The GLORY of God and the Garden

THE BIBLICAL TEXT –

“They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden” (Gen. 3:8).

The Garden of Eden is God’s “first” dwelling place. It is the “temple” where He would meet with His people. The Garden of Eden was to be ever expanding through the work assigned Adam and Eve until it covered the entire globe whereby the knowledge of His glory would cover the earth for the joy of His people. We see this by reaching forward to Revelation 21:1 where we read of a new heaven and a new earth.

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea” (Rev. 21:1).

In this new creation, there is no temple for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (Rev. 21:22-24).

22 “I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it” (Rev. 21:22-24).

What God began in the Garden of Eden, He will complete in the new heaven and the new earth. God has placed within us a longing for the Garden. We know what we have lost and we seek its return.

Yet we rejected God invitation for joy. We believed our joy could be full through means other than God.

God could have allowed us to remain in our fallen state, but He condescended and provided a blood atonement to cover our transgression and answer His justice (Gen. 3:21).

The Book of Genesis tells us this Story of redemption. God would redeem His people from their sin. The Book of Genesis ends with the people of God in a foreign land. From enslavement in Egypt, God would set His people free (Exod. 12:27; 13:1ff). The Exodus from Egypt is God’s great deliverance in shadow form.
Ten Reasons the Garden of Eden Was a Temple

http://derekzrishmawy.com/2012/12/07/9-reasons-the-garden-of-eden-was-a-temple/

G.K. Beale is a bit of an expert on the subject of the Temple in biblical theology. He did happen to write a whole book on it. Given that, it’s unsurprising that he devotes some space to exploring the significance of the Temple in NT theology in his recent New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New by sketching it’s structure and function in the OT. One of the more eye-opening claims he makes in this section is that the Bible pictures the Garden of Eden as the first Temple in the first creation. He gives 9 arguments/lines of reasoning for that point (pp. 617-621):

1. In the later OT the Temple was the place of God’s special presence where he made himself known and felt to Israel. That is exactly how his walking with Adam and Eve in the Garden is depicted. (Gen. 3:8)
2. Adam is placed in the garden to “cultivate (abad)” and “keep (samar)” it (Gen 2:15). The same two words are translated elsewhere “serve” and “guard”, and when they appear together, they are either referring to Israelites serving or obeying God’s word, or more usually, to the job of the priest in guarding and keeping the Temple. (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 1 Chron. 23:32) Elsewhere Adam is portrayed dressed in the clothes of the high priest, functioning as a high priest. (Ezek 28:11-19; see Beale, pg. 618 on this for more argumentation.)
3. The tree of life served as a model for the lampstand, which was clearly shaped as a tree, in the Temple.
4. Israel’s later Temple was made with wood carvings of flowers, palm trees, etc. meant to recall Eden’s garden brilliance (1 Kings 6:18, 29, 32, 35); pomegranates were also placed at the bottom of the two stone pillars in the Temple. (7:18-20)
5. The entrance to the Temple was to the east, on a mountain facing Zion (Ex. 15:17), just as the end-time temple prophesied in Ezekiel is (40:2, 6; 43:12). Well, turns out the entrance to Eden was from the East (Gen. 3:24) and in some places pictured as being on a mountain. (Ezek. 28:14, 16)
6. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the ark of the covenant both were accessed or touched only on pain of death. Also, both were sources of wisdom.
7. Just as a river flowed out of Eden (Gen 2:10), so a river is supposed to flow out of the End-time Temple (Ezek 47:1-12; Rev. 21:1-2)
8. This one requires some serious argument so I suggest you consult Beale directly here (pg. 620-621), but just as there was a tripartite sacred structure to the Temple, Beale discerns a tripartite structure to creation with Eden standing at the center as a Holy of Holies.
9. Ezekiel 28:13-14 refers the Eden as “the holy mountain of God” which everywhere else in the OT is Temple and Tabernacle language.

I have not come even close to doing justice to the exegetical work Beale does in this section, nor in the aforementioned book on the subject. Still, this rough sketch should be
enough to show that there is a substantial case to be made for understanding the Garden of Eden as the first Temple in biblical theology.

What does this matter you might ask? The theological implications are actually so massive that I can’t go into all of them. I’ll just bullet-point a few that could be teased out into blogs in their own right (probably books too):

- Creation — Why did God create the world? To inhabit it and dwell with people.
- Anthropology — If the Garden is the Temple, then Adam is a priest. That has implications for our idea of human purpose and our relation to the rest of creation.
- Israel/Covenant — God sets apart a people of Tabernacle and Temple-makers, who take up Adam’s original commission.
- Christology — When we start to realize that Christ is the greater Temple, fulfilling all that the Temple was supposed to be, as well as the true Adam, it starts to fill in the picture on the aim of Christ’s work.
- Ecclesiology — It follows from our thinking about human purpose, and our idea of Christ’s work that our theology of the church will be impacted by this idea as well.
- Eschatology — If our theology of creation is impacted, then so is our eschatology, because God will fulfill his purposes at the end of all things.

The list could go on and on and on, but you get my point. The Garden was a Temple and that’s big.
Almost everyone has an image in their mind of what the Garden of Eden looked like because ever since they were little they have seen images that represent the garden in their Sunday School curriculum, their illustrated Bibles and even famous illustrations and paintings produced over the centuries. The question of the physical location of the Garden of Eden is much discussed, but what was the land of Eden, what did the Garden of Eden look like, and what lay outside of Eden are topics of little discussion despite the importance that Christians place on the historicity of Adam and Eve. Literal interpretations have formed our image of the ecology of the Garden of Eden but even literalist are not likely to explore the theological implications of the specific features of the Garden of the Eden and are even less likely to ask about the region outside of the Garden and its physical attributes. Overall, I think it would not be unfair to say that the theology of Garden of Eden is a neglected topic among most theologians and lay Christians. I am interested in exploring the impact of the views on the Garden of Eden through history on the present day creation debate. I am convinced that the image to the right is not reflective of the Biblical representation of Eden and would argue that our images of Eden are tainted by western ideas of an ideal ecology.

But painting a picture of what Eden physically may have looked like is not my interest right now. What is most important, is establishing a solid foundation for interpreting Genesis 1 and 2 in the context of the whole Bible. In particular, I believe an approach to developing a proper biblical worldview based on a Biblical theology point of view can be very helpful for setting the stage to understanding most of the questions with with the evangelical church has been wresting (age of the earth, historicity of Adam, effects of sin on creation etc..). One theologian whose writing has been especially helpful to me in the past two years is Dr. G. K. Beale who is a faculty member at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia after many years at Wheaton College. Beale stands in the tradition of the likes of Gerdhouse Vos and Meridith Kline and has written books on Revelation and a response to Enns take on the doctrine of inspiration. Currently, I am working through his most recent tomb, A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New, but I am interested here in his writings about the temple motif in the Scriptures.


Beale, and others, present a convincing case that in order to understand the imagery of the Garden of Eden, and the meaning then of the Garden of Eden and of Adams position in it, one has to understand the significance of the temple and temple imagery found throughout the Bible (ie. from Genesis through Revelation). In his book “The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God”, Beale traces the
language and imagery of the Temple from Eden to the Tabernacle to the Temple and eventually to the new heavens and the new earth.

I am not going to spend time explaining how the Garden of Eden and the Tabernacle/Temple are connected right here but rather just give my highest recommendation to reading at least one of the articles linked below. The book is a bit dense but provides the most detailed defense of his how the temple represents all of creation. I understand that reading a book may be too much so for a concise overview I highly recommend his article in JETS from 2005 which which is a summary of his book.

Links to Beale’s articles on the Garden of Eden and the Temple:

http://www.kerux.com/documents/keruxV18N2A1.htm  This is an article in Kerux from 2002 entitled “Garden Temple“ which came out before his book and is very helpful but if you only have time to read one article then please take a look at this one entitled “Eden, the temple and the church’s mission in the new creation.” http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-aPDFs/48/48-1/48-1-pp005-031_JETS.pdf JETS. March 2005 48(1): pp 5-31.

A Foundation for Understanding Creation:

The articles above do not address the physical creation of the cosmos or earth, nor do they deal with hot topics like the historicity of Adam. However, I believe that any Christian, whether they believe in an old or young earth can benefit from a better understanding of how the Biblical authors thought about the world as a God’s temple. Once one makes the connection of the Garden of Eden to God’s temple and the earthly temples that represented his temple the purpose behind the descriptions of the Garden of Eden suddenly become more obvious. Why the various rivers mention, why are different physical resources in Eden mentioned? why is the inner garden different than Eden itself and what could the geographical area outside of Eden be like. All of a sudden the temple motif allows much more than speculation about these features.
EDEN, the garden was in Eden, but was not all of Eden. Eden was a “county” and the Garden was a “city” within the “county.”

Gen. 2:8 ¶ The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

Gen. 2:10 Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

Gen. 2:15 Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.

Gen. 3:23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Adam and Eve, longed to be in the Garden. Their mission did not change even though the location from which the mission would originate did.

Gen. 4:16 ¶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Isa. 51:3 Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places. And her wilderness He will make like Eden, And her desert like the garden of the LORD; Joy and gladness will be found in her, Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.

God will restore the fallen world back to Eden.

Ezek. 28:13 "You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared.

Ezek. 31:9 'I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches, And all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it.

Ezek. 31:16 "I made the nations quake at the sound of its fall when I made it go down to Sheol with those who go down to the pit; and all the well-watered trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, were comforted in the earth beneath.

Ezek. 31:18 "To which among the trees of Eden are you thus equal in glory and greatness? Yet you will be brought down with the trees of Eden to the earth beneath; you
will lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with those who were slain by the sword. So is Pharaoh and all his hordes!" declares the Lord GOD."

Ezek. 36:35 "They will say, 'This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.'

Joel 2:3 A fire consumes before them And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them But a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them.
Reformed Baptist Fellowship

The Garden of Eden a Temple and Adam a Priest?

In Reformed Baptist Fellowship on January 11, 2013 at 3:29 pm


Where was the first temple of God on the earth among men? Who was the earth’s first priest? I think the answer to both questions takes us back to the first chapters of the Bible. Consider the two observations below and their explanations.

Adam was made outside the garden, which was the earth’s first temple, then put in it.

“The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed” (Gen. 2:8). Genesis 2:15 says, “Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” This is very interesting. The garden was the place of God’s special dwelling on the earth with man. It was in the garden that Adam and Eve “heard the sound of the LORD God walking…” (Gen. 3:8). G. K. Beale comments:

The same Hebrew verbal form (stem) mithallek…used for God’s ‘walking back and forth’ in the Garden (Gen. 3:8), also describes God’s presence in the tabernacle (Lev. 26:12; Deut. 23:14[15]; 2 Sam. 7:6-7).  

God’s walking in the garden indicates His special presence among men. In this sense, the garden of Eden was a temple, a special dwelling place of God on earth among men. The garden of Eden was the earth’s first sanctuary.

Since this may be a new concept for some readers, it is important to consider this a bit further. Was the garden the earth’s first temple? Was the garden a special dwelling place of God among men on the earth? The text of Genesis 2 and 3 does not use those words to describe the garden of Eden. But as we have already seen, it does utilize language used elsewhere in Scripture that describes God’s presence in Israel’s tabernacle. Does the Bible look back upon the garden of Eden and indicate that it was, in fact, a temple, a sanctuary, the first special dwelling place of God on earth among men? I think it does.

Consider Ezekiel 28:11-19, especially verses 13-14, 16, and 18.

11 Again the word of the LORD came to me saying, 12 “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 “You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. 14 “You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 “You were blameless in your ways From the day
you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. 16 “By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. 17 “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you. 18 “By the multitude of your iniquities, In the unrighteousness of your trade You profaned your sanctuaries. Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you; It has consumed you, And I have turned you to ashes on the earth In the eyes of all who see you. 19 “All who know you among the peoples Are appalled at you; You have become terrified And you will cease to be forever.”’’ (Ezek. 28:11-19)

Notice that verse 13 is speaking explicitly of Eden, “You were in Eden, the garden of God.” Verses 14 and 16 call Eden “the holy mountain of God.” We will see in the next chapter that “…from the beginning of the Bible, mountains are sites of transcendent spiritual experiences, encounters with God or appearances by God.”[2] Beale says of mountains:

The prophet Ezekiel portrays Eden on a mountain (Ezek. 28:14, 16). Israel’s temple was on Mount Zion (e.g., Exod. 15:17), and the end-time temple was to be located on a mountain (Ezek. 40:2; 43:12; Rev. 21:10).[3]

Identifying Eden as “the holy mountain of God” indicates God’s special presence among men on the earth. In verse 18, the prophet Ezekiel says, “You profaned your sanctuaries.” Beale comments upon this passage as follows:

…it should not be unexpected to find that Ezekiel 28:13-14, 16, 18 refer to ‘Eden, the garden of God…the holy mountain of God’, and also alludes to it as containing ‘sanctuaries’, which elsewhere is a plural way of referring to Israel’s tabernacle (Lev. 21:23) and temple (Ezek. 7:24; so also Jer. 51:51). The plural reference to the one temple probably arose because of the multiple sacred spaces or ‘sanctuaries’ within the temple complex (e.g., courtyard, holy place, holy of holies)… Ezekiel 28 is probably, therefore, the most explicit place anywhere in canonical literature where the Garden of Eden is called a temple.”[4]

This is an important passage of Scripture because it identifies Eden as a temple, the first mountain of God in which He dwelled among men on the earth. Kline says, “Paradise was a sanctuary, a temple-garden. Agreeably, Ezekiel calls it “the garden of God” (28:13;31:8f.) and Isaiah, “the garden of the Lord” (51:3).”[5]

It is interesting that Christian commentators are not the only ones who argue that the garden of Eden was the first temple of God on the earth. There is extra-biblical evidence of the garden as a temple from early Jewish literature. Fesko says:

Perhaps one of the earliest writings that identify the garden of Eden as a temple comes from the Jewish book of Jubilees (c. 75-50 B.C.): ‘And he [Noah] knew that the garden of Eden was the holy of holies and the dwelling of the LORD.’”[6]
Beale notes that the Qumran community, an intertestamental group, identified “itself as the ‘Temple of Adam...’ and ‘an Eden of glory [bearing] fruits [of life]’.”[7]

Adam was made outside the garden-temple then placed in it. But what was he supposed to do in or with that temple? His commission was obviously vitally connected to the garden God put him in though not limited to it. Remember, he was to fill the earth and subdue it (Gen. 1:28; cf. Isa. 45:18). So the garden of Eden was not the end; it was only the beginning. Adam was called as an image-bearer of God who was sinless to multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. His calling was to extend the garden-temple throughout the entire earth. In effect, the whole earth was to be God’s special dwelling place with man. Eden was a prototype of something much greater.

Adam was commanded to cultivate and keep the garden in obedience to God.

Genesis 2:15 says, “Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” If the garden was a temple, then Adam was a priest who offered up his work to God. It is of interest to note that when Adam is exiled from the garden due to his sin, Moses tells us that “God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate [or “serve”] the ground from which he was taken” (Gen. 3:23; Remember that Adam was created outside the garden of Eden.). Then, in the next verse, God “stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard [or “keep”] the way to the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24). Notice that Adam was to “cultivate [or “serve”]” the ground and the cherubim were to “guard [or “keep”] the way to the tree of life.” These are the same words used together in Genesis 2:15, which says, “Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” What does it mean that Adam was to “cultivate and keep” the garden, especially if it was the earth’s first temple?

It is very interesting to note that these two words, “cultivate” and “keep,” are used together in other Old Testament texts to refer to the work of priests in connection with Israel’s tabernacle and temple (Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chron. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14).[8] Listen to Beale again:

Genesis 2:15 says God placed Adam in the Garden ‘to cultivate (i.e., work) it and to keep it.’ The two Hebrew words for ‘cultivate and keep’ are usually translated ‘serve and guard [or keep]’ elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is true that the Hebrew word usually translated ‘cultivate’ can refer to an agricultural task when used by itself... When, however, these two words...occur together in the Old Testament,... they refer either to Israelites ‘serving’ God and ‘guarding [keeping]’ God’s word... or to priests who ‘keep’ the ‘service’ (or ‘charge’) of the tabernacle (see Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chr. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14).[9]

…the writer of Genesis 2 was portraying Adam against the later portrait of Israel’s priests, and that he was the archetypical priest who served in and guarded (or ‘took care of’) God’s first temple.[10]

Since the garden of Eden was a temple, Adam was not only the first prophet (i.e., he would have spoke on behalf of God among men by passing-on the commission of Gen. 1:28) and human king of the earth (i.e., he was told to rule), he was its first priest. But Adam sinned. Adam’s sin, therefore, gets him kicked out of the first house of God among men on the earth.
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* This post was adapted from the author’s Better than the Beginning: Creation in Biblical Perspective, forthcoming from RBAP and used with permission.


[10] Beale, Temple and the Church’s Mission, 68.
Adam, the Priest of the Garden-Temple


Genesis 2:8-17
It is certainly true that most people want to get back to the Garden of Eden. Don’t you want to get back there? Think of it: perfect gardening, no weather problems, no weeds, no shame because there was no sin. Work was easy, because the entire creation was in complete harmony. There was no misery, no death, no problems in relationships, and no problems with our relationship with God. Don’t you wish you could get back there? Well, there is a way. That way has been provided for us by Jesus Christ, who was perfectly righteous, and succeeded where Adam failed. There is only one difference between what we can get and the Garden of Eden: we are not going back to the Garden of Eden; we can get to an even better place than Eden. Let’s see how.

First, we see that God planted a garden. It was very common for kings of that time to plant a garden, and richly furnish it with all kinds of luxurious, verdant plants and trees. Usually, it was located right next to the king’s palace, the place where the king lived. That is true of the Garden of Eden. Eden was the location where God took up His residence, as we can see from 3:8. The garden was located in Eden, which means that the garden did not take up all the space of Eden. This we can see in verse 10, where water comes out of Eden in order to water the garden. Eden is the place where God dwelt, and he planted the garden right next to His residence. Notice that the garden is located in the east. That is significant, because for the rest of the Bible, the temple always has its entrance facing the East, and out of the East shall anyone enter the temple.

Then the Lord filled the garden with all manner of delightful plants and trees. The very word Eden means “delight.” Then we see two special trees in the very center of the garden: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Moses is describing the garden like he describes the tabernacle, and like the temple looks later on in Israel’s history. You remember the golden lampstand that stands in the Holy Place? That was fashioned to look like the tree of life.

But the question that immediately comes to our mind is: what do these trees mean? Well, the tree of life is a sacramental tree. It does not confer life in and of itself; rather, it is the outward sign of the inward reality of fellowship with God. When Adam and Eve ate of that tree, they came into communion with God himself. Oh yes, they actually did eat of the tree of life. We do not usually think of the tree of life in that way: we think that Adam and Eve never ate of the tree, and therefore if they ate of it just once, they would receive everlasting life. This cannot be the case. Firstly, the Lord did not forbid them to eat of the tree of life before they fell into sin. Therefore, we cannot imagine that the tree of life would have some magical property within itself that would automatically give Adam and Eve eternal life. From the fact that God said they could eat of any tree of the garden, with only the once exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we should therefore understand that they did in fact eat from the tree of life. Think of the tree of life as being very similar to the manna of the wilderness, and also similar to the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. We come into communion with Jesus Christ during the sacrament, just as Adam and Eve did when they ate of the tree of life. It was not appropriate for Adam and Eve to eat of the tree of life after the Fall, because that communion God of which the
tree was a sign was no longer there. The communion had been severed because of the Fall. It was not any longer appropriate for Adam and Eve to partake of the tree of life, when they were in fact dead.

So, what does the other tree mean? Specifically, what does the “knowledge of good and evil” mean? Well, I will argue that it means moral autonomy. It means that if Adam and Eve were to eat of that tree, it would mean that they wanted to define for themselves what was good and what was evil. It would mean that they wanted to be God themselves. We cannot think that Adam and Eve were somehow ignorant of what good and evil actually was; God had given them the law, albeit in a very simple form. God said to them, “you shall not eat of this tree.” That meant that eating from it was evil, and refraining from eating of it was good. Adam and Eve already knew what good and evil was. So “knowledge of good and evil” does not mean that they were originally ignorant of good and evil. Rather, it means that the knowledge means something like “the deciding of good and evil.” Knowledge in the Bible often means much more than having facts stored in one’s head. It can mean “love.” But it can also mean “determine.” If you really knew something, you could determine what it was, and what it would do.

Now, we come to what is seemingly a very strange description of these four rivers. Why in the world do we suddenly get a lesson in geography? Well, there is a very good reason why this description is put here: rivers and temples go together. In Ezekiel 47, Ezekiel describes the new temple that he is seeing in his vision of what is to come. He describes a river that comes from under the threshold of the temple toward the east. But he goes around the temple and shows that the water really goes in every direction. Verse 8 is the punchline for the water: When it empties into the Sea, the water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. Then, in Revelation 22, we find that the river of the water of life flows from the throne of the Lamb, and on each side of the river grows the tree of life. You see, the water that was there at the beginning in the garden is the life-giving water that waters the whole world. Notice back in Genesis, that basically the entire known world gets its water from the water that comes from the garden. What Moses is saying is that the garden of Eden is a temple, and that the water that comes from the garden is life-giving. The number four is symbolic of the four points of the compass, so Eden gives life to the entire world.

Notice something else about the description of these rivers: they flow around lands which are rich in gold and gems. Do not forget that the tabernacle, and later the temple, and the robes that the priests wore had much gold and many gems everywhere. So, this description of the rivers and of the gold and gems found in various lands is not a digression, but is very important to Moses’ description of the garden as a temple.

Next, we see that Adam was appointed as priest to the garden-temple of Eden. How do we know that Adam was supposed to be a priest? From verse 15. The words translated “work” and “take care of” are everywhere else used (when together) in the sense of “priestly service” and “priestly guarding.” The first word refers to worshipping God. The second word refers to preventing any unholy visitors into the holy place. We can see then that Adam’s duties can be summarized as treating the garden of Eden as a temple. He was supposed to worship God in it, and he was supposed to keep Satan out of it. So, we can see that when Adam failed to keep Satan out of the garden, he was failing in the very thing that God had put him there to do. Then, in eating of the
tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam wanted to worship himself, rather than worship God. So Adam failed in both things that God had put him there to do. Those two things that God gave into Adam’s hand to do were summarized in the permission to eat from any of the trees in the garden, but not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This command from God is known as the covenant of works. If Adam were to obey God, worshipping God alone, and guarding the garden from the likes of Satan, then he would continue in everlasting life. If Adam were to fail, then he would die. Obedience equals life, disobedience equals death. Adam failed. Notice that when Adam failed, God placed a cherubim at the entrance to the garden to keep everyone out, because Adam had failed to keep Satan out.

Christ succeeded where Adam had failed. Notice that Satan tempted Christ in exactly the same way that he tempted Adam. If Adam was to worship God only, then Satan tempted Christ to worship Satan. Christ succeeded. If Adam failed to keep Satan out of the garden, Christ went into the garden (now known as the entire world), and cast Satan out of the garden, and put Satan under lock and key. Have you never thought of Christ’s struggle in the GARDEN of Gethsemane? Was Christ not struggling there with the entire penalty of sin staring Him in the face? He was struggling also with Satan, I think. He wanted some other way to accomplish God’s will than the painful way of the cross. But Christ had to be completely obedient to God, in order for Christ’s sacrifice to work. He was obedient in every respect, even to the point of dying on the cross. When we come to faith, we receive that righteousness of Christ that He earned for us. We could not earn it on our own, but He earned it for us. After Christ’s resurrection, you will remember yet another garden scene in John’s Gospel. Mary is looking for Jesus, because he is no longer in the tomb. He has been resurrected from the dead. See John 20:14-15. Mary thought better than she knew. Jesus was the gardener: Adam as he should have been. Christ has succeeded in serving God and guarding the garden, keeping the intruders out.

Now Christ invites us to come into His garden. He invites us to partake of his body and blood in the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. He invites us just as He invited the Samaritan woman in John 4 to drink of the water that He will give us. Read John 4:13-14. That is the life-giving water that flows out from the temple. You remember that Jesus refers to Himself as the temple, and that He entered the heavens, as it says in Hebrews, making available to us the entrance into the Most Holy Place. We have access to the Most Holy Place by being united to Jesus Christ in faith. When that happens, we realize that we are being built up into a living temple, until finally, we are the living temple of the Holy Spirit, who is the water that Jesus promised to the Samaritan woman. He has promised it to us as well. Read John 7:37-39.

One of our biggest problems is that we think we can get back to the garden of Eden in a physical way here on earth. We try to build ourselves a garden of Eden by engaging in pleasure-seeking, whether it is building a big farm empire, building a big bank account, building a perfectly happy home with your wife or any number of other possibilities. Where is your Eden? Is it in yourself? Do you think that you can make rivers of living water flow out of yourself? No doubt you think that you can water the entire world, like the four rivers could. No doubt you think that you can keep Satan out of your life by the very simple tactic of doubting his existence. No doubt you think that there is a perfectly good person for you to love and adore: yourself! No doubt you think all these things: it is called the sinful condition. But notice that Adam did not have this problem at first. We normally think of sin as natural, and thus we justify ourselves by saying,
“Well, “I’ve got a sin nature, therefore I do not really have to care about my sin.” Wrong. Sin is unnatural, not natural. You could not find a single trace of sin in the garden of Eden at its first creation.

Instead of thinking these things, we should be thinking about where we are headed: if you believe that Christ has regained paradise for us, and that believing in him will get you to heaven, then you have a better garden to look forward to. It does not even have the possibility of sin in it. Revelation 21:27: “Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” Do you long for that life with all of your being? Or do you lose your focus on what is coming because of the daily grind that is around you? What difference would it make to your life to know that the entrance to the garden is Jesus Christ, and that you have won through to the door, and that you are on the very threshold of heaven itself? What difference would it make to your marriage to know that heaven awaits you? And what if heaven does not await both of you? Would you not want to show your spouse heaven’s beauties and make him or her long for heaven as much as you do? It is hard to divorce someone with whom you share a common vision of what is coming.

We have this pernicious doctrine floating around that something is only practical in the Christian life if it tells me where I am to put my foot down that very day. We have blinkers on such that we can only see where we are at that exact moment in time. Now, the Bible does tell us where to plant our foot the next day. But that is not primarily what the Bible is about. The Bible is about Jesus Christ. I would argue that knowing the end of the journey, and concentrating on Jesus Christ as the Author and Finisher of our faith, is the single most practical thing that we can think about in the Christian life period. If you do not know your destination, then you will wander far afield into the realm of sin and darkness, and the cares of everyday life will consume you, as in Christ’s parable the thorns in the field choke the wheat that was planted. As Paul says, “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” He says just a little bit further, “Our citizenship is in heaven, not on earth.” Of course, this does not mean that we should be so heavenly minded as to be of no earthly good. But the opposite is also true: we should not be so earthly minded, that we are of no heavenly good. Believe in Jesus Christ, and look to him to get back to Eden. When you do, you will find out that it is even better than you imagined.
Adam, High Priest and King

Genesis 1 says that God made the world in six days and on the seventh he rested. Then Gn 2 talks about how he planted a garden. These stories are different from each other, but both are talking about how God made a temple. The story of Israel building a portable temple (‘tabernacle’) in Exodus 25–40 has the same outline and many connections with Gn 1–2, and the story of Solomon building his temple in Jerusalem does as well (1 Kings 5–8). God built a temple-world, and Israel built a world-temple.

Now, every temple has to have a statue of its god, for to see the statue is to see the god. So the last thing God did in the six days was to make a statue for his temple: God said, ‘Let’s make man in our image... male and female he created them’ (Gn 1.26-27). The word for ‘image’ is sélem, which literally is a ‘statue’, the kind you find in a temple. God made his statue out of dirt (adam), which is red (edóm), like blood (qum), and the statue God made was adám, ‘Blood-Red-Earth-Human’. He also made a wife for Adám, whom Adam called Havváh, ‘Life-Mother’. They were to have dominion (Gn 1.28), that is, be kings.

When your bible says that ‘the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden’ (Gn 2.15), it uses a special word—literally, he ‘set’ (náh) him there, like setting up a statue. So God ‘set up’ his image, Blood-Red-Earth-Human, in his garden-temple. Now, one of the interesting things about God’s temple and his religion is that God had breathed his own breath into his sélem so that it would live. In God’s religion, his image would also be his priest and king.

Your bible probably says that God rested Adam in the garden ‘to till and to keep it’ (Gn 2.15). That makes him a farmer, not a priest! But the Hebrew literally says, ‘to serve and to keep’. Now, you can ‘serve’ anybody and ‘keep’ anything, but in the Bible, these verbs appear together only to describe what priests do in the temple (cf, eg, Nm 3.7-8, 18.4.7). So Blood-Red-Earth-Human and the Life-Mother at his side weren’t there just to ‘serve and keep’ — much less to ‘dress and till’. They were there to serve (as in liturgy) and to keep (as in commandments). And that’s why, right after ‘setting’ Adam and Eve in the garden, God gave them some religious commandments for the very first time: ‘Of every tree of the garden— [even the Tree of Life]— you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for on the day you do eat of it, you shall surely die’ (Gn 2.16-17).

But Genesis is about how Adam, God’s sélem and High Priest, didn’t ‘serve and keep’. Instead, he ate the fruit of the ‘tree of the knowledge of good and evil’. He wanted God’s wisdom without faithfulness. So God exiled him from his garden/temple, ‘lest he take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever’ (Gn 3.22). And the rest of the Old Testament tells how the priest-kings of Israel made images of false gods and relied on false wisdom to support greed, betrayal, and injustice. Like Adam they transgressed the covenant (Ho 6.7)— they ‘transgressed’ (’aved), where they should have ‘served’ (’aved). So (again!) God exiled them from Jerusalem and from his holy Temple. But the Bible also tells how God restored Israel— and Adam— through a new Adam-Priest-King-Israel, Jesus.

Genesis is famous for its genealogies. You’ll find long lists of ‘begats’ in Gn 5 & 10, and shorter ones scattered up through Ex 6. If you put them all together, you find out they run from Adam down to Phineas, grandson of Aaron the first High Priest. But they don’t give you a ‘family tree’ that shows you absolutely all your cousins. Instead, a single trunk focuses in each generation on one central line. At the center of the world is the High Priest, who is Adam’s direct heir. As Adam’s son and image (Gn 5.3), the High Priest manifests what we are. As God’s son (Lk 3.38) and image, he manifests what God is. So do you want to know what a human being is? Ask the Bible: Every Blood-Red-Earth-Human and Life-Mother = Priest.

Both priest and image bring God into the world. But God made the only true and living Image of himself that can exist. The god-images we make don’t bring God into the world; they lead to exile and death, not to wisdom and life. God’s Image is his Priest, and as God’s sélem-priest, our work is to serve God and to keep his commandments in his temple-world— to practice mercy and truth— and God’s work is to supply life and wisdom!

The Bible nowhere says so directly, but Jewish and Christian tradition tell us that Adam and Eve were clothed in a garment of light. ‘Light’ is ór (וה). When they fell, they ‘saw they were naked’, so ‘the LORD God made garments of skin for them and vested them’ (Gn 3.21). ‘Skin’ is ór (יו). In a symbolic reversal, God told Moses to vest the priests in garments of white (light) when he ordained them (Ex 28.41, 29.8, 40.14; Lv 8.13). The same is done for us when we’re baptized. We’re stripped naked of the garment we inherited from Adam, and vested in the garment of light that we’ll wear at the resurrection. We ‘put off... the old Adam and... put on the new Adam, which is created according to God, in covenant faithfulness and true holiness’ (Ep 4.22-24). Then, clothed as priests once more in the radiance of God’s likeness, we’re brought into the Temple, to eat once again from the Tree of Life— the Cross, whose fruit, the new High Priest, Israel’s new King Adam who hung on it— has restored our Communion with God and brought us back to Paradise at last (Lk 23.43).
The Main Genealogies
of Genesis and Exodus

Generation
1

Adam [Blood-Red-Earth-Human]

Cain

Seth

3

Enosh ['Man']

Kenan

Mahalalel

Jared

7 (7x1)

Enoch

Methuselah

Lamech

10

Noah

Shem ['Name']

Arpachshad

Shelah

14 (7x2)

Eber ['Hebrew']

Peleg

Reu

Serug

Nahor

Terah

20

Abram

Nahor

Haran

Lot

21 (7x3)

Ishmael (12 tribes)

Isaac

Esau (12 tribes)

Jacob/Israel

Reuben

Simeon

Levi

Issachar, Judah, Zebulon, Dan,

Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, Benjamin

Gershon

Qehath

Merari

Amram

26

Moses

(Nadab)

(Abihu)

Eleazar

Ithamar

28 (7x4)

Phineas

A family tree or ‘divergent’ genealogy would show absolutely everybody descended from the first ancestor. But the genealogies of Genesis and Exodus form an ‘invergent’ genealogy where a linear trunk shows the main heir and ranks all other lineages around a central figure in every generation. Here, the focus is on the link between Adam and Aaron. In Israel’s Temple, the Son of Aaron is the High Priest because Aaron = Adam. In other words, the High Priest sums up and represents all Humanity-as-the-Living-God’s-Priestly-Image (sélem).
STUDY 3

Adam—Priest in the Sanctuary of Eden

Hector Morrison

From Genesis 1:26 it is clear that Adam—and humanity—have royal status. They are to ‘rule . . . over all the earth.’ In Genesis 2, with a little exegetical digging, it seems equally clear that Adam also had a priestly role within creation and, in particular, in the garden of Eden. As Gordon Wenham says: ‘The garden of Eden is not viewed by the author of Genesis simply as a piece of farmland, but as an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him’.¹ We consider briefly some of the evidence that points to the garden of Eden being an ‘archetypal sanctuary’.

EDEN AS ARCHETYPAL SANCTUARY

God Walks in the Garden

It would appear from Genesis 3:8 that it was the Lord’s custom to walk in the garden in the cool of the day. The Hebrew for ‘cool’ is ruach. This is the same word used in 1:2 to designate the Spirit of God. By his Spirit, then, the Lord was present in the garden. And it looks as if he was in the habit of walking and talking with Adam at such times. The very same form of the Hebrew verb as is used here for walking is used elsewhere in the Pentateuch to describe the presence of God walking among his people in the tabernacle. For example, in Leviticus 26:12 the Lord makes this promise to Israel: ‘I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people’ (see also Deut. 23:14; cf. 2 Sam. 7:6–7). The Spirit was present as the God of Adam and, indeed, of all humanity, communing with humanity in Adam.

Tree of Life

The tree of life was probably symbolic of the life which God held out to Man in the garden. Trees as symbols of life are well-known in the Bible, both in Israel and also in

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pagan religions. This is not least because they remain green throughout the summer drought as their roots go deep into the soil in search of water (e.g. Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:8). As symbols of life, they were also often associated with places of worship both for pagans, and also for the patriarchs (e.g. Gen. 13:18; Deut. 12:2). That in itself may point to the garden being a sanctuary.

Moreover, some scholars suggest that the lampstand (menorah) in the tabernacle was in the form of a seven-branched tree—the tree of life. In the tabernacle the priests had access to that tree-shaped light, just as Adam had access to the tree in the garden. Indeed, it was that light that enabled the priests to do their work in the holy place. I wonder if this is not part of what the psalmist had in mind when he wrote Psalm 36:7–9: ‘How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast in the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.’

The River

The fertility and life of the garden was due to the river mentioned in Genesis 2:10. It was this river that ‘watered’ the garden; that sustained, renewed and refreshed the life of the garden. But verse 10 also tells us that this river ‘flowed from Eden’. The picture that we have here is of the life-giving river of God flowing out from the temple of God into the rest of the world. The river moved out beyond the garden of God, beyond Eden to the territories round about it, bringing its life—the very life of God—with it as it went. And that is a pattern that we find repeated in various places in scripture, and that will be taken up in other studies in this school. Obvious examples are Ezekiel 47:1–12 where the river flows from the temple; and Revelation 22:1ff. where the river flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. But this reality is also found in Psalm 46:4–5: ‘There is a river of God whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.’ The River is none other than the life-giving presence of the living God—he is the source of all life on earth; in the entire universe—the River of God’s Spirit: that River that still waters the New Testament temple (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21–22) and flows from us to give life to the world (cf. John 7:38f.: ‘Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit . . .’)

Other significant parallels between Eden and later sanctuaries are found in Genesis 3:24. Once the first human couple were driven from Eden because of their disobedience we are told that God ‘placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life’. This verse raises a number of parallels with later sanctuaries.

Guarded by Cherubim

Cherubim were the traditional guardians of holy places throughout the Ancient Near East. In addition, in Solomon’s temple two cherubim guarded the holy of holies (1 Kings 6:23–28). Also, pictures of cherubim were embroidered into the curtains of
the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 26:31). In this way the dwelling places of God on earth were designed according to the pattern of his heavenly dwelling place. In the tabernacle and temple the images of the cherubim represented the living cherubim in the presence of God in heaven. There is a sense in which Eden, therefore, was even more like the heavenly dwelling place of God than either the tabernacle or the temple, since the cherubim in Genesis 3 would appear to be living beings.

**Entrance on the East Side**

In Genesis 3:24 we are told that the cherubim were positioned at the east side of the garden. Why was this? Presumably, because that’s where the entrance to the garden was. This was the case also with the tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple at a later time. The one entrance to the garden was in exactly the same position as the one entrance to Israel’s later temples.

**Guarded by a Flaming Sword**

There is little doubt that this symbolised the judgement of God falling on anyone who would seek entrance to the garden. Now, at a later time in the tabernacle, the first item of furniture that the Israelites met on entering the tabernacle courtyard was the altar of sacrifice. In other words, no-one could get beyond the entrance without blood being shed; without death occurring; without the judgement of God falling; without the wrath of God burning. Only, in Israel, God made provision for a substitute animal to fall beneath the sacrificial knife, in the place of its owner.

In these and others ways, the garden of Eden, which Ezekiel 28:14 teaches us was on the ‘holy mount of God’, can be considered as an archetypal sanctuary, like the temple that later stood on the ‘mountain of the Lord’ in Jerusalem.

**ADAM AS PRIEST IN THE SANCTUARY OF EDEN**

But for our purposes in this session, I want us to focus on the vocabulary used to describe the activity of Adam in the garden. In Genesis 2:15 we learn that he was ‘to work it and take care of it’. Now the Hebrew verb for ‘work’ used here (‘abhadd/avad) can be used of cultivating the soil. And there is no doubt that that was part of Adam’s task. He was to be a gardener or farmer, thus imaging his Father who had planted the garden (cf. Gen. 2:8). However, this word (‘abhadd/avad) is also the normal Hebrew word meaning ‘to serve’. From that we can say that Man was placed in the garden not to be served but to serve. He had a servant role—even though, as we see from chapter 1, he was a king. This is a reminder to us that all true leadership is servant leadership. The Hebrew word ‘abhadd/avad is also used often in the religious sense of serving God (cf. Deut. 4:19). In particular it is used especially of the tabernacle duties of the Levites (cf. Num. 3:7–8), so already points in the direction of priestly activity.

The other Hebrew verb for ‘take care of’ (shamar) is most commonly used for observing/keeping religious commands and duties (e.g. Gen. 17:9: ‘you must keep my
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covenant”; Lev. 18:5: ‘Keep my decrees and laws’). It is clear from this that one of the principal ways in which Adam was to ‘care for’ the garden was by ensuring that he himself kept the laws of God. In particular he was to keep the command highlighted in Genesis 2:17: ‘you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you shall surely die’. Not only so, but it looks as if he was to teach this law to the rest of humanity. In Genesis 3 it becomes clear that he fulfilled this function as far as Eve was concerned. And this would certainly be in line with one of the main tasks of the priesthood in Israel—the teaching of the torah/law.

This second word in Hebrew (shamar) can also mean ‘guard’. Interestingly, it is used in this sense in 3:24 where the cherubim guard the way to the tree of life. The cherubim guard the garden against intruders. It looks very much as if that had been part of Adam’s role too, as it was the task of the priests and Levites at a later stage (e.g. shamar is used in 1 Chron. 9 of the priests and Levites who acted as ‘gatekeepers’, ensuring that nothing and no-one unclean would enter the courts of the temple). Adam, then, was to guard the garden against infiltration by anything false/counterfeit/untrue. He was to guard against anything that would draw humanity away from true worship and service. He was to guard the garden against the perversion of the Father’s word/law. He was to guard against anything that would draw humanity away from the path of obedience to the words the Father had spoken. As such it was Adam’s duty to guard the garden against the entrance of that which would bring death.

Now in the rest of the Pentateuch, the only place where these two Hebrew words are found together is in descriptions of the work of the priests and the Levites in and around the tabernacle. For example, in Numbers 3:5–10 the Levites are given the task of ‘doing the work of the tabernacle’ and ‘taking care of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting’. That suggests strongly that we are right to think of Adam in Genesis 2 in a priestly role.

Adam’s Priestly Service

But what did Adam’s priestly service consist of in the garden of Eden? I think we can readily say that it included every aspect of his work in the garden. That included his maintenance of the garden, his protection of the garden, etc. Until the moment of his disobedience, his whole life and activity in the garden could be regarded as priestly. In the words of Romans 12:1, he offered his body as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. That was his ‘spiritual act of worship’. Every moment, every day, he tested and approved the Father’s will. And for Adam, as for Paul so much later, it was ‘his good, pleasing and perfect will’.

His whole life was his worship. He dug the garden to the glory of God; he studied the animal and plant life to the glory of God; he ate from the trees and drank from the river God provided—all to the glory of God; he looked for a wife to the glory of God; and when God provided him with that wife, Adam then went on to sing love songs to Eve to the glory of God; he enjoyed God’s Sabbath to the glory of God; etc. All his work and service in the garden; all his activity and Sabbath rests; all his maintenance; etc.—it was all priestly activity and all as the Lord had intended it to be.
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And I think that these are truths that we need to learn afresh and grasp afresh in the Christian Church today. For there is a very real sense in which Paul in Romans 12:1f. exhorts us to be priests, and a priestly community in everything we do. Now that doesn’t mean that we are only to have Christian friends and only to be involved in church activities. Rather, everything we do is to be done in the presence of God, as unto God, and for the glory of God. And that includes all the otherwise ‘boring’ routines of life at home or at work. We are to be priestly not just on Sundays. We are to be priestly at the kitchen sink, at the office desk, in the classroom, at the football match, etc.

If I understand what Paul is saying in Romans 12:1 properly, what he’s calling for is a whole mind-set that sees that everything we do in life is worship; everything we do in life is our Christian service: in church, at home, in school, at work, in the neighbourhood, etc. etc. In everything that our bodies and minds engage in day by day, we are to be priestly, living for the glory of God. In other words there is no distinction between the sacred and the secular. To the pure, all things are pure. For the Christian, the whole of life is ‘sacred’, lived out in the great temple of creation.

Adam’s Failure

Adam’s priestly service consisted of every aspect of his work in the garden, but sadly we are all aware of the tragic story of how Adam failed in this priestly service. He failed to ‘care for’ the garden. In particular, he failed to ‘keep’ the law of God revealed in the garden, and ended up being ‘served’ the fruit of the forbidden tree by his wife, rather than ‘serving’ the garden by not eating it. He also failed to ‘guard’ the garden against infiltration by the serpent, the ‘father of lies’, and all the falsehood that he brought with him. In particular, he failed to correct Eve’s re-interpretation of God’s law.

This is a failure Adam shared with the priestly nation of Israel, and with the priesthood within Israel, with the result that another Priest needed to come, Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the priestly office perfectly. He served the Lord faithfully unto death, by keeping the law in all its fullness himself and bearing the sanctions of the law broken by his people; and also by teaching the full meaning of the law. He also ‘guarded’ his own soul and the new creation against infiltration by the evil one.

And I believe that this is a major part of the background against which we must understand the story of Jesus in Gethsemane. There the Second Adam found himself in a fruitful garden on the Mount of Olives. For Jesus it was clearly a place of temptation; a place where he needed to be on his guard, lest he succumb to the strong temptations he faced, in particular the temptation to listen to the lie and to the father of lies.

How did Jesus seek to cope under this temptation? One of the main things he did was to pray. He covered his situation in prayer. He watched and prayed. Prayer was one of the main spiritual weapons which he used. He prayed with earnestness, with perseverance and in a spirit of submissiveness: ‘not as I will, but as you will’ and ‘your will be done’ (Matt. 26:39, 42). And so the Second Adam succeeded where the first failed. He proved himself to be the King–Priest of creation in his submissiveness to the Father’s will and word.
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How different were the disciples. They showed themselves to be no different from Adam. Christ had warned them to ‘watch and pray’ that they might ‘not enter into temptation’. Sadly, they did not watch—their weak flesh was so tired and exhausted that they just hadn’t got the strength to watch. They did not guard themselves in preparation for the temptation ahead of them. They did not even pray (‘lead us not into temptation’). With the result that when the temptation came they were afraid; they fell; they denied the Saviour; they ran; they were scattered.

YET in Gethsemane I think we have to understand that what Christ did was representative of all his people. He watched for us as well as for himself. How different he was from Cain. Remember how Cain somewhat angrily asked, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ Christ was and is our keeper. He watched for Peter, as Luke (22:31–32, ESV) reminds us: ‘Satan demanded to have you . . . but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.’ So he watched/guarded for us too.
Adam the High Priest in the Paradise Temple.

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The story of Adam and the garden of Eden is one of the best known and yet least understood parts of the Bible. It sets out the biblical teaching on the nature of human beings, and all too often has been read as no more than the story of the fall. The familiar talking snake and the missing rib which have caused such problems belong in the pre-philosophical culture of ancient Israel, and an over-literal reading of the text can obscure not only its profound insights but also its importance in the framework of the New Testament.

Adam and Eden are the beginning and the end of the great story of the Bible. Returning to Eden was an important part of Christian teaching from the beginning; paradise was regained when one entered the Church. Cyril of Jerusalem told the newly baptised that he was leading them by the hand ‘into the brighter and more fragrant meadow of paradise before us’... (First Lecture on the Mysteries, 1). In the New Testament, Jesus was described as the last Adam, the second Adam (1 Cor.15.45-7) and he was also described as the great high priest (Heb.4.14). Adam and the high priest, as we shall see, were the same figure. Jesus promised his faithful followers that they would once again eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God (Rev.2.7). The story in the New Testament reverses the story of Adam in Eden, and the Church’s claim to be paradise is rooted in the ancient belief that the original temple represented the garden of Eden.

Paradise, pardes, is not a Hebrew word, and when it is found in the Hebrew Bible, English translations usually give something other than ‘paradise’: forest (Neh.2.8), park (Eccles 2.5) or orchard (Song 4.13-15). In the LXX, the LORD planted a paradise, an enclosed garden, in Edem [not Eden, Gen.2.8]. The original Hebrew word Eden can mean either ‘delight’ or ‘plain’, so Eden could have been a garden on a plain, or a garden of delight. The prophet Ezekiel, a priest who had known the first temple (Ezek.1.3), described Eden as the mountain garden of the gods, the ‘elohim (Ezek.28.13-14), and so the meaning ‘plain’ would not have been appropriate for his Eden. ‘Delight’ fits better as the meaning of Eden, especially since Eden was used as an image for fertility. Isaiah, for example, prophesied of Zion ‘I will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD (Isa.51.3); and Ezekiel prophesied that the desolate land would become like the garden of Eden (Ezek.36.35). In the LXX, Isaiah’s Eden was translated as ‘paradise’ and Ezekiel’s as ‘garden of delight/luxury’.

The Genesis Eden was the garden where Yahweh of the Elohim [‘the LORD God’] walked. It was a place of trees and rivers, of cherubim and an evil snake. The LORD God set the man there, and caused every tree to grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. When Adam and Eve were cast out, cherubim and a flaming sword were set to guard the gate of the garden. Nothing in the story as told in Genesis has any obvious link to the temple. In Ezekiel’s Eden, however, the figure who was driven out was a high priest, and his
Eden was probably earlier than the more familiar garden in Genesis. Ezekiel’s Eden was ‘the garden of the gods’, ‘’elohim, on the holy mountain of the gods/God (Ezek.28.12-19). The figure addressed in his lament, seemingly the king of Tyre, is both masculine and feminine, and it had walked among the stones of fire, or possibly the sons of fire, before it was thrown down from the mountain garden because it had become proud and corrupted its wisdom.

The rest of the description is almost opaque, and the problems of the Hebrew are considerable. It is not clear whether the person Ezekiel addressed was the guardian anointed cherub, or was with the cherub, but it is clear that the key figure in Ezekiel’s Eden became Adam in the more familiar version of the story. [We shall return to the King of Tyre.] It is also clear that the figure in Ezekiel’s Eden was remembered as a high priest. It was dressed in precious stones: carnelian, topaz, jasper, chrysolite, beryl, onyx, sapphire carbuncle, emerald - nine different stones, according to the Hebrew text. The Greek text, however, has twelve stones which correspond exactly to those worn by the high priest, both in name and in the position they were set in his breastplate (LXX Exod.28.17-20). Either the difficult Hebrew text has lost three precious stones, or the Greek translator has added three in order to make clear that the figure driven from Ezekiel’s Eden was a high priest. Whether it was a cherub or had been ‘with the cherub’, this ‘King of Tyre’ had been in a heavenly place.

Another pattern corroborates the temple tradition that the original Adam was a high priest. When Moses on Sinai was commanded to make the tabernacle, he had to replicate on earth what he had seen in his mountain-top vision (Exod.25.8-9, 40). Later texts indicate that what Moses had seen was not a heavenly temple - although some do say that that is what he saw. Moses’ vision was the six days of creation, which he had seen when he was within the cloud of glory for six days (Exod.24.15-16). This vision is now the opening of the first book of Moses, Genesis chapter 1. A comparison of the six days of creation and the stages of erecting the tabernacle (Exod.40.16-33) show that each day of creation was represented by one item of tabernacle or temple furnishing. The sixth day, when Adam was created, corresponded to the layer of water in which the high priests purified themselves before approaching the altar. Thus the creation of Adam represented the high priesthood. This pattern of correspondences is a complex and fascinating topic, but one that we cannot explore in detail today. Note, however, that Adam as the original high priest was a widely based and widely known temple tradition.

The temple itself was built as a paradise place. The great hall of Solomon’s temple [corresponding to the nave of a western church] was decorated with carvings of gourds and open flowers, cherubim and palm trees (1 Kgs 6.18, 29). The great bronze pillars were decorated with pomegranates and lily-work (1 Kgs 7.15-22). When the measuring angel showed Ezekiel a vision of how the restored temple should be, he saw a temple on a high mountain (Ezek.40.2), with cherubim and palm trees carved on the walls of the great hall (Ezek.41.15-20). He saw a river flowing from the temple, just as rivers had flowed from Eden (Ezek.47.1-12), and other prophets too looked forward to the time when waters would flow from the temple (Joel 3.18; Zech.14.8). The righteous were described as trees in the house of the Lord, a pointless metaphor if there had been no trees in the temple, albeit carved in the wood (Ps. 92.13).

Various purges of the temple show other Eden items used in worship: Hezekiah broke in pieces a bronze serpent that had been venerated with incense since time immemorial (2 Kgs 18.4), although
the text does not say that the serpent was in the temple; and when Josiah purged the temple, he burned the chariot of the sun [Hebrew has plural but Greek is singular] which was probably the great throne of the LORD in the holy of holies (2 Kgs 23.11), another feature of the later traditions that link the temple to Paradise. According to the Enoch tradition, when the LORD came to Paradise, he rested under the tree of life (2 Enoch 8.3), and the Greek version of the Life of Adam and Eve says that when he returned to Paradise, seated on the chariot of cherubim, all the plants came into bloom, and the throne was set by the tree of life (Apocalypse of Moses 22.3-4).

The temple as Eden was the setting of the Book of Revelation, where St John described the heavenly city itself as a huge holy of holies (Rev.21.15-16), and so there was no need of a further temple there (Rev.21.22). In the holy of holies St John saw the tree of life and the heavenly throne, and from the holy of holies flowed the river of the water of life (Rev.22.1-2). The risen LORD promised to his faithful followers that they would have access again to the tree of life (Rev.2.7), and St John saw them standing before the throne and the tree of life (Rev.22.3-4) – exactly as described in the other texts. They were restored to Eden whence Adam had been banished, but in fact they were standing in the holy of holies.

There are two accounts in Genesis of the creation of Adam: God [or the 'elohim] resolved to create Adam ‘according to our invisible heavenly form, as our material image’ (Gen.1.26, translating literally; ‘as’ c.f Exod. 6.3 as El Shaddai). Adam was created male and female. The second account has Yahweh of the Elohim (the LORD God), form the man from dust and then breathe into the man the breath of life so that the man became a living being (Gen.2.7). Breathing into a statue was a well known ritual for bringing it to life as the dwelling place of the god it represented, and all the Targums agree that breathing into Adam meant giving him the power of speech. The image of the beast was brought to life in this way in the Book of Revelation and given the power of speech (Rev.13.15).

In each Genesis story, Adam was created as male-and female, and only later, after being set in the garden as high priest, was Adam separated into distinct male and female beings. He was set in the garden ‘to till and to keep’- the usual translation - but both these words have a temple meaning (Gen.2.15), and Adam was understood to be a high priest even though that is not explicit. ‘Till’ ‘bd, was also the technical term for temple service, and ‘keep’, smr, meant to preserve the tradition. The traditional Jewish interpretations did not think this was a command about gardening. The debate was: did it mean serve for six days and then preserve the Sabbath, or serve God and perform the sacred duties (Genesis Rabbah XVI.5).

Apart from the biblical accounts, there were many stories about Adam and Eden, some of which echo material in the Hebrew Bible and so may well have been known to its writers. They confirm that the temple was Eden. Amongst texts known in the time of Jesus, the Book of Jubilees, an alternative version of Genesis, had Adam wait forty days from his creation until he could enter Eden, and Eve eighty days, since both applied to Eden the temple laws about impurity after childbirth (Jub.3.8-14). When Adam was leaving Eden, he burned an incense very like the one prescribed for use only in the tabernacle (Exod.30.34-38): frankincense, galbubam, stacte and sweet spices (Jub.3.27). Noah knew that the garden of Eden was the holy of holies, and the dwelling of the LORD
(Jub. 8.19). It is sometimes said that Jubilees reworked Genesis in order to make the link between Eden and the temple, but this is unlikely, since the temple-as-Eden tradition was older than Genesis.

Another Adam and Eve text known at that time was the *Apocalypse of Moses*. After Adam himself had opened the door of paradise, allowed the serpent to enter, and listened to his words, he grieved for his folly. He had lost his garment of glory, the righteousness with which he had been clothed (*Apocalypse of Moses* 20-1-2). This is consistent with his role as high priest, since the vestments of any high priest were described as a garments of glory: ‘holy garments for Aaron... for glory and for beauty’ (*Exod.*28.2); and when Enoch stood before the heavenly throne, he was given garments of God’s glory (*2 Enoch* 22.6-10). St Ephrem, writing in fourth century Syria, said that God had clothed Adam with glory (*Ephrem, Commentary on Genesis* 2), and a collection of legendary material from the same area said ‘Adam and Eve were in Paradise, clothed with glory and shining with praise for three hours’ (*Book of the Cave of Treasures*, 1). The Genesis storyteller said that Adam and Eve knew they were naked when they had taken and eaten the forbidden fruit, but did not say what garment they had lost. Presumably the original hearers knew they had lost the high priestly garment of glory when they listened to the snake. The community at Qumran hoped to regain ‘all the glory of Adam... the knowledge of the Most High... the wisdom of the sons of heaven.’ (*Community Rule IV*).

Adam’s garment of glory was woven by Wisdom, and Adam was proverbially wise. Eliaphaz asked Job: ‘Are you the first man that was born?... Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself?’ (*Job* 15.7-8). Ben Sira, writing in the second century BCE linked the high priest’s vestments and Wisdom. When he was advising his son to accept the discipline of Wisdom, he compared this to putting on the vestments of the high priest: ‘There is a golden ornament upon her, and her bonds are a blue cord. You will wear her as a garment of glory, and put her on as a crown of gladness’ (*Ben Sira* 6.30-31, my translation). This passed into Christian teaching. An early Christian Wisdom text found in Egypt had Wisdom speaking to her children: ‘I am giving you a high-priestly garment woven from every wisdom... clothe yourself with wisdom like a robe... be seated on a throne of perception... return to your divine nature.’ (*Teaching of Silvanus* CG VII.4.89, 91). The Gospel of Thomas attributes to Jesus a longer version of a saying in Matthew and Luke, which suggests that Jesus was speaking of this robe of glory and wisdom. ‘Jesus said “Why have you come out into the desert? To see a reed shaken by the wind? And to see a man clothed in fine garments like your kings and your great men? Upon them are the fine garments, and yet they are unable to discern the truth.”’ (*Gospel of Thomas* 78).

Now Adam wearing fine garments of wisdom and sitting on a throne is not the figure we imagine in Genesis, but such stories were known in the time of Jesus and, it would seem, to the writers of the Hebrew Bible. The *Life of Adam and Eve* is, in effect, the background to the Genesis story. It describes how Satan was driven from heaven and vowed revenge on Adam who had caused his downfall, [and this is the Adam story that appears in the Qur’an]. When Adam was created as the image of the LORD God, all the angels were commanded to worship him, but Satan refused. He had been created with the angels, he said, and so was prior to Adam in creation. Adam should worship him. Satan and his angels were then expelled from heaven and plotted Adam’s downfall (*Life of Adam and Eve* 12-16).
This story is the context for the enigmatic words in Psalm 2. The LORD has set his king in Zion and called him his son, and the kings and rulers are commanded to serve him: ‘Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish...’ (Ps.2.12). The king in Zion is the Adam figure, the image of God enthroned in Zion. The angels called to worship Adam is also the setting for Deuteronomy 32.43, which became a key proof text for the early Church: ‘When he brings the Firstborn into the world, he says “Let all God’s angels worship him”’ (Heb.1.6). Jesus is the second Adam enthroned as the Son and the angels have to worship him. Remember, Luke’s genealogy of Jesus describes Adam as the son of God (Lk.3.38). The story of Satan refusing to worship Adam is also the context for Jesus’ temptations in the wilderness. Since Jesus was alone at that time, these must have been his own accounts of the experience, and they are told in terms of this story: ‘If you are the Son of God...’. and then most telling of all, the words of the devil: ‘If you will worship me, [the kingdoms of the world] shall be yours’ (Lk.4.7). The second Adam was being asked to worship Satan, to reverse Satan’s ancient humiliation. Mark summarised the same wilderness experience differently: “[Jesus] was with the beasts and the angels served him’ (Mk.1.13). This means that in his wilderness visions, Jesus was in the holy of holies with the beasts that formed the heavenly throne [the ‘living creatures’], and the angels served him. This is the same story of Adam the image being worshipped, and is the vision St John described in Revelation 5. It also appears in the description of the image of the beast who, like Adam, was given breath and the power of speech, and then those who would not worship the image of the beast were killed (Rev.13.15).

It is possible that all the stories known only in later texts were spun from the gaps and allusions in the Genesis story, and the Eden temple of the Book of Jubilees was a late fabrication. It is also possible that the Adam and Eden and temple material is far older than Genesis 2-3, and that traditions surfacing in later texts were themselves ancient, known to Ezekiel and either assumed by, or omitted from, Genesis.

The accounts of Ezekiel’s visions of the chariot throne leaving the temple and going to Babylon, with their mixture of masculine and feminine forms, singular and plural, are almost impossible to translate. This is what we should expect of the male-and-female-Adam in the heavenly state. Ezekiel saw ‘on the heavenly form of the throne, a heavenly form as the appearance of Adam,’ (Ezek.1.26, translating literally) which he recognised as ‘the appearance of the heavenly form of the glory of Yahweh’ (Ezek.1.28). Adam enthroned was leaving the temple. Ezekiel spoke of ‘forms’ and ‘appearances’, mysterious words for us, but for a first temple priest they were probably technical terms. The word translated ‘form’ seems to mean a heavenly archetype, and the word translated ‘appearance’ seems to mean its manifestation in a visible but not material form. Later teachers would say that sin made it impossible for Adam to see his form, that is, to know his true self and his true potential. ‘Because of sin, it was not given for man to know the dmut on high; were it not for this sin, all the keys would be given to him and he would know how the heavens and the earth were created...’ (Abot de R Nathan, A39).

Similar ideas are found in the Qumran Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, which also describe the heavenly throne and entourage that Ezekiel saw, but there is a different word here for the invisible realities, the forms. It is the word šur. The Songs describe the ‘forms’ of living ‘elohim, and the ‘forms’ of luminous spirits (4Q405). In the Old Testament, this same word is often found in descriptions of God, but is translated as ‘Rock’ since that the same Hebrew letters can also mean
Rock. ‘The Rock, his work is perfect’ (Deut.32.4); ‘He scoffed at the Rock of his salvation’ (Deut.32.15); ‘The Rock of Israel has spoken to me’ (2 Sam.23.3); ‘O LORD... O Rock...’ (Hab.1.12). In none of these examples does the LXX have the word ‘rock’, and there are many examples where the Rock becomes simply ‘God’. In other words, σῦρ which means the ‘invisible form’ in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice probably meant that in many other places in the Hebrew Bible.

But how is this relevant to Adam? In Ezekiel’s Eden there was a bejewelled high priest figure who was thrown out of the mountain-top garden of the gods. He was addressed as the King of Tyre. Now why should the translator of the LXX describe this figure as a temple high priest with all his jewels if he was the King of Tyre? The answer may lie in the fact that the Hebrew for ‘Tyre’ is written in the same way as the word that can mean ‘Rock’ or ‘invisible heavenly form’. The King of Tyre, I suggest, was originally the heavenly ‘form’ of the king in Jerusalem, who had also been the high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Ps.110.4). His expulsion from the city and temple was described as Adam, the image of God, being expelled from Eden, or, in the case of Ezekiel’s visions of the throne, Adam, the appearance of the heavenly reality of the LORD, leaving the temple.

The charges against Ezekiel’s fallen high priest figure resemble the words to unfallen Adam in Genesis who was created as the image, according to the ‘form’ of God - the same word as Ezekiel used for the invisible reality. In his glorious unfallen state and vested, we assume, in his garment of glory and wisdom, Adam was told to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen.1.28). But these words can have other meanings, and I suggest that they were originally understood to mean: ‘Be beautiful and great, and fill the earth with glory’ (Apocalypses of Abraham 23.5), and later Jewish teachers said that in the time of the Messiah, everything Adam had lost would be restored: his lustre, his immortality, his height..... (Genesis Rabbah XII.6). There is nothing in Genesis, as we now read it, to suggest that Adam was tall and radiant, but the words translated ‘be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth’ can have this other meaning.

The Genesis Adam was also commanded to subdue, קבש, the earth and have dominion, רדיה. Now קבש usually means ‘subdue’ (e.g Num.32.22; Jer.34.11), but Micah 7.18-19 suggests another possibility. The context here is atonement, and the LORD has compassion and *** our iniquities. The verb is translated ‘subdue’ [AV], ‘tread under foot’ [RSV], but the atonement process was one of repairing the bonds of the eternal covenant, and so ‘binding up’ our iniquities would better fit the context. Since Adam was the high priest, this would have been his great work of atonement, of upholding the eternal covenant and binding all things together. His second duty, רדיה, would then follow. ‘Have dominion’ should be understood in the way it was used of Solomon: he ruled, he had dominion, and he had peace on all sides (1 Kgs.4.21.24).

Ezekiel’s jewelled figure in the garden of the gods had corrupted all the characteristics of the original Adam. Like the original Adam it was male-and-female, and in this passage, as in the visions of the throne, there is a mixture of masculine and feminine forms. Originally the jewelled figure had been

1 Parah, be fruitful, pa’ar, be beautiful; rabah, be great, ,
perfect in beauty and full of wisdom, just as Adam had been beautiful and wise, but the jewelled figure had corrupted its wisdom and become proud through its beauty. Instead of filling the earth with glory or wisdom, it had filled the earth with violence, and instead of being great, it had achieved only greatness in commerce. The difficult command to Adam, ‘subdue’, which I suggest meant ‘bind things together’ appears in Ezekiel’s description of the jewelled figure as ‘You were the seal of perfection’.

The Genesis Adam was set in the garden and told that he could eat the fruit of any tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam’s first disobedience was not simply an act of defiance or stupidity; it concerned the attitude to knowledge. Adam was intended to eat from the tree of life which was the symbol of Wisdom (Prov. 3.18), but instead the human pair listened to the voice of the snake and ate from the forbidden tree. Immediately they realised they were naked because they had lost their garments of wisdom. You will recall that the Qumran community hoped to regain ‘all the glory of Adam...’ which was ‘the knowledge of the Most High... the wisdom of the sons of heaven’; and Ezekiel’s jewelled figure was thrown down from the mountain garden of the gods because it had corrupted its wisdom and become proud.

Who, then, was the snake? A bronze snake had been part of the cult in Jerusalem until Hezekiah destroyed it, and the words of the snake were in fact the promise to those who ate from the tree of life. ‘Your eyes will be opened and you will be like the ’elohim’ (Gen. 3.5). But Wisdom did open the eyes of those who fed on her, and she did make her children sons of God. This was symbolised by temple anointing, since the perfumed oil represented the oil of the tree of life, and the high priest was anointed on his eyelids.

But who was the snake? I suspect that this was Satan’s first act of deception, taking the form of the symbol of Wisdom, the bronze snake that Hezekiah destroyed. The snake suggested that both trees were identical and had identical effects. The Genesis story of Adan and the garden of Eden marks the point in Israel’s religion when Wisdom was rejected by the temple priesthood. Adam, the high priest, chose the knowledge of good and evil rather than wisdom, and Ezekiel’s jewelled figure corrupted its wisdom. They were driven from the garden. Those who remained faithful to Wisdom said that she was rejected at this time, and that the eyes of the temple priests lost their sight. (1 Enoch 93.8).

There are many echoes of the story of Adam leaving the garden that was the temple. Before he sinned, when he was still in the garden, he could hear the song of the seraphim singing ‘Holy Holy Holy Holy’ (Testament of Adam 1.4, a mid-3rd century Christian text), the seraphim that Isaiah had heard in the holy of holies. When he left the garden, he took with him gold, frankincense and myrrh to remind him of the garden, the temple, that he had lost, and these were buried with him (Testament of Adam 3.6). The magi bringing them as gifts to Jesus is the first sign in the New Testament of the new Adam.