

Uncovering the Silence of Sacred Space: An Examination of Trito-Isaiah's Theology of the Temple With Particular Attention to the Role of the Outsider

THESIS ABSTRACT

Shawn Flynn
Trinity Western University

We come to the Old Testament to ask a primary question: what is Isaiah 56-66's theology of the temple? We ask this question for two reasons. The first addresses the contemporary lack of discussing sacred space within Old Testament theology. Therefore, this study wishes to draw our attention back to the temple as a sacred space and its importance as a source of theology for the Israelites. Particularly, we hope to show that after the exile, the temple remained an important expression for the community seeking to restore their identity. The second reason deals with the book of Isaiah itself. Primarily, either Isaiah 56-66 is viewed as a text made up of conglomerate parts that lack cohesive meaning, or meaning is sought by situating the text in the light of the Isaiah corpus. Yet the approach taken here will show that Isaiah 56-66 contains its own meaning as an independent work, particularly, a cohesive theology of how the temple should function in the post-exilic community.

This study will take us on a journey which surveys scholarly approaches to the topic of sacred space in Old Testament theology, approaches to the last eleven chapters of Isaiah, developing a method from the successes and limitations of those approaches, discovering Isaiah 56-66's theology of the temple, and comparing that theology to other texts of the time.

In answering our primary question, we hope to show that there is a continuing dialogue in the post-exilic community regarding the importance of sacred space. Specifically, in Isaiah 56-66, there is a discussion between Divine Presence, sacred space and the role of the marginalized. Through examining the relationship between these elements, we will show that Trito-Isaiah supports the temple as an element of worship in the community. However, Trito-Isaiah's sets up a hierarchy of importance; while the temple is a positive expression of worship for the community, merely building the temple will not guarantee that proper worship can take place. Rather, the focus is more on what the community must do to obtain that expression of worship. Conditions are set up for sacred space and Divine Presence to come to the community. The main concern for the Trito-Isaiah is to welcome the marginalized (foreigner, eunuch and any outside the community) into a full relationship with the community by allowing them full access to the temple. As we will see, Trito-Isaiah's focus on the marginalized and granting them full access to the temple is a unique and original addition to the Old Testament theology of sacred space.