



The Temple Symbolism in Genesis

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The Bible is consistent from Genesis to Revelation. The matter of the Temple and its symbolism is an example of this. In this Exposition we show the beginning and ending of God's plan for the redemption of mankind. It is a glorious plan from which God has never varied — in the typical sense.

The temple was a physical replica of God's heavenly abode. When Moses was first ordered to construct a temple, he was told to make it portable — it was a tent, or tabernacle.

"Let them make me a sanctuary: that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall you make it." ¹

• **Exodus 25:8-9**

In the Book of Hebrews we are told that the tabernacle, and all its services, were "**patterns of things in the heavens**" (Hebrews 9:23). The physical objects associated with the earthly sanctuary were "**figures of the true**" (Hebrews 9:24) — the "**shadow of heavenly things**" (Hebrews 8:5). Each physical item had its spiritual counterpart in heaven. So, as long as there was a tabernacle or temple on earth, there was a material reflection of God's heavenly palace for mankind to see. ² The temple represented God's home on earth. Of course, God does not literally dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24), and though the temple at Jerusalem was a true image of the heavenly, in Hebrews it is made abundantly clear that the earthly sanctuary of God is "**not the very image of the [heavenly] things**" (Hebrews 10:1). It was only "**figures of the true**" (Hebrews 9:24). ³

If we wish to know what God's heavenly abode is really like, then we must understand the significance of the three general compartments in the earthly sanctuary, the furniture, and the persons (the priests) who served within the holy areas. All these physical things typify spiritual counterparts in heaven. The heavenly dwelling place is where God is at the present.

In the Book of Revelation, which depicts a period of time yet future to us, John is transported by the Spirit into heaven (Revelation 4:2). While there, he saw a throne with God seated on it. Around the throne were 24 elders and four living creatures (Cherubim). Before the throne was a seven branched lampstand and a sea of glass. The heavenly beings gave glory and honor to the Father who sat on the throne (Revelation 4:2-11). Inside this heavenly temple — the inner temple — John also saw individuals worshipping God who no longer needed the sun for light (Revelation 7:14-16). In the inner temple he witnessed the true "**ark of the testament**" (Revelation 11:19) and the pot of manna (Revelation 2:17). And finally, the inner sanctum contained "**the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God**" (Revelation 2:7).

Outside the Holy of Holies and just to the East of it was the general Holy Place. In it John saw a golden altar with incense and a censor associated with it (Revelation 8:3). Located in front of this incense altar, outside the Holy Place, was another altar under which were the **“souls of them that were slain for the word of God”** (Revelation 6:9).

Everyone of these heavenly features was represented in typical form by the physical sanctuary on earth. The complete and permanent temple was that of Solomon which he built in Jerusalem. It had all the heavenly factors exhibited. The celestial throne of God was portrayed by the mercy seat located in the Holy of Holies.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest [the Holy of Holies] by the blood of Jesus through the veil.”

- **Hebrews 10:19–20**

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy.”

- **Hebrews 4:16**

The throne of God is one of mercy. Also within the holiest area of Solomon’s temple was **“the golden pot of manna”** (Hebrews 9:4). Those who will eat of this manna **“shall serve him day and night in his [inner] temple [the Holy of Holies] ... they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more”** (Revelation 7:15–16).

The Ark of the Covenant

Alongside this pot of manna was the **“ark of the testament”** (Hebrews 9:4). In the earthly tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon the slabs of stone on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments were placed within this ark, a box-like structure supported by two horizontal poles that enabled it to be carried. ⁴ These stones were called the “tables of the covenant” (Hebrews 9:4). These physical stones with their laws were meant only for Israel under the Old Covenant. ⁵ Spirit beings do not need these Old Covenant physical regulations, so the ark of the testament in heaven does not have within it the two tables of stone or the extra scrolls positioned in its sleeves (Exodus 40:20; Deuteronomy 31:26).

Only the ark itself is in heaven. It represents the external witness that God has the power to make any necessary laws for the supervision of the universe. The ark could figuratively contain different laws for the administration of the various phases of divine government that God imposes on His creatures. Thus, the tables of stone which originated from the granite outcroppings at Mt. Sinai were never positioned in the **heavenly** ark. They were carved out of Sinai and only placed in the tabernacle in the time of Moses.

Indeed, just before the temple was destroyed by the Babylonians in the 6th century B.C., those stones, according to Jewish tradition, were deposited East of the Dead Sea by Jeremiah near where Moses was buried (2 Maccabees 2:4–8). Jeremiah was supposed to have prophesied that the physical ark will one day be found at the end of the age and it, along with the stones thereof, will be replaced in the Millennial temple. This is highly probable. One thing for certain: Those material stones were never placed within the heavenly ark. They are buried East of the Dead Sea. As far as we know, there is nothing (in a literal sense) within the heavenly ark.

The Holy of Holies

But what else was located in the Holy of Holies? In heaven there were twenty-four elders. On earth these were typified by the twenty-four priestly courses (each headed by a chief priest) who performed the regular daily services in the temple on a rotation basis (2 Chronicles 24:1–

19). The father of John the Baptist was portraying the role of one of these heavenly elders when he administered in the eighth course of the twenty-four orders (Luke 1:5, 8).

There were also the Cherubim in the heavenly temple. Statues were made of them and placed near the mercy seat in the earthly temple. Also within the Holy of Holies was **"Aaron's rod that budded"** (Hebrews 9:4). This staff was made from a limb of an almond tree (Numbers 17:8). The almond is the earliest of the springtime trees to blossom in the Holy Land. It represents new life — the first new life of every new year. This rod made from an almond tree was typical of *the tree of life* located in the Garden of Eden.

"To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise [park or garden] of God"

- **Revelation 2:7**

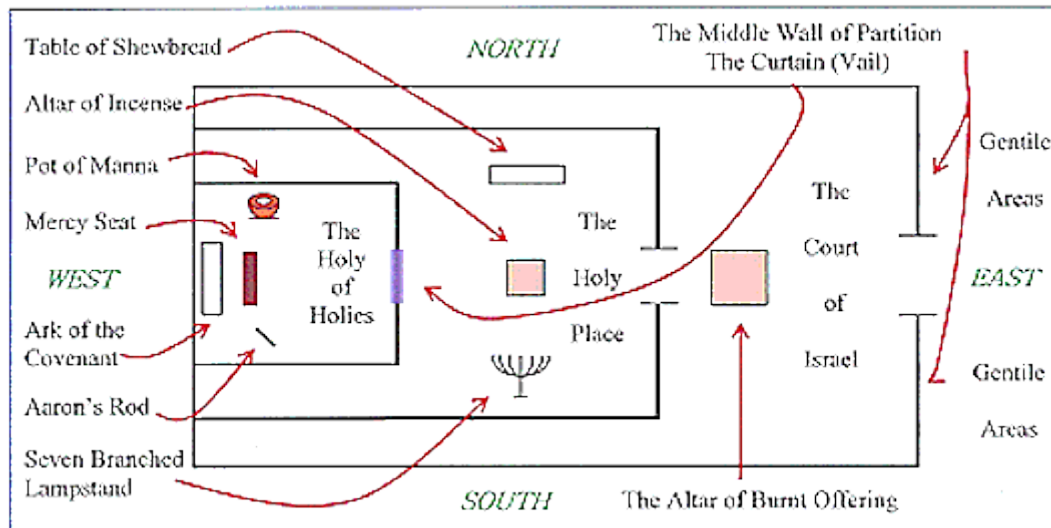
With this reference to the tree of life, we are ready to investigate the theme of this Exposition: "The Temple Symbolism in Genesis." The events associated with the story of Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden, Cain and Abel, the land of Nod, etc., will take on normal temple features which anyone in the time of Moses would have recognized. Even in the New Testament the scenes within the Garden of Eden were reflections of things in God's heavenly temple. John told the Ephesian church that they could have a right to partake of "the tree of life" located in God's paradise in heaven (Revelation 2:7). There was once an actual "tree of life" in the Garden of Eden.

If all the symbolic features have literal counterparts (which they do) then this **"tree of life"** must have been represented by a real almond tree growing in the Garden of Eden. But there was also another tree in the Garden called **"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"** (Genesis 2:17). Our first parents were allowed, at the beginning, to eat of any tree of the Garden (including even the tree of life). Only the tree of good and evil was off-limits to them. If the tree of life was the almond tree, what was this latter tree? The identification may also be given in the Bible. We will show this in due course.

The Plan of the Temple

It is necessary to recognize the basic patterns of the temple before one can grasp what happened (in a symbolic way) with the story of Adam and Eve. The temple had three compartments with major pieces of furniture located within each of them.

Note that the entrance into the temple was from the East. Only Israelites were permitted to pass the eastern gate and enter the court of Israel. On the West side of this court, and just before the entrance into the Holy Place, was the **"altar of burnt offering."** This was the altar on which animals were sacrificed. Into the next compartment (the Holy Place) only the priests could enter — they also entered from the East. And into the third room (the Holy of Holies) only the High Priest could go on the Day of Atonement — again he could only enter it from the East. I am emphasizing that the entrance to all compartments was from the East. There is an important reason for this that I will explain in a moment.

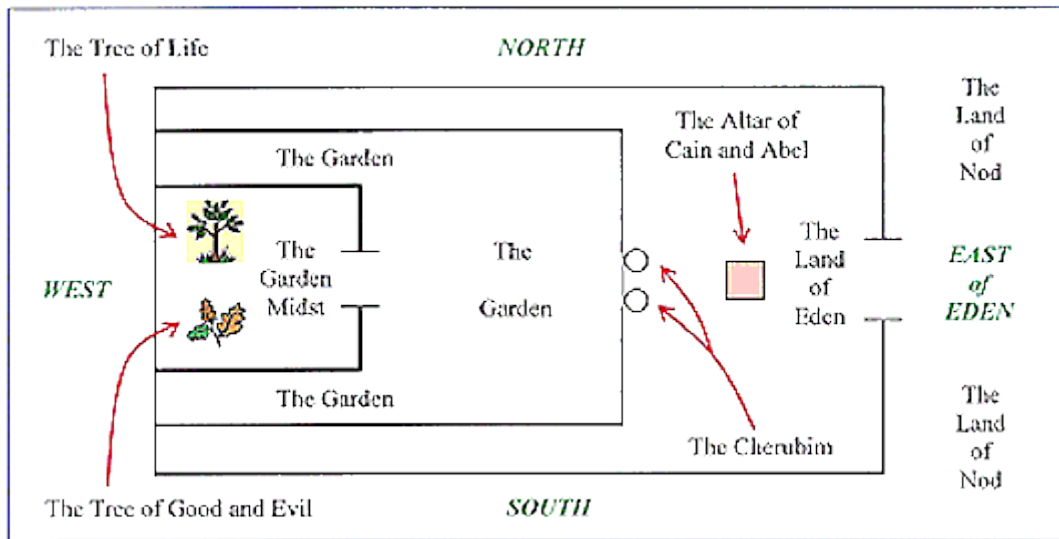


The Temple and the Garden of Eden

When Adam and Eve were put into the Garden they were in a state of moral and spiritual perfection. ⁶ As a result they were able to observe God in a visible sense and even talk with Him at particular times of the day. Only after they sinned was this privilege taken away. This occurred when they were cast out from the Garden.

Before they sinned, however, they were in a very privileged state. Of all the multitudes of spiritual beings in the universe, how many of them are able to have such a close and daily contact with the Creator God? Just very few — probably those associated with the throne itself such as the Cherubim and the twenty-four elders. But in the Garden were two human beings in the closest of association with God Himself. It must have been like a heaven on earth! And indeed, that's just what it was, in a symbolic way. It was as if God's celestial palace temporarily had come to earth. Even the Garden, the Cherubim of the Garden, the altar built by Cain and Abel, the land of Eden, and the land of Nod are all connected with the temple symbolism and are direct images of God's heavenly abode. And for the brief period of time before the sin of Adam and Eve, "heaven" was really here on earth.

In the Garden our first parents were able to talk face to face with God. But note an important point. They only had conversations with Him at certain times of the day. They did not see Him on all occasions. It was **"in the cool of the day"** that they came into **"the presence of the Lord"** (Genesis 3:8). The expressions **"cool of the day"** and **"the presence of the Lord"** were a part of temple language. ⁷ **"The cool of the day"** was the period when the Sun got lower in the sky and the cool sea breezes normally swept over the Palestinian region. This was the time of the evening sacrifice (1 Kings 18:36; Daniel 9:21) — about three in the afternoon. This was the time when the animals were being regularly sacrificed (and also in the morning about nine o'clock). At these times the people were then reckoned as being **"in the presence of God"** (2 Chronicles 20:19).



Finally, Adam and Eve sinned. They ate of the tree of which they were forbidden. This tree, like the tree of life, was also in the middle of the Garden. But with their partaking of it, God was angry and sent them out of the Garden. Never again could they enter the Garden in this life.

“And the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever’: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

• **Genesis 3:22–24**

This episode has some very significant features associated with it. Observe they were expelled *East* of the Garden. Cherubim (angelic beings — later connected with temple symbolism) were also stationed at the *East* gate to the Garden with a flaming sword to prevent Adam and Eve from re-entering. ⁸ When this happened, the tree of life became off-limits to them. Their face-to-face contact with God came to an end. The Cherubim guarded the East entrance (the only gate) into the Garden and forbade anyone to enter. We will see in a moment that these features represent precise arrangements found in the later tabernacle and temple.

Cain and Abel

Our first parents were cast out of the Garden — never to re-enter in this life. They still remained, however, in the territory of Eden. It is important to note that the “Garden” and the country of “Eden” were not synonymous. The Garden was *in* Eden, but the Garden did not represent *all* Eden. Look at a modern example. My residence is in Pasadena, California. Pasadena is *in* California, yet not *all* California is Pasadena. Adam and Eve were simply expelled from the Garden *in* Eden. They were still able to live in other regions of Eden.

Adam and Eve then had children. The first of which we have record were Cain and Abel. Cain became a tiller of the ground — he raised fruits and vegetables. Abel was a shepherd (Genesis 4:2).

“And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of

the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, 'Why are you wroth? and why is your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted? and if you do not well, sin lies at the door. And unto you shall be his desire, and you shall rule over him.' And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him."

- **Genesis 4:3-8**

There are three major points to consider in this narrative. **First**, both men decided to bring offerings at a set time of the year — on a particular day. The phrase **"in process of time,"** in Hebrew, means **"at the end of days."** It often signified the end of the agricultural (or civil) year (1 Kings 17:7) and was near the beginning of Autumn. Recall that the Israelites were required to appear three times in the year at the temple (Exodus 23:14-17). One of these occasions was **"at the end of the year"** (verse 16). This was the season of Tabernacles. Cain brought token offerings of his crops **"at the end of days."** This shows the brothers must have appeared before God at a precise time near the Autumn of the year. This means they must have been told by God when to bring them.

Second, they also must have been told where to bring them because they "brought" their offerings to one altar.

Third, they were no doubt told what to bring. God would hardly have been angry with Cain unless he brought offerings not sanctioned by God.

This is similar to what happened with the later Israelites in regard to the temple. They were told when, where, and what to bring to the temple. All sacrificial offerings could only be presented at the sanctuary. Under no circumstances was any other location allowed (Deuteronomy 16:5-6, 11, 16). With Cain and Abel, the same factors are in evidence. Back at that time, they went to the area where they knew God had been dwelling — He was a resident of the Garden. They built their altar as close to God as possible near the East entrance (the gate or door) to the Garden.

When the proper time came they both offered their gifts, waving them in sacrificial praise to God whom they believed to be in the Garden. God then issued His approval of Abel's offering, but He was displeased with Cain's offering. The older brother no doubt had been told to bring a lamb or goat, but Cain offered fruit and vegetables. God was not pleased and Cain's countenance fell. God then answered:

"Why is your countenance fallen? If you do well [in the future and bring the proper sacrifice], shall you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin [a sin offering] lies at the door."

- **Genesis 4:6-7**

Many people for generations have stumbled over the meaning of this verse. Yet it is quite clear what is meant if one understands that temple language is being used. God was really being merciful to Cain. The mercy was this: If Cain would repent and still bring the proper offering (**"if you do well"**), then he would be accepted; but if he did not do so, then **"sin"**[a sin offering] **lies at the door."** This "sin" was a sin-offering. God said that He would provide a sin-offering which would lie **"at the door."** What was this door?

The Gate of the Garden, the Door of the Temple

The matter becomes understandable once this “door” is identified. The word in Hebrew *ispehthagh* and refers in other parts of the Old Testament to the entrance of any tent (Genesis 18:1), but more particularly to the **“door of the tabernacle”** (Exodus 29:4), or the **“door of the temple”** (Ezekiel 8:7, 16), or **“the door of the east gate of the Lord’s house”** (Ezekiel 10:19).

In the case of Cain and Abel, they constructed their altar at *the East gate* of the Garden just in front of the Cherubim which guarded its entrance (Genesis 3:24). God was indicating to Cain that he still had a chance to obtain a proper offering and offer it. Cain, on the other hand, was a tiller of the ground. He had no lamb to give unless he got one from his brother. God understood the problem, so He added further: **“if you do not well”** (even if Cain was unable to obtain the proper animal sacrifice) God would have a sin-offering to lie **“at the door”** of the Garden where the altar was located. ⁹

The next phrase has been an enigma to many. **“And unto you shall be his desire, and you shall rule over him.”** This expression is explained in Genesis 3:16. Like a wife desired her husband and like a husband ruled his wife in Old Testament times (Genesis 3:16), so Cain would have a sin-offering provided for him that would allow him to rule over “sin.” It simply meant that Cain would gain mastery over sin — over his mistakes — by an offering provided by God. (Genesis 4:7). This was a noble gesture of grace on God’s part. Yet in spite of this act of mercy Cain did not obtain the proper animal, nor did he accept God’s grace of supplying a sin-offering for him to master sin. He responded with something very bad and in no way in accordance with the divine command. He offered up his own brother.

“And Cain talked with Abel” (Genesis 4:8). The margin has “quarreled”. They got into an argument. **“Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him”** (Genesis 4:8). This murder took place in the field. God then reprimanded Cain. **“What have you done? the voice of your brother’s blood cries unto me from the ground”** (Genesis 4:10). In later times it was recognized that the murder of Abel was a sacrifice of one of God’s saints. Such sacrifices symbolically took place on the altar of God. Jesus said:

“That upon you [Pharisees] may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom you slew between the [inner] temple and the altar.”

- **Matthew 23:35**

In Revelation the blood of righteous saints was also reckoned as flowing from the altar from whence they were figuratively sacrificed.

“I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth.’”

- **Revelation 6:9–10**

This is very similar to what God said about Abel. **“The voice of thy brother’s blood cries unto me from the ground”** (Genesis 4:10). Clearly, a New Testament connection was made between Abel and the end-time martyrs mentioned in Revelation. Like Abel, their blood was dripping down from their sacrificed bodies into the pool located under the altar. This receptacle for blood was supposed to be for that of animals, but in the case of righteous Abel (and all the

other martyred saints), their deaths were considered human sacrifices — killed on the altar of God. Abel's murder was too much for God to take:

“Now are you [Cain] cursed from the earth, which has opened her mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand ... a fugitive and a vagabond shall you be in the earth.”

- **Genesis 4:11-12**

Whereas Cain had worked in the same area of Eden with his brother and parents, he was now to be sent away from the land. He was to be a wanderer — one without a fixed abode. He was to live at a distance from God, even “out of His sight.” Cain considered this almost too much to carry.

“My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, you have driven me out from the face of the earth [the land where Cain lived]; and from your face shall I be hid.”

- **Genesis 4:13-14**

Cain's punishment involved him being “driven out” from the land he formerly tilled, and away from the “face” of God.

“And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod [Wandering], on the east side of Eden.”

- **Genesis 4:16**

What marvelous teaching is found in this latter scripture once it is understood that temple language was being used by Moses. Note that Cain was sent *OUT OF EDEN*. He went East of Eden. And by leaving Eden, he **“went out from the presence of the Lord.”** Now look at the second diagram. It will be similar to the outline of the temple which we gave earlier, but this time we will involve the story of Adam and Eve, the Garden, the Cherubim with the flaming sword, the altar of Cain and Abel, the land of Eden, and the land of Nod [Wandering]. It has excellent teaching.

The Tabernacle of Moses

The whole story revolves around the later design of the tabernacle of Moses — and the temple of Solomon. The Garden in which Adam and Eve were first placed was later represented by the Holy Place into which only priests could enter. When Solomon built the temple at Jerusalem he decorated the outside and inside walls of the Holy Place in a way that made it look like a garden.

“He carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, within [on the inside walls] and without [on the outside walls].”

- **1 Kings 6:29**

Israelites came into the court of the temple and looked westward beyond the altar of burnt offerings towards the Holy Place, it looked like a garden protected by Cherubim. This exactly depicts the Garden in Eden.

When Adam and Eve were at first in the Garden, they could talk with God at certain times. He was **“among the trees”** (Genesis 3:8). The two important trees (the tree of life and the tree of

the knowledge of good and evil) were located **"in the midst of the Garden"**(Genesis 2:9). And in the Holy of Holies (in the "middle" of the temple), was placed Aaron's rod that budded and produced almonds. This rod was not attached to the earth; it needed no water or nutrients to cause it to grow. It represented life coming from a supernatural source. It was a fit description of the tree of life. The tree of life was no doubt symbolized by the almond tree.

But there were many kinds of trees in the Garden (Genesis 2:9; Ezekiel 31:9). But the main type that Solomon most associated with the Garden was the palm — the date palm (1 Kings 6:29). In fact, in Solomon's temple only the date palm figured prominently. ¹⁰ This was also the case with Ezekiel in his future temple. So, alongside the main almond tree, it could well be that a date palm represented the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve **"saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes"** (Genesis 3:6). This could well describe the dates that grow in clusters near the top of the palm tree.

Maybe it was or maybe not, but within the future temple as described by Ezekiel there are representations of Cherubim and palm trees directly inside the Holy of Holies (Ezekiel 41:18–20, 25–26). ¹¹ This could show that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, in the midst of the Garden alongside the tree of life (the almond) was the date palm. It is interesting that Jeremiah considered the palm was a tree connected with good and evil (Jeremiah 10:5). Of course, there is nothing wrong with date palms or the dates they produce, but if God said not to eat from a tree of the Garden (be it any type of tree), it became bad — not for the tree — but for any who would partake of it. This is the essence of the narrative.

Further Temple Teaching

Cain was sent into the land of Nod, East of Eden, away from the presence of God. He became cut off from the Eternal. God then gave him a "mark" to show that Cain was not completely forgotten and that a measure of protection would be afforded him and his descendants. Cain became a representative of *all* Gentiles. They were reckoned as being in Nod (wandering — without a fixed spiritual home). And while they could approach the East entrance to Eden, they could not go in. A barrier was placed around Eden. The altar which Cain and Abel constructed in the area of Eden near the East gate (door) of the Garden was out of bounds to those who lived in Nod.

This condition existed throughout the antediluvian period. But with the great flood of Noah, everything was destroyed — the Garden, the altar, the barriers, etc. When Noah and his children began to repopulate the earth, none of these former things were retained — except in the memory of man, and only in symbol. In the time of Moses, however, God selected the Israelites to be His nation — in favored status to Him. Moses was ordered to build a tabernacle which resembled the condition that existed in the pre-flood age. Outside the tabernacle was represented the land of Nod. The court on the inside of the tabernacle (the court of Israel) was Eden. The Holy Place was the Garden. The Holy of Holies was the center of the Garden. The tabernacle not only represented Eden and the Garden, but it was also a physical type of God's heavenly abode.

The Israelites were reckoned as being in Eden like Adam and Eve were. However, even the privileged nation could only go to the East entrance to the Holy Place — which represented the Garden. Into the Holy Place (the Garden) only the Aaronic priests could go at the time of the morning and evening (the cool of the day) sacrifices. And even the priests were barred from entering **"the midst of the Garden"** — the Holy of Holies. They were only able to get close to the curtain that separated the outer Garden from its midst.

Only once in the year was anyone allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. On the Day of Atonement the High Priest, after many ceremonies of purification, and after he clouded the entire inner chamber with incense so that the mercy seat would be hidden from view, was able to push the curtain aside and briefly step into the inner sanctum. After he did his required duties, the

curtain came down once again, and the Holy of Holies (the midst of the Garden) became closed for another year. This showed that while the tabernacle stood, God still reckoned barriers between Himself and mankind. [12](#)

While Adam and Eve before they sinned were able to witness God's presence, their sins caused them to be sent from the Garden (the Holy Place). Cain and his descendants were sent further East — they were expelled from Eden and went to Nod. But when the Flood came the Garden, the altar, Eden, etc. all disappeared from earth. Mankind now found itself without any physical area on earth in which God dwelt. That's why the early descendants of Noah wanted to build a tower **"to reach to heaven"** (Genesis 11:1–9). They wanted to reach God, to have access to His heavenly presence. But God would not allow it. He had been angry with man for his ways, so He changed their languages and scattered them into all the earth. He sent all mankind into a condition of "Nod."

Finally, God selected Abraham to be the father of a nation which would be responsible for leading man (in a step-by-step way) back to God. By the time of Moses, the Abrahamic family had now reached nationhood. Moses built the tabernacle, and Israel was brought back into Eden once again. A middle wall of partition was erected, however, that kept all Gentiles out. God even put restrictions on Israel. Even they were told to stay out of the Holy Place (representing the Garden). The Aaronic priests were allowed to go in. But no one was permitted in the Holy of Holies except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement — and even then he (the holiest man on earth, symbolically) was not allowed to see the mercy seat. All of this shows that God still had several barriers which kept many sections of mankind away from an intimate association with Him.

The Revelation of "the Mystery"

Through Christ (who was the sin-offering that God first told Cain about, which God would place on the altar at the door of the Garden by grace) through *that* offering the whole barrier system was to be abolished. Instead of a step-by-step expelling of man eastward into relative oblivion (as happened with Adam, Eve, Cain, the antediluvian world, and those at the tower of Babel), all the barriers to God as shown by the temple (and the Garden) were to be removed in Christ. Paul said, **"The middle wall of partition"** has now been broken down (Ephesians 2:14). This means that the Gentiles (like Cain) who were in a state of wandering and without any fixed spiritual home, can come into the court of Israel where the altar is located. This got them back to Eden. But there is more than simply getting access to the holy altar.

Once the **"sin-offering at the door"** is accepted they can join hands with Israelites (with both peoples now called **"the new man"** — not Israelite or Gentile), and both walk up the fifteen steps into the Holy Place. The Cherubim no longer will keep them out with their flaming sword. They are now back in the Garden from whence our first parents were expelled. But that is not the end. When Christ died on the cross, the curtain in the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (**"the midst of the Garden"**) was supernaturally torn in two from the top down (Matthew 27:50–51). In Hebrews we are told that the destruction of this final barrier now gives us **"boldness to enter into the holiest[the Holy of Holies] by the blood of Christ ... through the veil"** (Hebrews 10:19–20).

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

- ***Hebrews 4:16***

What glorious teaching! All the obstacles that God set up in a progressive sense to alienate Himself from man (in a spiritual way) from the time of Adam and Eve onward, He has systematically abolished through the work of Christ Jesus.

“Having ABOLISHED in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances [decrees of separation]; for to make in himself of two one new man, so making peace.”

- ***Ephesians 2:15***

All the commandments and decrees which God formerly ordained to separate Himself from various peoples, have been removed in Christ. Adam and Eve, Abel and Cain, Israelite and Gentile, you and I, are now back “in the Garden” — and now in the very midst of it. We do not even have to wait for **“the cool of the day”** to come into contact with our Father. We now have a constant presence — in a spiritual sense. And the day is soon coming when we ourselves will be spirit beings (1 Corinthians 15:42–55).

When that day arrives, we will not only be able to talk with God face to face as did our first parents, but **“we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”** (1 John 3:2). As God is Spirit, so will we be. We will then be **“as he is”** — as His own Spirit-born children. This is far more glorious than it was with our first parents. Indeed, reaching this position is the very purpose for living. Our experience with sin, with an alienation from God, with suffering, will help us for all eternity to love God our Father in a much greater way than our first parents were able to experience. What a glorious future awaits mankind through Christ.

The Holy of Holies is now open to all people on earth without social, racial, or outward religious distinction. It is Christ who has redeemed Adam and his family to Himself. Christ’s death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead are mankind’s guarantee of a certain salvation. It comes to us by God’s grace, not man’s works. One day all humanity will understand this truth.

ELM

Appendix 1: The Garden of Eden and the Temple

In what kind of geographical region was the Garden of Eden? The Bible gives the answer. Moses said that a stream watered the Garden. From its midst it became the headwaters of four major rivers. Since it is self evident that rivers flow down slope, this is an indication that the Garden was located in an elevated area of the earth — probably on a mountain. Ezekiel said that Eden **“the garden of God”** was **“the holy mountain of God”** (Ezekiel 28:13–14). ¹³ When the tabernacle was established in the land of Palestine by Joshua, he placed it on the mound of a hill called Shiloh. Recall that the tabernacle and the temples represented the Garden and the Land of Eden. They were each placed on a “high place” in order to resemble the “mountain of God” in which our first parents saw Him. This is why Solomon followed the same pattern and constructed the temple on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 3:1).

All peoples of the world recognized that the Garden of God had first been located on a mountain. This is why they almost always erected their pagan altars or temples on **“high places”** in order to mimic this primeval situation. While this point in itself was proper, they combined such heathen practices with their worship that the prophets felt compelled to vilify those **“high places”** (Numbers 22:41; Jeremiah 48:35). The pagans held the belief that their temples on “high places” made them in closer contact with their gods in the heavens. This was a very early belief and is reflected in the building of the Tower of Babel not long after the Flood. They built it high so that its **“top may reach unto heaven”** (Genesis 11:4). They wanted God to come in contact with them at this Mesopotamian shrine.

Professor Mercea Eliade, the famous historian of ancient religious beliefs, said: **“According to Mesopotamian beliefs, a central mountain joins heaven and earth.”**¹⁴ This “mountain”

was the means of reaching heaven. So it was either a temple on a mountain or a high tower into the heavens that the ancients used as a means of worshipping their gods or even the true God. When Jacob was at a site called Luz he saw a ladder that seemed to reach into heaven. **"Behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold angels of God ascending and descending on it"** (Genesis 28:12). So impressed was Jacob over this event that he named the place **"Bethel"** — the House of God. This term was synonymous with the later word **"temple."** And interestingly, the region where Jacob had this experience was called **"Mount Bethel"** (1 Samuel 13:2).

All of this reflects the fact that the original Garden of Eden (where God first came in contact with man) was on a mountain — a **"high place."** The Garden, as we have shown in the body of the Exposition, was looked on as an archetype of the heavenly abode of God. The later tabernacle and temples showed the same thing. Even the Gentiles wanted their temples (or holy areas) to resemble — in their way of thinking — the living places for the gods. Plato's ideal city was reckoned as having a celestial counterpart (Plato's *Republic*, 592b; cf. 500e). The pagans reckoned that God would come and visit them if they constructed a home or a city on earth like the one He lived in among the stars. And true, God told Moses (and later David) to build Him a home on earth like His home in heaven. So, the tabernacle and the temple were constructed. These were only types, but they served to give mankind an example of what the palace of God was really like. Knowing God's home helps us know Him.

Ernest L. Martin, 1977
Edited by David Sielaff, March 2004

Appendix 2: Salvation, the Garden, and the Temple

Eden fits the accepted descriptions of what a "temple" is. John Lundquist in his article "What Is a Temple? A Preliminary Typology," lists 15 descriptive motifs for Near East temples. ¹⁵ It is interesting that although most temples do not fit more than a majority of these motifs, Eden fits them all to some degree. Lundquist notes that Near East Temples:

1. Are architectural examples of "cosmic mountains." The temple is the mountain itself
2. Are on mountains that arose from waters covering the primordial earth during creation
3. Have waters of life coming from them (figurative if not actual)
4. Are built on set-apart or sacred space
5. Are oriented to all four cardinal directions
6. Have an architectural orientation toward heaven
7. Have architectural plans revealed to man by divinity
8. Are central institutions (a) for social unity & prosperity, (b) their loss is a disaster for the community
9. Are where kings, priests, worshippers and images of the gods have made holy for contact with deity, eternal life and sacred marriage
10. Are the connecting point "between this world and the next"

11. Are for ritual meals
12. Are for communication with deity
13. Are where deity gives law to man
14. Are for sacrifice
15. Are a place of secrecy.

In fact, it is likely more correct to say that Eden was the archetype or the pattern for all subsequent temples in the Near East, including the Tabernacle and the Temples in Jerusalem. Yes, as Dr. Martin correctly points out at the beginning, the author of Hebrews does say that the Tabernacle was a shadow of heavenly things, but for the period before the flood, Eden was where God Himself walked. And, as far as we know, Eden continued to exist until the flood at the time of Noah. As Dr. Martin notes above, Eden continued until the Flood. Eden was a place of direct contact with God where earth was connected with heaven, albeit Eden was off limits after Adam's sin, just as much as heaven is to us today.

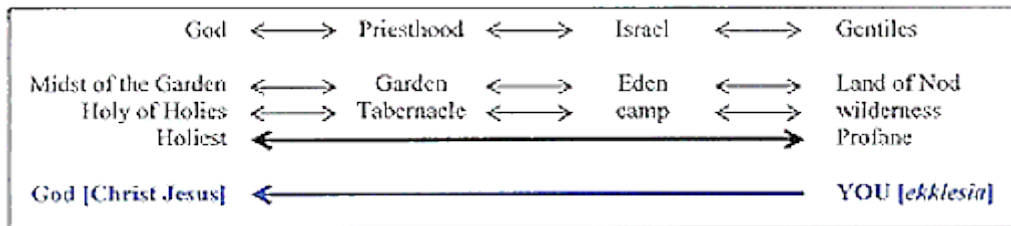
If we put all the factors side by side, the parallels between Eden and the Temple can be summarized as follows (items in italics are unique to one side) [16](#):

<u>EDEN</u>	<u>TABERNACLE / TEMPLE</u>
Garden "midst" (within the Garden) YHWH's presence Tree of Life <i>Tree of good and evil (no parallel)</i> Entrance from the east	Holy of Holies (within the Sanctuary) Shekinah glory Aaron's rod <i>Ark (no parallel)</i> Entrance from the east
The Garden (within Eden) Entrance to east Cherubim at entrance	Sanctuary (within the Court of Israel) Entrance to east Pillars (In Temple) at entrance <i>Furniture (no parallel)</i>
Land of Eden (within the Land of Nod) Cain & Abel's offerings (at an altar?) Source of 4 rivers Entrance from the east (Genesis 4:16)	Court of Israel (within Land of the Gentiles) Altar of burnt offering "Bronze Sea" or Laver, and "living water" Entrance from the east
Land of Nod (Wilderness) Cut off from God	Land of the Gentiles (Outside the Camp) Cut off from God <i>Miphkad altar (red heifer, no parallel)¹⁷</i>

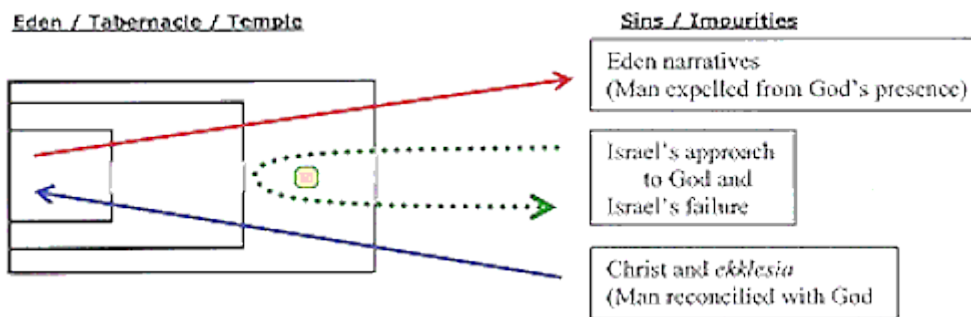
[17](#)

God did not live in the Garden, but it was where His presence was. God did not live in the Tabernacle, but it was where He met with Israel. The Tabernacle was a tent of meeting (Exodus 25:22, 29:42, 30:36). neither did YHWH live in the Temple (2 Chronicles 6:21, 33). The Garden, the Tabernacle and the Temple were where God was present at various times.

The relationships between the following schemes of progression can be understood by another diagram:



The top scheme has to do with God’s relationship with various people. It relates to the ritual system. The Gentiles could only approach God through Israel (a kingdom of priests). This will be the case even in the Millennium when the Gentiles will come to God through Israel (Isaiah 2:2–4 and Micah 4:1–3). As a result the Gentiles will not only recognize YHWH as their God, but they will begin to serve Him as well. Until Christ, Israel could only approach God through the Levites and the Priests. The Priests could only approach God at certain times and in certain places that God chose. That has ended and all requirements have been fulfilled in Christ, and God the Father can be approached, symbolically face-to-face.



For you and me the entire scheme is simplified. We can approach God directly with only one mediator, **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”** (1 Timothy 2:5, see also Galatians 3:19–24 and Hebrews chapters 8 and 9). Barriers to God no longer exist for you and for me.

Temple symbolism is fulfilled in you, not in a place, or in a scheme of boundaries, or in days of the year, or in tasks to be performed, but simply in the person of the resurrected Christ Jesus. He alone brings us directly into the presence of God the Father through the Spirit of God, **“the Power of the Highest”** (Luke 1:35) which comes from the Father and Christ through to you so that are now a child of God:

“You have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

• **Romans 8:15-17**

You have every right to act and relate to other people as the child of God that you truly are, acting with love and consideration for others. It is your inheritance — realize it, embrace it, live it.

DWS

- 1 See the article "The Patterns of the Temple" (<http://www.askelm.com/temple/t031102.htm>) which shows the same word "pattern" (or model or diagram) first used in Exodus for the Tabernacle is used later in relation to the Temple. *DWS*
- 2 Consider that the Tabernacle/Temple symbolism lasted in some manner from the time of Moses about 1450 B.C.E to 70 C.E., with an interruption with the destruction of the Temple, the exile of the Jews to Babylon and the rebuilding of the Temple in about 520 B.C.E. This is remarkably long period of some 1,450 years (1,520 years if you count the 70 years land's rest and the people's exile). Now the *ekklesia* of God is the Temple of God and the household of God (Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 3:2–6, 1 Peter 2:5). *DWS*
- 3 In Hebrews 12:24 the blood that Jesus sprinkled in heaven is compared to the blood of Abel from Genesis 4:8.
- 4 For more information about the ark and the Cherubim that enfolded it, see the article, "The Cherubim Had Wheels" at www.askelm.com. *DWS*
- 5 Note that not all the laws of the Ten Commandments recorded on the stones are applicable to spirit beings. Since God or spirit beings cannot commit adultery nor break the Sabbath, these laws on tables of stone are redundant for them. The Sabbath was made only for man (Mark 2:27) — and God always works on the Sabbath (John 5:17). Besides, the Ten Commandment legislation, though beautiful for the time it was intended, was recognized by Paul as **"the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones ... the ministry of condemnation"** (2 Corinthians 3:7, 9). **"The letter kills, but the spirit gives life"** (2 Corinthians 3:6). Such legislation as a system of government **"was to be done away"** (2 Corinthians 3:7). **"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty"** (2 Corinthians 3:17). *ELM*
- 6 Note God's action, **"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ... And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."** Genesis 2:8, 15. Adam was in Eden. YHWH "took" and "put" Adam into the garden of Eden from outside. As Walter Vogels notes, the verb, **"'took' is used in many biblical texts to express the idea of a bringing out for the purpose of an entry (Dt. 30:4; Ezek. 36:24, 27:21; Is. 14:2). The verb contains at the same time the idea of election."** See *God's Universal Covenant: A Biblical Study* (University of Ottawa Press, 1986), p. 19. He notes that this idea of election no longer comes through in any of our translations. Vogels asks why,

"Did this marvelous paradise and garden of God, with all the trees good for food (2:9), need to be cultivated? And what could be the meaning of 'keep this garden'? Against Whom? The understanding can well become much easier when seen in the context of the covenant."

- **Vogels, p. 20**

To Vogels "covenant" means the entire ritual system including the Tabernacle and Temple. *DWS*

- 7 Isaac Hellmuth notes that the Rabbis considered the "face" or "presence" of YHWH to be indicative of the Shekinah glory. See *Biblical Thesaurus, Genesis* (London, 1884), p. 49 on Genesis 3:8. *DWS*

8 Adam was to protect the Garden. When Adam was expelled, the Cherubim were assigned to guard the Garden, apparently transferred from where God was (in the midst of the Garden) to outside the garden. Umberto Cassuto in *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 122, notes that the Hebrew word *shamar* used to describe the function of the Cherubim, **“to keep the way of the tree of life,”** is the same word as in Genesis 2:15 when Adam is commanded while in the Garden of Eden, **“to dress it (Hebrew, *abad*) and to keep it (Hebrew, *shamar*)”**. *Shamar* means not only to keep, but also to guard and to protect. So too Noah was to “keep” the animals (Genesis 6:19–20, 7:3) and Abraham and Israel were admonished to “keep” God’s covenant. The priests and Levites were also to serve (*abad*), protect (*shamar*) and guard (another Hebrew word, *mishmereth*) the sanctuary from unauthorized people, with the sword if necessary. See Numbers 1:51–53, 8:26, 18:2–7, 31:30, 47; Joshua 22:27 and Ezekiel 44:8, 15. See Edmund P. Clowney, “The Final Temple” in *Westminster Theological Journal*, vol. 35 (Winter 1973), p. 160, available complete online at <http://www.beginningwithmoses.org/articles/finaltemple.htm> DWS

9 This was recognized by Edmund Clowney in “The Final Temple” in *The Westminster Theological Journal* v.35 (Winter 1993), p. 160. DWS

“The gate of the garden was barred by ... the Cherubim [who held swords]. ... In the tabernacle and the temple the sword [held by priests and Levites] continues to keep the gate. But the altar of sacrifice offers a victim ... so that the worshipper may come before God.”

10 Solomon constructed the Temple according to the pattern King David received from God Himself (1 Chronicles 28:11–13). Psalm 92 (which talks about a future Sabbath rest for the righteous) evokes Eden-like symbolism. DWS

“The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree [a date-palm], He will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the Lord, They will flourish in the courts of our God.”

• ***Psalm 92:12–13***

11 Again, the cherubim are symbolically guarding the trees in the midst of the Garden, even in the Solomonic Temple. DWS

12 Joshua Berman notes in *The Temple: Its Symbolism and Meaning Then and Now* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1995), p. 30 that Cherubim, in addition to guarding the way to the Tree of Life in the Garden. They also covered or guarded the tablets of the Law in the ark of the testament in the Holy of Holies in both the Tabernacle and Temple. Remember that touching the ark caused death (2 Samuel 6:7) just as the Cherubim threatened to do with their swords at Eden. They symbolized the inaccessibility of man to God.

13 Ezekiel 28 is filled with imagery from both Eden and the Temple. For example, Berman in *The Temple*, p. 26, notes that the 9 precious stones listed in Ezekiel 28:13 are 9 of the 12 stones present in the High Priests breastplate depicted in Exodus 28:17–20. In fact there are several points where the Eden of Genesis identifies with the Eden of Ezekiel 28: both have a garden, both have miraculous trees within the garden, both have at least 1 cherub associated with them, both are in mountains, both have creatures that transgress, both contain phrases that closely resemble each other (**“in the day ... created,” “walking”** in the Garden), both have the guard being the transgressor, both transgressors are expelled and both are made to be examples for others.

[14](#) Mercea Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, trans by Wullard Trask (New York: Harper & Row, 1959) p. 13.

[15](#) In *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George F. Mendenhall*, ed. By H.B. Huffman, et al. (Winona Lake, IN, 1983), pp. 207–219.

[16](#) By the way, these diagrams, schemes and models are for illustration only.

[17](#) There are differences, of course, between Eden and the Tabernacle/Temple. The Garden has no elements like the pot of manna, the ark, the table of shewbread, altar of incense or lampstand. The proportions and sizes of the Garden are not given to us.