## THE COSMIC TEMPLE INAUGURATION VIEW

John Walton: The difference between building a house and making a home -

"[The ancients] were not interested in how the material objects of the house came into being – God did it and that was enough for them. Of much more interest to them was how this house (the cosmos) had become a home for humans but even more importantly how God had made it his own home." (2015, p. 45)

The **rest** of Day 7 is not an addendum to the creation story but the climax of the story. In ancient cultures, the temple was the place where a deity rested (e.g. Psalm 132:7-8).

Gen 1 is concerned with God establishing

Gen 2 picks up and extends the temple metaphor. Gen 1 & 2, in turn, inspire many of the details of the building of **Solomon's temple**. The number seven recurs in the temple story (1 Ki 6:37-38, 8:65; 2 Chron 7:9). The temple's design and decoration are inspired both by the makeup of the cosmos and the brilliance of Eden (Advance Theology Course, 1.2).

The concept of rest is in turn associated with the establishment of **order**. This is what Days 1-6 are about (the focus is *not* on God creating material things). At the end of Day 6, order is finally established and God can begin the "normal operations" of running the cosmos. (Biblically, "rest" doesn't mean refraining from

activity; it means normal routines can be enjoyed without obstacles.)

The temple is the place where a deity dwells (notice how God is present in the garden in Gen 3:8). It's also where an image of the deity is placed. Unlike other gods, the LORD prohibits the making of physical images. Why? Because human beings are God's image, placed in the temple of creation (Gen 1:27).

## **Evaluation**

- This view strengthens the connection between Genesis 1 and 2 (and beyond. From page 1 of the Bible, a picture emerges of God's intention to dwell with humanity in the earth, a situation that is disrupted by sin in Genesis 3 and which God takes steps to remedy with the call of Abram in Genesis 12).
- The cosmic-temple inauguration view "feels" authentically Hebrew, that is, given what we know about the centrality of the temple to Jewish life and thought, it seems likely that the original audience would have readily understood the temple references in Genesis 1. The reading may not seem "plain" to us, but it could very well have been "plain" to them.
- John Walton may perhaps have overstated the case for Genesis 1 not being about material creation but only about God establishing "functions". Couldn't it be about both?
- There's no reason why this view can't sit alongside other perspectives, such as the literary framework view and/or the polemical view.