

### Cosmic Temple

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In this study, we will come to a deeper understanding of God's Presence: how He manifests Himself in and to His creation.

We use the word "Temple" to describe that Presence in its evolving manifestations, from the *Cosmic Temple* encountered in the first chapters of the *Book of Genesis* to the *Heavenly Temple* described in *Revelation*. This evolution of Presence is all God's doing. Over time He gradually reveals both His plan for His creation and the depth of His love for us.

The *Cosmic Temple* is the first manifestation of God's Presence and describes how He is present in His creation, a Presence directed at all of humanity. He reveals Himself as creator, as One, as a God who loves and plans to share His very Being with us. He is transcendent but personal, most high, but all near, not isolated from the world by His perfection.

He is *holy*, and because creation comes from His hands, it too is holy. He reveals that all of creation is totally *dependent* on Him, that without Him, nothing can be.

He confers on His creation a grace, a goodness reflecting His creative act of love. And he creates an earthly paradise in Eden, a place where man can share in God's goodness and grace. There God befriends man, the pinnacle of His creation; He walks and talks with Him; He gives him commands; He shares the divine prerogative of naming His creatures. He creates man as one who will be the leader and steward of His creation. This is the *Cosmic Temple* in its perfect state – nature in a state of grace.

The Fall distorts all. Tempted and moved by pride and disobedience man separates himself from the perfection God desires for him. Sin distorts man's view of himself, of the material world (nature) God created, and of God.

But God doesn't abandon man, whom He loves. He promises redemption [Gen 3:15] and within His creation offers signs of hope and of judgment. God, therefore, lets His Presence be recognized in the natural world, giving man an awareness of God as supernatural and transcendent, and awakening in man a desire for deliverance, salvation, and eternal life

God manifests His Presence in special ways to those righteous men who are faithful. Scripture reveals some of these to us (e.g., Enoch and Noah), men who, like Adam, "walked with God." His Presence to these is a kind of echo of His earlier Presence in Eden, the *Cosmic Temple* continued, and these righteous ones worship God wherever His Presence is manifested. In this sense the whole of nature remains a Temple consecrated to Him.

God then chooses one man, Abram – whom He renames, Abraham – to be the foundation of His plan for the redemption of man. Abraham responds in faith, and God makes a covenant with him, one that includes promises of land,

descendants, and the blessing of nations. These promises will all be fulfilled over time in accordance with God's plan.

Through Abraham and his immediate descendants – Isaac, Jacob (Israel), and the sons of Jacob – God's Chosen People are formed.

God manifests Himself to these Patriarchs through visits, dreams, visions and locutions, and through theophany (a manifestation of God that is experienced through the senses).

It is through these manifestations of His Presence to the Patriarchs that God reveals who He is, that he is almighty (*El shaddai*), timeless (*El olam*), and that there are no other gods. He reveals that for Him all things are possible.

God also reveals His deep love for us, that He is the God of our salvation and that we are, therefore, infinitely precious to Him.

God selects special places to manifest His Presence. These become signs pointing to realities that will follow. For example, God calls on Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. This becomes a distinct foreshadowing of the Father's willingness to allow His Son, Jesus, the Lamb of God, to be sacrificed on virtually the same spot. Not coincidentally, on this site King Solomon builds the Temple in Jerusalem a thousand years later.

Even today, the *Cosmic Temple* is present among us. Although surpassed by the subsequent Temples toward which it pointed, it remains a constant reminder of God's greatness and His love for His creation.

Indeed, through the Sacraments the Church mediates using elements of the Cosmic Temple, the visible universe, over which God lovingly watches. Water is the sign of God's cleansing Presence in Baptism. The oils with which we anoint – in Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, and the Sacrament of the Sick – empower and make holy.

God always gives us a choice. If, as a people, we exile God from our midst, the blessings of the Cosmic Temple will leave with Him. No culture can survive this, so we must be the ones who restore by reminding the world of His enduring love for us and extending that love to all.