

Thursday Evening Bible Study

Series: the End Times – Bible prophecy about future events and periods

Teaching Summary for Week 34

The Kingdom and the Covenants

Part 6. The future Messianic Kingdom in Old Testament prophecy

Five major subjects in the future prophesied Kingdom

5. The **Temple**: Worship in the Millennial Kingdom

f. The **Millennial Temple** with its **order of worship**

The future Millennial Temple, including the organization of the worship rituals within, is described in great detail in Ezekiel 40-48.

In **Ezekiel 40:5-43:27**, Ezekiel describes in great detail the vision he received concerning the Millennial Temple. We studied Ezekiel's description in some detail last week.

The Tabernacle, Solomon's Temple, and Zerubbabel's Temple were all constructed so Israel could perform the animal sacrifices and offerings that the Lord required in the book of Leviticus.

At the end of last week's study, we noted things in Solomon's Temple that are not included in Ezekiel's vision of the Millennial Temple:

- No ark of the covenant (mercy seat) (Jer 3:16)
- No cherubim above the mercy seat

- No tablets of stone containing the Mosaic Law
- No pot of manna
- No rod of Aaron
- No golden candlestick
- No veil
- No showbread tables

Now these things had the highest place and significance in the Tabernacle and Temples where the Levitical offerings were made. But they are not found in the Millennial Temple.

All of this tells us that the sacrifices and offerings in the Millennial Temple will service a different purpose from those that were made under the Mosaic Law.

We will examine the Millennial system of priesthood and offerings next.

While there are some similarities to the Levitical offerings under the Mosaic Law, we will focus on the many differences between the two.

i. The Millennial System of **the Priesthood and the Offerings (Eze 44:1-46:24)**

The animal sacrifices or offerings in Ezekiel 44-46 are perhaps the most controversial subject in Ezekiel's vision of the Millennial Temple.

We will begin with an overview of this section, and then dive into the controversy!

These three chapters deal with the various laws and statutes regarding the millennial priesthood and sacrifice.

While there are similarities with the Mosaic Covenant, there are also some fundamental differences.

Thus, the Millennial system of priesthood and sacrifice will NOT be a return to the Mosaic system. It will be a new system.

The Mosaic Covenant ended permanently with the death of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Covenant replaces the Mosaic covenant.

Thus, the tablets of stone that were the embodiment of the Law of Moses will not be found in the Millennial temple.

Since God Himself in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ will be dwelling in the Temple, there is no need for any Ark of the Covenant. That's why it is not found in the Millennial Temple.

Jer 3:16-18

"It shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land," declares the Lord, "they will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the Lord.' And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss it, nor will it be made again. 17 "At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the Lord,' and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart. 18 "In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.

The Messianic Kingdom will have its own system of laws and statutes, and that includes the system of worship.

So in Ezekiel 44-46, Ezekiel describes seven features of the system of worship in the Millennial Kingdom:

1. The law of the **Eastern Gate** (44:1-3).
 - The Eastern gate will be closed at the beginning of the Millennial Reign of Christ, and it will not be reopened for the thousand years.
 - The Shekinah Glory returned to the temple through that gate, and will never again depart from Israel.
 - Ezekiel next describes the prince's ministry at this gate.
2. The **Shekinah Glory** in connection with **Israel's sins**, which resulted in their exile to Babylon (44:4-8).
3. The **Levites**: their punishment, and their duties in the Temple (44:9-14).
4. The **sons of Zadok**: their privileges and responsibilities as those in charge of the sacrifices of the Temple (44:15-31).
5. The **Mountain** of the House of the Lord (45:1-8).
6. The duties of the **prince** (45:9-46:18).
 - The law of the measurements (45:9-12)
 - Carrying out the laws of the offerings (45:13-46:16). This includes the offerings for the Feasts (New Year, Passover, and Tabernacles), the new moons, the Sabbaths, and the daily offerings.
 - The special rights that the prince has.
7. The laws of **the boiling of the sacrifices** (46:19-24).

So Ezekiel says there will be animal sacrifices and other offerings in the Temple during the Millennium.

By the way, he is not the only prophet who does so.

Here is a list of passages from the Old Testament prophets that teach that there will be animal sacrifices and offerings in the Millennial Kingdom:

Let's read them together now.

Isaiah 56:4-8

Isaiah 60:7

Isaiah 66:18-23

Jeremiah 33:15-18

Ezekiel 40:49-41

Ezekiel 42:13

Ezekiel 43:18-27

Ezekiel 44: 11, 15, 27-30

Ezekiel 45: 13 – 46:15

Ezekiel 46:19-24

Zephaniah 3:8-11

Zechariah 14:16-18

Malachi 3:1-4

So if you take God at His word, there will be offerings and animal sacrifices in the Millennial Temple. And certain feasts of Israel will be celebrated.

There will be a physical Temple. There will be priests. And there will be an Altar. It would be very odd to have all of this in place and not have sacrifices!

But this raises several difficulties.

These difficulties cause many pastors and denominations to abandon the literal interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48.

There are three main questions that need to be answered to overcome these difficulties concerning the literal animal sacrifices during the Millennial Kingdom:

1. Isn't this a return to the sacrificial system of the Mosaic Covenant, which ended with the death of Christ on the cross?
2. Isn't it heresy to claim that blood sacrifices will be required in the Millennial Kingdom for the forgiveness of sins, since Christ is the one perfect sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins?
3. Wouldn't these future animal sacrifices contradict the teachings of the New Testament, especially the book of Hebrews?

The answer to each of these questions is "No". We will see why that is.

First of all, there are many differences between the sacrificial system under the Mosaic Covenant, and the sacrifices, offerings, and feasts that Ezekiel foresees.

Here is a table that documents some (but by no means all) of these basic differences:

Differences in Temple Worship between the Mosaic Covenant (Leviticus) and the New Covenant (Ezekiel).

| | Mosaic | New |
|--|---------|--------------------|
| Priests offering sacrifices | Levites | Sons of Zadok |
| Anointed or High Priest to offer Atonement | Yes | No |
| Can Gentiles serve as priests? | No | Yes (Isa 66:18-22) |
| Day of Atonement | Yes | No |
| Feast of Pentecost (Weeks) | Yes | No |
| Feast of Trumpets | Yes | No |
| Feast of Passover | Yes | Yes |
| Feast of Tabernacles | Yes | Yes |

| | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| (Booths) | | |
| Worshippers | Jews only (1 nation) | Jews and Gentiles (all nations) |
| The Prince | No | Yes |
| Offerings by individual common people | Yes | No |
| Who can enter the most Holy Place (Holy of Holies) | The High Priest exclusively | All the priests (Eze 4:15-16) |
| First of Nisan a holy day? | No | Yes (Eze 45:18) |
| Who performs the Passover ritual? | The head of the household, for his family | The Prince, on behalf of the nation |
| Length of Passover | 1 day | 7 days |

And there are many other differences as well.

There are differences in the number of sacrifices, as well the number and kind of animal sacrificed in each offering.

These differences prove that Ezekiel's offerings and sacrifices are not a return to the Mosaic Covenant, but instead represent a brand new system of worship.

Therefore, this new system does not contradict the New Testament teaching that the Mosaic Covenant ended with the death of the Lord.

Let's now answer the question about the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews was written to Jewish people who professed to believe in Christ but were about to turn back to the animal sacrifices in the Temple. These were the animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant, which did end with the death of the Lord.

But Hebrews also looks forward to the fulfillment of the New Covenant.

The old is passing away and the new is about to come.

Heb 8:7-13

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. 8 For finding fault with them, He says,

"BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD,
WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT
WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH;
9 NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS
ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND
TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT;
FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT,
AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD.

10 "FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL
AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:
I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS,
AND I WILL WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS.
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,
AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

11 "AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN,
AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,'
FOR ALL WILL KNOW ME,
FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.

12 "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES,
AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."

13 When He said, "A **new** covenant," He has made the **first** obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

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The sacrifices and offerings in the New Covenant will not take away sins.

Ezekiel and the other prophets did not say that the sacrifices in the Kingdom will forgive sins.

They won't have to, because the Lord will remember their sins no more!

But the sacrifices and offerings in the Old (Mosaic) Covenant didn't take sins away either.

The offerers were cleansed, their bodies sanctified (but not their consciences), and they would not be cut off from the people.

Yet the Lord still required those sacrifices and offerings back then, even though they were weak and worthless and made nothing perfect (Heb 7:18).

Their obedience in this was their acknowledgement that only the Lord could forgive sins.

That is just as much true for the nation of Israel during the Millennial Reign.

Only the Lord could forgive sins. And He did! He provided the precious Lamb as the one perfect sacrifice for our sins.

The Lord has given the church a regular way to proclaim the death of the Lord.

1 Cor 11:23-26

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Notice the phrase "until He comes".

The Lord has always given His people a way to proclaim the death of the Lord. To worship the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world.

He always knew His required sacrifice really proclaimed the death of His Son.

Go all the way back to the book of Genesis and you will see this.

Gen 22:4-14

On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5 Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." 6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. 7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." 13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. 14 Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

The burnt offering was performed BEFORE the Mosaic Covenant was established!

Go to the oldest book of the Bible and you will also see this.

Job 1:1-5

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. 2 Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. 3 His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east. 4 His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them.