



Jesus and the Temple in John and Hebrews: Towards a New Testament Perspective

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Resumen

En los últimos años, la definición que Jesús dio de sí mismo en los evangelios, particularmente en el de Juan, como el nuevo templo ha recibido atención erudita significativa. No solo Jesús parece declarar ser un templo. También anuncia el reemplazo del templo de Jerusalén como siendo fundado en su persona en un contexto escatológico (ej. Juan 2,19-21). Es más: este concepto es desarrollado de manera más completa en las epístolas de Pablo, cuando declaran que el nuevo templo es fundado en la persona de Cristo, y es, de hecho, el cuerpo de Cristo, su iglesia.

Este artículo explora y desarrolla el concepto de Jesucristo como el nuevo templo, con un enfoque particular en Juan 4,7-26. La tesis principal de esta investigación es que la declaración de Jesús de sí mismo como el templo, y el desarrollo subsecuente de Pablo de este concepto, debe recibir el peso que les corresponde. Dicha declaración tiene implicaciones significativas para la autocomprensión de la iglesia hoy, y para entender la naturaleza misma de la adoración cristiana, iluminando muchos temas neotestamentarios desde una perspectiva cristológica.

Palabras clave

Evangelio de Juan - Pablo - Templo – Hermenéutica - Cristología

Abstract

In recent years, the notion of Jesus' definition of Himself as the New Temple in the Gospels, and particularly in the Gospel of John, has received significant scholarly attention. Not only does Jesus appear to declare Himself to be a temple, but He also foreshadows the replacement of the Jerusalem Temple as being founded in His own person in an eschatological context (e.g. Jn 2,19-21.) Furthermore, this concept is more fully developed in the epistles of Paul, in which the new temple is founded on the person of Christ, and is in fact the body of Christ, that is, His church.

This article explores and develops the concept of Jesus Christ as the New Temple with a particular focus on Jn 4,7-26. The main thesis of this paper is that Jesus' declaration of Himself as the Temple, and Paul's subsequent development of this concept, must be given due weight. It has significant implications for the self-understanding of the church today,

and for understanding the very nature of Christian worship, illuminating many New Testament themes from a Christological perspective.

Key words

Gospel of John – Paul – Temple – Hermeneutics – Christology

Introduction: The Nature of the Sanctuary Doctrine

The New Testament teaches that the death of Christ is to be understood as the termination point of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament.¹ What then replaces the Jewish temple in the New Testament? There is an apparent tension in the New Testament between the focus on Jesus as the new Temple that is particularly found in the gospel of John, and the focus on the true temple as the heavenly sanctuary that is particularly found in the book of Hebrews. This is the tension that this essay proposes to resolve.

The book of Hebrews makes it clear that there is a real sanctuary in heaven, and that Jesus as High Priest ministers “in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle (τῆς σκηνῆς τῆς ἀληθινῆς), which the Lord pitched, not man.”² Similarly, the *Apocalypse* of John often refers to the heavenly temple,³ and with a frequency and in a manner that points to the reality of its existence. For Seventh-day Adventists, this belief is important both historically, in terms of the origins of the denomination, and also in terms of its systematic theology, since it has allowed the church to better understand not only its own identity and mission to the world, but also key aspects of the gospel.

In recent years, the notion of Jesus’ declaration of Himself as being the New Temple in the gospels has received significant scholarly attention. This theme, remarked on by both Protestant and Catholic scholars, has faced some stern challenges that have come largely from within Protes-

¹ Matt 27,51; John 1,29; Heb 8,1-7; 9,1-24; 10,1-14.

² Heb 8,2, New American Standard Bible. See also Heb 9,24.

³ Rev 3,12; 7,15; 11,1-2; 11,19; 14,15.17; 15,5-6.8; 16,1.17.

tant circles.⁴ Nevertheless, the presentation of Jesus as the New Temple in the gospels, and particularly in the gospel of John, continues to be noted by specialists.

Jesus and the Temple in the Gospel of John

Review of Scholarship

McKelvey demonstrated in 1969 that “the new temple is the central idea of Jewish eschatology from its very beginning”.⁵ During the Second Temple period, the Jews looked for the coming of the new and glorious temple that had been prophesied, and that would be filled with the Glory of God.⁶ This eschatological temple came to be considered as “entirely new in character and supernatural in origin”,⁷ and this eschatological interpretation of the temple has been seen as being reflected across all of the gospels.⁸

Moreover, McKelvey noted that the “fusion of the concept of the heavenly temple and the new temple found its logical outcome” in the belief that in the eschatological age God would reveal His new temple and would dwell with His people “in a new and unprecedented way.” Significantly, within this understanding, the Messiah is “a figure who stands not in His own right but in relation to the divine dwelling,” and all of these

⁴ See W. Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J. C. G. Grieg. (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1971 [1901]); and E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993)

⁵ R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 22. Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, “Jesus, the Temple and the Dissolution of Heaven and Earth”, in *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition*, ed. Christopher Rowland and John Barton, *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 43* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 117–141, at 122–123 considers that our understanding of early Christianity “has been distorted by a failure to reckon with the Temple’s prominence on the first-century political and religious map.”

⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁷ *Ibid.*, *New Temple*, 24. See also pages: 22, 40

⁸ For the Synoptic Gospels, see Ernst Lohmeyer, *Lord of the Temple: A Study of the Relation Between Cult and Gospel*, trans. Stewart Todd. (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1961), 41–42.

lines of thought converge on the hope of the coming of the eschatological temple.⁹

Within a similar framework, Kerr argues that “John is writing to demonstrate that Jesus is the answer for a Judaism that has lost its central institution”.¹⁰ Walker therefore notes that “John’s *language* may refer to the Jerusalem Temple, but his *meaning* does not”,¹¹ but rather refers to Jesus and the Church. According to the interpretation of John, the Church is essentially “the ongoing presence and action of Jesus in the world through His corporate body, the ecclesial community, which will salvifically reveal Him as He revealed God”.¹²

In his study, Kerr pays particular attention to John 1,14-16, where he argues that “the word ἐσκήνωσεν in v.14 echoes the Tent of Meeting where YHWH met with Moses... [h]owever, in John the presence of God is no longer found in the Tent/Temple, but in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, who manifests His glory (2,11), the glory of God, His Father”.¹³ Similarly, Anderson has noted that the temple theme is established with the opening words of the gospel of John, so that, “[b]eginning with John 1,14 we see an attempt to describe the tabernacling presence as God is becoming present in Jesus”: it is thus revealed among men and women.¹⁴

⁹ McKelvey, *New Temple*, 22.

¹⁰ Alan R. Kerr, “The Temple of Jesus’ Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John”, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 220 (2002): 102. Similarly, see S. M. Schneiders, “The Raising of the New Temple: John 20.19-23 and Johannine Ecclesiology”, *New Testament Studies* 52 (2006): 337-355, 337; and Brant Pitre, “Jesus, the New Temple, and the New Priesthood”, *Letter and Spirit* 4, *Temple and Contemplation: God’s Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart* (2008): 47-83, 56. This seems to be especially relevant in the light of the conclusion of Crispin-Lewis in his study of Old Testament and Second Temple texts that for many Jews the cessation of the rites of the Temple “was understood in the biblical period as an undoing of creation” (Fletcher-Lewis, “Temple,” 139), which represented, “in biblical terms, is the end of the space-time universe” (ibid., 139).

¹¹ P. W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 247.

¹² Schneiders, “Ecclesiology,” 355.

¹³ Kerr, *Temple*, 103.

¹⁴ Gary A. Anderson, “To See Where God Dwells: The Tabernacle, the Temple, and the Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition”, *Letter and Spirit* 4 (2008): 13-45, 43. This volume is titled *Temple and Contemplation: God’s Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart*.

In this regard, within Seventh-day Adventist scholarship, Wilson Paroschi has demonstrated that verse 14 consists of a radical affirmation of the inauguration of a new eschatological era of salvation in the incarnation of Christ,¹⁵ and this seems to fit well with the Jewish expectations that the new, eschatological temple will be revealed with the coming of the Messiah.

In the second chapter of John, in the second of Jesus' public acts, and as part of His very first public statement, Jesus made a pivotal declaration,

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
The Jews then said, It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days? But He was speaking of the temple of his body (ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἔλεγεν περὶ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ).¹⁶

Kerr notes multiple Old Testament eschatological allusions in John 2,111, and concludes that this particular passage "has an evident eschatological thrust.... The day of the Lord has come," and with it, a New Temple.¹⁷ In this regard, Hahn notes that John introduces the theme of Jesus as the New Temple in John 2,13-21, "in order to pursue that theme at key points throughout the remainder of his gospel".¹⁸

¹⁵ Wilson Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant in the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel (John 1:1–18)*, European University Studies: Series 23, Theology. Vol. 820 (Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 2006), 126–127.

¹⁶ John 2,19-21. Unless otherwise indicated, all Biblical references are from the English Standard Version.

¹⁷ Kerr, *Temple*, 77. On the evident Christological interpretation of this text, see Ferdinand Hahn, "Der urchristliche Gottesdienst", *Stuttgarter Bibel-Studien* 41 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1970), 53; also Albert L. A. Hogenterp, *Paul and God's Temple: A Historical Interpretation of Cultic Imagery in the Corinthian Correspondence*. Biblical Tools and Studies 2 (Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 183–184, citing J. Rahmer, "Er aber sprach vom Tempel seines Leibes," *Jesus von Nazaret als Ort der Offenbarung Gottes im vierten Evangelium. Bonner biblische Beiträge*. Band, 117 (Bodenheim: Philo, 1998), 328–329, 324.

¹⁸ Hahn, Scott W. "Temple, Sign and Sacrament: Towards a New Perspective on the Gospel of John," *Letter and Spirit* 4, *Temple and Contemplation: God's Presence in the Cosmos, Church, and Human Heart* (2008): 107–144, 115. Pitre, "New Temple," 53, comments regarding John 2,19-21 that, "[a]s the context makes clear, this is a veiled reference to *himself*. Should there be any doubt about this, he uses similar language elsewhere to refer to himself... [in] Matt 12,42; Luke 11,31... In our text, Jesus is not only identifying himself as a temple – as if this were not striking enough – but as *greater* than the Temple in Jerusalem."

Jesus in the Temple in John 4

One of the central themes of Jesus' discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4 is clearly worship. However, it is important to note that in the Second Temple Jewish period, the Jewish concept of worship was inseparable from the Jerusalem temple. It is in this context of worship that the Samaritan woman states something that no Jew or Samaritan could disagree with: "[o]ur fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship" (καὶ ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος ὅπου προσκυνεῖν δεῖ - John 4,20). The reason the Samaritan woman explicitly mentions the Jerusalem temple is because the temple and its cult had been the subtext of Jesus' discourse all along. It was Jesus Himself who had implicitly introduced this theme and, in the plethora of interpretations of John 4,¹⁹ this fundamental point seems to have been lost.

Jesus unmistakably flagged the theme of the conversation as being focused on the temple and its cult through the thematic concept of "living water,"²⁰ which was introduced and sustained by Jesus Himself from vv.7-15.²¹ Although there was water physically present in the well before them, the way that Jesus used the concept of "living water" correlates with Sirach's evidence of how water was spiritually understood in Second Temple Judaism. In this work from the early second century B.C., Wisdom cries out,

[t]hose who eat of me will hunger for more, and those who drink of me will thirst for more (καὶ οἱ πίνοντές με ἔτι διψήσουσιν).²²

¹⁹ See Stephen T. Um, *The Theme of Temple Christology in John's Gospel*, Library of New Testament Studies, 312 (London: T & T Clark, 2006), 2-14.

²⁰ ἕδωρ ζῶν - v.10.

²¹ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Waco: Word, 1987), 60.

²² Harold C. Washington, (trans). "Sirach", in *The New Oxford Annotated Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan. New Revised Standard Version, Augmented Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 100-175, 134; Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta*, ed. Robert Hanhart (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), 418; cv John 4,13-14. See also Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 186.

Within the Jewish canon, the concept of “living waters” was clearly associated with the temple, particularly in the writings of the prophets. Thus the prophet Jeremiah wrote,

A glorious throne on high from the beginning
is the place of our sanctuary.
O LORD, the hope of Israel,
all who forsake you will be put to shame
those who turn away on earth shall be written in the earth,
for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water.²³

As this passage suggests, the fountain of living water was understood to be the LORD, and the LORD was understood to reside in His Temple.²⁴ The “living waters”, therefore, issue from the Lord’s Temple Itself. Indeed, in the most striking passage, Jeremiah describes a river of “living waters” which flows from the eschatological temple (τὰ ὕδατα αὐτῶν ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων ταῦτα ἐκπορεύεται).²⁵

In the Second Temple period, this symbolism was particularly embodied in the rituals associated with the most popular of the pilgrimage feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles. Winstanley describes the associated ritual as follows:

The water ceremony consisted in a morning procession each day to the Pool of Siloam, where a priest gathered some water in a golden container, and the procession returned to the Temple through the Water Gate, where the ram’s horn was sounded three times. The priests and people then proceeded around the altar, singing psalms... On arriving at the altar the presiding priest poured the water and wine into two vessels on the altar allowing the water and wine to pour out onto the altar. On the seventh day of the feast the procession around the altar was repeated seven times.²⁶

²³ Jer 17,12-13.

²⁴ Ps 11,4; Hab 2,20.

²⁵ Ezekiel 47,1-12. Greek text from *Septuaginta*, ed. Rahlfs, 860.

²⁶ Michael T. Winstanley, *Symbols and Spirituality: Reflecting on John’s Gospel* (Bolton: Don Bosco, 2007), 37-38.

Beasley-Murray comments that after the pouring out of the water from Siloam onto the altar, the crowd shouted, “Lift up your hand!” This was a sign that the offering had been accepted.²⁷ The connection with Jesus’ saying in John 7,37-38 seems apparent, for it was made on “the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths.” (John 7,2.) It was “in the midst of the feast” (v.14) that Jesus went into the temple to teach. Moreover, the gospel specifically identifies the exact day that Jesus uttered the saying, “Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying...” (v.37.) Beasley-Murray continues by commenting that

The burning question that none can answer is at what time Jesus uttered John 7:37,38... If the voice of Jesus sounded across the temple court immediately after the crowd had shouted, “Lift up your hand!” and the priest had done so, the cry of Jesus would have been as a thunder clap from heaven. Even had it been at a later hour, or on the eighth day when no ritual drawing of water took place, the significance of the cry would have been plain to all.²⁸

What was it that Jesus cried out? “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink [ἐάν τις διψᾷ ἐρχέσθω πρὸς με καὶ πινέτω.] Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” - ῥεύσουσιν ὕδατος ζῶντος - vv.37-38.) Jesus was explicitly drawing attention away from the Jerusalem temple, and to Himself as the source of ὕδωρ ζῶν. This was in the context, as Beasley-Murray states, that Ezekiel 47 was a passage of Scripture that was actually read at this specific festival.²⁹ In using this symbolism, this should be understood as yet another declaration by Jesus of Himself as the One who takes upon Himself the functions of the temple.

Jesus responds to the woman’s question about where the correct center of worship is to be found, with the declaration,

Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father... But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth [προσκυνήσουσιν τῷ πατρὶ ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀληθείᾳ], for the Father is seeking such

²⁷ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 79.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 79–80.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth [πνεῦμα ὁ θεός καὶ τοὺς προσκυνούντας αὐτὸν ἐν πνεύματι καὶ ἀλήθειᾳ δεῖ προσκυνεῖν – John 4,21-24.]

Bultmann seems to have been correct in framing Jesus' words here within an eschatological context. He commented that "the terms πνεῦμα and ἀλήθεια are used in John to bring out the fact that the eschatological age has been brought about by the miracle of the revelation in Jesus."³⁰ Thettayil notes in regard to the key verse 24, that

[t]he use of ἐν in v. 24 is the same as that in Paul when he refers to the union between the believer and Christ using the ἐν Χριστῷ construction. The gospel makes use of the same kind of construction in 14:20... and in 15:4-11... also... in 10:38 and 14:10.³¹

The preposition ἐν is therefore to be understood "as indicating close personal relationship, and not as signifying agency."³²

This, of course, points to a Christological interpretation of worship, and this is the understanding that Porsch proposes when he writes, "*Jesus, der Spender des "lebendigen Wassers", ist letztlich auch der, durch den die neue Anbetung möglich wird. Anbetung "in Geist und Wahrheit" is auch immer Anbetung "in Christo"*."³³ Congruently, Thettayil comments that

... truth and Spirit must function as a unity especially in their dependence on Jesus because, as we have seen, both realities converge on him (14:6)... There are not two separable characteristics of a single worship that is to be offered... It seems more logical to take πνεῦμα and ἀλήθεια as a single entity personified in Jesus in whom the traffic between heaven and earth is localised.³⁴

³⁰ Bultmann, *John*, 190.

³¹ Benny Thettayil, *In Spirit and Truth: An Exegetical Study of John 4:19-26 and a Theological Examination of the Replacement Theme in the Fourth Gospel*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 46 (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 162.

³² *Ibid.*, citing J. Horst.

³³ Felix Porsch, *Pneuma und Wort: Ein exegetischer Beitrag zur Pneumatologie des Juhannesevangeliums*, Frankfurter theologische Studien, Bd. 16 (Frankfurt am Main: J. Knecht, 1947), 160. See also Bultmann, *John*, 190.

³⁴ Thettayil, *Spirit and Truth*, 162.

The “traffic between heaven and earth,” a fundamental function of the Jerusalem temple, is therefore now to be personified in the person of Jesus Himself. It is entirely appropriate that the woman replies to Jesus’ statement in v.25, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ) [ὅτι Μεσσίας ἔρχεται ὁ λεγόμενος Χριστός]. When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Thettayil significantly observes that “the woman is not merely randomly diverting the argument, but is following the conversation closely; she grasps the messianic bearing of the reference to worship in Spirit and truth and replies that these sorts of questions will be solved when the Messiah appears”.³⁵ In His response, Jesus reveals Himself as the Messiah, the coming of whom signals that the time for transformation of worship, and for the replacement of the Temple, has now come: “Jesus said to her, I who speak to you am He” (ἐγώ εἰμι – John 4,26.)

Pitre bases his analysis of the concept of the temple in the gospel of John on the understanding that “from a theological and liturgical perspective, for a first-century Jew, the Temple was at least four things: (a) the dwelling-place of God on earth; (b) a microcosm of heaven and earth; (c) the sole place of sacrificial worship; (d) the place of the sacrificial priesthood”.³⁶ Jesus, accordingly, saw each of these aspects as being fulfilled in Himself and in His disciples.³⁷ In representing this transition, the gospel of John demonstrates both the reverence of Jesus for the temple, as well as presenting the “unveiled glory of the divine presence” that has been manifested in the coming of the Son of Man.³⁸

Although this is most clearly the theme of the gospel of John, McKelvey finds it also in the synoptic gospels, in which,

The evangelists interpreted the ministry of Jesus as the fulfilment of the eschatological hope of Israel... all the time-honoured motifs are present in the gospels

³⁵ Thettayil, *Spirit and Truth*, 167, citing C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 200.

³⁶ Pitre, “New Temple,” 48.

³⁷ *ibid.*, 56.

³⁸ *Ibid.* See also *ibid.*, 69; and Yves Congar, Yves, *The Mystery of the Temple*, trans. Reginald F. Trevett (Westminster: Newman, 1962), 112.

and interpreted in the light of Jesus Christ and his redeeming word. The focus of attention is no longer the temple of Jerusalem, but Jesus and those gathered around him. It is upon them that the divine presence rests...³⁹

To illustrate this from the synoptics, we see it to be clearly evident in the gospel of Mark, where, while walking in the Temple (11,27), and having been asked by what authority He had driven out the merchants and money-changers the previous day (11,15), Jesus said to them, “Have you not read this Scripture: ‘The stone [λίθον] that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone [κεφαλὴν γωνίας]’” (Mark 12,10). This must surely be understood as a statement primarily about Himself, and secondarily about His relationship to Jerusalem and to the temple. As He is leaving the temple, he also says, “Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down” (13,2).

Jesus and the Temple in the Pauline Epistles

We find continuity between the thought of John and Paul in regard to the temple. Hahn significantly observes that in the gospel of John, the temple is not *solely* presented as the person of Christ, but that John 17 indicates that “the role of the Temple is being communicated from Jesus to the disciples. It follows that they will continue to fulfil the function of the Temple after his departure”.⁴⁰ Although John does not develop the theme of the body of Christ as the temple as explicitly as Paul, the theme is still present in the fourth gospel.⁴¹

³⁹ McKelvey, *New Temple*, 74. See also Raymond E Brown, *The Gospel According to John (i-xii): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1966), 33. In the synoptics, Jesus’ identification of Himself with the Temple seems particularly evident in His final temple discourses in Matt 23; Mark 12-13; and Luke 20,17-18. See also Matt 12,6.

⁴⁰ Hahn, “Temple,” 129.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Paul appears to firmly take up this notion, so that when we come to the Pauline epistles,⁴² it is evident that the community in Christ is the temple;⁴³ Paul so denominates it in 1 Cor 3,16-17.⁴⁴ Paul develops this concept at length, so that Corriveau refers to 2 Cor 6,16-7:1 as “the clearest statement in the Pauline epistles of the transition from the notion of a material to a spiritual Temple in early Christianity”.⁴⁵ As Newton comments,

[b]y describing the Christian community as a Temple of God, Paul transfers from the Jerusalem Temple many concepts that pertain to that institution... All of this has been made possible, in Paul’s mind, by the sacrificial death of Christ which... has enabled God’s Spirit to be forever present within the believing community.⁴⁶

Walker therefore challenges us to appreciate the “immense change” that has taken place in Paul’s thought in regard to the temple.⁴⁷ However, it is important to note that while on the one hand we should not underestimate the magnitude of the change in Paul’s thinking, neither should we veer into supercessionist territory. Indeed, the expectation of the eschatological temple, as noted above, was a Jewish notion, and the New Testament presents it in Jewish covenantal terms.⁴⁸ Paul himself does *not* have a negative attitude towards the Temple, Jerusalem, or the Land, as Rom 9,4 suggests. Having been established by God, these physical aspects

⁴² The authorship of Hebrews is not an issue that is relevant to this essay. I have chosen, mainly for thematic purposes, to not deal with the book of Hebrews in this section of the Pauline epistles.

⁴³ See 1 Cor 3,16.17; 6,19; 9,13-14; 2 Cor 6,14-7,1. These references demonstrate that Paul’s teaching of the church as the temple of God is based on the premise of presence and work of Christ in and through the church, so that the holiness of Christ is to be manifested in His body, which is His church. See also Walker, *Jesus*, 120,122; and M. Newton, *The Concept of Purity at Qumran and in the Letters of Paul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 54-55.

⁴⁴ Raymond Corriveau, “Temple, Holiness, and the Liturgy of Life in Corinthians”. *Letter & Spirit* 4 (2008): 145–166, 157. Also in 1 Cor 6,20; see comments Newton, *Purity*, 74.

⁴⁵ Corriveau, “Liturgy of Life,” 146.

⁴⁶ Newton, *Purity*, 77-78.

⁴⁷ Walker, *Jesus*, 120.

⁴⁸ In this regard, note particularly John 1:1-18 and the work of Paroschi, *Incarnation and Covenant*, 109-166.

of the covenant enshrined important spiritual truths for Paul.⁴⁹ However, Paul's positive attitude towards these aspects of the covenant does not mean that Paul saw a significant or continuing role for the Jerusalem temple itself in terms of the gospel that he preached.⁵⁰

Is There Tension Here?

We have seen that the evidence of the New Testament from the gospels to the Pauline epistles points to Jesus Christ as the focal point of that which would replace the Jerusalem temple. Until we come to the book of Hebrews, there is no explicit indication in the New Testament that the earthly temple is to be replaced by a heavenly sanctuary, nor is the concept of a heavenly sanctuary explicitly present.

It is certainly entirely reasonable to maintain that the concept of the *miqdash* [מקדש], with its inherent functions as the heavenly throne-room of God and as the place from which He dispenses His justice, is important throughout Scripture and implicit throughout the New Testament. To briefly illustrate, in Matt 5,34-35 Jesus says, "But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King".⁵¹ However, we cannot properly say that the teaching of a heavenly sanctuary is *explicitly* present throughout a large portion of the New Testament. For this reason, most non-Adventist scholars have not given priority to the teaching of a heavenly sanctuary in the New Testament.

How, then, can the discussion to this point be reconciled with the understanding of a heavenly sanctuary in which Jesus ministers as our High Priest? In other words, how can the later explicit perspective of Hebrews and Revelation be reconciled with the rest of the New Testament on the question of the identity, nature, and location of the sanctuary? The

⁴⁹ Walker, *Jesus*, 119.

⁵⁰ See: J.B. Chance, *Jerusalem, the Temple and the New Age in Luke-Acts* (Mercer University Press: Macon, 1988), 142.

⁵¹ Compare with Isa 66:1, where the context is clearly the "house" (בית) of God.

fundamental question is: Is there real tension, or not? The proposal being made here is that there should be no tension regarding these questions.

In this regard, we should also note that key scholars who advocate the perspectives that I have reviewed above also raise significant questions themselves. While Hahn, for example, notes the current scholarly consensus that “John is advancing what might be characterized as a “Temple Christology”;⁵² he also senses that something is amiss with this consensus, and that there must be more beyond, since on this basis, “if Christ is now ascended, our Temple must be gone.”⁵³ Pitre also senses that something is missing, noting that we should “move beyond the obvious visible, political, and national significance of the Temple to its deeper theological and liturgical significance.”⁵⁴ Certainly, if we see it *only* from the perspective of the national and cultural significance of the temple, then John’s Christology is indeed largely incomprehensible.⁵⁵

Why There Should Be No Tension: A Return to First Principles

The remarkable thematic similarities between the prologues to both the gospel of John and the book of Hebrews should be noted. These include the focus on the pre-existence of the Son, the incarnation, and His sharing of the glory of the Father, all within the context of explicit sanctuary language. These parallels and similarities suggest to us that Hebrews and the gospel of John share some fundamentally similar theological perspectives in regard to the sanctuary, and in this context, the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it would be a mistake to force John and Hebrews into opposition to each other.

⁵² Hahn, “Temple,” 107. See also Brown, *John*, 441, quoted in Walker, *Jesus*, 164, citing John 1,1-14; 2,13-14.16-19.21-22. Kenneth Bailey, “The Fall of Jerusalem and Mark’s Account of the Cross.” *Expository Times* 102 (1991): 102–105, 105, identifies the same theme in the Gospel of Mark; and McKelvey, *New Temple*, 91, finds it in Acts.

⁵³ Hahn, “Temple,” 107.

⁵⁴ Pitre, *New Temple*, 48.

⁵⁵ For the suggestions proposed in response to this dilemma by these scholars, see Hahn, “Temple,” 129; Pitre, *New Temple*, 48, 69; and Congar, “Temple,” 112.

Renwick reminds us that “the issue of finding God’s presence and living within it was a recurrent, and at times central, passion in the broad literary background and experience of faithful Jews in the first century of the common era, and in the scriptures of the early Christian church, including some of the writings of Paul himself”.⁵⁶ This central passion was reflected in a pervasive interest in concepts such as the Temple, the priesthood, and all matters relating to the cult. This interest was symptomatic of the quest for the presence of God, since, in Judaism, the loss of the presence of God was understood to be the fundamental problem of life.⁵⁷ In his epistles, the apostle Paul presented a solution to this fundamental problem.⁵⁸

It is significant that Davies “notes that Paul’s use of *ναός*, rather than *ἱερόν*, indicates his concern to ‘replace the very heart of the Temple with a new shrine shrine – a living community in Christ... it is not with the reform of the Temple (*to hieron*) that Paul is concerned, but with the substitution of a new shrine (*naos*) for the old.’”⁵⁹ This is reflected, for example, in 1 Cor 3.16-17; 6,19 and 2 Cor 6,16. Newton explains the significance of this, observing that

[i]n the LXX *ἱερόν* refers to the Jerusalem Temple in general and includes all its parts and its use in the New Testament reflects this understanding. Paul uses it in 1 Corinthians 9:13 in what appears to be a reference to the Temple as an institution. On the other hand the LXX has *ναός* as a translation for words which refer to the most sacred parts of the Temple. *Ναός* usually translates *hekal*, the Holy Place of the Temple (e.g. 1 Kings 6:17; 2 Chron. 4:22; Ezek. 8:16;41:1ff.)... and, in Psalm 28:2, the Holy of Holies. The Church appears, then, in Paul’s view, to constitute the most sacred portions of the Temple, those areas where only the priest in a state of purity may enter...⁶⁰

⁵⁶ D. A. Renwick, “Paul, The Temple, and the Presence of God,” *Brown Judaic Studies* 224 (1991), 43.

⁵⁷ Renwick, *The Presence of God*, 4, citing 2 Cor 2,14-3,18

⁵⁸ Renwick, *The Presence of God*, 4.

⁵⁹ W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California, 1974), 190.

⁶⁰ Newton, *Purity*, 54–55, citing Bertil Gärtner, *The Temple and the Community in Qumran and the New Testament: A Comparative Study in the Temple Symbolism of the Qumran Texts and the*

In Newton's analysis of Paul's use of cultic language, he argues convincingly that Paul's use of the language of purity focuses on the concept that believers enjoy the presence of God in their midst because they comprise the Temple of God.⁶¹ This principle of the fundamental importance of the presence of God, as that which determines what is holy, applies throughout the New Testament. It is because of this principle that it is the personal presence of Christ that must be considered as a fundamental factor in determining what is God's Temple.

It is for this very reason that the emphasis of the book of Hebrews is so clearly on the Son from beginning (Heb 1,2-3) to end (Heb 13,20.) The book of Hebrews has multiple exhortations that we are to focus on Jesus. One of the key themes of the book is about "seeing Him" (Heb 2,9), and "considering Jesus," (Heb 3,1; 12,3) about whom the author "has much to say" (5,11,) since it is Jesus upon whom we must "look" (Heb 12,2). This is the perspective that the book of Hebrews urges us to adopt.

The first chapter in Hebrews gives us the perspective of the eternal Son who is one with God, and who is Himself the Creator of all things, and through whom God has revealed Himself to humanity. In the same way that "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory" (ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν – John 1,14), so too, "in these last days, God... has spoken to us by his Son," who is "the radiance of the glory of God" (ὁς ὢν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης – Heb 1,3). Within the sanctuary context of the book of Hebrews, it is almost inconceivable that its readers are not expected to bring to mind the *shekinah* glory of the temple, which indicated the actual presence of God. Similarly, in the gospel of John, Jesus unites in Himself the functions of the temple, since in Him Divinity and humanity are united, and it is through Him that Divinity has come to live with humanity; these are indeed the very themes of John 1,1-14.

In spite of the different contexts of the gospel of John and the book of Hebrews, these similarities demonstrate that, from the very beginnings of

New Testament, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 53.

⁶¹ Newton, *Purity*, 52. See: 1 Cor 6,12-20.

their respective texts, both authors share a common core in terms of their understanding of Jesus Christ and His ministry. However, the particular difference between these two texts is that since Jesus has ascended to heaven, the focus of the book of Hebrews is not on Jesus' presence *on earth*, but rather on Jesus' presence *in heaven*. The scene is clearly set in Hebrews 1, where we are told that Jesus "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high".⁶² The focus of the gospel of John is on Jesus' presence on earth.

In Hebrews, after the prologue, the emphasis throughout is on the presence of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, into which He has entered. Heb 4,14 points out that our great High Priest "has passed through the heavens" (διεληλυθότα τοὺς οὐρανοὺς). In Heb 6,19-20 we are told that Jesus has entered in before us "within the veil" (ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος) as a "forerunner for us" (πρόδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν).⁶³ In Heb 8,1-2, it is similarly the *presence* of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary that is emphasized,

Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat [ἐκάθισεν] at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, minister in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." In Hebrews 9:11, again it is the presence of Christ as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary as High Priest that is emphasized: "But when Christ appeared [παραγενόμενος] as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) (οὐ χειροποιήτου τοῦτ' ἔστιν οὐ ταύτης τῆς κτίσεως)."⁶⁴

More broadly, the Scriptures give us glimpses of the horror that occurs when the presence of God is *not* in His house.⁶⁵ The Scriptural view of a temple that God *does not* inhabit is of an utterly desolate place that serves no function. In terms of priority, the temple and its functions depend entirely on the person and presence of Jesus Christ. The converse is not true; in terms of priority, the ministry of Jesus Christ does not depend on the

⁶² v.3. See also Heb 10,12; and 12,2.

⁶³ Heb 6,19-20, NASB

⁶⁴ See also Heb 9,24.

⁶⁵ See Matt 23,38; cv. Jer, 22,5; and comments by Craig A. Evans, *Matthew-Luke* in Vol. 1 of *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary* (Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 2003), 439. See also 1 Sam 4,21; and Ezek 10,18

temple. Essentially, a temple without the presence of Jesus is no temple at all, because all the functions of the temple derive from the person and ministry of Christ Himself. This principle is expressed in Hebrews, in the words, “the builder of the house has more honor than the house”.⁶⁶

The Relationship Between Jesus as the Temple and Jesus in the Temple

We therefore have two New Testament concepts that appear to be related together; that of Jesus *as* the Temple and Jesus *in* the heavenly Temple. Neither concept should be denied or inappropriately over-emphasized to the exclusion or detriment of the other. The connection between the two is significant since it illuminates important soteriological concepts. Although the two concepts are evident elsewhere in the New Testament, they will be illustrated with reference to the gospel of John and to the book of Hebrews. These concepts should be understood as two perspectives on New Testament soteriology that are different though compatible; as two views of the same concept.⁶⁷ That the same sanctuary-based soteriology is in view in both John and Hebrews is evident in the similar prologues in both texts, as has been noted above. The particular focus of the fourth gospel is on Jesus as the incarnational Temple of salvation within whom God dwells, and through whom God reveals Himself to humanity. The particular focus of Hebrews is of the presence and ministry of salvation of Jesus in the heavenly temple.

In the book of Hebrews, Christ’s ministry is a present work that is grounded on a past reality, and points to a future hope and culmination. The present and future implications of the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ are highlighted in Heb 10,19-25, in which, in verses 22-25, we are presented with a series of ethical injunctions in the present tense. These are, however, based on two premises that are found in verses 19-21,

⁶⁶ Heb 3,3, NASB. It is also interesting that in this passage, in v.6 the notion of the temple is applied to the people of God, so that we can see that the temple concept is not limited to the heavenly sanctuary even in the book of Hebrews.

⁶⁷ This was suggested to me by Wilson Paroschi of the Brazilian Adventist Theological Seminary.

which are also in the present tense. The premises are firstly, “since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus” (“Ἐχοντες ἔχω οὖν ἀδελφοί παρρησίαν)⁶⁸ and secondly, “since we have a great priest over the house of God” (καὶ μέγαν ἱερέα ἐπὶ οἶκον θεοῦ - v.21).⁶⁹ These present realities are immediately followed by an exhortation that emphasises future hope, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope [ἐλπίδος] without wavering, for he who promised is faithful... encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (ὅσω βλέπετε ἡμέραν ἐγγιζοθσαν ἐγγίζω - vv.23-24). We can see this present-future construct elsewhere in Hebrews in 6,18-20; and throughout Chapter 11.

However, the present realities of Christ’s high priestly ministry and its implications for believers, as well as the future hope, are very clearly grounded in Hebrews in Christ’s work in the past. We can again illustrate this from chapter 10 of Hebrews, in which all that has been mentioned has been made possible, “through His flesh” (διὰ... τοῦτ’ τοῦ σαρκὸς - v. 20). Indeed, the incarnational body of Christ has already been established in vv.5-10 as being fundamental to the theme of Heb 10. It is notable that the key focus of this passage is on the atoning sacrifice of the body of Christ (vv.5,12).

This past–present–future orientation is fundamental to the broader thematic structure of the book of Hebrews, so that the work begins by establishing the past realities as the foundation for the present. The similarities between the prologues to the gospel of John and the book of Hebrews have already been noted. In the first chapter of Hebrews, the incarnation is certainly in view (vv.2,5,6,9). Hebrews then continues, with specific reference to the earthly ministry of Jesus (2,3) with the admonition that “[t]herefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard” (Heb 2,1). Again, in the second chapter, the incarnation is clearly in view, as is particularly evident in vv. 14–18. This is not just in terms of the sacrifice of Jesus (v.9,10,14), but in the full breadth of the incarnation work (v.18). This theme is continued in 3,2, and then, in

⁶⁸ Heb 10,20, NASB.

⁶⁹ Note that this second clause is governed by the present active participle ἔχοντες (having”) in the first clause.

a passage whose themes are more fully developed in Heb 10, the incarnation theme is again emphasised in 4,14–16, in which the basis of our confidence is that we have a great high priest who is able “to sympathize with our weaknesses” and “who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin”.

The authors of the fourth gospel and the book of Hebrews have different purposes in writing, and they highlight different aspects of soteriology. However, underpinning the soteriology of each is an emphasis on the incarnation. For John, the focus is on the dwelling of God in Christ as the incarnational temple, as the basis of the believer’s access to and union with God (John 14,9; 15,1-11.) In the book of Hebrews, the focus is on the incarnational humanity and ministry of Christ as the basis for Christ’s qualification to the heavenly High Priesthood, and for the inauguration of the Heavenly Temple, with the latter being evident in Heb 1,3.9.13. It is through the ministry of Christ that the believer has access to God (Heb 4,16; 10,19-22).

Therefore, it is evident that in this regard the gospel of John and the book of Hebrews do not represent different understandings of the concept of the temple at all; they rather represent different, overlapping perspectives that should be combined for a more holistic perspective of the temple in the New Testament. The understanding of Jesus as the perfect incarnational temple of God must be seen as fundamental to an understanding of New Testament soteriology, and indeed, to the New Testament concept of the heavenly sanctuary.

The reality of the heavenly sanctuary is fundamentally based on the reality of Christ as the incarnated temple of God; in other words, Christ’s heavenly ministry is based on the past work of Christ’s earthly ministry; on His life and atoning sacrifice. As the gospel of John illustrates, the perfect humanity of Christ, perfectly indwelt by God, is the fundamental means of connection between Divinity and this world, between God and humanity. For the believer, Christ’s incarnational temple, accepted and ratified through His sacrifice, becomes the foundation both of humanity’s

access to God and of our living connection with God.⁷⁰ Again, in other words, Jesus is the way to the Father.

The gospel of John demonstrates the ideal of the relationship that God wishes to have with humanity. On the other hand, the book of Hebrews' perspective of the heavenly sanctuary emphasises the means, with Jesus' sacrifice and atoning blood as the key focal point of Christ's ministry of salvation for sinners, in both its earthly and heavenly phases. The concept of Jesus as the incarnational temple, focusing on His atoning sacrifice, therefore becomes the fundamental soteriological point of connection between Christ's heavenly ministry and the lives of those who follow Him on this earth. This perfectly reconciles the New Testament notions of Jesus *as* the temple, and of Jesus *in* the temple.

Jesus and the Temple in the Book of Hebrews

The priority that, therefore, must be given to the person and ministry of Jesus Christ in considering the temple is not a new discovery; it is, as we have seen, the focus particularly of the gospel of John, and of the teachings in the Pauline epistles. Indeed, we have an example in the very book of Hebrews that *exegetes* a 'physical' aspect of the heavenly sanctuary to point to Christ. This occurs strikingly in Hebrews 10,19-21,

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh (ἦν ἐνεκαίνισεν ἡμῖν ὁδὸν πρόσφατον καὶ ζῶσαν διὰ τοῦ καταπετάσματος, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ), and since *we have* a great priest over the house of God...⁷¹

In this passage, the reference is clearly to the heavenly sanctuary; specifically to the entrance to the ἅγιος through the veil (τοῦ καταπετάσματος).⁷²

⁷⁰ The many ethical injunctions in the book of Hebrews therefore become not merely ideals or commands, but in a real sense, promises.

⁷¹ Heb 10,19-21. NASB

⁷² On *καταπέτασμα* see Norman H. Young, "The day of Dedication or the Day of Atonement? The Old Testament Background to Hebrews 6:19-20 Revisited," *Andrews University Seminary*

Here we see an aspect of the heavenly sanctuary that is, in effect, pointing to the body (*σάρκα*) of Christ Himself. This is entirely understandable within the discussion being pursued in the tenth chapter (Heb 10,5-10), with its messianic focus on the “body” of Christ. The construction *τοῦτ’ ἔστιν* (i.e. “that is”) is a common exegetic construction in the New Testament, and indeed, it is used in this way elsewhere in the book of Hebrews.⁷³ It is, in fact, a strikingly Pauline phrase, that Paul uses specifically to exegete the Old Testament Scriptures.⁷⁴ We can see similar Pauline uses of *τοῦτ’ ἔστιν* in Rom 10,6-8; and Gal 3,16.

William Johnsson dealt with Heb 10,20 in a paper that was aptly titled, “The Heavenly Cultus in the Book of Hebrews – Figurative or Real?” In this paper, Johnsson rightly and convincingly concluded that the heavenly sanctuary and cultus are real. While this conclusion is correct, the inherent assumption underpinning his argument requires some reconsideration, for the logic in his paper seems to be that the heavenly sanctuary cannot be “figurative” *precisely because* it is literal and real.⁷⁵ I would argue that one premise does not logically follow the other. To demonstrate this point, the question may merely be asked: Was the tabernacle in the wilderness literal or figurative? The obvious answer is *both*. The fact that it was a literal, physical structure, with a real cult, did not preclude it being figurative, at least in the sense that its physical reality pointed to Christ and His ministry. To argue otherwise is to fall into a fundamental propositional fallacy.⁷⁶

Studies 40, n.º 1 (2002): 61–68; and Daniel M Gurtner, “Καταπέτασμα: Lexicographical and Etymological Considerations on the Biblical “Veil,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42, n.º 1 (2004): 105–111.

⁷³ e.g. Heb 9,11.

⁷⁴ e.g. Rom 9,7-8.

⁷⁵ William G. Johnsson, “The Heavenly Cultus in the Book of Hebrews – Figurative or Real?,” in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Theological Studies*, eds. Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner. Biblical Research Committee of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Review and Herald Publishing Association: Washington, D.C., 1981), 362-379, 375.

⁷⁶ This is a formal logical fallacy, in this case consisting in concluding “from the fact that one disjunct of a disjunction is true that the remaining disjuncts are false.” David A. Hunter, *A Practical*

However, the title of Johnsson's paper itself sets up a polarity that may not be appropriate in regard to the sanctuary, since while the sanctuary is on the one hand real, the term 'figurative' itself tends to denote a focus either predominantly or solely on the world of language and ideas. Instead of "figurative," perhaps a better term to use in relation to the sanctuary is "symbolic", in the sense that although some symbols can be largely abstract, such as numbers, other symbols can also be 'physically' real in themselves, such as the flag of a nation. In the latter case, what denominates a flag as a symbol⁷⁷ is that its meaning is grounded in, yet goes beyond, its physical aspects. In this sense, a flag is both tangibly real and has immediate meaning in itself, yet also points to deeper meanings that go beyond its physical elements.

In a recent contribution to *JATS*, Fernando Canale has correctly warned us that we should not "spiritualize" away the sanctuary "after the pattern of Platonic timelessness," but rather, that we must affirm the "spatial-temporal reality of the Sanctuary and Christ's ministry in heaven."⁷⁸ We can certainly agree with this; however, the idea of "spiritualizing away the sanctuary" should not be confused with the idea that the heavenly sanctuary has both literal *and* symbolic aspects. We can say that the heavenly sanctuary is an ontological reality, whose epistemology transcends its ontological elements. Furthermore, to *merely* limit the sanctuary to the spatial-temporal reality is to impose earthly understandings on to the heavenly, and in this way to limit the reality of Christ's ministry and its

Guide to Critical Thinking: Deciding What to Do and Believe (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, 2009), 242.

⁷⁷ My thanks to Tom Shepherd of Andrews University for this insight. This is closely related to the fundamental distinction made by Dorothy Sayers in 1949, who distinguished between "conventional" and "natural" symbols. (Dorothy L. Sayers, trans., *The Divine Comedy, I: Hell*, "Introduction" [Baltimore: Penguin, 1949], 12). Sayers referred to "conventional symbols" as arbitrary signs that represent other things only by common agreement, while "natural symbols" are things (or persons) that are an image of a greater reality of which they are themselves an instance. If considered as a "natural symbol," the Old Testament sanctuary, together with its priesthood and rituals, may be viewed as being itself as a limited and of itself non-efficacious instance of the greater reality of what was the truly redemptive work of God for His people.

⁷⁸ Fernando Canale, "The Eclipse of Scripture and the Protestantization of the Adventist Mind – Part 1," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 21 (2010): 133-165, 160.

meaning. The fact that the foundation of the Christ's heavenly ministry, His atoning sacrifice, was made "once for all" (ἐφ' ἅπαξ – Heb 9,26),⁷⁹ indicates that its benefits transcend linear time to include the past, present, and future, and this should give us pause to think. To merely limit the heavenly sanctuary to the spatial-temporal reality as we understand it may be to miss the breadth of the Biblical teaching on this topic.

Without any negation of the reality of the heavenly sanctuary itself, it is evident that the ultimate focus of the presentation of the sanctuary in the New Testament does not consist in the physical and literal aspects of the building and structure of the heavenly sanctuary, but rather in the person and atoning ministry of Jesus Christ *within* the sanctuary.⁸⁰ From this perspective, every aspect of the heavenly sanctuary *itself* should be understood as also pointing to and focusing on Christ and His ministry. This perhaps helps to clarify a verse at the end of Revelation that has puzzled many. Referring to the New Jerusalem in the time after the one thousand years, John writes in Rev 21,22 that

And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.⁸¹

καὶ ναὸν οὐκ εἶδον ἐν αὐτῇ ὁ γὰρ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ναὸς αὐτῆς ἐστὶν καὶ τὸ ἄρνιον

This verse has been interpreted as meaning that there is no temple in the New Jerusalem. For example, commenting on this verse, Catherine González and Justo González state that "[t]he city has no temple," explaining that, "[w]here God is directly present, no temple is needed."⁸² However, this is not what the text itself states; it states that John *saw* no temple; and *not* that there was no temple there. In fact, the force of the text is that there *is* a temple in the New Jerusalem, and the temple *is* the

⁷⁹ See also Heb 7,27; 9,26; and 10,10.

⁸⁰ See McKelvey, *New Temple*, 147, 149.

⁸¹ Rev 21,22. NASB

⁸² Catherine González and Justo L. González, *Revelation*, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 142. Similarly, *Bultmann*, John, 189.

Lamb,⁸³ which is a different understanding to the negation of the temple. McKelvey comments on this that

[t]his is a surprising statement; yet on reflection it is not really surprising. It runs counter to the traditional hope, but at the same time is in a direct line of development with it. In the context of the Apocalypse it is the kind of conclusion one should expect; certainly the conclusion for which John has been preparing his readers... he says quite simply that the temple is God and His Christ.⁸⁴

In this way, Rev 21,22 does not represent a radical break from what has existed before, unless it is in the clarity of its eschatological perspective and fulfillment. There *is* a temple in the New Jerusalem after the millennium. Perhaps there is no need for the temple in heaven, *as it existed before*; however, the temple *continues*. It is just that after sin has been eradicated, ultimate realities are manifested. The temple, as the New Testament consistently teaches, is the Lamb Himself.⁸⁵

In terms of Seventh-day Adventist hermeneutical approaches in regard to the sanctuary, nothing of what is suggested here breaks the “type/antitype” relationship between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary.⁸⁶ What is being discussed here is firstly a different *kind* of relationship and secondly between different entities, which are Christ (not the earthly sanctuary) and the heavenly sanctuary. In Hebrews, we can understand that the description of the Levitical sacrificial and priestly ministry as a “shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities” (Σκιὰν ἀγαθῶν μελλόντων οὐκ ὁ εἰκόνα πραγμάτων – 10,1) applies to the relationship between the structural earthly sanctuary and the heavenly sanctuary. However, in referring to the connection between Christ and the heavenly sanctuary, and in maintaining that all aspects of the

⁸³ Verse 22 should be paralleled with the following verse. In v.23, John is not stating that no *light* is needed, rather he maintains that Lamb is its lamp (ὁ λύχνος αὐτῆς τὸ ἄρνιον.)

⁸⁴ McKelvey, *New Temple*, 175–176.

⁸⁵ This does not contradict Ellen White’s comments about a temple outside the city in *Early Writings*, 19, since the Biblical concept of the Lamb as the temple has always been understood through the lenses of a physical temple, whether this temple is structural or bodily, as is even evident in the Gospel of John.

⁸⁶ Heb 9,24 – ἀντίτυπος.

temple concept ultimately point to Jesus and His ministry, we cannot apply the type/antitype relationship to *this* relationship. The heavenly sanctuary is never referred to as a “shadow,” and certainly the reality of Christ’s incarnation and redemptive work is indeed itself the commencement of the “good things to come”. We must therefore be careful not to confuse our hermeneutical paradigms. It is one thing to rightly maintain that the earthly sanctuary and its ministry was a shadow of the real sanctuary, and of the real ministry in heaven. It is another, and equally correct, thing to understand that all aspects of the sanctuary concept point us to, and find their fulfilment in, the person and the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Conclusions

The teaching of the New Testament is consistent throughout. That there is a real heavenly sanctuary in a heavenly spatial-temporal sense is clear from Hebrews and Revelation. However, even beyond that reality, the sanctuary and all of its aspects should be understood as pointing to the person and work of Jesus Christ. In reality, this leaves no room for either spiritualising away or replacing either the heavenly sanctuary or the work and ministry of Jesus, since these are intimately connected. Importantly, however, this perspective reminds us that the physical aspects of the sanctuary in heaven are not the *non plus ultra* of the sanctuary doctrine; rather, it is Jesus Christ and His ministry that are the *non sine qua* of everything that the sanctuary means. When the temple is discussed in the New Testament, the centre is always Christ.

In exploring the Biblical teaching of the heavenly sanctuary, we should beware of emphases that obscure the true Centre. Our emphasis must always be Scriptural, and so the centre must also always be Christ. Only in this way can we truly understand the Biblical teaching of the sanctuary in its important role of helping us to comprehend the gospel more fully, and as a Biblical teaching that brings together all others.

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