

The Beginning and the End: Echoes of Genesis 1–3 in Revelation 21–22

Julie M. Smith

The Bible begins with a creation story. It also ends with one: the final chapters of the book of Revelation contain John's vision of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Revelation 21:1). This vision borrows—and develops—symbols from the Genesis creation account. Comparing these texts can yield rich insights; among the most significant is that the first creation was of a temple within a garden while the last creation is of a garden within a temple. This paper will unpack that statement and explore its theological repercussions. To accomplish this task and to organize what follows, I'll draw on the work of evangelical scholar Gregory K. Beale.¹ While thinking about the Garden of Eden as a temple is not uncomfortable for Latter-day Saints, it can be for other Christians. Beale, despite his own persuasive argument for this connection, admits that the idea might sound strange. Nevertheless, he helpfully outlines nine reasons for connecting the Garden of Eden with the temple. In each section of this paper, I'll discuss one of those reasons and then explore how John's vision might impact our thinking about it.

God's presence

Beale notes that one of the key features of the Old Testament temple is that it was a place where God could be present: once per year, the high priest would enter the holy of holies to commune with the Lord (see Exodus 25:22). Similarly, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed God's presence. Beale points out that the same Hebrew verb (*hithallek*) is used for God's "walking" in the garden (see Genesis 3:8) as for God's "walking" in the tabernacle (see, for example, 2 Samuel 7:6–7), suggesting that the author of the Genesis account was thinking about God's presence in the garden in literally the same terms used for God's presence in the temple.² Now what does the book of Revelation do with this theme?

First, it is necessary to establish, however briefly, that the new creation of Revelation 21–22—the New Jerusalem—is to be understood as a temple. A couple of points make this clear. First, its length and width and height are the same, making it a perfect cube (Revelation 21:16), which is true of only one other entity in the Bible: the holy of holies, the central portion of the Old Testament temple. Further, the new creation is also described as having all its surfaces covered in gold (Revelation 21:18), something also true of the holy of holies. Just with these two points, we have clear evidence that both the garden of Genesis and the new creation of Revelation are temples. Further, as we've already seen, a central purpose of temples is to create a space where God can be present. If we consider both Eden and the New Jerusalem as temples, several interesting insights emerge.

One of the consequences of the fall in Genesis, of course, is that Adam and Eve are expelled from God's presence. But the book of Revelation announces that God will dwell permanently in the new creation (Revelation 21:3) because "the curse" is no more (Revelation 22:3). We sometimes speak of the curse of the fall as consisting of Adam's work and Eve's suffering in childbearing, but the Genesis text portrays only the serpent and the ground as being cursed, not Adam or Eve. Thus, we might more accurately read God's words to Adam and Eve after their transgression as an effort to prepare them for what they will experience in mortality. Further, reading intertextually, we might conclude that "the curse" that is no more, referred to in Revelation, is the curse of being denied God's presence. Where Adam and Eve hid from God's face after the fall, inhabitants of the New Jerusalem see God's face continually. And even though they are not strictly a curse, the conditions of mortality Adam and Eve were warned about are also done away in the new creation: food and water are given freely, and there is no more pain or sorrow.

The new creation in Revelation comes down from heaven, but the Garden of Eden was created on earth. Why? Beale argues that the first garden/temple was intended in time to spread to cover the whole earth, but the fall made this impossible because the starting point from which that spreading would occur (Eden) was lost. The New Jerusalem must come down from heaven because it doesn't have a starting place in advance on the earth. Read symbolically, its descent reflects the necessity of atonement: righteousness must come from the heavenly realm because it has lost its foothold on earth. For God to be present with humankind in the New Jerusalem, an atonement is required; something from heaven must bridge the gap between the human and the divine.

Priesthood

Beale's second reason for thinking of the Garden of Eden as a temple is that Adam's role in the former was the same as a priest's in the latter. The Hebrew words for Adam's task in the garden ('*abad* and *shamar*), translated in the King James Version as "dress" and "keep" (Genesis 2:15), are the same words normally used to describe the work of the priest in the temple (see, for example, Numbers 3:7-8). Thus Adam serves as a priest in the temple that is the Garden of Eden.³ On Beale's reading, the fall brought an end to Adam's priestly duties because he had failed to maintain the sacred space (a primary responsibility of priests). He was therefore replaced by the cherubim, who were given the job of guarding the tree of life (Genesis 3:24; the Hebrew *shamar* is again used).⁴ This situation is echoed in Israel's tabernacle, where the cherubim figuratively guard the mercy seat (see Exodus 25:10-22), but note that in the postfall garden it was the tree of life that needed protection, not the ark of the covenant. This difference, however, suggests a relationship between the tree of life and the ark. The symbolism of the tree of life will be explored in more detail later; for now it suffices to note that what the cherubim protect in both cases is the presence of God, which is sacred and cannot be entered except by those with a right to do so.

There are several intriguing resonances between this priestly guarding role in Genesis and what John sees in vision. Revelation 22:14, part of the epilogue to John's vision, notes that the righteous "may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." This verse seems to equate entering the gates of the city with having the right to the tree of life, suggesting a strong parallel between the angels at the gates of the New Jerusalem and the cherubim guarding the tree of life in Eden. Just as much as the garden or the temple, the entire New Jerusalem is to be regarded as sacred space. Interestingly, however, it appears that the need for a guard has disappeared in John's vision: no longer must any effort be made to keep humans away from sacred space; the gates are always open and the wall is comically small in proportion to the city.

There is more evidence that the entire New Jerusalem is sacred space. In an echo of the Old Testament practice of having the high priest wear a small plate with the Lord's name inscribed on it (see Exodus 28:36), all inhabitants of the New Jerusalem have the name of God in their foreheads. Thus they all fill the role of high priest and dwell in God's presence, meaning that they are continually in sacred space. Further, as already noted, the entire city is built according to the specifications of the temple's holy of holies: both are perfect cubes and are covered in gold. Thus the entire New Jerusalem has become space as sacred as that which houses the tree of life or the ark of the covenant. Sacred space has been both vastly expanded and made much more accessible.

The expansion of priesthood is reflected in another way. In the first creation, the only priest is Adam. The law of Moses stipulated a limited number of priests. In the new creation, however, *all* who dwell in the city take on the characteristics of priests. This radical expansion of the priesthood, completely inclusive in scope, is of course good news, but it is not without its own potential challenges. This vision of the new creation, for instance, risks becoming overly impersonal, as there is no longer one Adam or one high priest at a time but an undifferentiated mass of people. Revelation 21:3 encapsulates this potential downside: "They shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." The expansiveness of this vision is undeniable (it even extends Old

Testament promises originally given uniquely to God's chosen people; in the Greek the plural for *people* is used, implying that the promise now extends to *all* people), and yet it could still feel impersonal because the relationship to God is described in starkly corporate terms. Revelation 21:7, however, presents a comforting contrast: "And I will be his God, and he shall be my son." The text thus suggests that, despite the extension of sacred space and priesthood, each person's relationship with God remains personal and singular.

The theme of personal and community relationships between humans and God resonates in this text in other ways as well. The new creation is, for example, twice described as a bride: first, John describes seeing the holy city "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:2); then, a few verses later, an angel tells John he will show him "the bride, the Lamb's wife" and shows him the city (Revelation 21:9). The bride and the city are, apparently, interchangeable symbols for the new creation. The first suggests complete unity among the people of the new creation, while the second suggests the panoply of human differences that are part of any city. By treating the bride and the city as fungible symbols, the vision indicates both a high degree of unity and a high degree of individuality for the inhabitants of the new creation. The bride imagery also implies that the goal of the new creation is to replicate a marriage relationship between the bride and the lamb—a relationship that is extremely close, personal, and intimate. The goal of the two is to become one. Latter-day Saint readers are familiar with reading Adam's description of Eve as "bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Genesis 2:23) as covenant language and so are primed to find an association between old and new creation in terms of the marriage covenant.

Not only are the people related to each other and to God in compelling and complex ways, but they are related to their abodes as well. In Hebrew, the words for Adam ('*ādām*) and earth ('*ādāmā*) are very similar; the wordplay between these two terms in the creation story of Genesis makes clear that Adam is of the earth. The inhabitants of the New Jerusalem in Revelation are similarly associated with their dwelling. They have, as we have seen, the characteristics of the Old Testament high priest, yet the gems worn on the high priest's breastplate become in Revelation the foundation stones of the city. In both cases, people take on the characteristics of their habitation, but the city of the new creation comes from heaven, not from the earth as Adam does. And because the people of the city have God's name on their foreheads, they share their name not with the earth but with God. They are no longer a part of the creation but rather a part of the Creator.

In still another register, intertextual reading has something to say about the very nature of priesthood and temples. It is sometimes assumed that the Old Testament priesthood was only necessary for performing the sacrificial ordinances of the temple, but this position is obviously incompatible with LDS theology. For Adam to be a priest *before the earth's fall*, as well as for the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem to be priest-like *after the earth's redemption*, indicates that the primary meaning of priesthood does not lie in officiating in the sacrificial ordinances of the Mosaic law (since atoning for sin is unnecessary in both of these cases). There must be something more to the priesthood than sacrifice. Further, we might make the same argument about the temple itself. Sacrifice was unnecessary in the garden before the fall, and yet the garden was a temple. Sacrifice will also be unnecessary in the New Jerusalem, and yet it, too, is presented as a temple. Clearly, the primary reason for temples is not to perform the sacrifices required by the law of Moses. Rather, the point is to provide a space where a worshipper can encounter God.

Tree of life

Beale's third reason to connect Eden to the temple is that the lampstand in the latter was modeled on the tree of life from the garden.⁵ It would be hard to overstate the importance of the tree of life in the scriptures, right from Genesis, where access to the tree of life is what makes "being like God" possible. It is a key symbol, moreover, in the

description in Revelation of the New Jerusalem, where the tree of life takes pride of place over and around the river of water that proceeds from the throne of God. There is also Nephi's vision of the tree of life and Alma's discourse comparing the word to a seed that grows into a tree of life. Daniel C. Peterson, an LDS scholar, has explored the symbolism of the tree of life in an important article entitled "Nephi and His Asherah."⁶ He sketches the extensive evidence in the Old Testament (see, for example, Proverbs 3:18) and other ancient writings that advances an interpretation of the tree as a symbol for female deity and then turns to the Book of Mormon to find the same phenomenon, particularly in Nephi's vision. In that vision, the young Nephi wants to understand the meaning of the tree of life from his father's dream and is shown the mother of the Son of God, apparently to be identified with the tree (1 Nephi 11:1–22). Peterson explains, "Of course, Mary, the virgin girl of Nazareth seen by Nephi, was not literally Asherah. She was, as Nephi's guide carefully stressed, simply 'the mother of the Son of God, *after the manner of the flesh.*' But she was the perfect mortal typification of the mother of the Son of God."⁷ In short, there is strong evidence as much in the Book of Mormon as in biblical texts for a female deity, and she is symbolized by the tree of life.

If we interpret the tree of life as a symbol for the divine female, many insights emerge. On this view, because Adam and Eve had access to the tree of life in the garden, they had access to her in the garden, although as a consequence of the fall they lost this access. Isaiah 50:1 (quoted in 2 Nephi 7:1) may be interpreted as speaking of this event when it explains, "For your transgressions is your mother put away." It may further be significant that Adam and Eve leave the garden clothed not only in skins but also in leaves. We generally interpret the skins as a symbol for the atonement (since the skins were likely those of sacrificed animals) that is meant to serve as a reminder of human beings' relationship with God. Might we interpret the leaves as a similar reminder of the tree of life? Of course, there is also a contrast between the skins and the leaves: the former are *given* to Adam and Eve but they *take* the latter for themselves. It is interesting to contemplate what this difference might suggest about the relationship Adam and Eve had with each of their heavenly parents.

In Revelation 22:14, the King James Version reads, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." This verse appears to be based on a textual error, with the original most likely reading, "Blessed are they who wash their robes" instead of "blessed are they that do his commandments." (Interestingly enough, this apparently original reading appears to be supported by a parallel text in Ether 13:10 in the Book of Mormon: "And then cometh the New Jerusalem; and blessed are they who dwell therein, for it is they whose garments are white through the blood of the Lamb.") Thus, in the book of Revelation, the skins that Adam and Eve covered themselves with have been replaced by robes. The white, clean robes are still a symbol for atonement inasmuch as they are white through the blood of the Lamb, but they lack the symbolism of "covering" that the skins from the garden had.⁸ Now that there is no sin and the people enjoy God's presence unabated, there is no need for covering up with skins, but the white robes—a symbol of atonement—remain. There is no hiding or covering in the New Jerusalem—neither in stolen leaves nor in granted coats of skins.

Coming back to the garden, we might note that Eve's title, "the mother of all living," seems related to the tree of life. We can in fact think of Eve, the prototypical human female, as patterned after the tree of life, the symbol for the divine female. At any rate, in Revelation, the tree of life is the source of healing and life in the New Jerusalem, where it bears twelve crops of fruit—a crop each month (see Revelation 22:2). It might well be asked what significance this image has, given that there is no night in the New Jerusalem and that the tree of life fruits every month (such that nights and months do not reflect changing seasons). The most likely referent for month, therefore, would be the menstrual cycle, a connection that further links the tree of life to female imagery.

The tree of life is in the midst of the city, yet it is described in a way that we cannot completely understand. In wording that has befuddled scholars for generations, the text states that the tree is “on either side of the river” (Revelation 22:2). Perhaps the Book of Mormon suggests a solution to this difficulty. First Nephi 11:25 makes clear that, in Nephi’s related vision, the river and the tree are interchangeable symbolically; Nephi reports that he saw that the iron rod “led to the fountain of living waters, or to the tree of life; which waters are a representation of the love of God; and I also beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.” Perhaps John the Revelator’s difficult-to-interpret language, like Nephi’s more straightforward wording, equates the symbolic meaning of the living waters with the symbolic meaning of the tree of life. Alternately, it might be that the difficult language in Revelation is deliberately opaque in order to mirror our current inability to mesh our knowledge of the existence of a Mother in Heaven with our understanding of the Godhead.

Another aspect of tree of life symbolism is suggested by Alma 32, where the end result of a person’s choice to experiment on the word results in its taking root: “And behold it shall be a tree springing up unto everlasting life” (Alma 32:41). In this text, it seems, a person can herself become a tree of life by experimenting with faith.⁹ Another scripture that conceptualizes the righteous as a tree is Jeremiah 17:8: “For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” (Notably, there need be no contradiction between the idea that a Mother in Heaven is symbolized by the tree of life and the idea that the righteous person is a tree of life; rather, this overlapping symbolism implies unity between the two.)

Gourds, flowers, and trees

Next Beale notes that Israel’s temple had wood carvings of nature symbols—such as gourds, flowers, and trees—suggesting a garden-like atmosphere and encouraging us, yet again, to think of the Garden of Eden as the first temple.¹⁰ But given this emphasis on nature motifs in temples, why is the new creation of Revelation a city—and a very angular, cold, hard city at that? But here we need to take a step back to consider what exactly the new creation is. A curious feature of John’s vision is that although he first saw “a new heaven and a new earth” (Revelation 21:1), he immediately thereafter says that he saw “the holy city” (Revelation 21:2), and the entirety of the ensuing vision concerns only the city. This culminates, in Revelation 22:14–15, with John’s saying that those who sin are “without” the city and cannot enter into its gates (sinners, obviously not a part of the new creation, are not a part of the city). This distinction is odd because throughout the canon, particularly in Genesis, cities are portrayed negatively. From their origins with one of Cain’s children (see Genesis 4:17) to the corrupted cities of Babel (Genesis 11) and Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 14), cities are the places of corruption. Even in the Book of Mormon, Lehi and his family had to leave the city for the wilderness in order to live righteously.

What lies behind this negative assessment? Cities, it might be said, represent human will, wisdom, and experience. There is nothing city-like or even architectural in the Garden of Eden—no evidence of human will, experience, or wisdom. Only eating the forbidden fruit was evidence of will, but that act was incompatible with dwelling in the garden; it is not until they leave the garden and build an altar that the text presents evidence of anything structural or architectural produced by humans. Throughout the Bible, subsequently, cities are seen as evil to the extent that the exercise of human will associated with them is in fact negative. But, rather suddenly, in Revelation, we have a city that comes “down from God out of heaven” (Revelation 21:2). That it comes from heaven is key. *This* city represents human will and wisdom perfected by God. Because the new creation is a city and not a garden, there is no simple return to the Garden of Eden, which would imply losing the experience and wisdom gained in mortal life. Rather, the new creation suggests that all that has been passed through in the wake of the fall can be enjoyed as purified, perfected entities in God’s presence. The city doesn’t represent just God’s will—the creation story suggests that God’s will is expressed through the creation of the natural world and not through the building of

cities. Rather, it represents human will consecrated to God. The city, as an earthly entity, is redeemed through heaven's intervention.

It might be appropriate here to talk about the city of Enoch. LDS scripture teaches that Enoch led a city where the people "were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18). The city was called Zion, and eventually the city "was taken up into heaven" (Moses 7:21). The New Jerusalem that John sees descending from heaven is—symbolically at least—Enoch's perfected city, where human will and wisdom are aligned with God's desires. Support for this interpretation comes from the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis 9, where, in making covenant promises to Noah, the Lord says, "When men shall keep all my commandments, Zion [shall] again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself" (Genesis 9:21 JST).

In the end, however, the New Jerusalem is more than a city. It has at its core a fruitful tree and a river. That is, the New Jerusalem is, at its center, a garden. The carvings in the Old Testament temples were symbolic representations of nature as it had existed in Eden and would exist again in the New Jerusalem. Just as God was symbolically present in the Old Testament temple but actually present in the Garden of Eden and the New Jerusalem, garden elements are symbolically present in the Mosaic temple but actually present in the first and last temples. This nature symbolism is itself suggestive of God's presence—an idea that makes sense given the fact that the flowers, plants, and gourds are God's own creations.

Orientation

The fifth connection between the Garden of Eden and the Mosaic temple concerns orientation, and it can be dealt with more briefly than most of the other connections. Beale notes that just as Israel's temple was to be built on a mountain and to face east, the Garden of Eden faced east and was positioned on a mountain.¹¹ Orientation to the east, symbolically anticipating the coming of the Lord, is absent from the book of Revelation. The new temple-city has gates on all four sides, and all four cardinal directions are named without any one being privileged (see Revelation 21:12–13). This is no surprise: in the new creation, where there is no longer any need to anticipate God's delayed presence, east has lost its special significance. God is present all of the time.

The forbidden

Beale's next point similarly concerns something common to the garden and the Old Testament temple but absent in the New Jerusalem. He points out that touching either the tree of knowledge of good and evil (in the garden) or the ark of the covenant (in the temple) results in death. Moreover, both the tree and the ark (which contained the law) are sources of wisdom.¹² It is interesting to speculate about the symbolism behind the idea that the act of "touching" knowledge is worthy of death. Perhaps the real worry concerns attempting to handle wisdom on one's own terms rather than on God's. Regardless, as already intimated, there is no mention of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in Revelation. This, of course, makes perfect sense, since the people of the New Jerusalem have already partaken of it along with Adam and Eve. There is, it seems, no longer anything that will cause death for those who touch it: death and pain are done away. The tree of knowledge represents the task of mortality and its accompanying pains and difficulties, and these have no place in the new creation.

Rivers

Marking his seventh connection between Eden and the temple, Beale argues that since the postexilic temple, Ezekiel's vision of the temple, and the temple-city in Revelation all have rivers, Eden, which also has a river, should be grouped with these temples.¹³ Eden, in fact, has *four* rivers flowing in it (and, specifically, out of it), while Revelation has only one river, apparently in the city's middle. (Whether that river actually flows out of the city is

not stated.) Interestingly, while the Genesis text gives very little description of the Garden of Eden, five full verses are devoted to describing its rivers. Clearly, rivers are important in the Genesis account. They are also key in the new creation, where it is said that God “will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely” (Revelation 21:6). The book of Revelation provides several hints about the symbolic meaning of the river: it is called the “river of water of life,” and it proceeds out of the throne (Revelation 22:1). It is thus clear that the river symbolizes the eternal life that God grants. If we assume that the new creation’s river does *not* flow out of the city, we might see Eden’s river as symbolic of God’s attempt to offer eternal life to the four corners of the world. But since the New Jerusalem is the whole world, there is no point in having the river flow out of the city.

While the new creation does feature a river, it should be noted that the text says that there “was no more sea” (Revelation 21:1). The sea often represents chaos and evil in scripture—think of Noah’s flood, the parting of the Red Sea, and the disciples’ astonishment when Jesus calms the water. The Genesis text seems, so to speak, to muddy the waters a little bit on this point; there, all aspects of the creation are called “good.” Yet a closer reading reveals that, at least in Genesis, God did not actually create the seas. In Genesis 1:2, God’s spirit moves upon waters already present, already existent. In the second day of creation, God creates “a firmament in the midst of the waters” (Genesis 1:6), and on the third day, the waters are gathered together so that there will be dry land (see Genesis 1:9–10). At no point in this account is water actually created, and it is “the gathering together of the waters”—not the water itself—that is called good (Genesis 1:9–10).

A more complete discussion of the theology of evil and chaos is beyond the scope of this paper, but Genesis 1 suggests that God does not create evil but rather limits and controls it.¹⁴ The natural state is for water to overwhelm everything (as before the creation or as in the flood); only God’s ongoing actions prevent this. In the second creation, because evil has been completely vanquished and does not appear in the city, the sea disappears. The very definition of “the new heaven and new earth” in Revelation is heaven and earth *minus* the sea.¹⁵ Consider closely the way that John begins his description of the new creation: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (Revelation 21:1). The primary defining characteristic of the new creation is that there is no sea. The new creation is thus an act of subtraction. Not only are the waters subtracted in Revelation as a symbol of evil or chaos, but some of the waters separate heaven and earth in Genesis, suggesting that they originally helped to separate humans from God. The absence of these waters in the new creation implies a lack of separation between God and humanity, an idea that—as we have seen—is well developed in other ways in the final chapters of the book of Revelation.¹⁶

Why, though, is there still a river when the sea is no more? The symbolism of the river is actually quite different from that of the sea. The sea is a symbol of evil and chaos in part because it is directionless and purposeless. The river, on the other hand, evinces purpose because it flows in a particular direction and toward a particular end. Moreover, although the sea is no more in Revelation, there is still a lake of fire—albeit outside the city or outside the new creation. Evil and chaos still exist at the end of time—this is logical since they existed before the first creation—but they no longer affect the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem.

Residence

Beale opens his discussion of the eighth link between the garden and the temple with the observation that, contrary to common usage, “the garden” and “Eden” are not synonymous.¹⁷ The Genesis text records that a river went out of Eden to water the garden, meaning that “Eden” and “the garden” are two distinct spaces (see Genesis 2:10). Beale suggests that this arrangement is typical in the ancient world, where a palace would be adjacent to a garden. In this case, then, God’s residence (Eden) would be next to the garden where Adam and Eve lived. Note, however, that in the book of Revelation, God’s throne is in the midst of the city, not off to the side or at a distance.

This means that the New Jerusalem does not merely mark a return to the garden, where humans lived next to (and therefore apart from) God and God could freely visit. Rather, life in the New Jerusalem means dwelling in the midst of God—in God’s very own habitation. Before the fall, human beings dwelt near God; in the new creation, they dwell in God’s home. Having passed through mortal experience makes it possible to enjoy God’s presence in a way that was not possible before the fall.

Ezekiel’s witness

Beale’s ninth and final argument for interpreting the Garden of Eden as a temple is simply that that is how Ezekiel interprets it (see Ezekiel 28:13–14).¹⁸ Although Ezekiel’s immediate audience in the text in question is the ruler of Tyre, the language points to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and describes the garden as a temple—specifically, the “holy mountain of God.” Along the way, Ezekiel touches on virtually every theme explored in this paper. The text even contains a list of precious gemstones and gold, which are described as Adam’s “covering” or clothing (Ezekiel 28:13). This in particular makes a nice link to the New Jerusalem where, as already discussed, that clothing—symbolic of the high priest—becomes the foundation of the city. Through Ezekiel’s writings, the link between the Garden of Eden and the New Jerusalem—and, in particular, Adam’s priestly role—is emphasized. Indeed, Ezekiel’s text serves as a nice capstone to this discussion.

Conclusion

Twice in the final chapters of Revelation we hear, “I am . . . the beginning and the end.” While it is unlikely that Revelation was the last book of the Bible actually written, if we choose to read it in its canonical context we might take those words as reason enough to search for commonalities between the Bible’s beginning and its end. I opened this paper by proposing that the first creation was a temple in a garden, and the new creation is a garden in a temple. As we have seen in taking Gregory Beale as guide, the Garden of Eden was a temple, and a close reading of the book of Revelation shows a garden in the midst of the eschatological city, a city that is itself a temple. Not only is there a close association between the two texts, but also something of an inversion. In the New Jerusalem, we see the priesthood extended, the presence of God more fully realized, and evil banished. At every point in studying the first and final texts of the Bible together, we discover intriguing insights that nuance our understanding of both texts.

Julie M. Smith graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a BA in English and from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, with an MA in biblical studies. She is on the executive board of the Mormon Theology Seminar and the steering committee for the BYU New Testament Commentary, for which she is writing a commentary on the Gospel of Mark. She is the author of Search, Ponder, and Pray: A Guide to the Gospels. Julie is married to Derrick Smith; they live near Austin, Texas, where she homeschools their three children. She also blogs for Times & Seasons, where she is the book review editor.

NOTES

1. Gregory K. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48/1 (March 2005): 5–31.
2. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” 7.
3. Beale, “Eden, the Temple, and the Church’s Mission in the New Creation,” 7–8.

4. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," 8.
5. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," 8.
6. Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 16–25.
7. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah," 22, emphasis in the original.
8. Throughout the Old Testament, "covering" is frequently equivalent to atonement. A covering covers sins—not in the sense of "covering up," but in the sense of "covering for."
9. Alma 32 has been the object of study in a previous Mormon Theology Seminar project. See Adam S. Miller, ed., *An Experiment on the Word: Reading Alma 32* (Provo, UT: Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2014).
10. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," 8.
11. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," 8.
12. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," 8.
13. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," 8–9.
14. For an important study of this theme, see Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).
15. Adam Miller provided this formulation in the course of the discussions that led to this book. See his post, "Omnibus Make-Up Comments – 21:1–9," <http://revsem.blogspot.com/2009/06/omnibus-make-up-comments-211-9.html>.
16. It might be further noted that the intertextual reading offered here suggests that the creation account in Genesis be read more symbolically and less literally than usual.
17. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," 9.
18. Beale, "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation," 10.