

# **The Temple in Post-Exilic Prophetic Tradition: Ideology and Reality in Building Contextual Theology**

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## **I. Introduction**

The main question of this paper is concerned with the understanding of the temple in the prophetic tradition of Israelite religion. Specifically, it focuses on the prophetic literatures from the second temple period. Is there any change of the concept of the temple in the restoration times? What kind of roles of the temple do the prophets delineate? In what circumstances have the Persian period prophets viewed the temple? How does the temple ideology of the prophets reflect the lives in the colony of Yehud, the post-exilic community of Judah? This paper aims at finding principles of contextual theology<sup>1</sup> through transformed ideas of the post-exilic prophets on the temple.

Scholars have discussed the continuity and discontinuity of Israelite religion after the exile.<sup>2</sup> However, we generally recognize a transformation of the religion during the second temple period. Among those changes, the shift of the temple role is significant. This paper maintains that the Persian period prophets understand the temple, on the one hand, as a symbol of restoration of the community and on the other hand, as an eschatological symbol. We will find how ambivalent outlooks of the prophets played transformative role in shaping the faith of the Yehud community.

First of all, I will present a general perception of the temple in Canaan and ancient Israel. Then, a brief exploration of the temple understanding of earlier prophets is followed. Second, specific situations of the early post-exilic era are introduced. Against this background each prophecy of the Persian period is examined to find how the prophets have understood the temple. With the information of the prophetic literature and a result from the study of extra-biblical materials, a reality of the second temple, which is far different from the first temple, is discussed. Finally, we will discuss the principles of the contextual theology with which the post-exilic prophets transform the concept of the temple and cast a new vision for the Yehud community. In conclusion, a brief evaluation of the principles will be made in the perspective of Korean Christian Church and society.

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<sup>1</sup> By contextual theology, I mean local theology that takes the starting point of doing theology from the very ground on which the theologians stand. Contextual theology is commonly introduced as cardinal method for Minjung theology in Korea, liberation theology in Latin America, Black theology in North America, feminist theology and various local theologies in Asia: Yim Taesoo, *Minjung Theology towards a Second Reformation* (Seoul: Christian Conference of Asia, 2006) 85, 88.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Judaism The First Phase: The Place of Ezra and Nehemiah in the Origins of Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009) 33.

## **II. Temples in Canaan and Ancient Israel**

### **1. In Canaan and Ancient Israel**

Sacred places that are hedged off for a communication with the divine are divided into two kinds in ancient Canaanite religion, local sanctuaries and city temples. Local sanctuaries are modestly shaped: an erected stone or pillar, an altar of earth or stone, frequently near a tree or a well<sup>3</sup>. Some of them have no building. We can identify those open-air shrines as “high places”. Seasonal sacrifices and local festivals are held in the places. There are no divine images present, nor is there a special staff for the daily care of the deity. These sanctuaries are usually located outside the town<sup>4</sup>.

There are temples in cities. Temples are conceived as dwelling places for deities. According to William G. Dever, there are four principal types of the temples. First, they are conceived as “houses (palaces) for the gods”. Second, they are consecrated or set apart for sacred usage. Third, priestly groups serve in the temples. Fourth, worship consisted of offering food and drink to gods of fertility is performed in the temple<sup>5</sup>.

Van der Toorn discusses four functions of the Syro-Palestinian temple<sup>6</sup>. First is a religious role. Second is an economic role. Temples possess a stock of silver, gold, precious stones, and valuables, which come from spoils of war, the income of temple prostitution, votive gifts, temple taxes, and voluntary donations made by king or commander. It was likely that the temples made loans free of interest as venture capital to small farmers and merchants as a central bank. Third, the temples have juridical functions. Temples are assumed as places where the superior knowledge of god is situated. This belief informs the juridical use of the oath and the attendant practice of ordeal. Also the sanctuaries provide protection from blood revenge. Innocent manslaughterers can take refuge in the temples. Finally, political functions should be mentioned. Most Syro-Palestinian gods are national deities. The existence of a temple manifests national power and wealth. People are consolidated around their sanctuaries. There is a close relationship between palace and temple.

### **2. In Israelite Prophetic Tradition**

The concept of sanctuary or temple varies in each prophetic tradition of Israel. However, there are consistent elements. Before we discuss the post-exilic prophetic understanding of the temple, a brief exploration needs to undertake to observe how pre-exilic and exilic prophets have viewed the temple in respective period.

First, pre-exilic prophets emphasize the temple as the dwelling place of God. The temple mount,

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<sup>3</sup> Karel Van der Toorn, “Theology, Priests, and Worship in Canaan and Ancient Israel.” *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*. Ed. by Jack M. Sasson (New York: Scribner’s, 1995) 2050.

<sup>4</sup> Van der Toorn, 2050.

<sup>5</sup> William G. Dever, “Palaces and Temples in Canaan and Ancient Israel.” *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, 607.

<sup>6</sup> Van der Toorn, 2051.

Zion, is the cosmic center in which the reign of God takes place. Isaiah 6:1 witnesses that the prophet is called in the temple where the hem of the Lord fills. It is the place where the prophet is cleansed and responds to God's call (6:6-8). Also, contemporary prophet Micah depicts the temple as the holy abode of God from where the Lord is coming (1:2). However, the prophecy of Jeremiah takes a negative attitude towards the temple. He attacks those who have had a deceptive pride and security on the temple (7:4). He reminds the people of the sanctuary at Shiloh which was destroyed (7:12). Yet, Jeremiah's criticism is not for the temple itself but for the false ideas and hypocritical cultic behavior of the people. Micah's prophecy of Jerusalem becoming "heaps of ruins (3:12)" is also due to the injustice of rulers.

Second, during the exilic period, the temple of the Lord is a symbol of the restoration for the Israelite community. Deutero-Isaiah prophesies the promise of God to rebuild the temple (44:28) in the vision of God's saving acts. Most of all, Ezekiel stresses the importance of the temple in the restoration of his people in his two different temple visions. First, he sees the abominations of the people in the temple of Jerusalem (8:5-6, 10-11, 14-16). For the defilement of the temple God's anger is provoked and the people are abandoned. Now, in the second temple vision the holiness of the temple is restored and the glory of God returns to the temple (Isa. 40-43). The temple becomes the dwelling place of God (43:7) again. Furthermore, living water which makes every creature live flows from the temple and the trees bear fresh fruit (47:1-12). With the prophecy of the new temple, Ezekiel gives the hope of restoration of the land and salvation of the people.

According to the pre-exilic prophets, the temple is the dwelling place of YHWH, the national god of Israel. By emphasizing YHWH's being in the Holy Mount, Jerusalem, the prophets provide Israelites with national safety and identity. This belief in the temple continues in the exilic period in spite of the national disaster of 587 BCE. Exilic prophets cast the vision of the restoration of Israelites in the temple. Even though the temple exists no more, the hope for revival of Israel lies in the Temple Mount. It might be only option for the exilic prophets to encourage the exiled people to awaken national identity and religious integrity.

### **III. The Temple in Post-Exilic Prophetic Tradition**

#### **1. Situations in Early Post-Exilic Judah (Yehud)**

This section cannot cover complete historical circumstances of Yehud, one of the small provinces of the newly established Persian Empire. Here, the discussion is limited to furnish a specific aspect of the historical settings, which is related to our grasp of the prophets in Persian period.

Above all, we have to consider the early post-exilic community is a multi-stratified society unless we just accept the biblical report of Ezra-Nehemiah that speaks about a single stratum of the community. At least, three components of the community are recognized. First group is the people in the land who remained

in Judah throughout the course of events. Second group includes those who may have returned from Babylonia with Sheshbazzar early in the reign of Cyrus (Ezra 1:7-11). Third one is the late comers who have returned from Babylonia with Zerubbabel and Joshua only a few years before Haggai's preaching<sup>7</sup>.

For the people who were staying in Palestine, the return of the exiles was a threat because the returnees would enforce their ancestral rights to property with which the remainders had lived<sup>8</sup>. A conflict between the two groups<sup>9</sup> was expected (Ezra 4:4). Even among the same group of the returned exiles, the conception of their circumstances would be different according to their different time of arrival at Judah. The earlier repatriates would be less enthusiastic for the restoration of their community than the late comers because the former had already experienced the harsh reality that was different from the grand restoration vision of Deutero-Isaiah. The economic situation was wretched. There were a series of drought (Haggai 1:6, 9-11; Zechariah 8:10) and locust plague (Joel 1:4).

There was one more reason why the reconstruction of the temple was being delayed for eighteen years. The colonial status of Yehud as a western flank of the Persian Empire made the problem within the community worsen. For Jewish nationalistic group, it was hard to accept the chance of a new beginning which had been offered to them by Persian imperial policy.<sup>10</sup> If they followed the direction of the imperial government, they would be permanently loyal to the Empire. A conflict between the anti-Persian party and the pro-Persian group concerning the imperial-sponsored construction of the temple was inevitable

At least, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were facing with these initial problems of the Jewish community. Moreover, those problems continued to challenge to other prophets Joel, Malachi, and the trito-Isaiah. Next, we will explore these post-exilic prophets' understanding of the temple under these conditions. Their conceptions of the temple were shaped by the specific situations of the community.

## **2. Temple in Persian Period Prophets**

### **A. Haggai**

Haggai and Zechariah play a significant role in the construction of the second temple. Specifically, Haggai explicitly proclaims the urgent issue of the rebuilding of the temple (1:2-7). The prophet's diagnosis that the poverty of the community is due to the absence of the "House of God" (1:9-11) is an innovative idea.<sup>11</sup> According to Sara Japhet, Haggai took a different stand from the view that all misfortunes including

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Ross Bedford, "Discerning the Time: Haggai, Zechariah and the 'Delay' in the Rebuilding of the Jerusalem Temple." *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gosta W. Ahlstrom*. Ed. by Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) 72.

<sup>8</sup> Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period, Volume II: From the Exile to the Maccabees*. Tran. by John Bowden (Louisvill, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 444.

<sup>9</sup> Between "people of the land" and "people of the exile"

<sup>10</sup> Albertz, *A History*, 444.

<sup>11</sup> Sara Japhet, "The Temple in the Restoration Period: Reality and Ideology." *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 44

the depressed economy are punishments for the national sin in the past. Instead, he regards the sin of Israel as the failure to build the temple at the moment.

For Haggai, the existence of the temple is a manifestation of the prosperity of the community (2:8-9). From the day when the foundation of the temple was laid, the blessing of God is guaranteed (2:18-19). Also, the rebuilding of the temple implicates the return of YHWH's rule in Jerusalem, which is signified by Zerubbabel, the Davidide (2:20-23).<sup>12</sup> Economic and political recovery is accomplished by the construction of the temple. Here, we see that the Prophet Haggai understands the temple as a symbol of the restoration of the Jewish community.

Haggai's vision of the new beginning is not only limited to the immediate present but is also extended to the eschatological future. YHWH will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land, and all the nations (2:6). Then the House (hzh tybh) will be filled with the precious things of the nations and glory (2:7). The temple is connected to an eschatological vision.

#### B. Zechariah 1-8<sup>13</sup>

Peter Marincovic argues that Zechariah 1-8 does not talk about the restoration of the second temple but that of YHWH's community.<sup>14</sup> The prophecy of Zechariah does not explicitly express the temple construction as we see in Haggai. Japhet argues that the temple's construction is not a main issue in Zechariah's prophecy.<sup>15</sup> However, as Robert Carroll rightly discusses, the literary device of night visions focuses on the rebuilding of the temple in various ways.<sup>16</sup>

First of all, Zechariah declares that YHWH will return to Jerusalem and the House will be built in the Mount (1:16). The motive of YHWH's return of Jerusalem recurs throughout the prophecy (1:17b, 2:12, 3:2, 8:3). The return of God precipitates the rebuilding of the temple and the renewal of the divine presence in Jerusalem will ensure prosperity for the whole land (2:6-13, 8:1-8, 20-23).<sup>17</sup> Second, the prophet informs that the completion of the temple will be done by the hand of Zerubbabel, explicitly in 4:9 and implicitly in 6:12-13. The actual reign of Davidide ruler comes with the building of the temple. Finally, from the moment of the laying foundation of the temple, it is proclaimed that the blessing of YHWH is secured (8:9-12). The temple's

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(1991) 229.

<sup>12</sup> Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1-8* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 68.

<sup>13</sup> Deutero-Zechariah, chapters 9-14 is a separate section that is not directly related to the time of the rebuilding of the second temple. Instead, this part of Zechariah is concerned with the end times.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Marincovic, "What does Zechariah 1-8 Tell Us about the Second Temple?" *Second Temple Studies, 2. Temple and Community in the Persian Period*. Ed. by Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) 96.

Also, David L. Petersen argues that "in the visions (of Zechariah), there is remarkably little attention devoted to the temple itself" in his article, "The Temple in Persian Period Prophetic Texts." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 21 No.3 (1991) 92.

<sup>15</sup> Japhet, 219-220.

<sup>16</sup> Robert P. Carroll, "So What Do We Know about the Temple? The Temple in the Prophets." *Second Temple Studies, 2. Temple and Community in the Persian Period*. Ed. by Tamara C. Eskenazi and Kent H. Richards (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994) 41.

<sup>17</sup> Bedford, 82.

construction is the turning point from the curse of “the former days” to the blessing of “these days”.<sup>18</sup>

For Zechariah, the rebuilding of the temple means the restoration of the community. Also, the restoration accompanies both political and economic dimensions. Yet, unlike Haggai, eschatological dimension does not appear here.

#### C. Joel

If Haggai and Zechariah are related to the time of reconstruction of the temple, Joel along with Malachi and trito-Isaiah presumes the existence of the second temple. The problem for Joel is a cessation of cultic acts from the temple (1:9, 13, 16). The reasons for the suspension of the offerings are swarming locusts (1:4, 7, 10) and a severe drought (1:11-12). For the prophet Joel, the crucial difficulty of the community is not the locust plague nor the drought but the stoppage of the continuing offering to YHWH in the temple. For the cultic service in the temple is closely associated with the destiny of the community. Still, we see the same tradition of the post-exilic prophets who consider the temple as the symbol of the restoration of the community. The restoration is depicted as giving a grain offering and a drink offering in the temple (2:12-14).

This vision of rebuilding of the community is aggrandized into an eschatological dimension. The day of YHWH (הַיּוֹם הַהוּא ~וַי) is emphasized as the day of judgment (1:15, 2:1-11). In that “day of darkness and gloom,” the earth quakes and the heavens tremble. The sun, moon, and stars grow dark (2:10). The Lord him/herself utter the voice and no one endure it (2:11).

Yet, the dwelling of YHWH in the holy mountain is a protection for his people (3:16-17). Furthermore, the mountain will drip sweet wine and flow with milk (3:18a). A life-giving fountain will come from the House (3:18b). Even though the temple has been a place of sadness, devoid of offerings or the sound of joy (1:13-16), it shall become the source of gladness, from which blessings flow.<sup>19</sup>

#### D. Malachi

Like Joel, the problem of Malachi is related to the cultic service in the temple. However, the main point of contention for Malachi is not the cessation of the offerings but the negligence of the cult, manifested in offering sick animals, and failure to tithe (1:7-8, 3:8).<sup>20</sup> Also, the reasons for this are not only the economic hardships but more seriously the disconfirmation of the hopes aroused by completion of the temple and official restoration of the cult.<sup>21</sup> Now Malachi is dealing with later times than that of Joel.

The symbol of restoration does appear in the prophecy of Malachi regarding temple (3:10). Instead, we hear the voice of eschatological judgment that will come out of the temple (3:1-2). When the day of judgment comes, the descendants of Levi will be purified (3:3), the sorcerers and those who do injustice will be purged (3:5), and the righteous and the wicked will be differentiated (3:18). Therefore, the day of

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<sup>18</sup> Japhet 229.

<sup>19</sup> James Limburg, *Hosea-Micah* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988) 77.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996) 210.

<sup>21</sup> Blenkinsopp, 210.

judgment will be the day of victory for those who revere YHWH (4:1-3). Here, the temple is identified as an eschatological symbol, in which YHWH's final judgment is made and victory of the pious is given.

#### E. Trito-Isaiah

The corpus of Isaiah 56-66 displays a similar problem with which Malachi has to struggle. The temple has already been finished and sacrifices are being offered. However, there goes on false worship (58:1-5) and polluted rituals (66:3). Moreover, their faith is experiencing a crisis because the wealth which earlier prophets promise to come after the completion of temple has not arrived (60:6).<sup>22</sup>

Petersen argues that for trito-Isaiah, the temple does not embody the full scale of values which has been anticipated for it.<sup>23</sup> That is why 63:15 mentions the heavenly habitation of God (ʿvḏq lḇz; holy height) instead of the temple, the earthly abode. Also, 66:1-2 calls an attention to a fallible nature of the temple that is built by people. Yet, the temple still matters for the Yehud community because YHWH is at work in the temple from the perspective of the trito-Isaiah. .

We hear the voice of YHWH for a judgment from the temple (66:6). On the other hand, the comfort of YHWH for his/her people is performed in Jerusalem, the temple mount (66:13). As we see above in the eschatological judgment of Malachi, the temple functions as both divine judgment and godly comfort in trito-Isaiah. We should give attention to the discussion of Blenkinsopp who rightly maintains that prophetic eschatological faith is focused on temple and altar: the temple will be glorified, rich gifts will be brought to it, the faithful will partake of their sacrificial goods in peace in the temple precincts (60:7, 13; 61:6; 62:9).<sup>24</sup>

### 3. Ideology and Reality of the Second Temple

So far we have explored the temple concepts of post-exilic prophets. Two significances of the second temple are detected: restoration of the community and eschatological rule of YHWH. I identify these two conceptions as prophetic ideology of the temple because prophets apply their own ideas of the temple to their contexts to exhort people to move towards the prophets' aims. For example, Haggai and Zechariah stress the urgency of the temple construction because they are supporting the exiled group of Zerubbabel and Joshua, which is a responsible party of the temple project. Thus, the prophets' concepts of the temple are destined to be ideologically painted.<sup>25</sup>

A concern here is a reality of the second temple. Since the biblical information of the temple does not give a historical data, the prophetic ideology of the temple cannot be an exact picture of the second temple.

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<sup>22</sup> Petersen, "Temple," 93.

<sup>23</sup> Petersen, 93

<sup>24</sup> Blenkinsopp, *A History*, 218.

<sup>25</sup> Robert P. Carroll, "Coopting the Prophets: Nehemiah and Noadiah." *Priests, Prophets, and Scribes: Essays on the Formation and Heritage of Second Temple Judaism in Honour of Joseph Blenkinsopp*. Ed. by Eugene Ulrich and others (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992) 88.

Here, I will turn my attention to a couple of study of other temples and compare those with the second temple to draw its reality. Then I will examine how the prophets develop the temple vision in the alternating context of their times.

#### A. A Comparative Study

Blenkinsopp observes that in ancient Mesopotamia, Syria, Asia Minor and the Greek main land, city-state and temple belonged together.<sup>26</sup> Blenkinsopp explains that many of the larger temples throughout the Achaemenid Empire were wealthy institutions with their own land holdings and work force, their own capital and produce from which they advanced loans like banks and credit union today. These regional temples' economies were supporting the imperial exchequer. This was why the Achaemenid rulers promote and protect the local sanctuaries.<sup>27</sup> The priests for the service were under the supervision of imperial officers, whose chief function was to ensure the payment of tribute. So Nehemiah as local representative of the imperial authority took measures to control the economic resources of the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>28</sup>

We can summarize two social functions of the temples in the Achaemenid times. First, temples serve as catalysts of economic exchange and promoters of social cohesion. Second, temples are as a point of convergence for the symbolic structures of the region, "an emblem of collective identity" mitigating to some degree the resentment generated by subjection to a foreign power.<sup>29</sup>

The last point on the role of temple is same even in the Classical Greece. According to Walter Burkert, the Greek temples built from about 600 to 300 BCE are intimately connected with the Greek *polis* structure. Both evolved together and remain mutually interdependent.<sup>30</sup> The priests were appointed by the organs of the city-state. The temples were used for the state treasure house and made loans for people.

The *polis* was founded on the rejection of monarchy, on the common responsibility of autonomous equals. Usually, the temple and *polis* faced same destiny. They would thrive together in peaceful times but there are indications that the importance of temples decreased with the decline of the Greek *polis*.<sup>31</sup> A Greek temple is the sumptuous and beautiful *anathema* by which a *polis*, yielding to the divine, demonstrates to herself and to others her existence and her claims.<sup>32</sup> The temple in Classical Greece was a symbol of collective identity in the political and military system of the era.

The temples in the Achaemenid period and in the time of Classical Greece play a social role in both economic and political dimension. Despite little evidences, we can infer a similar situation in Yehud from the

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Temple and Society in Achaemenid Judah." *Second Temple Studies, 1. Persian Period*. Ed. by Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991) 22.

<sup>27</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Temple," 23.

<sup>28</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Temple," 23-24.

<sup>29</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Temple," 26.

<sup>30</sup> Walter Burkert, "The Temple in Classical Greece." *Temple in Society*. Ed. by Michael V. Fox (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1988) 39.

<sup>31</sup> Burkert, 44.

<sup>32</sup> Burkert, 44.



studies above. The so called *Burger-Tempel-Gemeinde* (civic-temple community) is claimed to exist and flourish within the Persian Empire.<sup>33</sup> According to Joel Weinberg, there was such a temple community in Achaemenid Judah province. Based on the observations thus far, we can reconstruct a historical reality of the second temple as follows: 1. It was an economic vehicle such as bourse, treasury, and commercial center, 2. The personnel was under the supervision imperial officers, 3. It was an emblem of collective identity.

#### B. Traces of Civic-Temple Community in Yehud

##### 1) *Economic Center*

The prophetic depictions of the temple as the symbol of restoration are closely related to a restoration of economic prosperity. For example, Haggai describes the temple as a store house which will be filled with treasure of all the nations (2:7). Silver and gold are proclaimed as YHWH's (2:8). The material blessing is expected with the laying of the temple foundation (2:18). Also, in Zechariah, the comfort of YHWH to Zion is preceded by the prosperity of cities (1:17). Again, an economic wealth of the community is promised with the laying of the temple foundation (8:9-13).

In this regard, Carroll's argument that temple is not a holy house for worship but a store house for the generating of great wealth<sup>34</sup> is legitimate. He continues to discuss that Zechariah 8:9-13 represents the temple as an economic center, and the burgeoning of the economy is associated with the building of the temple. Furthermore, even in deutero-Zechariah, the hope expressed in 14:21 that such a day would see the cessation of trade in temple is indicative of the role of the temple as a kind of 'merchant city,' much given to commerce and business transactions.<sup>35</sup> In addition to the two prophets, these traces of the temple as economic center are recurring throughout the Persian period prophets.<sup>36</sup>

##### 2) *Temple Personnel*

The temple personnel for the newly built temple must have been a controversial issue since there was a conflict between the people of the land and people of the exile, furthermore between the competitive priestly groups. Specifically, Haggai and Zechariah were sensitive to this problem. They sided with the exile group and emphasized Zrubbabel and Joshua whenever they spoke about the leadership of the civic-temple community. The two leaders of the repatriate group is pictured as being obedient to the voice of YHWH and taking the task of rebuilding the temple along with the rest of the people (Hag 1:12-15). In Zechariah, Joshua is authorized as the high priest for the temple by the messenger of YHWH (3:1-10). In reality, the priesthood was appointed by imperial officers. However, Zechariah tries to proclaim that the legitimacy of the position of Joshua is based on divine choice. Likewise the authority of Zerubbabel is depicted as being given by the spirit

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<sup>33</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Temple," 27.

<sup>34</sup> Carroll, "So What," 41.

<sup>35</sup> Carroll, "So What," 43.

<sup>36</sup> Joel 1:9-10, 13, 16, 2:14, 4:18, Malachi 3:10-12

of YHWH not by any other earthly institutions (4:6-14).<sup>37</sup>

### 3) *Collective Identity*

The message of Malachi concerning the three misbehaviors against which the prophet preaches; neglect of the cult, lack of economic support of the clergy, and marriage with foreign women<sup>38</sup> reflects aspects of the civic-temple community. The negligence of the cult is not only a religious problem but also a social problem because the participation of duly established cultic activity is one of essentials for the membership of the temple community.<sup>39</sup> The prophet is dealing with a social issue by criticizing a religious problem. The lack of economic support for the temple and the clergy is another problem in Yehud province because it evinces the crisis of solidarity among the people in Yehud. Supporting of the temple is the second crucial element for acquiring a membership. Yehudites neglect their collective identity. That is why Malachi emphasizes ethnic qualification of the community<sup>40</sup> by condemning the intermarriage (2:10-12).

### C. Causes of Eschatological Vision

Eschatological symbol of the second temple in the prophets can be explained in the relation of political dimension of the temple. As we see above, most of the post-exilic prophets express an eschatological concern in their interpretations of the temple. The civic-temple community is not an independent national entity but a limited autonomy under the supervision of the empire. Due to the clever policy by admitting the local autonomy, the Achaemenid government could mitigate the national movements of each province. However, the patriotic groups within the Jewish community could not accept the present temple community. Their only option was to project the sovereignty of YHWH, their national God into the future in an eschatological language. The civic-temple system, on the one hand, was an emblem of collective identity but, on the other hand, an obstacle with which the Jewish people should do away for the coming reign of YHWH.

There is another explanation for the emergence of eschatology, which is more significant in understanding the historical reality of the second temple. The post-exilic prophets redefine the concept of the temple according to the change of the circumstances. However, trito-Isaiah proclaims much more innovative claims on the temple than any other prophets. For instances, the place of the “foreigner” and the “eunuch” within “his” people is permitted at his house (56:3-8).<sup>41</sup> Also, trito-Isaiah raises a radical question about the nature of human temple (66:1-2). Finally, the prophet reveals ingenious concept of the temple as “a house of prayer for all peoples”(56:7), which goes beyond the boundary of the Jewish cult and ethnicity.

Now, the temple is not only a place of sacrifice but also a house of utterance. By designating

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<sup>37</sup> For an extended discussion of the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua, Janet E. Tollington, *Tradition and Innovation in Haggai and Zechariah 1-8* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) 125-81.

<sup>38</sup> Blenkinsopp, *A History*, 210.

<sup>39</sup> Blenkinsopp, *A History*, 198.

<sup>40</sup> Blenkinsopp, “Temple,” 32.

<sup>41</sup> Petersen, 93.

temple as a house of prayer, the prophet limits the customary status of any priestly class since they did not control prayerful utterance but did sacrifice.<sup>42</sup> In fact, in the late second temple period, there appears synagogue, the house of prayer and it gradually replaces the temple, the worship place of Judaism.

Menahem Haran justly points out that the emergence of synagogue during the second temple period denotes that Judaism reached the stage at which it could practically give up the institution of the house of God altogether. Consequently, when the second temple fell, Judaism could absorb the blow without collapsing. The temple was thus turned into an eschatological symbol.<sup>43</sup>

With the fall of the first temple in 587 BCE, the religious role of the temple as a cultic center of the whole community was lost. The second temple which was rebuilt on the site of the former one, however, was not any more a religious center but an economic and political location for a limited group of people called, civic-temple community. As a part of the apparatus of imperial control<sup>44</sup>, the temple was increasingly rejected by Jewish people as the House of God until that it was replaced by the synagogue, a place for public prayer.

#### **IV. Principles of the Prophetic Contextual Theology**

The role of the temple which is portrayed by Israelite prophets shows us continuity and discontinuity between pre-exilic and post-exilic periods. One of the consistent themes is the basic definition of the temple as the house of YHWH. From Isaiah's temple vision, through Ezekiel's blueprint of the future temple, to Haggai's exhortation to rebuild the House of YHWH, the temple as the dwelling place of God is persistently maintained.

However, some changes are recognized. First of all, temple has become a symbol of restoration. In the same line with Deutero-Isaiah, the post-exilic prophets relate the fate of community with that of temple. This new concept of temple is because of the experience of the national trauma and of the continuous hardships after the return of exiles. The residing location of YHWH from which both judgment and salvation come is the only hope for the community in the midst of disastrous surroundings.

Second, temple has been understood as an eschatological symbol by post-exilic prophets. A vicious cycle of a new hope and a disappointed reality in the post-exilic times has caused people's expectation to move to the end times. In this eschatological vision of the temple, however, the pre-exilic notion of the holy abode of God and the divine sovereignty still continues.

Here, we see the prophetic concepts of the temple are deeply influenced by historical circumstances. The problem is to reconstruct a historical reality from the ideological prophecy in order to understand the

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<sup>42</sup> Petersen, 94.

<sup>43</sup> Menahem Haran, "Temple and Community in Ancient Israel." *Temple in Society*. Ed. by Michael V. Fox (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1988) 22.

<sup>44</sup> Blenkinsopp, "Temple," 39.

prophecy better. When we are concerned with a prophecy of a prophet, we are dealing with the three problems; context, ideology, and reality at the same time.

The temple vision as the restoration of the community and eschatological rule of YHWH is the product of contextual theology of Post-exilic prophets. Three principles of their methodology in formulating the new vision of the temple are in order: 1. Preservation, 2. Innovation, 3. Transcendentalization.

First of all, post-exilic prophets have kept previous tradition of the temple as YHWH's abode from which divine judgment and deliverance come. With this belief of the temple as God's dwelling place, Haggai and Zechariah could exhort returnees to build the House of YHWH in spite of hardships of their times. Those who had experienced the fall of Jerusalem temple hardly believed the traditional belief about the temple. Yet, the two prophets' unyielding preservation of their temple heritage was transformed into renewed energy that completed the second temple in the end. Contextual theology is not simply situational. It should anchor in intrinsic vein of traditions which prove still true in various circumstances and changes of ages.

Second, the matrix of the post-exilic Yehud community has resulted in innovative temple vision among post-exilic prophets. The second temple as imperial institute administered by imperial personnel demanded renewed understanding of the temple. Both Joel and Malachi accepted the reality of the temple as economic vehicle almost like a commercial center. Yet, they developed the temple function further, from material and commercial role to nationalistic and religious role. Now the temple turned out to be the symbol of collective identity and the barometer of their restoration. Despite the Persian rule at the moment, the post-exilic prophets could develop the customary temple idea into transformative instrument on which the Yehudites' patriotic and faithful hearts were focused.<sup>45</sup>

Third, one of the most nagging problems of all for the prophets must be the gap between their religious announcement on the temple and the sheer reality of the temple as the apparatus of imperial control. The worst phenomenon of all was the failure of the prophetic expectations<sup>46</sup> that the revival of the nation would arrive with the restoration of the second temple. In the time of Joel, Malachi, and trito-Isaiah, previous temple vision could not have sustained by some groups of people. Fluctuation of hope and despair in trito-Isaiah's prophecy explains contemporary situations. However, post-exilic prophets and even Haggai did not limit their temple vision to mundane dimension. With a deeper appreciation of human circumstances, they cast their temple vision into transcendental dimension. Temple became understood as an eschatological symbol in which YHWH's ultimate rule would come true. The eschatological view on the temple ironically was the output of contextual theology of the post-exilic prophets.

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<sup>45</sup> Kim Hae-Kwon, "A Theology of National Reconciliation in the Book of Chronicles" *The Theological Thought* 152 (2011) 42.

<sup>46</sup> Those prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah!

## **V. Conclusion**

This paper is purposed to elucidate the understandings of the temple in the Persian period prophets and to search some principles of their theological adaptation of the temple vision in dialogue with the historical circumstances. For this, I have raised three specific problems of the early post-exilic community: a conflict within multi-stratified community, an economic disaster, and a subjection to a foreign power. On the one hand, two concepts of the temple by the post-exilic prophets have been drawn into two: the temple as a symbol of restoration and as an eschatological rule of YHWH. On the other hand, the reality of the second temple has been suggested as follows: 1. It was an economic vehicle such as bourse, treasury, and commercial center, 2. The personnel was under the supervision imperial officers, 3. It was an emblem of collective identity.

As a result of the discussions above, three principles of contextual theology of the post-exilic prophets are as follows: 1. Preservation of the traditional belief, 2. Innovation of the belief in dialogue with the context, 3. Transcendentalization of reality into eschatological vision.

Church in Korean society has lost her power to comfort and empower people. Unfortunately, the concept of the church can be identified with the symbol of failure and shame, rather than of victory and glory. One of the most critical reasons of this recent collapse of the church is the dogmatic theology that does not consider daily situations of human lives.

If the post-exilic prophets insisted the customary temple dogma, they could not respond to the change of the circumstances so effectively and result a downfall of their faith of YHWH. We have confirmed that the temple prophecies were products of the prophets' contextual theology. They attempted to fill the gap between the religious proclamation and real situations of life. What the post-exilic prophets instruct us today is to have a serious dialogue with our own context, which allows us to break through ideologies and finally encounter reality. Preservation of the good traditions of the Korean churches, innovation of the conventional doctrines in harmony with today's context, and eschatological confession of our existence are cherished wisdom of the great theologians from the Old Testament period.

### ***Key Words***

Temple, Post-Exilic Prophets, Contextual Theology, Ideology and Reality, Yehud Community, Korean Church

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