

## ADAM THE HIGH PRIEST IN THE PARADISE TEMPLE.

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The story of Adam and the garden of Eden is one of the best known and yet least understood parts of the Bible. It sets out the biblical teaching on the nature of human beings, and all too often has been read as no more than the story of the fall. The familiar talking snake and the missing rib which have caused such problems belong in the pre-philosophical culture of ancient Israel, and an over-literal reading of the text can obscure not only its profound insights but also its importance in the framework of the New Testament.

Adam and Eden are the beginning and the end of the great story of the Bible. Returning to Eden was an important part of Christian teaching from the beginning; paradise was regained when one entered the Church. Cyril of Jerusalem told the newly baptised that he was leading them by the hand 'into the brighter and more fragrant meadow of paradise before us'....(*First Lecture on the Mysteries*, 1). In the New Testament, Jesus was described as the last Adam, the second Adam (1 Cor.15.45-7) and he was also described as the great high priest (Heb.4.14). Adam and the high priest, as we shall see, were the same figure. Jesus promised his faithful followers that they would once again eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God (Rev.2.7). The story in the New Testament reverses the story of Adam in Eden, and the Church's claim to be paradise is rooted in the ancient belief that the original temple represented the garden of Eden.

Paradise, *pardes*, is not a Hebrew word, and when it is found in the Hebrew Bible, English translations usually give something other than 'paradise': *forest* (Neh.2.8), *park* (Eccles 2.5) or *orchard* (Song 4.13-15). In the LXX, the LORD planted a paradise, an enclosed garden, in Edem [not Eden, Gen.2.8] The original Hebrew word Eden can mean either 'delight' or 'plain', so Eden could have been a garden on a plain, or a garden of delight. The prophet Ezekiel, a priest who had known the first temple (Ezek.1.3), described Eden as the mountain garden of the gods, the '*elohim*' (Ezek.28.13-14), and so the meaning 'plain' would not have been appropriate for his Eden. 'Delight' fits better as the meaning of Eden, especially since Eden was used as an image for fertility. Isaiah, for example, prophesied of Zion 'I will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD (Isa.51.3); and Ezekiel prophesied that the desolate land would become like the garden of Eden (Ezek.36.35). In the LXX, Isaiah's Eden was translated as 'paradise' and Ezekiel's as 'garden of delight/ luxury'.

The Genesis Eden was the garden where Yahweh of the Elohim ['the LORD God'] walked. It was a place of trees and rivers, of cherubim and an evil snake. The LORD God set the man there, and caused every tree to grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the the tree of knowledge and the tree of life. When Adam and Eve were cast out, cherubim and a flaming sword were set to guard the gate of the garden. Nothing in the story as told in Genesis has any obvious link to the temple. In Ezekiel's Eden, however, the figure who was driven out was a high priest, and his

Eden was probably earlier than the more familiar garden in Genesis. Ezekiel's Eden was 'the garden of the gods', *'elohim*, on the holy mountain of the gods/God (Ezek.28.12-19). The figure addressed in his lament, seemingly the king of Tyre, is both masculine and feminine, and it had walked among the stones of fire, or possibly the sons of fire, before it was thrown down from the mountain garden because it had become proud and corrupted its wisdom.

The rest of the description is almost opaque, and the problems of the Hebrew are considerable. It is not clear whether the person Ezekiel addressed *was* the guardian anointed cherub, or was *with* the cherub, but it is clear that the key figure in Ezekiel's Eden became Adam in the more familiar version of the story. [We shall return to the King of Tyre.] It is also clear that the figure in Ezekiel's Eden was remembered as a high priest. It was dressed in precious stones: carnelian, topaz, jasper, chrysolite, beryl, onyx, sapphire carbuncle, emerald - nine different stones, according to the Hebrew text. The Greek text, however, has twelve stones which correspond exactly to those worn by the high priest, both in name and in the position they were set in his breastplate (LXX Exod.28.17-20). Either the difficult Hebrew text has lost three precious stones, or the Greek translator has added three in order to make clear that the figure driven from Ezekiel's Eden was a high priest. Whether it *was* a cherub or had been 'with the cherub', this 'King of Tyre' had been in a heavenly place.

Another pattern corroborates the temple tradition that the original Adam was a high priest. When Moses on Sinai was commanded to make the tabernacle, he had to replicate on earth what he had seen in his mountain-top vision (Exod.25.8-9, 40). Later texts indicate that what Moses had seen was not a heavenly temple - although some do say that that is what he saw. Moses' vision was *the six days of creation*, which he had seen when he was within the cloud of glory for six days (Exod.24.15-16). This vision is now the opening of the first book of Moses, Genesis chapter 1. A comparison of the six days of creation and the stages of erecting the tabernacle (Exod.40.16-33) show that each day of creation was represented by one item of tabernacle or temple furnishing. The sixth day, when Adam was created, corresponded to the laver of water in which the high priests purified themselves before approaching the altar. Thus the creation of Adam represented the high priesthood. This pattern of correspondences is a complex and fascinating topic, but one that we cannot explore in detail today. Note, however, that Adam as the original high priest was a widely based and widely known temple tradition.

The temple itself was built as a paradise place. The great hall of Solomon's temple [corresponding to the nave of a western church] was decorated with carvings of gourds and open flowers, cherubim and palm trees (1 Kgs 6.18, 29). The great bronze pillars were decorated with pomegranates and lily-work (1 Kgs 7.15-22). When the measuring angel showed Ezekiel a vision of how the restored temple should be, he saw a temple on a high mountain (Ezek.40.2), with cherubim and palm trees carved on the walls of the great hall (Ezek.41.15-20). He saw a river flowing from the temple, just as rivers had flowed from Eden (Ezek.47.1-12), and other prophets too looked forward to the time when waters would flow from the temple (Joel 3.18; Zech.14.8). The righteous were described as trees in the house of the LORD, a pointless metaphor if there had been no trees in the temple, albeit carved in the wood (Ps. 92.13).

Various purges of the temple show other Eden items used in worship: Hezekiah broke in pieces a bronze serpent that had been venerated with incense since time immemorial (2 Kgs 18.4), although

the text does not say that the serpent was in the temple; and when Josiah purged the temple, he burned the chariot of the sun [Hebrew has plural but Greek is singular] which was probably the great throne of the LORD in the holy of holies (2 Kgs 23.11), another feature of the later traditions that link the temple to Paradise. According to the Enoch tradition, when the LORD came to Paradise, he rested under the tree of life (2 *Enoch* 8.3), and the Greek version of the *Life of Adam and Eve* says that when he returned to Paradise, seated on the chariot of cherubim, all the plants came into bloom, and the throne was set by the tree of life (*Apocalypse of Moses* 22.3-4).

The temple as Eden was the setting of the Book of Revelation, where St John described the heavenly city itself as a huge holy of holies (Rev.21.15-16), and so there was no need of a further temple there (Rev.21.22). In the holy of holies St John saw the tree of life and the heavenly throne, and from the holy of holies flowed the river of the water of life (Rev.22.1-2). The risen LORD promised to his faithful followers that they would have access again to the tree of life (Rev.2.7), and St John saw them standing before the throne and the tree of life (Rev.22.3-4) – exactly as described in the other texts. They were restored to Eden whence Adam had been banished, but in fact they were standing in the holy of holies.

There are two accounts in Genesis of the creation of Adam: God [or the *'elohim*] resolved to create Adam 'according to our invisible heavenly form, as our material image' (Gen.1.26, translating literally; 'as' c.f Exod. 6.3 as *El Shaddai*). Adam was created male and female. The second account has Yahweh of the Elohim (the LORD God), form the man from dust and then breathe into the man the breath of life so that the man became a living being (Gen.2.7). Breathing into a statue was a well known ritual for bringing it to life as the dwelling place of the god it represented, and all the Targums agree that breathing into Adam meant giving him the power of speech. The image of the beast was brought to life in this way in the Book of Revelation and given the power of speech (Rev.13.15).

In each Genesis story, Adam was created as male-and female, and only later, after being set in the garden as high priest, was Adam separated into distinct male and female beings. He was set in the garden 'to till and to keep' - the usual translation - but both these words have a temple meaning (Gen.2.15), and Adam was understood to be a high priest even though that is not explicit. 'Till' *'bd*, was also the technical term for temple service, and 'keep', *šmr*, meant to preserve the tradition. The traditional Jewish interpretations did not think this was a command about gardening. The debate was: did it mean serve for six days and then preserve the Sabbath, or serve God and perform the sacred duties (*Genesis Rabbah* XVI.5).

Apart from the biblical accounts, there were many stories about Adam and Eden, some of which echo material in the Hebrew Bible and so may well have been known to its writers. They confirm that the temple was Eden. Amongst texts known in the time of Jesus, the *Book of Jubilees*, an alternative version of Genesis, had Adam wait forty days from his creation until he could enter Eden, and Eve eighty days, since both applied to Eden the temple laws about impurity after childbirth (Jub.3.8-14). When Adam was leaving Eden, he burned an incense very like the one prescribed for use only in the tabernacle (Exod.30.34-38): frankincense, galbabum, stacte and sweet spices (Jub.3.27). Noah knew that the garden of Eden was the holy of holies, and the dwelling of the LORD

(Jub. 8.19). It is sometimes said that Jubilees reworked Genesis in order to make the link between Eden and the temple, but this is unlikely, since the temple-as-Eden tradition was older than Genesis.

Another Adam and Eve text known at that time was the *Apocalypse of Moses*. After Adam himself had opened the door of paradise, allowed the serpent to enter, and listened to his words, he grieved for his folly. He had lost his garment of glory, the righteousness with which he had been clothed (*Apocalypse of Moses* 20-1-2). This is consistent with his role as high priest, since the vestments of any high priest were described as a garments of glory: ‘holy garments for Aaron... for glory and for beauty’ (Exod.28.2); and when Enoch stood before the heavenly throne, he was given garments of God’s glory (2 *Enoch* 22.6-10). St Ephrem, writing in fourth century Syria, said that God had clothed Adam with glory (Ephrem, *Commentary on Genesis* 2), and a collection of legendary material from the same area said ‘Adam and Eve were in Paradise, clothed with glory and shining with praise for three hours’ (*Book of the Cave of Treasures*, I). The Genesis storyteller said that Adam and Eve knew they were naked when they had taken and eaten the forbidden fruit, but did not say what garment they had lost. Presumably the original hearers knew they had lost the high priestly garment of glory when they listened to the snake. The community at Qumran hoped to regain ‘all the glory of Adam... the knowledge of the Most High... the wisdom of the sons of heaven.’ (*Community Rule IV*).

Adam’s garment of glory was woven by Wisdom, and Adam was proverbially wise. Eliphaz asked Job: ‘Are you the first man that was born?... Have you listened in the council of God? And do you limit wisdom to yourself?’ (Job 15.7-8). Ben Sira, writing in the second century BCE linked the high priest’s vestments and Wisdom. When he was advising his son to accept the discipline of Wisdom, he compared this to putting on the vestments of the high priest: ‘There is a golden ornament upon her, and her bonds are a blue cord. You will wear her as a garment of glory, and put her on as a crown of gladness ‘ (Ben Sira 6.30-31, my translation). This passed into Christian teaching. An early Christian Wisdom text found in Egypt had Wisdom speaking to her children: ‘I am giving you a high-priestly garment woven from every wisdom... clothe yourself with wisdom like a robe... be seated on a throne of perception... return to your divine nature..’ (*Teaching of Silvanus* CG VII.4.89, 91). The Gospel of Thomas attributes to Jesus a longer version of a saying in Matthew and Luke, which suggests that Jesus was speaking of this robe of glory and wisdom. ‘Jesus said “Why have you come out into the desert? To see a reed shaken by the wind? And to see a man clothed in fine garments like your kings and your great men? Upon them are the fine garments, and yet they are unable to discern the truth.”’ (*Gospel of Thomas* 78).

Now Adam wearing fine garments of wisdom and sitting on a throne is not the figure we imagine in Genesis, but such stories were known in the time of Jesus and, it would seem, to the writers of the Hebrew Bible. The *Life of Adam and Eve* is, in effect, the background to the Genesis story. It describes how Satan was driven from heaven and vowed revenge on Adam who had caused his downfall, [and this is the Adam story that appears in the Qur’an]. When Adam was created as the image of the LORD God, all the angels were commanded to worship him, but Satan refused. He had been created with the angels, he said, and so was prior to Adam in creation. Adam should worship him. Satan and his angels were then expelled from heaven and plotted Adam’s downfall (*Life of Adam and Eve* 12-16).

This story is the context for the enigmatic words in Psalm 2. The LORD has set his king in Zion and called him his son, and the kings and rulers are commanded to serve him: 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you perish...' (Ps.2.12). The king in Zion is the Adam figure, the image of God enthroned in Zion. The angels called to worship Adam is also the setting for Deuteronomy 32.43, which became a key proof text for the early Church: 'When he brings the Firstborn into the world, he says "Let all God's angels worship him"' (Heb.1.6). Jesus is the second Adam enthroned as the Son and the angels have to worship him. Remember, Luke's genealogy of Jesus describes Adam as the son of God (Lk.3.38). The story of Satan refusing to worship Adam is also the context for Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. Since Jesus was alone at that time, these must have been his own accounts of the experience, and they are told in terms of this story: 'If you are the Son of God...'. and then most telling of all, the words of the devil: 'If you will worship me, [the kingdoms of the world] shall be yours' (Lk.4.7). The second Adam was being asked to worship Satan, to reverse Satan's ancient humiliation. Mark summarised the same wilderness experience differently: '[Jesus] was with the beasts and the angels served him' (Mk.1.13). This means that in his wilderness visions, Jesus was in the holy of holies with the beasts that formed the heavenly throne [the 'living creatures'], and the angels served him. This is the same story of Adam the image being worshipped, and is the vision St John described in Revelation 5. It also appears in the description of the image of the beast who, like Adam, was given breath and the power of speech, and then those who would not worship the image of the beast were killed (Rev.13.15).

It is possible that all the stories known only in later texts were spun from the gaps and allusions in the Genesis story, and the Eden temple of the *Book of Jubilees* was a late fabrication. It is also possible that the Adam and Eden and temple material is far older than Genesis 2-3, and that traditions surfacing in later texts were themselves ancient, known to Ezekiel and either assumed by, or omitted from, Genesis.

The accounts of Ezekiel's visions of the chariot throne leaving the temple and going to Babylon, with their mixture of masculine and feminine forms, singular and plural, are almost impossible to translate. This is what we should expect of the male-and-female-Adam in the heavenly state. Ezekiel saw 'on the heavenly form of the throne, a heavenly form as the appearance of Adam,' (Ezek.1.26, translating literally) which he recognised as 'the appearance of the heavenly form of the glory of Yahweh' (Ezek.1.28). Adam enthroned was leaving the temple. Ezekiel spoke of 'forms' and 'appearances', mysterious words for us, but for a first temple priest they were probably technical terms. The word translated 'form' seems to mean a heavenly archetype, and the word translated 'appearance' seems to mean its manifestation in a visible but not material form. Later teachers would say that sin made it impossible for Adam to see his form, that is, to know his true self and his true potential. 'Because of sin, it was not given for man to know the *d'elmut* on high; were it not for this sin, all the keys would be given to him and he would know how the heavens and the earth were created...' (*Abot de R Nathan*, A39).

Similar ideas are found in the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, which also describe the heavenly throne and entourage that Ezekiel saw, but there is a different word here for the invisible realities, the forms. It is the word *sur*. The *Songs* describe the 'forms' of living '*elohim*', and the 'forms' of luminous spirits (4Q405). In the Old Testament, this same word is often found in descriptions of God, but is translated as 'Rock' since that the same Hebrew letters can also mean

Rock. 'The Rock, his work is perfect' (Deut.32.4); 'He scoffed at the Rock of his salvation'(Deut.32.15); 'The Rock of Israel has spoken to me' (2 Sam.23.3); 'O LORD... O Rock...' (Hab.1.12). In none of these examples does the LXX have the word 'rock', and there are many examples where the Rock becomes simply 'God'. In other words, *šur* which means the 'invisible form' in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* probably meant that in many other places in the Hebrew Bible.

But how is this relevant to Adam? In Ezekiel's Eden there was a bejewelled high priest figure who was thrown out of the mountain-top garden of the gods. He was addressed as the King of Tyre. Now why should the translator of the LXX describe this figure as a temple high priest with all his jewels if he was the King of Tyre? The answer may lie in the fact that the Hebrew for 'Tyre' is written in the same way as the word that can mean 'Rock' or 'invisible heavenly form'. The King of Tyre, I suggest, was originally the heavenly 'form' of the king in Jerusalem, who had also been the high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Ps.110.4). His expulsion from the city and temple was described as Adam, the image of God, being expelled from Eden, or, in the case of Ezekiel's visions of the throne, Adam, the appearance of the heavenly reality of the LORD, leaving the temple.

The charges against Ezekiel's fallen high priest figure resemble the words to unfallen Adam in Genesis who was created as the image, according to the 'form' of God - the same word as Ezekiel used for the invisible reality. In his glorious unfallen state and vested, we assume, in his garment of glory and wisdom, Adam was told to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen.1.28). But these words can have other meanings, and I suggest that they were originally understood to mean: 'Be beautiful and great, and fill the earth with glory'<sup>1</sup>. In the time of Jesus, Adam was described as very tall and beautiful: 'a man very great in height, and terrible in breadth, incomparable in aspect' (*Apocalypse of Abraham* 23.5), and later Jewish teachers said that in the time of the Messiah, everything Adam had lost would be restored: his lustre, his immortality, his height..... (*Genesis Rabbah* XII.6). There is nothing in Genesis, as we now read it, to suggest that Adam was tall and radiant, but the words translated 'be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth' can have this other meaning.

The Genesis Adam was also commanded to subdue, *kbš*, the earth and have dominion, *rdh*. Now *kbš* usually means 'subdue' (e.g Num.32.22; Jer.34.11), but Micah 7.18-19 suggests another possibility. The context here is atonement, and the LORD has compassion and \*\*\* our iniquities. The verb is translated 'subdue' [AV], 'tread under foot' [RSV], but the atonement process was one of repairing the bonds of the eternal covenant, and so 'binding up' our iniquities would better fit the context. Since Adam was the high priest, this would have been his great work of atonement, of upholding the eternal covenant and binding all things together. His second duty, *rdh*, would then follow. 'Have dominion' should be understood in the way it was used of Solomon: he ruled, he had dominion, and he had peace on all sides (1 Kgs.4.21.24).

Ezekiel's jewelled figure in the garden of the gods had corrupted all the characteristics of the original Adam. Like the original Adam it was male-and-female, and in this passage, as in the visions of the throne, there is a mixture of masculine and feminine forms. Originally the jewelled figure had been

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<sup>1</sup> *Parah*, be fruitful, pa'ar, be beautiful; *rabah*, be great, ,

perfect in beauty and full of wisdom, just as Adam had been beautiful and wise, but the jewelled figure had corrupted its wisdom and become proud through its beauty. Instead of filling the earth with glory or wisdom, it had filled the earth with violence, and instead of being great, it had achieved only greatness in commerce. The difficult command to Adam, 'subdue', which I suggest meant 'bind things together' appears in Ezekiel's description of the jewelled figure as 'You were the *seal* of perfection'.

The Genesis Adam was set in the garden and told that he could eat the fruit of any tree except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam's first disobedience was not simply an act of defiance or stupidity; it concerned the attitude to knowledge. Adam was intended to eat from the tree of life which was the symbol of Wisdom (Prov.3.18), but instead the human pair listened to the voice of the snake and ate from the forbidden tree. Immediately they realised they were naked because they had lost their garments of wisdom. You will recall that the Qumran community hoped to regain 'all the glory of Adam....' which was 'the knowledge of the Most High... the wisdom of the sons of heaven'; and Ezekiel's jewelled figure was thrown down from the mountain garden of the gods because it had corrupted its wisdom and become proud.

Who, then, was the snake? A bronze snake had been part of the cult in Jerusalem until Hezekiah destroyed it, and the words of the snake were in fact the promise to those who ate from the tree of life. 'Your eyes will be opened and you will be like the *'elohim'* (Gen. 3.5). But Wisdom did open the eyes of those who fed on her, and she did make her children sons of God. This was symbolised by temple anointing, since the perfumed oil represented the oil of the tree of life, and the high priest was anointed on his eyelids.

But who was the snake? I suspect that this was Satan's first act of deception, taking the form of the symbol of Wisdom, the bronze snake that Hezekiah destroyed. The snake suggested that both trees were identical and had identical effects. The Genesis story of Adam and the garden of Eden marks the point in Israel's religion when Wisdom was rejected by the temple priesthood. Adam, the high priest, chose the knowledge of good and evil rather than wisdom, and Ezekiel's jewelled figure corrupted its wisdom. They were driven from the garden. Those who remained faithful to Wisdom said that she was rejected at this time, and that the eyes of the temple priests lost their sight. (*1 Enoch* 93.8).

There are many echoes of the story of Adam leaving the garden that was the temple. Before he sinned, when he was still in the garden, he could hear the song of the seraphim singing 'Holy Holy Holy' (*Testament of Adam* 1.4, a mid-3rd century Christian text), the seraphim that Isaiah had heard in the holy of holies. When he left the garden, he took with him gold, frankincense and myrrh to remind him of the garden, the temple, that he had lost, and these were buried with him (*Testament of Adam* 3.6). The magi bringing them as gifts to Jesus is the first sign in the New Testament of the new Adam.