



And Its Message For Our World

An Excerpt From The Forthcoming Book
Redemption By Jesus

RODERICK GRACIANO and CARLOS SAMUEL MARTINEZ

© 2024

*We are stardust
We are golden
And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the garden¹*

The Garden of Eden was a perfect world. It answered the deepest needs of humanity. ... Deep within the psyche of modern man is this innate drive to return to Paradise.²

¹ From "Woodstock," by Joni Mitchell, 1969, a song capturing the feeling of the Woodstock music festival which she was unable to attend. The lyric expresses some of her generation's secular hope for a return to Edenic peace and freedom.

² Jack W. Hayford and Paul McGuire, *People of the Covenant: God's New Covenant for Today* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1994), Lesson 3.

The following narrative is a section from the seventh and final chapter of our forthcoming book *Redemption By Jesus*. God willing, we will publish the entire book online as a free download by early 2025. The eleven-page excerpt in this document gets a little technical at points, and perhaps a bit controversial for those who have a theological stake in the topics of covenants and temples. Hopefully, it will be easier to understand when read in the full context of *Redemption By Jesus*, chapter 7. Nevertheless, we hope this excerpt will pique your interest, not only in the topics of Eden, the tabernacle, and the Sinaitic covenant, but also in the rest of the forthcoming book on the grand theme of redemption.

This excerpt has been carefully edited but is not yet in its final revision for online publication. Therefore, we will welcome suggestions from our readers for corrections of any kind. Please email us about typos and all other errors by writing to roderick@tmin.org.

God's blessing upon all who await the coming day of redemption,³

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roderick Graziano". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Lakewood, WA, August 2024

³ Romans 8.23; Ephesians 4.30.

MAIN IDEA 1

In the garden of Eden, before sin entered the world, God had a family consisting of Adam, Eve, and His triune Self. Together, God and His children enjoyed a fellowship unrestricted by material barriers and unhindered by sin. Theologians refer to that primeval, familial fellowship with the Latin phrase *familia dei*.

MAIN IDEA 2

After the primeval fellowship between God and man was ruined by Adam and Eve's sin, God graciously began a long process of restoring the *familia dei*.

MAIN IDEA 3

After the judgment of Noah's flood, God introduced an important method by which He would progressively rebuild the *familia dei*. The effective instrument of that method is called a **covenant**. Though the word *covenant* is sometimes used metaphorically in the Bible, when it refers to an arrangement between God and man, it refers to **an elective kinship bond**. An elective kinship bond is a (1) binding (2) family relationship (3) that persons enter into by choice, rather than by natural procreation. We commonly form biblical-type covenants when we marry or legally adopt a child.

So, God's method for rebuilding the *familia dei* is to form progressively more comprehensive **elective kinship bonds**, and the instrument for forming those bonds is called a **covenant**.

SUBSIDIARY IDEA 1

The Sinaitic covenant (mediated by Moses) enhanced rather than abrogated the preceding Noahic and Abrahamic covenants, and brought the relationship between God and His covenant people several steps forward. One huge advancement was brought about by the divine directive to build and make ritual use of the tabernacle and its furnishings.

SUBSIDIARY IDEA 2

Christians have always known that the tabernacle, and the subsequent Jerusalem temples modeled after it, symbolically foreshadowed Jesus Christ and His redemptive work. Christian authors through the centuries have written extensively about this forward-pointing Christological typology of the tabernacle and temples. What has not always received sufficient attention from Christian authors and teachers is the fact that **the tabernacle and temples also pointed backward to the garden of Eden.**

In the wilderness of Sinai, God instructed the Israelites to construct a tabernacle, a portable building of wooden boards, fabrics and animal skins, as a dwelling place for His visible presence.⁴ This tabernacle was not an Israelite invention; the Israelites constructed it, together with its furnishings, *according to a heavenly pattern* (Heb 8.5). It had two rooms, partitioned by a heavy curtain. It had furnishings for the storage of sacred artifacts, and for the performance of religious rituals. It also had its own portable courtyard demarcated by a post-and-fabric fence and accessed by an eastward facing gate.

The rich symbolism and the spiritual teaching afforded by this divinely designed structure and its furnishings merit the many books that have extolled its wonders. Traditionally, Christian writings about the tabernacle have rightly focused on its symbolic prefiguring of the character and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. We will briefly elaborate below on how Jesus Christ embodies everything that God designed the tabernacle and subsequent temples to express and facilitate (Joh 2.19-22). However, we must not lose sight of two facts: first, Jesus is something much greater than the temple (Mat 12.6), and second, physical temples serve an interim purpose and will all finally pass away (Rev 21.22).

For our present purposes, we must leave discussions of the Christological typology of the tabernacle to other authors. In this work we will only draw attention to the interim purpose of the tabernacle and temples, namely, their purpose of bringing the people of God another step forward in restoring the *familia dei*. The tabernacle and temples accomplished this purpose by providing an architectural representation of Eden and its sacred garden, as well as replicating *some* of the garden's functions. To understand this, let's observe the parallels between aspects of the garden of Eden and features of the tabernacle and temples:

⁴ The presence that Jewish people refer to as the *Shekinah*, "the Abiding." G. K. Beale calls it God's "special revelatory presence," *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, p. 3.88.

1. The LORD God planted the garden in the eastern part of the region called Eden (Gen 2.8); thus, the relevant geography consisted of two areas, the smaller garden within the larger Eden.

1. The tabernacle and subsequent temples consisted of two main areas, the smaller tabernacle proper (and later sanctuaries) within the larger courtyard area.

2. The garden of Eden was God's garden⁵; for His enjoyment (Gen 3.8), and it served as His *earthly* dwelling place.⁶

2. The tabernacle and subsequent temples were God's house, His own dwelling place on earth.⁷

3. Genesis 1-3 does not mention fragrances but we can assume that the garden was aromatic.

3. The altar of incense in the holy place kept the tabernacle and subsequent temples full of a perpetual fragrance (Ex 30.1-8). The rising smoke from the incense certainly represented the rising prayers of God's people,⁸ paralleling Adam's presumed conversations and supplications (perhaps for a mate) during his communion with the LORD in the garden. However, the altar of incense also added the olfactory dimension of Edenic experience to the tabernacle and temples.

⁵ Eze 31.8; Isa 51.3; cf. Rev 2.7

⁶ See DOTP, p. 205.

⁷ Ex 23.19; 1Sa 1.7,9,24; 1Ki 8.10-11; Psa 26.8; 122.1; 134.1; 135.2; etc.

⁸ Psa 141.2 Luk 1.10; Rev 5.8.

4. The LORD God put Adam in the garden to “work” it and to “keep” or “guard” it (עבד and שמר, Gen 2.15). These terms (and their cognates), while applicable to agricultural activities, can also describe the priestly activities connected with the tabernacle (Num 3.7-10). This information, together with what we have learned about the priestly status of the firstborn in the Ancient Near East, implies that Adam, as the firstborn of mankind, was a priest in the sense that God intended him to serve and commune with his Creator in the sacred precinct, and to become a spiritual overseer for his wife and their descendants.

4. The Levites and Aaronic priests kept (שמר) the duties and furnishings of the tabernacle, guarded (שמר) its priesthood, and performed its service (עבדו) (Num 3.6-10).

5. Food was provided inside the garden for the maintenance of God’s priest, Adam, and for his family (Gen 2.9,16; 3.2).

5. Twelve loaves of bread, called “the bread of Presence” (Ex 25.30), were perpetually maintained in the tabernacle and temples, and eaten each week by Aaron and his sons (Lev 24.9). The mandated number of *twelve* loaves reflected the number of Israel’s tribes, allowing the Aaronic priests to act as Israel’s representatives in the consumption of the loaves. The perpetual message of this ritual was that it is from God’s presence that sustenance comes for God’s priests, and for *all* His people as well.

6. The tree of life stood in the garden, and it would have presumably maintained Adam's life and the life of his family members indefinitely, had sin not intervened (Gen 2.9; 3.22).

6. In the tabernacle, perhaps the most direct echo of the Edenic garden was the menorah (lampstand) with its cups made to look like almond blossoms.⁹ Since Scripture nowhere tells us *explicitly* what the menorah signified, both Jewish and Christian commentators have offered diverse speculations about its symbolism. Some, however, have recognized its connection with Eden. As Tremper Longman III writes,

The Menorah is essentially a tree. That the place of God's presence is associated with a tree should not be surprising. After all, the place where humans and God fellowshiped freely with each other was in a garden, the Garden of Eden. The tabernacle, thus, represents the Garden of Eden as well as heaven on earth.¹⁰

Eugene Carpenter connects the symbolism of the menorah to Genesis 1-2, and to the tree of life, seeing in it also an allusion to "the God of fire and light."¹¹ John N. Oswalt writes that the almond-decorated lampstand "may well have been a symbol of the life-giving light of God," or "the tree of life in the garden of Eden."¹² Nahum M. Sarna also sees in the menorah the tree of life, and, because of the early flowering of the almond tree, a hint in the almond decorations of "life renewed and sustained."¹³ Though the botanical imagery of the tabernacle was mostly constrained to the

⁹ Ex 25.31,33-34; 37.17-21.

¹⁰ Longman, *How To Read Exodus*, p. 138. The menorah probably did double duty, commemorating both the garden of Eden *and* the Exodus, the latter particularly in the menorah's similarity to the burning bush (see Longman, *Immanuel In Our Place*, p. 57).

¹¹ *Exodus*, p. 189.

¹² Allen Ross and John N. Oswalt, *CBC Vol. 1*, p. 496.

¹³ *JPSTC Exodus*, p. 165.

menorah, we should note that Solomon added much more tree, flower and fruit imagery to the temple.¹⁴

7. The tree that would precipitate the experiential knowledge of good and evil also stood in the midst of the garden (Gen 2.9).

7. Within the tabernacle resided the tablets of the law. We can see these as a representative counterpart to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As the apostle Paul wrote, “I would not have come to know sin except through the Law” (Rom 7.7).

8. Without hindrance, the man and his wife communed with God in the sacred space that was the garden.¹⁵

8. Upon the establishment of the covenant on Sinai, God *in His visible presence* would meet with Moses and the people at an interim “tent of meeting” (Ex 33.7-11). Once built, the tabernacle, also called “the tent of meeting,”¹⁶ became the place for meeting with God, as did the subsequent temple of Solomon.¹⁷ The tabernacle and later temples, of course, also served as the place where the priests ministered to God.¹⁸

¹⁴ 1Ki 6.18,29,32,35; 7.20,22,24,26,36,42,49.

¹⁵ Gen 2.19-23; 3.8-19,21.

¹⁶ Ex 30.36; Lev 1.1,3,5; Num 1.1; 2.2; Deu 31.14; Jos 18.1; etc.

¹⁷ 1Ki 8.30,33,35,38,41-43.

¹⁸ Ex 28.43; 29.30,44-45.

9. The garden was oriented to the east (Gen 2.8), and seems to have had an eastern access (Gen 3.24).

9. The east was “the direction from which one entered the tabernacle and later temples of Israel, and would be the same direction from which the latter-day temple would be entered (Ezek. 40.6).”¹⁹

10. God stationed cherubim to guard the garden’s entrance (Gen 3.22-24).

10. Cherubim, woven into the curtains that formed the walls of the tabernacle (Ex 26.1), as well as into the thick veil closing off the holy of holies (Ex 26.31), symbolically guarded the way into God’s presence. Solomon’s temple preserved this imagery, with cherubim carved into the walls and doors of the temple (1Ki 6.29,32,35).

In these parallels we see indications that the tabernacle and temples did indeed represent the Edenic environment and replicate some of its functions. We also see why many have suggested that the garden of Eden itself was a temple. Various expositors have thought of the garden of Eden as a primeval temple because the Old Testament terms used to describe the later tabernacle and temples also connote the most fundamental realities of Eden. Those realities include the functions of serving as:

1. a sacred space (*sanctuary*, מִקְדָּשׁ) and house (בַּיִת, 1Sa 1.7) in which God might dwell (יָשָׁב, Ex 15.17) among His people (Ex 25.8; Eze 37.28), and

¹⁹ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and The Church’s Mission*, p. 74.

2. a place to which God's people might come to pray (1Ki 8.29; Isa 56.7).

However, Scripture nowhere refers to the garden of Eden as a temple, lest we confuse the shadow with the reality. Both the garden of Eden and the subsequent temples served as a sacred, earthly abode for God, but the temples were not the same kind of abode as the garden.²⁰ **The tabernacle and Israelite temples were all substitute representations of the Edenic environment, with aspects of that environment *altered*.**

While we see the wonderful similarities between the garden of Eden and the subsequent tabernacle and temples, we must not ignore the crucial differences. The first of those differences is that while the tabernacle and temples were walled structures with permanent dimensions, the garden was a living environment with potential to grow and expand. The second is that the sacred space in the tabernacle and temples was *partitioned*, while the garden was completely open. Everything represented by the furniture of the tabernacle's holy place, the menorah, the table of showbread, the altar of incense, existed in the same sacred space of the garden together with the visible presence of God, while in the tabernacle and temples God's presence was partitioned off by a thick veil. There was no veil in the garden. In that one open space, Adam served, worshipped and communed with his visible Creator, and the tree of life, as well as the food trees for Adam (God's priest) stood in that same space. These physical differences underscored the key functional difference between the garden and the tabernacle and temples. Unlike the garden of Eden, the tabernacle and temples functioned as aids in the rapprochement

²⁰ Various scholars have similarly proposed creation itself as a cosmic temple, and have listed biblical similarities between the cosmos and the temples. Here again, the fundamental errors are: (1) Making the words *house* and *temple* synonymous; (2) Not taking into account the difference between the pre-fall cosmos and the post-fall temples; (3) Failing to recognize the interim purpose of the temples: in the end there will be a cosmos but no physical temple (Rev 21.22).

between sinners and the holy God, something unneeded while Adam enjoyed unrestricted fellowship with his Father in the garden.

An important thing to understand about the tabernacle's divided compartments, is that while the Israelite tabernacle and temples gloriously brought the people of God a giant step forward in the restoration of the *familia dei's* primeval fellowship, they also served as a painful reminder of the inability of sinful man to approach God in the same way that sinless Adam had done. So long as the veil remained between the holy place and the holy of holies, anyone entering the latter presumptuously would die (Lev 16.2). The opening of that veil would await the establishment of the new covenant (Heb 9.8; 10.19-22 cf. Mat 27.51).

In the larger context of the Sinaitic covenant, then, the tabernacle and temples architecturally illustrated the mission given to God's new "kingdom of priests" (Ex 19.5-6). That mission was to invite all people into the progressive restoration of the Edenic fellowship between man and God, through the covenantal propitiation of the Creator. God had come much more than halfway to restore fellowship with sinful humanity. By the Mosaic law He taught that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3.23). Through the blood sacrifices He revealed the availability of forgiveness through the expiation of sin (Heb 9.22). And by His presence in the tabernacle He showed His willingness to once again dwell with mankind, and be approached by those who would humbly supplicate Him — even if they be foreigners (1Ki 8.41-43).

Understanding the tabernacle and the temples in this way helps us see how Jesus Christ, the "greater than the temple" (Mat 12.6) embodied all of the tabernacle and temple's essential purposes and functions. In Jesus Christ, God came *all the way* into man's sinful environment, and yet without sin (Heb 4.15), to restore fellowship with unholy humanity. By Christ's exposition of the law, both verbally and by His life (Mat 5.17 to 7.12), He helped his disciples see their

sinfulness and need. Through the shedding of His own blood He made the true expiation for sin and accomplished the propitiation of the Father (1Jo 2.2). He opened the way for all people to come to God through Him (Joh 10.9; cf. Joh 12.32), and provided in Himself the true basis for supplicating the Father (Joh 16.24). Jesus was greater than the earthly temple because rather than serving as an architectural symbol of Eden He was the very way into the heavenly Paradise after which Eden's earthly garden was modeled (Luk 23.43). He was greater than any material temple and will finally serve as the *only* temple in the cosmos, when the *familia dei* is fully restored (Rev 21.3-4,7,22).

All these insights about the tabernacle and temples have implications for the mission and message of the Christian church. In the western church of today, a visitor can hear offers of a variety of benefits, including health, wealth, success in family and business, escape from tribulation, forgiveness of sins and ransom from hell. However, the underlying message of the tabernacle and temples, the message given to God's kingdom of priests (Rev 5.9-11), has not changed: **God invites people of all nations into restored fellowship with their Creator.** Any "Christian" proclamation offering benefits apart from this invitation is incomplete at best, and deceptive at worst.

The underlying message of God's invitation into fellowship with Himself has, of course, been spectacularly enhanced by the coming of the living temple, Jesus Christ. Not only has Jesus embodied all the essential functions of the temple for those who come to Him in faith, He has also given us an inviting demonstration of what fellowship with God looks like: we might not be able to imagine fellowship with the Creator who is pure spirit, but who wouldn't delight in walking, talking and dining with Jesus? Therefore, along with the fundamental message of God's invitation to restored fellowship, no Christian proclamation is complete without the gospel, that is, without the declaration of Christ's *fulfillment* of the temple

functions by the expiating and propitiating work accomplished in His death and resurrection (1Co 15.1-5).

Now, though we have focused upon the aspects of the tabernacle that have to do with restoring the *familia dei*, we acknowledge again that there is much more to the biblical doctrine of *tabernacle*, *temple* and *sanctuary* than we can cover in this work. Nevertheless, as we conclude this handful of observations about the tabernacle, we must emphasize the fact that earthly temples — like the covenants — were never an end in themselves. The restoration of the *familia dei* must finally include the dwelling of God with man once again, and in this regard, the tabernacle and temples were a step forward in the progressive restoration. However, temples, like the covenants, were an interim arrangement.

Still, so long as God must deal with fleshly humanity, the didactic value of a physical temple will justify its continued use. For this reason, though there is no temple (of the biblical pattern) standing in Jerusalem today, a physical temple is still to come, for the continued instruction of God's people.²¹ Furthermore, even in the Jerusalem temple's absence, *what the Bible tells us* about the tabernacle and temples conveys important lessons for us to take to heart in the present. One of the most important of those lessons is that an external building and rituals, while pointing us *toward* restored relationship with God, are not enough in themselves *to bring about* that restored relationship. Even under the old covenant, people of understanding recognized that the temple, while central to true religion, was secondary in importance to the disposition of one's heart. As David sang,

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.²²

²¹ See the prophetic indications of a Jerusalem temple in operation even during the future day of the LORD (Isa 19.21; Jer 33.15-18; Eze 40-46; Zec 14.16-21).

²² Psa 51.17.

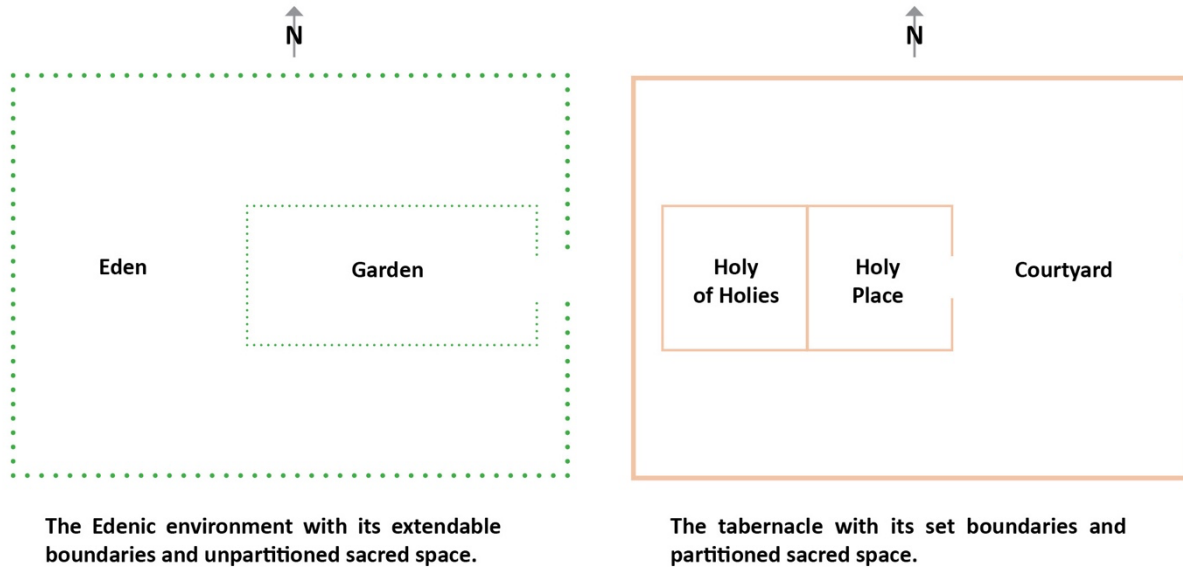
Also, as John N. Oswalt eloquently commented on Isaiah 61.1, “God’s sanctuary is the human heart (cf. [Isa] 57:15), and unless he dwells there, all other sanctuary building is an exercise in futility.”²³

Therefore, we close this section with the recognition that, because of the priority of heart and spirit over building and ritual, a temple of the previous kind is obsolete for those who live under the new covenant that has succeeded the Sinaitic. The rending of the veil when Jesus died signified this (Mar 15.37-38), and Stephen proclaimed it at the cost of his life (Act 7.47-51; cf. 1Co 3.16; 1Pe 2.4). We now look forward to the new heavens and the new earth, when there will be no more temple at all, of the kind that constrains the visible presence of God to a particular place (Rev 21.22). In that coming age, God will once again dwell among humanity as He did with Adam and Eve before the fall, in His unpartitioned Garden house.

²³ *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, pp. 667-678.

Eden And The Tabernacle

A Simplified Diagram



These simplified representations of Eden and the tabernacle emphasize the crucial differences between them, namely, the extendable versus the set boundaries and the open versus the partitioned sacred space. As explained above, the differences arise from the fact that the tabernacle and temples had a functional difference from the Edenic environment. The tabernacle and the temples functioned as an aid to the rapprochement between man and God. This function was unneeded in pre-fall Eden. If function is an element that defines *temple*, then Eden was not a temple. Instead, the tabernacle and temples were representations of Eden, with its sacred space sadly partitioned off.

On a side note, scholars influenced by the archaeological investigations of royal palaces in the Ancient Near East, have interpreted the region of Eden as God's primeval palace, adjoined by His royal garden which He would occasionally visit. We instead interpret the garden as God's living palace, surrounded by an extensive and inviting courtyard.