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SEVEN PROMISES TO THOSE WHO OVERCOME: ASPECTS OF GENESIS 2–3 IN THE SEVEN LETTERS

Richard D. Draper and Donald W. Parry

The Garden of Eden account (Genesis 2–3) is composed of several powerful symbols that look forward to or anticipate later temple systems. Biblical scholar Gordon Wenham categorizes this as “a type of archetypal sanctuary.”¹ For instance, the text of Genesis 2–3 explicitly identifies items directly connected to Israelite sanctuaries (including the Mosaic Tabernacle and Solomon’s Temple), such as the tree of life, cherubim, sacred waters, sacred vestments, Eden’s eastward orientation, and divine revelation. The Eden story also contains words and phrases used in later biblical texts that refer to the temple.² John the Revelator used many of these same temple symbols and skillfully wove them into his letters to the seven churches (Revelation 2–3).

In this paper we compare and contrast the temple symbolism common to both Genesis 2–3 and Revelation 2–3. We point out the parallels between the two sections and then attempt to explain why John, in Revelation 2–3, used elements from the Eden story in his letters to the seven churches.

The Literary Structure of the Seven Letters

John structures the seven letters to the churches in a balanced and symmetrical configuration, comprising a seven-part pattern: (1) divine commission, (2) description of the speaker, (3) formal recognition, (4) criticism, (5) admonition, (6) call to hear, and (7) promise and blessing.³ Each of these seven parts is presented to each of the seven churches (see table 1, pp. 124–27).

Of particular concern in our paper is the seventh part: promise and blessing. Each of the seven promises and blessings begins with the anaphoric expression *to him that overcometh*, and each features one or more temple images directed to those who do overcome. These temple images do not simply recall Israelite temple systems as advanced in the Old and New Testaments, but they also anticipate the end time when the elect will gain access to the temple in heaven (compare Revelation 7:15; 14:15, 17; 16:17).

Seven key themes listed in the promise and blessing sections of Revelation 2–3 correspond to the Garden of Eden story in Genesis 2–3:

1. the tree of life (Genesis 2:17; Revelation 2:7)
2. physical death (Genesis 2:17; 3:3) and the second death (Revelation 2:11)
3. bread (Genesis 3:19) and hidden manna (Revelation 2:17)
4. dominion (Genesis 1:28; Revelation 2:26)
5. sacred vestments (Genesis 3:21; Revelation 3:5)
6. expulsion (Genesis 3:23–24) and return (Revelation 3:12)
7. receiving names (Genesis 2:23; 3:20; 5:2; Revelation 2:17; 3:12)⁴

These promises and blessings to the seven churches clearly apply to the church in John's day as well as to our church today. "The whole church seems to be meant. . . . The instruction to each church was universal for it tells 'what the Spirit is saying to the churches'—all the churches."⁵ We will now examine these seven key themes.

1. The Tree of Life (Genesis 2:17; Revelation 2:7)

God placed many trees in the Garden of Eden, including the trees of life and knowledge. According to the record, "out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9). According to an ancient source, the tree of knowledge was also known as the tree of death,⁶ for it brought death to Adam and Eve when they partook of the fruit: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16–17).

Once Adam and Eve partook of the fruit of the tree of death, God did not allow them to partake of the fruit of the tree of life:

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever . . . the Lord God . . . placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22–24)

Table 1. Seven-Part Pattern in Letters to Seven Churches

Division	Ephesus (Rev. 2:1–7)
1. Divine Commission	Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write;
2. Description of the Speaker	These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;
3. Formal Recognition	I know thy works. . . .
4. Criticism	Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.
5. Admonition	Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works. . . .
6. Call to Hear	He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;
7. Promise and Blessing	To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

<p style="text-align: center;">Smyrna (Rev. 2:8–11)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Pergamos (Rev. 2:12–17)</p>
<p>And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write;</p>	<p>And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write;</p>
<p>These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;</p>	<p>These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;</p>
<p>I know thy works . . .</p>	<p>I know thy works. . . .</p>
<p>and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not . . .</p>	<p>But I have a few things against thee. . . .</p>
<p>be thou faithful unto death. . . .</p>	<p>Repent. . . .</p>
<p>He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;</p>	<p>He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches;</p>
<p>He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.</p>	<p>To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.</p>

Table 1. *Continued.*

<p style="text-align: center;">Thyatira (Rev. 2:18–29)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sardis (Rev. 3:1–6)</p>
<p>And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write;</p>	<p>And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write;</p>
<p>These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;</p>	<p>These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars;</p>
<p>I know thy works. . . .</p>	<p>I know thy works. . . .</p>
<p>Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee. . . .</p>	<p>. . . For I have not found thy works perfect before God.</p>
<p>. . . But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.</p>	<p>Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. . . .</p>
<p>He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.</p>	<p>He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.</p>
<p>And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them . . . : even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star.</p>	<p>He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7–13)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Laodicea (Rev. 3:14–22)</p>
<p>And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write;</p>	<p>And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write;</p>
<p>These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; the creation of God; and shutteth, and no man openeth;</p>	<p>These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;</p>
<p>I know thy works. . . .</p>	<p>I know thy works. . . .</p>
<p>Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not. . . .</p>	<p>Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. . . .</p>
<p>. . . Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.</p>	<p>. . . Be zealous therefore, and repent. . . .</p>
<p>He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.</p>	<p>He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.</p>
<p>Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem . . . : and I will write upon him my new name.</p>	<p>To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.</p>

Although Adam and Eve transgressed and were denied access to the tree of life, we learn that those who overcome the world will be able to partake of the fruit. The Lord promised the Saints of Sardis, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7). By overcoming the world, church members could return to life, but they first had to reach the tree, which was in the midst of sacred space. For the modern Saint to get to the tree, he or she must first visit the temple and partake of its glorious ordinances.

The tree of life icon in Israelite temple society is evident in the tabernacle menorah, or seven-branched lamp stand.⁷ The menorah was a stylized tree of life.

And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: Three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. And in the candlestick shall be four bowls like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it. (Exodus 25:31–37)

The menorah must have looked like a tree, possessing seven branches (a number of symbolic significance to the Israelite community)⁸ and a number of flowers (almond blossoms?).

The tree of life was present in the garden, and a symbolic representation of the tree of life—in the form of a seven-branched lamp stand—was present in the Israelite temples. John’s imagery suggests that the only way to reach this tree and thus eternal life is by going to the temple. In effect, the tree of life suggests that the fall of Adam has been surmounted; spiritual death can no longer claim the individual who obeys God.

2. Physical Death (Genesis 2:17; 3:3) and the Second Death (Revelation 2:11)

Physical death results in the “body without the spirit” (James 2:26). The “second death” (Jacob 3:11)—called “spiritual death” (Helaman 14:18) or “everlasting death” (Alma 12:32)—pertains to those who die in sin (see Alma 12:16), who “die as to things . . . of righteousness” (Alma 40:26), or who are “cut off from the presence of the Lord” (Alma 42:9). This second death is the penalty for doing evil (see Alma 12:32). As President Joseph F. Smith explained,

Thanks be to the eternal Father, through the merciful provisions of the gospel, all mankind will have the opportunity of escape, or deliverance, from this spiritual death, either in time or in eternity, for not until they are freed from the first can they become subject unto the second death, still if they repent not “they cannot be redeemed from their spiritual fall,” and will continue subject to the will of Satan, the first spiritual death, so long as “they repent not, and thereby reject Christ and his gospel.”⁹

After partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, Adam and Eve brought both physical and spiritual death

into the world. Alma instructed his son that “it was appointed unto man to die—therefore, as they [Adam and Eve] were cut off from the tree of life they should be cut off from the face of the earth— . . . And now, ye see by this that our first parents were cut off both temporally and spiritually from the presence of the Lord” (Alma 42:6–7). This fall “brought upon all mankind a spiritual death as well as a temporal” (Alma 42:9; see D&C 29:40–43).

Death in the Garden of Eden corresponds to a statement in John’s letter to the church of Smyrna: the Revelator promises that “he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death” (Revelation 2:11). Through Christ’s atoning sacrifice and resurrection, all mankind will receive a resurrection, or a reuniting of body with spirit. This resurrected body will be immortal. Also through Christ’s atonement, repentant individuals overcome spiritual death. Alma summarizes: “the atonement bringeth to pass the resurrection of the dead; and the resurrection of the dead bringeth back men into the presence of God; and thus they are restored into his presence” (Alma 42:23).

Note that in 1 Corinthians 15:22, Adam and Christ are connected but contrasted: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Similarly, a relationship between Adam and Christ is identified in Mormon 9:12–13:

Behold, he created Adam, and by Adam came the fall of man. And because of the fall of man came Jesus Christ, even the Father and the Son; and because of Jesus Christ came the redemption of man. And because of the redemption of man, which came by Jesus Christ, they are brought back into the presence of the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 15:45, Adam is called the “first man Adam” and Christ is referred to as the “last Adam,” again linking the two.

In the primal temple (the Garden of Eden), Adam and Eve did not overcome the temptations of Satan and consequently subjected themselves and their posterity to physical death; in the last temple (heavenly), however, all who overcome through Christ will not remain subject to the second death.

3. Bread (Genesis 3:19) and Hidden Manna (Revelation 2:17)

Bread, sometimes called the staff of life, was a vital foodstuff for sustaining life in the biblical world, and for that matter in many parts of the world through all ages. It is a common and important symbol of both physical and spiritual sustenance, as many scriptures testify. Every Sabbath in the Israelite temple (see Leviticus 24:5–9), priests consumed twelve loaves of bread (called *shewbread*; see Exodus 25:30). This bread anticipated the Lord's sacrament, which is composed of broken bread, signifying Christ's body ("Take, eat; this is my body," Matthew 26:26), and water or wine, symbolizing Christ's blood. The shewbread, the cereal offering in the temple, "the manna which fed the Israelites in the desolate deserts of Sinai, the . . . bread [fed] to the multitudes on the shores of Galilee, and the bread of the sacrament are but figures of the 'true bread,' which is the body of the Savior."¹⁰ To his Old World disciples Jesus taught, "The bread that I will give is my flesh" (John 6:51), and to the Nephites, "He that eateth this bread eateth of my body to his soul" (3 Nephi 20:8).

Jesus explained, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). Also, "if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever," he shall be raised "up at the last day," he shall have "eternal life" or "everlasting life," and "he

that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6:51, 44, 54, 47, 57). The parallels between physical bread made of yeast and flour and spiritual bread are clear: one sustains physical life and the other provides eternal life.

Manna, which was "like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey" (Exodus 16:31), was called "the corn of heaven," "angels' food" (Psalm 78:24–25), and "bread" (Exodus 16:15). Manna, like bread, typified the eternal life that Jesus Christ provides to repentant souls through his atonement. Jesus explained to his followers, "I am [the] bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (John 6:48–51). Note that the wilderness manna and Christ both "came down from heaven" and both provide life to partakers; one provides physical life and the other spiritual.

God commanded Moses to place a jar of manna in the temple's ark of the covenant (see Exodus 16:32–34; Hebrews 9:4) where, hidden from view, it became a memorial of God's sustaining Israel in the wilderness. Manna is mentioned in John's seven letters to the seven churches, where the Lord told the Saints of Pergamos: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna" (Revelation 2:17). Christ is the manna for those who overcome.

The parallels between the wilderness manna and the hidden manna of Revelation are apparent. The first was hidden from view in the tabernacle's holy of holies; the second is hidden from view in the celestial holy of holies. The wilderness manna provided physical life to those who partook; the hidden manna provides spiritual life to those who repent and accept the atonement.

After their transgression, Adam and Eve were removed from the Edenic temple setting and were required to work the ground in order to obtain bread for sustenance. The Lord told Adam that after his transgression the ground was cursed for his sake, that he would eat foods produced from the ground “all the days of [his] life” or “till [he] return[s] unto the ground,” and that he “in sorrow” would “eat bread” in the “sweat of [his] face” (Genesis 3:17, 19). The atonement of Christ reverses this process for those who repent, and Jesus thus becomes eternal sustenance to the righteous, who will return to the temple of heaven to dwell eternally.

4. Dominion (Genesis 1:28; Revelation 2:26)

When God contemplated the creation of humankind, he determined that dominion would be theirs.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:26–28)

Adam began to exercise that dominion while yet in the primal temple setting. “Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof” (Genesis 2:19). By naming the animals, Adam demonstrated his ascendancy. This dominion

continued, to an extent, when this couple was driven from the garden into the telestial sphere.

What does *dominion* mean in these verses? Hugh Nibley, in his article “Man’s Dominion,” explains that “the ancients taught that Adam’s dominion was nothing less than the priesthood, the power to act for God and in his place.”¹¹ This agrees with Brigham Young’s teaching that “the Spirit of the Lord and the keys of the priesthood hold power over all animated beings.”¹² Nibley summarizes that “man’s dominion is a call to service, not a license to exterminate.”¹³

This earthly and temporal dominion is a type or shadow that points forward to the eternal dominion that exalted souls will possess. John wrote to the church of Thyatira: “to him who overcometh, and keepeth my commandments unto the end, will I give power over many kingdoms” (Revelation 2:26 JST). The dominion of the Saints is no longer limited to the animal kingdom. It spreads to the human kingdom as well. In the heavenly temple God expands the authority given in the primal temple.

5. Sacred Vestments (Genesis 3:21; Revelation 3:5)

The fifth parallel between the garden story and John’s promise and blessing to the various congregations grows out of God’s last act shortly before expelling Adam and Eve from the garden. “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats [garments] of skins, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). Note God’s careful attention to the sacred clothing—he does not delegate the making of the garments and the dressing of the couple to an angel or another but carries out these divine acts himself.

There are two chief connections between the garments

of skins and Christ's atoning sacrifice. First, ancient tradition suggests that the skin garments were made of sheep's wool.¹⁴ Wool reminds us of Jesus Christ and his atonement, for the scriptures refer to sacrificial lambs that typify Jesus' death.¹⁵ Christ also is called "our passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7), the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), and the "lamb without blemish" (1 Peter 1:19). Other scriptural images also relate the lamb to Christ's sacrifice (see, for example, Isaiah 1:18). Second, the English word *atonement* (at-one-ment) originated from the Hebrew word *kaphar*, which means "to cover." When the Lord covered Adam and Eve with garments of skin, he was, as it were, covering or protecting them by the power of his atonement. Though leaving the presence of God, they were not leaving his protection.¹⁶

The apostle Paul perhaps had the idea of *kaphar* or "covering" in mind when he wrote the following statements: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ *have put on Christ*" (Galatians 3:27); "let us *put on* the armour of light" (Romans 13:12); "this corruptible must *put on* incorruption, and this mortal must *put on* immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53); and "*put on* the new man" (Ephesians 4:24, emphasis added in each instance).

The garments of skin may be for this world only (compare JS—H 1:31), but the Lord promised the church at Sardis, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Revelation 3:5). The color of the garment is important. The Greek *leukos* denotes brilliance, the state of heavenly splendor, the state of innocence and purity. The brilliant, white garment covers those who enter

the sacred space of God. As God clothed Adam and Eve for their journey through mortality, he now clothes those who overcome the world for their journey through eternity.

6. Expulsion (Genesis 3:23–24) and Return (Revelation 3:12)

The sixth parallel centers on the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden, because “the man is become as one of us [the gods], to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden” (Genesis 3:22–23). Adam’s punishment for his transgression was death, so he was forced to leave the Garden of Eden, where he “must have remained forever, and had no end” (2 Nephi 2:22). But not all was lost. To the Saints of Philadelphia, the Lord promised, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out” (Revelation 3:12). Again John emphasizes that the key to reentering God’s sacred dwelling is overcoming the world. In this covenant, however, God promises the Saints more than a “place” in his heavenly kingdom, for they become a part of sacred space, never to leave its environs.

7. Receiving Names (Genesis 2:23; 3:20; 5:2; Revelation 2:17; 3:12)

The seventh and final parallel between Genesis 2–3 and Revelation 2–3 deals with the reception of sacred names for Adam and Eve (in Genesis) and for those who overcome the world (in Revelation). It was God who gave to Adam and Eve—that is, to the man and the woman—their names while yet in their paradisiacal setting. According to Gene-

sis, “This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created” (Genesis 5:1–2). This title not only designated the first pair, but also their descendants. Thus God named humankind at the beginning of the world, giving it the name Adam.

At the end of world, God will give a new name to those who overcome. Indeed, he who overcomes shall receive a threefold name: “I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name” (Revelation 3:12). No longer will the Saint be *Adam*, but he or she shall possess the very name of the Father and the Son, the name of God’s city, the New Jerusalem (meaning they will be inhabitants of that city), and the new name. This new name, however, is that of the Lord, and thus it identifies the recipient with him. In this way they become heirs of God and Christ, receiving the full power and glory with the Son.

John referred to the new name (see Revelation 2:17; compare D&C 130:9–10) and promised that the name of the righteous would not be blotted out of the book of life (see Revelation 3:5).

Conclusion

Having listed the parallels (see table 2), we can now postulate why these correlations exist between the garden story and the letters to the seven churches. John drew his readers’ attention to the temple esoterica found in Genesis 2–3. The letters were to sound a warning to the church as a

Table 2. Key Themes Common to Genesis 2–3 and Revelation 2–3

Key Theme	Primal Temple (Eden)	Temple of Heaven
1. Tree of Life	Adam and Eve are forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of life (see Gen. 2:17).	The elect will partake of the fruit of the tree of life (see Rev. 2:7).
2. Death	Death enters the world because of the transgression of Adam and Eve (see Gen. 2:17; 3:3).	The elect will not be hurt by the second death (see Rev. 2:11).
3. Bread/ Manna	Adam and Eve eat bread by sweat (see Gen. 3:19).	The elect will eat of the hidden manna (see Rev. 2:17).
4. Dominion	Adam and Eve replenish and subdue the earth and have dominion over the animal kingdom (see Gen. 1:28).	The elect will have power over the nations (see Rev. 2:26).
5. Sacred Vestments	God made coats of skins and clothed Adam and Eve (see Gen. 3:21).	The elect will be clothed in white raiment (see Rev. 3:5).
6. Expulsion/ Return	The Lord “sent [Adam and Eve] forth from the garden”; he “drove out” the man and the woman (Gen. 3:23–24).	The elect will reenter the temple and become (symbolically) pillars in the temple; i.e., they will possess eternal access to the temple (see Rev. 3:12).
7. Receiving Names	God “called their name Adam [‘humankind,’ ‘man and woman’] in the day when they were created” (Gen. 5:2).	The elect of God will receive the name of God and Christ’s new name (see Rev. 3:12).

whole. Apostasy was running full steam, fueled by false prophets and apostles. Entire branches were ignorantly or willfully being overrun by it. The message to the churches sounded a clear warning that God would abandon them unless they returned to him. Each congregation was responsible to stop the spread of heresy, hold on to the truth, and thereby gain salvation. The book *Opening the Seven Seals* explains:

From the context of the letters, the Church's spiritual life foundered in six areas. Two were external: a willingness to compromise with paganism and a denial of Christianity due to Jewish harassment. Four were internal: the acceptance of unauthorized leaders, approval of false doctrine promulgated by pseudo-prophets, halfheartedness and indifference, and a loss of love for the Church and her Master. Succumbing to any one of these would have sounded the death knell for the Church.¹⁷

John reached out to warn and hold them, choosing the most powerful imagery he could—temple imagery. The trial of the Saints in Asia Minor became a kind of microcosm for the problem the Saints faced everywhere: overcoming the world while facing forces that would take them away from God. John's readers lived in the fallen world and felt the effects of that fall. John encouraged them by promising a return to sacred space. After having left the divine temple of Eden, humankind could, by overcoming the world, once more enter into sacred space and enjoy the blessings of the eternal paradise, the temple in heaven. Our contemporary temples, of course, serve to reverse the direction of our (Adam and Eve's) path toward the second death and destruction. Our temples assist us in partaking of the power of Christ (the hidden manna), gaining dominion in

the eternal world, acquiring the sacred vestments, receiving the sacred name, and returning to the tree of life and to God's presence.

Notes

1. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 86. On the temple symbols in the Garden of Eden, see Donald W. Parry, "Garden of Eden: Prototype Sanctuary," in *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism*, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 126–51.

2. Examples of three phrases used in connection with the temple are found in Parry, "Garden of Eden," 143–45.

3. We have simplified certain elements in this seven-part pattern.

4. We could, of course, present other parallels between these two texts, but in the context of this paper we will examine only these seven.

5. Richard D. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals: The Visions of John the Revelator* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 37.

6. See Ingvild S. Gilhus, "The Tree of Life and the Tree of Death: A Study of Gnostic Symbols," *Journal of Religion and Religions* 17 (1987): 337–53. Gilhus writes that the "Tree of Knowledge is here made equivalent to a Tree of Death," and this Tree of Death "created death for those who ate of it" (p. 341).

7. See Carol L. Meyers, *The Tabernacle Menorah: A Synthetic Study of a Symbol from the Biblical Cult* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1976), 165–79. Note that in Revelation 1:12–13, John "saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man." These seven golden candlesticks, John is informed, represent the "seven churches" (Revelation 1:20).

8. See John W. Welch, "The Temple in the Book of Mormon," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 353, 384 n. 85.

9. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 15.

10. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Donald W. Parry, *A Guide to Scriptural Symbols* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1990), 25.

11. Hugh W. Nibley, "Man's Dominion, or Subduing the Earth," in *Brother Brigham Challenges the Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 7.

12. Elden J. Watson, *Manuscript History of Brigham Young 1846–1847* (Salt Lake City: Watson, 1971), 142 (26 April 1846).

13. Nibley, "Man's Dominion," 18.

14. See Stephen D. Ricks, "The Garment of Adam," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 706. Latter-day Saint scholars have pointed out that these sacred vestments may be garments of "light" rather than "skin," based on ancient writings, and because the two Hebrew words are homonyms, differing only in the initial character *ʿôr* (skin) and *ʾôr* (light). See *ibid.*, and John A. Tvedtnes, "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," in *Temples of the Ancient World*, 651–54. Ricks, "The Garment of Adam," 706, explains, "Probably the oldest rabbinic traditions include the view that God gave garments to Adam and Eve before the Fall but that these were not garments of skin . . . but instead garments of light."

15. See McConkie and Parry, *A Guide to Scriptural Symbols*, 141–42: "In six ways the sacrificial lamb was a type of Jesus Christ. 1) No bones of the lamb were to be broken (Ps. 34:20; Ex. 12:46; John 19:36). 2) The lamb must be perfect (Mal. 1:7–14; 3 Ne. 12:48). 3) The lamb must be without blemish (Ex. 12:5; Heb. 7:26–27; 1 Pet. 2:22). 4) The flesh of the lamb was to be eaten (Ex. 12:8; John 6:53–55). 5) The lamb must be the firstborn (Ex. 13:2; D&C 93:21). 6) The lamb must be a male (Ex. 12:5; Matt. 1:21)."

16. For the physical and spiritual protection offered to the wearer by the garments, see Tvedtnes, "Priestly Clothing in Bible Times," 659–61.

17. Draper, *Opening the Seven Seals*, 37.