text, Tradition, and Theology in Ezekiel*, 279–311 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 279.

¹⁵⁶ Koester, *The Dwelling of God*, 122.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

purposes throughout history.¹⁵⁸ Congar observes that “it is at this point that John, in chapters 21 and 22, offers us the astonishingly beautiful vision of the heavenly Jerusalem....All the details in this description are borrowed from the Old Testament or the Jewish apocalyptic literature. This fact shows once again the continuity between Christianity’s fulfilment of the prophecies and the promises or the hopes which preceded it.”¹⁵⁹

As the biblical narrative reaches its climax and conclusion, its readers are brought full circle with John’s vision of the ‘already-but-not-yet’ fulfilled promises. The coming of Christ inaugurates the realization of Temple imagery that had begun in the Garden and had been carried throughout Scripture. However, as John’s vision highlights, the complete consummation of the promises would not come to pass until the second coming of the Messiah. At this point, the Lord will dwell perfectly and permanently with humankind, with unbroken and unhindered fellowship as was intended in Eden. Humanity will be redeemed from the curse of sin, which has already been accomplished by the sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection of the Messiah but is not yet experienced fully in the fallen world. Peñuela-Pineda posits that “the purpose of eschatological redemption is to re-create humankind by returning the redeemed to an edenic setting.”¹⁶⁰ Two important aspects of this Edenic setting that have been traced throughout this thesis are God’s abiding presence with his people and his abundant provision for his people. The Temple is the picture of his dwelling place which is also the source of ever-flowing, life-giving water symbolizing his never-failing provision. Both are prominent themes in the beginning of Scripture as well as in these closing chapters of the biblical narrative.

¹⁵⁸ Hengel, “Old Testament in the Fourth Gospel,” 32.

¹⁵⁹ Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 213-215.

¹⁶⁰ Peñuela-Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 218.

After the Fall and expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden, the presence of God among his people had been limited to very specific times and places, from occasional theophanies to the patriarchs to the highly restricted Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Temple. As Jesus fulfills the imagery of the Temple, however, there is a shift. Block highlights themes from the epistle to the Hebrews that illuminate the relationship between the Temple and the incarnation as he argues:

In light of the appearance of the Son of God – through whom the world was created, who embodies the radiant glory of God and the exact imprint of his being, who sustains all of creation by his strong word, who has solved the problem of human sin, and who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1:1-4) – shadow institutions like temple and sacrifices and Aaronic priesthood have been superseded by the reality. Through Jesus Christ’s saving work the people of God participate in God’s Edenic rest. The movement away from the temple as the locus of divine presence to Jesus Christ climaxes in the vision of a restored cosmos in the book of Revelation...John describes this city in magnificently Edenic terms (Rv 21-22)...this is not a return to the original Eden but...a glorious transformation of the original home of humanity. The divine visits will not be limited to appearances “in the cool of the day”; the very presence of the throne of God and the Lamb will guarantee access to the tree of life, the well-being of the city, and the permanent removal of the curse and its effects.¹⁶¹

The abiding presence of the Lord with his people is the cornerstone of John’s vision of the New Jerusalem, which in essence is a New Eden. Although the heavenly city is most certainly linked to the Temple, there is actually no temple within it. Rather, the entire new heavens and new earth constitutes a new Temple precisely because the Temple is equivalent to the tabernacling presence of God. The locus of Yahweh’s presence had first been transferred from the Temple to the person of Jesus through the incarnation and then to the Church through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The mission of the Church, then, is to spread the presence of God throughout the entire world, as was the divine commission to the very first man and woman, as well as to Abraham and to the nation of Israel. Beale explains that “God’s Spirit comes into us

¹⁶¹ Block, “Eden: A Temple?” 28-29.

and dwells in us in a similar manner that God dwelt in the sanctuary of Eden and Israel's temple.... We are to realize that the Church's place in the eschatological redemptive-historical story is that of being the inaugurated temple, which is designed to expand and spread God's presence throughout the earth"¹⁶² and then "at the climax of all history, the inaugurated indwelling presence of God completely fills the entire cosmos, which appears to have been the design of the Ezekiel 40- 48 temple all along. Thus, the essence of the temple, the glorious presence of God, sheds its OT architectural cocoon by emerging in Christ, then dwelling in his people, and finally dwelling throughout the whole earth."¹⁶³ Each manifestation of the Temple in Scripture, from the original Garden of Eden to each appearance of God to Noah and the patriarchs to the wilderness Tabernacle to the Jerusalem Temple, and every tradition and cultic practice associated with them – all had pointed forward to this reality that Peñuela-Pineda terms "the eschatological re-creative exclamation:"¹⁶⁴ "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God" (Rev. 21:3).

In John's vision, not only will the redeemed enjoy unhindered access to the very presence of God in the New Jerusalem, but they will also be the recipients of his unending, abundant blessing. Throughout Scripture the Temple is described with garden-like imagery, including a river whose source is within the Temple and that issues forth throughout the entire earth, bringing life and fruitfulness wherever it goes (Gen 2:10; Psalm 46:4; Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech 14:8-9). In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus claims this characteristic of the Temple as part of his identity and

¹⁶² Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and Mission," 30.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 31.

¹⁶⁴ Peñuela-Pineda, "Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3," 260.

offers the one who believes in him ‘living water’ that ‘will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life’ (John 4:14, 7:38). It is interesting to note the connections among the passages listed above. The river that flowed out from Eden went in all directions to water the four corners of the earth (Gen. 2:10). Likewise, the post-exilic temple in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek. 47:1-12) along with the eschatological temple as envisioned by John (Rev. 7:15-17; 21:1-2) both have the prominent feature of an abundant, life-giving river issuing forth from their center. Beale connects these threads as he writes, “Indeed, Ezekiel generally depicts latter-day Mt. Zion (and its temple) with descriptions of Eden in an attempt to show that the promises originally inherent in Eden would be realized in the fulfillment of his vision...The new creation is equated with an escalated Edenic garden-temple because now Christ has finally caused the garden-temple to be expanded over the whole earth.”¹⁶⁵ In this way, Christ completes the commission to humanity in the first chapters of Genesis to ‘fill the earth and subdue it,’ bringing his presence and abundant life and blessing to all who dwell within the new cosmos.

The presence of God will bring with it the provision of God, which Liroy points out is an “expectation for wellness and wholeness”¹⁶⁶ traced throughout the promises of the Old Testament and reiterated in the New. He goes on to say that “in the eternal state, God will satisfy the yearnings of the soul. This assurance is grounded in the Lord’s own nature. Those who overcome in this life will receive an eternal inheritance and an eternal relationship.”¹⁶⁷ This is the

¹⁶⁵ Beale, “Adam as the First Priest,” 19.

¹⁶⁶ Liroy, “The Garden of Eden,” 46.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

essence of the Hebrew word ‘*shalom*,’¹⁶⁸ an incredibly important concept in Jewish thought, and the hope and the *telos* to which all creation is pointed. Nowhere is this more evident than in the concluding chapters of the biblical narrative. Liroy observes that “in the unfolding vision, John saw ‘the river of the water of life’ (22:1) and ‘the tree of life’ (v. 2). These images, which evoke the initial happiness of humanity in the original ‘garden of Eden’ (Gen 2:8), suggest the final happiness of God’s elect in the eternal state...Indeed, what Genesis introduces is brought to closure in Revelation”¹⁶⁹ That is to say, the intended state of humankind in the Garden of Eden, from which they were alienated by sin and the Fall, is that to which the Lord restores all things at the end of time. Through the work of Christ – his life, death, and resurrection – Adam’s commission to ‘fill the earth and subdue it’ and to ‘serve and guard’ the sacred space where God dwells is finally completed. Through the Spirit, Christ invites his people into perfect communion with him. His presence fills the entire cosmos, and his provision is continually and abundantly flowing for those who abide where he is. According to Peñuela-Pineda, “protology and eschatology substantiate the theological framework of Eden as a literary eschatological unity of Scripture, where creation/re-creation intertextuality reverberates through the sanctuary/temple motif. In a special sense, the end of the Bible is the beginning of the Bible brought to its intended goal because temple symbolism is present in Gen 1-3 and Rev 21-22.”¹⁷⁰ Hoskins would concur as he writes, “the new Jerusalem is not merely a new Temple, but the Temple ‘in its perfected

¹⁶⁸ F. J. Stendebach, “שָׁלוֹם,” ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 19.

¹⁶⁹ Liroy, “The Garden of Eden,” 132.

¹⁷⁰ Peñuela-Pineda, “Sanctuary/Temple in Genesis 1–3,” 232.

and eternal' form."¹⁷¹ There is a unified narrative, although it takes many shapes and forms throughout the ages. The timeless message, however, remains unchanged. The Creator God pursues relationship with humankind and abundantly provides for every need of those who abide with him. This is the intention of the Garden Temple, which humanity fails to 'serve and guard,' much less extend throughout the earth. In the incarnation of Christ, who perfectly completes the Adamic commission, however, the intended design of Creation becomes its eschatological reality.

¹⁷¹ Hoskins, *Jesus as Fulfillment of Temple*, 295.

Summary and Conclusion

Having taken a survey of the Temple motif throughout Scripture, with a particular focus on water imagery related to the Temple, it is the conclusion of this thesis that the writer of the Fourth Gospel intentionally employs water imagery within the Temple motif to communicate to his readers that Jesus is the Messiah they had anticipated. John effectively argues, using the Jewish nation's own Scripture, history, and traditions, that Christ fulfills everything to which the Temple had pointed throughout the preceding centuries. Beginning with the Gospel's Prologue, Congar observes that "At the heart of the message was the idea...that God's dwelling-place is essentially with his people and in his people...This is the 'golden string' that runs through all God's purposes which are summed up in Jesus Christ, the Son of Man."¹⁷² The Temple had been the locus of the divine presence on earth, as well as the source of divine provision for his people. The Fourth Gospel convincingly presents Jesus as both.

The Temple can be traced all the way back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis, as well as forward to its eschatological fulfilment in Revelation, with its whole purpose hinging on the incarnation of the Messiah. Beale describes John's use of the Temple motif in his Gospel and in Revelation "as completion or fulfillment of intended design (i.e. intended design of the OT temple). In this sense, I think we can refer to this as 'literal' fulfillment.... Accordingly, our contention is that Christ not only fulfills all that the OT temple and its prophecies represent but that he is the unpacked meaning for which the temple existed all along."¹⁷³ In Christ, God is present with his people and pours out his abundant life-giving blessing upon them, as was

¹⁷² Congar, *The Mystery of the Temple*, 53.

¹⁷³ Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and Mission," 26-27.

intended from the beginning of time and will be fully realized in the end.

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