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## The 'Temple of the Holy Spirit' & Christian Identity: Old Testament Echoes in 1 Corinthians

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THE 'TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT' & CHRISTIAN IDENTITY:  
OLD TESTAMENT ECHOES IN 1 CORINTHIANS

BY

SISTER AMATA CHRISTI LIPPERT, O.P.

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

PROVIDENCE COLLEGE

JULY 2023



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in the thought of Saint Paul was first awakened in a graduate course I took with Dr. James Keating. I became fascinated with the power of St. Paul's words and concepts as a solid foundation for the Church and Christian identity today. I am grateful for Dr. Keating's help and guidance during my studies, and especially for serving as my thesis director. Many thanks are due to Dr. Patrick Reid and Dr. Isaac Morales, O.P., for serving as readers of my thesis. I learned to love the Old Testament from the many classes I took with Dr. Reid, and I hope to always emulate his reverence for the Word of God. Father Isaac's helpful guidance, scholarly eye, and scriptural expertise on Paul and the Spirit were also greatly appreciated. A very special gratitude is due to my parents, who first brought me to the Lord in Baptism to receive the indwelling Spirit. This was the greatest gift you could ever have given me after life itself. I am particularly grateful to Mother Anne Marie and Mother Anna Grace for assigning me to graduate studies at Providence College, and to my community of Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia for their friendship and sisterly encouragement throughout this process. The fact that this work is centered around the Holy Spirit is thanks to several priests I have known through the years who have shown me by their own lived example how powerfully the Holy Spirit wishes to indwell and transform us. Their witness changed my life, and I am profoundly grateful. Finally, my deepest thanks are to the Lord himself, whom I love above all things. Come, Holy Spirit!

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OT	Old Testament	2 Cor	2 Corinthians
NT	New Testament	Gal	Galatians
Gen	Genesis	Eph	Ephesians
Ex	Exodus	Phil	Philippians
Num	Numbers	Col	Colossians
Deut	Deuteronomy	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians
Judg	Judges		
1 Sam	1 Samuel		
2 Sam	2 Samuel		
1 Kgs	1 Kings		
2 Kgs	2 Kings		
1 Chron	1 Chronicles		
2 Chron	2 Chronicles		
Ez	Ezra		
Neh	Nehemiah		
Psalms	Psalms		
Is	Isaiah		
Jer	Jeremiah		
Ezek	Ezekiel		
Hos	Hosea		
Hag	Haggai		
Zech	Zechariah		
Mal	Malachi		
Acts	Acts of the Apostles		
Rom	Romans		
1 Cor	1 Corinthians		

## INTRODUCTION

Paul declares both the Christian community and the individual believer to be the Temple of the Holy Spirit in his first letter to the Corinthians. For a pious Jew to make such an identity statement using the image of the temple, the very center of Jewish life, politics, culture, and worship, is striking. What exactly does Paul mean by this, and what is the theological background or worldview that allows him to make what appears to be such a bold theological claim? Tellingly, Paul uses this temple phrase twice in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians in proximity, when writing of the identity of a beloved Christian community that he is clearly anguishing over. Beyond a casual analogy, it seems that Paul considered this image of the temple an important one, which he used to help solidify Christian identity in Corinth and preserve the church there from spiritual harm. Further investigation into Paul's Jewish worldview suggests that this temple imagery was essential to a larger theological narrative of the Messiah and His Spirit that can be traced throughout the Old Testament—a theology that has serious implications for Christian identity and holiness today.

This topic of Christian identity is a timely and necessary one. Our modern era has much in common with Paul's own; Christian communities today struggle with some of the same moral and ecclesial chaos that the early Corinthians did. While all Scripture is timeless and necessary, Paul's message to Corinth seems particularly well-suited to speak to our modern situation. Paul had to continue to write to his neophyte church with constant reminders, as he knew that a deep awareness of one's Christian identity is not genetically inherited or unthinkingly absorbed. In every age, essential Christian truths must be intentionally passed on, and this is largely done by the stories we cherish and re-tell. Today many moderns have been deprived of an education in the 'identity-rooting' stories of the Biblical tradition, stories which make up the very substance of our shared history as the people of God. Not surprisingly, a sense of rootlessness and loss of identity

in Christ has become a common experience for many. The Old Testament reminds us repeatedly not to forget what God has done for us, reminding men of every age and time that one of the greatest crises that can emerge is when one forgets his identity. What precisely is the impact on the Church when its members forget who they are and how they are meant to live—a form of spiritual dementia? Paul himself likely asked this question as he confronted the errors of the Corinthians. Like in his own day, many Christians today have forgotten the staggering truth that they exist as temples of the Holy Spirit, or perhaps have lost the profundity of the doctrine. Many have missed the temple imagery and its underlying truths that are woven through the Old Testament, and so have missed their powerful message for us today. N.T. Wright contends that, “failure to attend to the actual story told by Jews and Christians alike—i.e., the story of the Old Testament—was the basic charge that the early church levelled at Judaism. It might also be suggested that a similar failure on the part of contemporary Christians is widespread and is, moreover, at the root of a great deal of misunderstanding of the Christian tradition in general and the gospels in particular.”<sup>1</sup> Losing the larger narrative of these foundational stories of sin and redemption cannot help but weaken the Church. If one does not know what God promised to do to restore his fallen creation, how long people longed for the fulfillment of these promises, and just how profound the gift of the Spirit was when it came in Christ, one cannot fully appreciate and savor the new life of grace for which he died. In short, a generation that has lost the threads of its salvation narratives has lost its roots, and therefore the key to its identity. Thankfully, if the crises are similar, so are the antidotes; in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, Paul offers us a path of renewal, through the presence and power of Christ’s Holy Spirit, who is already at work in the church, but who needs our greater cooperation. Paul knew well that the way we live and the choices we make will flow out of what we believe

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<sup>1</sup> Wright, N.T. *The New Testament and the People of God*. Vol. 1. Fortress Press, 1992. 70.



ourselves to be. So, the best way for Paul to correct the errors of the Corinthians, and by extension, modern man, is to remind him again of the great story of his identity. And that requires the Temple and all that it signified for a Second Temple Jew.

To better understand precisely what Paul means when he calls the new Christians and their communities the “temple of the Holy Spirit,” there are a few identity-seeking questions to be probed within this study. In the scriptural stories about God’s presence in the OT tabernacle and temple, one can ask: how God was understood to be present in this ‘temple’, why this presence is vitally important to the identity and holiness of the community or individual, how this presence is threatened or lost, and what the keys or hopes for its protection or restoration are. The answers to these questions will bring to light the significant role of the temple as Paul would have understood it and be used to frame his own use of the temple analogy in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. To investigate this topic, the writings of N.T. Wright and Richard Hays will provide major support, as these scholars read Paul with a narrative theological lens which is well-suited for understanding Paul’s worldview of salvation history. Throughout this paper, reference may be made to Paul’s commonly accepted letters,<sup>2</sup> but special attention will be given to 1st Corinthians since it holds two of the three explicit “temple” references in Paul’s corpus.<sup>3</sup>

The first chapter of this work will present the rationale for using a narrative theological lens to read and comprehend Paul’s larger worldview, since he was a Jewish-Christian thinker steeped in OT story. The second chapter will take up these themes and further probe the Old Testament theology of the tabernacle that undergirds Paul’s language, to discover what it tells us

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<sup>2</sup> Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Romans, Philemon, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians.

<sup>3</sup> The third temple passage is from 2 Cor 6:16-19 which will also be referenced, as its sacral language and temple connections to 1 Corinthians and Ezekiel are significant.

about the identity of the people of God. This will require a particular focus on the motifs of God's presence, glory, and holiness as they relate to the identity and holiness of his people. In the third main chapter, the same analysis will be done on the language and content of the most applicable Biblical passages that correspond to the first temple, with an emphasis on Ezekiel. This chapter will briefly discuss the debates surrounding the departure and expected return of the Presence of God to the temple, based on OT prophecies and messianic expectations. In this light, Paul's particular vision of how these prophecies came to completion in Christ's indwelling spirit will be better understood. Finally, a fourth and fifth chapter will use the previous chapters' background to do an in-depth analysis of two key passages in 1 Corinthians where Paul uses the phrase "temple of the Holy Spirit". An exegesis of these passages will shed light on the identity of the Christian as it was understood by Paul, and the holiness to which communities and individuals are called as new temples of the Spirit.

## CHAPTER ONE: PAUL'S NARRATIVE WORLDVIEW

### The Narrative Worldview Defined

When beginning a study of Paul's New Testament theology, one may wonder why an investigation into Old Testament themes is required. Paul, after all, did not want Christians to be bound by the works of the law, but set free in Christ.<sup>4</sup> Further, he was writing primarily to a Gentile audience with little background in Jewish theology. Should not the New Testament be read on its own terms, then, without referencing old stories that were definitively fulfilled in Christ and therefore ostensibly of lesser significance? It would seem fitting for him to begin afresh, theologically, and put off the "old leaven" of the Old Testament. However, to state this as an absolute claim is to miss a profound truth about Paul, his Jewish background, and its far-reaching implications on Christian life today. That is, Paul never espouses a theology of replacement, in which the Jewish meaning-giving stories of old would be emptied of their significance. Rather, Paul understood the Jewish faith and all its Scriptures as *fulfilled* in Christ; the new was comprehensible only in reference to the old. "The substructure of all Christian theology lay in the early church's patterns of interpreting Old Testament material" and Paul was the foremost example of a theologian steeped in OT story.<sup>5</sup> For Paul, the God of the New Testament was also the God of the Old, who still spoke to his people and acted in their lives in patterns that could only be understood through the narratives and promises of the Old Testament. In other words, Paul was only able to understand the truth of Christ by reading backward and re-discovering God's OT

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<sup>4</sup> See Eph 2:15: "He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances", and Rom 7:4: "you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another".

<sup>5</sup> Hays, Richard B. *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*. Yale University Press, 1989. 182. Quoting C.H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures: The Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology*. London: Nisbet, 1952. 66.

promises which had come to full completion in his own time. Richard Hays sums it up well when he says:

If we want to understand what the New Testament writers were doing theologically—particularly how they interpreted the relation of the gospel to the more ancient story of God’s covenant relationship to Israel—we cannot avoid tracing an understanding their appropriation of Israel’s Scriptures. This is so a fortiori for Paul, the self-described Hebrew of Hebrews who, by his own account, surpassed all his contemporaries in zeal for the traditions of his fathers...whose reflection on God’s action in the world was shaped in decisive ways by his reading of Israel’s sacred texts.<sup>6</sup>

In short, the scriptures of the Old Testament provided Paul and his Jewish contemporaries with the lens through which they saw all of reality and made sense of what God was doing in their own lives. Wright explains, however, that the main reason these narratives were passed on and cherished is not just that it gave them a feeling of meaning or provided a rationale for their doctrines. Rather, the main point was that “second-Temple Jews believed themselves to be *actors within* a real-life narrative...the main function of their stories was to remind themselves of earlier and (they hoped) characteristic moments within the single, larger story which stretched from the creation of the world and the call of Abraham right forwards to their own day, and (they hoped) into the future.”<sup>7</sup> This perspective permeated all that Paul wrote. When writing to his churches of mixed converts, some of whom were likely not yet steeped in this worldview, Paul therefore urges them to “*think within the biblical narrative*, to see themselves as actors within the ongoing scriptural drama: to allow their erstwhile pagan thought-forms to be transformed by a biblically based renewal of the mind.”<sup>8</sup> While Paul would not require them to become Jewish or adopt Jewish customs, he *did* want them to think within the worldview of the Jewish Scriptures—to see

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<sup>6</sup> Hays, Richard B. *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005. 27–28.

<sup>7</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*. Fortress Press, 2008. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*. Fortress Press, 2013. 15. Hereafter abbreviated as *PFG*.

themselves within the larger story that God was writing, the grand story of salvation history. This was no small task. Even Paul's contemporaries who were similarly steeped in OT narratives may have struggled to understand the full implications of his new ideas immediately. A totally reworked idea of salvation history that now centered around a crucified Messiah and his Spirit had taken awhile for Paul to absorb, too. To affect a full 'renewal of his own mind', the Lord had allowed his physical and spiritual vision to be blinded and then restored in a radical way on his life-changing journey to Damascus.<sup>9</sup> This divine intervention changed the way he saw everything, theologically, and forced him to look again at the way he had always read the narratives of salvation history. Simply put, Paul was a Pharisee who "rethought and reworked every aspect of his native Jewish theology in light of the Messiah and the spirit."<sup>10</sup> Yet, it was far from being supplanted and forgotten. Ever a loyal son of Israel, Paul "insistently sought to show that his proclamation of the Gospel was grounded in the witness of Israel's sacred texts. The trick lay in learning to read these texts aright."<sup>11</sup> If we are to understand Paul's use of an OT image such as the temple, then, we must also go back and learn from him how to read Scripture in the context of salvation history.

### Further Terms

Any serious study of Pauline scholarship and its relationship to the Old Testament will soon encounter concepts such as narrative, metanarrative, narrative substructure, and narrative echoes discussed frequently. A brief mention of each will help to clarify how they are often used

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<sup>9</sup> Acts 9:1–19; 22:6–21; 26:12–18; Gal 1:13–24. All Biblical citations are NRSV unless otherwise noted.

<sup>10</sup> Wright, N.T. *PFQ*, 46.

<sup>11</sup> Hays, Richard B. *Echoes*, 2.

and which will best suit the present study, and then the larger ‘controlling narrative’ that formed Paul will be briefly set forth.

The terms *narrative*, or *narrative lens* refer less to a distinct theology and more to an overall way of seeing scripture as primarily a story of God and his people, as opposed to a book of rules and doctrines (though the Bible undoubtedly contains them). It looks to these stories as message-carrying and meaning-giving narratives that structure reality and can still direct us today. Two well-respected scholars who read the scriptures according to this mode are N.T. Wright and Richard Hays, whose work provides a solid foundation for the current thesis. However, it should be noted that the narrative lens as a tool for reading scripture can be misused; Joel White warns that the overly-simplistic ‘narrative theology’ of some modern scholarship “suggests a rather fast and loose approach to the historicity of the narrative,” often de-emphasizing the importance of biblical principles or systematic theology in favor of personal interpretation.<sup>12</sup> This modern capture of the narrative movement would certainly not be aligned with Wright and Hays. In the present work, any mention of ‘narrative theology’ will therefore relate to the disciplined study of the scriptural narratives, with the help of scholars like Wright and Hays, in the attempt to locate as far as possible how *Paul* would have read them and taken these narratives up in his theological vision.

A *metanarrative*, as used by Pauline scholars, refers to a larger, governing story that takes precedence over the others and makes sense of all the rest. These stories often operate on both a cosmic and an individual scale and illuminate God’s great purpose for creation. For example, Wright expresses the major metanarrative of scripture as “a tale about God setting right what went

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<sup>12</sup> White, Joel. “N. T. Wright’s Narrative Approach”, in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul*. Christoph Heilig, Fortress Press, 2017.183, fn. 11.

awry after his creation of the world,” a story which still progresses up into Paul’s own day and age, and in which “Israel is still awaiting the full restoration and new creation it has been promised.”<sup>13</sup> Sometimes he expresses this in Exodus language of exile and return. For scholars like Wright, it is self-evident that the biblical writers are tapping into a grand story, and it is only against the background of this story that Paul’s ideas can be fully understood. For some modern theologians, however, this way of reading scripture is not self-evident at all; many hold an antipathy to metanarratives as meaning-giving stories since they do not wish to acknowledge anyone or anything (outside of themselves) as wielding the power to *give* meaning. The French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard once famously went so far as to characterize postmodernist thought as “incredulity toward metanarratives” in general, claiming that we have outgrown our need for these meaning-creating stories in modern times.<sup>14</sup> Generally, however, scholars who study scripture not merely as an ancient document, but with a profound love and reverence for scripture as Divine Revelation find in the whole of the Bible a grand metanarrative of salvation—and this method of reading the Bible will be adopted here. While it can be given different names or studied under various aspects—such as “covenant union”, “creation/recreation”, or “exodus/return”, essentially all these narrative themes serve the whole and merely express different aspects of the *one* story called “salvation history”. While each of these topics deserves its own study, the goal of this present work is not to champion a specific metanarrative at all, but rather to explore how the temple as an image functioned within the Jewish narrative worldview to communicate God’s plan for Israel’s identity and holiness.

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<sup>13</sup> White, *GFP*, 185.

<sup>14</sup> White, *GFP*, 183. fn 9.

*Narrative substructures* are another concept referenced in this study. Scholars such as Dodd, Dunn, Hays, and White use this term to describe how OT ideas influence the NT without direct quotations or clearly identifiable allusions. White defines this concept as “a story that influences a discourse, regardless of whether it is explicitly referenced, to such an extent that the discourse is not completely intelligible without knowledge of the story.”<sup>15</sup> Other terms that are absorbed into this general concept of narrative substructure are those of *narrative allusions* and *narrative echoes*. These are indirect words, ideas, or concepts from the OT that are part of the narrative substructure undergirding the NT stories in ways that are not as easily discernible. Scholars defend the existence of these ‘echoes’ in Paul by the fact that he was a man profoundly shaped by Scripture, and so his language is thoroughly steeped in it. James Dunn states, “The scriptures were the ‘substructure’ of Paul’s theology...reminding us that what was in mind was not simply Paul’s explicit quotations of scripture, but the way in which scriptural terminology, idiom, and imagery shaped and determined so much of what Paul wrote.”<sup>16</sup> It would seem foolish, then, to expect that he only speaks of or references Israel’s stories and themes when he directly quotes them. Hays concludes, “There can be no doubt that Scripture shapes his symbolic world in a more pervasive manner. That means that our efforts to interpret his writings must deal also with allusions to and echoes of Scripture in his writings.”<sup>17</sup> Some echoes were directly intended, certainly, but others may have simply overflowed from his heart unintentionally. How far do these echoes of Scripture influence Paul, and is their intentional use in his new theology provable?

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<sup>15</sup> White, *GFP*, 182.

<sup>16</sup> Dunn, James D.G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1998. 16.

<sup>17</sup> Hays, *Conversion*. 28.



## Paul's Use of Old Testament Echoes

It may at first seem that the Pauline phrase “temple of the Holy Spirit” could have been used as a casual analogy, based on how quickly and infrequently Paul used the phrase. Yet, Dunn cautions too quick a rejection of the weight of Paul’s words due to this alone. He wisely writes, “Such allusions should not be evaluated simply by the brevity of their reference... We do not ‘weigh’ Paul’s theology simply by counting the number of words he used.”<sup>18</sup> For, throughout his corpus Paul commonly uses words and phrases replete with heavy Jewish meaning that he does not take the time to elaborate on. 1 Corinthians 5 provides two concrete examples. Here Paul criticizes the Corinthians’ sexual misconduct, referencing the curses and consequences for such behavior in Deuteronomy (1 Cor 5:1–13; Deut 17:7; 22:22), yet without quoting his sources. In verse eight he references the Exodus story when he commands them to “throw out the old leaven,” but he does not explain his theological nuances at all. Initially this seems odd. In a moment of extreme danger—as the community is about to tear itself apart, and he is straining every nerve to correct their errors—he references OT stories and images that he does not cite. “The extraordinary thing about Paul’s use of this metaphor is how little he explains. He does not quote Exodus 12...and he does not explain the Jewish custom of removing all leaven from the home... Yet he seems to expect his readers to understand the argument.”<sup>19</sup> Hays asks insightfully, “Is this simply a rhetorical miscalculation, a failed act of communication?”<sup>20</sup> It is possible that Paul already spoke or wrote to them on these topics, or that he intends his disciples like Timothy to explain the contents of his letter in greater detail later. Or perhaps Paul’s converts were “Godfearers”, that is,

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<sup>18</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 23.

Gentiles who had attached themselves to the synagogue without fully converting to Judaism, and who therefore would have been familiar with the Scriptures—a theory strongly held by biblical scholar James Dunn.<sup>21</sup> He writes, “Unless we are to suppose that Paul was quite unconcerned whether the recipients of his letters appreciated the force carried by such allusions, we have to take it that Paul felt able to assume a considerable knowledge of the LXX on the part of his converts...by previous exposure to the Jewish scriptures prior to their conversion as well as by intensive teaching thereafter.” Dunn concludes, “[Paul] could refer to it briefly or allude to it by using brief formulae...knowing, we may confidently assume, that even such brief formulations would evoke knowledge of a substantial range of basic teaching which he had passed on.” For, Hays adds, “Paul treats them as readers able to understand the allusion...to recover the original context, and to interpret the figurative linkage between Israel and the Corinthian congregation.”<sup>22</sup> It seems right to conclude, then, that Paul used these images for a specific reason, and that he believed his audience would either already know, or come to comprehend, the deeper significance of what he meant, for “the text makes sense if and only if the readers of the letter embrace the typological identification between themselves and Israel.”<sup>23</sup> It is possible that some of his allusions or OT echoes were not “loud enough” to reach into the Corinthian’s historical and theological situation.<sup>24</sup> However, what is more fundamental is that Paul was inspired to write them, and the Divine Author used the richly interwoven fabric of Paul’s Jewish roots to make profound theological points that his audience may have only been imperfectly aware of at the time.

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<sup>21</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 16, see fn 45.

<sup>22</sup> Hays, *Conversion*. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Hays, *Conversion*. 23.

<sup>24</sup> For more on measuring the strength of “echoes” in Paul, see *Conversion*, 34-45.

One can never with certitude state what a biblical author *intended*, and from the distance of millennia “it is difficult to distinguish between intentional and unintentional intertextual references in Paul.”<sup>25</sup> Hays suggests that “because the question of authorial intentionality is a slippery one, we should not place too much weight upon it; for the present let us simply say that to interpret Paul discerningly, we must recognize the embeddedness of scriptural language in his discourse” and explore the various effects these OT and NT relationships create.<sup>26</sup>

In summary, Paul frequently used OT ideas, symbols, and themes in 1 Corinthians and applied them directly to his community, more than likely intending to draw direct parallels between the Israelites and Corinthians. By not explaining himself thoroughly, it is reasonable to conclude that he thought they would understand his allusions. Yet, whether they did understand him is not the essential point. In the end, there simply was no other way Paul could have done his theology. As a Jewish man thoroughly steeped in the stories of salvation, the only way he could make sense of the divine work being accomplished in his own day was in reference to the prophetic promises that preceded them. As he looked backward, the Divine Author spoke through Paul, using the richness of his Jewish origins to craft texts laced with scriptural references that would echo both in his own time and into each age to come.

### **The Big Picture Reconsidered**

Though an investigation into the finer points of narrative substructures and echoes can be helpful, one unintended consequence of a too-analytical lens is the tendency to lose the larger picture in the quest for precision. Before beginning a closer study of the texts under consideration,

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<sup>25</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 29.

then, it is helpful to back up once more and re-position the eye of study on the metanarrative level in which the Jewish people lived and breathed, and which so influenced Paul. To grasp the worldview of a Second Temple Jew like Paul more fully, one must soak in the full drama of the story of salvation, in which the spirit or presence of God plays a pivotal role in restoring creation to its original purpose. This metanarrative, faithfully passed down from generation to generation, was a strong and central frame of reference that gave structure and meaning to the people of Israel and their whole way of life. It explains who the Jewish people are, what they believe, and how they are to live. Since “every worldview has a controlling narrative, and ‘narrative is the most characteristic expression of worldview’, a correct estimation of the metanarrative that embodies Paul’s particular worldview is absolutely critical for understanding Paul’s theology.”<sup>27</sup> To understand his use of strong images such as the temple, then, one must understand its relationship to the great story that was central to the Jewish people’s identity and holiness: that of their belonging to God through the Covenant, their subsequent sinfulness, and God’s desire to put things right and restore them to intimacy with himself by dwelling among them and teaching them again how to offer right sacrifice and praise.<sup>28</sup> The tabernacle (and later, temple) are such powerful images and themes for the Jewish people because they draw together as in one central motif all the strands of their theology throughout salvation history. “All the other symbols of ancient Israel and the second-Temple Jewish world gathered around this majestic, potent building, and from it they took their meaning and power.”<sup>29</sup> These temple-origin stories were absolutely central to the very identity of the Jewish people and formed the backdrop to their whole way of praying and relating

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<sup>27</sup> White, *GFP*, 186. Quoting N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 403–9.

<sup>28</sup> White, *GFP*, 185.

<sup>29</sup> Wright, *PPG*, 100.

to God, for they are “stories about Israel’s God, about his name and his glory...his actions, stories about his power and his faithfulness, about his powerful wings hovering over his people to keep them safe. They are Temple-stories because they are God-and-Israel stories, and vice versa.”<sup>30</sup> Paul, as a fervent Pharisee, would have molded his whole life around these sacred images and concepts, interpreting God’s new actions in Christ through their lens, for “the Temple in Jerusalem was the focus of the whole Jewish life and way of life.”<sup>31</sup> To understand what God was doing in his own day, Paul had to first re-read backward and understand the promises of God made in the Old Testament narratives, then follow them forward once more to see them fulfilled in Christ. For one to understand what Paul meant to convey about the identity of the Church and Christian as a “temple,” then, one must seek out its roots in the OT narratives where it first began.

### **The Metanarrative of Salvation History**

The story of Israel, its metanarrative of salvation, involves multiple interconnecting strands or sub-narratives that interweave and profoundly impact Paul. While not all strands can be deeply investigated in this short work, a brief mention of the overarching story as a whole will lend depth and meaning to the temple imagery in general and set a better foundation for an in-depth study of its theme of identity, to be probed more deeply later.

In brief, within the Jewish worldview, all of creation was a vast and beautiful temple where God reigned in majesty—the first temple where his glory dwelt. Founded on this belief, Solomon’s temple to come would be seen as a symbolic re-construction of Eden in all its original

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<sup>30</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 100.

<sup>31</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 95.

purity.<sup>32</sup> For to the Jewish people, “the creation of the world and the construction of the temple are parallel events.”<sup>33</sup> This is why, when the later temple was built, “the Temple, its vessels, and even the high priest’s vestments were depicted as representing the entire universe and the heavenly hosts.<sup>34</sup> In this first temple of creation, God lived in close friendship with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, speaking with and providing for them (Gen 3:8). Adam and Eve had an identity and mission within this ‘temple of creation’ that all humanity is still destined to share. They were chosen and willed into existence for intimate friendship with God; unique among all created things, they were made in his image and likeness (Gen 1:27). Further, as perfect priests and caretakers of Eden, their mission was to be co-workers and tillers of the garden, to glorify God throughout the earth (Gen 2:15). In this prelapsarian state, all of creation was suffused with the presence of God. Man had no need to be taught how to love and praise the Lord rightly, or how to act or glorify him, for his presence was fully accessible, visible, and unmediated—they were able to speak and walk with him in the garden (Gen 3:8). Thus, the nature, purpose, and very identity of mankind from the very beginning was to belong totally to God as pure manifestations of his glory and participators in his divine love.

Unfortunately, because of the sin of Adam and Eve and their subsequent fall from God’s grace, God’s people had to be called back from dispersion and brought into communion with himself and each other again. Chosen and willed into being for intimate friendship with God, they could only find their way back to him by the mediation of Abraham, their first father in faith (Gen

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<sup>32</sup> Levering, Matthew. *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel: A Christian Israelology in Dialogue with Ongoing Judaism*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021. 270.

<sup>33</sup> Levenson, Jon Douglas. *Sinai & Zion: An Entry Into the Jewish Bible*. Harper & Row, 1987. 143.

<sup>34</sup> Safrai, Shemuel, and Menahem Stern, eds. “The Temple”, *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*. *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum*, Section 1, V. 1, 2. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974. 904.

12–17; Rom 3:27–4:28). Through his obedience, Israel again realized her unique status among all tribes and nations—to display God’s glory throughout the earth. Her mission is to sanctify his name among the people, to make sacrifice and right praise, so that through her, “all the nations of the earth will find blessing” (Gen 26:4). Yet, this is increasingly hard for a fallen race living in a fallen world, and Israel began to experience his presence differently. Separation from God resulted, and his presence was no longer direct and unmediated. Now that man was cut off from the vision of God, he had even greater need of a physical place where he knew that he could access God, be cleansed, and worship rightly. He needed a concrete space with rules that would teach him how to live and worship rightly. And God, the ever faithful, continued to find a way to make this possible. He still desired to dwell among his people. But the way would now require a more visible and tangible place of encounter: a tabernacle—and later, a temple.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE PRESENCE OF GOD & THE OT TABERNACLE

One of the earliest foundations for Saint Paul's concept of the temple of the Holy Spirit comes from the story of the wilderness tabernacle where God's presence descended among his people in a profound and visible way. Exodus chapters 25–40 provides the full story of the tabernacle's construction and consecration, and in chapter 40 the presence of Yahweh in a cloud of glory comes down upon the finished tabernacle. This last chapter provides special connections to Paul's later use of the phrase "temple of the Holy Spirit" and will receive special treatment. This OT narrative of God's spiritual presence offers the first stones of the theological foundation behind Paul's temple language and theology. The text will be analyzed according to the questions set out earlier, to show how these passages relate to Israel's identity: how exactly was God's presence understood to be present in this tabernacle, why is this presence vitally important to the identity and holiness of the community or individual, how is this presence threatened or lost, and what are the keys or hopes for its protection or restoration? However, preliminary notes on terms used for the spirit in the OT will first be discussed for context.

### **The Jewish Concept of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament**

#### Spirit in General

To understand the later concept of the "temple of the Holy Spirit," the meaning of 'spirit' as the Old Testament writers used it should first be clarified. To the Jewish authors of the OT, the Spirit is not yet known as a distinct person, but rather as a mysterious, "divine dynamic entity by which Yahweh accomplishes his ends: it saves, and is a creative and charismatic power".<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>35</sup> McKenzie, John L. *The Dictionary of the Bible*. "Spirit", Simon and Schuster, 1995. 841.



word used throughout the Old Testament Scriptures for spirit is *ruah*, which comes from the Hebrew root for moving wind or air.<sup>36</sup> Though it cannot be translated easily into a single concept in English, it is used to signify breath, wind, air, and sometimes mind.<sup>37</sup> It forms the basis of all life and activity, is breathed by God into all creation, and returns to him at death. Often the term stands on its own, though twice it is given the modifier “good” (Ps 143:10; Neh 9:20) and three times “holy” (Isa 63:10, 11; Ps 51:13).<sup>38</sup>

### Spirit of God and Spirit of Yahweh

There are two specific words for the spirit in the OT which are used in different circumstances: the spirit of God (*ruah Elohim*) and the spirit of Yahweh (*ruah Adonai*).<sup>39</sup> Again, these terms did not yet signify the *person* of God or of Yahweh, but merely the power or energy connected to Him in some mysterious way. The spirit of God is used five times in the Torah and describes a general spiritual force characterizing the will and might of God. It is the power that does God’s work (Gen 1:2), interprets dreams (Gen 41:38), inspires knowledge and craftsmanship (Ex 31:3, Ex 35:31) and carries out God’s will (Num 24:2). It is also used seven times in 1 Samuel and twice in 2 Chronicles, especially to show that the spirit of God came upon someone or gave them authority to speak on behalf of God.<sup>40</sup> This last sense is most clearly seen in the prophetic

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<sup>36</sup> Bible Hub. Interlinear, Greek, and Hebrew Bibles and Strong’s Concordance. <https://biblehub.com>. 2004-2023. All Greek and Hebrew words cited are from this source.

<sup>37</sup> McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 840.

<sup>38</sup> The adjective holy (שָׁדָד) here simply emphasizes that the spirit is set apart, different, or “other.”

<sup>39</sup> Because the Jews of the OT did not conceive of the spirit of God or spirit of Yahweh to be a divine person, references to their terms will not be capitalized unless quoting scholars that do so, or unless it is clear from the context that God himself is meant.

<sup>40</sup> Parsons, John J. Hebrew4Christians website. “Names of God.” Accessed June 22, 2022. 1 Sam 10:10; 11:6; 16:15f, 23; 18:10; 19:20, 23; 2 Chr 15:1; 2 Chr 24:20.

books where the spirit of God picks up, moves, inspires, or gives a prophet superhuman capacities to carry out his work. One striking example comes from Genesis, when Joseph is asked to interpret Pharaoh's dream. He counters, "I cannot do it...but God will give Pharaoh the answer" (Gen 41:16); and afterward, he insists that it was God himself who had interpreted the dream. Pharaoh then praises the interpretive gifts of Joseph, saying, "Can we find anyone else like this, one *in whom is the spirit of God?*" (41:37). However, this spirit was never understood in the OT to be God himself, nor did this presence seem to permanently indwell individuals.<sup>41</sup>

The term spirit of Yahweh (*ruah Adonai*) appears much more often in the Old Testament, but never explicitly in the Torah.<sup>42</sup> Numbers, for instance, does not use the actual phrase "spirit of Yahweh," but describes a phenomenon associated with the phrase. Wherever the term is used, the spirit is a force that accomplishes the works of God, such as creating, saving, judging, and inspiring prophecy.<sup>43</sup> The Spirit of Yahweh moves one to charismatic worship (1 Sam 10:6), inspires judges (Jdg 3:10), and is poured out on those with special roles such as kings (1 Sam 11:6) and prophets (Hos 9:7). The term also develops throughout the Old Testament toward a 'hypostatization' of sorts; while it was not thought of as a person per se, it began to be understood as a 'substantial force of force and energy...the creative force of Yahweh.'<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, it should be noted that the spirit of Yahweh was given for a time to Saul or the judges, but reposed

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<sup>41</sup> Stallard, Mike. "The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament." Bible Baptist College. [http://www.bbc.edu/council/documents/2011/5A\\_Stallard\\_ The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament Final. pdf](http://www.bbc.edu/council/documents/2011/5A_Stallard_The%20Holy%20Spirit%20in%20the%20Old%20Testament%20Final.pdf) (2017). 17–19.

<sup>42</sup> Parsons, *Ruach Elohim*. Accessed 6/22/22.

<sup>43</sup> McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 841. See Jdg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6; 15:14; 1 Sam 10:6; 16:13; 19:9; 2 Sam 23:2; 1 Kgs 18:12; 22:24; 2 Kgs 2:16; 2 Chr 18:23; 20:14; Is 11:2; 40:7, 13; 59:19; 63:14; Ezek 11:5; Hos 13:15; Mic 2:7; 3:8.

<sup>44</sup> McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 841.

“permanently on David and upon the Messianic King.”<sup>45</sup> Though it is noteworthy that David received a special anointing or ‘repose’ of the spirit, here and elsewhere in the OT such a gift of power always appears to fall short of a full “indwelling” of the Spirit like Christians began experiencing at Pentecost.<sup>46</sup>

### Spirit vs. Presence of God

The OT concept of the *spirit* in relation to that of God’s *presence* must also be clarified. Nowhere in the OT are these two words directly linked as synonymous, and they are never used as alternative words for God himself, though both are mysteriously connected to him. However, Christian exegesis typically joins these concepts and frequently uses them interchangeably. For instance, it is common for New Testament scholars to read backward with a Pneumatological lens when studying Exodus 40 and the descent of the cloud on the tabernacle, seeing the Holy Spirit as the glory of God in the cloud.<sup>47</sup> While caution is in order when using these terms, within the scope of the current study it is only essential to ask what Paul *himself* would have thought about the presence and the spirit, and how his Christian re-reading of the narrative stories of Exodus (tabernacle) and Ezekiel (temple) in the new light of Christ and the Spirit may have impacted his epistles to the Corinthians and his message of their new identity. His dramatic conversion had required him to re-examine all his preconceived theological ideas and Jewish worldview around Christ and his Holy Spirit afresh.<sup>48</sup> This would have required him to also look backward and re-

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<sup>45</sup> McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 841.

<sup>46</sup> Stallard, "The Holy Spirit", 17.

<sup>47</sup> For more details on this mode of reading Scripture see Hays, Richard B. *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness*. SPCK Publishing, 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Wright, *NTPG*, 79.

read the narratives of tabernacle and temple from a whole new perspective, as well. First, the Jewish narrative stories themselves should be analyzed to glean the major themes undergirding Paul's worldview. Then, Paul's unique way of using the images of the temple and spirit and putting them at the service of the new, Christian church will be better understood.

### **God's Presence & the Old Testament Tabernacle**

An essential root of all temple theology to come is the story of the wilderness tabernacle, which extends in a deeper way the story of God's faithful presence among his people through salvation history. It sets the stage for many major themes of salvation history, particularly that of Israel's identity as beloved children, called to be holy, with the all-holy God in their midst. The story of the Lord's presence in the wilderness tabernacle traces its beginnings to Moses's encounters with God on Mt. Sinai. Here the Lord gave both the Ten Commandments as well as detailed plans for a tabernacle at the same time, revealing God's desire to remain with his people: "have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them" (Ex 25:8). Ironically, while the Lord was providing these detailed plans for a tabernacle so that he could dwell in their midst, Aaron was down at the foot of the mountain crafting gold into an idol that Israel could gather around and worship, instead (Ex 32). What followed was a multi-faceted crisis in Israel that required serious healing and the restoration of the covenant. Here, the sins of Israel could be categorized as communal, moral, theological, and liturgical chaos—problems which the people of God have struggled with to this very day. Each of these was dangerous precisely because it undermined an essential aspect of Israel's identity and call to holiness. A brief mention of each of these four basic issues in Israel will highlight an aspect of its special identity, and show more clearly why the tabernacle, where God could remain among them with his powerful presence, was the necessary solution for restoring their covenant identity.

## Four-Fold Crisis in Israel

### *Theological Crisis*

At the root of all four areas of crisis was an underlying theological problem: the Israelites had a wrong view of God, and it needed strong correction. Though they had just witnessed his marvels at the Red Sea, they did not yet trust him (Ex 14–17).<sup>49</sup> Just as Adam and Eve doubted God’s providence and decided to take the forbidden fruit to care for themselves, Israel—faced with the uncomfortable delay of Moses on Mt. Sinai and the insecurity of their position--began to take matters into their own hands and form a golden calf to worship. The Lord states their theological problem himself, when he tells Moses to go back down the mountain to his people, for, “they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it and said, ‘These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!’” (Ex 32:8). This was willful idolatry, resulting in an outburst of God’s righteous anger and the near loss of his presence among them. The reason for such strong anger was the spiritual danger it caused to Israel, who had been chosen precisely to show the greatness of God among the polytheistic nations. Israel had been marked for favor and saved from her enemies precisely in order to be a people chosen as his own treasured possession (Ex 19:6). The original plans for a tabernacle where the Lord could dwell among them were proof of that divine desire (Ex 25:8). By denying this special relationship and doubting the presence and power of God to save them, they effectively undermined their own identity. For they belonged to the *one* God; it was their whole existence and singled them out as different—holy—other—from their pagan neighbors. Their special election and God’s saving presence were

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<sup>49</sup> For examples of their lack of trust, disobedience, or self-reliance, see especially: Ex 15:24, 16:3, 16:20, 16:27–29, 17:2–3).

inextricably linked. The loss of their elected identity, therefore, led rapidly to their spiritual disintegration.

### ***Ecclesial Crisis***

Connected to Israel's theological crisis was a related ecclesial, or communal crisis, of poor leadership giving in to the demands of the crowd. After Moses had not returned from the mountain after forty days, the people gathered around Aaron to make demands contrary to God's will. In effect, they formed a coup against the Lord himself as their leader, taking away Moses's God-given leadership role and handing it over to Aaron to do their bidding. This breakdown of trust in governance was also a failure of leaders to steer the community on the right course. Aaron then added to the problem and reinforced the crowd's erroneous beliefs with three intentional actions in rapid succession which made him complicit in the crime: he took their gold, formed it into a mold, and cast an image of a calf with it (Ex 30:4–5). His weakness as a leader prompted derision when he was found to be unable to control chaos within the camp (Ex 32:25). Once again, the chaos reveals a breakdown of original purpose, since Israel had been chosen by God in the first place to be united with each other and with Him. Just as Adam and Eve were called into communion with each other in the first community of charity, so Israel is called back to mankind's original purpose, and is meant to be united around the one, true God.

With the making of the golden calf, theological doubts and communal problems merged, and a related but deeper liturgical issue sprang from both. Due to poor theology and poor leadership, Aaron allowed the crowd to make their own erroneous proclamations about his newly formed golden calf's divinity, built an altar for it, and personally announced a festival to the Lord for the following day. So, the people "rose early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought

sacrifices of well-being” to the calf and began celebrating in its honor with liturgical music and dance (Ex 32:6). From the mountain, the Lord looked down and declared to Moses, “They have cast for themselves an image of a calf and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it”—liturgical abominations that would be their undoing (Ex 32:8). While it is true that this sounds nearly the same as their issues with idolatry mentioned earlier, here a new aspect emerges that is specifically liturgical. The people are not just doubting God’s goodness or questioning his human instruments, they are worshiping wrongly, and their praise is pure idolatry.

### ***Moral Crisis***

As for moral chaos, Israel’s wild and unruly celebration in honor of the false god who had ‘saved them’ from Egypt amounted to a debauched orgy of drinking and revelry, so much so that Joshua mistook their shouting and singing for a “noise of war in the camp” (Ex 32: 6, 17–19). Moses saw that the people were completely out of control, and that even Aaron was morally compromised enough to put the blame on the people and their wickedness, not taking responsibility for his own actions but suggesting that the calf just leapt from the flames of its own accord (Ex 32:22–24). Moses’s only solution to this madness was to start fresh with a faithful remnant—the Sons of Levi—who rallied around him and struck down about 3,000 people who were unwilling to follow the Lord (32:26–28).<sup>50</sup> As a terrible consequence to this four-fold breach of fidelity, God dealt a severe blow with the following statement: “Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey, but *I will not go up among you*, or I would consume you on the way, for you are a

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<sup>50</sup> In this violence, the prophetic leader (Moses) allows for the community to suffer the terrible consequences of their own infidelity. When Paul later picks up echoes of this Exodus narrative in threats to the Corinthians that they are in danger of “destroying” their own communities, this catastrophe should be kept in mind.

stiff-necked people” (Ex 33:3,5). It seemed that the only hope for their restoration—God’s all-holy presence in their midst—was the very thing to be denied them.

As if to symbolically show the separation with God effected by their sin, Moses took a tent and pitched it *outside* their camp to serve as an interim tabernacle; here, from a distance, he received revelations and spoke to God on behalf of the people (Ex 33:7–11). This first tent of meeting (*ohel moed*) was a sort of temporary dwelling (*mishkan*) for the glory of the Lord before the final tabernacle was built later.<sup>51</sup> The word *mishkan* emphasized that Yahweh himself dwelled among them, while the word *ohel moed* signified that God himself came to meet his people through Moses, his intermediary.<sup>52</sup> The presence of God was near enough for the cloud that descended on the tent to be visible and inspire fear and awe in the people—a sign that even after grave sin, God had not completely abandoned them. Further, they were still able to approach the tent when they sought the Lord, so they were not entirely cut off from him (Ex 33:7). Poignantly, however, the presence would not dwell in their midst, for a full reconciliation had not yet taken place. From this general background, a closer reading of several selected passages from Exodus will make the connections between God’s presence and the identity of the people of Israel clearer.

#### The Cloud & Presence: Exodus 33:7–9

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp...And *everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting*, which was outside the camp...When Moses entered the tent, the *pillar of cloud would descend* and stand at the entrance of the tent, and *the Lord would speak with Moses* (Ex 33:7–9).

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<sup>51</sup> Jewish rabbis speculate that the first *ohel moed* was decommissioned once the real tabernacle was constructed. Some modern scholars consider the informal *ohel moed* as a later addition of non-priestly redactors meant to emphasize access to God’s presence outside the temple and priesthood. See The Torah.com, “The Other *Ohel Moed*” and “The Non-Priestly Ohel Moed.”

<sup>52</sup> McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 862. Both terms were used interchangeably, and sometimes side by side.



There are three important things to note about this passage related to the cloud and the presence of the Lord among his people. First, Moses set up this tent to be a place where the people knew he would speak to God on their behalf, so there was a sense that God’s presence was still accessible in some way. Second, there was a visible sign of a mysterious presence that they could all witness in the form of a pillar of cloud. This cloud must have signified to the Israelites, while they were standing at attention watching Moses, the all-holy presence of God himself in some enigmatic way. They saw the cloud with their own eyes and knew that Moses was not speaking merely to a pillar, but to the Almighty himself. Third, God chose for his presence to be mediated to the people through Moses’s prophetic role and did not speak to them directly. These three themes—God’s presence being accessible, visible, and mediated—are motifs that emerge later in Ezekiel and Paul, who strove by their own holy mediation to bring the accessible and visible presence of a faithful God to unfaithful temples.

#### Presence, Identity, and Holiness: Exodus 33:15–16

And [Moses] said to him, “If your *presence* will not go, do not bring us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you *go with us*? In this way, *we shall be distinct*, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth (Ex 33:15–16).

In this section from Exodus, the relationship of God’s presence to the identity and holiness of Israel becomes clearer. From the makeshift tent of meeting Moses pleaded with God for clemency after the golden-calf debacle, and begged him to reconsider the previous utterance, “*I will not go up among you*,” asking the Lord to accompany them through the wilderness for his own sake and that of the reputation of Israel as God’s chosen people. Notably, Moses reminds God that his presence is precisely what will show the world they have been the recipients of “favor” or grace (*hen*). His presence among them is itself the grace that will safeguard their

distinctness, making them holy, separate, and distinguished among the nations. The word “distinct” in Hebrew (*palah*) gives a sense of wonder and awe, of being created marvelously (Ps 139:14) and being set apart for godliness (Ps 4:3).<sup>53</sup> God’s holy presence will make his people holy, but only if he accompanies and dwells among them. Their holiness will not be a reward for their fidelity—which waxes and wanes—but rather will be based on the faithfulness and holiness of God.

Because Moses had found favor with him, God heard his plea; he commanded Moses to cut new stones and bring them up Mt. Sinai. “The Lord *descended in the cloud* and stood with him there” (Ex 34:5). In a particularly poignant prayer, Moses then asked God to remain with Israel—not merely from heaven, but to accompany them on their journey—saying, “If now I have found favor in your sight, my Lord, I pray, *let my Lord go with us*. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance” (Ex 34:9). Despite Israel’s weakness and defection, God took the initiative in restoring right relationship, first by granting them forgiveness of their sins, and then by commanding the building of a tabernacle where his presence could remain among his people in their wanderings as he had promised.

However, there were a couple of things the people needed to put in place *before* he would come to dwell in the tabernacle, and the Lord himself provided an outline of what was to be done. First, in Exodus 34, he re-gave the ten commandments and added a cultic decalogue of extra requirements surrounding the keeping of Sabbath (Ex 34:11–26). It was as if he knew that the defection and weakness of his people needed extra safeguards before they would be able to receive the honor of his glorious presence and live uprightly in it. He would come to dwell with them, but

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<sup>53</sup> Bible Hub. Strong’s Hebrew Bible Concordance, <https://biblehub.com>. 2004-2023. 6395.

first they would need strong rules for right conduct (ten commandments), a commitment to rest and right worship (sabbath), and a holy place set apart for reverencing his presence (tabernacle). These divine revisions to the commandments are both spiritually lofty and eminently pragmatic; God knows that man is weak, and must be assisted in bringing his whole, broken self to the covenant. Real conversion will now entail a full life commitment and a new ethical set of rules. The grace of this covenant is beyond measure but will require discipline and fidelity. To be the people of God and a covenant community where the Most-high dwells is a privilege requiring sustained faithfulness, and commandments and rites of worship are the safeguards of this presence. In a particular way, a new commitment to obedience, right praise, and purity will now be especially necessary.

#### Presence & Holiness: Exodus 35–40

Further details in Exodus point out the profound connections between the presence of God and the right conduct and purity required of those whom he calls to be his own. Exodus 25–31 gives instructions for construction, followed by the actual building of the tabernacle in chapters 35–40. The first section explains in detail the specific building materials and dimensions to be used in the tabernacle’s construction, from the acacia wood to be used in its frames to the decorations on the tabernacle curtains.<sup>54</sup> This was to be Israel’s holy, cultic tent, “the place of the visible manifestation of Yahweh in the cloud and the glory.”<sup>55</sup> Even the basic details of construction pointed at the holiness for which the tabernacle was made: Moses was told to surround it with a court and a screen, to separate the holy place from the profane. Further, he was

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<sup>54</sup> The tabernacle decorations are the same as those used later in the temple, leading many to speculate that priestly redactors may have later added the details of Exodus’s tabernacle. While possible, it is also conceivable that the priestly writers had valid information about the first tabernacle and used it in construction of the temple. See McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 863.

<sup>55</sup> McKenzie, *Dictionary*, 862.

to place a wash basin between the tent of meeting and the altar where the priests could ritually purify themselves before approaching it. Even here in the earliest form of the temple, God instructs his people slowly on how to maintain closeness to his presence, through a holy ‘otherness’ that is clean and undefiled. The purity of their lives and conduct will now be tied up intimately with the concept of closeness to God’s holiness and presence.

Finally, after Moses had finished all the preparations, the long-awaited glory of the Lord came in a numinous cloud to fill the space they had dedicated to him.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Whenever the *cloud was taken up* from the tabernacle, the Israelites would *set out on each stage of their journey*, but if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, *before the eyes of all* the house of Israel at each stage of their journey (Ex 40:34–37).<sup>56</sup>

Here for the first time the *glory* of God is said to fill the tabernacle. Previously the cloud and pillar were mentioned, but the glory of God was not said to settle and remain. Now in this passage of solemn dedication, the cloud and glory of the Lord begin to form a mysterious duo. The cloud is not synonymous with the glory, exactly, yet appears as its visible manifestation.<sup>57</sup>

By drawing these themes and stories together the divine author was already drawing forth, even in this early stage of Israel’s covenant with God, several concrete truths related to the tabernacle, God’s glory, and how to maintain an appropriate place where God might dwell. The questions set forth at the start of the chapter framed a general, narrative exploration of the wilderness tabernacle story: how exactly was God’s presence understood to be present in this

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<sup>56</sup> See also Num 9:15–23.

<sup>57</sup> Ex 13:21–22; 14:19–20, 24.

‘temple’, why is this presence vitally important to the identity and holiness of the community or individual, how is this presence threatened or lost, and what are the keys or hopes for its protection or restoration?

By way of summary, there appear to be at least five central truths related to God’s presence in Israel’s tabernacle that will again emerge in the stories of the temple of Ezekiel and of Paul’s new Christian temples, as well. Strands, words, and images surrounding the tabernacle will become ‘echoes’ to be picked up later. They should be summarily stated here and kept in mind for their future re-emergence.

First, Israel’s holiness comes from its relationship to God. God’s people are set apart—holy—and marked as unique because of His glorious presence, not their own fidelity (Ex 19:1–6). Second, God chooses prophetic leaders to safeguard the gift of his presence by construction of a fitting tabernacle, instruction of the people, and correction of abuses (Ex 25:1–9). They represent his accessible, visible, and mediated presence among them, and speak on his behalf. Third, the tabernacle itself—this place of meeting between God and man—must be properly built and maintained, and its rules or codes of conduct must be observed in order to safeguard God’s presence among them (Ex 25–40). Fourth, there are disastrous consequences for breaking the rules of the tabernacle. God’s accompanying presence is forfeited at the breach of the covenant, and serious suffering is always the result. Finally, even when man appears incapable of keeping these rules, God’s faithfulness does not fail. He always provides opportunities for restoration of the covenant, which can only be renewed by repentance and the mercy of God (Ex 33:17–23; 34:5–7).

## CHAPTER THREE: THE OLD TESTAMENT TEMPLE

### Temple Theology & History: 1 Kings

Paul inherited his temple imagery from the scriptural accounts of the first temple, a building that was at the nerve center of Jewish religious, political, and cultural life and so provided the key to Israel's very identity. This monolithic structure was built around 957 BC by Solomon. His father David had dreamed of the project and began making the initial preparations and plans (2 Sam 7), but because of his many wars and much bloodshed, was not found worthy to bring it to completion (1 Chron 22:8–10; 28:3). So, Solomon took up the project, and after tremendous expense and many years of labor by both strong laborers and skilled artisans, the temple was dedicated and priests brought the ark of the covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary, the holy of holies (1 Kgs 8:6). Two separate text traditions interweave, here; in one tradition, the cloud is said to fill the temple, emphasizing his literal presence there. God fulfilled the promise he made to dwell among them and ratified it with a tremendous sign of descent in glory: “And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord” (1 Kgs 8:10–11). A second, Deuteronomic tradition emphasizes the transcendence of God through Solomon's prayer of the temple's dedication, where he states that God will dwell in the *heavens*, while his *name* will dwell in the temple: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built! Regard your servant's prayer...that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you said, ‘*My name shall be there,*’...O hear in *heaven your dwelling place*; heed and forgive” (1 Kgs 8:27–30). Hahn summarizes this tradition when he writes, “Heaven remains the dwelling place of God, but in a mysterious way he will dwell with his people on earth in the sanctuary

where he will cause his name or divine presence to be.”<sup>58</sup> Both traditions, that of God’s *presence* and *name* dwelling in the temple, join together to emphasize the glory and awe of God’s power in the temple. For Israel, Wright explains, “The point of the Temple...is that it was where heaven and earth met. It was the place where Israel’s God, YHWH, had long ago promised to put his name, to make his glory present. The Temple, and before it the wilderness tabernacle, were thus heirs...to the discovery that a particular spot on earth could intersect with, and be the gateway into, heaven itself.”<sup>59</sup>

There were many reasons the temple was so important to Israel. As was mentioned earlier, the temple was seen to be a symbolic re-construction of Eden in all its original purity, second in religious importance only to Torah itself.<sup>60</sup> To the Jewish people, theologically, “the creation of the world and the construction of the temple are parallel events,” and so the importance of the building to the people of Israel simply cannot be overstated.<sup>61</sup>

In the eyes of the people [the temple] constituted primarily the divine dwelling-place of the God of Israel which set them apart from other nations...the offering of the sacrifices and ritual cleansing involved atoned for the individual’s transgressions and served as a framework for his spiritual elevation and purification...the Temple, its vessels, and even the high priest’s vestments were depicted as representing the entire universe and the heavenly hosts.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Hahn, Scott. *The Kingdom of God As Liturgical Empire: A Theological Commentary on 1-2 Chronicles*. Baker Academic, 2012.111.

<sup>59</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 96.

<sup>60</sup> Levering, Matthew. *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel: A Christian Israelology in Dialogue with Ongoing Judaism*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021. 270.

<sup>61</sup> Levenson, Jon D. *Sinai & Zion*, 143.

<sup>62</sup> Safrai, Shemuel, and Menahem Stern, eds. “The Temple”, *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*. Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum, Section 1, V. 1, 2. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974. 904.

Because it set them apart from all other nations, the temple had a direct relationship to Israel's covenant identity. God had promised Solomon, "If you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you...I will dwell among the children of Israel" (1 Kgs 6:12–13). This conditional statement both marks Israel as special, but also gives a strong indication that what God desires from his chosen people is not merely a house to dwell in. The building of the temple "is not of first importance to Yahweh. Yahweh's desire is obedience,"<sup>63</sup> and the temple was meant to be a place par excellence of obedience to the laws guarding their covenant. It was a building that simultaneously reminded them of their covenant promises and helped them to keep them, to provide them with a common identity, and to safeguard it (1 Kgs 8:27–55; 8:56–61). For the temple is the all-holy dwelling place of God's name and presence, "the enthronement and glorification of YHWH in his cosmic abode...Between the temple and ordinary reality lies a barrier of *holiness*".<sup>64</sup> If they are to draw near to God, Israel must also leave behind what is profane and enter into God's holiness.

The temple is the place par excellence of Israel's identity, symbolizing the obedience God desires of his covenant people. However, this tremendous blessing is not to be taken for granted. At its dedication, Solomon blesses the people, but pairs the blessing with a reminder that God's presence is somehow tied to their obedient hearts, and they must keep his ordinances if they don't want to be abandoned: "The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our ancestors; may he not leave us or abandon us, but incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his

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<sup>63</sup> Walsh, 1 Kings, 105. See also Bodner, *Theology of the Book of Kings*, 67, and Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel*, 269.

<sup>64</sup> Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 126-7.



commandments” (1 Kgs 8:57–58; 9:1–14). It was a warning he should have heeded, himself. Unfortunately, Solomon grew lax and unfaithful, establishing different temples to foreign gods to appease his many wives (1 Kgs 11:1–13). Except for a few references to plundering and refurbishing, the temple becomes less frequently mentioned in the historical books of the OT.<sup>65</sup> The prophets begin to rail against its corrupted worship with threatening oracles, and dark clouds loom. The moral of the story is hard to miss: “Worship of God in the spectacular temple that Solomon builds is corrupted very early, and true worship of God in this temple is the rare exception rather than the rule.”<sup>66</sup> Finally, at the time of Ezekiel, the people of Jerusalem were deported, and the temple was sacked and burned to the ground by the armies of Babylon in 586 BC. The destruction of Israel’s most sacred building was complete.

### **Background to the Book of Ezekiel**

While the Old Testament is naturally full of references and important passages about the Temple in Jerusalem, to understand Paul’s prophetic role and his multifaceted allusions to the temple, a study of the book of the prophet Ezekiel is of paramount importance. More than other OT books, Ezekiel draws together themes of the presence of God, its loss and prophesied return, and its relationship to the fidelity—or lack thereof—of Israel. Rich and even shocking at times, the book’s graphic imagery and somewhat bizarre actions make it one of the most memorable of prophetic accounts. In Ezekiel the themes of temple and spirit will come together in a notable way. The book is an autobiographical narrative most likely written by Ezekiel himself, or by a school of Ezekiel that came after him. Not only was he a prophet, Ezekiel was also a priest, and so would

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<sup>65</sup> Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel*, 271.

<sup>66</sup> Hays, J. Daniel. *The Temple and the Tabernacle: A Study of God's Dwelling Places from Genesis to Revelation*. Baker Books, 2016. 103.

have likely spent his formative years “in the shadow of the Jerusalem temple and in the milieu of liturgy, piety and learning of the Jerusalem priesthood.”<sup>67</sup> It is not surprising, then, that his book is so highly concerned with the purity of the temple and its right worship. Throughout the book Ezekiel spends considerable time detailing visions he has seen of abominations in the temple (Ezek 8), the dramatic departure of the Presence of the Lord from the temple (Ezek 10–11) and the detailed plans for a restored temple that he prophesies will come (Ezek 40–44). Written in the 590’s-570’s from exile in Babylon, Ezekiel’s audience was a demoralized group of Israelites who had just lost their homeland and temple, and with it, their clear link to God’s covenant and protection. Since the temple “was for Jews the centre of every aspect of national existence,” the loss of the temple could not have been more catastrophic on every level.<sup>68</sup> “With the destruction of the Temple the image of the universe was rendered defective, the established framework of the nation was undermined and a wall of steel formed a barrier between Israel and its heavenly Father.”<sup>69</sup> Far from their home and traditional access to the Presence of God, their very ability to pray and worship God was uncertain. Blenkinsopp explains, “With the temple destroyed, the sacrificial system brought to an end, and an entire segment of the population relocated outside the territorial jurisdiction of their God, the very possibility of worship was called into question.”<sup>70</sup> What is perhaps even more heart-wrenching, Ezekiel places the blame for the departure of the presence of God from the temple at the feet of the Israelites themselves, and particularly their leaders (Ezek 14; 34). He announces that it is their false worship and immorality which have

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<sup>67</sup> Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *Ezekiel: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2012. 8.

<sup>68</sup> Wright, *NTPG*, 225.

<sup>69</sup> Safrai, “The Temple”, 906.

<sup>70</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 12.

compromised the temple and expelled the glory of the Lord from their midst, threatening their very identity as a people. Yet, Ezekiel brings not just a message of woe, but also of hope. Like Moses at the time of the Exodus wanderings, Ezekiel—a prophet called in a foreign land—must pronounce judgment on the people’s breach of the covenant and interpret for them the consequences of their actions, but then follow these up with a promise of restoration (Ezek 11) that centers upon a new heart (36-37), a future temple, and an outpoured spirit (40-48).

The themes of Ezekiel echo forward into Paul’s letters to the Corinthians profoundly, and undoubtedly shape his understanding of the eschatological temple where God’s presence would return to dwell. Several chapters of Ezekiel serve as particular touchpoints for these Pauline connections. A closer look at the most pertinent passages related to either the spirit or glory of God in the temple in Ezekiel will help establish the importance of these themes to the book as a whole and to Paul’s later thought. To provide structure to the discussion, the same identity-seeking questions previously asked of the OT tabernacle will also be asked of the temple of Ezekiel’s time. First, how does Ezekiel understand God to be present in this temple, and why is this presence vitally important to Israel and her very identity? Further, how can this presence be threatened or lost, and what are the keys to its restoration? Once these questions have been probed, the promise of a new temple and expectation of a definitive return of the Presence to the temple will be discussed.

### **How God is Present: Language of Ezekiel**

First, how does Ezekiel understand God to be present in this temple? What terms does he use for this Presence and what do his words and symbols signify? It should be noted that terms such as *glory* (or *effulgence*), *spirit*, and *presence* are used throughout the book, but whereas they

are often conflated into one idea in Christian exegesis—the Presence of God himself—Ezekiel would have used them in a related but not synonymous sense. Making sense of the words as he intended them is a key place to start.

## **Spirit**

In Ezekiel, the spirit (*ruah*), “has a prominence unparalleled in other prophetic books,” though its meaning varies from passage to passage, as is the case in the rest of the OT.<sup>71</sup> Frequently it is used to mean merely wind, or breath. As before, the term is used both in reference to the spirit of God and the spirit of Yahweh at work in creation and human affairs, as well. In this book the Spirit of God has a personal agency, speaks, acts, and moves. In this sense, the spirit intervenes directly in the prophet’s life, speaks to Ezekiel, enters into him and stands him on his feet (2:2; 3:12, 3:24), falls upon him and commands him to carry out missions (11:2, 5). Some exegetes claim that this language supports a belief that Ezekiel was more continuously filled or empowered by the spirit than previous prophets, judges, and craftsmen.<sup>72</sup> It is clear that the spirit of the Lord was understood to be present to Ezekiel, in a mysterious way. Forty-nine times in the book, Ezekiel reports that “the word of the Lord came to me,” usually in connection to the spirit’s activity or the action of the Presence of God.<sup>73</sup> So, while “spirit” as used in the above ways in Ezekiel is not synonymous with the Presence of God in the temple, it is still mysteriously linked to God’s own personal power and will.

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<sup>71</sup> McKenzie, John L. *Dictionary of the Bible*. Rouben Mamoulian Collection (Library of Congress). Milwaukee: Bruce Pub, 1965. 841.

<sup>72</sup> Stallard, “*The Holy Spirit*”, 11.

<sup>73</sup> Leclerc, Thomas L. *Introduction to the Prophets: Their Stories, Sayings, and Scrolls*. Paulist Press, 2017. 290.

## Glory

The term Ezekiel uses for the “Presence of the Lord,” the *kabod*, was a priestly term for God’s glory and therefore is the closest one can come to a synonym for the “Presence” of God.<sup>74</sup> Throughout the book, Ezekiel speaks of the Presence of the Lord in an awe-inspired and somewhat indirect way, as if in fear and trembling. From the time he receives his first vision and prophetic call in the first chapter of his book, he can only speak of the cloud and radiance in which God spoke to him as “the *appearance* of the *semblance* of the *presence of the Lord*” (Ezek 1:28). Ezekiel falls on his face before the glory of the Presence mounted on a chariot throne —as one would lie prostrate before the Ark in the Holy of Holies.<sup>75</sup> In chapter 3, Ezekiel encounters various aspects of God’s mysterious power in rapid succession: he hears the voice of God (3:1, 4, 10), is seized and carried away by a spirit (3:12, 14), and hears both the roar of wings and wheels from the great chariot throne (3:12–13) and the words “Blessed is the Presence of the Lord in his place” (3:12). In all this, he feels the hand of the Lord strong upon him (3:14). Later, when he watches the divine Presence prepare to depart from the Temple, he speaks of the effulgence, or glory of the Lord, gradually leaving the temple in the symbol of a cloud and eventually departing from Jerusalem entirely. Though it is the *glory* cloud and not the *spirit* that is said to depart from the temple due to the abominations and idolatry of Israel (Ezek 11), it is the *spirit* that Ezekiel promises will return to his people to bring them new life and give them a new heart (Ezek 11, 36), allowing them to worship rightly. Ezekiel promises that the spirit will be poured out on Israel

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<sup>74</sup> Berlin, Adele, and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Study Bible*. Oxford University Press, 2014. 1048 fn. 1:28. See also Exod. 16:6-7, 40:34-38.

<sup>75</sup> See 1 Kings 8:54; Ps 5:8, 99:5, 132:7, 138:2; 1 Chron. 16:29; 2 Chron.20:5–18.

(39:25–29) and the *glory* of the Lord will return to his temple definitively (Ezek 40–48). A new heart, the spirit, God’s glory, and a new temple are here joined in one fresh, hopeful prophecy.

## **Shekinah**

One non-biblical Hebrew term that is essential for understanding Jewish thought and expectations for the return of the Presence of God is *shekinah*. The term is an often used and sometimes misunderstood one, particularly in modern scriptural exegesis centered on Ezekiel and his spirit/glory language.<sup>76</sup> In Ezekiel 37, God promises that his sanctuary (*miqdash*) will be among them (37:26, 28), and his dwelling place (*mishkan*) will be with them (37:27). This is profound language, which would have powerfully reminded the Jewish people of God’s tabernacling presence in their midst, his saving promises, and covenant. The word *mishkan* is also deeply connected to the rabbinic concept of the *shekinah*. The word was “frequently used in the Talmud, Midrash, and other postbiblical Jewish writings” even in the first century to convey the glory, radiance, holiness, and immanent presence of God among his people, particularly in the Temple.<sup>77</sup> Though the word is not biblical and so was not used directly by Ezekiel himself, Rabbis and Jewish theologians such as Onkelos (AD 35-120) used the loaded term “in place of ‘God’ where the anthropomorphic expressions of the Bible were no longer regarded as proper,” especially in Aramaic texts.<sup>78</sup> *Shekinah* was used interchangeably with the terms for “word” (*logos*) and “glory” (*kabod*), and used in a wide variety of passages that speak of God dwelling

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<sup>76</sup> Many modern theologians continue to use the term *shekinah* today. Often it seems to be casually used as a synonym for the spirit or presence of God in modern texts.

<sup>77</sup> Jewish Encyclopedia, *Shekinah*, <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13537-shekinah>.

<sup>78</sup> Jewish Encyclopedia, *Shekinah*.

either in the Tabernacle, the Temple, or among the people of Israel.<sup>79</sup> It was also used in place of God's name (Deut. 12:11; 14:23; 16:6, 11), with allusion to "him that dwelt in the bush" (Deut. 33:16). However, naturally because these same Jewish writers were strict monotheists, when they used the term *shekinah* they did so squarely in keeping with traditional Jewish theology.

It is said that the Shekhina descended on the tabernacle and on Solomon's Temple, though it is also said that it was one of the five things lacking in the Second Temple. The glory of God that filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34) was thought of as a bright radiance, and the Shekhina is sometimes similarly conceived. There is also an affinity between the Shekhina and the Holy Spirit, though the two are not identical. Both signify some forms of divine immanence, both are associated with prophecy, both may be lost because of sin, and both are connected with the study of the Torah.<sup>80</sup>

In summary, how does Ezekiel understand God to be present in the temple? He understands him to be mysteriously present by his visible glory, in the semblance of cloud. His presence is not the same thing as his spirit, exactly, in Ezekiel—but there is a correspondence between the terms that cannot be denied.

### **Vital Importance of the Presence**

Throughout the whole book of Ezekiel, the powerful Presence of God in the temple is held up as indispensable for Israel to maintain her true identity. Most of the explanations for this are the same as were already set forth for the accompanying presence of God in the wilderness tabernacle. First, it was the Presence of the Lord in the cloud of glory that made Israel distinct from all the other nations; they were meant to remain holy (separate) and distinguished in their morality and fidelity to the One God. In short, unless God's presence remained among them, they

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<sup>79</sup> Jewish Encyclopedia, *Shekinah*. See Ex. 25:8, 29:45-46; Num. 35:34; I Kings 6:13; Ezek. 43:7, 9.

<sup>80</sup> Britannica, Encyclopedia. "Shekhina." Encyclopedia Britannica, February 7, 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Shekhina>.

could not exist at all as the nation they were created to be. As was seen before, their holiness itself was merely a reflection of the glory of God among them, not a reward for their greatness. Their greatness and security as a people, then, rested in their belonging totally to the Lord.

### **Threats to the Presence**

Throughout his book Ezekiel makes plain that the Presence of God *can* be lost—indeed, a major theme of the entire book is “divine abandonment reflected through the gradual departure of the divine spirit from the Temple”.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, he proclaims that the departure of God’s Presence from the temple was a direct result of Israel’s infidelity and immorality and was even held up as the cause for the city’s destruction. Just as was the case for the presence of God in the wilderness tabernacle, idolatry and immorality—both of which were proof of disobedience—led to various forms of chaos that led to Israel’s undoing.

### **Idolatry**

Since he was a priest as well as a prophet, Ezekiel’s language “is permeated with a sense of God’s holiness”; a holiness which was protected “by assuring that everything and everyone related to the worship of God is preserved ritually clean and pure. What defiles both the Temple and the land is the presence of idols.”<sup>82</sup> As a true son of Israel, and one who knew and read the Old Testament stories rightly, Ezekiel saw that the presence of these idols and the worship given them was the vilest form of uncleanness and would virtually compel the Lord to vacate the temple. Interestingly, Ezekiel does not see this as a problem merely contemporary to his own time but

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<sup>81</sup> *Jewish Study Bible*, 1049 fn. 3:12. Interestingly, the Jewish editors use the word spirit (*ruah*) rather than glory, here, for the departure of the Presence from the temple.

<sup>82</sup> Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets*, 290.



recalls the entire history of Israel as one of ongoing infidelity and accumulated sin: “They and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day” (Ezek 2:3). He then goes through the former experience of the Israelites from Egypt, through their desert wanderings, and even to the point of the threat of destruction and abandonment by the Lord due to their rebellions (Ezek 20). Through Ezekiel’s mouth the Lord explains that he did not destroy them purely for the sake of his holy name, that it not be profaned before other nations. However, their sin remains an outrage to him, for their lusting after other gods is akin to the worst forms of prostitution (Ezek 16:31–34).

Ezekiel 8 outlines this idolatry realistically as he details the abominations that he sees in his vision of the temple area. After the hand of the Lord falls upon him, he is transported to the temple entrance, and there beholds the *kabod* at the gate that faces north, which “would place the prophet at the entry of the most sacred area of the Temple.”<sup>83</sup> He sees there an “infuriating image” of a pagan idol, and hears the Lord’s voice say: “Mortal, do you see what they are doing, the terrible abominations that the House of Israel is practicing here, to drive me far from my Sanctuary?” (Ezek 8:6). From the Lord’s own voice, then, the connection between idolatry and his forced departure from the temple cannot be clearer. Soon Ezekiel is commanded to break through the temple wall and observe Israel’s vile fetishes and detestable creeping things—which were ritually impure—depicted on the whole temple wall in direct disobedience to the law given in Deuteronomy (4:15–18). Perhaps eerier still, Ezekiel enters further and sees in his vision the seventy elders of Israel burning incense to false gods in *darkness*, believing that God does not see them. This reference to seventy men, “indicates that the highest leaders of the nation are involved

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<sup>83</sup> Jewish Study Bible, fn. *Ezekiel 8:5*.

in pagan worship inside the Temple.”<sup>84</sup> When Ezekiel moves further into his temple vision, he also observes women wailing for the goddess Tammuz, and twenty-five men with their back to the Temple, bowing down to the sun. “The turning of their backs on the temple and the Presence within has a symbolic as well as a literal meaning,” for they have persistently refused to turn their face toward God and receive his instruction.<sup>85</sup> Such turning away from God’s instruction is a deliberate refusal to *hear*, and only adds disobedience to their idolatry. Startlingly, Ezekiel’s mysterious guide “links these cultic abuses with violence, disorder, and lawlessness of a kind that brought the old world to an end in the deluge.”<sup>86</sup> It is clear that the purity of worship in the Temple has been completely compromised and is in dire need of ritual cleansing on an almost Noachic scale if its sacred purpose is to be restored. Thus, the Lord makes a severe promise to Ezekiel: “I in turn will act with fury, I will show no pity or compassion; though they cry aloud to Me, I will not listen to them” (Ezek 8:18). Chapters 16 and 23 later portray the same woeful message of temple abominations, but this time allegorically. Here Ezekiel uses graphic imagery to portray “Israel’s cultic sin as playing the whore with Baal and with idols,” lusting after fetishes and abandoning all restraint in their infidelities.<sup>87</sup> More graphic imagery or a more thoroughly derogatory castigation can hardly be imagined. Though there were plenty of other sins that offended God, idolatry, Ezekiel asserts, has always been its most criminal and degrading act.

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<sup>84</sup> Jewish Study Bible, fn. *Ezekiel 8:11*. “The institution of Israel’s seventy elders is well known in Biblical tradition as the primary ruling body of the nation. (Exod. 24:1, Num. 11:16)”.

<sup>85</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 56.

<sup>86</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 56.

<sup>87</sup> Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets*, 292.

## Immorality

Another great threat to the Presence of God was Israel's wickedness, for "the people's immoral behavior, spurning of the Sabbath, and false teaching also impugn the holiness of God."<sup>88</sup> It should be noted, however, that for the ancient Israelites—as for Paul in his day—theology and ethics were not separated into distinct categories, but were directly related to one another. When Ezekiel levels a withering accusation against Jerusalem in Ezek 22, he evokes the memory of the Noahic law of Genesis 9:4–7, which directly links acknowledgement of God with right moral living.<sup>89</sup> After all, the goal of all Jewish rules was "to preserve this community with its distinctive identity and ethos," and that meant a profound link to its worship.<sup>90</sup> Blenkinsopp explains: "Exchanging the glory of the immortal God for idolatrous images leads inevitably to moral degeneration, including envy, murder, and strife."<sup>91</sup> It is then no surprise that the various charges of Ezekiel against the princes of Israel (and by extension, all its people), combine "social injustice with cultic and sexual aberrations...condemning the Jerusalemites as members of a community with its own unique identity and self-understanding." It is not merely idolatry that forces the presence of God to depart the temple, but also the immorality of the people. The forms this immorality and injustice took were legion, and nearly all of them failed to honor the rules set forth in the Decalogue and the Holiness Code of Leviticus (Lev 18–20). Ezekiel gives his verdict on their conduct with a clap of his hands in token of his contempt: they have dishonored their parents, cheated their neighbors, wronged orphans and widows, despised holy things and profaned the

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<sup>88</sup> Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets*, 290.

<sup>89</sup> The Seven Laws of Noah renounce worshipping idols, cursing God, murder, adultery and illicit sexuality, theft, and eating the flesh of a living animal. They also require the establishment of courts of justice. [Source?]

<sup>90</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 96.

<sup>91</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 96.

sabbath. They have practiced depravity and committed abhorrent acts of impurity, taken bribes, and defrauded countrymen (Ezek 22:6-12). Therefore, consequences are in order, and Ezekiel promises they will be dire.

#### Consequences: Departure of the Presence & Fall of Jerusalem

Ezekiel's temple visions tie Israel's corrupt worship and moral infidelities directly to the loss of the presence of God from the temple, and the subsequent fall of Jerusalem. In Ezekiel 10–11, he narrates the dreadful day when the cloud of glory departs from the temple and abandons Israel to its self-inflicted fate. In chapter nine judgment is pronounced, and the glory of the radiant cloud where the Presence dwells moves toward the threshold of the temple on a chariot throne, as if Yahweh chooses to make his departure in punctuated stages to draw out the terror of his leaving (9:3). His voice commands the massacre of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and when Ezekiel falls on his face before the Lord's presence in astonishment, Yahweh answers, "The land is full of crime and the city full of corruption...I, in turn, will show no pity or compassion" (9:9–10). In Ezekiel 10–11 the Presence of the Lord moves on, the court is filled with the radiance of his glorious cloud, and his wheeled chariot finally ascends and leaves the city.

Later in the book, the relationship between the departure of the Presence and the fall of Jerusalem is made manifest through the mouth of Ezekiel. God speaks through him, saying, "I have therefore poured out my indignation upon them; I will consume them with the fire of my fury. I will repay them for their conduct" (Ezek 22:31). They will be attacked, cut up, stripped, and delivered to the hands of those who hate them (23:22–31). Because they have forgotten God and cast him behind their back, they will be forced to drink the cup of desolation and horror, and

‘gnaw its shards’ (23:33–34). “I will not refrain or spare or relent. You shall be punished according to your ways and your deeds—declares the Lord God” (24:14).

### **Keys to Restoration of the Presence**

Left seemingly abandoned and destroyed, the exiles from Jerusalem who listened to Ezekiel’s prophetic words must have been feeling completely paralyzed by hopelessness. Yet, as was the case for Israel during the time of its own infidelity in the desert, God’s fidelity does not depend on man’s. After his gruesome declaration of woe, Ezekiel is given prophetic words of hope that stand in stark contrast to all that came before. As was the case with Moses and the Israelites, the hope of help will only come from the Lord, and not in any way because of the merit of the people, but rather because of the holiness of God: “Thus says the Lord God: Not for your sake will I act, O House of Israel, but for my holy name, which you have caused to be profaned...and the nations shall know that I am the Lord...when I manifest my holiness before their eyes through you” (36:22–23). In one life-changing moment, the fortunes of Israel are suddenly reversed, and its covenant identity restored by God’s extravagant and un-looked-for pledge of future restoration.

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you, and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances. Then you shall live in the land that I gave to your ancestors, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God (Ezek 36:24–28).

Lavishing still further promises, God pledges abundant grain and the end of famine for settlements that will be rebuilt and populated (36:29–30, 33–36). The ravaged places and desolate lands he promises to restore “like the garden of Eden” in words drawing the narrative of restoration once again back all the way to Genesis (Ezek 36:35, Gen 2). Such a grandiose promise of restoration is striking after Ezekiel’s dire warnings.

## Covenant Obedience

The promise of restoration is an unforeseen grace, yet how is this promise to come about? The new, dramatic cleansing which the defiled temple needs so badly is no mere ritual washing or restored physical building for worship. Since Israel's only hope is to once again be faithful to the covenant, a further gift than mere forgiveness is necessary; they will need rebirth at a deeper level. Obedience, God has seen, is frankly not possible to them in their wounded state. Now, through his own spirit he must provide a new capacity for obedience, providing Israel with the ability to turn from rebellion and observe God's life-giving commandments and ordinances when they are unable to do so on their own. For this Israel requires a new heart and a new spirit—the spirit of Yahweh himself. When this spirit restores an obedient heart to God's people, they will somehow, miraculously, be given back their ancestral land and the identity as God's people. Restoration will be complete, and their covenant identity restored! But it will not be a simple matter. Blenkinsop explains the radicality of what God promises to do:

Only a miracle of grace, a new initiative beyond the demonstrated moral capacities of the individual, could effect an inner transformation. Ezekiel uses the language of a new heart and a new spirit...and even speaks of the necessity of a heart transplant if they are to have a 'heart of flesh', that is, a genuinely receptive disposition, an inner core which is spiritually alive. But to this must be added a transfusion of the divine spirit without which the human impulse to action, to change, cannot be sustained.<sup>92</sup>

This is a work that God alone can complete, and it will involve his remembrance of his covenant, as he did in Genesis (Gen 9:15–16; Ezek 16:60). A return to their land will not be enough; instead, this must be joined to the promise of the divine presence, implying his return to the

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<sup>92</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 167.

sanctuary.<sup>93</sup> The initiative will be God’s in restoring his presence to them by sending his spirit to dwell within them. Here Ezekiel expresses great continuity with the promises of Jeremiah when he echoes, “But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33).

To understand the agency of the spirit who promises to dwell within Israel once again, chapter 37 of Ezekiel—the vision of the dry bones—is also of special importance. A closer reading reveals important points in Ezekiel that will be drawn up later into the themes and writings of Paul, demonstrating how the promised spirit’s indwelling of creation is the key to a restored future temple.

#### Close Reading of Ezekiel 37

Israel has just been promised a true restoration through a new heart that will come (Ezek 36). How will this take place? Chapter 37 gives the answer—through the divine and dynamic power of God’s breath, the spirit. In Ezekiel 37:1–8, the ‘hand of the Lord’ comes upon Ezekiel and carries him out ‘in the spirit of the Lord’ to a valley of dry bones. In a “chilling, even macabre vision, Ezekiel sees a field littered with the bones of the dead.”<sup>94</sup> He is told to prophesy to these bones to call them to life. Called to “hear” and “listen” to the word of the Lord, Ezekiel promises that when breath enters into them, then they will “know” that the Lord is their savior. By the end of this section, the bones are raised up by the prophetic word of Ezekiel, but they stand there with no breath yet in them. Here, the prophet is a spirit-filled individual who has been granted a special

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<sup>93</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 167.

<sup>94</sup> Leclerc, *Introduction to the Prophets*, 297.

role in calling a whole community to new life when it seems most hopeless.<sup>95</sup> His power only comes through the spirit, sent by God. New life also depends, however, on the ‘hearing’ of those who receive the spirit’s breath. In the OT, hearing is often related to the concept of obedience.<sup>96</sup> Those who hear the Lord walk in his paths. The implied meaning of the breathless bones is that it is quite possible for a whole nation to be alive and standing on two feet but without real “spirit” within them. Ezekiel prophesies that only the “breath” of God would bring them to life (Ezek. 37:5).

In Ezekiel 37:9–14 God once again commands Ezekiel to prophesy to the ‘breath’ and to call it to come from the four winds, that it might enter into the bones and bring them to life. It is intriguing that this second prophetic act is needed beyond the first call, as if to demonstrate Israel’s tragic state, God’s faithful perseverance, or both. Ezekiel calls the bones the “slain”, using the rather vivid word *bahārūgîm* for those who are not merely dead, but murdered or killed. Clearly, the consequences of breaking covenants and ruining temples are deadly—but not completely hopeless. After Ezekiel sees the bones come to life and stand on their feet as a whole nation and vast army (37:10), God explains the vision and its metaphor: Israel also thinks its hope is lost and its covenant is dead, but there is always hope because of God’s own fidelity and the power of his spirit to re-create. He then promises that he will even “open their graves and have them rise from them,” will return them to their land—language significant to covenant promises—and he will put

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<sup>95</sup> The whole community is called to new life together; the valley of bones is ‘broad’, and a large number of dead are implied. This is restoration on a large scale, not the private, individual level.

<sup>96</sup> See passages such as Ex 5:2, Deut 27:10, 30:2, 1 Samuel, 15:22-23.



his spirit within them (37:14).<sup>97</sup> The agency here is all the Lord's. Notably, God and his spirit are linked here in the same activity to renew and restore a dead creation.

In Ezekiel 37:15–28, encouragement comes through strong images and reassuring promises. Ezekiel, in a prophetic gesture, uses two sticks to demonstrate that Israel will one day again be united as 'one in his hand'. They will be returned to their own land and covenant (37:21), and united under one King and shepherd from David's line, who will be a prince in a time of covenant peace (37:22–26). Further, he promises he will "cleanse" his people to make this possible, reminiscent of the language of Jeremiah and his new heart, as well as the new heart and spirit promised to those who are cleansed of all their iniquities in Ezekiel 36. Finally, and quite dramatically, God promises that his sanctuary (*miqdash*) will be among them, and his dwelling (*mishkan*) will be with them. As mentioned earlier, this is profound language, reflecting God's tabernacling presence in their midst, his saving promises, and covenant. The word *mishkan*—which the later Rabbinical term *shekinah* will reflect—conveyed the glory, radiance, and immanent presence of God among his people. There can be no doubt that language of the temple is joined here in Ezekiel to the promises of a future restoration and outpouring of God's spirit into the very bones of Israel. Life breath, physical bones, the temple, and God's spirit are now mysteriously connected in this eschatological vision. Ezekiel could have just said that the Lord promised to return to his future temple. Yet, he said more than this. The promise was for a restored humanity—bones and all—by the gift of God's own spirit placed within his people, and this would be part of their restored covenant identity, return to the land, and right worship of God.

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<sup>97</sup> In Ezekiel's time, this would not have necessarily been read as a doctrine of resurrection, but certainly Paul took up this theme and used its imagery when he spoke of Christian hope in the resurrection. See 1 Cor. 15 and Rom 8:8-12.

## Israel's Hope for a Restored Temple & the Return of the Presence

The book of Ezekiel concludes with hope-filled promises of a future Temple that will be once again filled with God's presence. In language reminiscent of Deuteronomy, the Lord God declares, "I will never again hide my face from them, for I will pour out my spirit upon the House of Israel" (39:29).<sup>98</sup> He then spends eight chapters outlining another vision of a future temple, meticulously described in every detail, though it did not match the descriptions of any temple the Jewish people would have known. In fact, it differed so much from the wilderness tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, and the Second Temple that it was believed by Rabbis to signify the future, Third Temple to be built in the Messianic age.<sup>99</sup> Here, Ezekiel sees a vision of the glory of the Lord returning to the temple through the east gate, by which he previously departed (43:4–5). A voice from the temple declares, "This is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the people Israel forever" (43:7). This dramatic return of the *kabod* is similar to the narrative of the dedication of the first temple in Kings, where the glory of the Lord took possession of the temple (1 Kings 8:10–13; 2 Chron. 5:13–6:2). Here the Presence would reign as king; the sanctuary would be his throne and footstool, and his very return to the temple in glory would be a sign of his kingly victory over evil.<sup>100</sup> "The climactic moment of the vision, therefore, gathers together many of the themes and archetypes reflected in Israelite worship and...anticipates the historical moment when the returned exiles would celebrate, after many vicissitudes, the dedication of the rebuilt temple."<sup>101</sup> It also points to the final return of the

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<sup>98</sup> Deut. 31:17–18; 32:20; see also Micah 3:4; Is 54:8; 57:17; 64:7; Ps 30:7.

<sup>99</sup> Jewish Study Bible, p. 1118, fn. *Ezekiel 40:1–48:35*.

<sup>100</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 210–11.

<sup>101</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, 211.

Presence to a temple that Ezekiel foresees will one day be built. When this new temple comes, Ezekiel prophesies that the people will be fully restored to their land—and therefore also to their full identity as people of God. Further, in the restored city to come, the land will be yet a wider extension of the sanctuary, with sacred waters from the temple flowing outward to bring abundant life to the surrounding country wherever the water goes (47:9). Here God will dwell among them definitively, and “the name of the city from that day on shall be ‘The Lord is There’” (48:35).

This dramatic vision of renewal was cherished by a hopeful Israel. Many other post-exilic prophets also speak of it, prophesying an outpouring of the spirit, a restored land, and a Messiah to come that will all be intimately related to a new temple. Yet, for such intensely desired promises, it seems surprising that they were never spoken of as fulfilled. Even after the exiles return from Babylon and rebuild their temple, there is never mention of a divine indwelling or visible movement of the *kabod* back into the temple. Neither does this long-awaited event take place anywhere else in the Old Testament. The post-exilic prophets all continue to promise the Lord’s return, which only serves to emphasize the unpleasant truth that by their time he still has not done so. Because of this, Haggai has to spur Zerubbabel and his workers to greater efforts at the building of the temple, promising them that the spirit of God *is* still at work among them, and that at a time to come, “I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the Lord of hosts” (Hag 2:7). Zechariah, a prophet speaking at the beginning of the Second Temple period, also promises that one day the glory of God’s divine Presence will return: “Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the Lord” (Zech 2:10). Malachi also warns lukewarm Second Temple priests that the absent Lord will one day return, and when he does, they will be judged: “The Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—

indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? (Mal 3:1-2).<sup>102</sup> Even after the long and difficult task of building and dedicating the second temple at the time of Ezra, no return of the glory of the Lord is mentioned (Ez 6:13-22). It seems strange that these prophecies never were said to have been fulfilled, and that no prophets after Ezekiel recount the return of the Presence in cloud, smoke, or fire. What can one make of this? While wisdom literature, Torah, and the high priesthood had their elements of ‘glory’ and were in some sense considered to be the new ‘presence’ of God in their midst, no texts express the bold type of divine return envisioned by the prophets, when “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Is 40:5). Even after the Maccabees restored and rededicated the temple, there was still no mention of a full divine return. “There is no mention of the house being filled with a cloud, of the priests being unable to stand before the glory, and so forth. The narrative is strangely incomplete.”<sup>103</sup>

### **Second Temple Expectations of the Return**

Given the silence on this point by the post-exilic prophets, no divine return in glory predicted by the prophets had yet taken place. This apparently incomplete narrative of the temple—a building at the foundation of Jewish life—deserves note. To better understand Paul’s theology of the Spirit, it is fitting to probe what exactly his contemporaries believed about the Divine Presence in Israel and its anticipated return. The eschatological hopes of Israel for an outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh had been long awaited, and its fulfillment had been anticipated by some Jews even within the Second Temple period. Writings such as *Jubilees*, *Words of the*

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<sup>102</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 106.

<sup>103</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 107.

*Luminaries*, *Testament of Judah*, and *Treatise on the two Spirits* include a strong hope in a “new spirit” that will be outpoured in fulfillment of Ezekiel’s prophecies, gather the gentiles into one, and give them a new heart and new spirit so they may at last obey the commandments.<sup>104</sup> In all these texts, no claim is made that a *full* return of the promised spirit has taken place, but the hope of restoration through the spirit is still cherished and looked for, while the presence of the spirit in some way is already acknowledged. Interestingly, some Jewish groups of the Second Temple period such as the Essenes write in a manner suggesting belief in the presence of a divine spirit already at work among them. For example, a Qumran text from 1QS, the “Community Rule”, speaks in such spirit-filled language not as a prophecy, but to describe an ideal, current reality of community life.

When these become members of the Community in Israel according to all these rules, they shall establish the *spirit of holiness* according to everlasting truth. They shall atone for guilty rebellion and for sins of unfaithfulness that they may obtain loving kindness for the Land *without the flesh of holocausts* and the fat of sacrifice. And prayer rightly offered shall be as an acceptable fragrance of righteousness, and perfection of way as a delectable free-will offering. At that time, the men of the *Community* shall be set apart as a *House of Holiness* for Aaron for the union of supreme holiness, and (as) a House of Community for Israel, for those who walk in perfection.<sup>105</sup>

F.F. Bruce comments, “This appears to envisage the establishment of a living temple as a habitation for the holy spirit, where the offering of obedient lives and praising lips replaces animal sacrifices and approaches the New Testament concept of the age of the Spirit replacing the age of

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<sup>104</sup> See Morales, Rodrigo J. *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel: New Exodus and New Creation Motifs in Galatians*. *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen Zum Neuen Testament*. 2. Reihe, 282. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010. 168. Paul’s eschatological expectations for the return of God’s Spirit sound like those found in some Qumran writings and early apocryphal literature such as *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch*, and *Psalms of Solomon*.

<sup>105</sup> Vermes, Geza. *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*. A&C Black, 1995. 1QS ix 3-5. “The Community Rule.” Emphasis mine.

law.”<sup>106</sup> This is certainly temple language, but it has an eschatological feel to it, even before the time of Christ and the outpoured Spirit. Though this is only one Qumran text, it does reveal something about the faith of zealous Jews of the Second Temple period in the divine presence within their community, as a ‘living temple’ with a ‘holy spirit’, and perhaps hints that eschatological hopes were already alive and well before Paul’s day. Some scholars argue that if Jews of this period believed that the spirit was already at work among the community, it would minimize the proposed radicality of Paul’s “temple of the holy spirit” language, as argued by theologians such as Wright and Fee.<sup>107</sup> Perhaps the Divine Presence had returned to the temple of his community, as the language of Qumran hints at, just without the visible glory of the *shekinah*. Yet this does not seem to sufficiently fulfill the prophecies surrounding the visible, definitive return of the Divine Presence to his temple (Ezek 43). Further, the fact that Paul applies his language of the indwelling spirit not to the people of Israel alone, with whom God had first made his covenant, but to the newly formed Christian churches centered around Christ, and even to their individual bodies, seems to be something new, indeed.<sup>108</sup>

In his writings, Wright highlights the fact that by the time of Paul the divine Presence had not yet returned to his temple in any visible, glorious way (as promised in the prophets), and that there was therefore a general sense during the Second Temple period that the return of the

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<sup>106</sup> Bruce, F.F., "Holy Spirit in the Qumran Texts," *Annual of Leeds University Oriental Society* 6 (1966/68): 49-55.

<sup>107</sup> See Levison, John R. "The Spirit in its Second Temple Context: An Exegetical Analysis of the Pneumatology of N.T. Wright." In *God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N.T. Wright*. Heilig, Christoph, J. Thomas Hewitt, and Michael F Bird, eds. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017. 439–462.

<sup>108</sup> That he speaks of the *individual* Christian as a temple indwelt permanently by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19–20) appears to take the ‘newness’ even further.

Presence of the Lord to his temple was a still-awaited event.<sup>109</sup> He also declares that Paul's use of the temple image and its application to the Spirit of Christ is a direct proclamation of the Divine Return so long awaited in Israel. He states emphatically, "When Paul speaks of the individual Christian, or the whole church, as the 'temple' in which the spirit 'dwells', such language from a second-Temple Jew can only mean (a) that YHWH has returned to his Temple as he had promised and (b) that the mode of this long-awaited, glorious, tabernacling presence is the spirit."<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, Wright claims that "for the divine spirit to take up residence in the church is for Exodus 40 and Ezekiel 43 to find a radical, unexpected, and even shocking new fulfillment."<sup>111</sup> It is to claim that the Spirit of Christ now takes the place of the glorious, returning *Shekinah*, the tabernacling presence of YHWH himself. If this is true, and Wright reads Paul correctly, the Spirit becomes the "driving force of Pauline exegesis and exhortation,"<sup>112</sup> and the "nerve center of the Christian life among the people of God."<sup>113</sup> With this as background, a closer look at the OT narratives and echoes can now be traced in the writings of Paul, himself.

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<sup>109</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 105–106, 711–717.

<sup>110</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 711.

<sup>111</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 712.

<sup>112</sup> Levison, "The Spirit in its Second Temple Context", 440.

<sup>113</sup> Macchia, Frank D. "The Spirit and God's Return to Indwell a People: A Systematic Theologian's Response to N.T. Wright's Reading of Paul's Pneumatology." In *God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N.T. Wright*. Heilig, Christoph, J. Thomas Hewitt, and Michael F Bird, eds. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017. 623. Referencing James Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit: A Re-examination of the New Testament on the Gift of the Spirit*. Philadelphia, Westminster, 1977.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT & THE COMMUNITY

### IN 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16–19

In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul mentions the “temple of the Holy Spirit” twice, once in reference to the community as a whole and once directed at individual Christians. Since most Second Temple Jews expected the Lord to return to his temple in some sort of striking and glorious way, when Paul uses this language of divine indwelling he appears to be making quite a bold claim. For Paul was a pious Second Temple Jew, well-steeped in the profound symbols, language, and traditions of the temple. He had spent most of his life as an extreme zealot for the law and customs of Israel, whose Scriptures “were deeply embedded in his bones.”<sup>114</sup> Because of this, Hays reminds us that “Christians accustomed to reading the ‘Old Testament’ through the hermeneutical lens that Paul grounds may find it difficult to appreciate how peculiar and scandalous many of his readings must have looked to his contemporaries.”<sup>115</sup> While the importance of this imagery and its rich theology may be lost on us today, ancient references to the temple always held meaning and significance; the temple was at the very heart of Jewish culture, politics, and religion—an essential foundation for the life and unity of all Israel. Wright contends that “In the messianic events of Jesus’ death and resurrection Paul believes *both* that the covenant promises were at last fulfilled *and* that this constituted a massive and dramatic irruption into the processes of world history unlike anything before or since...unless we hold on to both parts of this truth we are missing something absolutely central to Paul.”<sup>116</sup> If Wright is correct, something remarkably new has now come in Christ and his Spirit: “The divine spirit has taken up residence

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<sup>114</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 143.

<sup>115</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 2.

<sup>116</sup> Wright, *PPF*, 54.



in the fellowship of Corinthian believers. The church, as it stands, is thus already the new Temple, and the spirit that dwells within is the new Shekinah. It is hard to see how a Second Temple Jew could give the spirit a higher value than this.”<sup>117</sup>

Previous chapters explored the theological narratives or motifs that undergird Paul’s worldview and teaching. Now, a closer reading of the context of 1 Corinthians and its key temple passages will bring to light the profound connections between the OT and Paul and more importantly, will reveal the identity of a Christian temple of the Holy Spirit in a fuller context. First, some basic background on Paul’s terms and the situation in Corinth will provide context for the discussion. Then the same four questions asked of the Old Testament passages will be raised organically within a close reading of Paul’s temple imagery in 1 Cor 3 and 6: How does Paul understand God to be present in this ‘temple’, why is this presence vitally important to the identity of this community or individual, how can the presence be threatened or lost, and what are the keys for its protection or restoration?

## **Background and Context**

### **Paul’s Understanding of the Spirit**

“For Paul the Spirit, as an experience and living reality, was the absolutely crucial matter for Christian life, from beginning to end.”<sup>118</sup> But what did Paul mean exactly by the “Spirit”? Paul uses the phrase *pneuma tou theou* squarely in keeping with common Jewish language, which had always recognized God’s breath and life at work in Israel. Even the Qumran community in the

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<sup>117</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 712.

<sup>118</sup> Fee, Gordon. *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994. 1.

second temple period recognized the presence of a holy spirit (*ruah haqqodes*) among them—and even within them—as a wise, instructing, guiding, protecting, inspiring, unifying, sanctifying presence.<sup>119</sup> Yet, Paul’s language for the indwelling spirit takes on a new dimension when connected to Christ. Paul uses many words and phrases for the Spirit: the Spirit of God (1 Cor 2:12), the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9, Phil 1:19), the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:5, Rom 15:13), etc. Used interchangeably in his writings, the Spirit is always united to Christ (Rom 8:9; Gal 4:6), raised him from the dead (Rom 8:11), and builds up the church (1 Cor 12). The Spirit prays within us to the Father (Rom 8:2, 15), pours the love of God into our hearts (Rom 5:5), helps us in our weakness, and intercedes for us (Rom 8:26–27). The Spirit, therefore, is in some way tied together with God’s own divine life and power, but also the presence of Christ.

Because Paul here and elsewhere speaks of Christ and the Spirit so closely, a clearer understanding of Paul’s trinitarian theology is needed. Just what did Paul believe about the Spirit, and did he hold an “early high pneumatology” as some scholars claim?<sup>120</sup> This spirit that we share with Christ, in Paul’s thought, is assigned attributes and actions that go beyond an impersonal spiritual force; using what Thomas Joseph White calls “proto-Trinitarian thought,” Paul speaks of the Spirit in terms that link it closely with the Father and Christ.<sup>121</sup> Although Paul only indirectly identifies the Spirit with Christ, “there is a dynamic equivalence between them” that cannot be ignored.<sup>122</sup> This spirit-filled theology begins with Paul’s Christology. While Paul’s monotheistic

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<sup>119</sup> Bruce, F.F., “Holy Spirit in the Qumran Texts,” 49-55. Bruce notes, “We shall not expect to find the holy spirit treated as a person in the Qumran texts, and so it is best not to capitalize the initials and write ‘Holy Spirit’”.

<sup>120</sup> N.T. Wright is a leading proponent of Paul’s holding an “early, high pneumatology”. See *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, part 3.

<sup>121</sup> White, Thomas Joseph. *The Trinity: On the Nature and Mystery of the One God*. Vol. 19. CUA Press, 2022. 92. For others who champion Paul’s trinitarian language see Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 63–73 and Fee, *GEP*, 829.

<sup>122</sup> Bruce, F.F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1977. 209.

Judaism is never in question, and he claims no God but one (1 Cor 8:4), yet he also strongly declares the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul writes, “For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor 8:6). Scholars like Richard Bauckham and N.T. Wright rightly call this “Christological monotheism”; yet, as Gorman points out, “Paul’s experience of the Spirit means that his Christological monotheism is infused by a power that could lead him to describe it only in “Trinitarian” language.”<sup>123</sup> Paul “clearly distinguishes the three persons from one another, and yet ascribes to each titles and activities associated with the God of Israel.”<sup>124</sup> He frequently joins the Father, Christ, and the Spirit together in doxological unity (2 Cor 13:14), connects all three to fonts of grace in baptism (Eph 4:4–6), and affirms that the Spirit and the Son both sanctify us as adopted sons.<sup>125</sup> For example, Paul joins the terms for Spirit, Lord, and God in a way that unites them, while recognizing their personal agency: “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same *Spirit*; and there are varieties of services, but the same *Lord*; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same *God* who activates all of them in everyone” (1 Cor 12:4–6). Finally, in his later letter to the Romans Paul makes a similar point once again to that he made to the Corinthians. He binds different terms for the Spirit more closely when he says, “But you are not in the flesh; you are in the *Spirit*, since the *Spirit of God* dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the *Spirit of Christ* does not belong to him” (Rom 8:9). Wright points to this language as proof of an “early, high pneumatology” in Paul, while others acknowledge the Spirit’s importance to Paul

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<sup>123</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 355. See also fn. 11, pgs. 63-73, and Wright, “Monotheism, Christology, and Ethics: 1 Corinthians 8,” in his *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, 129.

<sup>124</sup> White, *The Trinity*, 92.

<sup>125</sup> White, *The Trinity*, 93.

with more moderated language.<sup>126</sup> As was evidenced by references to the holy spirit in the writings of Qumran, Paul's pneumatology may not have been entirely radical and new, since it sprang from the common hopes of Israel. Yet, in another sense it was new, indeed, for nobody else had ever linked the return of the long-awaited Presence with the person of the crucified Christ. Levison claims, "It was Paul who combined the grand traditions of *Shekinah*, temple, and messiah in the service of an eschatological vision in which all three were wrapped in the mantle of divinity."<sup>127</sup> In conclusion, while a formal declaration of the Holy Spirit's divinity was not pronounced by Paul, by the very fact that he declared the Lordship of Jesus Christ and spoke of the Spirit as the Spirit of Christ, it is clear that "the spirit was not simply a generalized or sub-personal divine force that later theology would turn into a third 'person of the Trinity'. As far as Paul was concerned, the spirit, just like Jesus, was doing what YHWH himself had said he would do. The spirit was the further, and ongoing, manifestation of the personal presence of the one God."<sup>128</sup>

### General Background for 1 Corinthians

First, the basic backdrop for Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians should be noted. Corinth was an infamously immoral trading city on the Mediterranean Sea, to the point where the city's name gave birth to a new Greek verb describing those who had been "Corinthianized", or corrupted and materialistic.<sup>129</sup> It was a major hub for trade and travel, and its inhabitants were

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<sup>126</sup> Macchia largely agrees with Wright. Levison qualifies this claim, stating that at Paul's time there was already a strong Jewish pneumatology, but not yet a Christology. Paul's greater contribution to pneumatology, then, seems to be in linking the Spirit's Presence to Christ, the crucified Messiah. See Levison, "The Spirit in its Second Temple Context", 456.

<sup>127</sup> Levison, "The Spirit in Its Second Temple Context", 449.

<sup>128</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 711.

<sup>129</sup> Gorman, Michael J. *Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017. 228. \**korinthianazesthai*.

thus a cosmopolitan mixture of the wealthy and working-class. After his arrival in Corinth around 50-52 AD, Paul experienced early success, establishing a vibrant, charismatic community of mostly Gentile believers whom he baptized himself. Unfortunately, the church in Corinth soon experienced major issues from within. Three to four years after his departure for Ephesus, Paul heard reports that the community in Corinth was struggling with four major areas of chaos that undermined their unity and holiness: communal/ecclesial, moral, liturgical, and theological crises.<sup>130</sup> These issues naturally divide the epistle into four major sections, with his two temple passages most directly addressing the Corinthians' ecclesial disunity (1 Cor 3) and immorality (1 Cor 6). While the temple image was directly applied by Paul only to these two areas of crisis, because of the inter-connected nature of the issues, the temple image serves as a particularly powerful remedy for all four. Paul saw that the Corinthians' problems were essentially rooted in forgotten identity: they were sinning arrogantly because they had forgotten who they were as temples of the Holy Spirit and members of Christ's own body (4:6). Because of their spiritual amnesia, they were failing to live in unity, a divisiveness which Paul took extremely seriously.<sup>131</sup> "For Paul the 'conversation' or specific message of his letter was an exhortation to unity within the community. This is the overarching and unifying theme of the letter."<sup>132</sup> Paul's temple imagery here makes perfect sense. For Jewish communal unity and identity came from God, whom they believed to be present in the temple—the sacred dwelling of God's divine presence and glory. Here Israel was deeply united by its access to divine wisdom and holiness, centered around the all-

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<sup>130</sup> Gorman, *Apostle*, 238.

<sup>131</sup> Gorman, *Apostle*, 239.

<sup>132</sup> Collins, Raymond F, and Daniel J Harrington. *First Corinthians. Sacra Pagina Series, Vol. 7.* Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1999. Intro. 8.

holy and powerful Name of God, and saved from its enemies.<sup>133</sup> Because the temple had always been the symbol *par excellence* for the unity of God’s people, it is an image perfectly suited to address Corinth’s crises of unity.

Paul’s choice of the temple image certainly made sense even from a practical, human perspective. The Corinthians would have easily understood the term and perhaps drawn deeper meaning from it simply based upon their current historic situation. Greek civic, cultural, and political life in general was strongly influenced by the cult of the gods at this time, and Corinth was no exception. The city was full of temples and monuments to various gods, dozens of which can still be found among the city’s ruins today.<sup>134</sup> The center of Corinth was dominated by the temple of Aphrodite on its Acrocorinth<sup>135</sup> and various comments of Paul’s suggest that some of the Corinthians were actually still practicing pagans (6:9, 8:7) and were arguing to visit the temples (1 Cor 8–10).<sup>136</sup> It is of interest that archaeologists have uncovered an Arcadian epigraph on temple ruins to the goddess Athena from the 4<sup>th</sup> century that shows close linguistic parallels to Paul’s construction imagery.<sup>137</sup> The inscription describes the building and repair work of the various temple contractors or builders, and “refers to the penalties meted out to contractors for various infractions, such as delaying the construction by failing to finish their work on time,

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<sup>133</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 100.

<sup>134</sup> Gorman, *Apostle*, 228.

<sup>135</sup> Gorman, *Apostle*, 228.

<sup>136</sup> Fee, Gordon D. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1987.147.

<sup>137</sup> Collins, *First Corinthians*. 3:13-15. Also see C. D. Buck, *Greek Dialects*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955, 201–203.

harming workers, and damaging property.”<sup>138</sup> Paul’s own language is quite similar, as he “contrasts the wages (*misthon lēmpsetai*) paid to those whose work is satisfactory (v. 14) with the penalty (*zēmiōthēsetai*) incurred by those whose work does not pass inspection (v. 15).”<sup>139</sup> Because of the close connections in the style and content, then, Paul may have intentionally chosen this common “cautionary” idiom of his day, which his hearers would have understood well from the warnings on their own local temples, to set the context for 1 Cor 3 and the language of temple construction.

While the above sociological considerations may have been part of Paul’s reasoning, the use of the temple image twice in his letter of reprimand strongly suggests Paul intended more than that alone. Scholars generally believe that this first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians “is a well-crafted piece of deliberate rhetoric.”<sup>140</sup> The fact that Paul used the image of the temple, then—a highly loaded term for him—cannot simply have been a cultural reference point. Hays contends that Paul’s use of such OT imagery was very intentionally used to unite his people around the narratives of covenant and identity:

Paul thinks of his Gentile Corinthian readers as having been taken up into Israel in such a way that they now share in Israel’s covenant privileges and obligations. He...addresses them as participants in the covenant community, using the language of Scripture. He is trying to reshape their consciousness so that they take corporate responsibility for the holiness of their community; he does this by using Scripture to address them as Israel.<sup>141</sup>

As an intelligent and well-educated pastor imbued with the spirit, Paul was certainly alert to the subtle issues in Corinth and crafted his response to their needs. As was discussed at length in the

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<sup>138</sup> Collins, *First Corinthians*, 3:13-15.

<sup>139</sup> Collins, *First Corinthians*, 3:13-15.

<sup>140</sup> Gorman, *Apostle*, 236. See also Collins, *Sacra Pagina*, Intro sect. 6-7.

<sup>141</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 23.

introduction, while it is impossible to determine the precise *intentionality* of Paul as author, we can nevertheless identify strong ‘echoes’ of his scriptural background here that cannot be ignored. Drawing from the rich narrative of God’s fidelity to the covenant throughout salvation history, Paul’s temple language draws the Corinthians’ attention not merely to a symbol, but to a profoundly true and unifying reality that could serve to correct and heal the crises in Corinth.<sup>142</sup>

***Context: 1 Corinthians 1–4***

Paul crafted the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians with an intentional chiasmic structure, and they are sometimes termed his “first rhetorical demonstration.”<sup>143</sup> Paul’s overall message here is that the community is supposed to be united in charity around Christ crucified and indwelt by his sanctifying spirit. There is no room for factions or divisions, which only ruin God’s work. Their true leader is not Paul or Apollos, but Christ (3:4), and so the leaders in Corinth must be humble servants and trustworthy stewards of the mysteries of God (4:1–2). He lambasts the weak shepherds who are not serving in a humble, cruciform, way, and warns them of the dangers of wounding the body of Christ, the temple of this new community for which they hold responsibility (3:17). They must not be inflated with pride (4:6) like spiritual infants who are still living in the flesh and not the spirit (3:3). Paul would rather be a gentle father and not correct with the rod (4:21), but what is at stake is worth a strong reprimand. If they don’t want their temple—their community—to be destroyed by fire, (3:13) they must take care to build each other up in the Spirit by using their gifts well (12), in true Christian charity and cruciform service (1:18). It was the

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<sup>142</sup> Whether Paul intended to use the temple image as a remedy for all four of Corinth’s crises is not the essential point. As an inspired writer, it is sufficient to show that this selected image was particularly effective in doing so. God inspired the Biblical authors to write many things with layers of meaning that had an affect beyond what they could have intended.

<sup>143</sup> Collins, *First Corinthians*, Intro. Sect. 11.



Spirit of Jesus who made them one body in their common baptism, and this Spirit alone can bring the unity that will heal their communal chaos (1:13; 12:13).

***Closer Context: 1 Corinthians 3:10–15***

Just before Paul first uses the language of the temple of the Spirit, there is a short section of five verses using the image of a master builder that provide helpful context. Behind this section's exhortation are ecclesial cliques that are tearing apart the social fabric of the Christian community. To these factions, Paul first employs images of a field and laborer planting and watering seeds (3:6–9). Then, as if to emphasize his points with another and even stronger image, he shifts his metaphor to building and architecture to describe the work he has done (and that the community continues doing), in constructing a spiritual temple for God (3:9–17). The section of 1 Cor 3:10–15 provides an almost unmistakable echo of many Old Testament stories reverberating in Paul's thought. Most notably, the tabernacle construction of Exodus and the prophecies of the new temple in Ezekiel reverberate in Paul's language. Just like the skilled builders Bezalel and Oholiab in Exodus, and Hiram of Tyre in 1 Kings, Paul is also a "wise master builder" laying a strong foundation of a new temple (3:10). He instructs the people to be careful how they continue to build their community, using strong and beautiful spiritual materials, "gold, silver, and costly stones" that will withstand fire (3:12–13). In Exodus, "Everyone who could make an offering of silver or bronze brought it as the LORD's offering" (Ex 35:4-9).<sup>144</sup> Likewise, Solomon "overlaid the whole house with gold, in order that the whole house might be perfect" (1 Kgs 6:22).<sup>145</sup> So also, Paul wants to ensure his newly formed temple is both strong and beautiful, built of the best spiritual resources that can withstand the fire of tribulation. Fee suggests that "it is probably not

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<sup>144</sup> See also Ex 25:1–9.

<sup>145</sup> See also Ex 37 regarding the gold of the ark of the covenant.

irrelevant that ‘gold, silver, and costly stones’ recur regularly in the OT to describe the building materials of the Temple.”<sup>146</sup> Nor is it irrelevant that Paul takes up these very same words when speaking of his new temple in Christ: “Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it” (3:12). The leaders in Corinth are now responsible for building the communal temple of the Holy Spirit with strong, spiritual materials, so Paul insists that they “take heed because their present work will not stand the fiery test to come, having shifted from the imperishable ‘stuff’ of Jesus Christ and him crucified.”<sup>147</sup>

### **Close Reading of 1 Corinthians 3:16–17**

Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple (1 Cor 3:16–17).

#### ***“Do you not know?” (1 Cor 3:16)***

Paul makes an initial launch into his temple imagery with the strong use of a rhetorical device, “Do you now know that...?” which he repeats ten times in this letter alone and only one other time in the rest of his corpus. The fact that he does so this frequently to the Corinthians indicates the strength of his frustration with their poor behavior, and may even border on sarcasm as he pokes at the lack of basic ‘knowledge’ of those who claim they are “wise”.<sup>148</sup> The fact that Paul has to begin this way indicates its answer was doubtful: “it is clear from their current behavior that they do not know, or at least have not seriously considered the implications of who

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<sup>146</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 140. These temple materials are also mentioned in various forms in Hag 2:8; 1 Chron 22:14, 16; 1 Chron 29:2; 2 Chron 3:6.

<sup>147</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 137.

<sup>148</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 146.

they are as God's people in Corinth."<sup>149</sup> In this passage, the plural pronoun for *you* (*hymen*) shows that Paul means to address the whole community and wants them to know that collectively they are the temple of God (3:16). In the context of rivalries and schism, this plural sense of 'temple' drives his theological and ecclesial point home well: individual house churches or spiritually gifted leaders do not have more access to God and his indwelling presence than the 'weaker' among them. In fact, this spiritual presence is only strong and safeguarded when their community is united in humble charity.

### ***"You are God's temple" (1 Cor 3:16): Identity***

Rather than seeing his Christian churches as a radical break from Judaism, Paul uses their scriptures and narrative stories to teach his most important lessons of identity. Interestingly, this imagery comes within the context of identity politics in Corinth, as factions align themselves as "belonging" to certain leaders. As if to counteract this divisive tendency, Paul reminds them to whom they belong: "you are God's". Their very identity, therefore, is not found in who they follow (Apollos, Paul, etc.) but in the one Christ they are supposed to worship and for whom their community exists in the first place. More specifically, it is to be found in their new identity as a living temple. By using this theologically charged image, Paul deftly reminds the Corinthians that they are collectively indwelt by God's presence as in the tabernacle and temple of old, and this is the basis for their new life.

However, Paul's use of temple language seems to go far beyond mere metaphor: "They are not in Paul's mind mere symbols, for they describe spiritual realities true about the believer's

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<sup>149</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 146.

relationship with Christ and with each other.”<sup>150</sup> Previously, the chapter on Ezekiel discussed the loss of the *Shekinah* from the Temple and the longing of Israel for its definitive return. As was previously noted, at the time of Paul no definitive return had yet taken place.<sup>151</sup> While Second Temple Jews would have undoubtedly believed that the divine presence remained among them in the temple in some way—for after all, it was the house of God and sacrifice was still offered there—it is nevertheless true that no visible return of the glory of God had come to the temple. Yet, now Paul is claiming that the Christian community is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the place where God dwells. Wright clarifies the importance of this claim when he explains, “No ex-  
pharisee could write this without intending to say that the founding and building up of the church through the Gospel constituted the long-awaited rebuilding of the Temple, and that the *indwelling of the spirit constituted the long-awaited return of YHWH to Zion.*”<sup>152</sup> When Wright reads 1 Cor. 3:16 he thus can draw only one possible conclusion: Paul’s claim that God’s Spirit dwells now in the temple of the community “can only mean—must only mean—some kind of identification of the divine spirit with the long-awaited returning Shekinah. For the divine spirit to take up residence in the church is for Exodus 40 and Ezekiel 43 to find a radical, unexpected, and even shocking new fulfillment. But there can be no doubt that this is what Paul meant to say.”<sup>153</sup> Hays considers this an “audacious metaphor” that ought to wake a reader up: “the apostolically founded community takes the place of the Jerusalem temple as the place where the glory of God

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<sup>150</sup> Witherington III, Ben. *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph*. 1st ed. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994., 282.

<sup>151</sup> See pg. 54–5 of the current work. Also, Wright, *PFG*, 106–107, 711–712.

<sup>152</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 712.

<sup>153</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 712.

resides.”<sup>154</sup> For a community to be analogously related to a temple is one thing, but for it to *be* the temple seems a bold thing to declare in Second Temple context.

## Temple

It is noteworthy that here Paul did not use the word *hieron* for temple, generally used for the buildings or general physical layout of a temple. He will use this term in 1 Cor. 9:13: “Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple...?” In this reference to employment Paul seems to focus on the everyday experience of work and sustenance, not spiritual realities of the temple. This is contrasted by his use in 1 Cor 3:16–17 of a different term for ‘temple’. In 1 Cor 3 and 6 he uses the Greek word *naos*, a term used for the inmost shrine of a temple where a deity dwells, like the holy-of-holies where the presence of God dwelled in the cloud of glory—the *kabod*.<sup>155</sup> When Paul tells the Corinthians that they are a temple, he may be wishing to emphasize that their ecclesial community as a whole is not merely a physical structure where worship takes place, or a building wherein God is praised, but is much more. Now they have a special, consecrated existence with a dedicated role, and their church community is meant for intimate worship of, and closeness to, God himself. They collectively form a holy-of-holies, a dwelling place of the divine presence itself. “For Paul, the imagery reflects the OT people of God. Although they are never called God’s temple as such [in the OT],

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<sup>154</sup> The Qumran communities also had a sense of this, that their covenant community replaced the corrupt temple. See Hays, *Moral Vision*, 34, fn 54.

<sup>155</sup> Levison considers it unwise to put weight on the two words for temple in Pauline usage since they were not always distinguished in other Greek writings of the NT period. See *Filled with the Spirit*, 285 fn35. Fee, on the other hand, believes the LXX, where the distinction was common, would have influenced Paul here, and so these terms can be considered to have had different meanings in his thought. See Fee, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 146 fn. 6, or O. Michel in TDNT IV, 880-90.

they are his people among whom he chose to ‘dwell’ by tabernacling in their midst.”<sup>156</sup> This special consecration as a dwelling place for God is at the root of their very identity in Christ.

Echoes of the first temple and its covenant resound here:

Now the word of the Lord came to Solomon, “Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes, obey my ordinances, and keep all my commandments by walking in them, then I will establish my promise with you, which I made to your father David. I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel” (1 Kgs 6:11–13).

Just as in days of old, God’s people belong to him in a special way; Christians are now no longer like the other nations, and their worship and community life must be quite different from the Greek culture surrounding them. As God’s temple in Corinth, “they are intended to be his alternative to Corinth, to both its religions and its vices.”<sup>157</sup> While the community is open to all, in another sense it is necessarily exclusive, in that “it sets high ethical standards, which are meant to mark it out from sin and sorrow. Without such theological and ethical distinctiveness, one loses the sense of one’s distinctive identity.”<sup>158</sup>

### ***“God’s Spirit dwells in you” (1 Cor 3:16): The Presence of God***

When Paul says that the Spirit “dwells in you” he uses the term *oikei*, coming from the common word for “house” or “home”. It can also contain the sense that one is inhabiting, indwelling, and even cohabiting in this space. Quite literally, the Spirit intends to be housed within the community as its very life principle, and Paul will later claim this power to be the Spirit of Christ in their midst who will one day raise them from the dead (Rom 8:9–11). There are

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<sup>156</sup> Fee, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 147. See Ps. 114:2: “Judah became his Sanctuary.”

<sup>157</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 116.

<sup>158</sup> Witherington, *Paul’s Narrative Thought World*, 341.

echoes here of the colloquial way in which God once announced his intention to “tent” among his people in the OT. Just as the wilderness tabernacle was pitched at the center of camp, or the holy-of-holies was built at the center of the tabernacle and temple, so in Corinth God intends to dwell at the center of his people’s community life by the power of his Spirit. True though it is that this Spirit comes to dwell in each individual, as he will later emphasize in 1 Cor 6, here Paul is still speaking of the Church as a corporate reality. This suggests that the phrase *en hymin* is in reference to the Spirit of God dwelling *in their midst* collectively in Corinth. Fee declares, “It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of this text for Paul’s understanding of the church—as primarily a people of the Spirit.”<sup>159</sup> Or, as Wright says, “The divine spirit has taken up residence in the fellowship of Christian believers. The Church, as it stands, is thus already the new Temple, and the spirit that dwells within is the new Shekinah. It is hard to see how a Second Temple Jew could give the spirit a higher value than this.”<sup>160</sup>

***“God will destroy that person” (1 Cor 3:17): Threats to the Presence***

The very Spirit and glory of God now abides in the midst of Christian communities. However, threats to this presence remain. Unlike the wrath of Moses and the severe oracles of Ezekiel, Paul says he does not write to shame his readers (4:14) and would prefer to use love and a gentle spirit to a rod (4:21). Still, danger lurks, and he is direct in addressing it. Just as Ezekiel once called the dry bones the “slain”, using the rather vivid word *bahārūgîm* for those who are not merely dead, but murdered or killed, Paul also uses similarly strong language. To the leaders who are directing people astray he has a severe warning, addressed in the singular as if to warn each

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<sup>159</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 115.

<sup>160</sup> Wright, *PFQ*, 712.

erring person individually: “If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy *that person*” (3:17). The word for *destroy* that Paul uses in this context is *phtheirei*, variants of which translate as “corrupt” or “lead astray” elsewhere in the NT.<sup>161</sup> The general sense, then, is that Paul is not merely concerned with the Corinthians causing a bit of damage; he is worried that their leaders will become immoral, lead the flock astray, and therein destroy their own community and life in the Spirit. As Paul will continue to say to other churches, God’s Spirit *can* be grieved (Eph 4:30) and quenched (1 Thess 5:19), and his life among them threatened.<sup>162</sup> “To sin against the body is to deface the divine Temple, to ignore the Shekinah who, in shocking fulfillment of ancient promises, has returned to dwell in that Temple at last.”<sup>163</sup> Fee points out that when Paul precedes his striking metaphor of the temple with a motif of judgment, he “offers the strongest warning in the NT against those who would take the local church lightly.”<sup>164</sup> Paul asks, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?” (1 Cor. 6:9–10). The fact that Paul flings this reminder at a community that has already been baptized into Christ makes his tone even more striking. What is at stake, then, must be quite serious. In fact, the temple image itself serves to heighten this tension, since the underlying threats to the presence of God dwelling among his people in Corinth are similar to those that the Israelites of old once faced, showcased particularly in the worship of a golden calf in Exodus 32 and the vile abominations in the temple, recounted in Ezekiel 8. Three strands of iniquity were the main reasons for the loss of God’s presence in Israel:

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<sup>161</sup> See also 1 Cor 15:33; 2 Cor 7:2; 2 Cor 11:3; Jude 1:10; In Revelation 19:2, the term is used for the great prostitute who has corrupted the earth with her sexual immorality.

<sup>162</sup> Whether this ‘quenched’ life in the Spirit would be final or only temporary is part of a larger debate. What was *finally* at stake? Would the sins of Corinth lead to final damnation, for instance, or only a temporary separation? Fee points out that while this larger theological question is not addressed directly by Paul, the plain sense of the words points to a threat of eternal punishment. See *God’s Empowering Presence*, 117 FN123.

<sup>163</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 713.

<sup>164</sup> Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*, 113.



idolatry (theological and liturgical crisis), disobedience (ecclesial crisis), and immorality (moral crisis).

### ***Old Testament and Corinthian Downfalls***

Strikingly, the crises mentioned above now threaten Corinth, and Paul speaks with a prophetic voice to warn them of the danger. In 1 Cor 10 he even cites specific Old Testament narratives as a warning to Corinth. Paul draws their attention to some parallels between the Corinthians and the ancient Israelites, pointing out that even being “baptized into Moses”, being “under the cloud”, and eating spiritual food and drink, was not enough for the Israelites to win God’s favor. They were struck down in the wilderness because God was very displeased with their idolatrous, disobedient, and immoral behavior (Num 25:1–9; Ps 78:18). In an unmistakably direct way, Paul reminds them to take this lesson personally in their present situation.

Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become *idolaters* as some of them did; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.” We must not indulge in sexual *immorality* as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the *test*, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not *complain* as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer (1 Cor 10:6–10, emphasis added).

These are some of the most direct appeals to the Torah in Paul’s writings to Corinth, and they center precisely on age-old threats to the communal temple and God’s presence among them. Corinth is playing with fire, and “one can scarcely circumvent the awful nature of the warning.”<sup>165</sup> As Gorman notes, “If the building is destroyed—which could well be the outcome of the divisions—the supposed builders will have become desecrators, and they will suffer the ultimate

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<sup>165</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 117.

loss on the coming day.”<sup>166</sup> The same disastrous consequences that Israel faced of old *can* be repeated in their own day.

## Idolatry

Theologically, the Corinthians may not be bowing down to golden calves, but they are clearly not partaking in the sacred mysteries with pure hearts. Instead, they idolize their spiritual gifts and leaders, and casually disregard liturgical customs. Paul regrets that when they “come together it is not for the better but for the worse” (1 Cor 11:17). God’s presence in the temple has always depended and still does depend upon right worship for God’s glory, and their bickering and factions prove they are not seeking God’s glory in worship, but their own (1:10–17; 3:4–6). Their attendance at the Breaking of the Bread shows the lack of supernatural purpose to their gathering, and instead of seeking the glory of God through the cross of Jesus Christ, they are getting puffed up by their apparent wisdom and charismatic gifts (1 Cor 3:18; 4:7). In addition, their actions and words evidence a trend toward idolizing their favorite leaders. Instead of belonging to Christ, they are paying more attention to which apostle—Apollos, Paul, etc.—they ‘belong to’ (3:4–5, 22). Their liturgies are reported to Paul to be conducted wrongly (1 Cor 11), undermining both unity in worship and right praise of God, which are the very purpose of temples. There are even abuses of the Lord’s Supper, for “when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk” (11:21) which, Paul declares, “shows contempt for the Church of God” (11:22). That their behavior in general involves idolatry in a subtle form is clear to Paul, and he minces no words when he warns: “If you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall...flee from the worship of idols” (10:12, 14).

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<sup>166</sup> Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 291.

## Disobedience

Paul gets understandably frustrated with the disobedience of the Corinthians, chiding them for disregarding what he once preached to them or wrote in former letters. They are not observing the pure Gospel he handed on to them but are re-interpreting it according to their own whims. He is not afraid to come down hard on their inflated pride and arrogance when the life and holiness of their community is at stake (4:6). Their jealousy and strife are external proof that they are living according to the flesh and not the spirit, and this is tearing the community apart (3:3–4). By choosing to disregard his directions and disobey the authority he has been given by Christ, Paul implies that the Corinthians are acting like the Israelites who disobeyed Moses in Exodus; they “desired what was evil and displeased God”, and so they were “struck down in the wilderness” (1 Cor 10:5–6; Num 11–20). This strong consequence must be taken seriously! Israel’s disobedience was manifested in the way they put God to the test and grumbled against him. Paul exposes this when he explains, “We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer” (1 Cor 10:9–10; Num 21). Now, in any language, “destroy” is a dramatic choice of words, and this is no exception. Paul’s use of the word *apollynto* did in fact mean to ‘destroy fully,’ or ‘perish’.<sup>167</sup> Paul does not want this same fate to befall his beloved community by a similar refusal to listen and obey. So, just as Moses and Ezekiel once castigated the leaders of Israel for their disobedience to God, the Corinthians are rebuked for jeopardizing the holiness of their communal Temple by their disobedient spirit.

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<sup>167</sup> Bible Hub, Strong’s Greek Concordance and Interlinear Bible, 1 Cor 10:9, 622: *apólymi* (“violently/completely perish”) implies permanent (absolute) destruction, i.e. to cancel out (remove); “to die, with the implication of ruin and destruction” (L & N, 1, 23.106); cause to be lost (utterly perish) by experiencing a miserable end.

***“For God’s temple is holy”: Holiness, and Conditions for Preservation or Restoration***

Within this phrase the word for “holy” (*hagios*) is quite significant: “Paul predicates of the Corinthian community the adjective *hagios*, a description often used in the OT to convey the character of persons or objects set apart for or dedicated to the service of God in the Jerusalem temple.”<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, this word is directly predicated of the temple in the Psalms (11:4; 65:5; 79:1) as well as used synonymously *with* the temple in the OT (Num 3:38, Ezek 45:18).<sup>169</sup> Therefore, it is not at all a stretch to say that for Paul, “what was true of the Sanctity of the Jerusalem Temple must be true also of the Corinthian community.”<sup>170</sup> Beyond a mere legalistic following of commandments or ethical codes, then, the Corinthians must now live in unity and charity in the Spirit of Christ and the new commandment of love: “The major theme which marks out Paul’s theology of God’s people as renewed through the Spirit is the renewed call to holiness. It is a holiness not defined by Torah...It is, as the prophets always wanted, a holiness which comes from the heart.”<sup>171</sup> This means they must acknowledge and choose to live within a covenant of radical ‘otherness’ and consecrated purity that has always been associated with the OT temple, but now in an even more exalted way. Having once accepted baptism, they no longer can straddle the fence. Paul anchors his criticism of the Corinthians by recalling their true identity as those baptized into Christ and united to him.<sup>172</sup> Having already chosen baptism, the only choice is continued fidelity or infidelity according to the choice already made. If they repent and begin

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<sup>168</sup> Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 202.

<sup>169</sup> Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 203.

<sup>170</sup> Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 203.

<sup>171</sup> Wright, N.T. *Paul in Fresh Perspective*, 125.

<sup>172</sup> 1 Cor 1:13; 6:17; 12:13.

again to live out their true identity in Christ, they will preserve their community. If they continue arrogantly in their disobedience, they risk serious loss. To prevent further catastrophe and progress in the love of Christ, they must stop tearing apart the Church of God through their idolatry, disobedience, and immorality, and begin living as the spirit-indwelt community that they are. This is the holiness—or ‘other-ness’—for which they were created.

### ***Conclusion***

Paul believed profoundly that the OT prophecies had reached a stunning fulfillment in Christ and his Spirit. So, he knew that grace could be poured out by the eschatological Spirit from within the new temple of the Corinthian community—they need only grasp hold of the promise and of their new identity. They truly have everything required to turn their community around but are simply not using it. Puffed up by their “freedom” they are enslaving themselves anew. Distracted by their charismatic gifts, they are ignoring the Spirit of Love who produces them all. In their idolatry, disobedience, and immorality they are compromising their own holiness. So, he points them back to the Spirit who is at their very center: “the Spirit is the key, the crucial reality, for life in the new age. The presence of the Spirit, and that *alone*, marks them off as God’s new people, his temple, in Corinth.”<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Fee, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 147.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT & THE INDIVIDUAL IN 1 CORINTHIANS 6:19–20

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body (1 Cor 6:19–20).

In this second reference to the temple in 1 Corinthians, Paul's words are directed more personally toward the individual Christian, as is evidenced by his specific reference to morality as lived out in the physical body. The specific context for this repeated temple image—couched in a stern reprimand—is the community's moral chaos related to problems of sexual immorality. Using ethical arguments steeped in identity and holiness language, this chapter picks up similar Old Testament echoes previously mentioned. First the general context of the chapter will set the scene, and then the above passage will be analyzed according to the questions previously explored in other contexts: how does Paul understand God to be present in this 'temple', why is this presence vitally important to the identity of the individual Christian, how can this presence be threatened or lost, and what are the keys for its protection or restoration?

### **Context: 1 Corinthians Chapters 5–6**

After Paul's major argument for community unity in 1 Cor 1–4, he goes on to begin a new rhetorical demonstration against the Corinthians' arrogance regarding sexual immorality (5:1–2). Paul is appalled that they would give tacit approval to an incestuous relationship within their community, and in no uncertain terms reminds them that their boasting of freedom in this context is not a good thing; they must be willing to judge and drive out those who are causing grave scandal among them (5:9–13). Following this, he also criticizes them for taking fellow believers to public court, demonstrating their lack of supernatural perspective and that they do not yet understand their new unity as equal members of the body of Christ. The very fact that they have

lawsuits against each other at all is already a ‘defeat’ for them, in Paul’s mind (6:7). He even suggests that the inevitable result will be their “wronging and defrauding” each other, which is unacceptable (6:8). He warns them directly once again that the matter is spiritually serious: “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived!” (6:9). Though they have once again forgotten who they have become in Christ, he reminds them that they were washed, sanctified, and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God” (6:11). Their whole identity as a people has been radically transformed through this baptismal grace. Yet, they are not living as if this is true, particularly when it comes to sexual sin. In the previous chapter, the downfalls of disobedience and idolatry—taking the form of ecclesial and liturgical chaos—were thoroughly discussed. Here in chapter 6, the Corinthians’ immorality is on dramatic display.

#### Immorality in Corinth:

The sexual immorality of Corinth was one of the greatest charges Paul levels against them (1 Cor 5:1–13; 6:12–20). He reveals his shock at cases of incest reported among them (5:1) and the arrogance they display despite such grave sin (5:2, 6). In 6:12–18, he attacks the casual confidence in the “freedom” they claim gives them license for sexual immorality, *porneia* (6:12–13), by flinging their licentious slogans back at them. In a jarring response to their supposed freedom from law, and belief that the body has little to do with holiness, he reminds them rather strikingly that their bodies are “for the Lord” and are “members of Christ” (6:12, 15). Later he will remind them these same bodies are destined for future resurrection (15:44–49). What they do with their bodies, therefore, matters a great deal. With a deft question, Paul draws his readers back to recall their profound new union with Christ and His Spirit, as he asks, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?” (6:15) Commenting on Paul’s language, George Montague writes,

“The body has an even nobler end, a divine end: it is *for the Lord*. It is destined ultimately to be united and conformed to the glorious body of Christ, now living in heaven (Phil. 3:21).”<sup>174</sup> To join this body that belongs to Christ, then, to a prostitute is unthinkable. Moreover, the Greek word for “take” (*aras*) used in the phrase “shall I then take Christ’s members and make them members of a prostitute?” (6:15) can hold the sense of something being taken forcefully, even unjustly.<sup>175</sup> In four Gospel uses of the word, it is always translated with a stronger context than merely “picking up.” It is the word used in John 19:15 when the crowd calls for Jesus to be taken away and crucified, and in Luke 6:29–30 when a cloak is stolen away unjustly. While Paul’s usage is debatable, he could have used the word with similar sentiments in mind, since violent stealing is precisely what is done to the body of Christ when it is handed over to *porneia* through the immorality of a member of Christ’s body, the Church. Despite his insistence and passionate language, however, Paul does not provide a list of “dos and don’ts” when it comes to morality within this section, but he does offer principles for how Christians must live and act. In speaking this way, Paul lays a strong foundation for sexual ethics that is new, and even goes beyond the traditional marriage ethics of the Jews. He shows that “sexual immorality is an outrage to Christ (6:15–17) and to the Holy Spirit (6:18–20), already named in verse 11.”<sup>176</sup> It is only because of the profound union of the Christian with Christ himself that immorality in all forms must be shunned. Though it is counter-cultural and difficult for them, they are now called to live according to a higher standard of conduct. “In this sense 1 Corinthians is not merely deliberative but subversive—subversive of the status quo even within the church, whose values are being turned

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<sup>174</sup> Montague, George T. *First Corinthians*, Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture. Vol. 7. Baker Academic, 2011.108.

<sup>175</sup> Montague, *First Corinthians*, 109.

<sup>176</sup> Montague, *First Corinthians*, 108.



topsy-turvy.”<sup>177</sup> What they once would have considered weak and foolish they now must receive as God’s wisdom (1 Cor 1:25–29).

### Paul’s Theology & Ethics

Since this section of 1 Cor involves questions of Christian morality, it is worth pausing to shine some light on the interconnected nature of theology and ethics in Paul’s writing. For, Paul’s goal is always to form an eschatological community, a ‘living temple’ in Christ in the present age, with its eyes fixed on the world to come. So, his ethics are always rooted squarely in his theological thought, and the two depend upon each other. Hays explains, “In these texts it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between theology and ethics. They are packed together, under pressure: specific pastoral problems in Paul’s churches elicit his theological reflection...and the constant aim of his theological reflection is to shape the behavior of his churches.”<sup>178</sup> Gorman agrees, stating that “The purpose of Paul’s letters generally, and the various kinds of narratives within them, is not to teach theology but to mold behavior...it is appropriate, therefore, to consider Paul first and foremost as a pastoral or spiritual writer, rather than as a theologian (or ethicist).”<sup>179</sup> For Paul, the richly theological epistles he writes “are always a tool for constructing community,” and are not merely a speculative activity.<sup>180</sup> Further, his view is to form a community that is eschatological in its very nature, strongly marked by the tension of sinners who have already been saved, but who are still working out their salvation in fear and trembling (Phil 2:13). Yes, they are

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<sup>177</sup> Gorman, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 237.

<sup>178</sup> Hays, *Moral Vision*, 18.

<sup>179</sup> Gorman, Michael J. *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 2001. 4.

<sup>180</sup> Hays, *Moral Vision*, 18.

now spirit-filled temples—but temples can be desecrated, as the Old Testament passages made abundantly clear. Essentially, “Paul’s eschatology locates the Christian community within a cosmic, apocalyptic frame of reference...all Paul’s ethical judgments are worked out in this context. The dialectical character of Paul’s eschatological vision (already/not yet) provides a critical framework for moral discernment”.<sup>181</sup> The Christian is united to Christ, yes, but this union (and its attendant freedom) are not yet definitive and require man’s choice for righteous living in the present age as he awaits the Kingdom to come.

Were the Old Testament scriptures irrelevant to Paul’s ethics, now that new life in Christ had come? What is worthy of note in this section of 1 Cor is that Paul does not draw upon OT scriptures to make law-and-order types of ethical arguments. When he is faced with the issue in 1 Corinthians of whether or not to eat meat offered to idols, for instance, “he does not settle them in a rabbinic fashion by seeking to apply Torah casuistically.”<sup>182</sup> Here Paul seems to be steering his ethical and moral arguments away from Old Testament sources with their legal language in order to establish his community more firmly in the freedom from blind slavery to the law which Christ brought. Victor Furnish describes this admirably when he states:

It is noteworthy that Paul never quotes the Old Testament *in extenso* for the purpose of developing a pattern of conduct. Except for a few instances...the citations are always brief. Moreover, and even of greater significance, they are never casuistically interpreted or elaborated...there is no evidence which indicates that the apostle regarded [The Old Testament] as in any sense a source book for detailed moral instruction or even a manual of ethical norms.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Hays, *Moral Vision*, 27.

<sup>182</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 145.

<sup>183</sup> Furnish, V.P. *Theology and Ethics in Paul*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2009. 33.

However, this is far from making the Torah irrelevant to Paul's ethics. While he did not use it anymore as the Rabbis did, to dictate the smallest actions and choices of the community's life, still "there are numerous indications in Paul's letters that the Scripture somehow shapes his moral vision."<sup>184</sup> In 1 Cor 10:11, for instance, Paul draws from the story of the wilderness exile to remind the Corinthians of the dangers of their immoral conduct.<sup>185</sup> Just as the ancient Israelites endangered their own walk with God through their immorality, so the Corinthians may lose the covenant relationship at the basis of their very identity if they fail to change their ways. Essentially, however, for Paul all ethics come down to identity, and the place Christians possess in the magnificent narrative of salvation. The very reason for this elevated morality is that Christians no longer belong to themselves but to Christ, as part of his body. Thus, the individual Christian cannot make moral choices independent of Christ's body, for what they do with their bodies they do with Christ's. "The story of the Christian is a story that ranges from grace to glory...Yet it is a story that does not stand alone; it must be read in the context of the stories of Christ and of the body of Christ."<sup>186</sup> If this is true, the story of the Christian must also be understood within the wider context of the Old Testament narrative history of the people of God. An analysis of Paul's language in 1 Cor 6 will further clarify the important connections between the individual believer and the narratives of the Temple in the Old Testament.

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<sup>184</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 146.

<sup>185</sup> See also Romans 15:4.

<sup>186</sup> Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, 338.

## 1 Cor. 6:19–20: Close Reading

### God's Presence in His Temple

Paul uses the language of diatribe at the outset of this passage to make a dramatic point.

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God...?” (6:19) When he asks, “*Do you not know...?*”, the obvious answer is they do not. Based on their casual defense of their own immorality in the section directly preceding this one, it is clear that the Corinthians do not yet comprehend just who they are in Christ, how God is present within their temple, or what this means for their lives. Because of this blindness, they also do not grasp the theological importance of their bodies and what it has to do with their union with Christ.

The first major question to be probed again is precisely *how* God is present in this temple, now considered as the individual Christian. For a pious Jew of Paul's day, the emphasis on the physical human *body* as the place of divine dwelling seems to be quite a remarkable statement to make. It is one thing to say that the Spirit of God dwells among the community, that it breathes in one's soul, or inspires one's spirit. This had long been believed; throughout the whole Old Testament, the Spirit of God is said to inspire people, enter into them, lift them up, move them to act, and speak prophetically through them.<sup>187</sup> Language of this sort was entirely biblical, then, and would not have been surprising in the theological discourse of Paul's day. Yet nowhere else is this spirit declared to abide definitively within the individual human *body*. For instance, the Essenes of Qumran believed that their community was communally meant to be a holy dwelling, a temple for the spirit of God.<sup>188</sup> Yet, they did not apply this theology to the individual's body. As another example, Philo “spoke of the intelligence as being a temple, but he never applied the image to the

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<sup>187</sup> See the references on pg. 1-2 of the current work.

<sup>188</sup> Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1QS ix 3–5.

body.”<sup>189</sup> Unlike the Essenes or Philo, Paul does so directly. His clear pronouncement that God himself dwells not merely in their community, but also in their very bodies, is itself striking, and warrants attention.

When Paul uses the word *soma* here for body, he could be speaking either of a physical or spiritual body—either the individual or the communal body of Christ. When he uses the same word later in 1 Cor 10 and 12, for example, it is to speak of the members of the church as the Body of Christ. However, most of the time when he uses the term it is in reference to the physical body, and the general context of this passage it makes most sense to understand it in this light.<sup>190</sup> To understand the difference between 3:16 and 6:19–20, the possessives reveal the difference. Fee explains, “In 3:16, church through the spirit is *God’s* temple in Corinth, in contrast to all the pagan temples and shrines. Through the phenomenon of the indwelling Spirit, Paul now images the body as the *Spirit’s* temple, underscoring that it is the “place” of the Spirit’s dwelling in the individual believers’ lives.”<sup>191</sup>

The Spirit and temple language in these passages is profound and the OT connections unmistakable. For the prophets had long prophesied that the Spirit of God, when it returned to the temple at last, would restore the covenant promises made to Jeremiah and Ezekiel and literally bring life to dead bones, providing a new heart of flesh to God’s people. Just as the OT temple once housed the glorious presence of God, Paul now declares the body of the Christian to house the presence of God by his Spirit: “What is significant is that the believer is the present *locus* of

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<sup>189</sup> Montague, *First Corinthians*, 111.

<sup>190</sup> For uses of *soma* in relation to the individual physical body, see Rom 4:19; 6:6; 8:10; 1 Cor 9:27; 1 Cor 11:24; 13:3; Phil 3; 1 Thess 5:23. For uses of *soma* in reference to the communal body of Christ or in places where the physical body is a metaphor for the Church, see Eph 1:23; 4:4; 4:16; Rom 5; Col 2:19. In 1 Cor. 15 it is used in both a physical and spiritual sense in the same passage.

<sup>191</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 135.

God's own *presence*. The God who tabernacled among his people, whose same glory filled Solomon's temple, now tabernacles among his eschatological people by his Spirit (3:16)."<sup>192</sup> By claiming that the believer is a temple, Paul is saying that God "not only dwells *among* his people, but is himself present, by His spirit, *within* his people, sanctifying their present earthly existence and stamping it with his own eternity."<sup>193</sup>

***Spirit & Identity: "your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit...and you are not your own" (6:19)***

For Paul, Christian identity centers on the person of Christ, the Messiah; as *the* temple par excellence, he is the one who gives man access to God, as all temples must do. He does this precisely by uniting man to himself, through baptism. It is fitting that Paul speaks of the Spirit in the context of Christians' union with Christ, who purchased them by his own blood. Because of his saving work, the Corinthians—and all Christians—must therefore understand themselves to have a totally transformed identity. In 6:15 he reminds them that their very bodies were members of Christ, and in 6:17 that "whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with Him." It is from this union with Christ that the Christian shares so profoundly in the Spirit of Christ, himself. It is a sharing of basic identity: "Being one spirit with Christ means that the Christian shares in Christ's own character as a temple of the Holy Spirit."<sup>194</sup> In other words, a Christian can only be rightly called a temple of the Spirit because Christ—to whom he is united so profoundly—is *the* temple par excellence.

When this passage from 1 Cor 6 about the individual is set beside the temple passage related to the whole community in 1 Cor 3, a special theme of *filial* identity and belonging

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<sup>192</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 136.

<sup>193</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 136.

<sup>194</sup> Montague, *First Corinthians*, 111.

emerges, as well. Throughout the whole letter, Paul had reminded the Corinthians about their new lives begun in baptism. Only a few verses before in 6:11 he declared that they were washed, sanctified, and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” Earlier Paul had reminded them that through their baptism “all belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God (3:23).” When Christians are made one with Christ in baptism and receive the indwelling spirit, they become one with Christ and belong to him. Yet because now their “bodies are members of Christ,” and Christ belongs to God, the very body of the Christian now belongs to God the Father himself, as well. And since “anyone united to the Lord becomes one *spirit* with him,” (3:17) the proto-Trinitarian language spoken of earlier reemerges once again in Paul’s thought. As Hays explains, even though Paul did not announce “an explicit doctrine” of the Trinity, “he *experienced* God as Trinity.”<sup>195</sup> He experienced the Spirit’s indwelling in Baptism, understood it could only be the Spirit of Christ, and knew that Christ belonged to God. This unique—and still somewhat mysterious—relationship to God through Baptism was now at the heart of Paul’s preaching on Christian identity.

***Threats to the Presence: “For you have been purchased at a price” (6:20)***

Though the identity of the Christian has taken on this beautiful, new meaning, Paul draws back before the Corinthians’ eyes the reality that they were a very expensive purchase for Christ (6:20), who won them at the price of his blood. Both here and in chapter 7, Paul mentions “you have been purchased at a price” twice, first in reference to the problem of visiting prostitutes, and then in 7:23, in reference to slavery. Both make the human person into a commodity to be used, and in both, Paul emphasizes that we have been set free from all forms of use and abuse of self or

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<sup>195</sup> Hays, R. *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1997), 210. See the current work, p. 59.

others. Christ paid for us (6:20), washed us (6:11), died for our sins (15:3), and will raise us by his power (6:14; 15:57) and by the Spirit dwelling within (Romans 8:8–12), but each Christian must remember that he does not belong to himself, now. Paul criticizes them for their seeming indifference to—or forgetfulness of—the doctrine of the Body of Christ and each person’s union with Christ’s own body. The way Christians live must be intimately connected to the covenant relationship at the foundation of their new identity and mission. By the baptismal covenant received, they were united to Christ’s own body—therefore now what they do with their own bodies, they do with Christ’s (6:17). The body is not meant for immorality (6:13) which they must avoid at all costs (6:18), since what they do with it directly impacts the whole Body of Christ. Paul’s language in 6:20 strongly signifies that Christians’ very existence is on a different plane, now, because Someone else lives within them. As he states in his letter to the Galatians, Christians live no longer merely as themselves—because Christ lives in them (Gal 2:20). Their lives of rugged individuality are over; united to Christ, every decision they make by soul or body affects Christ directly.

As before when Paul spoke of the temple in the whole communal context, he alerts the individual Corinthians that there are consequences for ignoring his warnings—and he threatens to come with a rod if they don’t pay attention (1 Cor. 4:21). Hays explains, “One of Paul’s fundamental convictions is the belief that God will ultimately pronounce judgment on the whole world, including the community of faith; in accordance with this conviction, Paul sometimes seeks to influence the behavior of his communities through threats of punishment for disobedience.”<sup>196</sup> For example, Paul writes, “We make it our aim to please [God]. For all of us must appear before

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<sup>196</sup> Hays, *Moral Vision*, 39.



the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:9–10).

Then what is the specific threat to those who fail to maintain the new life of holiness to which they were called, and fall back into sin? The larger context of chapter five of 1 Corinthians expresses it best, when Paul mourns the immorality of one of their members—and their puffed-up tolerance of his licentiousness—and threatens to excommunicate and hand a sinner “over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh” (1 Cor. 5:5). Yet, while Paul commands them to “drive out the wicked person”, an ‘excommunicated’ life in the world, outside the Christian community and its graces, seems to be the greatest punishment threatened. Not that this is negligible: “The inevitable consequence is that he is back out in Satan’s domain,” which is the world of the flesh, “where Satan and his ‘principalities and powers’ still hold sway over people’s lives to destroy them.”<sup>197</sup> For one who had once known Christ to be flung back into the world and its traps is still dangerous. However, Paul does state that the goal for such an expulsion is actually “so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord” (5:5), and so he leaves sinners to God’s own judgment (5:13). While he does caution that anyone who does not take the apostle’s words seriously “rejects not human authority but God” (1 Thess 4:6, 8), he does not threaten with eternal and unrelenting punishment due to sin. As was the case for Moses and the Israelites at Sinai, or Ezekiel and the people of God at the time of the first temple’s destruction, God always offers his people the chance for repentance and mercy. In like manner, there is always the hope for the restoration of the sinner in Paul’s language.

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<sup>197</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 126.

### ***Guarding the Presence: “Therefore, glorify God in your body” (6:20)***

Paul wants his people to live from their identity and accomplish their main mission: to glorify God among the nations. As was true for Israel in the OT, this is the way to safeguard the presence of the Spirit among them. The practical and specific way they will carry this out is by glorifying him “in their body”, by the way they live and the moral choices they make. This language is strongly reminiscent of the temples of old, where the glory cloud of the Spirit’s presence (*kabod*) dwelled in all its holy “otherness”. For Paul, “the role of God’s living presence, the glorious Shekinah, is taken by the spirit.”<sup>198</sup> Just as the cloud of God’s glory descended on the old tabernacle and made His name revered among the people, so Christians are meant to let the all-holy Spirit of Christ dwell within their own members and show forth the glory of God by the purity of their actions (6:20). Instead of the physical temple building receiving the glory of the living God, the lives of Christians are to be transformed by the reception of this glorious Spirit. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains this further: Believers “with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor 3:17). It is God himself who has shone in our hearts (2 Cor 4:6) but this glory is not meant for mere enjoyment or display. The Spirit’s return now falls “within God’s broader agenda to indwell all things, to inaugurate a new humanity and to make all things new,” and this brings with it a challenge: “The church cannot remain satisfied with its self-preoccupation and tired complacency...they are to pray, yearn, and work to be both the instrument and sign of a new world coming.”<sup>199</sup> This must be lived out in concrete actions and choices for holiness.

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<sup>198</sup> Wright, *PFG*, 716.

<sup>199</sup> Macchia, *The Spirit and God’s Return*, 642–3.

## *Holiness: The Christian Temple as Sanctifier*

For Paul, sanctification in Christ involved choosing personal holiness. However, it is interesting to see how this holiness works afresh in Paul's thought. As Ben Witherington notes, "In 1 Cor. 7:14 we see a dramatic difference from Old Testament holiness. Far from the unbeliever causing the believer to become impure, just the opposite is the case; sanctifying, or cleansing, is what happens to the unbeliever..."<sup>200</sup> Christians, then, are not made ritually impure by contact with sinners—a "remarkable statement for someone with the background of Paul to make"—but can even make those around them holier, since the Christian religion is a "world transforming not world-denying religion."<sup>201</sup> Witherington summarizes:

This is most important because it means that Christians do not have to sever relationships with the world to be Christians, to be sanctified and acceptable to God. Indeed...Christians have the possibility of positively affecting others in the world rather than being defiled by them. Paul here urges detachment from worldly attitudes, not withdrawal from the world.<sup>202</sup>

In one sense, this is simply part of the "glorifying" and "sanctifying" mission of Israel through the ages. For just as the temple and the cult surrounding it sanctified Israel, leading the nations to the all-glorious and sanctifying God himself, now it is the role of the Christian Church and its individual members to live out that temple identity by sanctifying the world. However, now in Christ this mission is shared not just with the nation as a whole, but with individual communities and baptized Christians.

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<sup>200</sup> Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, 321.

<sup>201</sup> Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, 321.

<sup>202</sup> Witherington, *Paul's Narrative Thought World*, 321.

However, this new identity as a world-sanctifying temple brings up an important question: if the community and the individual Christian have now become the true temple where God dwells among his people, does this mean that Paul has decisively rejected the Jewish Temple—the major pillar of Israel’s sanctification? Dunn believes he has: “If there is any pillar of his traditional religion which Paul can be said to have abandoned wholly or almost completely it is this one...Paul seems to have moved away more or less entirely from any sense that his redefined faith had to be attached to holy land or particular holy place...the people of the holy land seem to have been replaced by the image of the body of Christ.”<sup>203</sup> Paul wants his communities to know they are now free from the curse of the law and are living within a transformed new vision of life and worship that no longer requires the cult of the temple. Yet, while the need for animal sacrifice in a physical temple is past, God’s people still require the deeper spiritual realities for which the temple had been established; they still have an absolute need for God’s Presence among them, safeguarded by right worship and purity of life, symbolically pointing toward the eschatological temple to come. For, the grand story of salvation history, which Paul sees himself and his church as part of, and which is always related to the temple and the Presence of God, continues. They have need, still, of all that the temple once stood for. Matthew Levering confirms this link when he claims, “The New Testament does not offer a replacement theology of the temple if by this is meant a negation of one thing to make way for an entirely discontinuous thing. The temple in Jerusalem prepares for and is always (even now) interiorly related to the eschatological temple established by the Messiah.”<sup>204</sup> Paul’s theology has “the character of inaugurated eschatology, that is, of a sense that God’s ultimate future has come forwards into the middle of history, so that the

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<sup>203</sup> Dunn, James D.G. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 721.

<sup>204</sup> Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Israel*, 272.

church is living within—indeed is constituted precisely by living within!—God’s new world and the present one.”<sup>205</sup> N.T. Wright continues, “The age to come has already arrived with Jesus; but it will be consummated in the future. The church must order its life and witness, its holiness and love, along that axis.”<sup>206</sup>

### **Related Pauline Texts**

Several additional Pauline texts connect with 1 Corinthians on the themes of Christian identity, glory, and holiness, and also draw heavily on OT imagery from Ezekiel. Because of this, 1 Corinthians must not be read in isolation, but should be viewed within the context of the rest of the Pauline corpus. Special reference must be made to a few key passages that deeply connect with similar themes and language, as they will further illuminate precisely what being a spirit-filled temple meant to Paul.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–7

The Pauline link between morality and holiness comes out clearly in Paul’s writings to the Thessalonians, which likely predate 1 Corinthians, and may even be his earliest letter.<sup>207</sup> Here Paul directly relates bodily morality, particularly self-control in matters of sexuality, precisely to one’s holiness. He declares, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor... For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness” (1 Thess 4:3–7). If the Thessalonians, then, want to fulfill their mission of glorifying God among the nations, they must be holy—and purity is an

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<sup>205</sup> Wright, *PPF*, 57.

<sup>206</sup> Wright, *PPF*, 57.

<sup>207</sup> Gorman, *Apostle*, 188.

indispensable component of that holiness. They must live not according to the flesh, but the spirit. This was a radical new teaching for the Greek world, and Paul knew it would be challenging for them. As the German biblical scholar Gerd Theissen has said, the way Paul spoke about the body is so opposed to its common use in the ancient world that it would demand a “cognitive restructuring” of the social environment of those who heard his message.<sup>208</sup> Yet he did not retract his clear teaching, so directly related to the passages previously explored on sexual morality (1 Cor 6). However, Paul always reminds his people that the reason for this new (and difficult) standard of living is because of their status as a new creation in Christ and their union with him in baptism (2 Cor 5:17). For Paul believed a radical newness had come in Christ, unleashing a spiritual power and freedom previously unknown. He simply could not allow them to revert to former ways of life and slavery to the senses: “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1). As Michael J. Gorman writes, “To live in the old realm, the realm of the flesh, instead of in the new realm, the realm of the Spirit (Galatians 5; Romans 8) is to live a reverse anachronism. It is to allow the old to live, out of place, within the new.”<sup>209</sup> This is unacceptable for Paul, who knows his people have been given a remarkable time of grace and must not abuse it. Just like in 1 Cor 6, Paul warns the Thessalonians that there are consequences for immorality: “the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. Therefore, whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God” (4:6–8a).

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<sup>208</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 361-2, citing Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*, 236-30.

<sup>209</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 354.

## 2 Corinthians 3:17–18

In another profound connection, Paul will write in his second letter to the Corinthians in ‘spirit’ and ‘glory’ language that connects the tabernacle of Moses, the temple of Ezekiel, and his current eschatological community all in the same chapter:

You show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets that are human hearts...Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor 3:3, 17–18).

In these first lines from 2 Cor 3:3, Paul dramatically links the stone tablets of law in Exodus with a Spirit-filled new heart, capable of true obedience to the commandments (Ezek 37:14). Such language thus suggests eschatological overtones for Paul, as evidenced by the amount of other Jewish writings using similar language at his time.<sup>210</sup> Here, Paul draws upon the prophecies of Ezekiel and its theme of a ‘new heart and new spirit’ to strongly link the prophecies of Israel’s renewal with the nascent Christian community. Fee writes, “One can scarcely miss the eschatological implications of Paul’s understanding of the Spirit—as fulfillment of God’s promised gift of the Spirit at the end of the ages, which...he understands already to have come.”<sup>211</sup> Elsewhere he notes, “The present experience of the church as the place where the eschatological Spirit dwells would thus be the restored temple of Ezekiel’s vision (40–48), where God promised ‘to live among them forever’ (4:9, 37:28) and out of which flowed the river of fresh water that

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<sup>210</sup> Fee, *1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, 147. Ezek. 40–48. See *Jub.* 1:17, 1 Enoch 91:13, 4QFlor.

<sup>211</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 304.

restored the land (47:1–12).”<sup>212</sup> By using the phrase “temple of the Holy Spirit”, Paul draws upon these foundational texts of spirit and temple, invoking Israel’s prophetic tradition and applying its message to the Corinthians, “trying to remake the minds of his readers by teaching them to interpret their lives in light of an eschatologically interpreted Scripture.”<sup>213</sup>

A few verses later, the language of the OT tabernacle echoes forward in Paul’s reference to the “unveiled faces”, which is a direct link to Moses as he went before the presence of God in the cloud of glory (Ex 34:34). Though he could remain before the Lord unveiled, after leaving the presence of the Lord Moses had to veil himself so that the people would not look on his shining face and see God’s reflected glory mediated through him (Ex 34:29). If here the Corinthians—previously called a temple twice!—are now able to approach the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, seeing his glory and being transformed by it directly, a remarkable fulfillment of the OT has come to pass. “For those who have the Spirit the veil is now removed...the ‘freedom’ that comes with the removal of the veil means that people now have access to God’s presence so as to behold the ‘glory’ which the veil kept them from seeing...the Lord himself.”<sup>214</sup> And all of this, as Paul says, “comes from the Lord, the Spirit”, who was promised as the agent of divine transformation in Ezekiel when stony hearts would become hearts of flesh, capable of keeping the covenant commandments of the Lord (3:3). Perhaps in no other chapter of 2 Corinthians are all of these dynamic and powerful themes drawn together so closely. “Thus, in the final analysis, the Spirit of the living God not only gives us the life of God, but serves for us as God’s presence and enables

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<sup>212</sup> Fee, *First Corinthians*, 147.

<sup>213</sup> Hays, *Conversion*, 18.

<sup>214</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 309.



us to behold God’s glory so that we are being transformed into his likeness. That is ‘glory’ indeed!’<sup>215</sup>

2 Corinthians 6:16–17

Only a few chapters later, Paul again declares the Corinthians to be the temple of the living God, telling them to shun all forms of idolatry and not be matched with unbelievers, using language taken straight from the prophet Ezekiel:

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God, as God said,

‘I will live in them and walk among them,  
and I will be their God,  
and they shall be my people.  
Therefore come out from them,  
and be separate from them, says the Lord,  
and touch nothing unclean:  
Then I will welcome you,  
and I will be your father.’ (2 Cor 6:16–18a)

The larger context of the passage Paul quotes from Ezekiel is noteworthy: “My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people. Then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy, when my sanctuary is among them forever” (Ezekiel 37:27–28).

Notably, the Corinthians are to walk with God as a ‘new creation’ (2 Cor. 5:17) in language reminiscent of Adam and Eve’s walk with God in the garden, having been restored to intimate friendship with their creator in a covenant relationship that sets them apart from all other peoples (6:17). But they must choose to “come out” from worldly ways and be different, pure, and separate—in other words, holy. By quoting Ezekiel, Paul calls to the Corinthians’ minds yet again the narrative story of the temple’s destruction and the consequences Israel once received for its

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<sup>215</sup> Fee, *GEP*, 309-310.

infidelity. As he once wrote in 1 Cor, so here in 2 Cor Paul reminds them that they belong to God, that idolatry has disastrous consequences, but that God still promises fidelity to the covenant he made with them. In a conflation of many OT texts all at once, Paul reminds them of the Lord's promise to those who are faithful in return: "I will be their God, and they shall be my people."<sup>216</sup> While the passage as a whole directly quotes from Ezekiel, the overall tone is also a link to the Old Testament, for the phrase "then I will welcome you" ends this command of Paul's with a typically prophetic "if/then" conditionality (6:18). Yes, God's promises are true and faithful, but in order to be called children of God and retain his covenant Presence and protection, they must choose to 'come apart' and be separated from the world. Paul implies that the Corinthians' reward will be the same pledge Ezekiel made of God's restored presence among his people in a 'temple' of new creation ("I will live in them and walk among them"). Now, Paul declares, the promise of the Lord is coming true, while still pressing on to final fulfillment. While Corinth already experiences the Spirit dwelling within and among them, "they are to pray, yearn, and work to be both the instrument and sign of a new world coming," living in hope of the eschatological temple to come.<sup>217</sup> The promises Ezekiel made to Israel are now made to them anew!

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<sup>216</sup> This is a conflation of Lev 26:12, Ezek 20:34; 37; Is 52:11.

<sup>217</sup> Macchia, Frank D. *The Spirit and God's Return*, 643.

## CONCLUSION

Paul claims in 1 Corinthians that God has once again made his dwelling among his people in a new temple, where he ‘tents’ with them both collectively (3:16) and individually (6:19-20). As a Jewish man thoroughly steeped in the narratives of the Old Testament, the only way Paul could make sense of God’s present actions was to read backward and view events through the lens of the Old Covenant promises to Israel. Paul re-read the stories of salvation and proclaimed them to be fulfilled in Christ; this included the great prophecies of the return of the Spirit and restoration of the Temple. As he built and formed new Christian communities, Paul envisioned them as *the* eschatological people of God promised through the prophets, centered around the Messiah and His Spirit, living as spirit-filled temples. Paul’s references to the temple in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians cannot be set aside lightly. When Paul is read in the context of the old stories of Israel’s salvation, the echoes of the old narratives reverberate more loudly, revealing layers of meaning and a great depth of spiritual history. To better understand this, the stories of salvation at the heart of Paul’s thought-world were explored in depth, bringing to light the narrative theology undergirding his language.

According to Paul, then, what is the identity of a Temple of the Holy Spirit, and how is this Temple meant to live? In the end, Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians is meant to be eminently practical and related to the church’s everyday life, not to merely expound doctrine. For Paul is both a pastor and a theologian, and his goal is not merely right conduct for its own sake; it is transformed communities living holy lives. A brief return to the major themes that connect the Old Testament with Paul’s letters highlights important principles of temple identity that can be applied to the Church in every age.

The Old Testament scriptures reveal that temples are places where God’s glory is visible and his presence accessible, where heaven meets earth, man and God are reconciled, and the

earthly may be sanctified by the presence of holiness. Both the old tabernacle and temple—as the center of right worship and sacrifice—paved the way for the new by slowly preparing a people capable of worshipping “in spirit and truth.” Just as the Presence of God in the OT tabernacle led Israel away from Egypt and toward the freedom of the promised land, the Spirit will lead the Church out of slavery to the flesh as it journeys toward heaven. As the OT temple was the place par excellence for encountering God in his glorious and sanctifying presence, so the Church and the individual Christian have the identity of new temples indwelt by the glory of God, capable of sanctifying the world. And as the Spirit once promised through Ezekiel to breathe new life into Israel’s dry bones, so the freshly outpoured Spirit will renew the face of the earth and re-create a people with obedient hearts capable of keeping the covenant that the temple requires. All this leads us to essential truths about new, Christian “temples”: to be a temple of the Holy Spirit means that our Christian communities *and* our individual bodies are literally the dwelling place of God on earth, ‘holy’ houses, set apart to glorify God. Yet, this holiness comes from God’s presence within, not from our own goodness. We have been chosen and set apart, despite our sinfulness.

From this identity, how are Christian temples meant to live? Admittedly, Paul’s entire corpus is one long answer to this question. However, in relationship to the purpose and mission of the old temples, a few parallels can be drawn to the new. In short, Christians as Temples of the Holy Spirit are meant to live so as to glorify God’s name among the nations. Unlike the communities centered around the old tabernacle and temple who were characterized by idolatry, immorality, and disobedience, or the Corinthians who struggled through ecclesial, moral, liturgical, and theological crises, the spirit-filled temple of the Christian community is meant to be a new creation characterized by unity, purity, obedience, and right praise.

In contrast to the *idolatry* of Israel and Corinth, Christians are called to communal unity, faithfulness to prayer and deep relationship with God. This excludes any idol-worship of charismatic leaders or personal gifts, and also requires charity among believers. In these Temples God must reign supreme, praised and glorified above all, admitting no rivals. Here sacrifice for sin must be lifted up, so that in humble repentance man might be led to a restored friendship with God. The church and individual Christian must exist for the Lord's glory, abandon false idols, and be unified in prayer and worship, so that by her holiness she can point the nations toward God.

Since ancient Israel and Corinth once struggled with *disobedience*, the call to be new Temples of the Holy Spirit also means a new commitment to a freely chosen obedience, both to leaders and to God's commandments. Just as God chose Moses, Ezekiel, and Paul to be prophetic leaders who would safeguard his presence, instruct his people, and correct abuses in his "temples" of old, the leaders God appoints today are also chosen instruments deserving of respect and an intelligent obedience. They speak on God's behalf—even if imperfectly—and help to safeguard the temples of our communities. A free and mature obedience to God's appointed leaders helps to unify and protect our modern 'temples' from chaos and destruction. Secondly, obedience to God's laws and commandments is also crucial for the flourishing of Christian temples. The numerous rules or codes of conduct established for the tabernacle and temple of old were put in place simply to train Israel to walk in the right way, and they had to be observed to safeguard God's presence among his people; they were there for the people's safety and holiness. The same remains true today. God's commandments are not meant to constrict and burden life, but to channel human freedom for its flourishing. By obedience to the commandments given to us, Christian temples are preserved from sin and its attendant suffering and freed for unimpeded life in Christ.

Finally, the impurity of the communities of Israel and Corinth point us back to the *purity* that must characterize Christian temples, to allow the bright glory of God's Presence to shine forth without stain. Remembering Paul's injunction that our bodies are part of the body of Christ, what we do with our bodies we also do with his; we no longer belong to ourselves. Remembering that what we *do* impacts who we *are*, Christians are meant to live with clean hearts and pure consciences. Paul reminds us that we were washed clean by Christ (1 Cor 6:11), are freed from sins (1 Cor 15:3), and so must now show forth the glory of God in the temple of our bodies and communities just as the glory once shone from the old temple of the covenant.

There are also a few general lessons of the temple that apply to Christians in every age. From the very earliest tabernacle narratives, it is clear that there are disastrous consequences for breaking the rules of the temple. God's accompanying presence can be forfeited at the breach of the covenant, and serious suffering is always the result. Yet, even when man appears incapable of keeping the commandments, God's faithfulness does not fail. He always provides opportunities for restoration of the covenant, which can only be renewed by repentance and the mercy of God. To be a Temple of the Holy Spirit is a glorious gift, but one that cannot be held lightly. Christian Temples now exist to glorify the Lord and proclaim his works, carrying forward the great narrative of salvation both in their present age and into the future; "This people, the 'Church', lives the story, embodies the story, tells the story. It is the living exegesis of God's master story of faith, love, power, and hope."<sup>218</sup> Steeped in a new awareness of this call, Christians must live from a transformed identity, allowing Christ's indwelling Spirit to radiate through their lives and actions. By doing so they will live within and sanctify the world while pointing toward the world to come, as an eschatological people fully indwelt by the Spirit.

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<sup>218</sup> Gorman, *Cruciformity*, 367.

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