

Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 7, The Temple in the New Testament

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 7, The Temple in the New Testament.

So, we've been considering the theme of the temple, tabernacle, and Eden, which I've put together due to their connection in Genesis and the Old Testament.

I've suggested that the significance of the temple, although many things could be said about it, is that for our purposes, the significance is that the temple or tabernacle is the dwelling place of God. It signifies God's presence with his people. The temple and tabernacle go all the way back to the Garden of Eden and demonstrate the stages of fulfillment of God's intention to restore his sanctuary dwelling and take up residence with his people in the first creation from Genesis 1 and 2. We begin then to look at some of the New Testament evidence where Jesus himself, in the Gospels, begins to fulfill the true intention of the temple by manifesting God's presence among the people on creation.

So, it's through the person of Jesus Christ that God now dwells with his people. God's tabernacling temple presence is now resident in the person of Jesus Christ. It's through Jesus Christ that God now dwells with his people.

What I want to do is look at a number of other texts in the New Testament that draw on temple imagery or tabernacle imagery in demonstrating that through the person of Jesus Christ, God's presence is tabernacle, and temple presence is now resident with his people. But also, we'll see that much like we'll see take place with other themes is it's not only fulfilled in Jesus Christ but also fulfilled in his followers, in his people, in those who belong to Christ. So, as we've said, and as I'll repeat a number of times, most of these promises get fulfilled first of all, or most of these themes are fulfilled first of all in the person of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, by extension, they are fulfilled in the followers who belong to him or who are united with him. And that is certainly true of the temple theme. The first place moving outside of the gospels and the claims of Jesus in books like Matthew and John, chapter one and chapter two, is the next stopping place, which could be the book of Acts.

And I just want to say something very briefly by way of a proposal, but I don't want to dwell on it because there are all kinds of other evidence, whether it is ultimately convincing to you or not. But in chapter two of the book of Acts, we read about the so-called day of Pentecost, or the birthday of the church, as some have called it. In

Acts chapter two and the day of Pentecost, Christ's followers are all gathered in Jerusalem by Jesus' own command and instruction in Acts chapter one.

And so, his disciples and his followers are gathered in Jerusalem, and God pours out his Holy Spirit upon the people in fulfillment of the Old Testament, Joel chapter two in particular, which Peter quotes describes and defends what happens on the day of Pentecost. So, God pours out his spirit upon the people, and the author describes it as if tongues of fire hover over them, and they speak in tongues. Now, in that situation, although I don't want to go into detail, it's possible, as Greg Beal has argued in a couple of articles and in his larger New Testament theology book that Greg Beal has argued that Acts chapter two and the Holy Spirit coming upon the people is actually a temple scene.

And he argues for temple imagery. He traces the tongues of fire and several other themes and terms in Acts chapter two and connects them back to the temple. And so, if that is the case, then Acts chapter two is already demonstrating that the people of God are God's temple, and now the Holy Spirit, God's presence, fills the people, his temple, much like we saw happening in the construction of the tabernacle in Ezekiel chapter 43 where God's glory comes and fills the temple.

Now, we find God's presence through the spirit, perhaps filling the temple. So, it's possible that even in Acts chapter two, we already see the temple theme being expanded and extended to include God's people. And we're going to see that that is indeed a prominent motif in the rest of the New Testament where the New Testament authors, particularly Paul, apply temple imagery or temple language to the people of God themselves.

So, I want to move past that possible example in Acts chapter two. You can read Greg Beale's *A New Testament Biblical Theology* and several sections in there on the temple where he argues that Acts chapter two is a temple scene. But I want to move from there to the Pauline literature.

We could also point to a number of texts in Pauline literature. Perhaps just the general theme of God or Jesus being present with believers through the Holy Spirit may evoke the temple concept, even though temple language is not explicitly used. The presence of God, the presence of Jesus in people, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in his people, all could evoke temple language or temple imagery.

Or to go even further, the fact that Christ is the final sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins that we find in Hebrews, but even Paul describing Jesus as the one who provides forgiveness of sins at least implicitly assumes that Jesus Christ replaces or fulfills the temple. Forgiveness is now no longer associated with the temple and performing sacrifices in the temple, but now forgiveness for sins is found solely in the person of Jesus Christ. So, references to forgiveness of sins and references to forgiveness

through Christ may implicitly evoke or at least assume that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the temple and replaces it because now, forgiveness is found in and associated with the person of Jesus Christ.

But I want to look at some more specific texts in the New Testament and start again with the Pauline literature. The starting point would probably be 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verses 16 and 17, one of the more well-known references in Pauline literature to the temple. And again, most of these, all of these references will refer to the people themselves as the temple.

But in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verses 16 and 17, we read this: don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person, for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple. Now, in this section, Paul clearly addresses his readers and it's important to understand that if you could look at the Greek text, although the English text obscures this, but if you look at the Greek text, the pronouns you and the verbs are plural, referring to the entire congregation or referring to the people themselves.

So, this is not an individual statement that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, but this is a corporate statement where Paul refers to the entire church, to the entirety of the Corinthian believers as the temple. So, the Corinthian church is a temple. More temple language is also found in verse 12.

If I can start reading verse 10, by the grace that God has given me, I will lay a foundation. That could also be temple language. I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it.

But each one should build with care, for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, their work will be shown for what it is. And I want to draw attention to that language of gold, silver, and precious stones.

Once more, in both the Old Testament and Jewish apocalyptic literature and elsewhere, gold and precious stones are associated with the construction building of the temple. All one has to do is jump over to Revelation 21, for example, where, as we'll see later, the New Jerusalem is actually described as a temple, and temple language is taken and applied to the New Jerusalem. But as perhaps you're well aware, in chapter 21 of Revelation, John describes the New Jerusalem temple as consisting of gold and precious stones.

So, all of this language together, the language of foundation, the language of precious stones, gold, and precious stones, and then the explicit reference in verses 16 and 17 of 1 Corinthians 3 to the church as a temple suggests then that the people

of God are now the temple. Now, one could say perhaps that, well, this is simply a metaphor, the authors comparing the church to a temple. That is possible.

If all I had to go on with was this text, it may be possible to conclude that Paul is simply using a metaphor. I think that some commentaries actually conclude that. But when you look at what Paul does, especially elsewhere in the book of 1 Corinthians, his reliance on the Old Testament, what he does in 2 Corinthians with the temple motif, where he clearly connects it with the Old Testament promises, I think it's difficult to simply conclude that Paul's only using the temple as a metaphor and comparing the church to a temple.

Instead, I think that Paul is suggesting, especially in light of the broader canon and what he does elsewhere in 1 and 2 Corinthians, that the church now fulfills the true intention of the temple. What God intended in the temple now reaches its climax and fulfillment in the church, the people of God. What the prophetic text, like Ezekiel, anticipated, a restored temple where God would dwell with his people, now is beginning to find fulfillment, not only in Jesus Christ, John 1 but now in his church, in his followers who are the true temple of God.

In fact, probably many of the ethical obligations and the ethical standards in the rest of 1 Corinthians are based on the assumption that the church is a temple. For example, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, the call for them to pursue purity and to expel an immoral brother seems to be based on the idea that the church is the temple. Just as purity was associated with the temple and holiness was associated with the temple in the Old Testament, now Paul, understanding the church as the true temple and the new temple of God, also calls on it to pursue purity and holiness.

So many of the ethical exhortations in the rest of Corinthians probably stem from the fact that Paul envisions the church as a temple and now calls for its purity and holiness. So, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 then seems to be an example of Paul taking temple imagery from the Old Testament and now applying it to the church, not only as a metaphor but also seeing the church, the people of God, now as the true temple, now as the fulfillment of what God intended in the temple in the first place, and that is that God would dwell with his people. 2 Corinthians chapter 6, to stay in the Corinthian literature for just a moment, 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and 16-18, we've read a couple of texts in this section already, and we looked at chapter 5, 17 in connection with the new creation, again showing that so many of these concepts are closely intertwined.

In fact, we'll see later on in Revelation 21 that the new temple Jerusalem occurs on the new creation, so it's difficult to completely separate some of these themes. But for 2 Corinthians 6:16-18, what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we notice the plural again, Paul referring to himself and the Corinthian church, for we are the temple of the living God. Now, one could stop there and think,

well, again, could not Paul simply be using a temple as a metaphor to describe the church? The church is a temple, and it is used simply as a kind of symbol or metaphor.

Well, yes, that's true, but go on and notice that Paul grounds his assertion by beginning to quote Old Testament text. The first one in verse 16 is rather telling, I will live with them and walk among them and I will be their God, and they will be my people, which is probably a combined quotation from both Ezekiel chapter 37 and verses 26 and 27, but also Leviticus chapter 26 and verses 11 and 12. The Leviticus quotation is in the context of the tabernacle, God dwelling with his people in the tabernacle.

The Ezekiel 37 passage is in the context of God, comes right before a section we've looked at and we'll look at again, chapter 40-47, that recounts the restored renewed temple. So, for example, in Leviticus chapter 26, I want you to notice the language and the covenant formula; we'll deal with covenant next, but the covenant formula that Paul picks up, Leviticus chapter 26, the author says, I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.

Again, in the context of Israel, setting up the tabernacle and God dwelling with his people through the tabernacle. Then, Ezekiel chapter 36 uses very similar, almost identical wording, which again proceeds with Ezekiel's description of the restored, rebuilt, and renewed temple. Ezekiel chapter 37 and verses 26 and 27.

Again, the new covenant formula related to God dwelling with his people. He says I will make a covenant of peace with them. It will be an everlasting covenant.

I will establish them and increase their number. And I will put my sanctuary among them. The sanctuary then will get described in 40 through 47.

My dwelling place will be with them and I will be their God and they will be my people. Now Paul combines both of those actually in chapter six and verse 16 of second Corinthians, when he says, for we are the temple of the living God, as God said to, to, to explain that and to justify that he says, I will live with them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

So, Paul justifies the fact that they are this temple by quoting two texts that relate to the tabernacle and the renewed temple in Ezekiel chapter 37. Then he goes on and actually quotes two more Old Testament texts. Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord, touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.

And then I will be to you verse 18. I will be a father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord God almighty. So, I think in this section, the author Paul

is quoting from the Old Testament to demonstrate the fact that those Old Testament texts, Leviticus chapter 26, and then even the prophetic texts, especially Ezekiel 37, now find their realization in and their fulfillment in the church of Jesus Christ.

And notice, too, that this is all in the context of holiness. So once more, the concepts of purity and holiness that were associated with the Old Testament tabernacle and temple are now transferred to the new temple, which is the church. So, this is not only a metaphor but instead the fulfillment of the Old Testament motif of the temple and even the eschatological temple in Ezekiel 37.

In fact, later on in this section, the author will refer to God's promises. Now that we have God's promises are based on these promises so that once more, Paul sees probably a reference to these Old Testament texts. So, Paul sees these promises, such as God establishing his sanctuary, his dwelling with the people, now fulfilled, not in a physical building or structure, but now fulfilled in the people of God themselves.

So, both of the Corinthian texts both of the Corinthian texts then seem to testify, I think, and this will be corroborated by looking at some other passages as well, but seem to be a demonstration that Paul sees the intention of the establishment of the physical temple in the Old Testament, as well as the expectations of an eschatological temple now being fulfilled in the people, in the church. So, he can refer to the church as the temple of God. And then again, even 2 Corinthians 6 justifies that and explains that by a reference to the Old Testament itself.

The next stopping point is Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 20 through 22. And we've, again, already looked at some of these texts and will continue to do so in other contexts related to other themes. But Ephesians chapter 2, 20 through 22 comes at the end of a section where two things at least are going on.

There are a number of things, but the two I want to emphasize are that Paul is arguing for the unity of Jews and Gentiles now becoming one humanity. This unity is demonstrated by God taking two formerly disparate groups, ethnically and religiously, and now bringing them together into one new humanity, as Paul says, in Christ Jesus. It's through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection that the barrier has been broken down between the two, and now Christ has created peace between the Jews and Gentiles by bringing them together into one body, one new humanity, the church.

The second thing is that Paul grounds this in allusions to the Old Testament, especially the book of Isaiah. Now, nowhere does Paul explicitly quote the Old Testament in Ephesians chapter 2. One of the things, as a kind of an aside again, one of the things that have been going on the last perhaps 20 years or so is a renewed study of the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament that has recognized the

significance of the Old Testament is far more than just where New Testament authors quote it by saying things like, this took place to fulfill what was spoken in Isaiah the prophet, or as it is written, or something like that, such as you find in Matthew chapter 2 and other texts like we saw in 2nd Corinthians 6. Instead, sometimes authors take Old Testament text and Old Testament language, and weave them into their work without signaling it by saying this is actually a fulfillment of this, or this took place to fulfill this, or just as it is written. Instead, they'll simply take the language and weave it into their own discourse, into their own speech.

And that's what we find going on in Ephesians chapter 2. And when authors do that, it's no less significant at times than when they actually quote it. In Ephesians chapter 2, Paul actually weaves a number of concepts and specific references to passages into his own language. So, Ephesians chapter 2 starts in verse 11. Let me just reread a couple of these sections so that you get the picture.

For example, in 11 and 12, there are already specific references to the Old Testament. Therefore, remember that formerly you who were Gentiles by birth and called uncircumcised by those who call themselves circumcision. So, there's clear Old Testament language.

Verse 12, remember that at that time, you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of promise. We've read these verses already, but note again the specific references back to Old Testament concepts. But then the author goes on and talks about now in Christ Jesus, you who are far have been brought near.

That far and near language again comes right out of the book of Isaiah. Verse 14, for he himself, is our peace. The language of peace, Isaiah 52 and elsewhere, the language of reconciliation, making the two one new humanity, the concept of newness.

This language comes right out of the book of Isaiah. So, Paul is utilizing texts that come out of Isaiah that refer to the restoration of the people of God. Now, to refer to the bringing together of Jews and Gentiles into one new humanity, which is the church that now has equal access to the people of God.

So, Paul's point is the joining of Jew and Gentile, the uniting of Jew and Gentile into one new humanity, is the fulfillment of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah's program of restoration that he spells out, particularly in chapters 40 through 66. This litany of allusions to the Old Testament and Paul's lengthy description of what Christ has done in bringing about the fulfillment of Isaiah in uniting Jews and Gentiles to one another in one new humanity through the cross of Jesus Christ and bringing peace is climaxed with this reference in verses 20 through 22. Actually, I'll back up and read verse 19, since that's the actual beginning of this concluding unit.

Consequently, you, especially Gentiles, his readers, are no longer foreigners and strangers, but you are fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ himself being the cornerstone. Now, listen to this. So far, it appears to be just general building imagery.

Although I would argue the reference to the foundation in chapter 20 is probably in verse 20, I'm sorry, chapter two is probably temple imagery because now, in verse 21, in him, in Christ, this whole building is joined together and arises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him, you two are being built together to become a dwelling place in which God lives by his spirit. In other words, then much like we saw in the first and second Corinthians, Paul conceives of the church as the temple, as the end-time temple that now is the dwelling place of God, where God himself resides through his Holy Spirit.

And the apostles and prophets are the foundation of this temple. In fact, that language of foundation is consistent with what you find in other Jewish literature. For example, the Qumran community and the Dead Sea Scrolls describe the community as a temple.

They also use temple language, and they describe their founding members, key members of the community, as the foundation of the temple. Now, the Qumran community still expected a physically rebuilt temple, but in the meantime, they also applied temple language to themselves and saw their key founding members as the foundation of the community and of the temple. So now Paul does something similar in calling the apostles and prophets as the foundations of this temple, a temple that is now being built up that consists not of literal stones and building blocks, but now consists of the members that constitute this temple in which God dwells through his Holy Spirit.

But then the author, quoting Isaiah chapter 28 and verse 16, not quoting, but alluding to Isaiah once again, 28:16, calls Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone. So, Christ, although the apostles and prophets are the foundation of this structure, Jesus is the chief cornerstone. He's the keystone that holds it all together.

And then we are built upon all of that. God's people, the members of all of this, become a holy temple where God dwells through his Spirit. So once more, this reference to the church as a temple does not appear to be simply metaphorical language only, that the temples only use as a metaphor to describe the church, although it does that.

But I would argue, based on the reference to Old Testament texts, especially from Isaiah, and Isaiah 28-16, Jesus Christ the chief cornerstone, that that text and other

Old Testament texts throughout chapter 2 argue that the church is being seen by Paul as the fulfillment of Old prophetic text. Now, the church, not a physical temple, is the locus of God's dwelling place. God's tabernacling temple presence with his people is now being fulfilled, not in a physical structure, but now in the people of God themselves, where God dwells through his Spirit.

In fact, if I can refer to one more text in Ephesians that I think this concept helps to illuminate, turn to chapter 5 and verses 18-20 of Ephesians. Ephesians chapter 5 and verses 18-20. This is a text that is frequently referred to once more, usually read very individualistically, and we'll talk about that in just a moment.

But starting at verse 18, do not get drunk with wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing and making music in your hearts of the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then verse 21 probably belongs to that as well, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Now, what I want to do is I don't want to look at every detail in this section, but I want to look at that phrase and be filled with the Spirit. As I said, usually we are inclined to treat this individualistically, that God's Spirit fills me and controls me, and as opposed to wine controlling me and filling me and being drunk with wine, now I need to let God's Spirit fill me individually so that I produce the fruit of the Spirit and I live the kind of life that God desires. And again, I certainly would not want to dispute that notion, but I do want to question whether that's what Paul is saying.

I wonder if we should not read this more corporately and if we should read it perhaps in light of Ephesians chapter 2, the text that we just looked at. In fact, once more, the imperative here to be filled is plural, and obviously, if Paul is speaking to a group, he would use a plural, not just a singular, but probably Paul is referring more corporately to the entire church. And I think when he asks the church to be filled, I think he's referring to the church once more as a temple.

Notice, too, this language of speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual psalms; this seems to place these instructions in the context of the church gathered for worship, not just what individuals do in their homes. So, I think what Paul is saying is the church is a temple that God fills with His Spirit. So, this once more refers to the temple's presence.

In fact, if you go back to the Old Testament once more, this idea of filling, of God filling the temple, seems to be what is present here. For example, one text we read, Ezekiel chapter 43, in reference to the restored, renewed temple, after Ezekiel sees the temple's structure and is led on a tour of it and measures it. In chapter 3, he finally sees God's glory.

In verse 2 Ezekiel 43, verse 2, I saw the glory of God of Israel coming from the east, and it entered the temple. And notice what he says in verse 5, then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. So, I think that the language of filling here in chapter 5 is temple language.

What Paul is saying is that he wants the church to be the temple of God, where God dwells in it, and God fills it with His glory and His Spirit. Obviously, how that works out is in the surrounding chapters; in chapters 5 and 6, we find the ethical implications of that, what it means to be God's temple, what it looks like, and how the church demonstrates that it is God's temple. But once more, I think we should stop reading this exclusively individualistically, and again, we should probably read it in light of chapter 2, where the church is growing up to become a holy dwelling place, a temple that God dwells in through His Spirit.

Now again, we find the church as a temple that God fills with His Spirit. So, I think in these sections, Paul consistently uses temple imagery, not just as a convenient metaphor or comparison, but Paul is using temple imagery to express the fulfillment of the Old Testament temple, the intentions for the physical temple, and the prophetic expectations of a restored temple are now being realized in and fulfilled in God's people, the church. That is, what the temple signified, God's presence with His people, God dwelling with His people, is now being realized with God dwelling in, God filling through His Holy Spirit, His people, the church.

Jew and town are now brought together as one body in Christ. Some people, interestingly in light of that, have talked about it and asked whether there's going to be a third temple period. We refer to the first temple and then the second temple period, Herod's temple, which was destroyed in 70 AD.

Is there going to be a third temple period? And my suggestion is, yes, there is. There already is one. The church is now the third temple.

God's people, made of Jews and Gentiles, in fulfillment of Old Testament promises, is now the third temple where God begins to dwell with His people. But we'll see this is only the not the already. There's still a not-yet dimension.

The temple is not completed in a sense. We find the final realization and the final fulfillment in the new creation in Revelation 21 and 22, which we'll look at later. But I want to move outside of the Pauline literature and talk briefly about two other texts.

One of those is found in Hebrews chapters 8 through 10, where in this section the author, throughout the entire book, the author is demonstrating the superiority of Christ over the old covenant system. And the idea isn't that the old covenant itself was defective and it was plan A that didn't work, so God had to institute plan B. But

the author of Hebrews demonstrates that Jesus Christ is what the old covenant system was pointing to. And so, he has brought it to fulfillment.

So why do the readers want to go back to something else? In a lengthy section in chapters 8 through 10, the author argues at length that Jesus Christ replaces and brings to fulfillment the entire Old Testament sacrificial system. So now forgiveness of sins is found in Jesus Christ and not in the Old Testament tabernacle or temple. For example, in Hebrews chapter 8, and once more, I'll just read a couple of sections so that you get the idea of what the author is saying.

In Hebrews chapter 8 and verses 1 through 6, the author says, now the main point of what we are saying is this, we do not have such a high priest who sat down at the right hand of the throne of majesty, or we do have such a high priest, that is Jesus Christ, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by human hands, that is the earthly tabernacle or temple. Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices, so it is necessary for this one, this high priest, that is, Jesus, to have something to offer. If he were on earth, he would not be a priest, for there are already priests who offer the gifts prescribed of all.

They serve at a sanctuary that is only a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle, see to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown by you in the mountain. However, in fact, the ministry Jesus received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is a mediator is superior to the old one since the new covenant is established on better promises.

Now, the issue of the tabernacle and temple is also linked with the covenant, the theme that we will deal with after the temple. If you skip to the next chapter, chapter 9 and verses 11 and 12, for example, but when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands. That is to say, it is not part of this creation.

He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, which is the way the priests and the earthly tabernacle and temple did, but he entered the most holy place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption. So, notice in these verses that Jesus Christ now at least does three things that are important in these texts. There are a number of things, but I simply want to highlight these in relation to the temple.

First of all, Jesus is now the superior priest. Jesus now functions as and fulfills the Old Testament priesthood as the priest that now enters the holy place, the heavenly one, and offers up a sacrifice, which is now his own blood, which obtains and secures

eternal redemption for the people. So once more, what the author is arguing is that redemption and forgiveness of sins are now found not in the physical temple and tabernacle but is now found in the person of Jesus Christ.

So, Jesus Christ is the priest who serves in the tabernacle. Second, I want you to note that Jesus Christ serves in a tabernacle that is a greater and heavenly one, not an earthly one. The earthly one is described as only a type or a copy or shadow of the reality of the real tabernacle temple, which is in the and that is a temple that Christ now serves.

That is the tabernacle temple in which Christ now enters the holy of holies to offer up sacrifices for forgiveness of sins. The third thing I've already mentioned in conjunction with those two points is the implication is that forgiveness is now associated not with the physical tabernacle, not with the physical temple, but with Jesus Christ, who serves in the heavenly sanctuary. So, the author of Hebrews himself begins to argue for the seemingly temporary nature of the physical tabernacle and temple, but that that has now been eclipsed with the coming of Jesus Christ.

No longer is forgiveness of sins associated with the human priests and the earthly tabernacle and temple, but now forgiveness of sins is associated with our heavenly priest, although the author still argues he is a human as well, but our heavenly priest who is Jesus Christ who now offers himself up as a sacrifice and serves in the heavenly temple of which the earthly one is merely a model or pattern. So once more, the author's argument is not just that plan A didn't work, so God scrapped it and replaced it with something else, but that language of model or pattern or shadow seems to suggest that the earthly tabernacle and temple were already pointing to something greater. They were never meant to be permanent expressions of the means that God will utilize to deal with human sin, but the tabernacle and temple were only meant as a shadow of or as an anticipation of something greater.

And the author of Hebrews' argument is that something greater is now here in the person of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament tabernacle and temple pointed to a greater reality of God dwelling with his people and God dealing with sin so that he could dwell with his people in the person of Jesus Christ. So once more Hebrews does, interestingly, not, at least in these sections, talk primarily in terms of the people being the temple, but seems to talk in terms of Jesus Christ, consistent with the author's purpose throughout the book where Jesus is seen as fulfilling and being superior to different Old Testament persons and places and institutions.

Now Jesus Christ is seen as the fulfillment of the temple and what went on in the temple, the whole sacrificial system, the whole covenant, and God's intention and purpose in the tabernacle and temple, the physical one, that now find their fulfillment in the greater reality embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. Another text,

one other text that utilizes temple language, and there's probably, as I've said before, there's probably others we could point to, but I'm focusing on passages that seem clearly to refer to Jesus or the people of God as a temple and seem to connect that back to Old Testament text, which Hebrews clearly does, and we saw that Paul seems to do that as well. But in 1 Peter chapter 2, 1 Peter chapter 2, I want to read verses 4 through 6. 1 Peter 2, verses 4 through 6, as you come to him, the living stone rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him, you also, and notice again that you, the author's addressing the church or churches, not individuals, but you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

For in scripture it says, see, I lay in Zion a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. So, note, once more, two things. First of all, the temple language is now applied to the church.

So, the people of God are the temple. They are the temple, the stones, much like Ephesians chapter 2. This seems to be very consistent with what Paul said in Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 19 through 22. Now the people themselves are the metaphorical stones that make up the temple.

And once more, Jesus is the chief stone. Verse 6, I lay in Zion the precious cornerstone. Jesus is the cornerstone or the chief stone.

Again, much like what we saw in Ephesians chapter 2. Jesus is the cornerstone of this temple, and the people are the metaphorical stones that form the structure of the temple. Furthermore, they are a holy priesthood, and they offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Jesus Christ. So, the authors have taken all this Old Testament temple imagery and now apply it to the people of God, much like we see Paul doing.

But I also want you to notice once more that this is not just convenient metaphorical language, although it is metaphorical, but the author grounds it in the Old Testament. So, he quotes, although Paul alluded to it, the author quotes from Isaiah 28 and verse 16. Also, this notion of being a holy priesthood anticipates what we find later on in just a few verses later in verse 9, where the author says, but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you may declare the praises of God, or of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

That is a direct quotation from Exodus chapter 19, verse 16, which refers to the nation of Israel as the kingdom of priests. But now, interestingly, in chapter two, verse nine of 1 Peter, it gets applied to the people of God, the church. They are now the priests who serve in the new temple.

They are now the royal priesthood, which functions to serve and offer praise and spiritual sacrifices in the restored temple. So, the references to the Old Testament, I think, again, suggest this is more than just a metaphor, but that the author understands the church as the true temple fulfilling the Old Testament promises of a restored, renewed temple, as well as the ultimate goal and purposes of the physical temple in Tabernacle, which the author of Hebrew said were merely a shadow of the true temple. Now we find that true temple fulfilled in the church, the people of God, where, again, much like Ephesians 2, Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone in fulfillment of Isaiah 28, and all the people are the building stones that make up this dwelling place where God lives, and they function as priests.

Interestingly, in Hebrews 8 through 10, we see that Jesus is the true priest, but now we see that the people themselves function as priests. And once more, we've seen that several times, where what is applied to Jesus Christ then also gets applied to his people by virtue of their association with and their union with him through faith. So, 1 Peter 2 also, much like the Pauline literature, takes temple language and applies it to God's people, the church.

Now, taking temple language and applying it to the people is not unique to Paul or to Peter or other New Testament authors. Other Jewish writers do that. We find in some of the intertestamental literature, sometimes, we find Jewish authors taking Old Testament language, temple language and applying it to the people.

The Qumran community, the Dead Sea Scrolls, do that. We've talked about that already. They frequently take temple language from the Old Testament and apply it to their community.

The main difference is that Jewish literature, virtually without question, still anticipates a future rebuilding of the physical structure. I would argue that, for example, in the Qumran community, the reason they apply temple imagery to their community is they are disillusioned by, they are rejecting the physical temple in Jerusalem for various reasons, so they don't think that's a true temple. So they take temple language and apply it to themselves, yet they still await a rebuilt physical temple.

The reason Paul applies temple language to the community is not because he rejects the physical temple, not because he thinks it's corrupt, etc., etc., not because he thinks that one day there's still yet to be a physical temple, and in the meantime, the community is the temple. But the reason he does it is because, first of all, the Old Testament promises of the temple have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and then, by extension, have now been fulfilled in his people who belong to him. So the temple promises then, in the Old Testament, find their fulfillment, I would argue, not in a physical building or temple now or in the future, which would be consistent with, you would find that still in Jewish expectations and Jewish literature.

But instead, the New Testament seems to find the prophecies of a rebuilt temple and the expectations of a rebuilt temple and even the intentions and purposes of the Old Testament temple now fulfilled, no longer physically in a rebuilt temple, but now those fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who is the true temple, and also in his people who are now the temple of the living God where God dwells by his Spirit. Now, the temple imagery or the expectations of the temple have an already but not yet dimension to them, obviously. We focused mainly on the already in the Gospels where Jesus fulfills the temple, in the Pauline literature, in Hebrews and 1 Peter where Jesus, again in Hebrews, but the church fulfills the temple intentions and the expectations of a restored temple.

The church fulfills that. That's the already. But there's still a not-yet dimension that we'll look at in just a moment, and that is in Revelation 21 and 22.

So again, just to summarize, to make clear, in the Old Testament, what I think we find, first of all, in the Garden of Eden, Eden was the sanctuary, sort of the temple sanctuary tabernacle where God dwelled with his people. Following Genesis 3, with sin ruining that and sin disrupting that relationship, disrupting God's presence, Adam and Eve are God's presence with his people. Adam and Eve are expelled or exiled from the Garden, and the rest of the Old Testament then begins to answer the question, how will God restore his sanctuary with his people? How will God once more take up residence with and dwell with his people? That began to be fulfilled through both the physical tabernacle and temple in the Old Testament.

But Israel fared no better than Adam and Eve. They, too, because of sin, were exiled from the temple. So that you have the prophets, such as Ezekiel and Zechariah, expecting and anticipating a restored and rebuilt temple that will recapture Eden, that will fulfill the intention of the tabernacle and temple in the first place, in a restored and rebuilt temple.

The question then is, well, how is that going to be fulfilled? When you get to the Old Testament, or I'm sorry, the New Testament, what is interesting then is that it gets fulfilled not in a physical structure, not in a rebuilt physical temple, but first of all, in the person of Jesus Christ. God's presence with his people from the Garden of Eden, manifest in the tabernacle and temple, was anticipated and prophesied in the prophets. God's presence now resides in Jesus Christ.

God is now beginning to take up residence with his people in fulfillment of the Old Testament in the person of Jesus Christ. And then, by extension, in his people who belong to Jesus Christ, so the New Testament writers use temple imagery to show that the church is also the temple, where God now takes up residence and dwells with his people through his Holy Spirit in the church temple. In the next section, then, as I said, we'll look at the not yet aspect, and we'll focus on Revelation 21 and

22, which gives us a glimpse of the final consummated temple, tabernacle, and Edenic dwelling of God with his people.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 7, The Temple in the New Testament.