

Ezekiel 43:18-27—Why Animal Sacrifices During The Millennium?

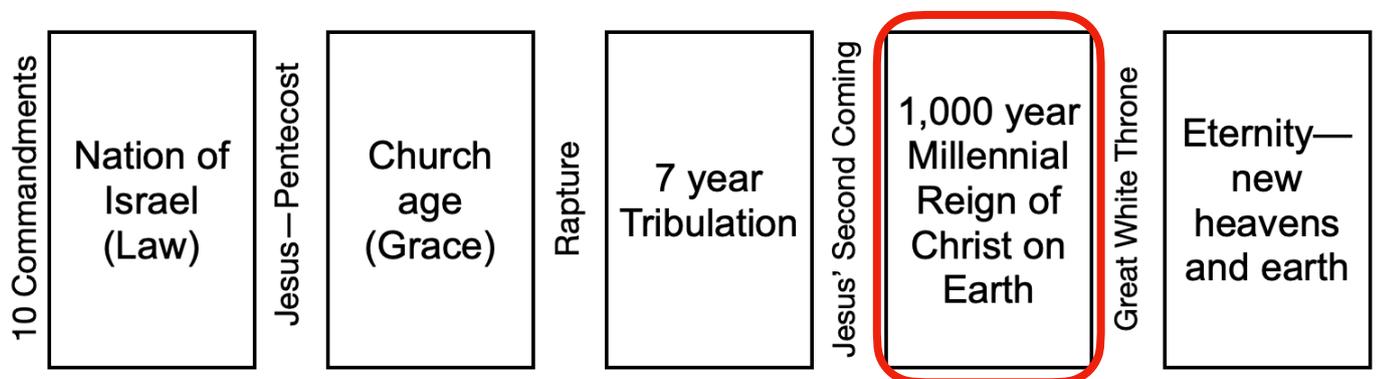
Memory Verse

Ezekiel 36:26-27 NKJV

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

Introduction

Ezekiel chapters 40-48 describe places, buildings, land allocations, and worship that are a part of Jesus' Millennial Kingdom, when He comes back to earth from heaven and He reigns for a thousand years on a beautifully renovated earth. The chart below shows when this fits in God's plan of the ages (red outline). The vertical writing represents the events that mark the transition from one time period (or dispensation) to the next.



Outline of Ezekiel 40-48

Chapter 40—The measurement of the courts of the temple

Chapter 41—The measurements of the temple

Chapter 42—The outer court being described

Chapter 43—The glory of God returns to the temple and the altar described.

Chapter 44—Only the sons of Zadok will be allowed to go into the inner court; the other priests were not faithful.

Chapter 45—Describes how the land around the temple/city is divided up, and that the Passover will be one of the feasts observed each year.

Chapter 46—Describes the sacrificial offerings that will be made, and how the temple will be closed throughout the week and only open on the sabbath.

Chapter 47—Describes the river of living water that flows from the temple, and the boundaries of the Land of Israel.

Chapter 48—Describes the divisions of the lands given to each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and the gates of the city of Jerusalem.

Introduction:

Last time we looked at Ezekiel 43:1-12, which describes when God (Jesus) comes to take His rightful place on the throne which is inside the temple, which He calls, "My Throne". The throne represents authority over all creation.

This week we look at the offerings for the consecration of the altar for burnt offering and why there will be animal sacrifices—43:18-27

The offerings for the consecration of the altar for burnt offering

Ezekiel 43:18-27 NKJV

And He said to me, “Son of man, thus says the Lord God: ‘These are the ordinances for the altar on the day when it is made, for sacrificing burnt offerings on it, and for sprinkling blood on it. ¹⁹ You shall give a young bull for a sin offering to the priests, the Levites, who are of the seed of Zadok, who approach Me to minister to Me,’ says the Lord God. ²⁰ You shall take some of its blood and put it on the four horns of the altar, on the four corners of the ledge, and on the rim around it; thus you shall cleanse it and make atonement for it. ²¹ Then you shall also take the bull of the sin offering, and burn it in the appointed place of the temple, outside the sanctuary. ²² On the second day you shall offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they cleansed it with the bull. ²³ When you have finished cleansing it, you shall offer a young bull without blemish, and a ram from the flock without blemish. ²⁴ When you offer them before the Lord, the priests shall throw salt on them, and they will offer them up as a burnt offering to the Lord. ²⁵ Every day for seven days you shall prepare a goat for a sin offering; they shall also prepare a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without blemish. ²⁶ Seven days they shall make atonement for the altar and purify it, and so consecrate it. ²⁷ When these days are over it shall be, on the eighth day and thereafter, that the priests shall offer your burnt offerings and your peace offerings on the altar; and I will accept you,’ says the Lord God.”

Ezekiel 43:13-17 describes the dimensions of the altar. As we previously saw visually on the 3D animation (see notes for chapters 40-43 for link), this altar is quite large, being about 5 metres high and six metres square, with steps leading up to it on the eastern side. This is an altar that can accommodate a lot of burnt offerings, with an area of 36 m², and is much larger than the one built for the tabernacle whose area was only about 5 m² (see Exodus 29:27).

Then in verses 18-27 God lays out the procedure for the initial cleansing or sanctifying of the altar once it was made. Part of the procedure was that every day for seven days the following animals would be offered: **a goat for a sin offering; they shall also prepare a young bull and a ram from the flock, both without blemish** (v 25). After the seven days of sin and burnt offerings, the altar would be used to receive the sacrifices of the people, as well as the other daily, weekly, monthly, and other prescribed sacrifices. We’ll read more about these as we continue through the book of Ezekiel.

Importantly, God said that He would only accept the **peace offerings** once the altar had been *purified* by the sin offering and *consecrated* by the burnt offering. The peace offering represents *loving and joyful fellowship* with God. The animal would be killed, and one part given to the priest, but the rest eaten in the temple courts by the person who brought the animal. It’s like they were sharing a meal with God.

Application: Forgiveness and consecration are required for fellowship

The sin offering was required to make the burnt offering possible, which was required to make the fellowship offering possible.

The sin offering (v 21): Like Jesus was taken outside the city to be crucified, so the sin offerings were taken outside of the sanctuary to be burned. Why? Because it had *symbolically* taken on the sin of the priests/altar and was therefore sinful and so could not longer be in the presence of the holy God.

In a similar way, at His crucifixion, Jesus had *literally* taken on the sins of the world, and so could not be in vicinity of the temple area which was holy; therefore, He had to be taken outside the city to be crucified (instead of burned). The sin offering always points to Jesus being our substitutionary sacrifice, the One who would take our sins upon Himself and die in our place.

John 1:29 NKJV

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

The burnt offering (v 24): The burnt offering would be wholly consumed by the flames. None would be eaten by the person offering the sacrifice—it was all given to God. This symbolises complete surrender and total dedication to God. Again, Jesus is the perfect and ultimate fulfilment of this sacrifice. Why? Because Jesus only did and said what pleased the Father—therefore He always knew and was in the good and perfect will of the Father.

The burnt offering is what Romans 12:1 alludes to, where each believer is strongly encouraged to offer themselves up as a living sacrifice on God’s altar. We are always giving ourselves to and for something; there are many altars or idols that seek our affections and devotion. God wants us to be wholly surrendered to Himself, completely consumed in our dedication and devotion to Himself, giving everything of ourselves to serve Him—and not giving any part of us to be used by or enjoy the world, flesh, or devil. God desires us to be single minded (as opposed to double minded) in our love and devotion to Him.

Romans 12:1-2 NKJV

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, **holy, acceptable to God**, which is your reasonable service. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Romans 12:1-2 AMP

I appeal to you therefore, brethren, and beg of you in view of [all] the mercies of God, to make a decisive dedication of your bodies [presenting all your members and faculties] as a **living sacrifice, holy (devoted, consecrated) and well pleasing to God**, which is your reasonable (rational, intelligent) service and spiritual worship [what or who I choose to honour and give my loyalty and affections to—expressed as willing obedience].

² Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].

As a believer, “I become who I am”, because I am a “new creation” (see 2 Corinthians 5:7). It is by God’s power that I can fully offer myself to God (Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13, Hebrews 13:20-21)

Another Scripture that is similar to Romans 12:1-2 as it describes giving our whole body, mind and spirit to serve God is also found in Romans.

Romans 6:10-14 NLT

When [Christ] died, He died once to break the power of sin. But now that He lives, He lives for the glory of God. ¹¹ So you also should consider [reckon it to be true] yourselves to be dead to the power of sin and alive to God through Christ Jesus.

¹² Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. ¹³ **Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin [don't offer yourself on the altar of sin]. Instead, give yourselves completely to God [as a living burnt offering—total consecration], for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.** ¹⁴ Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

The peace offering (v 27): This represents fellowship with God, abiding in God, and enjoying a love relationship with God. Not surprisingly Jesus also is the perfect illustration of this offering, and He invites all believers to participate in this loving and joyful abiding relationship with God the Father.

John 15:9-11 AMP

I [Jesus] have loved you, **[just] as the Father has loved Me**; abide in My love [continue in His love with Me]. ¹⁰ If you keep My commandments [if you continue to obey My instructions], you will abide in My love and live on in it, **just as I [Jesus] have obeyed My Father's commandments and live on in His love.** ¹¹ I have told you these things, that My joy and delight may be in you, and that your joy and gladness may be of full measure and complete and overflowing.

These three types of sacrifices (burnt offering, sin offering, and the peace offering) show what is required for us to know His will and so be used by God to advance His kingdom as we walk in fellowship with God. First, we must have our sins forgiven (the sin offering); this brings us back into relationship with God. Second, we must be fully consecrated, or wholly given over to God (the burnt offering); this means that we are dead to the world and alive to God. Third, we then enjoy the privilege of walking in fellowship with God, knowing and walking in His will (represented by the peace offering). Only then can we be effective in the kingdom of God.

There are many who have had their sins forgiven because they have repented (choose to put God first) and believed in the Gospel (see Mark 1:15). They have, so to speak, using the Old Testament symbolism of the lamb, placed their hand on Jesus' head and confessed their sins. All their sins were transferred to Jesus, who then had to die because He was now declared guilty, while the guilty sinner is declared innocent and is free from all condemnation or guilt (Romans 8:1). This makes them a believer or born again (or born from above—John 3:3).

However, many of those who have received Christ's forgiveness choose not to lay their lives down and sacrifice themselves on God's altar—they are not willing to give up everything that they want so they can do what God wants. Instead, they choose, at least to some extent, to love the things of the world and give themselves to the pursuit of worldly things. The verses we read in Romans tell us that we will only know God's perfect will for us if we are willing to lay our lives down on God's altar. And if we don't know His will, then we can't walk in it—God can't use us if we are not in fellowship with Him—if we are doing what we want instead of what He wants. Of course then we also won't enjoy a love relationship with God because we will be loving the world instead. We can't love both the world and God at the same time.

2 Timothy 2:20-22 AMP

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also [utensils] of wood and earthenware, and some for honourable and noble [use] and some for menial and ignoble [use]. ²¹ **So whoever cleanses himself [from what is ignoble and unclean, who separates himself from contact with contaminating and corrupting influences] will [then himself] be a vessel set apart and useful for honourable and noble purposes, consecrated and profitable to the Master, fit and ready for any good work.** [*again, this is like the burnt offering—total consecration and dedication to God*]

²² Shun youthful lusts and flee from them, and aim at and pursue righteousness (all that is virtuous and good, right living, conformity to the will of God in thought, word, and deed); [and aim at and pursue] faith, love, [and] peace (harmony and concord with others) in fellowship with all [Christians], who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

James 4:4-10 AMP

You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? **So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God.** [*on whose altar will you offer yourself—the world's or God's*]

5 Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love? [Jeremiah 3:14; Hosea 2:19]

6 **But He gives us more and more grace (power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency and all others fully). That is why He says, God sets Himself against the proud and haughty, but gives grace [continually] to the lowly (those who are humble enough to receive it).** [Proverbs 3:34.]. [*we must come to the throne of grace, not merit—Hebrews 4:16*]

7 So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you.

8 Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognise that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery].

9 [As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins].

10 Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant].

Why will there be animal sacrifices during the Millennium?

Let's take the time to think about this and try to clear up some misconceptions.

Question 1. Does having animal sacrifices during the Millennium mean that we will be back under the Old Covenant?

Answer: *No, absolutely and definitely not—The First or Old Covenant is obsolete and was permanently replaced by the New Covenant after Jesus' death and resurrection.*

Hebrews 8:6-13 NLT

But now **Jesus, our High Priest**, has been given a ministry that is far superior to the old priesthood, for He is the One who mediates for us a far **better covenant** with God, based on **better promises [unconditional instead of conditional promises]**.

7 If the First Covenant had been faultless, there would have been no need for a second covenant to replace it. ⁸ But when God found fault with the people, he said: “The day is coming, says the Lord, **when I will make a New Covenant with the people of Israel and Judah.** ⁹ This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. They did not remain faithful to my covenant [did not obey it], so I turned my back on them, says the Lord [the first covenant was conditional on their obedience—Galatians 3:10-12]. ¹⁰ But this is the **New Covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day**, says the Lord: **I will** put my laws in their minds, and **I will** write them on their hearts. **I will** be their God, and they will be my people. ¹¹ And they will not need to teach their neighbours, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, ‘You should know the Lord.’ For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already. ¹² And **I will** forgive their wickedness, and **I will** never again remember their sins.”

¹³ When God speaks of a “New Covenant”, it means he has made the first one obsolete. It is now out of date and will soon disappear.

Galatians 3:10-12 NLT

But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse, for the Scriptures say, **“Cursed is everyone who does not observe and obey all the commands that are written in God’s Book of the Law.”** ¹¹ So it is clear that no one can be made right with God by trying to keep the law. For the Scriptures say, “It is through faith that a righteous person has life.” ¹² This **way of faith** is very different from the **way of law**, which says, “It is through obeying the law that a person has life.”

Notice from the above scriptures that it is clear that after Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross the Old or First Covenant, the **way of law**, was made obsolete. Why? Because it could not save. Why couldn’t it save? Because it was based on conditional promises—it required the people to perfectly obey the law, otherwise they would be under the curse—and of course nobody can perfectly keep the law.

In place of the First or Old Covenant is the New Covenant, the **way of faith**, which God promised to the people of Israel in a future time—**on that day** (Hebrews 8:10). And there are no “if you, then I” conditional statements. Instead we find repeated “**I will**” unconditional promises (vs 10-12).

Question 2. Do the animal sacrifices in the Millennium have anything to do with our atonement or forgiveness?

Answer: No, absolutely and definitely not—Animal sacrifices never did (as required by the Old or First Covenant), and never will (as required by the New Covenant) have anything to do with our sins being forgiven. Jesus’ death in our place was the only way that our sins could be forgiven.

Hebrew 10:1-10 NLT

The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, **but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship.** ² If they could have provided perfect cleansing, the sacrifices would have stopped, for the worshipers would have been purified once for all time, and their feelings of guilt would have disappeared.

³ **But instead, those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year.**

⁴ For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ That is why, when Christ came into the world, He said to God,

“You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But You have given Me a body to offer. ⁶ You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin. ⁷ Then I said, ‘Look, I have come to do Your will, O God—as is written about Me in the Scriptures.’ ”

⁸ First, Christ said, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings or burnt offerings or other offerings for sin, nor were you pleased with them” (though they are required by the law of Moses). ⁹ Then He said, “Look, I have come to do Your will.” **He cancels the First Covenant in order to put the Second [Covenant] into effect.** ¹⁰ **For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.**

Question 3. Since animal sacrifices have no power to forgive sins, then why do them again during the Millennium?

Answer: *“those sacrifices actually reminded them of their sins year after year”* (Hebrews 10:3)

In essence, under the Old Covenant, the animal sacrifices were simply a reminder to the people that they were guilty, and that God **had a plan to provide a Saviour**, the Messiah, who would save them from their sins *if they were willing to put their faith in God’s future Messiah—that He would come and die in their place—just like the animal sacrifices were a picture of.*

*“It is incorrect to think that animal sacrifices took away sins in the Old Testament, and it is incorrect to think they will do so in the millennial kingdom. **Animal sacrifices served as object lessons for the sinner, that sin was and is a horrible offense against God, and that the result of sin is death.***

*Most premillennial scholars agree that the purpose of animal sacrifice during the millennial kingdom is memorial in nature. As the Lord’s Supper is a reminder of the death of Christ to the Church today, animal sacrifices will be a reminder during the millennial kingdom. **To those born during the millennial kingdom, animal sacrifices will again be an object lesson. During that future time, righteousness and holiness will prevail, but those with earthly bodies will still have a sin nature, and there will be a need to teach about how offensive sin is to a holy and righteous God. Animal sacrifices will serve that purpose, “but in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year”** (Hebrews 10:3). (gotquestions.org)*

Question 4: Why didn’t God ask the Church to sacrifice animals?

Answer: *Because that requires a temple, which requires a physical nation, and the church is not a physical nation. God’s kingdom is not of this world until Jesus returns.*

John 18:36 NLT

Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.”

However, Israel, who will be partakers of the New Covenant during the Millennium, will be a nation again and will have their temple (from which Jesus will reign—it will be His throne). God will again use Israel to be a light to the whole world, and therefore it makes

sense to reinstitute animal sacrifices as, compared to taking communion, they are a much more potent reminder of the consequences of sin, and the great lengths that God had to go to to provide forgiveness for us.

Question 5. Are there other Scriptures that indicate that there will be animal sacrifices during the Millennium?

Answer: Yes, several, with Ezekiel 40-48 being the most obvious.

Isaiah 56:6-8 NKJV

“Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—⁷ Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. **Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar**; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations.”

⁸ The Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, “Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him.”

Zechariah 14:16-21 NKJV

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁷ And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. ¹⁸ If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ¹⁹ This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. ²⁰ In that day “HOLINESS TO THE LORD” shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. ²¹ Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts. **Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them.** In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.

Jeremiah 33:14-18 NKJV

‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘that I will perform that good thing which I have promised to the house of Israel and to the house of Judah:

¹⁵ ‘In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David a Branch of righteousness; He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. ¹⁶ In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell safely. And this is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS’

¹⁷ “For thus says the Lord: ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; ¹⁸ **nor shall the priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually.**’ ”

Ezekiel 43:27 NKJV

When these days are over it shall be, on the eighth day and thereafter, that the priests shall offer your burnt offerings and your peace offerings on the altar; and I will accept you,’ says the Lord God.”

Ezekiel 44:10-11, 15 NKJV And the Levites ... shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister to them ...

¹⁵ “But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok ... they shall stand before Me to offer to Me the fat and the blood,” says the Lord God.

Ezekiel 45:17 NKJV

Then it shall be the prince's part to give burnt offerings, grain offerings, and drink offerings, at the feasts, the New Moons, the Sabbaths, and at all the appointed seasons of the house of Israel. He shall prepare the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings to make atonement for the house of Israel."

Under the New Covenant, with Jesus ruling and reigning on the earth, the sacrifices will remind the people that God ***had already sent the Saviour, that Jesus' scared body was the once and for all sacrifice that bore the punishment of all sins of all mankind***. Animal sacrifices, just like communion is today in the Church age, will simply be a memorial or reminder of what Christ has already done for them, and that they are born as sinners, with a sin nature, separated from God, and that to be reconciled to God they must put their trust in the Saviour that God has already provided.

2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV

For [the Father] made [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in [Christ].

Summary:

What's important to understand is that, although there will be animal sacrifices during the Millennium, *we will not be going back under the law (back under the Old Covenant)*. The Bible makes it very clear, in Hebrews 7-10 and in the Old Testament (for example Ezekiel 36:22-38) that the Millennium, with Christ ruling and reigning as the High Priest forever, will be the complete fulfilment of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant will continue to be obsolete—Jesus will be the High priest, with the levitical priests serving under Him.

Here are some good quotes that reenforce and summarise what we have been discussing regarding the reinstatement of animal sacrifices during the Millennium.

"As noted before (in Ezekiel 40), these may be fairly regarded as *memorials* pointing back to the work of Jesus. Animal sacrifices were *never* actually effective for the cleansing of sin, only as representations and shadows of the future reality fulfilled by Jesus the Messiah in His crucifixion. Even so, the literal presence of these sacrifices does not mean that they should or could be regarded as effective for the cleansing of sin. Much as the bread and the cup of the Lord's Table is a powerful spiritual representation and memorial of Jesus' work on the cross, these sacrifices can be regarded in a similar way." (David Guzik)

"The offerings presented thereon were meant to be memorials, much as the Lord's Supper is no efficacious sacrifice but a memorial of a blessedly adequate and all-sufficient sacrifice for all time. Thus, whereas the sacrifices of the Old Testament economy were prospective, these are retrospective." (Feinberg)

"Old Testament believers weren't forgiven because animals died, but because they put their faith in the Lord (Hebrews 11; Psalm 51:16-17; Habakkuk 2:4). Therefore, the use of animal sacrifices in the millennial temple no more minimises or negates the finished work of Christ than these sacrifices did before Jesus died. It appears that the sacrifices will be offered in a memorial sense and as expressions of love and devotion to the Lord (Isaiah 56:5-7; 60:7). They will also bring people together for fellowship and feasting to the glory of the Lord." (Wiersbe)