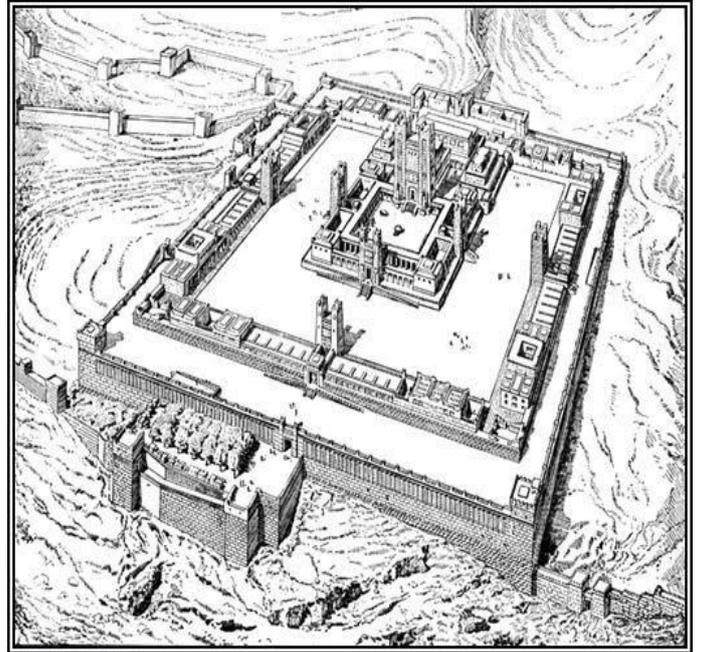


The Millennium (3)

Worship in the Millennium: The Temple's Construction

Isaiah 66.23: And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

The centre of worship in the Millennium will be the temple (Ezekiel 40-46). This is a literal temple which shall be built by the Branch Himself (Zechariah 6.12). As we have seen, the temple will not be located in Jerusalem, but rather in the Holy Oblation on a very high mountain which will be miraculously created at the second advent of the Lord Jesus. *Micah 4.1-2: But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the **mountain** of the house of the LORD shall be established in (upon) the **top** of the **mountains**, and it shall be **exalted above** the **hills**; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. Ezekiel 37.27: My tabernacle also shall be with ('over' or 'above') them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*



Ezekiel gives numerous details concerning the construction and structure of the temple, much of which is similar to Solomon's temple. The gates and courts surrounding the temple are first described (Ezekiel 40.5-47), followed by the inner court where the priests will minister (Ezekiel 40.28-47). An altar occupies the centre of the inner court where sacrifices are offered (Ezekiel 40.47, 43.13-17). The temple itself is then described (Ezekiel 40.48-41.4) complete with a porch (Ezekiel 40.48-49) and two large pillars (Ezekiel 40.49). The interior of the temple (Ezekiel 41.15-26) contains the holy place (Ezekiel 41.2), within which is a wooden table (Ezekiel 41.22), and the most holy place (Ezekiel 41.3-4). It is interesting to note that there is no record of the Ark, Mercy Seat, veil or cherubim here. The only article of furniture described is the table or altar of wood which is probably the Table of Shewbread. This speaks of communion with God. Ezekiel concludes by giving a description of the throne (Ezekiel 43.7-12), the altar (Ezekiel 43.13-18), the offerings (Ezekiel 43.19-27), the priests' ministry (Ezekiel 44.9-31) and the entire worship ritual (Ezekiel 45.13-46.18). The vision closes with a description of the river which flows out of the sanctuary (Ezekiel 47.1-12), through the city of Jerusalem and divides towards the Red Sea and Mediterranean (Zechariah 14.8), bringing life to the whole land, even the Dead Sea. The new temple will be much larger than Solomon's, measuring one mile square (Ezekiel 40.48-41.2).

The account of the 'waters' from 'the house' is most interesting. It is water that brings healing and life (Ezekiel 47.8-9). Although this is a literal river, flowing water in the Word of God speaks of the Holy Spirit, the One who has also given us life (Romans 8.2, 10, Galatians 5.25). Note that the water is measured up to the ankles (v.3), knees (v.4) and loins (v.4) before it becomes so deep that it cannot be passed over (v.5). Likewise, as believers, we find the source of our spiritual life is the Spirit of God. We should be seeking to walk in the Spirit (ankles), pray in the Spirit (knees), serve in the Spirit (loins) and be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5.18).

Worship in the Millennium: The Temple's Purpose

The purpose of the temple in the Millennium is to provide a **dwelling place** for God and His glory as well as demonstrate His **holiness**. *Ezekiel 43.7: Son of man, (this is) the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile.* The temple will also provide the centre for divine **government** and maintain the **memorial** of sacrifice (Ezekiel 46).

Believers should remember that the Church is God's dwelling place today. It is here that the glory of God is seen and the holiness of God is demonstrated (Acts 5.1-11, 1 Corinthians 3.17). It is also a place of divine government; we seek to understand and practice the will and mind of God. We also maintain the memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the first day of every week as we meet to break bread (Acts 20.7, 1 Corinthians 11).

Worship in the Millennium: The Temple's Sacrifices

There are many Scriptures which teach that there will be a restoration of the priesthood (Isaiah 66.21, Jeremiah 33.18), sacrifices and feasts during the millennium. *Zechariah 14.16: Every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

Many do not accept the restoration of a literal sacrificial system in the Millennium, rather they believe it is figurative or pictorial of the various aspects of the work of Christ which will be remembered in that day. However, there are a number of key points to consider.

First, this is **not** the Mosaic covenant or order being restored. Whilst the Millennial system has many *similarities* to the Aaronic priesthood, it is the *differences* which are significant. Some **similarities** include: worship focussed around an altar on which blood is sprinkled (Ezekiel 43.18) and offerings are made (including burnt, meal, peace, sin, trespass and drink offerings, Isaiah 56.7, Jeremiah 33.18, Ezekiel 43.19, 27, 44.11, 29, 45.17). There will be the observance of new moon and Sabbath days (Ezekiel 46.1) and morning sacrifices will be offered daily (Ezekiel 46.13). The Passover feast will be observed again (Ezekiel 45.21-25), as will the feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14.16). The Year of Jubilee is also observed (Ezekiel 46.17) and there are similarities in the dress of the priests (Ezekiel 44.15-31). Some **differences** are: the priests who serve are taken from a particular line of Aaron, the sons of Zadok (Ezekiel 44.15). Much which was of great importance under the Aaronic system has gone. There is no Ark of the Covenant, no pot of Manna, no tables of the Law, no cherubim, no mercy seat, no golden candlestick, no shewbread, no veil, no High Priest and no evening sacrifice. There is also no mention of the feast of Pentecost or the Day of Atonement. This cannot therefore be a restoration of the old Levitical order. That could never be changed. It was fixed so Israel might gain a picture of the unchangeable holiness of God. One further major change from the old Levitical order is the introduction and ministry of the Prince (Ezekiel 44.3, 45.7, 16, 46.12). As might be expected, the whole concept of the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 envisions an entirely new order after the passing of the old (cf. Hebrews 7.12).

Second, the purposes of the sacrifices appear to be different. Sacrifices could never and will never take away sins (Hebrews 10.4). This is as true of sacrifices in the OT as it is of those in the millennial age. It is likely these sacrifices will be a memorial of the work of Christ at Calvary. The OT sacrifices were *prospective*, i.e. they looked forward to the work of Christ. These sacrifices are *retrospective*, i.e. they look back to the work of Christ. Perhaps they will serve as an evangelistic tool, *Isaiah 52.15: So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider.*

Third, some insist that the reinstatement of sacrifices would contradict the teaching of Hebrews that Christ has once and for all finished the sacrificial system and provided a 'new and living' way to approach unto God (Hebrews 10.19-20), e.g. *Hebrews 9.26: For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now **once** in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* It is also true that the Millennial sacrifices are recorded as providing atonement (Ezekiel 16.63, 43.20, 26, 45.15, 17, 20). How can this be answered?

OT animal sacrifices could never purchase salvation. They were simply a remembrance of the sins committed and pointed forward to the one sacrifice of Christ which would take them away. However, animal sacrifices did provide 'atonement'. What does this 'atonement' achieve? It does not and cannot take away sins! Rather, the 'atonement' removed any ceremonial uncleanness from the offerer which was necessary because of the glorious presence of God which dwelt amongst them in the Tabernacle. Likewise, we dare not enter the presence of God in an unclean state. We must confess our sins and daily apply the cleansing water of the Word of God to our hearts.

This is indicated by the writer to the Hebrews who differentiates between **purification** of the **flesh** and **cleansing** of the **conscience**. He teaches that the animal sacrifices could not save, but they were effective at providing ceremonial cleansing in their time. As such, Christ's offering and sacrifice is far greater. He has done something that no animal sacrifice could ever do; He has cleansed our **consciences** and accomplished spiritual salvation. *Hebrews 9.12-14: Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his **own** blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the **purifying** of the **flesh**: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge** your **conscience** from dead works to serve the living God?* In this way a sacrificial system will function under the New Covenant during the Millennium. In the same way that OT sacrifices did not add to the work of Christ, neither will Millennial sacrifices take away from it. Given that children born during the Millennium will be born in sin and God Himself will be dwelling in Jerusalem (Jehovah Shammah, Ezekiel 48.35) there is a necessity to provide a way of ceremonial cleansing even at this time.