

Eschatology

The Temple The Priesthood & Sacrificial System

Following Ezekiel's precise details of the actual temple, he describes how the Glory of God will once again fill the temple (43:4,5); the Lord then proceeds to give exact instructions to Ezekiel as to the "law of the house". It is chapters 43 thru 46 that we learn of the sacrificial system and the Jewish priesthood of Moses and the Old Testament will be reinstated...or is it?

One of the problems accompanying the literal interpretation of the OT presentation of the millennium is the problem surrounding such passages as Isaiah 56:6-8; Jeremiah 33:14-18; Ezekiel 20:40-41; 43:18-46:24. All of these references teach the restoration of priesthood and the reinstatement of the bloody sacrificial system.

It is here that the amillennialist affirm their viewpoint that prophetic scripture cannot be interpreted literally, because to do so would negate Jesus' claim of "one sacrifice, once and for all". (Heb. 10:12) Amillennialist Oswald T. Allis feels that he has presented an insurmountable obstacle to premillennialism and the literal interpretation of scripture by saying:

"Its literalistic and OT emphasis leads almost inevitably, if not inevitably, to the doctrine of the millennium which makes it definitely Jewish and represents a turning back from the glory of the gospel to those typical rites and ceremonies which prepared the way for it, and having served that necessary purpose have lost for ever their validity and propriety."

If Allis is correct then we are either miss-interpreting scripture or he has discovered a contradiction within the canon of scripture.

The problem (and solution) to Allis' declaration is that he has failed to place the interpretation of the above-mentioned scriptures back into the plan of God with His unconditional covenants (Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic and New) with Israel. The restoration of the priesthood and sacrificial system is outward proof that God will fulfill His covenants with Israel, just as He promised.

The Priesthood

In the OT, it was the tribe of Levi that had the honor and responsibility to function as the priests both unto God and on behalf of the nation of Israel. There are several passages that affirm the existence of the Levitical order during the millennial (Eze. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15-31).

It is important to note that the priests who serve during the millennial are not taken from the entire Levitical line, for the line as a whole was set aside because of their apostasy, but are taken from the sons of Zadok.

The Levites are restricted in their ministry to that of guarding and maintaining the temple and are excluded from the priestly ministry, with the exception of the sons of Zadok. Zadok was the high priest during King David and Solomon's reigns.

The Worship

The worship during the millennial kingdom will have several similarities to that of the OT Aaronic system:

The worship centers in an alter (Ezek 43:13-17) on which blood is sprinkled (43:18) and on which are offered burnt offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings (40:39). The meal offering is incorporated in the ritual (42:13). There are prescribed rituals of cleansing for the alter (43:20-27), for the Levites who minister (44:25-27), and for the sanctuary (45:18). There will be the observance of the new moon and Sabbath days (46:1). Morning sacrifices will be offered daily (46:13). The Passover feast will be observed again (45:21-25) and the feast of Tabernacles becomes an annual event (45:25). The year of jubilee is observed (46:17).

Why Sacrifices?

1. The first thing to clearly understand is that nowhere in scripture is it stated (or implied) that the millennial sacrifices are offered with a view to salvation from sin.
2. Secondly, the sacrifices will be memorial in character. The sacrifices are not rendered with a view of obtaining salvation, but sacrifices in view of accomplished salvation.

One very important thought to keep in mind is that God has a plan for both the church and for Israel. The millennial kingdom (and its worship structure) brings both fulfillment and order to those plans.