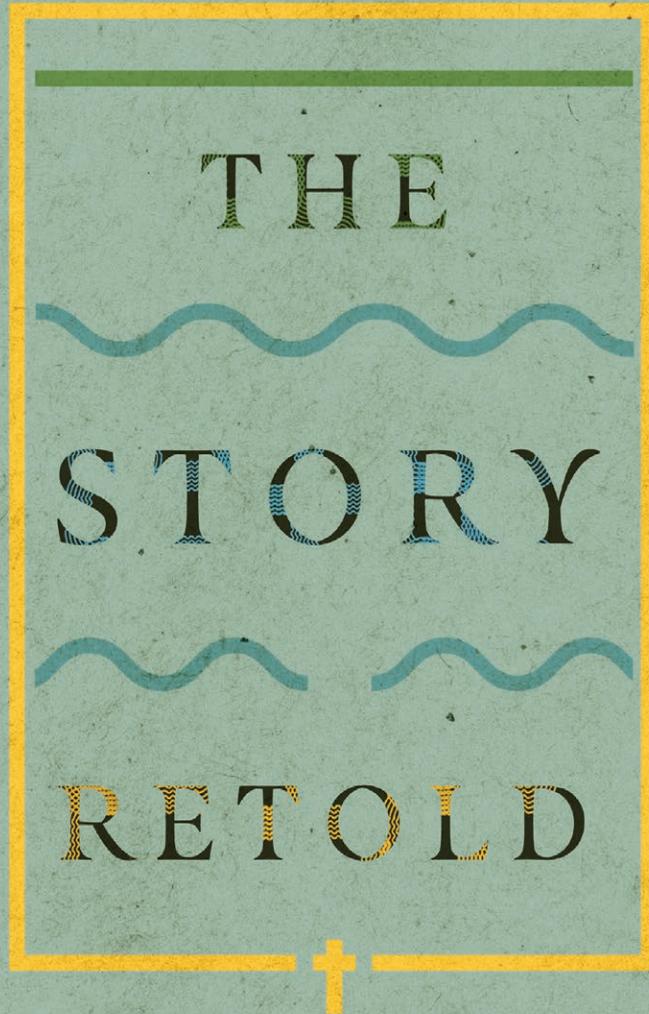


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THE  
STORY  
RETOLD

A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION  
TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

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# THE STORY LINE OF THE BIBLE

From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible presents a single, grand narrative that reveals who we are, who God is, and his goal for all creation. It is a rich story that puts God on display for all to see and marvel. This is a story that narrates God's gracious and merciful dealings with humanity, including remarkable suspense, intrigue, and twists and turns.<sup>1</sup>

Genesis 1–3 forms the core of the story and contains the basic elements of the script. Here we discover God's ultimate intention for all creation and how he plans on achieving that aim. As we make our way through Genesis 1–3, we will glean three interrelated points: (1) God creates the heavens and the earth to be his cosmic sanctuary, where he sovereignly rules and dwells. All creation is designed to house the glory of God. (2) God creates Adam and Eve as kings to rule on his behalf and as priests to serve and mediate his glory. Humanity is created to remain wholly dependent on God and represent him faithfully on the earth. (3) In an attempt to be independent of God, the original couple succumbs to the

serpent's temptation. But, despite the fall, God promises to overcome evil and establish a perfect dwelling place for his glory and kingdom.

The grand story line of the Bible entails the general pattern of creation, fall, and redemption. Delving deeper into this cycle, the pattern begins with creation and the divine commission for humanity to rule over the earth and worship the Lord. Humanity then sins and disobeys. As a result, God's people are exiled from his presence in Eden. Beginning with Adam and Eve, the pattern repeats itself throughout the Old Testament. Each pattern picks up steam, and more characters emerge into the spotlight. What began in Eden with the first couple is repeated with an entire nation in the Promised Land. With more characters come more subplots, intrigue, suspense, and redemption. Although the story becomes more complex, the general pattern remains the same. The expectation is that one day, at the very end of history, the cycle will end and humanity will enjoy God's full presence in the new creation.

<sup>1</sup>This discussion is also found in G. K. Beale, "The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology," in *The Reader Must Understand: Eschatology in the Bible and Theology*, ed. K. E. Brower and M. W. Elliott (Leicester, UK: Apollos, 1997), 11-52; and G. K. Beale and Mitchell Kim, *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

## THE CREATED WORLD AS GOD'S COSMIC TEMPLE

Genesis 1–2 portrays God creating an all-encompassing cosmic temple wherein he sovereignly rules. Genesis 1:14 contains an early hint of the creation of a cosmic temple: “And God said, ‘Let there be *lights* in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night.’” The word *lights* in the creation narrative is peculiar, as the same term is applied to the lampstand in Israel’s tabernacle: “the lampstand that is for *light* with its accessories, lamps and oil for *the light*” (Ex 35:14; cf. 39:37; Num 4:9). The lights within the cosmos, therefore, function as cultic luminaries that shine throughout God’s cosmic temple, just as the lights on the lampstand illuminate the Holy Place of Israel’s temple. Even the seven lights on the lampstand in the temple symbolize the seven lights of the visible sky (sun, moon, and five planets).<sup>2</sup> Several scholars have even compared the construction of Israel’s mobile tabernacle to the creation of the cosmos, concluding that God is indeed fashioning a cosmic temple in Genesis 1–2 (Gen 1:31; cf. Ex 39:43; Gen 2:1; cf. Ex 39:32; Gen 2:2-3; cf. Ex 40:33; Gen 2:3; cf. Ex 39:43).<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in the Old Testament, the cosmos is compared to Israel’s temple: “*He built his sanctuary like the heights, like the earth that he established forever*” (Ps 78:69; cf. Is 66:1-2; 1 Chron 28:2).

When God finished creating the cosmos, he “rested” from the creative process, but this resting is unlike our modern conception of rest. God’s resting after six days entails his climactic enthronement as King over the cosmos (Gen 2:2; cf. 2 Chron 6:41; Is 66:1) since

“it is connected to taking control in his role as sovereign ruler over the cosmos.”<sup>4</sup>

Why does God graciously construct a cosmic temple? He desires to rule and reign over the created order, but he also wants to dwell intimately with it. The world is designed to house the veritable glory of God. Despite God’s intimate communion with the first couple in Eden, his full presence dwells in the invisible heavens with the angels. Even before the fall, God and humanity remained separated—God in heaven and Adam and Eve on the earth. By creating a cosmic temple, God reveals that he intends on dwelling with humanity in all his fullness. Heaven and earth are to be joined together at the very end of history. Though perfectly created, the cosmic temple remains incomplete in Genesis 1–2. Sin can infest the original creation. The cosmos, then, must be altered to house the glory of God.

***Eden as a temple.*** Another insightful detail we glean from Genesis 1–2 is the depiction of Eden as a sanctuary resting on a mountain. Although God dwells in his fullness in the invisible heavens, he dwells partially with Adam and Eve in the garden. The casual mention of God “walking” in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:8) highlights his presence in the temple. In Leviticus, the Lord promises that he will “walk” among the Israelites and be their God (Lev 26:12). In Deuteronomy, the Lord commands the Israelites to keep their camp holy because he “walks” in the midst of their camp (Deut 23:14 NASB). In a similar manner, the Lord is “walking” in Eden because Eden itself is a sanctuary.

The book of Ezekiel even calls Eden a temple, referring to it as “the garden of God . . .

<sup>2</sup>Vern Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1991), 18-19.

<sup>3</sup>J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 81-82.

<sup>4</sup>John H. Walton, *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 165.

the holy mount of God” containing “sanctuaries” (Ezek 28:13-14, 16, 18). Ezekiel also describes a person resembling Adam in Eden wearing bejeweled clothing like a priest: “You were in Eden, the garden of God. . . . Your settings and mountings were made of gold” (Ezek 28:13). This individual’s sin profanes the sanctuaries and causes him to be cast out: “Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So *I threw you to the earth*” (Ezek 28:17).

Genesis 2:10-14 provides the reader with several seemingly incidental details about bodies of water: “A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon. . . . The name of the second river is the Gihon. . . . The name of the third river is the Tigris. . . . And the fourth river is the Euphrates.” The river flowing out of Eden indicates the abundant life flowing from the presence of God. It gives life to the many trees growing on its banks, including the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life (Gen 2:10, 17; 3:24). This water flows out of Eden to water the garden before flowing outward to give life to the rest of the earth (Gen 2:10-14). Similarly in later depictions of the temple, a river flows with trees of life on its banks. In Ezekiel 47, a river flows from below the threshold of the temple with trees on the bank of both sides. The waters of this river make seawater fresh (Ezek 47:8), give life to creatures (Ezek 47:9), and cause leaves of healing to blossom on the trees of its banks (Ezek 47:12). In Revelation, a river flows in the new Jerusalem, with “the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev 22:2).

This river of life abounding with God’s presence flows from the inmost place of God’s presence (“from the throne of God and of the Lamb”) outward into the nations. In the Israelite temple, God’s holiness is graciously manifest in the holy of holies and spreads outward to the Holy Place and then



FIGURE 1.1. GARDEN OF EDEN

the outer court, where all Israel assembles for worship symbolizing the whole world. In Eden, the river flows from God’s presence into the garden and then the rest of the earth (Gen 2:10-14).

We can discern gradations of holiness as the presence of God increases from the innermost place of Eden / holy of holies outward to the earth and the lands. Just as the Holy Place contained the lampstand shaped like the tree of life and held the bread of the presence to sustain the priests, so the Garden of Eden was the place of the tree of life (Gen 2:8-9) and sustains Adam’s existence (Gen 2:16). Just as the outer court of Israel’s second temple provided a place for the nations to come, so the land and seas are outside the garden, where the nations of Cush and Assyria dwell (Gen 2:13-14). Of course, these

lands were not yet populated. Notice in the illustration how Eden is the Holies of Holies, the garden is the Holy Place, and the outer world is the outer court.

Why is it important that we understand Eden as a sanctuary created for God's glory? This insight reveals two important points: God ultimately wants to dwell with the created order in all his fullness, and Adam and Eve play a critical role in accomplishing that goal.

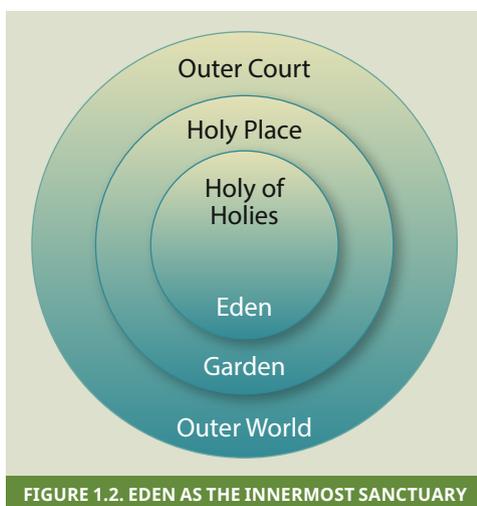


FIGURE 1.2. EDEN AS THE INNERMOST SANCTUARY

## ADAM AND EVE: THE CREATION AND FALL OF THE DIVINE IMAGE

After God created his cosmic temple, he began to enter into the cosmos, rule over it, and dwell with humanity. On day six, he created Adam and Eve at the pinnacle of creation to rule on his behalf. God's full presence remains in the invisible heaven, yet he comes down to Eden to dwell with Adam and Eve. This is similar to God dwelling in heaven yet residing in the holy of holies of the temple. God's aim is for the first couple to spread this glorious presence over the entire earth so that it may be transformed into the new heavens and earth. Once the earth is perma-

nently transformed, God's presence will descend and fully dwell with mankind.

When God creates Adam and Eve in his image, they become his official representatives on earth. Genesis 1:26-27 says that God made Adam in his image or likeness, and Genesis 2 says that God placed him in a garden-like sanctuary. In Eden, Adam and Eve reflect and represent God as his divine image. In the ancient Near East, gods frequently established kings as their images to express their authority (even though these kings were images of false gods). Images of the gods were also placed in the innermost part of the temples. Adam is created in the image of God and placed in the Eden temple so that the divine presence would shine through him and God's rule would extend to the earth. As kings, the first couple are charged with mediating God's sovereign rule on the earth. As priests, Adam and Eve are to serve in God's garden sanctuary in Eden and expand his glory to the ends of the earth. As prophets, they were to learn, obey, and promote the divine law. We will now examine the offices of king and priest in more detail and connect them to the story line of the Bible.

***Adam and Eve as kings.*** According to Genesis, God fashions Adam in his image to function as a vice regent (one who rules on behalf of another) over creation:

Then God said, "Let Us make man *in Our image*, according to *Our likeness*; and *let them rule* over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man *in His own image*, *in the image of God* He created him; male and female He created them. (Gen 1:26-27 NASB)

Just as God reigns over the cosmos in his cosmic temple, so Adam and Eve represent him and rule over the created order. God's heavenly reign extends through the first couple. Psalm 115:16 states, "The highest heavens belong to the LORD, *but the earth he has given to mankind.*" The entire creation account of Genesis 1–2 highlights God creating the cosmos and bringing order to creation. In the same way, Adam and Eve are to gain control over the earth and subdue it. Adam, for example, rules over creation by speaking and naming the animals (Gen 2:19), just as God spoke and named parts of creation (e.g., Gen 1:5, 8, 10).<sup>5</sup>

Genesis 1:28 reveals the core of God's plan for Adam and Eve and humanity in general:

"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" Just as God, after his initial work of creation, subdued the chaos, ruled over it, and created and filled the earth with all kinds of animate life, so Adam and Eve, in their garden abode, are to reflect God's activities in Genesis 1 by fulfilling the commission to "subdue" and "rule" over all the earth and to "be fruitful" and multiply (cf. Ps 8). Stephen Dempster notes that "the male and female as king and queen of creation are to exercise rule over their dominion, the extent of which is the entire earth."<sup>6</sup> As time would unfold, the



FIGURE 1.3. KARNAK TEMPLE, EGYPT

<sup>5</sup>W. Austin Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1984), 31.

<sup>6</sup>Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 59.

couple and their progeny would continue to fulfill the commission of Genesis 1:28 by extending God’s rule beyond Eden until the entire earth is subdued.

**Adam and Eve as priests.** Adam and Eve’s priestly role also comes into focus: “The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden *to work it and watch over it*” (Gen 2:15 HCSB). A priest is a servant of God—one who ministers before his presence and mediates it to others. As priests in the garden sanctuary, God charges the first couple with taking care of the garden by maintaining it and keeping out all unclean things. The two key terms in 2:15, *work* and *watch over*, often occur together and pertain either to Israelites “serving” God and “guarding” (or “keeping”) God’s word, while the combined wording refers to the role of a priest in his service to the tabernacle/temple (e.g., Num 3:7-8; 8:26; 18:7). Adam is to cultivate the garden and guard against theological corruption by

keeping God’s law and rooting out all forms of falsehood (Gen 2:16).

John Walton states that Adam and Eve “were gradually supposed to extend the Garden as they went about subduing and ruling” in order to “extend the food supply as well as extend sacred space (since that is what the Garden represented).”<sup>7</sup> God wanted to expand that sacred space and dwelling place from the limited confines of the garden temple of Eden to the entire earth.

The command to “fill the earth” in Genesis 1:28 implies that the earth is not yet filled with images that reflect God’s glory. While the boundaries of the garden are clearly delineated (Gen 2:10-14), the command to multiply images of God would expand its boundaries until it filled the whole earth. The entire earth was to be one gigantic garden of Eden so that all of humanity would worship God by reflecting his attributes in all of life. As Adam multiplied children in his image,



FIGURE 1.4. IN THE GARDEN

<sup>7</sup>Walton, *Genesis*, 186.

they would expand God’s dwelling place of his presence into the wilderness outside of Eden until the whole earth reflected his order and glory.

*If Adam and Eve obey God’s commission by producing godly descendants, expanding the boundaries of Eden and filling the earth with God’s glory, keeping his commands, and subduing evil, then the earth would be transformed into an incorruptible creation, evil would be abolished, and humanity would inherit incorruptible bodies. God would descend to earth to rule and dwell with humanity for all of eternity.<sup>8</sup>*

## THE FALL AND THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION

In Genesis 3:1-7, we learn that Adam and Eve fail to keep God’s law, fail to “rule over” the serpent, and fail to “watch over” the sanctuary of Eden (Gen 1:28; 2:15). What about the commission of Genesis 1:28? Has God’s plan to fill the earth with his glory changed? No. The divine mandate remains intact after the fall, but there is a shift in how it will be accomplished. God will now go “with” humanity in accomplishing that original goal. Sin corrupted the divine image and infected the created order, but it did not abolish the image of God. The Lord promised to restore his image in humanity and accomplish the original aim of Genesis 1:28 through a covenant. Genesis 3:15 states that God “will put enmity” between the serpent and his ungodly offspring and the descendants of Adam and Eve. The two lines will wage war with one another, culminating in the decisive defeat of evil: “He [a righteous descen-

dant of Eve] will crush your [the serpent’s] head.” Redemption is guaranteed.

**From Adam to the patriarchs.** Adam’s commission to fill the earth with images of God is passed to Noah even though sin runs rampant. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve disobey God’s command to subdue the beasts and are



FIGURE 1.5. NOAH'S ARK ON MOUNT ARARAT

instead subdued by a serpent. In Genesis 4, Cain murders Abel. In Genesis 6–9, the earth is filled not with faithful images of God but with wickedness of humanity (Gen 6:5, 11). As a result, God brings a flood, paving the way for God to repeat Adam’s commission to Noah. Just as God originally created the heavens and earth through waters (Gen 1:1-2) and blessed and commissioned Adam to be “fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth” (Gen 1:28), so God recreates the world through the waters of the flood and blesses and commissions Noah to “be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1, 7).

The comparison between Adam and Noah doesn’t stop there: Adam and Eve sinned in

<sup>8</sup>See 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), 81-121, for more in-depth demonstration of Adam as a priest and of Eden as a sanctuary that was to be expanded to encompass the entire earth.

a garden, and Noah sins in a vineyard (Gen 9:20-21). Instead of the sanctuary of God's presence expanding and filling the earth with images of God, the earth is filled with a people so rebellious that they are dispersed "over the face of the whole earth" (Gen 11:9). The unabated spread of sin after the flood raises a critical question: How will the commission of Adam ever be fulfilled in light of the prevalence and power of sin?

God passes down the commission of Adam to the patriarchs, while promising and guaranteeing its fulfillment through a number of covenants. In Genesis 12, the focus shifts from "all the earth" to one man—Abraham. From this one man comes offspring in whom "all peoples on earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3). While the wide-angle lens of Genesis 11 pictures rebellious, scattered humanity, Genesis 12 zooms in on a promise that the offspring of Abraham will become a blessing to all the families of the earth. The cosmic scope of God's purposes through Abraham and his children is seen in the repeated promises to bless and multiply their offspring to fill the earth. These promises to the patriarchs grow out of God's original commission given to Adam in Genesis 1:28, which he passes down to Abram in Genesis 12:1-3:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and *I will bless you*; I will make your name great, and *you will be a blessing*. I will *bless those who bless you*, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

God accompanied the original commission with a blessing (Gen 1:28), and he does

so once more with Abram. God blessed Adam to fill the earth (Gen 1:28), so he blesses Abram to make him a "great nation" and bless "all . . . [the] earth." In Genesis 17, the connections to Adam's commission are more explicit: God promises to "multiply [Abram] exceedingly . . . [and] make [him] exceedingly fruitful" (Gen 17:2, 6 NASB; see 22:17-18), just as God blesses Adam and commands him to "be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen 1:28). His purpose for Abram grows out of the original commission to Adam. Through the Abrahamic covenant, God ensures that the Genesis 1:28 commission will be fulfilled *through* Abram's descendants and that he will be the "father of many nations" (17:4). Abram's immediate offspring, Isaac and Jacob, likewise receive the identical commission given to Adam (Gen 26:3-4, 24; 28:3-4, 14; 35:11-12; 48:3, 15-16).

## ISRAEL: THE CREATION AND FALL OF THE CORPORATE ADAM

The second pattern of creation, fall, and redemption begins with the nation of Israel and their descendants. God redeems his people from Egyptian bondage by overthrowing the Egyptian deities in the ten plagues of judgment. He leads his people through the waters and, like Adam and Eve, creates Israel at Sinai.

Mount Sinai is reminiscent of Eden in that both are the dwelling place of God. Like Eden, Sinai comprises a tripartite structure—the outer courts (Ex 19:12, 23), the holy place (Ex 19:22), and the holy of holies (Ex 24:2). The goal of God's delivering his people from Egypt is to lead them to this holy mountain so that they might worship and experience him there: "When you [Moses] have brought

the people out of Egypt, *you will worship God on this mountain*" (Ex 3:12; cf. 3:18; 4:31; 5:3; 7:16; 8:1, 20, 27, 28).

Once he creates his chosen people, God commissions them to be "a kingdom of priests" (Ex 19:6). Like the first couple, Israel must form a godly community that obeys God's law, rule over the entire created realm, and mediate God's presence. God covenants with them by obligating himself to grant life to those who perfectly obey (Lev 26:1-13; cf. Deut 28:1-14) and death to those who do not (Lev 26:14-46; cf. Deut 28:15-68). Resembling their parents in the garden, the Israelites immediately break God's law by committing idolatry through worshiping the golden calf (Ex 32). As William Dumbrell notes, "Like Adam, Israel is put into a sacred space to exercise a kingly/priestly role (cf. Ex 19:4-6) . . . like Adam, Israel is given laws by which the divine space is to be retained. Finally, Israel, like Adam, transgresses the law and so too is expelled from the divine space."<sup>9</sup>

***The tabernacle and temple as a model of the cosmos.*** The mobile tabernacle in the wilderness wanderings and the permanent temple in Jerusalem are composed of three main parts, each of which represent a major part of the cosmos: (1) the holy of holies symbolize the presence of God with his heavenly host in the invisible dimension of the cosmos (Ex 25:18-22; Is 6:1-7; Ezek 1), (2) the Holy Place in the temple is emblematic of the visible heavens and its light sources (Ex 25:8-9; Ps 19:1), and (3) the outer court represents the habitable world where humanity dwelt (Ex 20:24-25; 1 Kings 7:23-26; Ezek 43:14). Daniel Block agrees, "Although the temple

was an earthly replica of YHWH's true heavenly residence, it also functioned as a microcosm of the cosmos, perfectly proportioned and designed with cosmic and Edenic features."<sup>10</sup> Why are the three parts of the tabernacle and temple symbolic of the cosmos? The structure of the temple is a symbolic story of God's ultimate intention to dwell intimately with his people and creation. The general idea is that God's revelatory presence in the invisible heavenly dimension (the holy of holies) will break out and fill the heavenly (Holy Place) and earthly (outer court) regions.



1.6. ISRAEL AND THE GOLDEN CALF

The central difference between the tabernacle or temple and Eden is the purification of sin. Only the burnt offerings in the outer court can purify sinful individuals. The problem of sin must be remedied to provide access to a holy God in the tabernacle, and the outer courtyard in Israel's temple is where provision was made.

Even though the tabernacle and temple are localized manifestations of God's presence, his presence was never ultimately to

<sup>9</sup>William J. Dumbrell, "Genesis 2:1-17: A Foreshadowing of the New Creation," in *Biblical Theology: Retrospect & Prospect*, ed. Scott J. Hafemann (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 62.

<sup>10</sup>Daniel Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 312.

be limited to one place; heaven and earth are designed to house the Lord's glory. Isaiah 66:1 reads, "This is what the LORD says: *'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be?'*" (see Is 6:1; Jer 23:24; Ps 78:69).

God's special, revelatory, glorious presence remains sequestered in the back room of the temple in the Old Testament epoch. The cosmic design of the temple indicates that this sequestered presence will break out from the heavenly holy of holies and fill every nook and cranny of the new cosmos. God's consistent purpose for his tabernacle was to expand and fill the earth so that his presence would fill it and sinful humanity might be forgiven and cleansed in the new heavens and earth.

***Journey to and entrance into the Promised Land.*** We will now briefly trace the story of Israel and how that story never loses sight of God's original goal for creation and

humanity. As Israel remains at the base of Sinai, Moses outlines in the book of Leviticus a series of regulations for Israel to obey if God is to dwell in their midst. The nation of Israel, a "kingdom of priests" (Ex 19:6), must ensure that they are ritually clean and qualified to approach the tabernacle and be near to God's presence. Numbers describes the various obstacles that Israel had to overcome in order to reach the Promised Land, where God's people would function as a corporate Adam in a new garden of Eden. Deuteronomy addresses this second generation with the same obligations of the first, yet these Israelites will enter this land of promise. The book of Joshua depicts Israel experiencing a mini-exodus (Josh 3) and the overthrow of the hostile nations living in the land. The book concludes on a positive note by affirming that "the LORD gave them rest [from their enemies] on every side" (Josh 21:44; cf. 3:1) and that "not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled"



FIGURE 1.7. JOSHUA CROSSING THE JORDAN RIVER

(Josh 21:45; cf. 23:14-15). But these comforting statements come with a warning: if Israel does not faithfully obey the covenant, they will incur the covenant curses and “will quickly perish from the good land he has given you” (Josh 23:16). The book of Judges highlights the incipient sin, though only briefly noted in Joshua, running rampant. Judges narrates a repeated pattern of Israel sinning, coming under bondage to a surrounding enemy, and then God raising up a judge to deliver them from their plight.

***Israel in the Promised Land.*** First Samuel recounts the transition from the rule of the judges to that of kingship in Israel. Kingship itself was not evil (Deut 17:14-20), for God himself installed Adam as a king over creation. Israel’s first king, Saul, was disobedient much like Adam. Saul’s kingship was taken away and given to David, whom he persecuted. David initially displayed the marks of a faithful king. Yet his promising start toward successful kingship did not come to fruition, as 2 Samuel (and 1 Chronicles) sadly recounts. His adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah signal the beginning of his demise. His own son, Absalom, even conspires against him (2 Sam 15). Although David regains his kingdom, 1 Kings 1–2 relates how his chosen heir, Solomon, begins his reign after an attempted coup.

The kingdom of Israel reaches its zenith under Solomon, who successfully builds the temple and establishes the kingdom more widely than his predecessors (1 Kings 3–10 / 2 Chron 1–9). Solomon represents the height of Israelite kingship and the epitome of Israel fulfilling the promises and hopes of Genesis 1:28. His sinful demise commences in 1 Kings 11, and further deterioration occurs with the division of the monarchy into southern and

northern Israel. Instead of obeying God’s laws, keeping the covenant, and ruling on behalf of God as Adam should have done in the garden, Israel’s kings in the north and the south brazenly commit idolatry and rule selfishly (1 Kings 12–2 Kings 25). Righteous kings during the period of the divided monarchy are few and far between.

***Israel in exile from the Promised Land.*** The fall of the nation of Israel was a long time coming. Despite the protestations of the prophets throughout the centuries (Elijah, Elisha, etc.), the northern tribes of Israel and her kings continue to sin and worship foreign deities. Second Kings 17 describes the Assyrian assault on the northern tribes and



FIGURE 1.8. JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON

their eventual destruction. For three years, the Assyrians fought the Israelites in Samaria and eventually succeed (2 Kings 17:5-6). Deporting thousands of the culturally elite and notable individuals, Sargon II exiles Israel to Assyria in 722 BC.

Approximately one hundred years later, the two tribes in the south, Benjamin and Judah, follow suit. Despite Josiah’s reforms, God’s decision to exile Judah remains firm: “The LORD did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah

because of all that Manasseh had done to arouse his anger. So the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem’” (2 Kings 23:26-27; cf. 24:3). After a series of attacks, Jerusalem eventually falls to the Babylonians in 587/86 BC, and Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, exiles the two southern tribes in a series of deportations.

At the end of 2 Kings, God discloses *why* he sent Israel into exile: “I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people . . . because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger

*by all the idols their hands have made*” (2 Kings 22:16-17). Centuries before, Moses predicted this very thing in Deuteronomy 29:26-28: “They went off and *worshipped other gods and bowed down to them*. . . In furious anger and in great wrath the LORD uprooted them from their land and *thrust them into another land*” (cf. Deut 28:64-68). Like Adam and Eve, the nation of Israel commit heinous idolatry, so God drives Israel from his presence into Babylonian exile, just like he drove the first couple out of the garden.

#### ***Israel’s return to the Promised Land.***

Israel spends approximately seventy years in captivity, but a glimmer of hope remains: Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians, and Cyrus, the Persian king, decrees that Israel could return to its land and rebuild the temple (2 Chron 36:21-23; Ezra 1:1-4). If the temple could be rebuilt, then God would once again dwell among his people. The Israelites return to the land and begin reconstructing Jerusalem’s walls and the temple (Ezra–Nehemiah). The temple is eventually completed, although it pales in comparison to its former glory (Ezra 6:13-18; Hag 1:12-14; 2:3). Despite physically living in the Promised Land and rebuilding the temple, Israel remains in *spiritual* exile because the post-exilic community, like their ancestors, continue to disobey God’s law. For example, Israel’s priests present unclean sacrifices to the Lord (Mal 1:6-14), and the Israelite men break their marriage covenant with their wives (Mal 2:14-17). Zechariah 10–11 also condemns Israel’s leadership for their selfish ways. According to Zechariah 10:2, the Israelites are even consulting idols because of the “lack of a [righteous] shepherd.” Although living in the Promised Land, Israel is still physically in slavery to foreign



FIGURE 1.9. EZRA THE SCRIBE

powers,<sup>11</sup> continuing through the Roman occupation in the first century AD. Spiritually, the majority of the nation remains in unbelief, in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 6:9-13.<sup>12</sup> The second pattern of creation, fall, and redemption is recapitulated but without ultimate redemption. Israel still stands in need of complete physical and spiritual salvation.

### RESTORED ISRAEL: THE SUCCESS OF GOD'S MESSIAH

Stretching back all the way to Genesis 1–3, the Old Testament writers and prophets foresaw a time when the third and final pattern of redemption would emerge. This epoch in Israel's career takes place at the very end of history. This pattern entails God's greatest act of creation, but instead of repeating the fall of Adam and Israel, a future figure will arrive on the scene and succeed in obeying the divine commission and resisting sin and temptation. The success of this figure will

secure God's decisive act of redeeming creation and humanity in the new heavens and earth. At that point, God will descend from heaven and dwell with redeemed humanity in the new creation for all eternity.

**The timing of Israel's restoration.** Our English term *eschatology* comes from two Greek words—*eschatos* (last) and *logos* (word)—and means the study of the “last things.” The final pattern or cycle of redemption should be considered eschatological, as it takes place at the very end of history. The Old Testament uses the phrase “latter days” or the “last days” to refer to this final phase of Israel's history (e.g., Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Deut 4:30; 31:29; Hos 3:5; Is 2:2; Ezek 38:14-16; Dan 2:28-29, 45). All the events that take place within this period, whether acts of judgment or restoration, are eschatological. Like a seed germinating, sprouting, and eventually growing into a tree, the Old Testament writings begin with an eschatological seed in Genesis 1–3 and then develop into a vast tree



FIGURE 1.10. ADAM, ISRAEL, AND RESTORED ISRAEL

<sup>11</sup>Ezra, for example, confesses that “we [Israelites] are slaves,” even though Israel had physically returned to the promised land (Ezra 9:9). Likewise in Nehemiah 9:36 the Levitical leaders confess that “we are slaves today, slaves in the land you gave our ancestors so they could eat its fruit and the other good things it produces.”

<sup>12</sup>Isaiah prophesies that the spiritually hardened condition of Israel before the Babylonian exile (Is 6:9-10) would continue even when Israel returned from exile to the Promised Land (Is 6:11-13). See G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 35-69.

by the close of the canon. That is, the remainder of the Old Testament writings expand in various ways on the ideas in Genesis 1–3. The period of the latter days is neither unrelated nor disconnected to the remainder of the Old Testament; it is the climax of Israel’s story.

Determining the precise order of end-time events is difficult since they are tightly bound together. Nevertheless, the following is a general chronological overview of the Old Testament material of what will occur during the latter days:

1. Israel will endure a period of intense suffering and affliction instigated by an end-time opponent. This antagonist will deceive many within Israel, and those who do not succumb to false teaching will be persecuted (Dan 11:31-35).
2. God will vanquish Israel’s enemies through a descendant of David, the Messiah (Gen 3:15; 2 Sam 7:13; Ps 2:8-9).
3. Those persecuted and martyred because of their faithfulness to God’s law will be resurrected with incorruptible bodies and will rule with the Messiah in his eternal kingdom (Is 25:8;

Ezek 37:12-13; Dan 12:1-3) and in his new temple (Ezek 40–48).

4. God will transform the present cosmos into an incorruptible one, the new heavens and earth, that will house God and redeemed humanity (Is 65:17; 66:22). The commission of Genesis 1:28 will be finally fulfilled.
5. God will cut a new covenant with restored Israel and the nations and pour out his Spirit on them (Jer 31:33-34; Ezek 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-29).

Thus, the latter days entail positive and negative elements with the negative elements generally preceding the positive. God first judges then restores.

### THE LATTER DAYS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

With the basic story line of the Old Testament now sketched, we turn to the New Testament’s continuation of that same story. The period known as the latter days in which Israel’s enemies are judged and the covenant community is restored at the end of history has now begun in the person of Christ. All

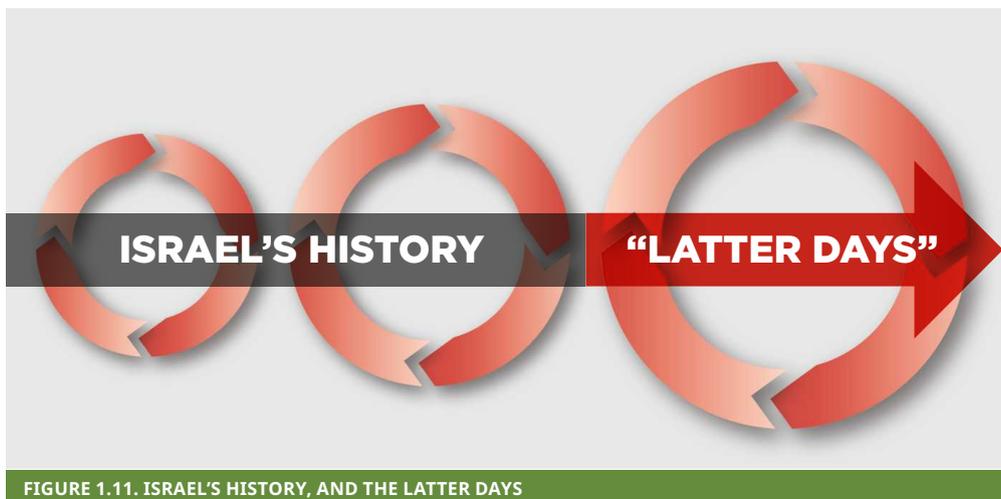


FIGURE 1.11. ISRAEL'S HISTORY, AND THE LATTER DAYS

that the Old Testament foresaw would occur in the end times has begun to be fulfilled in the first coming of Christ and continues until his second coming. The final pattern of creation, fall, and redemption has been initiated. But this time around, we witness genuine success. The divine commission to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 is fulfilled, and God's glory begins to invade the earth. As the glory of God filled Israel's tabernacle, so too his glory dwells in Jesus. The presence of God, formerly contained in the holy of holies of the temple, has begun to burst forth into the world in the form of Jesus incarnate.



FIGURE 1.12. TWO WITNESSES OF REVELATION 11

The Old Testament end-time expectations of the great tribulation, God's subjugation of the Gentiles, deliverance of Israel from oppressors, Israel's restoration and resurrection, the new covenant, the promised Spirit,

the new creation, the new temple, a messianic king, and the establishment of God's kingdom have all been set in motion through Christ's death and resurrection.

The expression "already but not yet" refers to two stages of the fulfillment of the latter days.<sup>13</sup> It is "already" because the latter days have dawned in Christ, but it is "not yet" since the latter days have not consummately arrived. Scholars often use the phrase "inaugurated eschatology" to describe the beginning stage of the latter days.

We can illustrate this critical phenomenon with a military metaphor. Christians live between D-day and V-day. D-day is the first coming of Christ, when the opponent is defeated decisively; V-day is the final coming of Christ, when the adversary will finally and completely surrender.<sup>14</sup> As Oscar Cullmann notes, "The hope of the final victory is so much the more vivid because of the unshakably firm conviction that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place."<sup>15</sup> Anthony Hoekema concludes,

The nature of New Testament eschatology may be summed up under three observations: (1) the great eschatological event predicted in the Old Testament has happened; (2) what the Old Testament writers seemed to depict as one movement is now seen to involve two stages: the present age and the age of the future; and (3) the relation between these two eschatological stages is that the blessings of the present [eschatological] age are the pledge and guarantee of greater blessings to come.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup>The discussion of the "already but not yet" is adapted from Benjamin L. Gladd and Matthew S. Harmon, *Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 9-10.

<sup>14</sup>Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 21.

<sup>15</sup>Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950), 87.

<sup>16</sup>Hoekema, *Bible and the Future*, 21-22.

Christ's life, trials, and especially his death and resurrection initiated the latter days (Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 10:11; Gal 4:4; Eph 1:7-10; 1 Tim 4:1-3; 2 Tim 3:1-5; Heb 1:1-2; 1 Pet 1:19-21; 2 Pet 3:3; Jude 18; 1 Jn 2:17-18). These pivotal events of his life inaugurated the new creation and the eternal kingdom. The Old Testament prophesied that the destruction of the first creation and the re-creation of a new heavens and earth were to happen at the very end of time, but Christ's ministry demonstrates that the end of the world and the coming new creation have begun in his death and resurrection. For example, 2 Corinthians 5:15 and 17 says Christ "died and rose again . . . [so that] if anyone is in Christ, he is *a new creature*; the old things passed away; behold, *new things have come*" (NASB). Revelation 1:5 refers to Christ as "the first-born from the dead," and then Revelation 3:14 defines *firstborn* as "the Beginning of the [new] creation of God" (NASB). Likewise, Colossians 1:18 says that Christ is "the first-born from among the dead" and "the beginning," so that "in everything he might have the supremacy." In Galatians 6:14-15 Paul says that his identification with Christ's death means that he is a "new creation."

The Old Testament predicted that the resurrection was to occur at the end of the world as part of the new creation (cf. Dan. 12:1-2). The resurrected Christ is the beginning of the long-awaited new cosmos since he was resurrected with a physical, newly created body. Recall the effects of Jesus' death in Matthew 27:51-52, "*The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.*" These strange phenomena are recorded by Matthew to signal to his readers that Christ's death was the beginning of the end of the old

creation and the inauguration of a new creation. The death of Jesus is not just any death but the beginning of the destruction of the entire cosmos. The new cosmos that was promised to Adam and Israel upon perfect obedience has now been initially fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection.

The New Testament writers, without hesitation, claim that the church is the restored Israel of God (Rom 2:25-29; 9:6, 24-26; Gal 3:29; 6:15-16; Eph 2:16-18; 3:6; 1 Pet 2:9; Rev 1:6; 3:9; 5:9-10). The covenant community in this new age stands in solidarity with the covenant community in the Old Testament. Through Christ's earthly ministry, death, and resurrection, all the Old Testament prophecies that concern latter-day Israel are initially fulfilled in the church (2 Cor 1:20).

***The nature of the latter days in the New Testament.*** Now that we have outlined the basic eschatological underpinnings of the New Testament, we will probe the nature of its fulfillment. The "already but not yet" nature of eschatology in the New Testament is a bit unexpected from the vantage point of the Old. The Old Testament authors anticipated that end-time events would occur in all their fullness. The advent of the Messiah would signal the death knell of evil empires. He will destroy or "crush" pagan kings and their kingdoms (Dan 2:44). Such a defeat and judgment would be decisive and happen all at once at the end of history. But Jesus claims that the advent of the Messiah and the latter-day kingdom does not happen all at once (Mt 13). Paradoxically, two realms coexist—those who belong to the kingdom and those who belong to the devil. The kingdom has been inaugurated but remains to be consummately fulfilled. What the Old Testament foresaw as one fulfillment at the very end of

history happens unexpectedly in two stages or in a staggered manner: an inaugurated and a consummated fulfillment.

Believers are caught in the “overlap of the ages.” Christ has inaugurated the new age, yet the old age and its effects persist. The Old Testament writers generally did not foresee such an overlap of the ages since to them the old age was to give way decisively to the new age. We can graphically depict the Old Testament’s expectation of the end of history (see figure 1.13).

The New Testament, however, outlines a different schema of fulfillment (see figure 1.14).

Though all facets of the latter days have begun to be fulfilled in Christ and the church,

they have not reached their consummate state of fulfillment. The New Testament looks forward to the future when God will fully establish the kingdom (1 Cor 15:24), physically resurrect believers and unbelievers (James 4:5), and create the physical new heavens and earth (Rev 21:1).

Therefore, as we survey the New Testament, we will situate each book and examine every major passage in light of the overlap of the ages. We will consider how each New Testament author explored the depths of the Old Testament and latter days and exhorted his audience to live soberly in light of the coming climax of the history of redemption.

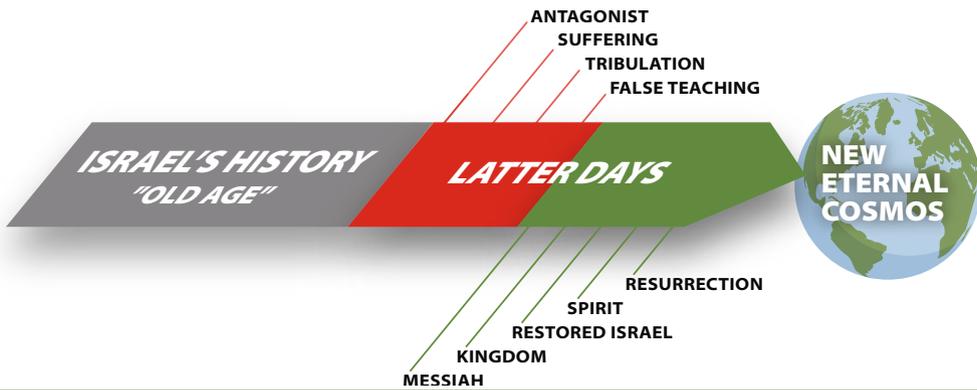


FIGURE 1.13. THE LATTER DAYS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

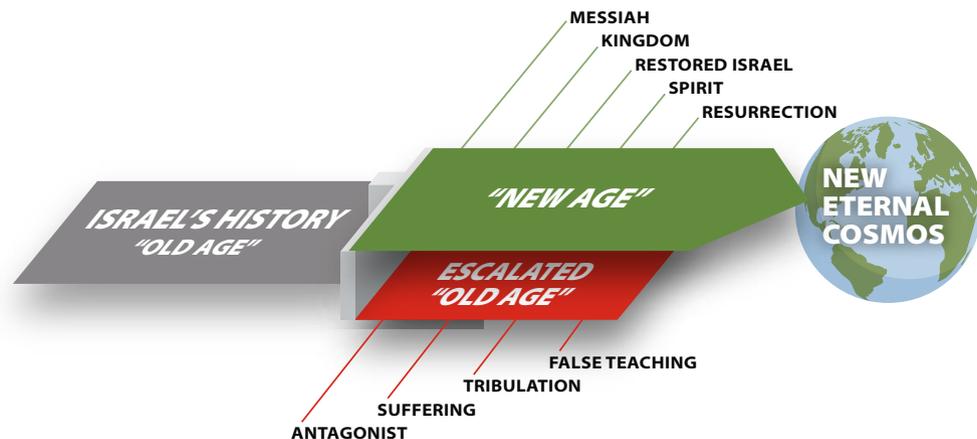


FIGURE 1.14. THE LATTER DAYS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

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