

Beale, G. K. and Mitchell Kim. *God Dwells Among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014. 215 pp. Paperback, \$11.88.

This book is a valuable example of a successful intersection of theology and praxis. Both aspects are present in the book's title. The theological conviction that "God dwells among us" motivates believers to respond by "expanding Eden to the ends of the earth."

G. K. Beale's earlier work *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (IVP Academic, 2004) is here reworked for an informed lay readership. Like the earlier volume it emphasizes God's presence in the "temple" as the theological key for motivating effective mission. Those who experience God's presence are called to take that presence to the rest of the world. "Eden" or the "temple" (images emphasizing God's presence) is to be expanded into those places that do not know God—the "outer court" or "outer world." Acknowledging that such a mission is often met with suffering and persecution, the authors believe that they have identified a theologically "compelling conviction" which "propels us through painful sacrifice." The authors' goal and deepest concern is to "strengthen biblical conviction for sacrificial mission" for the long haul (14).

The preface explains the development of the book. Professor of New Testament and biblical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, G. K. Beale wrote a biblical theology of the temple in a 458-page work published in 2004. Mitchell Kim, senior pastor of the Living Water Alliance Church near Chicago based a seven-week sermon series on Beale's book and then developed the sermons into a lay seminar on theology and mission. Now, a decade after the publication of the original work, the simplified seminar has itself been turned into book format. Clearly Beale and Kim continue to see an important link between temple theology and motivation for mission.

Beale and Kim begin in Genesis 1–2 where God is physically present with the first humans. God's presence makes the Garden of Eden a "temple" of sorts, with Adam and Eve commissioned with expanding Eden by following God's word and by accepting the command to be "fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). This is a key bible verse for the book's thesis. Even though humanity fails, men and women still have their *raison d'être*: expand Eden to the ends of the earth. How is this possible? The authors' answer is that worship of God leads to the expanding of Eden. This theological thread followed through both testaments, is the unifying theme as also in Beale's earlier work. For example, after the fall, the patriarchal stories tell of the construction of small shrines or temples in order to continue to experience, albeit in an imperfect way, worship in the presence of God. At God's direction, wandering Israel creates a movable tabernacle for worship, and then Israel's kings build an ever-expanding temple complex.

Where the first humans, the patriarchs, and Israel fail in expanding God's presence in the world, Jesus succeeds. Jesus judges the temple in Jerusalem, calling it to account for its failure to reflect God's presence to others. Jesus

then replaces the temple with himself as the chief cornerstone (“Eden Rebuilt: Jesus as the New Temple in the Gospels”), and the church is established as the organic entity following Christ and expanding to fill the earth (“Eden Expanding: The Church as the New Temple”).

Two-thirds of the way through the book, Beale and Kim express concerns about contemporary approaches to church growth that emphasize sociological studies and contextualized technique and models, rather than theological analysis. They are convinced that God’s dwelling place expands only through teaching the Word of God, not by marketing methods to attract converts. They mention several megachurches by name (Willow Creek and Saddleback) and gently critique their approach arguing that “a biblical exploration of the characteristics of a healthy church should be the starting point,” and that “theology must undergird our concepts and frameworks of both church health and church growth” (112).

The Christian canon concludes with a return to Eden, the New Jerusalem described as a place not requiring a temple because the whole cosmos has become a temple (Revelation 21–22). Beale and Kim conclude their work with one more reminder of their crucial theological foundation for Christian mission: “The mark of the true church is an expanding witness to the presence of God in the invisible temple: to our families, the church, our neighborhood, city, country, and ultimately the whole earth” (165).

For the reader who has not yet explored theological themes shared by Genesis, the prophets (especially Ezekiel and Isaiah) and the book of Revelation, there are many insights and interesting associations in store. I appreciated the fresh perspective in the chapter “Eden Remixed,” where connections are made between the creation of the world and the construction of the tabernacle (61). Readers hear that temples and tabernacles are not only constructed for humans to experience God’s presence, but that they also reflect God’s longing to be with humanity. For those who may not find the line of thought entirely convincing, the argument does help to cast light on the artistry of tabernacle and temple: “the parallels between the creation of the tabernacle and creation of the heavens and the earth remind us of the ultimate purpose of the tabernacle: to fill the entire heavens and earth with the consummate, end-time glory of God” (62–3).

The short treatment of Jesus as the new temple in the gospels is surprising. The tension between Jesus and the temple and his eventual replacement of it is discussed only briefly as the authors seem to want to get as quickly as possible to the Church as temple. However, a close reading of the gospel accounts shows the first-century church replacing the Jerusalem temple with Jesus. What does this mean for the theme of this book? What does this mean for mission to the “ends of the earth”? The observation that “Matthew seems to construct his Gospel on the framework of 1 and 2 Chronicles” (96) sounds similar to the approach taken by Rikki E. Watts (*Isaiah’s New Exodus in Mark*, Baker Academic, 2000), who argues that Mark tells the Jesus story by reworking Isaiah. If gospel authors are reworking temple imagery

from a variety of Old Testament sources, how might we better grasp their Christology?

Another oversight appears to be a lack of discussion of Ezekiel 1 and the “movable temple” going into exile with God’s people. How might this imagery deepen a temple theology about moving out and mission? Perhaps Beale’s earlier work remedies the matter.

Aside from questions about minor points (does “be fruitful and multiply” really refer to mission?) and a missing caution not to read Christian mission back into Old Testament texts, one wonders how Beale and Kim understand the forming of the Old Testament. Which direction is the “reworking” of the temple motif going? Is Genesis shaping later reflections on the temple and God’s presence? Or is the temple shaping understandings of creation and Eden? Perhaps an answer to such a question is impossible.

An important concern about the overall thesis of the book is the assumption that God is not already in the “outer” places of our world. Early on in the book, a diagram illustrates the similarities Beale and Kim find between Eden and earthly temples (22). This diagram, if I understand it correctly, assumes that God is not already in the “outer world.” This is why God needs humanity to reach the world. And that God enters the world through sanctuaries (49). This is not only a theological problem, but also a missional problem. Is there a danger that what missionaries share when they show up is left unevaluated? No book can do everything, but is there a need for some caution here?

Personally, I could not help but think of the Sabbath as another way to approach this important theme identified by Beale and Kim as temple theology. The Sabbath as a “sanctuary in time” (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*, first published 1951) provides a rich theology for experiencing the presence of God and therefore a powerful motivation for mission to those who do not yet know a God who longs to be with us.

All could agree with Beale and Kim on the importance of Bible study, prayer, and mission to the “ends of the earth.” All can embrace the promise spoken by Jesus that immediately follows Matthew’s “great commission”: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

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Gregory A. Boyd. *Benefit of the Doubt: Breaking the Idol of Certainty*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013. 269pp. Paperback, \$16.99.

Gregory Boyd (PhD, Princeton), theologian and pastor, has written an excellent book titled *Benefit of the Doubt: Breaking the Idol of Certainty*. In my review, the bracketed numbers are page numbers from his book. Frank Viola describes it as “one of the best books ever written” (see back cover). Rachael Evens praises it as “a profoundly theological look at the important role of doubt in Christian faith” (1). Bruxy Cavey comments on its “hugely helpful