

The Eschatological Temple in John 14

STEVEN M. BRYAN

ETHIOPIAN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

In an article published in Tyndale Bulletin in 1993, the eminent Cambridge scholar Ernst Bammel offered the following bare assertion in regard to John 14:2: "The house with the many mansions is, of course, the temple." This stands against the tide of scholarly opinion on the text, which identifies "my Father's house" as heaven. On this understanding, Jesus promises to return to heaven in order to prepare rooms that will serve as the final heavenly abode of his followers. However, several lines of evidence suggest that Bammel's intuition that the text was speaking about the Temple was correct. What follows then is an attempt to show that John 14:2-3 refers to a heavenly Temple that Jesus makes ready through his death and resurrection to serve as the eternal dwelling of his followers in the presence of God.

Key Words: Temple, heaven, eschatology, Messiah

THE TEMPLE AS THE ESCHATOLOGICAL DWELLING PLACE OF THE RIGHTEOUS IN JEWISH LITERATURE

Insufficient attention has been given to the way Jewish literature sometimes portrayed the Temple as the eschatological dwelling place of the righteous. The roots of the concept are thoroughly biblical and represent a significant development of Deut 30:4, in which Moses promises that, after exile, when the people repent, God will gather them back to the land. In several texts in Isaiah, the expectation of Israel's return is associated not primarily with resettlement in the land but with the anticipation of eschatological assembly in Zion and the gathering of God's scattered people into the Temple:

In days to come
the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.
Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,

to the house of the God of Jacob;
 that he may teach us his ways
 and that we may walk in his paths.” (Isa 2:2; cf. 27:13)

In 2 Sam 7:10, God says to David, “I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place.” The language has several points of contact with Exod 15:17, where Moses declares that God will bring his people in and “plant them on the mountain of your own possession, the place, O Lord, that you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established.” *4QFlorilegium* indicates that these two texts were read together as part of a reflection on the eschatological Temple. Whether together or apart, it is easy to see how these texts influenced the development of the idea that the Temple would be the eschatological dwelling place of God’s people.

This influence may be seen in 2 Macc 1–2, where the promise of return is read in light of Exod 15:17. In 2 Macc 1:17, the petition to “gather together our scattered people” is followed by the prayer “Plant your people in your holy place, as Moses promised.” The reference to the words of Moses in Exod 15:17 makes it unlikely that the hope is merely one of regathering to the land; rather, the desire is more specifically for the ingathering of God’s people to the eschatological Temple. Similarly in 2 Macc 2:17–18, the return of the inheritance, the kingship, the priesthood, and the consecration are the firstfruits of a hoped-for harvest that will see God “gather us from everywhere under heaven into his holy place” (cf. 1:27–29; 2:7).¹ We have, then, in these texts evidence of an expectation that the people of God will one day be gathered into the Temple, referred to as the holy “place” of God.

In the *Animal Apocalypse*, we also find the expectation, though here, I would argue, it is expressed in terms of the gathering of God’s people into God’s house. The nature of the expectations regarding the Temple in this text has been the subject of some dispute. However, much of the difficulty may be resolved when it is recognized that the close association between Zion and Temple evidenced in Isaiah probably lies behind the ambiguous way the term “house” is used in the *Animal Apocalypse*. In this text both the First and Second Temples are described in terms of a tower within a house, obviously Jerusalem (89:50, 73). But description of Jerusalem as the house itself represents a shift, for earlier in the *Apocalypse* the tabernacle was described as the house.² The significance of

1. The terms “priesthood” and “kingdom” allude to Exod 19:6; the term “inheritance” may stem from Exod 15:17, which has clearly influenced the author’s thought beginning in 1:29. The use of these two passages confirms the eschatological framework.
2. The earlier reference to the tabernacle as the “house” seems to have escaped some commentators, for example, Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel: From Its*

this has been inadequately recognized and emerges in part from the fact that the *Apocalypse* says that, during the wilderness years, Moses placed all the sheep into the house (89:36). The reference is puzzling, and, as a result, P. Tiller suggests that the house should be taken as a reference to the wilderness camp.³ This, however, makes little sense of the fact that the building of the house is associated with Moses' experience on Sinai. Nor does such a solution jibe well with the following reference, in 89:50, to the house's becoming great and spacious with a tower in its midst at the time of the building of the land.⁴ This should be understood as the author's way of signaling the shift of referent of house from tabernacle to city. How then do we explain the eschatological "house" of 90:33–36? Most scholars have assumed that the house of these verses designates eschatological Jerusalem, maintaining referential continuity with the description of the First and Second Temple periods. My contention is that the metaphor of an eschatological house reverts back to the house of the wilderness. Three observations establish this likelihood: (1) there was a proclivity toward association of the heavenly or eschatological Temple with the early ideal represented by the tabernacle;⁵ (2) like the wilderness house into which Moses placed all the sheep (89:36), all the sheep are again within the eschatological house (90:29);⁶ (3) like the tabernacle house, the eschatological house has no tower. This absence has been variously explained. Some have taken this as an indication that the author of the *Animal Apocalypse*⁷ has no expectation of a Temple within the eschatological Jerusalem. Against this, Sanders has argued that such a dissociation of Jerusalem and Temple is extraordinarily unlikely and that we must assume that the author has simply assumed the presence of a tower in the eschatological house.⁸ But even if it is correct to argue against a dissociation of

Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah (trans. W. F. Stinespring; London: Allen & Unwin, 1956) 287.

3. Patrick A. Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of I Enoch* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993) 41.

4. For a discussion of the textual difficulties of 89:50, see *ibid.*, 3112–13.

5. See, e.g., 2 Bar 4:1–6.

6. In 90:35–36, the assertion of v. 29 is slightly modified to emphasize the great number of sheep who enter into the house: all the sheep were invited into the house, but they could not all fit, despite its expanded dimensions.

7. E.g., C. C. Rowland, "The Second Temple: Focus of Ideological Struggle," in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel* (ed. William Horbury; JSNTSup 48; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 186; Paul Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde im Neutestamentlichen Zeitalter* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1966) 217; Lloyd Gaston, *No Stone on Another: Studies in the Significance of the Fall of Jerusalem in the Synoptic Gospels* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) 114.

8. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985) 77–86. Cf. also Hans Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1951) 195; Andrew Chester, "The Sibyl and the Temple," in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on*

Jerusalem and Temple, the silence he hears may speak more loudly than he allows; as Tiller observes, “The author has given consistent and clear attention to the Temple, and it is inconceivable that it is here merely assumed.”⁹ It seems to me that the mediating solution suggested above is not only possible but probable: the eschatological house contains no tower, neither because the author does not envision an eschatological Temple, nor because he assumes one, but because the house has again been identified as the Temple, the place into which all the sheep will again be gathered. This solution allows us to grant a more natural sense to 90:28–29, where the transition to the eschatological house is described. For if the eschatological house refers to Jerusalem, we must understand the pulling down and replacement of the pillars and columns and ornaments of the house as a way of describing the construction of a new city. But surely the terms refer more naturally to a new Temple, as does the assertion that this new house will be “loftier” than the first. It appears then that, anticipating the impending shift of referent in v. 29, the author already refers to the Second Temple as a house in v. 28 (despite having used the term “house” for the city throughout his description of the Second Temple period) in order to facilitate the comparison he is about to make. Here again then we have a probable description of the eschatological Temple, referred to as a house into which all of God’s people are gathered.

A similar notion is found elsewhere in *1 Enoch*, where the Temple is heavenly or at least heavenly in origin. In the *Similitudes* of *1 Enoch*, the seer is shown the dwellings of the elect and resting places of the righteous, which are with the holy angels (*1 En.* 39:4).¹⁰ In *1 En.* 71:16, the dwelling places of the righteous will forever be with the heavenly Son of Man, a point that stands whether or not the text is understood to identify Enoch as the Son of Man. This latter text is of particular interest in that the visionary scene is set around the throne of the Ancient of Days. The throne itself is set within a crystalline “house.” The description corresponds quite closely to and is likely derived from the vision of *1 En.* 14, also a throne vision set within a house. Given the propensity in biblical texts to describe the heavenly house of God as a Temple, Black is probably correct to suggest that connection here, particularly in view of texts such as Ps 11:4, in which the heavenly throne and Temple of God are closely associated:

the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel (ed. William Horbury; JSNTSup 48; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991) 44.

9. Tiller, *Commentary*, 376.

10. A similar reference may be found in *1 En.* 41:2 where, however, other readings are also attested.

The Lord is in his holy Temple;
the Lord's throne is in heaven.¹¹

I Enoch 71 does not specify the relation between the house of God and the heavenly dwellings in which the righteous will dwell forever with the Son of Man. The reference to the heavenly dwelling places of 39:4 corresponds to the description of the abode of the righteous “beneath the wings of the Lord of spirits” in 39:7; the vision comes to climax with the acclamation of the Lord of the spirits in terms drawn from the heavenly Temple throne vision of Isa 6. Of interest also is the fact that the *Similitudes* seem to suggest that the heavenly Temple will be revealed. *I Enoch* 53:6 speaks of a coming manifestation of “the house of the congregation” through a heavenly mediator. Whether the spectacular heavenly Temple mentioned later in the *Similitudes* (71:5–7) is here in view is difficult to discern, but it seems likely that such a connection would have been made by subsequent readers.¹² In any case, though the description of the Temple in the *Similitudes* is rather different from that of the *Animal Apocalypse*, both nevertheless seem to anticipate the house of God, the Temple, as the eschatological dwelling place of the righteous. If the *Similitudes* differ from the *Animal Apocalypse*, it is in the description of the house of God as heavenly and in the association of that house with the differentiated dwelling places of the righteous.

Finally, mention must be made of the *Temple Scroll's* description of a Temple in which rooms are provided for all Israel. Though some have argued that the Temple described in the *Temple Scroll* is an idealization of the historical Temple rather than a template of an eschatological Temple, Brooke is undoubtedly correct in his assertion that “11QTemple is the blue-print for [the eschatological Temple] because it is primarily the blue-print for all Israel's Temples.”¹³ In this light, one of the striking things about the 11QT Temple in comparison with the Second Temple is the prescription and designation of rooms not just for the priests and Levites (as in the First and Second Temples as well as the Temple of Ezekiel)¹⁴ but remarkably also for the twelve tribes (11QT 44:3–16). It

11. See also Isa 6:1–2; 2 Sam 22:7; Pss 18:6; 29:9–10; Mic 1:2; Hab 2:20. Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or I Enoch: A New English Edition with Commentary and Textual Notes* (with James C. VanderKam; SVTP; Leiden: Brill, 1985) 147–48.

12. R. J. McKelvey does not connect the two texts and is thus inclined to leave the question open; *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) 31.

13. George J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in Its Jewish Context* (JSOT-Sup 29; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985) 193.

14. Cf. *m. Mid.* 4:3; Josephus, *J.W.* 5.220; 1 Kgs 6:5–10; Ezek 40:44–46; 41:6, 10–11; 42:1–14. These texts primarily describe the chambers in the three-storied building that formed the lower part of the central sanctuary and surrounded the holy place and the holy of holies. Though the function of these rooms is not specified in all of the cited texts, their location meant that they were accessible only to priests and Levites. In Herod's

is difficult to miss here the conception of the eschatological Temple as a place into which, at least representatively, all Israel will be gathered. Here, the people of God as a whole enjoy unprecedented access to the presence of God, in rooms that have been prepared for them.

MESSIAH AS BUILDER OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL TEMPLE

If there are texts that designate the Temple as the eschatological dwelling place of the righteous, there are also texts that suggest that the builder of the eschatological Temple would be the Messiah. The existence of this idea in or before the first century is important to any argument that Temple imagery is at work in John 14. However, though the attestation of this idea in Jewish texts is widely recognized, it is often assumed that the expectation that Messiah would be the builder of the eschatological Temple does not verifiably predate the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.¹⁵ I have elsewhere set forth significant evidence to the contrary. In 4Q*Florilegium*, the *Similitudes of 1 Enoch*, the LXX of Zech 6:12–13, the Herodian messianism implicit in Josephus's descriptions of Herod's massive Temple-building project, possibly the source of 4 *Ezra* 13, and, very likely, in the sayings of Jesus himself, we find evidence for pre-70 conceptions of the Messiah as the builder of the Temple.¹⁶

In addition to these texts from the pre-70 period, the idea appears in several sources that arose very close to the time of the writing of John's Gospel. In *Sib. Or.* 5.414–33, a text that stems from the end of the first century C.E. or beginning of the second, a "blessed man" who builds Jerusalem and the Temple with glory and splendor appears from heaven. The figure is not referred to as "messiah," but the connections between this text and other clearly messianic texts, including texts within *Sib. Or.* 5 require this conclusion.¹⁷ Of relevance is the fact that the builder of this eschatological Temple is God himself, though this apparently does not exclude the involvement of a heavenly messianic figure.¹⁸

Temple there were also various rooms within the inner court for the Temple treasury, storage, and the like. See especially F. J. Hollis, *The Archaeology of Herod's Temple: With a Commentary on the Tractate "Middôth"* (London: Dent, 1934) 219–21, 326–29; T. A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem: Von Salomo bis Herodes* (Leiden: Brill, 1970) 1097–1101, 1130–35.

15. The idea is found in the following texts, which found their final form considerably after 70 C.E., though it is widely acknowledged that the targums in particular contain ideas that predate the destruction of the Temple: *Lev. Rab.* 9:6 // *Num. Rab.* 13:2 // *Midr. Cant.* 4:16; *Tg. Isa.* 53:5; *Tg. Zech.* 6:12.

16. For a discussion of these texts, see my *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration* (SNTS 117; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 193–99.

17. Chester, "Sibyl," 49.

18. Against Gaston, Chester rightly points out that the "the blessed man" acts as a divine agent with derived power (5.415) and so cannot be God himself (*ibid.*, 50).

Another text that arose in close temporal proximity to John's Gospel is *4 Ezra*. I have mentioned above the possibility that *4 Ezra* 13 may depend on a source, which would take its concept of a heavenly messianic figure who constructs an eschatological Temple back to before 70 C.E. Even if the text does depend on a source, the incorporation of its ideas into a late-first-century document suggests the currency of such ideas during the period. In 13:6, the seer describes a messianic "man" who "carved out for himself a great mountain, and flew up on it." The language recalls the stone of Dan 2, which represents the kingdom of God and which "was cut out, not by human hands." The stone of Dan 2 becomes a great mountain, which fills the earth and reduces the kingdoms of the earth to dust. *4 Ezra* focuses on the fact that Daniel's stone becomes a mountain and identifies the mountain as Mount Zion. But despite the fact that in the dream the "man" carves out the mountain, in the interpretation of v. 36 the mountain is said to be "carved without hands." At least formally, M. Stone is correct in detecting a "direct contradiction" between the dream and its interpretation.¹⁹ However, it seems likely that *4 Ezra*, like *Sib. Or. 5*, does not regard the establishment of city and Temple by God himself as incompatible with the mediated construction of Zion by a messianic figure.

There is significant evidence for the idea that Messiah would have a role in the preparation of the eschatological Temple. In some texts, this idea was held together with the belief that the eschatological Temple would be a Temple built by God himself, a Temple not made with hands.

MESSIAH AND TEMPLE IN JOHN 14

In John 14:2–3, we read: In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may also be." Commentators have typically passed over this passage as a generalized description of heaven as the dwelling place of God. Most do not even mention the possibility that "the Father's house" of 14:2 be taken as a reference to a Temple of some sort, though a similar expression occurs in 2:16 in relation to the Jerusalem Temple and references to the Temple as God's house are frequent in Jewish literature.²⁰ A few older

1. Michael Edward Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) 398.
2. Exceptions include Günter Fischer, *Die himmlischen Wohnungen: Untersuchungen zu Joh 14,2f* (Bern: Herbert Lang / Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1975) 68; Ulrich Wilckens, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes* (NTD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998) 222; Alan R. Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John* (JSNTSup

commentators were prepared to find a reference to a heavenly Temple, though with scant evidence.²¹ Similarly passed over is the possible reference to the Temple with the term “place” at the end of v. 2 and again in vv. 3–4. As with the phrase “my Father’s house,” the term “place” has already been used by John to refer to the Temple in the expression of the Jewish leaders’ fear that if Jesus were allowed to continue the Romans would take away “our place” (11:48; cf. 4:20).²² This term too is frequently found in Jewish literature in reference to the Temple, including a number of texts cited above that express or serve the idea that the Temple would be the eschatological dwelling of the righteous.²³ So then in 14:2 we appear to have not one but two expressions that are not only used elsewhere in John to refer to the Temple but are widely paralleled in references to the Temple found in the OT and intertestamental literature.

As the background of 14:2, R. Brown suggests Deut 1:33, where God rebukes the faithless fear of the Israelites, who do not trust in the Lord, “who goes before you on the way to seek out a place for you to camp.” Brown suggests that this typology indicates that Jesus goes before the disciples to prepare a place for them in the promised land.²⁴ However, the parallel between seeking a place to camp and preparing a heavenly dwelling is not close. Moreover, τόπος never appears as a

220; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002) 268–313; Mary Coloe, *God Dwells among Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001); James McCaffrey, *The House with Many Rooms: The Temple Theme of Jn. 14,2–3* (AnBib 14; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1988). Wilckens briefly mentions this as a possibility but wants also parallels in Platonic and gnostic ideas in which individual souls return to their home after a transitory material existence in foreign territory. Fischer quickly dismisses the notion of a heavenly Temple in John 14:2–3 largely on the basis that John has used οἰκία rather than οἶκος. The semantic range of the former falls within that of the latter and is used only of a *wohnhaus* or the people who live in such a house. Thus, argues Fischer, if a larger structure such as a temple is in view, οἶκος is required. But even if this close circumscription of οἰκία is correct (and texts such as 2 Cor 5:1, where reference is made to “a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” call it into question) surely the point of John 14:2–3 is that Jesus goes to prepare his Father’s house to be a *wohnhaus* in just the sense Fischer understands οἰκία. See below, for interaction with the work of Kerr, Coloe, and McCaffrey.

21. Certain older commentators are exceptions, for example, Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction and Notes* (London: John Murray, 1908) 167. Note also the comment of E. Bammel cited above.

22. On the use of the term τόπος and equivalents to designate the Temple, and particularly, for references that speak of preparation of the Temple, see McCaffrey, *House*, 88–93, 98–103.

23. For discussions of the use of the term “place” as a reference to the Temple, see G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 648–49; and Helmut Köster, “τόπος,” in *TDNT* 8:196–99, 204–5.

24. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (13–21)* (AB 29A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 625.

designation of the land, though it frequently appears as a reference to the Temple.²⁵ A more likely influence on the idea expressed in John 14:2 is the LXX of Exod 15:17, a text that shaped Second Temple thinking about the eschatological Temple in sources as diverse as 2 Maccabees and 4Q*Florilegium*. Exod 15:17 LXX translates the Hebrew מִכּוֹן לְשִׁבְתֶּךָ (“place of your dwelling”) with ἑτοιμον κατοικητήριόν σου (“your prepared dwelling place”) and then immediately picks up the verbal form of the adjective in the following apposition, ἁγίασμα, κύριε, ὃ ἠτοίμασαν αἱ χεῖρες σου (“the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands prepared”). The notion first found in Exod 15:17 of a sanctuary that the Lord prepared by his own hands to be his dwelling place had already given rise to the belief among some that the eschatological Temple would be a Temple not made with hands. This presupposes a very close association or perhaps even identification of the eschatological Temple with the heavenly Temple, which was necessarily a Temple not made with hands. In view of the close verbal parallels with a text known to have informed discussions of the heavenly and/or eschatological Temple and the numerous conceptual points of contact with Jewish ideas about the Temple, it seems likely that John was speaking of a heavenly Temple that, though built by God, Messiah would prepare to be the eschatological dwelling of his people. As with the texts surveyed above, John 14 envisions the Temple as the eschatological dwelling place of the righteous.

If John 14:2 refers to the Temple, a number of important features of the text emerge. First, it is striking on any interpretation of the “Father’s house” that, though the house already exists and already contains many rooms, Jesus nevertheless goes “to prepare a place.” If the text refers to the Temple, the many rooms are the rooms of the heavenly Temple that Jesus prepares to serve as dwelling places for his followers. Thus, Jesus’ action of going to the Father makes it possible for the dwelling place of God to serve also as the dwelling place of his people. It is in this sense that this heavenly, eschatological Temple is at once both a Temple established by God himself and a Temple prepared by Messiah. This underscores at least one aspect of Jesus’ exhortation in the preceding verse: “Believe in God, believe also in me.” The Father and the Son are united in their action to make the dwelling place of God the eternal dwelling place of the followers of Jesus.

Second, on this interpretation, the basis for the exhortation “do not let your hearts be troubled” emerges in a very powerful way. In Jesus’ going to the Father through death and resurrection, preparation is made for the dwelling place of God to be the dwelling place of Jesus’ followers. John’s readers knew that the Jewish leaders’ fear for their

25. *TDNT* 8:199.

“place” (11:48) was more well founded than they could have guessed. But, unlike the leaders, the followers of Jesus need not “let their hearts be troubled” (14:1), for Jesus has gone to prepare a more enduring “place,” a heavenly and eschatological Temple, in which his followers will one day dwell.

Perhaps the greatest hindrance to seeing Temple language at work in John 14 has been the Johannine equation of the Temple to Jesus’ body in 2:19–21. This has discouraged commentators from considering other ways in which John may have developed the Temple motif. Those who have sought to maintain the notion in John 14 have tended to reduce the significance of one in favor of the other. McCaffrey has sought to bridge the apparent gap between the two obviously different uses of the motif by arguing that John 14:2–3 should be read in terms of Jesus’ own redemptive and cultic entrance into the heavenly Temple, modeled after the entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement. Jesus’ “going” to his Father’s house through death and resurrection prepares his body to be the new Temple in which his followers dwell.²⁶ This, however, is to read more into the text than is warranted.

Two other recent studies have similarly sought to overcome the tension between the nature of the Temple language in 2:19–21 and in 14:2. For Alan Kerr, the equation of the Temple to Jesus’ body in 2:19–21 defines the meaning of the Temple language in 14:2: the Father’s house is Jesus’ body. But, continues Kerr, in 14:2, there is a “further shift to incorporate not only Jesus, but also the disciples as ‘my Father’s family.’”²⁷ Mary Coloe has similarly argued that the Temple language of John 14:2 refers to the believing community.²⁸ However, neither the equation of the Father’s house to Jesus’ body nor to the community of disciples makes sense of Jesus’ promise to receive his followers into the house.²⁹ Further, it is difficult to see how, having already defined the Temple as Jesus’ body, John can suggest now that this Temple has many rooms. Kerr and Coloe suggest a connection between the many “rooms” (μοναί) and the frequent use of μενεῖν in John. However, while John sets forth the necessity of remaining in Jesus as both a possibility and an imperative in the present, the promise of dwelling places in the Father’s house is a future hope. Jesus’ disciples know the way to the place (i.e., Jesus, 14:4, 6). But the place has not yet been prepared, and they cannot yet follow Jesus to that place (13:36). This is not to deny a

26. McCaffrey, *House*, 114–15, 190–92, 256.

27. Kerr, *Temple*, 298.

28. Mary L. Coloe, *God Dwells with Us: Temple Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001) 163.

29. Cf. P. W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 171 n. 39.

connection between remaining in the Son and dwelling in the Father's presence; the metaphor of the vine and the branches in ch. 15 like the image of dwelling places in a heavenly Temple in ch. 14 suggests intimate relation to the Father. However the connection in no way requires the awkward identification of the Father's house with the community of believers. Though the Temple in John 14:2 is the Temple, it is not the Temple of Jesus' body. Rather, it is the heavenly sanctuary. Neither use of the Temple imagery should be dissolved into the other; it is entirely possible that John views the concepts of heavenly sanctuary and Jesus' glorified body as entirely harmonious.³⁰

John may have simply used the motif in diverse ways, unaware of any tension between the two. Even a cursory glance at the Apocalypse or at Paul's writings illustrates the polyvalent potential of the Temple in early Christian reflection. If there is a relationship between the idea that the Temple is Jesus' body and the conception of the Temple as the future heavenly dwelling of believers prepared by Jesus, it is less direct than the relationship suggested by McCaffrey's virtual equation of the two motifs. At times McCaffrey is more cautious and seems to suggest a more simple connection of two somewhat independent uses of the Temple motif: "the New Temple of the risen Jesus provides access to the heavenly temple of the Father's house."³¹ But perhaps it is possible to specify the relationship between these two uses of the Temple motif in John more clearly. As has often been observed, in Jewish as well as early Christian thought, the earthly sanctuary was regarded as the mirror image of the heavenly sanctuary. In John, this is no less the case now that the earthly locus of the presence of God has shifted from the Temple in Jerusalem to Jesus. For John, the way in which the earthly sanctuary mirrors the heavenly sanctuary no longer relates to the architectural pattern or liturgy of the heavenly sanctuary. Rather, the focus rests on the experience of the presence of God enjoyed by the followers of Jesus, an experience that will no longer be limited by the constraints imposed on visitors to the Jerusalem Temple. The Jerusalem Temple had been the locus of God's dwelling among his people; now Jesus sets forth the hope of God's people permanently dwelling with him. This highlights the centrality of dwelling in the divine presence in John's eschatological hope, but it also suggests the way in which that reality has already been made available to those who believe. The presence of God now experienced in intimate communion with Jesus is a fulsome adumbration of the presence of God to be experienced by Jesus' followers at his return. But the substance of this

30. Note R. Brown's contention that the two ideas have been combined in 2 Cor 5:1 and Heb 9:11, 24, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994) 440 n. 19, 443.

31. McCaffrey, *House*, 21.

present experience is not for that reason to be regarded as different in nature from the future reality, for the outcome of the ingathering of his followers to their heavenly dwellings in the Father's house will be that where Jesus is so also will his followers be (John 14:3).

Jesus' return to gather his followers to himself is often thought to be indicative of John's otherworldly eschatology. In one sense, this is the misunderstanding of the disciples as they ask Jesus about the way to this other world. Jesus' words, however, are not so much concerned with the removal of his followers from earth to heaven as they are about the dissolution of the divide between heaven and earth; God's earthly house is no longer separate from his heavenly house. Jesus displaces the earthly dwelling place of God and also goes to the Father to prepare the heavenly dwelling of God to be the dwelling place of his people. It is thus through union with Jesus that the followers of Jesus ultimately enjoy the continual experience of God's presence.

CONCLUSION

John 14:2–3 should be seen within the context of a number of Jewish texts that portray the Temple, sometimes heavenly in nature, as the eschatological dwelling place of God's people, and of texts that grant Messiah a role in the construction of the eschatological Temple. There are thus important precedents for regarding John 14:2 as an indication of the belief that Messiah would play a role in the establishment of the eschatological Temple. In particular, for John, this Temple is an existing, divinely established, heavenly Temple that Messiah prepares to be the eschatological habitation of his people. This provides important insight into the nature of eschatological hope in John: its focus is on a future permanent dwelling in the divine presence through intimate communion with Jesus, a communion with Jesus that is already available to his followers.