

Thursday Evening Bible Study

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

Teaching Summary for Week 35

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
 - 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 saw that 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.

So Ezekiel is not the only prophet that foresees animal sacrifices and other offerings in the Temple during the Millennium.

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. We read many of them last week, and will finish now.

Let's read the ones in bold.

Isaiah 56:4-8

Isaiah 60:7

Isaiah 66:18-23

Jeremiah 33:15-18

Ezekiel 40:39-41

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 theologians, commentators, 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.

The table that follows 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 (Booths)	Yes	Yes
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 offered, and in the number and kind of animals sacrificed in each offering.

These differences prove that Ezekiel's offerings and sacrifices are not a return to the Mosaic Covenant. Rather, they represent a 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.

We will answer the second question by starting in 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.*

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 be for the forgiveness of sins.

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

So it is not heresy to say that there will be animal sacrifices in the Millennial Kingdom.

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

The offerors 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 will also be 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 also 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".

God 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.

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.

5 When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and **offering burnt offerings** according to the number of them all; for Job said, "Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Thus Job did continually.

Go all the way forward to the book of Revelation and you will still see this.

Rev 5:11-14

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice,

*"Worthy is **the Lamb that was slain** to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."*

13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying,

"To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever."

*14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And **the elders fell down and worshiped.***

The system of animal sacrifices was given to Israel as their way to worship the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world.

Does it really make sense that there would be no proclamation of the death of the Lord in the Millennial Kingdom?

Why would the sacrifices that proclaim the Lord's death be left out of the worship protocol for the Millennial Kingdom?

Israel is God's earthly people.

The church is completely distinct from Israel.

The New Testament epistles describe the form of worship suitable for the God's heavenly people – the church.

During the church age, Jewish believers cannot return to the Mosaic sacrifices under the Mosaic Covenant. That covenant ended with the death of the Lord.

The book of Hebrews was written to explain this to Hebrew Christians.

Our High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, is now in heaven at the Right Hand of God the Father.

But the New Testament does not forbid or condemn future animal sacrifices under the **New** Covenant, in the Kingdom.

Not even the book of Hebrews does that.

Heb 10:8-10

*8 After saying above, "SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices **FOR SIN** YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, NOR HAVE YOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them" (which are offered according to the Law), 9 then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO YOUR WILL." He takes away the first in order to establish the second. 10 By this will we have been **sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

The Lord does not desire sacrifices and offerings FOR SIN.

Heb 10:16-18

16 "THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THEM AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD:

*I WILL PUT MY LAWS UPON THEIR HEART,
AND ON THEIR MIND I WILL WRITE THEM,"*

He then says,

*17 "AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS
I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."*

*18 Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering **for sin**.*

There is no longer any offering for SIN.

But that is **not** the same thing as saying that the Lord will not include sacrifices and offerings FOR PROCLAIMING THE LORD'S DEATH during His Kingdom Reign.

At His second coming, Christ will once again be on the earth as the Messiah.

How will the citizens of the kingdom worship Him?

Keep in mind that the Lord will fulfill His covenants with Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

What form of worship was given to the nation of Israel? The Temple, with its sacrifices and offerings and feasts.

Hebrews tells us that the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sins.

Heb 10:4

*4 For it is **impossible** for the blood of bulls and goats **to take away sins**.*

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That was true in the Mosaic Covenant. It will remain true in the New Covenant.

Because Christ hadn't died on the cross yet, the Lord gave the people of Israel the Temple and certain feast days (especially the Day of Atonement) to deal with their sins during their time on earth.

Jesus will be the greater High Priest forever. As such, He is the guarantee to Israel of a better covenant to come – the New Covenant

That is why He said what He did to His Jewish disciples the night before He was to die on the cross:

Luke 22:14-21

*14 When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. 15 And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this **Passover** with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it **until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**" 17 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on **until the kingdom of God comes.**" 19 And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is **the new covenant in My blood.**"*