

Abstract

TEMPLE CHRISTOLOGY IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: REPLACEMENT THEOLOGY AND JESUS AS THE SELF-REVELATION OF GOD

by Ken Brown

The past decade has seen remarkable interest in John's view of the Temple, marked by the publication of several monographs and numerous articles. Many of these have been produced independently of one another and reflect a variety of approaches, but all of them find in the traditions and expectations of the Temple vital background to John's presentation of Jesus. Most of these studies, however, continue to assume that John's Temple theme is primarily a reaction to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and conclude from this that Jesus (or the church) in some sense "replaces" the Temple and its festivals, taking their place as the locus of God's presence. This "replacement" has been understood and qualified in a various ways, from supersession to fulfillment, symbolism to typology, but the common assumption is that the Jerusalem Temple has become "defunct," with Jesus taking its place completely and finally.

A few more recent studies, however, have begun to call this replacement paradigm into question. Often arguing on sociological grounds, scholars such as Judith Lieu, Jonathan Klawans, Kåre Fuglseth, and most recently Mary Spaulding have noted that reapplications of Temple language and imagery—in John and elsewhere—can be better understood as positive attempts to *extend* the meaning of the cult to other realms, than as attempts to replace it. They note that reapplications of Temple language were common in the period, especially among those loyal to the Temple, and in John itself a number of details imply that Jesus and his disciples were Temple participants (e.g. 2:13; 4:45; 5:1; 7:10, 37; 8:20; 10:22-23; 18:20). If this raises the possibility of a non-replacement reading of John's Temple theme, however, no one has yet attempted as comprehensive an exegetical treatment of that theme from that perspective as previous studies have provided within the replacement paradigm. As such, it remains to be seen not just whether a non-replacement paradigm can be *maintained* throughout the whole of John, but whether it might actually provide a *more fruitful* reading of John's Temple theme than has previously been offered. Such will be the question this thesis seeks to answer.

It will be argued that John's many references and allusions to the Temple and its festivals are not to be understood merely as a reaction to 70 CE, but rather serve an essential purpose in advancing John's more fundamental Christological agenda (cf. 20:31). Focusing primarily on John's prologue (esp. 1:14-18), the Temple incident (2:13-23), Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman (esp. 4:4-26), the festival cycle (5:1-10:42) and Jesus' death and resurrection (esp. 17:1-20:31), it will be argued that the imagery, traditions, rituals and expectations of the Temple, festivals and priesthood are given a persistent and vital role in John's presentation of Jesus, and are consistently focused on his identity as the incarnation of the self-revelation of God. In short, Jesus embodies the Wisdom, glory, presence and name through which God has always been known, including in the Temple. He "tabernacles" among us, and his death and resurrection are tied to the destruction and raising of the Temple. "True worship" depends on knowledge of his true identity, and he fulfills the hopes for the restoration of Israel celebrated and anticipated by the Temple festivals, preeminently in his death and resurrection.