

The Biblical/Theological Background

There are two issues that we will need to consider here. The first of those issues is that of the Jewish Temple. What was that? How should Christians understand it, both in terms of pattern and precedent? Second, what do we do with the New Testament pattern of Acts and Paul that clearly demonstrates a decentralization and an informality with regard to worship and worship space. Which is the essential formula that still applies today or were these only a temporary necessity caused by such circumstances? Should Christians seek out a holy space today or simply a worship space?

Old Testament

Tabernacle – God’s instruction to Moses to build a tabernacle in the wilderness was a display of God’s redemptive plan and would be a gift to the nation for their hope and trust. The tabernacle was God’s solution to the question: “How does a sinful people worship the Lord in anticipation of the coming Redeemer (promised in Gen. 3:15)?” Everything about the tabernacle looked forward to Christ and to his work. As such, the significant lesson of the tabernacle had to do with barriers. These barriers included the mediatorial role of the priesthood, the bordering screen surrounding the courtyard, and the thick curtains that closed the entrance of the Holy Place and, further in, the Holy of Holies, to all but the High Priest’s annual entrance to offer intercession on behalf

of the people. God's sinful people were protected from the holiness of God by these barriers and they characterized everything about the Israelites' form of worship. Today, the essential message of the gospel is that all such barriers have been removed by Christ's intercessory work on the cross.

The tabernacle was also portable, being made of fabrics and hides, with furniture outfitted with hoops and poles so that all could be carried in order to go with the people of God wherever they found the cloud and fire to lead them as they wandered the desert wilderness. Whenever they camped, the tabernacle was set up and all the tents of residence were set up surrounding it. The tabernacle was the center of all life as well as of life-sustaining worship.

Inside the Holy of Holies, past all the barriers, priests and curtains, resided not a mere idol but the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the very throne and footstool of God on earth. God did not live there but it represented His presence with them. This taught and reminded the people that God is not a product of their own imagination; that He was not some mere statue or figure that needed to be protected as well as worshipped. Clearly, the tabernacle was the meeting place between God and man. It was not to be understood in a static sense but in terms of its place in the progression of redemptive history. One day, the veil, being the symbol of separation between God and his people, would be torn asunder. One day, the way God's people would worship would be radically different.

There was other symbolism that taught of a more permanent truth. The tabernacle's portability meant that the Israelites could worship God as they continued their trek through the wilderness and north into the land of Canaan. God did not require them to return to Mt. Sinai to worship his name. Rather, he had committed himself to be with his people wherever they went.

That image is also represented in the coming of the God-man into the world. God comes to seek and to dwell with his own. The apostle John purposely described Jesus in the opening chapter of his gospel as being God "dwelling" or "tabernacling" with his people (Jn. 1:14). The New Testament describes the Christian church as pilgriming through this age (2 Pet. 2:11) as we move toward the new heavens and the new earth - and God in Christ is with us, always (Mt. 28:20b).

Between the Tabernacle and the coming of Christ is the Temple, built by Solomon. At first, this seems to be a natural transition. The Israelites had settled in the land of Canaan, David had built himself a palace in Jerusalem, the capital that he chose for his kingdom, and so the Tabernacle could well take on a more permanent residence as well. It could also be said that, unlike the Tabernacle which pointed to Jesus' advent, the Temple pointed to Jesus' return and the kingdom yet to come.

If that is the correct line of thinking, clearly the concept of worship long prescribed and required by God, has been changed dramatically. Now the worship space provided the Israelites in the wilderness has been changed into a

Temple – a singular, geographically-marked spot that God has set aside for his worship, a place where all of God’s people must come if they are to meet with their God, a place where God is considered to dwell.

Had that transition truly been made? Has this change in worship been objectively declared by God? Answering this question will require us to examine the Bible’s own testimony regarding the building of the Temple, follow the words of the prophets, of Jesus’ own regard for the Temple, and finally, how the Christians in the book of Acts understood it.

Temple

“Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.

What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord or what is the place of my rest?

Did not my hand make all these things?’” (from Stephen’s defense in Acts 7:44-50, ESV)

a) **David’s Understanding** - When David established his kingdom in Israel, and made Jerusalem his capital, this man after God’s own heart and with whom God had renewed his covenant, desired to build a house for God. “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of Israel dwells in a tent.” (2 Sam. 7:2, ESV)ⁱ The king of Israel desired to honor his own King and wanted to make the worship of the true and living God more glorious. David’s desire was to build a house which would bring glory to David’s kingdom in the eyes of others.

However, the word of the Lord came to Nathan which prohibited David from doing what was in his heart.

“Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in? I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’” (2 Sam. 7:5-7 ESV)

Instead, the Lord reminded David of how David had been raised up for the Lord’s own purposes and how the plan of the Lord was that “the Lord will make you a house” (2 Sam. 7:11, ESV, my emphasis). What the Lord meant by that was not a house of cedar as David had built for himself but a people according to his covenantal promise.

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Sam. 7:12-16 ESV)

The word “house” seems crucial to understanding the Lord’s prophetic intention. It appears to be clear that the Lord is saying:

- the “offspring” promised to David is the same covenantal chain of descendents by faith promised to Abram (Gen. 15:5-6) which is also verified by Paul (cf. Gal. 3:16);
- the “house” that will be built for the name of the Lord is that of 1) Jesus Christ, by raising him from the dead (cf. Jn. 2:19, where Jesus refers to his own body correctly as the “temple”), and 2) by building up his people, the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27, etc.);
- the “kingdom” is not that physical kingdom that Solomon will inherit (and which will not stand forever) but Christ’s own kingdom (cf. Is. 9:7);
- the one who will be to the Lord as a “son” is Jesus in the flesh (cf. Mt. 3:16);
- the “sin” involved in this prophecy/promise is the sin taken up by Jesus (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21) and for which he was punished (cf. Is. 53:4).

David prayed in response before the Lord making it clear he understood what the Lord had said.

“Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? ... And now, O LORD God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, ... and the house of your servant David will be established before you. ... [M]ay it please you to bless the house of your servant, ... and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.” (2 Sam. 7:18, 25-26, 29 ESV)

Here, also, the meaning of “house” is crucial. Nowhere in this passage is the term referring to anything physical. Rather, the “house” is the legacy in the continuing generations of God’s people. That meaning is consistent throughout these verses.

Later, as 1 Chroniclesⁱⁱ records, David’s understanding and intention has changed. David had offended the Lord by calling for a census in Israel and the Lord’s rebuke had come in the form of a pestilence – a pestilence which mercifully came to a stop when, at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, a sacrificial offering was made. It would appear that in thanksgiving for the Lord’s mercy that day, David renewed his resolve to build a physical house for the Lord after all: “Here shall be the house of the LORD God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel.” (1 Chron. 22:1, ESV). Here the meaning of “house” changed significantly.

- David begins specific, physical preparations (rf. 1 Chron. 22:2-5);
- He interpreted God’s promise for offspring to refer to his own, chosen successor, Solomon, and David charged Solomon with the task of construction of the Temple, explaining to his son that David, himself, had been denied by the Lord to do the building himself. David told Solomon that it was because David had “shed so much blood” before the Lord on the earth that the Lord would not allow him to build the Temple (rf. 1 Chron. 22:8; cf. 28:3);

- David organized the Levites, priests, musicians, treasurers and other officials into a clerical bureaucracy (cf. 1 Chron. 23-27);
- David charged all Israel, and charged Solomon before them, to build the house, insisting that “the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary”, giving Solomon “the plan of all that he had in mind” and claiming that “All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan.” (1 Chron. 28:10, 12a, 19 ESV)

b) *Solomon's Dedication* - The construction of the new temple was Solomon's chief endeavor. 1 Kings 5 records how Solomon bargained with Hiram, king of Tyre, for necessary materials. It is in this communication that Solomon explains: “You know that David my father could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.” (1 Kgs. 5:3) The meaning of this is left in doubt. In 1 Kings, the meaning may be that David simply did not have time for this construction program in Solomon's mind; in 1 Chronicles, David's recorded words to Solomon sound more punitive: “shed so much blood”. In neither case are we left with a clear indication that the voice of the Lord is involved in this reasoning. Solomon goes on to explain to Hiram that he intends “to build a house for the name of the Lord my God”, using the word of the Lord given to Nathan as justification - understanding that the offspring promised of the Lord to David applied to himself. The record of the construction is detailed through 1 Kings 5-7, although there no similar parallel to the Lord's giving of those construction plans as there was with the tabernacle.

Solomon's dedication of his new construction (cf. 1 Kings 8) began with great pomp and circumstanceⁱⁱⁱ. Before the great assembly, he had the ark of the

covenant brought up as well as the tent of meeting itself and all the articles that went along with the ceremonial worship of God and all these were brought into the new Temple.

In the account of Solomon's dedication speech, the language and viewpoint expressed are consistent throughout. Whether by way of the author's description or the direct quotations of Solomon himself, the place of attention is described as a "house" (בַּיִת) twenty-one times and is never described or called a "temple" or "palace" (הַיְכָל). Furthermore, the purpose - that it be a "house for my name" - is repeated nine times. Finally, Solomon expresses a consistent acknowledgement and appreciation made of the fact that God, himself, does not truly reside in such a man-made house:

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! (1 Kings 8:27, ESV; cf. vs. 30, 32, 36, 39, 43, 45, 49)

In the same spirit are the words of Solomon addressed to the people:

Then Solomon said, 'The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever' (1 Kings 8:12-13, ESV, my emphasis).

There is a clear lesson that Solomon is teaching his people. Even as he ventures to glorify his Lord by building such an edifice, he is aware of the tendency that dwells in the heart of man to change the nature of "worship space" into a "holy place". This is different than the designated areas of the tabernacle which were called "The Holy Place" and "The Holy of Holies", for those had been areas in the tabernacle set aside by God as a result of the barriers present in the worship

of God prior to the sacrifice of Christ. A “holy place” as Solomon was warning the Israelites about was the theology not of their Lord but of pagan idols.

Temples had long been built for pagan idols in every nation and culture but not in Israel^{iv}. In the temples of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Rome, etc., the carved and gilded statues of idols and deities were provided places not just for their worship but also for their residence. Ancient idolatry is extremely territorial and every nation whose strength and power were represented by their idol needed a temple - a home and a covering to keep the elements of nature (over which these idols had no control) from spoiling and decaying them, and also to keep the deities, themselves, from being helplessly stolen. Such temples also were designed so that the worship of such idols could be done with impressive form and power, and performed by designated priests. Temples were, as such, holy places.

Solomon taught and warned the Israelites not to regard their God as the nations regarded their idols, that the house he had built that day was distinctly not to be thought of as the residence of their God, and that the worship done at this house was to be a continuation of the worship God had prescribed to be given when he have command to have the tabernacle built and used.

However, with time, the term “temple” will come to be applied to the house of Solomon nonetheless. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* describes *הֵיכָל*, translated “temple”, as a “loanword from Sumerian/ Akkadian” (Harris, vol. 1, p. 214) meaning “palace” or “citadel”, serving as locations for

both legitimate or illegitimate kinds of worship, and that “[w]ithin Israel it refers to the dwelling place of the great king, God” (Harris, vol. 1, p. 215). It could be argued that *היכל* and *בית* are words that are used interchangeably to describe or refer to the edifice that resided on the mount in the heart of Jerusalem and which was the religious center of the nation of Israel right up to the time of Christ, and that there is no clear distinction to be made between the words. This might, indeed, be the case.

However, as the references continue to be made, it can be observed that there is a progression, or rather, a regression of thought that accompanies the use of these words. If that is the case, then this “regression” would be analogous to the way we use the English word “church” in modern dialogue today. Is the “church” a building or is it the people? Do we build our churches with bricks and mortar or through worship, discipleship and fellowship? The New Testament clearly refers to “church” as the body of believers and not to any given building in which they meet. Yet, our language expresses confusion in our perception of this truth. Perhaps this is because we are always prone to forget that God meets with his people wherever they are, and, instead, we slide into the notion that God simply “resides” somewhere and that we go to such places in order to “meet with Him”.^v

So, rather than accept the notion that we readily find interchangeability with these two words, we should understand that the word *בית* carries a different meaning from *היכל* entirely. *בית* is a very common word and is very commonly

applied. It can refer to the residence of a poor person, the palace of the king or the house of a deity (cf. 1 Sam. 5:5). It is also used as a metonymy. "By metonymy the word can denote what is in the house." (Harris, vol. 1, p. 105)^{vi} *היכל*, on the other hand, is more technical and carries with it different connotations.

What all this demonstrates is that Solomon was, indeed, trying to be specific in the way he expressed what he had accomplished, how his edifice was to be understood, and how it was to be used. "A house for God's name" was clearly to be a symbol of their faith and religion, a place for the convenience of the people to gather and call on the name of God. It was not to be perceived as a *היכל*, a residence for God himself. God had forbidden the construction of idols which might otherwise reside in such a house, and, instead, the only furniture that represented his presence was the ark, considered his throne or seat of mercy. This called attention to the character of his covenant relationship with his people - the heart of which was the Moral law that resided inside the ark itself. These symbols of God's authority were to be the items before the people as they came and assembled before God.

Therefore, the house Solomon built for God's name was actually to be the "anti-temple". It was not to be perceived as a dwelling for God, himself, as with pagan gods, but it was to be viewed and understood as a house for the people, a place where they could assemble and call on the name of the Lord in worship - a

house representing the gospel which was to radiate out from Israel into all the earth.

However, it appears that such a distinction would not remain in the minds of the people. The Temple, designed by David and built by his son, Solomon, was simply built along the same dimensions and purpose as the Tabernacle but on a much grander and permanent scale. Everything was magnified and enriched except for the Ark, which now rested in the much larger Holy of Holies, guarded by two enormous, angelic figurines. Yet, even as it was built to imitate the Tabernacle, it could not effectively perform that function. Although it resided in David's royal city, the capital, Jerusalem, it was no longer the visible center of the people's very lives. Instead, in the thinking of the Israelites, the Temple took on more and more of the characteristics of the pagan temples found in the nations that surrounded Israel^{vii}. It became a focus of national pride, of individual pilgrimage, of national identity. Even the word for temple in the Hebrew, seems to be borrowed and it eventually replaces the more personalized term "house" in the vocabulary.

c) *The Voice of the Prophets* - Evidence of this transition can readily be found in the prophets. To their minds, the attitude and regard for the Temple became a symbol and an indictment against the Israelites for what had become meaningless worship, nationalistic pride, and superstition.

One example of this can be found in Isaiah 6, where Isaiah records but also preaches of the vision given him by God which is considered to be the

prophet's calling. He does this not simply to validate his prophetic office but to teach the people.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. ... And one called to another and said:

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"
(Isaiah 6:1-3, ESV)

How are we to understand Isaiah's vision? What does it mean that he "saw the Lord", that he saw the Lord "sitting upon a throne", that he could observe "the train of his robe" and that he knew that the place he was in was "the temple"? How significant is it that this vision did not take place in Solomon's temple? What did the seraphim mean by their praise that "the whole earth is full of his glory"?

Isaiah envisions the Lord as being in his true dwelling – the הֵיכָל of his heavens, his true temple or palace, far above anything that might reside on earth or be created by man.⁴ It is from the true הֵיכָל that God gives Isaiah his true message of judgment upon the house of Israel (cf. vs.s 9b-13). That message is in contrast to the one of false assurance and hope that was coming at the same time from the false prophets clinging to the man-made temple in Jerusalem, as well as the temples constructed by Jeroboam in Bethel and Dan.

At the end of the book of Isaiah, the prophet drives home the same point.

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. (Is. 66:1-2, ESV)

By this time, the nation that David had built and that Solomon had enriched and gilded had long since split north and south between Rehoboam, Solomon's rightful heir, and Jeroboam, a former general in Rehoboam's own army. Over the many years since, the northern ten tribes had not honored God in worship and none of their kings ever honored God in their behavior and rule. The judgment of God, having been spoken and declared by prophets before, was on the horizon at last in the form of the dreadful Assyrian army, known for its cruelty and merciless anti-cultural tactics of dealing with neighboring nations. The northern nation of Israel was on the verge of being swallowed up, and the people in the southern kingdom of Judah were also very worried. At least Judah had Jerusalem and the Temple! God would surely protect his own.

Isaiah's ministry had been harsh and condemning, calling the people of Israel to understand God's judgment for what it was. He also had words of hope – God was not done, his promise still stood to be fulfilled and he spoke of the Suffering Servant who would ultimately redeem his people. Their trust must be in God and not in a temple. Judah would not escape and Isaiah knew that as well. The fall of Jerusalem and the loss of the temple would still come but it would not mean the end of God's promise or the end of his people.

Therefore, even though the exile was coming, God's people would emerge and live to see the day when God's dwelling would truly be with men. God's decree was not to be thwarted by the unfaithfulness of men or limited to David or to David's royal son, Solomon. The Suffering Servant, the ultimate "humble

and contrite” one would be the one upon whom God would look. He would build the true house of God’s dwelling among his people – not in seven years and not with gifted artisans but alone and in three days. When the time was right, Jesus would take the scroll of Isaiah 61 and announce the day of the Lord’s favor was finally at hand.

Such house-building would not be something any mere mortal could build. It would not be limited to granite and mortar, or even to some specific spot of real estate for that matter. This house would be a dwelling for his name but it would also be the building of a family, and it would also be a legacy, a kingdom. All of this is in view in verse one: *“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?”*. The anthropomorphic way that the Lord poses his question depicts the fact that all of the earth, which is full of his glory (rf. Isaiah 6:3) is, nevertheless, not big enough to contain his presence. Any mere man, Solomon included, is incapable not only of restraining and containing the Lord in a physical house but he is also incapable of building a family of faith and trust in God without the gift and favor of God first. Idolatry is built on fear and superstition and the continuing desire in the heart of the fallen man toward selfishness and immorality. Only the heart quickened to life by the Spirit of God can act in self-denying and all-trusting faith toward the living God. Also, the generations will not succeed in building up God’s kingdom on earth without the continual

declaration of the gospel which, by nature, must expand and must not be contained or thought to be selfishly or prejudicially precluded.

Yet, the Lord has chosen to dwell where he pleases – to visit his people – to make himself nothing, take the form of a servant, and be born in the likeness of men (cf. Philippians 2:6-7). John understood how Jesus had done this when he reflected on Jesus' life and ministry and, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit wrote of it in his gospel.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1, 14, ESV)

The word "dwelt" - σκηνώω - means "to spread a tent" which is intentionally reminiscent of the tabernacle in the wilderness that was carried with Moses and the Israelites. In this fashion, Jesus, God in the flesh, dwelt among his people until those who rejected him destroyed that dwelling of God by crucifying him on the cross and burying him in a tomb. With the resurrection and ascension, the victorious Jesus proved that while mere religiosity can be destroyed in such a way, the true God and his purposes cannot. It was a resurrected and living Jesus who sent his Spirit to dwell within the midst of his people until Jesus, himself, returns. At such time, the visitation of God with men will be forever transformed into the dwelling of men with God.

Another example is in the writing of the unpopular prophet, Jeremiah, who lived in the first half of the seventh century before the coming of the Messiah. A priest called of God to prophecy to the people of Judah, the

surviving southern half of the original Israel, he lived to witness the short and withering reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah before the inevitable invasion of Babylon and the fall of Jerusalem to that expanding aggressor.

Jeremiah was unpopular as a prophet for many reasons. For one thing, he spoke across class lines – condemning the rich and poor alike – regarding the idolatry that they all shared. He was also preaching a message of rebuke and condemnation that was countered by many more popular “prophets” of his day who were assuring the people of Judah that, even as dark political clouds were boiling up all around them, all would yet be well. Most of all, Jeremiah was not appreciated because he was bluntly forecasting the fall of Judah, the sack of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Overall, Jeremiah’s message was one that declared it was too late for repentance and change. The circumstances were worse than during the days of Isaiah and the people had not heeded the rod of the Lord’s discipline that had fallen to the northern kingdom at the hand of Assyria. Now, Jeremiah was saying, the people had better prepare for the worst. Judgment at the hand of their own covenant God was all too near.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: ‘This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.’ (Jeremiah 7:3-4, ESV)

Still, it was a time for hope. To parallel the remnant theme of other voices, Jeremiah called for repentance on the part of his hearers saying that though the nation is doomed, the hearts and lives of the faithful may yet continue to hope in

their God for deliverance and for his promise to yet be fulfilled. God may still be worshipped and God may yet bless, but the consequences for the nation shall surely come before the light of a new day will dawn.

It was the worship of God that had caught Jeremiah's attention and focus the most. Moses had called the people to *"love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might"* (Dt. 6:5, ESV) for that was the essence of worship and that was what made the relationship between a living God and His people different than that of an idol to its followers. The human heart, as John Calvin observed, is a factory for idols. As Paul reminded the Corinthian church, idols have no substance in and of themselves, they are simply created by man in order to be worshipped by man. Therefore, the sinful heart is constantly desirous of rejecting and turning away from the true and creating and worshipping the false. With such idolatry came cruelty and injustice among the people.

The Lord God had known this. In first writing the Moral law on the heart of man in the garden, and then later in stone on Mt. Sinai, He was explicit in teaching man the distinction and the warning of idolatry:

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6, ESV)

The problem was not limited to just what the Israelites had borrowed or become addicted to from other nations – offering their children in the fires to Baal or Chemosh in either the high place of Topheth or the valley of Hinnom – it included the taking of emblems and testimonies of the Lord God’s history of faithfulness with his people and using those emblems as idols themselves – as things with which the living God might, himself, be manipulated or controlled. Such had been the case with the bronze serpent made in the wilderness and held up by Moses to heal all those rebellious hearts who looked up and gazed upon it (Num. 21:9). By the time of Hezekiah, one of the last faithful kings of Judah, the people had forgotten the God who healed and they worshipped, instead, the pole and the serpent that wound lifelessly upon it. Hezekiah had seen this as nothing more than idolatry itself and destroyed the serpent (2 Kings 18:4). Such had also been the case back in the days of young Samuel and old Eli, when the Israelites sought to fight off the Philistines by using the ark of the covenant as some kind of “magic bullet” with which to defeat their enemy. They would not trust in the God who reigned from the ark as his throne but they trusted, instead, in the box that they decided to carry into battle. The Lord God allowed the Philistines to capture the ark and overrun Shiloh in His wrath of such idolatry among his people. The result of such superstition: the ark was gone, the place of holiness was gone, and Eli and both of his sons were dead.

Even from the time of Isaiah to that of Jeremiah, the attitude toward the temple had become much less religious and more presumptive and superstitious.

Surely, the temple, with its beauty, richness and permanence, could not be wrong, could not be overcome, could not be destroyed. In the minds of the Jews, the temple was the climax of God's dealings with his people, the glory of the whole earth resting prominently on Mt. Zion. The voice of those other prophets reminded the people of these facts. "This is the temple of the Lord" they cried. "It represents the integrity of the Lord God's promise and commitment to us and His power to protect us. There is nothing greater in all the world." *"We are delivered"* (Jer. 7:10, ESV).

But Jeremiah's words were words that challenged those notions. "Such words are deceptive," Jeremiah proclaimed, "this house has become a den of robbers" (Jer. 7:11, ESV), a "place in which you trust" (Jer. 7:14, ESV). The Lord God has sent out servants and prophets day after day to call the people to repentance and faith but they refused to hear, they stiffened their necks and acted worse than their fathers (Jer. 7:26, ESV) and, as a result, the Lord God's judgment shall come upon them, the temple shall be destroyed.

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: behold, my anger and my wrath will be poured out on this place, upon man and beast, upon the trees of the field and the fruit of the ground; it will burn and not be quenched." (Jer. 7:20, ESV)

These were dreadful words because Isaiah had first used them in chapter sixty-six of his prophecy to speak of the fate of those whom the Lord had judged and punished in his justice. Now, they were turned on the people themselves and on the place of God's name.

Synagogue

We must also include, at this point, an observation about synagogue worship among the Israelites. There can be little doubt that synagogue worship had an abiding influence upon the pattern of the early Christian church going forward. More importantly, synagogue worship, itself, was a statement made in the light of what had been allowed to become of the temple – the holy and distant place that it had become, the pride and the glory with which it was prized, and the superstition and security that it seemed to promise – all had very little to do anymore with the actual spiritual worship of the people.

There is no clear indication as to when these synagogues began to appear. Whether before or after the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians and the accompanying exile, the intent was clearly the same – to make the Law of God and the Word of His prophets central in the lives of God’s people again. It is no wonder that synagogue worship continued long past the return from Babylon, the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and even unto the present age.

What took place at the synagogue was quite different than what took place at the Temple. Synagogue services were constituted with a collective liturgy of prayer, use of the Psalms, preaching and dialogue.

- 1. There was no holy place where the presence of God was manifested. He communicated with the community by the testimony of his word contained in the Scriptures, and by prayer.*
- 2. In this form of worship, there was not a privileged priesthood whom the people needed for communication with God. There was an order of service and there were those who arranged it, but any male worshipper could stand up to interpret the Scriptures. We remember Jesus’ part in the service at Nazareth (Lk. 4:16ff). After his death the Christians used to go to the synagogues where important discussions would take place*

after the reading of the Law and the Prophets (Acts 13:15). This free and informal discussion among the worshippers who heard the word of God was liturgically important in the worship. (Bieler, p. 10)

New Testament

Christ - "A Desolate House"

The clearest statement that Jesus makes with regard to the Temple of his day is not the one found in Matthew 26:61: "'I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.'" Actually, that was a perversion of what Jesus actually said and which is recorded in John 2.

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. (Jn. 2:19-22, ESV)

Matthew 23 records words of Jesus that deal directly with the Temple that stood on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Mt. 23:37-39, ESV)

This climactic statement by Jesus comes in the midst of those two chapters of Matthew's gospel that are most incendiary. Chapter 23 consists of his excoriating "woes" issued against the Pharisees. That chapter concludes with Jesus taking a deep, mournful, authoritative breath and then lamenting like Jeremiah over the future fate of Jerusalem. The gifting, the heritage, the blessing

that God had poured upon Israel and its signature capital represented the entirety of God's covenantal patience and endurance. They had rejected God again and again, even dispatching those prophets sent from God to warn the people of that city and of the nation to call them back. *See*, Jesus then says, *your house (my emphasis)* – the temple building itself, the heritage, the legacy – are all left to the Jews *desolate*. ἔρημος means abandoned, forsaken, empty. It was meant to cause them to remember how the glory of God had shrouded even the temple when Solomon had dedicated it - so much so that the priests could not do their job. Now, not only was the glory of God gone, but the outer courts had been transformed into a den of thieves and inside, the trampling of feet was that of hypocritical priests.

What Jesus says in the next verse makes the pronouncement clear. “For I tell you, you will not see *me* ...”. Here is the glory of God appearing before the temple one last time. However, he is walking away even as he speaks. God is leaving this temple edifice, choosing instead to inhabit the praises of those who gather together and say their beatitudes to the one who “comes in the name of the Lord”.

This, of course, is the pronouncement of God himself in prophetic judgment of the people of that city. The temple had become just a figurehead of the corruption and idolatry that controlled their thinking. Soon enough it would be allowed to be destroyed and be forbidden to be rebuilt.

Christ - The Great Commission

The Great Commission in Matthew 28 not only gives the New Testament church her marching orders for the advance of the Kingdom but it includes the nature of the church in terms of her worship in the future.

Once Christ's body had been destroyed, after his death, the real and tangible presence of the living God among men was transferred to the community of believers. The risen Christ, who is the Word of God, and "in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily", made himself present through his Holy Spirit in the disciples themselves. Thus they too became the dwelling place of Divine Presence. (Bieler, p. 14)

Beiler goes on to express the understanding of the disciples, based on the reality of the resurrection of Christ:

It is, therefore the Christian community, gathered together by the Word of God and in the brotherly communion of the Lord's Supper, full of the joy of the resurrection and in expectation of the Christ's return, that constitutes the true temple of God, unique and real to the exclusion of all others. ... Neither the building which housed the meeting, nor the setting in nature was sacred; it was in the community itself that God's presence lay. (Bieler, p. 15)

This is made particularly clear in the writing of the book of Hebrews which stresses that the completed work of Christ - as the sacrifice of and for God - did away with much of the routine activity that had been prescribed for the Tabernacle according to the Ceremonial Law. This would include the blood sacrifices primarily but also the more general mediatorial role of the Aaronic priesthood. Instead of that, Jesus, himself, is the Christian's High Priest and the Church now consisted of the priesthood of all believers. That means that all other intercessory work done by mere men was no longer required and, with that, the priestly rites, regularly conducted under the Aaronic administration, were to be done away (rf. Heb. 3:1-4; 4:14-5:15; 7:13-10:39)^{viii}.

In the Great Commission, Jesus did not call or instruct all worshippers to gather in one, centralized place in order to properly worship his name but rather, just the opposite. As with the tabernacle in the wilderness, Jesus, by his Spirit, committed himself to be with his people as they went into the entire world. God was still committed, as long as this age would continue, to “tabernacle” with his people.

Stephen’s Dramatic Speech Before the Sanhedrin

We focus on Stephen and his speech recorded in Acts 7 for two reasons. First, although we know little about him, Stephen is given enormous credibility in the brief account of his ministry, testimony and death. Second, his words of self-defense were really an inspired indictment against the council that sat in judgment of him on that day. As his words echo those of Isaiah and Jeremiah, they confirm both the misdirection of the Israelites in relation to the temple and they also set the course of the Christian church for the future.

So it was until the days of David, who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him. Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says, “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Did not my hand make all these things?”

“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

(Acts 7:45b-53, ESV)

The entire episode of which Stephen is involved originates with the beginning of chapter six of the Book of Acts. An issue arose in the physical

ministry of the people of Christ regarding the care of widows. It is there that we are first introduced to the “Hellenists”. Ἑλληνιστής is one who speaks Greek and follows Greek customs.⁸ Typically, it goes without saying that Hellenists were Jews who have been given this classification because it is presumed that they chose to speak Greek and not Aramaic and because they were prone to be progressive in adapting worldly customs to their Jewish heritage and lifestyle. Hellenists were often considered to be compromisers by the orthodox Jew and prejudice alone could have been the reason for the imbalance in care between these two categories of worthy widows. When invited to select men to handle the organization and supervision of this ministry, the larger grouping of disciples – ie., the early church body – selected seven men, all with Greek names, perhaps all Hellenists. The motivation for this is not stated in the text.

The ordination of these seven men contributed to the continuing growth of the church⁹. The rise of the diaconate (as this class of office would later come to be called) records “a new and momentous advance in the community of followers of Jesus – the large-scale evangelization of Gentiles” (Bruce, p. 129), and what may have been very significant between these two groups: *a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith* (Acts 6:7). There is no indication that this last collective event had any effect on temple activities but its inclusion here may be so entered to assist the reader in understanding how the dialogue between Stephen and the men of the Freedmen synagogue got started. Stephen rose to the top of the list for notoriety in the very next passage. A man recognized by

the church as being “full of grace and power”, it became evident as well that Stephen was also a man capable of “doing great wonders and signs among the people”. These, too, are not elaborated. Their demonstration attracts attention to his words and these were found to be offensive. While the name and background of the synagogue are clearly identified, just why they opposed Stephen is not. In holding forth debate, they found they were not able to refute Stephen’s words and thus, felt led to resort to the less honorable tactics of secret plotting and false accusation. Probably not produced out of whole cloth, these false accusations were, instead, undoubtedly very close to the topic or topics debated. As these same tactics had just previously been used against Jesus, himself, they were probably confident in employing them here. The two charges were blasphemy against “this holy place and against the law,” (Acts 6:13, ESV); specifically, that “this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us” (Acts 6:14, ESV).

Whatever form of words Stephen used which gave rise to the charge that he said Jesus the Nazarene would destroy the temple, it seems plain that he had not only repeated the words which Jesus Himself had spoken, but also grasped and expounded their inner meaning. The apostles and many of the rank and file of the Jerusalem church might continue to attend the temple services and be looked upon as devout and observant Jews; Stephen saw that the work of Christ logically involved the abrogation of the whole temple order and its supersession by a new edifice not made with hands, and yet within the main stream of OT revelation. ... (Mt. 12:6) ... The gospel meant the end of the sacrificial cultus and all the ceremonial law.” (Bruce, 135-36)

With some parallels between the arrests and trials of Jesus and of Stephen, we are struck with one stark difference: Jesus remained silent, letting his previous actions and words, which the reader can go back and read, speak for

themselves while Stephen, whose previous words are not recorded, took full opportunity of the time given him to defend himself to levy a full, redemptive-historical speech for the benefit of his original listeners and for us as readers alike.

Stephen's speech began by recounting the travels of Abraham, noting that it was God who not only led but went with Abraham everywhere he went. Next, Stephen elaborated well on the story of Moses, pointing out that not only was he God's servant to the Israelites but that those same Israelites had repeatedly rejected him as their leader, choosing instead to construct the idol of gold in the wilderness before the presence of God on Mt. Sinai. At that point, Stephen taught that God rejected their worship to Him citing their true hearts sought after the idols of Moloch and Rephan. These references are probably metonyms (the quotation from Amos 5:25 being changed here, apparently deliberately) as is Stephen's following quotation regarding the exile in verses 42-43. Amos had originally spoken of the northern Israelites being exiled beyond Damascus, but here Stephen uses the quote to speak of the Jews being sent beyond Babylon in a parallel fashion¹⁰. Stephen then moves to the tent of witness, given them by God, which they eventually took to Jerusalem and replaced with the temple of Solomon.

Stephen's argument turns on that last item. At this point, he deliberately skips over the entire exile and the second temple built after the return from the exile. In Stephen's mind, he wants to compare the intent and purpose of

Solomon with that of the Sanhedrin of his day. He is demanding that they see the contrast in full. *Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, (Acts 7:48, ESV).* Instead, *“Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? (Acts 7:49, ESV)* That is verbatim the very thoughts and words of Solomon himself: *Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built! (1 Kings 8:27b, ESV)* and it is the very principle that the Sanhedrin and the people of Israel had long since set aside.

“With every chapter in the history of God’s people” Stephen is saying, “God has dwelled by His Spirit among us. Yet, at every turn, our people have rejected the living God and sought idols instead, statues, images and even buildings that we might worship what we construct, what we see and what we can control.” “At every step of the way, the worst enemy has been our own idolatrous heart.” But Stephen was reminding the Sanhedrin of what Isaiah had said in rebuking the Jews of his day – that God does not dwell in places that man builds for himself. Stephen is rebuking the same attitude and superstition of Jeremiah’s day when he spoke of those who cried: *“This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.” (Jeremiah 7:4, ESV).* And Stephen is reminding them as well of the pronouncement of Jesus himself who said *“See, your house is left to you desolate” (Mt. 23:38, ESV).*

Stephen answers the charge against him in the fashion of the prophets and Christ before him. The living God is not contained or restricted. The house in

which the name of the Lord resides, in which the name of the Lord is called upon in prayer, in which that Lord is worshipped, is not a temple – not a fixed place on earth in which God, himself resides or is kept¹¹. Then, Stephen levied the charge upon the Sanhedrin of making this same sinful shift in thinking that the Israelites had done in constructing the golden calf: they were now guilty of idolatry and rejection of the presence of God, His Holy Spirit: *“you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”* (Acts 7:53)

By not keeping the law, Stephen’s accusation to the Sanhedrin focused on the temple of Herod, the most glorious edifice in all of Jewish history. The place of worship has become the object of worship. The house Solomon had built for the Lord’s name had now become a temple, a palace, a holy place where the “god” of Israel was regarded to be dwelling. That place had already been judged and destroyed by God when He sent the Jews into exile beyond Babylon. But upon being returned in God’s mercy, they still returned to build not a house but yet another temple in the name of preserving and protecting their identity, now fading fast due to influence of the world beyond and Hellenism from within. Now the temple stood against the redemptive will and purpose of God, it stood as a symbol of the Jews’ rejection of Jesus and of Jesus’ rejection of them. The house which should have kept the Lord’s name, should have housed the Lord’s family, should have represented the heritage of God’s covenant promise was rejected by God and was now left to them desolate. Now, like the bronze serpent on the pole, it must be rejected.

The account that follows in Acts 7 must be read carefully to understand the full picture. In vs. 54, the members of the Sanhedrin became enraged toward Stephen but they did nothing. That might well be because, just as in previous debates before (rf. 6:10ff), they could not withstand the wisdom with which Stephen spoke. Next came the vision Stephen was blessed to see: Jesus standing¹² at the right hand of God. In all likelihood, Stephen is given a vision virtually identical to that of Isaiah, as recorded in Is. 6. If so, he was allowed to gaze into the same, true throne room of God. And if so, the same exegetical questions of our proper interpretation return. The only consolation here is that Stephen, like Isaiah, was able to verbalize a description of what he saw, even doing so instantly. It is the announcement of this vision – that Stephen’s eyes were blessed to see into that true throne room (which does not occur in the temple or under the authority of the Sanhedrin), that Jesus is seen living and not dead, and that Jesus is seen in the highest position of authority and glory – the right hand of God – that decides his mortal fate. All of this incriminated the Sanhedrin, which was the body representing all of Israel in their rejection of Jesus. Their reaction of rage and attack upon Stephen in response lives out the words of Psalm 2:

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."

He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and

the ends of the earth your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

As their wrath upon Stephen commenced, the seeds of their downfall were already among them. One named Saul is identified as standing there who would soon be converted, would come out from among them and be separate, and, instead, become the pioneer of the gospel presentation and expansion beyond the temple and the ceremonial law and on to the Gentiles. Saul will, in other words, pick up the visionary mantle of Stephen, not just in Stephen's rebuke of the sins of the Jewish people, but also in the Hellenistic understanding that the gospel, the presence of God on earth, the will of God to build His church from every nation, tribe and tongue is only beginning.

Stephen's last words before dying were these: *"Lord, do not hold this sin against them"* (Acts 7:60, ESV). Not simply being a quotation from his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as He was being fixed to the cross - *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Luke 23:34, ESV) - Stephen is actually responding to Solomon's own prayer and petition to God at the dedication of the Lord's house:

Likewise, when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a far country for your name's sake (for they shall hear of your great name and your mighty hand, and of your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this house, hear in heaven your dwelling place and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name. (1 Kings 8:41-43, ESV)

Stephen understood that the true gospel made him a foreigner to the traditions of his fathers. He understood that he no longer came to petition God as a Jew but

as any other unworthy outsider. Stephen prayed toward the true house of God, as David had done before him, and from that house God responded.

Destruction of the Temple

"The First Reformation"

The catastrophic invasion of Jerusalem by Titus and the ensuing destruction of the Temple clearly fulfilled Jesus' words announcing that a new day for the Christian Church was coming. Jesus, himself, had called the Temple "a house" (Mt. 21:13) but now, it was a house that had already long been left to the people desolate (Mt. 23:38). Meanwhile, the culture of Judaism had slid down into an atmosphere of apocryphal mysticism and the Temple had become a focus of legalism and superstition. All of this, of course, explained why God, himself might have come upon them earlier in the form of a man to tabernacle among them (Jn. 1:14), only to be rejected and crucified. And yet, the true Temple, the one not made by hands, which the Jews themselves had destroyed; was raised up again in three days (Jn. 2:14).

Paul - The Ever-Expanding "House" of God

All the disciples understood this principle, scattering as they did, to all parts of the known world, taking the gospel to the cultures they encountered rather than calling all nations to be drawn to Israel. We know this, particularly, through the inerrant Word given through Luke as he wrote of the missionary

endeavors of just one missionary, Paul. Paul not only preached the gospel according to the Great Commission but he also started churches – defined not by the buildings they gathered in but by the name Christ gave to his gathered people. The book of Acts describes how Paul utilized synagogues, private homes or existing lecture halls for the purpose of preaching and spreading the gospel. Neither his theology nor his specific instructions to the elders and deacons of the churches seem to suggest to us any thought whatsoever of how a room should be designed or furnished in order that the God of the Christian faith might be truly and effectually worshipped.

We can see thus how radically new were the arrangements for those taking part in the Christian worship as compared with the gatherings at the temple in Jerusalem or at pagan temples.

In the latter, the crowd remained ceremoniously at a distance from the priests officiating in the ritual of the sacred place, while in Christian worship the assembly met in a brotherly way around the holy table, the officiating ministers being included in the community as in the ancient synagogues. The community itself, in each of its members with their various functions, constituted the holy priesthood and the place where God was present. There was no sacred place outside or in front of the community. And each person came, not only to satisfy his individual religious needs, but rather as a member responsible for the other members with whom he constituted the body of Christ in a concrete and organic way. (Bieler, p. 19)

While Paul's letters do not speak of the importance of the room in which the worship of God in Christ is to take place, his theology speaks volumes. It would be a mistake to assume that such things as the design and layout of the room is not important at all to Christians from now on because there is a lack of such specific designs. Instead, we gain such instruction clearly through New Testament teaching that successfully stresses the priorities, values and concepts of worship and church. But what history records is that other things – political

pressures, financial manipulations and worse, the vain imaginings of men – all too quickly came to control the construction of church buildings which, in turn, affected the worship and direction for worship in the centuries yet to come.

Conclusion, Definitions and Statement of Theme

Today, the gospel continues in its world-expanding enterprise. Yet, the battle remains the same in every generation or culture or time period in which the gospel faces the sinful will and heart of man. God is not an idol to be appeased, satisfied, or ignored at one's choosing and desire to manipulate. Similarly, the church is not a building, it is the gathering of God's people, for that is where His name truly resides. As such, worship is to be directed to the calling upon that name and the focusing on the evidence of the Gospel – the Word, the ordinances of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper – and that as opposed to worshipping them.

No furniture or shape of room or beauty of windows or other art can declare or demonstrate the presence of God. Even as the ability of man's own work may, indeed, raise the awareness of the majesty and transcendence of God in any given place of worship, those things in and of themselves do not declare "God dwells here".

In like fashion, the worship of God is not to be given to a casual atmosphere of mere pragmatism or entertainment of men. Those same elements representing the Gospel to all – the Word, the ordinances – must be the center of

attention and design and must not compete for floor space or focus with lesser things. The former is the worship of idols, the latter is worship of the self. Our goal is to avoid the words of Jesus being spoken to us in whatever place we find ourselves – that our house be not left to us desolate but filled with the presence of the Holy and tri-une God.

ⁱ 2 Samuel 7 is paralleled closely with 1 Chronicles 17.

ⁱⁱ I accept the interpretation that 1 & 2 Chronicles was written at the end of the exilic period as a way of encouraging and inspiring those who would eventually return to Jerusalem with a vision to rebuild the temple themselves.

ⁱⁱⁱ “And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be counted or numbered.” (1 Kings 8:5) Such excess may describe the number of worshippers that were presenting their offerings according to the Mosaic law or simply the excess that Solomon considered called for upon such an occasion. The latter is strongly suggested as the description continues in 1 Kings 8:62ff.

^{iv} The only legitimate temple previous to this was made by God, himself, in the garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 1-2). There his name and Spirit dwelt in communion with his people and the holiness of his presence was met with joy. After the fall, Adam and his wife were expelled from that temple and the age of idolatry and rebellion against the living Lord began.

^v To demonstrate this question, the first use of the word *הֵיכָל* takes place in 1 Samuel 1:9 long before the temple of Solomon is built: “Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD.” Obviously, Eli was not sitting in front of a building but a tent. But Eli was not the most faithful of priests in his day. There was corruption within the priesthood, inattentiveness and a lack of zeal for the things of God which led to ignorance of doctrine and superstition in terms of practice. Ultimately that led to the Lord’s rebuke upon Eli, his sons and all Israel. We surmise that would have also been represented in the sleepy attitude of the people of Eli’s day regarding the tabernacle - to regard and refer to the tent as “the temple” would fit that scenario. Meanwhile, the fixed buildings of the idols of other nations are also referred to as their temples (cf. 1 Sam. 31:10) which would have reinforced the borrowed impression to the Israelites that one’s god resides in his temple. But Samuel would grow up and be called upon to reform the thought of God in the people, to call them away from such rote and mistaken religiosity and to educate the people away from superstition and cult of other nations. Undoubtedly, this would have also been a focus of his efforts to train prophets that they might teach the people the difference.

Later, King David seems aware of how language reveals such an impression but demonstrates, himself, an inconsistency of expression in his Psalms. In Psalm 5:7, he writes: “But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.” Even though there was no solid edifice, David expresses his fear and reverence of the Lord in terms of fear and reverence for a place of worship. But in Ps. 11:4 he seems much more aware of the truth: “The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD’s throne is in heaven;”. Other psalms demonstrate that David uses the word “temple” to describe the

worship of God, the wisdom of God, and the richness of blessing that comes from the gathering of God's people to call on his name. At such times it is clear that David regards the true place of God's dwelling as being in his heaven and not in the tabernacle.

^{vi} By this is meant those who dwell in the house – a man's wife and children and all who reside under that man's authority or responsibility. "The man Elkanah **and all his house** went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice and to pay his vow" (1 Sam. 1:21, ESV, my emphasis). Such language intimates that all the people living under the headship of Elkanah accompanied him on his journey. And then, by extension of that metonymy, the word can also speak of the generations and legacy or even the notoriety, influence or infamy of a family name or dynasty (cf. 2 Sam. 3:29; 9:3; 19:20).

^{vii} Bieler argues "[t]he temple retained the outward features of a pagan sanctuary. It contained:-

1. A holy of holies (originally a perfect cube), the dwelling place of God, who was present in his Law (the tablets of the covenant contained in the Ark.) After the destruction of the Ark this place was quite empty.

2. A holy place, accessible only the ministrants, containing an altar or table for 'the bread of the Presence', lampstands (perhaps ten), and probably an altar of incense.

3. A court for the people, where the altar for burnt offerings was placed, and perhaps in early days the sea of bronze and the ten wheeled vessels used for the purification of the worshippers." (Bieler, p. 7)

^{viii} And yet, such issues as the continuing Christian priesthood and the focus of worship - being either the reenacting of the sacrifice of Christ or celebrating his resurrection - will make the major divides within the Christian Church and dictate the formula for worship itself and the design of the room in which it is done.