

### The Manner of Worship in the Millennial Temple

#### Ezekiel 46

Ezekiel 46:1-15 – *“Thus says the Lord God: “The gateway of the inner court that faces toward the east shall be shut the six working days; but on the Sabbath it shall be opened, and on the day of the New Moon it shall be opened. <sup>2</sup> The prince shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gateway from the outside, and stand by the gatepost. The priests shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings. He shall worship at the threshold of the gate. Then he shall go out, but the gate shall not be shut until evening. <sup>3</sup> Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the entrance to this gateway before the Lord on the Sabbaths and the New Moons. <sup>4</sup> The burnt offering that the prince offers to the Lord on the Sabbath day shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish; <sup>5</sup> and the grain offering shall be one ephah for a ram, and the grain offering for the lambs, as much as he wants to give, as well as a hin of oil with every ephah. <sup>6</sup> On the day of the New Moon it shall be a young bull without blemish, six lambs, and a ram; they shall be without blemish. <sup>7</sup> He shall prepare a grain offering of an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as much as he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah. <sup>8</sup> When the prince enters, he shall go in by way of the vestibule of the gateway, and go out the same way.*

*<sup>9</sup> “But when the people of the land come before the Lord on the appointed feast days, whoever enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate; and whoever enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate. He shall not return by way of the gate through which he came, but shall go out through the opposite gate. <sup>10</sup> The prince shall then be in their midst. When they go in, he shall go in; and when they go out, he shall go out. <sup>11</sup> At the festivals and the appointed feast days the grain offering shall be an ephah for a bull, an ephah for a ram, as much as he wants to give for the lambs, and a hin of oil with every ephah.*

*<sup>12</sup> “Now when the prince makes a voluntary burnt offering or voluntary peace offering to the Lord, the gate that faces toward the east shall then be opened for him; and he shall prepare his burnt offering and his peace offerings as he did on the Sabbath day. Then he shall go out, and after he goes out the gate shall be shut. <sup>13</sup> “You shall daily make a burnt offering to the Lord of a lamb of the first year without blemish; you shall prepare it every morning. <sup>14</sup> And you shall prepare a grain offering with it every morning, a sixth of an ephah, and a third of a hin of oil to moisten the fine flour. This grain offering is a perpetual ordinance, to be made regularly to the Lord. <sup>15</sup> Thus they shall prepare the lamb, the grain offering, and the oil, as a regular burnt offering every morning.”*

#### Background Notes

If you just happened to open a Bible to Ezekiel 46 and started reading there for the first time, most likely your reaction would be “What is this all about?” Who is this prince? Where and when are these sacrifices taking place? Are these Jewish feasts that are being celebrated? Is all of this to be taken literally, or should this be interpreted symbolically?

Once again we are confronted with the major question about the interpretation of Ezekiel 40-48. If we choose to spiritualize these descriptions and apply them as being symbolic of the Church today as the Temple of the Holy Spirit, then why would God have given the vast amount of exacting detail – for example, the dimensions of the Temple and the detailed regulations of worship at this Temple? If all this description was only symbolic, then why were all those details given? And what do all those details mean?

The more consistent way of interpreting these chapters is to see them as prophetic of a literal Temple that is yet to be built in the future, when the Lord returns. This view certainly harmonizes with the rest of prophetic Scripture. Scripture predicts that the nation of Israel will be restored to the Lord in the future (Romans 11), and Scripture predicts that the Lord will establish a kingdom that will last for 1000 years when He returns to this earth (Revelation 20). Zechariah 6:13 predicted that at that time, the Lord Himself will direct the building of the Temple of the Lord.

So we believe that, in these final chapters, Ezekiel described the literal earthly kingdom of our Lord in the future. It is often called the Millennium because it will continue for 1000 years and merge with eternity. The millennial Temple will be the center of worship for restored Israel of the future. According to Zechariah 14, the saved people of the Gentile nations will participate in this worship. Restored Israel will be a light to the Gentiles, just as God's sovereign plans always meant Israel to be!

It naturally follows, then, that to be consistent in our hermeneutics (interpretation), the detailed regulation of the worship that will take place in the millennial Temple should also be interpreted literally - including the sacrifices.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. People remember the redemptive work of Christ at the millennial Temple.

Ezekiel 46 concerns the sacrifices that will take place at the Temple during the Millennium. We've mentioned this subject before, but it bears repetition because the sacrifices are a major topic in Ezekiel 46. For the sake of time I'm reading an excerpt from a "*Devotion for Growing Christians*" essay that I wrote some time ago. The title is "Two Future Temples." (It can be found on our website, [growingchristians.org](http://growingchristians.org)):

*"Wouldn't a literal Temple with literal sacrifices contradict the clear teaching of Hebrews 10:10-14? At first consideration, this seems to be an insurmountable theological and hermeneutical barrier to a literal Temple. It is important to notice, however, that in Hebrews 10 the author did **not** say that there could never be animal sacrifices in the future. The thrust of his argument is that animal sacrifices could never take away sin! The animal sacrifices of the Old Testament period pointed forward, prophetically portraying the sacrifice of the Lamb of God. If animal sacrifice were to be reinstated during the time of the millennial kingdom, these sacrifices would look backward, in a retrospective and instructive way, commemorating an already accomplished salvation. These sacrifices would not remove sins any more than the sacrifices*

*in Old Testament times removed sins. They would remind believers and instruct unbelievers of the cost of redemption from sin.*

*During the millennial kingdom, the Church and the Old Testament saints will reign with Christ in their sinless new bodies, but there will be human beings with sinful human natures living on the earth at that time as well. Some of these people will be believers, but some will be unbelievers. Every person coming out of the Tribulation and entering the Millennium will be a believer, but not all those who are born during the 1000 years of the kingdom will become believers. Animal sacrifices during the Millennium would certainly be a vivid reminder of Calvary. A lamb “led to the slaughter” as a sacrifice provides an unforgettable reminder of the cost of redemption!*

*In that day, Israel will finally be a light to the nations as God had originally intended. There will be no Temple or animal sacrifices in the Eternal State, because the effects of “the curse” will be forever erased. The millennial kingdom of Christ on this earth precedes the sinless Eternal State. During the Millennium, the saved peoples of the earth, both Jew and Gentile, will maintain fellowship with the Lord by coming to Jerusalem in that day to worship Him (Zechariah 14:16-21). [Excerpt from Two Future Temples]*

People will remember the redemptive work of Christ at the millennial Temple.

## **2. People will gather for worship and fellowship at the millennial Temple.**

*Ezekiel 46:16-24 - “Thus says the Lord God: “If the prince gives a gift of some of his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. <sup>17</sup> But if he gives a gift of some of his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty, after which it shall return to the prince. But his inheritance shall belong to his sons; it shall become theirs. <sup>18</sup> Moreover the prince shall not take any of the people’s inheritance by evicting them from their property; he shall provide an inheritance for his sons from his own property, so that none of My people may be scattered from his property.””*

*<sup>19</sup> Now he brought me through the entrance, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests which face toward the north; and there a place was situated at their extreme western end. <sup>20</sup> And he said to me, “This is the place where the priests shall boil the trespass offering and the sin offering, and where they shall bake the grain offering, so that they do not bring them out into the outer court to sanctify the people.”*

*<sup>21</sup> Then he brought me out into the outer court and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court; and in fact, in every corner of the court there was another court. <sup>22</sup> In the four corners of the court were enclosed courts, forty cubits long and thirty wide; all four corners were the same size. <sup>23</sup> There was a row of building stones all around in them, all around the four of them; and cooking hearths were made under the rows of stones all around. <sup>24</sup> And he said to me, “These are the kitchens where the ministers of the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people.”*

Once again, the prince mentioned here cannot be the Lord or the resurrected David, because he has sons (v16-18). In addition, the prince will provide a sin offering for himself and the people (45:22). So the prince is not the Lord or the resurrected David. He will be a high-ranking leader of restored Israel in the millennial kingdom of Christ.

When the prince worships, he will have special access to the inner east gate of the Temple courts on Sabbaths, on the monthly days of the new moon, and on appointed feast days. The gate will be open on these days for the rest of the people to worship as well, but will be shut on the workdays of the week. This shows that people will work during the Millennium. (Remember - the Millennium is not Heaven or the Eternal State.)

Access into the overall Temple complex for the prince and the people will be by the outer north and south gates, because the outer east gate is shut up (Ezekiel 44). Those who enter the Temple complex from the south will exit to the north, and those who enter from the north will exit to the south. Everything will be done in an orderly way.

The year of liberty or jubilee will be celebrated throughout the Millennium (v17). All land will return to its original owners at that time, including land given away by the prince to the people outside his own family. Notice that the prince will not be like Israel's unscrupulous leaders in the past. He will be a blessing to God's people (v18).

The last part of the chapter was a detailed description of the place where the priests will prepare the offerings. Verses 21-24 gave a detailed description of the kitchens in the corners of the outer court where the sacrificial meals for the people will be prepared. These will be great times for family and friends to gather at the Temple for worship and fellowship around a meal prepared from the parts of the sacrifice that were not consumed on the altar. People will gather for worship and fellowship at the millennial Temple.

## Practical Application

### Don't interrupt the "continual burnt offering."

*"Thus they shall prepare the lamb, the grain offering, and the oil, as a regular burnt offering every morning" (v15).* Under the Old Testament Law, the **continual** burnt offering was an essential part of Israel's daily worship. It was interrupted when the nation turned away from the Lord and God allowed the Temple to be destroyed, but this daily worship will be practiced once again by restored Israel during the Millennium.

This offering has a practical application for us today. We should worship the Lord each day with prayer and reading and study of His Word. This is our "continual burnt offering." Let's not allow this good Christian habit to be neglected or interrupted for any reason! Don't interrupt the "continual burnt offering."