
Most of us in pastoral ministry can look back to those formative years in seminary and point to a few key professors who played a pivotal role in our theological training. When I reflect on all that I learned from Larry Pettegrew, I think not merely of the doctrine itself but also of two related convictions that he modeled so faithfully in the classroom: To be truly biblical the systematic theologian must first be exegetical, and to be truly exegetical he must first be humble. The humility that drove Dr. Pettegrew to be so meticulously exegetical in his theology and to submit his life to the authority of God's Word has served as an example for me and countless others trained under his tutelage. It is with profound appreciation for his faithfulness—and a desire to honor his legacy by emulating him—that I offer this essay on one of the most difficult issues in all of Scripture: the animal sacrifices in Ezekiel's temple.

CHAPTER 5

The Millennial Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48

MATT WAYMEYER

Introduction

IN EZEKIEL 40–48 THE prophet records a vision of sacrifices being offered in a newly constructed temple in the city of Jerusalem. Dispensationalists typically identify this temple as a physical building where Jesus will reign during the millennial kingdom. But non-dispensationalists object to this literal interpretation of Ezekiel's vision, maintaining that animal sacrifices in a millennial temple would constitute not only a return to the Mosaic system of worship, but also a denial of the sufficiency of Christ's work on the cross (Heb 9:1–10:18). Because the death of Jesus has put an end to the sacrificial system (Heb 10:18), non-dispensationalists interpret the temple and its sacrifices symbolically/typologically and point to Ezekiel 40–48 as a significant problem for the literal approach of dispensationalism.¹ The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the main dispensational views of the millennial sacrifices, beginning with a brief consideration of the nature of the temple itself.

¹ Some argue that the terms "literal" and "symbolic" are too simplistic because they fail to capture important nuances in this discussion, but the two categories speak clearly to the key question in the debate: Will the fulfillment of Ezekiel 40–48 involve the actual construction of the physical structure described in these nine chapters? As the terms are used here, the "literal" view says *yes*, whereas the "symbolic" view—regardless of the various ways it is sometimes qualified—says *no*.

The Nature of Ezekiel's Temple

It should be emphasized at the outset that the vision in Ezekiel 40–48 presents no less a problem for the symbolic view of the temple than it does for the literal interpretation. The difficulty that this vision poses for the symbolic approach can be illustrated by reading the entirety of these nine chapters and then simply asking the question: *What does all of this mean?* As Walter Kaiser notes, “It would take an enormous amount of allegorizing to satisfy the plethora of detail and exactness of description of this temple.”² Those who reject a literal interpretation are simply unable to offer credible exegesis of the significance of the blueprint-like schematics of the temple in Ezekiel 40–48. In fact, if these structures are merely symbolic of greater spiritual realities, the vast majority of detail in these 260 verses was completely irrelevant to the original audience of this prophecy and is completely irrelevant today.

The difficulty in providing a plausible symbolic interpretation is underscored by the wide variety of views regarding what it actually symbolizes. “It has been argued, for example, that the temple represents heaven, the new heavens and new earth, the church, Christ and His community of believers, or Jesus Himself.”³ This lack of consensus constitutes a compelling argument against this view. At the very least, the one who rejects the literal view of Ezekiel's temple must concede that “there can be no consistent interpretation of this text by the symbolic method and therefore no clear understanding of its message.”⁴ This is no small problem.

In contrast, the straightforward meaning communicated to the original audience in the original context is that one day in the future an actual temple will be built according to the plans set forth in this prophecy. Ezekiel was exhorted not only to pay attention to all that was shown to him, but also to declare to the house of Israel everything that he witnessed (Ezek 40:4). The purpose of making known all the details of this temple—with “its layout, its exits, its entrances, all its plans, all its statutes, and all its

² Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Preaching and Teaching the Last Things: Old Testament Eschatology for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 121.

³ Mark F. Rooker, “Evidence from Ezekiel,” in *A Case for Premillennialism: A New Consensus*, eds. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), 130.

⁴ Randall Price, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy: A Definitive Look at Its Past, Present, and Future* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), 544.

laws” (Ezek 43:11a)⁵—was not so that Israel would anticipate some kind of spiritualized or typological fulfillment of the prophecy, but rather “so that they may observe its entire plan and all its statutes *and execute them*” (Ezek 43:11b, emphasis added). Ezekiel 40–48 clearly predicts the construction of a temple in the future, one that will be built according to the specified plans. How else could this vision have been understood, especially in light of the explicitly stated purpose for the prophecy within the prophecy itself?

The Question of Animal Sacrifices

This prophecy of a millennial temple not only arises from a grammatical-historical interpretation of Ezekiel 40–48, but it is also consistent with the prophetic picture of an eschatological temple elsewhere in Scripture.⁶ The clarity of this teaching should compel the interpreter to embrace the reality of a future temple in the city of Jerusalem, regardless of how well that may seem to fit with his theological system. But it does raise the legitimate question of how to understand the animal sacrifices in a way that can be harmonized with Hebrews 9–10. Among those who believe in a literal millennial temple, three primary answers have been given to this question.

The Symbolic View of the Sacrifices

Some dispensationalists affirm the existence of a literal temple in the millennial kingdom, yet they believe the descriptions of the sacrifices are merely a symbolic way to portray the worship that will take place there, using terms and concepts that were understandable to the original audience. Thus, says this view, even though the temple will be literal, the animal sacrifices will not. As dispensationalist Robert Chisholm explains:

The inclusion of so many minute details suggests that the temple described here will be a literal reality in the Jerusalem of the future (see Isa. 2:2–4; Hag. 2:9). However, the final sacrifice of Jesus Christ has made the Levitical system obsolete (see Heb. 9:1–10:18). To return to this system, with its sin offerings and such, would be a serious retrogression. Ezekiel's audience would have found it impossible to conceive of a restored covenant community apart from the sacrificial system. Now that the fulfillment of the vision transcends that

⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are taken from the NASB.

⁶ E.g., Isa 2:2–4; Jer 33:14–18; Joel 3:18–21; Mic 4:1–5; Hag 2:7–9; Zech 6:12–15; and Mal 3:1–4, in contrast to the absence of a temple in the eternal state (Rev 21:22).

cultural context, we can expect it to be essentially fulfilled when the Israel of the future celebrates the redemptive work of their savior in their new temple.⁷

Two main arguments can be made in favor of this view. First, it includes a clear rationale for why millennial worship would be portrayed in the terminology of sacrifice, for the prophets did sometimes use anachronistic language and concepts to communicate in a way that made sense to their original audience. As one dispensationalist explains, “Ezekiel in referring to the literal worship of Yahweh in the Millennium would be forced to use terms and concepts with which the audience was familiar.”⁸ It would be no surprise for those terms and concepts to include the sacrificial system that was so central to Israel’s worship under the Mosaic Covenant.

In response to this first argument, however, when advocates of this view ask, “How else could worship have been described?”⁹ one simple answer is that the book of Psalms is replete with descriptions and expressions of worship that do not use the language of animal sacrifice. Thus, the prophets were obviously not dependent on the concept of animal sacrifice to describe the act of worship, and so the insistence on the need for this use of anachronism becomes less compelling, as does the argument itself.

A second argument for this view notes that the animal sacrifices portrayed in Ezekiel’s vision do not contain nearly the amount of detail as the temple complex, and therefore it would make sense to see the former as symbolic even though the latter is literal. This may be the strongest argument for the symbolic view of the sacrifices. In response, however, even though the vision contains relatively less detail when it comes to the sacrifices, the amount of detail is not insignificant. In fact, according to one count, there are a total of 60 references to sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48.¹⁰ If

7 Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 286. Similarly, *The New Scofield Reference Bible* explains one possible interpretation of the Ezekiel sacrifices like this: “The reference to sacrifices is not to be taken literally, in view of the putting away of such offerings, but is rather to be regarded as a presentation of the worship of redeemed Israel, in her own land and in the millennial temple, using the terms with which the Jews were familiar in Ezekiel’s day” (*The New Scofield Reference Bible* [New York: Oxford, 1967], 888).

8 Rooker, “Evidence from Ezekiel,” 133.

9 As does Rooker (ibid.) in arguing for the symbolic view.

10 John W. Schmitt and J. Carl Laney, *Messiah’s Coming Temple: Ezekiel’s Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple*, Updated Edition (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2014),

the language of animal sacrifice were intended merely to communicate the idea of worship in the millennial temple, it is difficult to understand why so many specific details would be necessary to do so. It is also difficult to understand the symbolic significance of each of the various sacrifices in distinction from the others. In this way, a symbolic approach to the sacrifices encounters the same problem as a symbolic approach to the temple.¹¹

This leads to the most obvious weakness of this view—its hermeneutical inconsistency. According to covenant theologian Anthony Hoekema, taking the sacrifices symbolically constitutes a far-reaching concession on the part of dispensationalists: “If the sacrifices are not to be taken literally, why should we take the temple literally? It would seem that the dispensational principle of literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy is here abandoned, and that a crucial foundation stone for the entire dispensational system has been set aside.”¹² Although Hoekema’s objection may not be decisive, the inconsistency of taking the temple literally but the sacrifices symbolically can hardly be denied.¹³

The Memorial View of the Sacrifices

Most dispensationalists believe that the animal sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48 will serve as a visual reminder of the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ and therefore will not contradict Hebrews 9–10. Advocates of this view make two primary arguments that the millennial sacrifices will serve as a

142.

11 In addition, the way the sacrifices are integrally related to the priesthood, the temple, and the Jewish feasts throughout Ezekiel’s vision makes it difficult to take most of the vision literally and yet the sacrifices symbolically. For example, when Ezekiel describes the specific measurements of the altar in 43:13–17 and then immediately explains how the various animals are to be offered upon that very altar in 43:18–27, it seems impossible to take the altar literally but the sacrifices symbolically. Similarly, when Ezekiel describes the measurements of the place in the corners of the temple where the sacrifices are prepared for the people (46:21–24), it is difficult to interpret the architecture literally and yet the preparation of the sacrifices as merely symbolic.

12 Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 204.

13 Additional arguments for literal sacrifices include: (1) several other Old Testament prophecies describe a coming kingdom that will include animal sacrifices of some kind (Isa 56:6–7; Jer 33:14–18; Zech 14:16–21; Mal 1:11; 3:1–4); and (2) Jesus Himself spoke of once again eating the Passover meal with His disciples in the millennial kingdom (Luke 22:15–18; cf. Ezek 45:21), which presumably will require the accompanying animal sacrifice.

memorial. First, they point to the precedent and parallel of the Lord's Supper, the God-ordained means by which His people remember the death of Jesus in the present age (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24–25). In the same way that the Lord's Supper currently serves as a memorial that neither supplements nor undermines the sufficiency of Christ's death on the cross, so it will be with the millennial sacrifices in the future kingdom. Because the memorial of the Lord's Supper will only be celebrated "until He comes" (1 Cor 11:26), these visual reminders of the ultimate sacrifice will be especially fitting in a millennium that immediately follows His coming.

A second argument for the memorial view involves the nature of animal sacrifices in the Old Testament. Advocates of this view emphasize that the sacrifices of the Mosaic Covenant were not efficacious for salvation but were prescribed to a people who had already entered into relationship with Yahweh. Rather than providing redemption, the various sacrifices and offerings "reminded the Israelite that he was sinful and that he needed the Messiah's innocent blood, typified in the animal, to cleanse him of his sin and bring forgiveness from God."¹⁴ In this way, the purpose of the sacrificial system was to point ahead to the ultimate sacrifice of which the various animal sacrifices were merely types. Thus, in contrast to the Mosaic sacrifices that looked forward to the fulfillment of the cross, these millennial memorials will look back at the accomplishment of the cross and thereby remind God's people of what He has done on their behalf.

Although the memorial view effectively eliminates the tension between Ezekiel 40–48 and Hebrews 9–10, it faces two significant problems. First, there is no clear indication in Ezekiel itself that these sacrifices will be memorial in nature. The suggested parallel between the prospective function of the Mosaic sacrifices and retrospective function of the millennial sacrifices may imply the memorial nature of the sacrifices as a secondary purpose, but one would expect a more explicit indication in the biblical text were it intended to be the primary or exclusive function of these offerings.

Second, the various assertions in Ezekiel that these sacrifices will actually make *atonement* of some kind (43:20, 26; 45:15, 17, 20)—using the same Hebrew verb (*kipper*) as Leviticus¹⁵—render the memorial function of these sacrifices secondary at best. The memorial view implies that the Old Testament animal sacrifices had no efficacy whatsoever and merely pointed

¹⁴ Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," in *Expositors Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 1981), 6:949.

¹⁵ E.g., Lev 4:20, 26; 35; 16:27; 17:11.

forward to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. But both Leviticus and Ezekiel make it clear that "while the offerings *symbolized* something, they also *accomplished* something that was more than symbolic."¹⁶ The memorial view provides a reasonable explanation for how to harmonize the millennial sacrifices with Hebrews 9–10, but it fails to account for the details of the sacrificial language in Ezekiel 40–48 itself. Thus, although these sacrifices may provide some kind of visual reminder of the work of Christ on the cross, it is difficult to sustain the view that this will be their primary function in the millennial kingdom.¹⁷

The Ceremonial Cleansing View of the Sacrifices

An increasing number of dispensationalists have come to embrace what is sometimes called the *ceremonial cleansing view*.¹⁸ According to this view, "animal sacrifices during the millennium will serve primarily to remove ceremonial uncleanness and prevent defilement from polluting the temple envisioned by Ezekiel."¹⁹ In this way, the millennial sacrifices will not serve as mere reminders of the death of Christ, and they will certainly not provide the redemption that comes only through His all-sufficient work on the cross. Instead, they will provide the temporary cleansing and ceremonial purity necessary for non-glorified people to dwell and worship in the glorious presence of God during the millennial kingdom.

¹⁶ Price, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy*, 553; emphasis original. For a helpful discussion of the relationship between salvation and the animal sacrifices under the Mosaic Covenant, see Allen P. Ross, "The Biblical Method of Salvation: A Case for Discontinuity," in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments*, ed. John S. Feinberg (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 174–77, and John S. Feinberg, "Salvation in the Old Testament," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, eds. John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), 59–75.

¹⁷ A third difficulty with this view is that the bodily presence of Christ reigning in Jerusalem would seem to render visual reminders of Him and His sacrificial death unnecessary and therefore unlikely to be their primary function.

¹⁸ See John C. Whitcomb, "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel," *GTJ* 6/2 (1985) 201–17; Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48," *BibSac* 152/607 (July–Sept 1995): 279–89; and Price, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy*, 533–57.

¹⁹ Hullinger, "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices," 281.

The Nature of "Atonement" in Ezekiel 40-48

The case for this view begins with the nature of atonement and the meaning of the Hebrew verb *kipper* ("to make atonement"). Its use throughout the Old Testament appears to indicate a foundational meaning of "cleanse" in the sense of purging or wiping away.²⁰ Sometimes it refers to atonement for sin that results in *forgiveness*, but it is also used of both *purification* (in which an "unclean" object or person becomes "clean") and *consecration* (in which a "common" object or person is set apart as "holy").²¹ According to this view, the atonement accomplished by the sacrifices in Ezekiel 40-48 falls into these latter two categories and is related to temple service in the millennial kingdom rather than the forgiveness of sin.

This is consistent with all five occurrences of *kipper* in Ezekiel 40-48. The verb is used twice in Ezekiel 43 in reference to a one-time act of atonement for the altar (vv. 20, 26)—starting on the day it was built (v. 18) and lasting for seven days (v. 26)—in order to cleanse (v. 20), purify (v. 26), and consecrate (v. 26) it for ongoing use in God's holy presence (v. 27). The purpose of this atonement "is not the forgiveness of sin but the purification of a place."²² A third use of the verb is found in Ezekiel 45:20, where it involves the annual decontamination of the temple to "cleanse the sanctuary from sin" (Ezek 45:18)—also the purification/consecration of a place rather than the forgiveness of sin.

In the final two uses of the verb, atonement is made for the people of God—"for them" (45:15) and "for the house of Israel" (45:17)—most likely providing the ritual cleansing necessary for them to serve and worship in

20 Richard E. Averbeck, "kpr," in *NIDOTTE*, ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 2:690-705; Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24*, NICOT, eds. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 520; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible, Vol. 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1079-84; and Hullinger, "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices," 282-84.

21 Although the etymology and foundational meaning of *kipper* is debatable—the three somewhat overlapping proposals being "to cover," "to ransom," or "to wipe away"—a survey of its 102 uses in the Old Testament does make it clear that the results/benefits of "making atonement" fall into three main categories: (1) forgiveness, (2) purification, or (3) consecration (Averbeck, "kpr," 2:704).

22 Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48*, NICOT, eds. R. K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 609. The same three verbs in Ezek 43:26—"make atonement," "purify," and "consecrate"—are also used in Exod 29:36 where the sanctification of the Mosaic altar is prescribed.

the temple. Although one could argue that the atonement in Ezekiel 45:15 and 17 involves the forgiveness of sin, when *kipper* results in *forgiveness* rather than *purification* or *consecration*, this is almost always indicated by an explicit reference to either: (a) the sin for which the sacrifice is offered, (b) the forgiveness that results from the act of atonement, or most commonly (c) both the sin and the forgiveness.²³ Because neither is mentioned in Ezekiel 45:13-17—and because both the immediate (45:18-20) and broader (44:25-27) contexts highlight the need for ceremonial cleansing and consecration—these final two uses of *kipper* support this view of the millennial sacrifices as well.

The Sacrificial System in Ezekiel 40-48

This same dynamic can be seen in Ezekiel's sacrificial system as a whole. Although the millennial sacrifices will not constitute a return to the Old Covenant,²⁴ Ezekiel 40-48 includes the five main classes prescribed in Leviticus: burnt offerings,²⁵ sin offerings,²⁶ guilt offerings,²⁷ grain offerings,²⁸ and peace offerings.²⁹ Rather than merely atoning for sin, under Moses these sacrifices often *purified* the "unclean" to make it "clean" or *consecrated* the "common" to make it "holy," both being required for worship in the presence of God.³⁰ In such cases, the Levitical sacrifices provided not the

23 E.g., Exod 32:30; Lev 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 16, 18; 6:7. In addition, Abner Chou argues that when the same four kinds of sacrifices offered in Ezek 45:13-17 (sin, grain, burnt, and peace offerings) are made together in Leviticus 9, they consecrate the priests and set them apart to lead worship, not provide forgiveness of sin (*I Saw the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Vision* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013], 110-11).

24 In fact, the promise that Israel will not lack a Levitical priest to continually offer sacrifices before the Lord—including burnt offerings and grain offerings—is part of the New Covenant (Jer 33:18). This guarantee is joined to the promise that David will not lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel (Jer 33:17), and it is found in the same context in which Jeremiah prophesies of a New Covenant that will replace the Old Covenant (Jer 31:31-32).

25 Ezek 40:38-39, 42; 43:18, 24, 27; 44:11; 45:15, 17, 23, 25; 46:2, 4, 12, 13, 15.

26 Ezek 40:39; 42:13; 43:19, 21, 22, 25; 44:27, 29; 45:17, 19, 22, 23, 25; 46:20.

27 Ezek 40:39; 42:13; 44:29; 46:20.

28 Ezek 42:13; 44:29; 45:15, 17, 24, 25; 46:5, 7, 11, 14, 15, 20.

29 Ezek 43:27; 45:15, 17; 46:2, 12.

30 When someone/something had been defiled in some way, he/it must first be *purified* to be made "clean" (i.e., no longer "unclean") and then be *consecrated* to be made "holy" (i.e., no longer "common"), and sacrifices were the prescribed means of restoring

forgiveness of sin per se, but the ritual purity needed to render either the worshiper or the sacred object of worship ceremonially acceptable. As F. F. Bruce explains, "The blood of slaughtered animals under the old order did possess a certain efficacy, but it was an outward efficacy for the removal of ceremonial pollutions."³¹

For example, when the "sin offering" was made to cleanse or consecrate the altar, the Holy Place, or the tent of meeting (Exod 29:36–37; Lev 8:14–15; 16:17–20), it obviously did not atone for any sin that was committed by those inanimate objects or places. But even when it was offered on behalf of people, the sin offering often addressed physical impurities having nothing to do with moral failure—such as childbirth (Lev 12:1–8), leprosy (Lev 14:1–57), unclean discharges (Lev 15:13–15, 25–30), and contact with a dead person (Num 6:9–12)—in order to cleanse the defilement and enable the worshiper to come before the Lord.³² Likewise, when the sin offering made was made for the Levites (Exod 29:14, 33; cf. Lev 8:2, 14–15), it was not to atone for their moral transgression (forgiveness), but to cleanse them from ceremonial impurity (purification) and to set them apart for service as priests in the temple (consecration).

Looking ahead to the millennium, the sacrificial system in Ezekiel's vision emphasizes that same need for purification and consecration. Although the house of Israel will already have been forgiven and cleansed from all of her sin (Ezek 36:25, 33; 37:23; cf. Jer 31:31–34), the priests serving in the temple will be called upon to protect themselves and the sanctuary from ritual defilements (Ezek 42:13–14; 44:7–8, 15–27, 31) and to teach the people the difference between the "clean" and the "unclean" and between the "holy" and the "profane" (Ezek 44:23; cf. 42:20; Lev 10:10). Consistent with their function under Moses, sin offerings will be made to cleanse and

the priest, the worshiper, or the sacred object/place of worship to this state of "cleanness" and "holiness" (see Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979], 18–29; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978], 116–17).

31 F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 214.

32 Hullinger, "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices," 289. As Price explains: "This concept understands that ritual violations (such as those specified in Leviticus) result in a ceremonial condition of uncleanness that not only interrupts and restricts the worship of the one who has committed the offense, but by its contagious nature is able to contaminate other people and objects, disrupting the required service of God" (*The Temple and Bible Prophecy*, 555).

consecrate (a) the altar in the temple for sacred use (Ezek 43:18–27), (b) the Levitical priests in the temple after ceremonial defilement through exposure to a corpse (Ezek 44:25–27), and (c) the people of Israel who worship in the temple (Ezek 45:13–25). In fact, the only explicitly stated outcome of all the different sacrifices in the entirety of Ezekiel 40–48 is ceremonial cleansing or consecration, never the forgiveness of sin. In this way, the millennial sacrifices will be instituted not to provide salvation for the people of God but to enable these forgiven worshipers to come before the Lord in His sanctuary.

The need for this kind of ceremonial cleansing is rooted in the uniqueness of this stage of the coming kingdom. During the millennium, the glorious presence of God will dwell on earth as the Lord Jesus Himself reigns in the Jerusalem temple (Ezek 43:5–7a; cf. Jer 33:17; Zech 14:9); yet He will do so in the midst of redeemed but non-glorified people who are capable of incurring ritual defilement and polluting the earthly sanctuary.³³ Thus, unlike in the new heavens and new earth—where sin and death will no longer exist (Rev 21:4), "nothing unclean" will be permitted (Rev 21:27), and there will be "no temple" (Rev 21:22)—the presence of Christ among non-glorified worshipers will require various sacrifices to provide ceremonial purification from any impurity that may cause defilement. In this way, the millennial sacrifices will not propitiate the wrath of God, but rather will cleanse the altar, the temple, and the people themselves to make them ceremonially presentable as they serve and worship in the very presence of the Lord.

The Millennial Sacrifices and Hebrews 9–10

Harmonizing these millennial sacrifices with the finality of the work of Christ involves looking more closely at the book of Hebrews, which emphasizes the sufficiency of His death on the cross. According to Hebrews, animal sacrifices in the Old Testament could neither take away sins (10:4, 11) nor cleanse the conscience of the sinner (9:9; 10:1–3), and therefore they had to be repeated day after day (7:27; 10:11) and year after year (9:7, 25; 10:1). But when the perfect (7:26–28; 9:14) and permanent (7:17, 21, 24) great High Priest offered Himself once and for all time (7:27; 9:12, 28; 10:12, 14), His sacrifice cleansed the conscience of His people (9:14) and thereby

33 The millennial kingdom will include a mixture of glorified and non-glorified people, and it will obviously be the non-glorified population that runs the risk of incurring ritual defilement and polluting the temple.

obtained eternal redemption on their behalf (9:12), having removed their sin (9:26; cf. 10:4, 11, 17) and sanctified and perfected them forever (10:10, 14; cf. 7:25). Nothing can add to what He has done on the cross.

The primary objection to sacrifices in the millennium is that they undermine the sufficiency of this redemptive work of Christ. In response to this objection, nothing in these future sacrifices will seek to accomplish what has already been perfectly accomplished by the Lord Jesus. None of the five classes of sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48 possesses an exclusively *expiatory* function;³⁴ none of the five uses of *kipper* (“to make atonement”) in Ezekiel

34 This can be demonstrated by considering the function of these five sacrifices under the Mosaic system. (1) The *guilt offering* was prescribed to cleanse from sins of disobedience (Lev 5:1, 4–6)—especially when restitution could be made (Lev 5:15–16; 6:1–7)—but it was also used to cleanse from physical contamination caused not by sin but by touching something unclean (Lev 5:2–3). (2) The *sin offering* was made to atone for sins committed unwittingly (Lev 4:1–3, 20), but it was also offered to cleanse from defilement contracted through means such as childbirth (Lev 12:1–8) or leprosy (Lev 14:1–57), and in such cases “no confession was required and no forgiveness given” (Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2006], 198). (3) The *burnt offering* was consumed entirely on the altar and thereby “symbolized complete consecration of life to God” (Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel’s History*, rev. by David O’Brien [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986], 162). Although it was offered for atonement, it was often required in scenarios not involving moral transgression: when priests were consecrated (Exod 29:15–18; Lev 9:12), when new mothers were purified (Lev 12:6–8), when lepers were cleansed (Lev 14:19), when ceremonial uncleanness was removed (Lev 15:14–15, 30), and when the Nazirite vow was broken (Num 6:11, 14) (Wood, *A Survey of Israel’s History*, 162). (4) The *peace offering* “was made to celebrate being at peace with God” (Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory*, 203), and it consisted of one of three types: “the thank offering rendered when unusual blessing had been experienced; the votive offering given in payment of a vow; and the freewill offering presented simply as an expression of love to God” (Wood, *A Survey of Israel’s History*, 163). The peace offering also served as an act of consecration at the inauguration of the tabernacle (Lev 9:4, 18, 22), at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:63–64; 2 Chron 7:7; cf. 1 Kings 9:25), and at the rededications of the temple (2 Chron 30:22; 31:2; 33:16); and the only time it made “atonement” (*kipper*) is when it was offered to consecrate Aaron and his sons for service as priests (Exod 29:33). (5) The *grain offering* was “a gift to the Lord that honored him as the source of life and of the fertility of the land,” and it “represented dedication to God of the fruit of one’s labor” (Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, NAC [Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000], 99). It was brought at times of joy, including the cleansing of a leper (Lev 14:10, 20–21, 31) and the successful consummation of a Nazirite vow (Num 6:15, 19) (Jerry M. Hullinger, “The Function of the Millennial Sacrifices in Ezekiel’s Temple, Part 1,” *BibSac* 167:665 [Jan-Mar 2010]: 56). Because none of these five offerings possesses an exclusively expiatory function, one cannot point to their use in Ezekiel’s temple as proof that the vision portrays sacrifices made for the forgiveness

40–48 involves the forgiveness of sin; and nowhere in Ezekiel 40–48 are the millennial sacrifices described as atoning for sin or resulting in forgiveness. Put simply, the atonement of Christ and the atonement of the Ezekiel sacrifices are of a completely different nature and for a completely different purpose. The former was *redemptive*, providing eternal salvation from divine wrath, but the latter will be *ceremonial*, providing temporary cleansing from ritual defilement.³⁵ Thus, although the atonement of the millennial sacrifices will have a vital function, they will have nothing to do with providing the forgiveness that comes only through Christ, and therefore they will not undermine the sufficiency of His death on behalf of sinners.³⁶

The Millennial Sacrifices and the Day of Atonement

The compatibility of Ezekiel 40–48 with the death of Christ is strengthened further by noting significant differences between the millennial sacrifices and the Mosaic system. Although many aspects of the two are identical, the sacrificial system in Ezekiel 40–48 is marked by several conspicuous omissions. Under Moses, the central feature of the sacrificial system was the annual Day of Atonement when the high priest of Israel went behind the veil and entered the Holy of Holies to atone for the sins of the people. He did so by sprinkling the blood of the sacrificed goat on the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant and then releasing the live goat into the wilderness to picture the removal of their iniquities (Lev 16:15–22). But among all the details of the sacrificial system in Ezekiel 40–48, there is no mention of the Day of Atonement, the high priest of Israel, the veil, the mercy seat, or the Ark of the Covenant.³⁷

The omission of these vital elements of the Levitical system is evidence that the millennial practices are not the reinstatement of the Mosaic Covenant. But even more importantly, it reflects the reality that all these

35 Whereas the ceremonial sacrifices provided the external cleansing of the flesh (Heb 9:10, 13, 21, 23), only the sacrifice of Christ could remove the guilt of sin and provide the internal cleansing of the conscience (Heb 9:9, 14; 10:1–3).

36 Those who insist that such sacrifices deny the sufficiency of the redemptive work of Jesus have difficulty explaining how the apostle Paul offered a sacrifice in the temple to cleanse himself from ritual defilement (Acts 21:26) without undermining the value of Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice.

37 According to Jer 3:16–18, the Ark of the Covenant will be absent during the millennial kingdom because the Lord Himself will reign from His throne in Jerusalem, and thus there will no longer be need for a physical representation of His presence.

features of the Levitical system were fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest³⁸ who went through the veil³⁹ and entered the heavenly Holy of Holies⁴⁰ to offer His own blood for the sins of His people,⁴¹ the perfect sacrifice that actually removed their iniquities⁴² and therefore never needs to be repeated.⁴³ Because the forgiveness of sin represented by the Day of Atonement was fully accomplished by the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, it will not be part of the sacrificial system in the future.⁴⁴ Thus, its absence from Ezekiel 40–48 highlights the compatibility between the millennial sacrifices and the death of Christ, and it strengthens the overall case for the ceremonial cleansing view.⁴⁵

Despite its obvious strengths, this view would benefit from further exegetical scrutiny. For example, does its understanding of the millennial sacrifices fully relieve the tension presented by Hebrews 10:18b (“there is no longer an offering for sin”⁴⁶), which at least *appears* to signal the end of the sacrificial system as a whole?⁴⁷ Even though the primary focus of Hebrews 9–10 is the contrast between the sacrifice of Christ and the Day of Atonement, it also refers to other sacrifices in the Mosaic system, including those offered daily (Heb 10:11) and those offered for external cleansing (Heb 9:10,

38 Heb 4:14–5:10; 7:1–8:13; 9:11–13, 24–26.

39 Heb 10:20; cf. Matt 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45.

40 Heb 4:14; 9:11–12, 24; cf. Heb 10:19.

41 Heb 7:27; 9:7; 10:10, 12.

42 Heb 9:26; cf. Heb 10:4, 11, 17.

43 Heb 7:27; 9:12, 28; 10:10; 12, 14.

44 Put another way, the very same features that were central to the sacrificial system in Leviticus were accomplished by the sacrifice of Christ (Heb 9–10) and therefore will not be part of the sacrificial system in the millennial kingdom (Ezek 40–48).

45 It also raises a significant difficulty for the symbolic view: If the sacrifices in Ezekiel’s temple were intended to point forward typologically to the once-and-for-all atonement of Christ (as many non-dispensationalists say), why does the prophet’s vision omit the very features of the sacrificial system that were most obviously fulfilled by Jesus? Attempts to answer this question have been less than convincing.

46 Author’s literal translation of the verbless clause.

47 A related question is why Jews in the millennial temple will need ceremonial cleansing since they will already possess the full access to God provided through the redemptive work of Christ (Eph 2:18; 3:12; Heb 10:19–22). The answer is found in the uniqueness of this stage of the coming kingdom and the role of theocratic Israel as a priesthood to the nations (Exod 19:6; cf. Isa 61:6) (Chou, *I Saw the Lord*, 111), but this question is worthy of further attention.

13, 21, 23). Does this imply that Jesus has fulfilled the sacrifices of purification and consecration as well? If so, does that render obsolete every kind of future sacrifice, including those posited by the ritual cleansing view?⁴⁸

But if not, can the tension with Hebrews 10:18 be resolved simply by noting that because there is no longer an offering specifically “for sin,” future sacrifices could be offered for other purposes, such as ceremonial cleansing and consecration? The logic of Hebrews 10:18 is that because “there is forgiveness of these things [‘their sins and their lawless deeds’ from v. 17]” (v. 18a), an offering “for sin” is no longer required (v. 18b). But since the millennial sacrifices will in fact *not* be offered “for sin”—i.e., to provide forgiveness for sins and lawless deeds that have already been forgiven—they would seem to be compatible with Hebrews 10:18.

Summary Conclusions

- The vision in Ezekiel 40–48 presents a formidable challenge for every theological system, and therefore Christians should be cautioned against letting this one passage become the deciding factor for which eschatological view is ultimately correct. They should be equally challenged not to let their own theological systems distort what is taught in individual passages of Scripture. It is much more important to humbly submit to the authority of God’s Word than seek to defend one’s doctrinal views, and sometimes this means admitting that one does not have all the answers.
- If the Bible clearly teaches two specific realities and the finite human mind has difficulty harmonizing them (e.g., divine sovereignty and human responsibility), the temptation is to deny one or the other in order to eliminate the tension. If a genuine contradiction exists between two assertions so that they are mutually exclusive,

48 This is the argument of non-dispensationalist Drew N. Grumbles, who writes that “even if atonement was simply cleansing and not propitiation, Heb 9:12–14 presents the sacrifice of Christ as the once-for-all purification offering” (*YHWH Is There: Ezekiel’s Vision as a Type* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021], 165). But Grumbles appears to miss the point of this passage. Rather than presenting the sacrifice of Christ as that which *fulfilled* the purification offerings, Heb 9:13–14 sets forth an argument from the lesser to the greater in which the latter is superior to the former because it cleansed the conscience from dead works (v. 14) rather than merely cleansing the flesh from physical defilement (v. 13). In this way, the two have a completely different nature and a completely different purpose.

obviously both of them cannot be true. But a lack of patience and an unwillingness to live with some degree of tension often short-changes the process of seeking to harmonize what can indeed be reconciled, albeit not easily. The Christian must be committed to affirm all that Scripture teaches—regardless of how easily those various truths fit together in his own mind—and to patiently and carefully harmonize that teaching in a way that is most faithful to all the relevant biblical passages.

- A consistent application of the grammatical-historical method leads to the conclusion that (a) a physical temple will be built in Jerusalem according to the plans set forth in Ezekiel 40–48, and (b) animal sacrifices will be offered there as the Lord Jesus reigns in the millennial kingdom. This sacrificial system will not constitute a return to the Mosaic Covenant, which has become obsolete through the establishment of a New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34; 2 Cor 3:6–18; Eph 2:15; Heb 8:7–13). Instead, the sacrifices envisioned in Ezekiel 40–48 and other Old Testament prophecies are presented as an integral part of the fulfillment of the New Covenant (e.g., Jer 33:14–18, 19–22), and that is how they must be understood.
- Those who affirm these millennial sacrifices must seek to harmonize Ezekiel 40–48 and Hebrews 9–10 in a way that safeguards the infinite value of the once-and-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Only His death on the cross can provide eternal redemption for His people, and nothing can be added to the sufficiency of what He has done on behalf of sinners. When non-dispensationalists accuse dispensationalists of a blasphemous denial of this sufficiency, they seem to envision a sacrificial system similar to that of Roman Catholicism in which salvation depends upon the ongoing sacrifice of the Eucharist. But none of the three dispensational views sees the millennial sacrifices as supplementing what is lacking in the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ, and therefore this accusation is unfounded.
- The best way to harmonize Ezekiel 40–48 and Hebrews 9–10 is to see the millennial sacrifices as providing the temporary cleansing and ceremonial purity necessary for non-glorified people to dwell in the presence of God in the temple. This understanding of

Ezekiel is compatible with Hebrews, for nothing in these future sacrifices will seek to accomplish what was already accomplished by the once-and-for sacrifice of Christ. For this reason, the ceremonial cleansing view should be embraced as the most exegetically faithful way to harmonize all that Scripture teaches, but with an openness to correction and refinement and with a willingness to study these passages further in an effort to bring greater clarity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Beale, G. K. *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- _____, and Mitchell Kim. *God Dwells Among Us: A Biblical Theology of the Temple*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014.
- Chou, Abner. *I Saw the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Vision*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013.
- Freeman, Hobart E. "The Problem of the Efficacy of the Old Testament Sacrifices." *Grace Journal* 4/1 (1963): 21–28.
- Grumbles, Drew N. *YHWH Is There: Ezekiel's Vision as a Type*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021.
- Hullinger, Jerry M. "The Divine Presence, Uncleanness, and Ezekiel's Millennial Sacrifices." *BibSac* 163:652 (Oct-Dec 2006): 405–22.
- _____. "The Function of the Millennial Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple, Part 1." *BibSac* 167/665 (Jan-Mar 2010): 40–57.
- _____. "The Function of the Millennial Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple, Part 2." *BibSac* 167:666 (Apr-June 2010): 166–79.
- _____. "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48." *BibSac* 152/607 (July-Sept 1995): 279–89.
- _____. "Two Atonement Realms: Reconciling Sacrifice in Ezekiel and Hebrews." *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 32 (2007): 33–63.
- Mitchell, John L. "The Question of Millennial Sacrifices, Part 1." *BibSac* 110/439 (July-Sept 1953): 248–67.
- _____. "The Question of Millennial Sacrifices, Part 2." *BibSac* 110/440 (Oct-Dec 1953): 342–61.
- Price, Randall. *The Temple and Bible Prophecy: A Definitive Look at Its Past, Present, and Future*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005.

- Rooker, Mark F. "Evidence from Ezekiel." In *The Coming Millennial Kingdom: A Case for Premillennial Interpretation*, eds. Donald K. Campbell and Jeffrey L. Townsend, 119–33. Chicago: Moody Press, 1997.
- Schmitt, John W., and J. Carl Laney. *Messiah's Coming Temple: Ezekiel's Prophetic Vision of the Future Temple*, Updated Edition. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2014.
- Thomson, Clive A. "The Necessity of Blood Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple." *BibSac* 123/491 (July-Sept 1966): 237–48.
- Whitcomb, John C. "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel." *GTJ* 6/2 (1985): 201–17.

To Seek... to Do... and to Teach: Essays in Honor of Larry D. Pettegrew

Editors: Douglas D. Bookman, Tim M. Sigler, and Michael J. Vlach

Copyright © 2022 Shepherds Press

Published by Shepherds Press
6051 Tryon Road
Cary, NC 27518

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or repurposed in any form or by any means without prior written permission from the publisher, except as allowed under fair use and United States copyright.

Editorial assistance: Jim Dieffenderfer and Kim Lewis

Layout: Andrew N. "Marcus" Corder

Cover concept: Kea (Bookman) Brooks

First printing 2022: Honorary Presale Edition

Printed in the United States of America

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-959454-00-7

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture quotations taken from the (NASB®) New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.lockman.org

Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked HCSB are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Used by permission HCSB © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 Holman Bible Publishers. Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Holman CSB®, and HCSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked LSB are from the (LSB®) Legacy Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2021 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Managed in partnership with Three Sixteen Publishing Inc. LSBible.org and 316publishing.com.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the (NASB®) New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1971, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. All rights reserved. www.lockman.org.

*For Ezra had prepared his heart
to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach
in Israel statutes and judgments.*

Ezra 7:10 (KJV)

Contents

Introduction.....	ix
<i>Tim M. Sigler</i>	
The Kingdom in Paul's Epistles.....	3
<i>Michael J. Vlach</i>	
The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Symphony of the Coming Kingdom	27
<i>Roy E. Beacham</i>	
A Case for a Messianic Reading of Psalm 18	49
<i>Todd Bolen</i>	
Does Biblical Prophecy Fail.....	67
<i>Michael A. Grisanti</i>	
The Millennial Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48	107
<i>Matt Waymeyer</i>	
Christmas Parables: The Cat and the Flower	127
<i>Thomas James Baber</i>	
Flesh and Spirit in 1 Peter	137
<i>W. Edward Glenny</i>	
The Free Grace Movement and Perseverance	155
<i>Jon Pratt</i>	
The “Kingdom of Heaven/God” and the Church: A Case Study in Hermeneutics and Theology	177
<i>R. Bruce Compton</i>	
Victorinus of Poetovio and the Patristic Shift from Premillennialism ...	205
<i>W. Andrew Smith</i>	
The Perspicuity of Scripture and Expository Clarity	219
<i>Rick Holland</i>	
Why Futuristic Premillennialism?	245
<i>Richard Mayhue</i>	
The Urim and Thummim: The Theocracy in Microcosm	271
<i>Douglas D. Bookman</i>	
Biography of Larry D. Pettegrew	293
<i>Justin Pettegrew</i>	
Contributors	299

to seek
to do &
to teach

essays in honor of
Larry D. Pettegrew