

# MILLENNIAL BLOOD SACRIFICES

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## Introduction

The theme of Ezekiel is worship. The term appears dozens of times in the standard commentaries on Ezekiel 40–48. Its prominence may even produce for the careless reader an atmosphere of familiarity rather than intimacy.

The leading problem in Ezekiel 40–48 is the requirement of blood sacrifice, read against the theology of Hebrews. The discussion has naturally focused on atonement, and The Atonement. This paper will most assuredly not solve that problem. The Atonement is of supreme importance; nevertheless, attention to that question can distract from the question of worship. I found myself distracted, but I hope also to draw attention to the theological implications of blood sacrifice for worship in the Millennium.

Blood sacrifice is the cornerstone of worship in Ezekiel. How scholars handle blood sacrifice is contingent generally on how each handles the entirety of chapters 40–48. I classify the scholarship into four categories.<sup>1</sup>

1. Entirely Symbolic (Allen). In Allen, Ezekiel describes a temple that will never exist on earth. The Temple is God Himself: "a model of his own being and of his relationship" with His people. Accordingly there will be no literal blood sacrifices.<sup>2</sup>

2. Partially Symbolic (Peters, New Scofield, Beale). Some anticipate a temple on earth that varies from the details presented in Ezekiel. Peters expects a millennial temple but avoids blood sacrifice by deflecting the possibility of detailed fulfillment. Detailed fulfillment was contingent upon repentance among the exiles in Babylon, a condition which in Peters was unmet. The New Scofield gives a nod to the *possibility* that Ezekiel's reference to sacrifices might be symbolic. Its editors remained curiously agnostic. Beale's treatment is highly symbolic. A real temple will exist on earth, but the details are not so important as the position of this temple in the trajectory of God's ultimate purposes in human history. Beale treats the sacrifices as symbolic or typical. Ultimately the glory of the Lord will fill the whole earth; He will be its temple.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The classification reflects my familiarity with traditional sources on this subject and a survey of other representative sources. It does not reflect a comprehensive investigation.

<sup>2</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 29 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 214.

<sup>3</sup> See for instance Geo. N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ, as Covenanted in the Old Testament, and Presented in the New Testament*, vol. 2 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 611, in whom the priests are glorified, church-age saints who serve in the millennial temple bringing sacrifices of praise; cf. Geo. N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ, as Covenanted in the Old Testament, and Presented in the New Testament*, vol. 3 (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 83, 85–6, 458, esp. 85–86 on the conditionality of a detailed, literal fulfillment. See New Scofield p. 888; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 353. The precise nature of Beale's temple is quite difficult to grasp: "On the basis of cumulative evidence,

3. Normatively Literal (Alexander). Alexander holds that a temple will exist on earth. Its sacrificial system will be compatible with simultaneous observance of the Lord's Supper. Alexander offers precise, clear, and repeated affirmation of this proposition but follows with vague support. This vagueness is perhaps a result of seeking a middle way between strict dispensationalism and systems that insist upon complete and permanent cessation of animal sacrifice. By treating both systems purely as memorials or teaching pictures, he hopes to render compatible their simultaneous practice.<sup>4</sup>

4. Regulatively Literal (Whitcomb, Mitchell, Hullinger, Ryrie, Chafer). These scholars envision a temple on earth with a sacrificial system comprising solely the elements of acceptable millennial worship universally. I have read between the lines a bit in imagining such categories as "regulatively literal" and "normatively literal." These five scholars legitimately fall into the former category because they would affirm that the Lord's Supper ceases with the end of the Church Age. Alexander (above) falls into a different class; he does not believe that the Lord's Supper ends as a mode of acceptable worship at the dawn of the millennium. The terms *regulative* and *normative* also set the stage for the subject I wish to explore briefly in the final section of the essay.<sup>5</sup>

### First Principles

I present this essay from a dispensationalist perspective. I proceed upon dispensational hermeneutical assumptions and upon a conservative philosophy of language. I rehearse a few first principles, not to instruct my gracious auditors, but

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we have reached the conclusion that Ezekiel 40–48 is a figurative vision of a real heavenly temple that would descend and be established on earth in non-structural form in the latter days." Beale supposes that the sacrifices might refer to the blood of the Christian martyrs (343), but he really does not know what to do with these "enigmatic" types (350; cf. 353). What I call "partially symbolic" Ryrie has called a "combination view." Charles C. Ryrie, "Why Sacrifices in the Millennium?," *Emmaus Journal* 11 (2002): 300.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph H. Alexander, "Ezekiel," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 6 [Isaiah–Ezekiel] (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 905–9; 942–96, esp. 950–952.

<sup>5</sup> John C. Whitcomb, "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel" (Revision of article published in *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985), 2008), 17, <https://app.box.com/s/63hxsblsr88tiefim5px6hrr2hc8h8fl>; John L. Mitchell, "The Question of Millennial Sacrifices [Part One]," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 110 (1953): 267; ; see also John L. Mitchell, "The Question of Millennial Sacrifices [Part Two]," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 110 (1953): 342–61. Mitchell, who takes the memorial view, is also one of the finest summaries of the arguments for and against millennial sacrifices. Hullinger has done the most extensive work on the sacrifices from a dispensationalist perspective. See Jerry M. Hullinger, "A Proposed Solution to the Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48" (PhD diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1993); Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (1995): 279–89; Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Divine Presence, Uncleaness, and Ezekiel's Millennial Sacrifices," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 163 (2006): 405–22; Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Function of the Millennial Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple, Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (2010): 40–57; Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Function of the Millennial Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple, Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 167 (2010): 166–79; Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Compatibility of the New Covenant and Future Animal Sacrifice," *Journal of Dispensational Theology* 17, no. 50 (2013): 47–64. Ryrie, "Sacrifices." Ryrie and Hullinger both take a functional view of the sacrifices. For them, they are definitely a crucially regulated feature of millennial worship. See in contrast Chafer (7:272): "The anticipation of animal sacrifices in the kingdom . . . is naturally perplexing, yet evidently a memorial looking back to the cross (as the Lord's Supper does now)."

merely to express openly the presuppositions I bring to bear upon the question of blood sacrifice in Ezekiel 40–48.

Dispensationalists insist upon literal interpretation of the Scriptures. They insist upon consistently literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Consistently literal interpretation requires consistent application of a literal hermeneutic. Dispensationalists apply a literal hermeneutic not only to historical accounts but also to prophetic utterances. Ezekiel 40–48 is a prophetic utterance.<sup>6</sup>

The words of Scripture span two worlds, the visible and the invisible. These words refer to ideas in the immaterial world and to phenomena in the material. The relation between word and referent reflects Divine prerogative. Progressive revelation absolutely conditions the development of our understanding of these categories. Regenerate interpreters enjoy complete authorization to explore the dimensions of these words and their referents. They lack entirely, however, authorization to modify them. The words of Ezekiel 40–48 refer.

Interpretation is creaturely. Theologians interpret. They interpret with an eye on ultimate questions: Who is God and what is He like? What is history and what does it mean? Good theologians focus on the Scriptures. They focus first on those passages most closely related to a given question. They also strive to incorporate every passage that impinges upon that question. No theology is perfectly consistent. Every theology contains deficiencies. Good theologians address problem passages, but good theologians do not modify words or adjust referents. Ezekiel 40–48 is a problem passage.

The Atonement occupies top tier in any evangelical theology. Christ alone is the sufficient and efficacious sacrifice for sin. The blood of no animal sacrifice can take away sin. All evangelical theologians affirm these statements. Some evangelical theologians infer that God has forever terminated blood sacrifice. They appeal primarily to the Letter to the Hebrews. Other evangelical theologians insist that God has not forever terminated blood sacrifice. They appeal in part to Ezekiel 40–48.

### **Ezekiel 40-48 on Blood Sacrifice**

Now that I have entirely distracted you from the subject of worship, I wish to draw your attention to what Ezekiel has to say about blood sacrifice in chapters 40–48.

Blood sacrifice is not ancillary to millennial worship. In chapters 40–48 Ezekiel stresses its importance in at least three ways. First, blood sacrifice occupies a significant portion of his utterance. At least eleven passages specify or imply blood sacrifice. Second, the literary sequence foregrounds blood sacrifice. Instructions for blood sacrifice buttress Ezekiel's description of the inner court, altar, and most holy place. The first appears just after Ezekiel's description of the entrances into the inner court (40:38–43); the last immediately before Ezekiel exits the temple (46:19–24). These passages are bookends for at least two-thirds of the material.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ryrie presented consistently literal interpretation as one of three *sine qua non* in his classic *Dispensationalism Today*.

<sup>7</sup> On blood sacrifices in Ezekiel 40–48, see 40:38–43, 40:44–46; 41:21–26, 42:13–14, 43:13–27, 44:10–16, 44:25–27, 44:28–31, 45:13–46:12, 46:13–15, 46:19–24. Some passages adjoin others, but I have separated them based on shifts in subject matter.

Third, blood sacrifice bears crucially upon temple operations. To access the the inner court from any direction, all must pass through chambered gateways. These entrances feature prominently the preparation and slaughter of blood sacrifices. Every gate contains large rooms furnished with large stone tables and instruments for butchering (40:38–43). The altar is a large structure with deep gutters for sluicing blood (43:13–17). Only Zadokite priests may minister blood sacrifice before the Lord in the sanctuary (40:14–16). For this function they must don consecrated garments not worn in any other role (44:15–16). The most visible merely human leader in Israel, “the prince,” must provide sacrificial animals for his own sins and for the sins of the people of the land (45:13–46:12; esp. 45:22, 45:17b). Without fail and without end, each morning must begin with blood sacrifice (46:13–15). In part, blood sacrifices provide daily nourishment for the entire priestly caste (46:19–24).

Ezekiel’s prophecy performs a crucial role for assessing the legitimacy of messianic claims. The messianic temple must correspond to Ezekiel’s utterance in its architecture and operation. The Scriptures, including Ezekiel’s prophecy, will certainly remain publicly available to the world during the millennium. Its readers will reflect on its record of creation, the flood, Abraham, Moses, and the Church—and upon its predictions about the millennium in which they live. Variations from these predictions would invalidate messianic claims and the Scriptures themselves. Ezekiel predicts the establishment of a messianic temple in which blood sacrifice plays a crucial role. To accept the existence of a millennial temple of some kind while doing away with the details of what Ezekiel affirmed about future blood sacrifice is to eliminate the power of predictive prophecy. Fulfillment of these prophecies will validate messianic claims.<sup>8</sup>

### **Jesus on the Passover**

The Jewish Passover requires blood sacrifice. Ezekiel received instructions for celebrating Passover in the millennial temple (45:21–24). Some theologians appeal to Hebrews as proof that blood sacrifice has forever ceased. On this logic, Passover has also forever ceased.

God has spoken to us in these last days by His Son. But what relation does the Son bear to the Feast of Passover? He *is* the Paschal Lamb. Nevertheless, the Son *ate* the Passover in his humiliation and expects to eat it again in His exaltation (at His return; Luke 22:14–20; esp. 16,18). During the the Last Supper Jesus implied that Israel would observe at least one more legitimate Passover, and Jesus expected to eat of it. This has not yet occurred.

Some take Jesus’ reference to Passover as a reference to a future participation in the Lord’s Table. This view sometimes appears in connection with the vague term “eschatological banquet.”<sup>9</sup> In my opinion this term reflects the nebulous view of eschatology characteristic of evangelical theology today. By what authority might an interpreter alter the original referent of Passover? The synoptics all transmit to us our Lord’s expectation of eating in the kingdom; Luke specifically records that Jesus uttered the term “Passover” in this connection. These statements occurred in the setting of the

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Whitcomb, “Animal Sacrifices [2008],” 17.

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance, D. A. Carson on Matthew in *EBC*. Not all who use the term *eschatological banquet* deny that Jesus referred to a real future Passover. See next note.

traditional Passover celebration. Of course Jesus was the ultimate Passover Lamb Himself, and it is true that the transactions connected with the Atonement all occurred in the immaterial realm, when Christ entered into the heavenly tabernacle. Whatever Hebrews means, however, it can not negate Messiah's prediction about Passover: "I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God. . . . I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Whatever the Son has spoken about a future Passover must condition the interpretation of Hebrews.<sup>10</sup>

The words of Jesus imply that worship in the kingdom will involve blood sacrifice. They imply the existence of a system of worship in the material world. They are perfectly consistent with Ezekiel 40–48 as it stands. In fact, they reinforce it.

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<sup>10</sup> Animal sacrifice in the millennium is consistent with Jesus' comments at the Last Supper. I am keenly aware that my interpretation of Jesus' statements at the Last Supper bears the preponderance of the weight of this proposal. My view is consistent with a straightforward application of the dispensationalist hermeneutic, and is entirely consistent with the syntax of the Greek text of Luke. For various views on Jesus' reference to Passover and the kingdom, see the following: D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 [Matthew, Mark, Luke] (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 535–539 for comments on 26:26–30, esp. 539 on Jesus' reference to his future participation in the meal as a reference not to a future Passover, but to a future Lord's Supper. Under the term "messianic banquet" Carson seems either to have replaced Passover with the Lord's Supper, or to have blended the two into a single (future) celebration. In Carson, the festivities occur at the consummation of the kingdom. W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, The Anchor Bible, Vol. 26 (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 318–324 on the last supper. 26:17–29. Esp. notes on 323–324. Precursor to the more refined view expressed later in Mann on Mark. In Albright and Mann Paul "complicates" matters by his instruction to keep the table until the return of Christ. Hence, in one tradition we have the Passover fulfilled in the kingdom, which Albright and Mann take as immediately consummated in connection with Christ's exhalation; in the other we have a phrase which implies not only a second coming, but a delayed kingdom, or at least a delay in its consummation (323). Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 33B (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 768–775 on "institution of the Eucharist" 26:26–30; esp. 774 on Jesus' expectations. Hagner follows Jeremias (Eucharistic Words of Jesus, 217): "the Messianic meal on a transformed earth." Hagner (774): "This will be the occasion of the experience of the consummated eschatological kingdom . . . ." Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, New American Commentary, Vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 390–392 on 26:20–25, esp. 391 on the implications of Jesus' statements for a future Passover. In Blomberg Jesus expected to participate in a future Passover, for Jesus "warns his disciples that he will not again be drinking (or eating or performing any other part of this Passover liturgy) in the immediate future." Blomberg also couches the discussion in terms of the "messianic banquet" referring the reader to 22:1–14 and Rev. 19. The kingdom is inaugurated in connection with Messiah's exhalation and consummated at his return, the time of the banquet. Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 [Matthew, Mark, Luke] (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 760–761 on the institution of the Lord's Supper, esp. 761 on Jesus' reference to his future participation in a meal. In Wessel the festivities begin at the "dawn" of the messianic kingdom. In their comments on the respective passages, both Wessel and Carson appear noncommittal about the precise nature of the future "festal meal" and "messianic banquet." Cf. Carson on Matt. 8:11–12 in EBC 8:202. C. S. Mann, *Mark*, The Anchor Bible, Vol. 27 (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 569–583 on "the institution of the Eucharist" 14:22–26, esp. notes on 580–581 on the Jewishness of the vocabulary in the passage, the "messianic banquet," and the "coming" of the Reign of God, in the exaltation of Jesus to the Father," at which moment the Passover is fulfilled. Mann is a tradition critic. Jesus was speaking of the immediate realization of the kingdom; the notion of a second coming developed later. Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 8 [Matthew, Mark, Luke] (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 1024–1031 on the Last Supper, esp. 1026–1027 on Jesus' expectation of eating a future Passover in the kingdom. Luke specifically records a precise reference to "Passover" in the utterance of Jesus. Liefeld follows Marshall on Luke (796) in supposing that Jesus meant to indicate that he would eat the lamb but not necessarily the entire Passover in the future. Nevertheless, Liefeld aligns closely with the dispensational view. "Jesus anticipates the next genuine meal of its kind that he will eat sometime in the future when the longed-for kingdom finally comes. . . . The believer in the present age observes the Lord's Supper 'until he

## **The Consistency of Millennial Blood Sacrifice with the Atonement**

We creatures naturally struggle to comprehend the relation between time and eternity. We cannot even define time, much less comprehend eternity. Could one do either, he would be God. Yet we speak in these terms; we understand something about what time refers to and something of what eternity means. We welcome thoughts of endless existence with Christ and eschew contemplation of endless years in Hell.

At the incarnation pure Spirit joined pure matter. Divine nature and human nature united in the Second Person of the Trinity. The hypostatic union supplied the foundation for Atonement. It rendered the Atonement sufficient for the sins of the race and sufficient to propitiate an angry God. The cross signaled an intersection of time and eternity. For creatures subject to time, God made real the idea of Atonement. Its imprimatur? The resurrection. All who trust the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world enjoy complete forgiveness and everlasting fellowship with the eternal God.

Part of our difficulty relating time to eternity has to do with the way history is typically charted: according to “timelines.” This method certainly has its value, but it is difficult to juxtapose a timeline against eternity. Suppose instead that we approach time as if it were a circle. This is not without its drawbacks, of course, but may help to illustrate what I’m proposing about the relation between the Atonement and ritual blood sacrifice.

**\*\*** Imagine a circle named “Time.” Put a hash mark bottom center. To the left of the hash write “Creation and Fall.” To the right, “Re-creation.” Put hashes at nine, twelve, and three o’clock. Place an arrow or two on the circle indicating clockwise direction. Write “Moses” at the nine o’clock hash. Write “Restoration” at three. Along the outside of the line marking the first quadrant (six to nine o’clock), write “Grace.” Along the second, “Mosaic Law.” Along the third, “Grace.” Along the fourth, “Millennial Law.”

Draw the symbol of the cross at top center, with its foot just on the line. Draw a second circle, encompassing the first and traversing the center of the cross. Name that circle, “Atonement.” Draw a third circle encompassing the second and touching the tip of the cross. Name that circle “Eternity.”

In the center of the first circle, write “Sacrifice” and draw a tight box around it. Draw four arrows from the box out to the central point along the perimeter of each quadrant. Along the arrows to the first, second, and fourth, write “blood.” Along the arrow for the third quadrant, write “praise.” **\*\***

Eternity circumscribes temporal history. The idea of Atonement sustains it. In view of the fall of Adam, to require blood atonement in worship as a reflection of this theological reality would be consistent in any segment of temporal history. Blood atonement formed a customary part of acceptable worship both in periods where it was

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comes’.” Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, New American Commentary, Vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 539–545 on the Passover–Lord’s Supper (22:14–20), esp. 541 and 544. In the former place, Stein supposes that when Jesus proclaims that he will not again eat of “it,” “it” refers to Passover as “a type of the messianic banquet” (541). Notice how the notion of an inauguration and consummation work together to transform what might reasonably be understood as the future celebration of a traditional Jewish Passover into a celebration of a different kind. See 541 and 544.

specified by legislation (Moses) and in periods where it was not (pre-flood and Abraham to Moses). In the Mosaic dispensation God eventually specified Jerusalem as the only acceptable place for blood sacrifice.

Had God not instantiated Atonement in temporal history surely He would have entirely destroyed His creation. The consistency of millennial blood sacrifices with the Atonement is a logical extension of the proposition that blood sacrifice is consistent with the atonement at any moment in temporal history. Let me say it a different way: Animal sacrifice is consistent with the atonement. Therefore animal sacrifice is consistent with the atonement at any time. Therefore, during the millennium, animal sacrifice is consistent with the atonement. Resumption of blood sacrifice is consistent with the institution of a material system of temple worship under theocracy as described in Ezekiel.

The apparent problem is, of course, the expression in Hebrews: *once for all*. But it is not a real problem on two counts: first, the eternal aspect of atonement as we have already seen. The atonement as divine idea, eternal and unchangeable, sustains temporal history. Shadows of its most real instantiation are thus consistent in any age. Second, in its temporal aspect, the mode in which the idea of atonement is instantiated in the millennium takes into account the atonement of Christ as an event in temporal history. Ezekiel's description reflects precisely a change in the law: a change in the priesthood and a change in the manner in which sacrifices are handled. The sacrifices are brought to Messiah Himself who functions as both priest and king. Messiah offers no sacrifices for Himself. Offerings terminate at the earthly seat of Messiah. Messiah takes the blood of animal sacrifices nowhere. He is God, Man, and Mediator.<sup>11</sup>

A post-Atonement instantiation of blood sacrifice does no damage to the true idea of atonement and its fulfillment in Christ. Fulfillment in some aspect is atemporal because of the incarnation. Non-dispensationalist evangelicals worry, in part, that the true idea of atonement in Christ will be sublimated beneath its instantiations, especially any future instantiation in a material temple system. This concern does not follow as a logical necessity from the belief in millennial blood sacrifice. Dispensationalists are genuinely concerned with saving the invisible foundations of the visible world, even though the mode in which they express this differs from the mode in which their non-dispensationalist brethren articulate it.

### **Application: Worship, Regulation, and Rebellion**

Worship has always been a matter of regulation. Worship in the millennium will be a matter of regulation. The God of the new covenant is the God of the old. He has not changed. He will regulate worship in that dispensation to conform to his transcendence and holiness even as He dwells among mere humans on earth. He will rule with a rod of iron. That instantiation of the Divine administration will put to an end the notion that God "softened" following the Atonement, that the God of the New Testament is different than the God of the Old, that God has removed all barriers to worship in whatever forms happen to strike the worshiper's fancy. For this reason I reject Alexander's notion (see above) that the Lord's Table and Temple Sacrifices can coexist. That notion

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<sup>11</sup> For my purposes, the function of the sacrifices is less important than the fact that Ezekiel informs the reader that they will constitute part of the operation of the millennial temple.

accommodates conflicting regulations. It contradicts the idea of united worship throughout the kingdom, not to mention that it blends Israel and church. At best it rests on the notion that worship is normative; certainly not regulative.<sup>12</sup>

Revelation 20 predicts a final rebellion at the end of the millennium. Rebellion will begin with the first children born into the millennial kingdom. Each will have a sinful nature. Rebellion will fester and build throughout the millennium. It will come to a head with the release of Satan.

Following McClain and in part McDermott, let's chase the proposition that rebelliousness arising during the millennium is aggravated by Divine insistence upon blood sacrifice. McClain broaches the possibility of international dissatisfaction with sacrifices during the millennium due to the very fact that they are considered Jewish regulations. This is anti-Semitism. McDermott understands the Pauline "mystery of iniquity" presently at work to be anti-Semitism.<sup>13</sup>

Blood sacrifice will likely be one of the occasions for rebellion. The Divine requirement will squelch freedom of religion and innovation in worship. The Divine requirement will promote "cruelty to animals." The death of millions and millions of innocent animals over the course of a thousand years will stand out in stark relief against the otherwise peaceful relation between mankind and beast and between beast-kind and beast. The Divine requirement will impose upon the nations a Jewish system of worship. Satan's release will mark one last gasp for the mystery of iniquity: anti-Semitism.

But the issue transcends mere anti-Semitism. Rebellion is a consistent feature of unrepentant fallen human nature: rejection of the sovereignly appointed requirements for worship. The archetype of willful worship, Cain, rejected these requirements. Pre-Mosaic idolaters rejected these requirements. The Canaanites and their associates rejected these requirements. All who reject the Gospel today reject them. Millennial rebels will reject them, at least in their hearts. Rebellion is an irrefragable component of fallen humanity across all dispensations. As McDermott notes, "Evil hates what is good."<sup>14</sup>

Theologically, the requirement of animal sacrifice reinforces the Divine sovereignty. Messiah will exert His authority to require acts of worship commensurate with His own saving work and royal status. He will exert His prerogative to exalt an ethnic group of His own choosing above all other ethnic groups. He will dwell in the place He most greatly desires to dwell: in the temple at Jerusalem. For the Lord is there.

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<sup>12</sup> In spite of his reduction of Ezekiel 40–48 to the status of pure symbolism, I agree with Allen when he draws attention to the solemnity of worship. He refers to the massive gates more than once in this connection (see 236 for instance). He also finds worship the most prominent feature in Ezekiel: "Supremely the divine promise of renewal of worship in the climactic 20:40–41 and in the equally climactic 37:26b–27 is developed in this final part of the book [chapters 40–48]." Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, 214.

<sup>13</sup> Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God* (1959; repr., Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 2007), 251; 246–7; Gerald R. McDermott, *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017), 134–5.

<sup>14</sup> McDermott, *Israel Matters*, 135.



## Conclusion

Consistent application of dispensationalist principles necessitates the conclusion that bona fide animal sacrifices will occur under some kind of priestly system in an earthly temple during the millennium. Ezekiel deploys these features strategically in chapters 40–48. To dismiss them as merely symbolic is akin virtually to deconstructing the vision entirely.

What Jesus declared about Passover in the kingdom must control the interpretation of Hebrews on the priesthood and sacrifices. Jesus still expects to celebrate Passover. Further, viewed as an instantiation of the true idea of atonement in the mind of God, blood atonement as a component of worship in any age constitutes no necessary logical inconsistency. Just as the church omits blood sacrifice in view of special revelation and as an application of the regulative principle, so the worship of restored Israel will include blood sacrifice on precisely the same basis: special revelation and the regulative principle. The church is not Israel; Israel is not the church.

Worship is the theme of Ezekiel, highlighted in all its gravity. The vision reinforces the sovereignty of God in regulating worship. Divine prerogative will require universally animal sacrifice as a component of acceptable worship at the temple in Jerusalem. Messiah will enforce this requirement with a rod of iron for purposes that may become fully clear to mankind only through fulfillment in temporal history.

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Certainly what I have written here is not new to dispensationalists. It may be new to no one, save for its mode of expression. It has almost certainly all been written before at various places and times in the mass of material produced by dispensationalists. Further, every claim made in this essay has been countered by someone. I have intended no novelty in the presentation. I do hope to have refreshed the discussion of some categories. What I intended in the main, however, was to say again what dispensationalists have said for nearly two centuries.

In the academy a move away from supercessionism seems to be afoot. Suddenly *Israel Matters*. Nevertheless, dispensationalism remains embarrassed—or is told that it ought to be—and marginalized—or made to think that it has been. The sensibilities of a great many plain church folk resonate with dispensationalist beliefs, although they may have no clue that the term dispensationalist even exists. Dispensationalism is a theology of the church and for the church. We dispensationalists, with all charity toward others, ought to continue to say what has been said to the church, to the world, and in the academy. If dispensationalism is to be marginalized, let God marginalize it. Let us not marginalize ourselves.

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