

253 *A totally different perspective*

Is the OT still a bit of a problem for you? Do you feel you have to cherry-pick the ‘nice’ bits? Or are you positively excited by it? (The early church only had the OT and they were EXCITED!)¹

Let’s look at the wonderful pattern of God’s plan – Genesis to Revelation – of which we’re part.

God created the world as a place to be with people – as a ‘temple’ where his presence would dwell. Heaven on earth! (Gen 1 – see JW’s book.¹)

We said, ‘Yes but...’, and our doubt caused God to withdraw his presence (Gen 3).

(Not quite sure how Noah fits the pattern, but he did trust God in difficult circumstances, and God did make a covenant with him. Gen 6ff.)

Humans, at Babel, decided to ‘make a name for ourselves’ by building a tower up to heaven – to bring God down (Gen 11). Er, no!

Abraham trusted God, who made a covenant with him: through him the whole of humankind would be blessed and God would dwell with them. He took Abraham on a journey (Gen 12).

When things went wrong and God’s people ended up in slavery, God’s presence was with them, and through Moses, God brought them out – miraculously – with his presence in the pillars of cloud and fire. He took them on a journey.

As they journeyed, God’s presence was with them in the tabernacle.

Eventually they reached the promised land and entered it, but not without incident: they tried to take matters into their own hands, rather than trusting God to drive out the inhabitants – but that’s another story – ask Boyd.¹

‘Build me a temple, and my presence will come and dwell in it,’ God promised them.

For a few hundred years, people trusted (then didn’t trust) God, so God kept withdrawing his protecting presence. But God promised them a new Exodus, a new covenant, ready for...

God’s presence came to earth in **human** form. But he died and went away. Then he came back at the resurrection. Then he went away again back to heaven.

When God’s presence came back to earth in flames of fire, heaven came to earth, and they declared the praises of God in the many languages – the reverse of Babel.

As the new believers looked into the OT, they saw this glorious panorama, the pattern of God’s coming to bring his presence to his people. God took them (us) on a journey: The Way.

God is still true to his promise for his presence coming into his temple: **WE** are the temple, both as individuals and as a local church and as a worldwide church, the temple of the Holy Spirit.

¹ The best helps I’ve found for the OT are Boyd’s *Cross Vision* [124–129] and Walton’s *Lost World of Genesis One*. [130–133]

Now God doesn't take *away* all suffering, but God's presence is in that suffering with us which can transform our journey, bringing good out of evil.

And that same pattern will continue right to the culmination – the new heaven-and-earth – where there is no temple because God's presence IS the temple.

Now do you see why I'm so excited again?!

(This is a cut-down version of ^[136] and [Walton's sermon](#).)

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