



Introduction to “The First Temple: Divided Monarchical Period”

Review of Previous Article

During the united monarchical period, the First Temple represented an epochal highpoint in Hebrew thought. With David and his scholars, there emerged a new human self-consciousness. This was accompanied by an appreciation of human relationality — the “I” and “Thou” — together with an appreciation of YHWH’s covenantal presence that makes “I”/“Thou” relationality possible. Wholly unlike contemporary pagan temples, the First Temple symbolized a reclining YHWH as an androgynous parent (father/mother) awaiting the birth of the Adamic child, issuing out of the Temple as *the human manifestation of God*. With amazing accuracy, the First Temple symbols and metaphors constituted an encoded message pointing forward to God’s becoming human as Jesus Christ.

Overview of This Article

In the subsequent history of the First Temple during the divided monarchical period, periods of apostasy were interrupted by sporadic reforms. There was rivalry between the Zadokite priesthood, who emphasized God’s *unconditional* covenant, and the Levitical priesthood, who emphasized that covenantal *conditions* were definitive for Israel’s future. Little attention has been given to the fact that these same differences were apparent among the literary prophets, who came from either a Zadokite or a Levitical priestly background. Nevertheless, the prophets were united in declaring YHWH’s compassion (*rachamim* = “womblikeness”) toward the Chosen People. Again, “womblikeness” is a forceful reminder of the powerful Temple metaphor of YHWH as an androgynous parent (father/mother) awaiting the birth of the Adamic child. Like the Temple itself, the prophetic voice pointed forward to the Christ event — to *God’s becoming human as Jesus Christ* on behalf of mankind.