

The Problem of Ezekiel's Temple/City Vision Response to Rebuttal

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Warner accuses the first submission of being a “straw man.” My choice in topics, he presumes, has nothing to do with “futurism.” That’s interesting, because I thought that *Ez 40-48* had everything to do with the future, since it is a *prophecy*, and an obviously unfulfilled one at that if the conditions for its fulfillment mean the literal application of such. What else is that he then moves on to tell us, in his view, of *what the future is going to be like!* It is going to be a millennial kingdom with literal animal sacrifices that have only a symbolic function. What I said is that Ezekiel was viewing the Church through elaborate symbolism (in agreement with A-millennialism and Post-millennialism). This is the *preterist* interpretation as opposed to the *futurist* interpretation (both millennial views incorporate a preterist hermeneutic in many places). Thus, Warner’s first assertion is false. This is entirely in keeping with the debate.

Secondly, since the A- and Post- views do agree with Preterism on this point, it is then easy to demonstrate their inconsistency. Here is where Warner is correct: the visions of Ezekiel on this matter come **AFTER** the Second Coming of Christ. Preterism takes the strengths of each millennial view and harmonizes them into a coherent solution. Once again, if Pre- is right, and the Second Coming **PRECEDES** the Ezekielian Temple setting, and if the A- and Post- are right in that this represents the church age presently, then, together, the Second Coming was in A.D. 70 which **PRECEDED** the fulfillment of the ‘age to come’ church age which we are in now. Therefore, to error of the Pre- school (which Tim espouses) is that the Second Coming has not happened, yet. The error of the A- and Post- schools is that the Second Coming does not precede the temple vision, but comes **AFTER** it.

Clearly, Warner can see that to place the Second Coming **AFTER** the fulfillment of Ezekiel’s Vision is ludicrous. Yet, Warner is entirely correct in that this vision is fulfilled *on earth*. In fact, *all three millennial views understand the earthly fulfillment*. Preterists wholeheartedly agree on this unity. Ezekiel is not talking about heaven (else, how could you explain dead bodies in heaven as per *Ez 44.25-27*). The two main problems, then, is where to place the Second Coming and how to understand the *nature* of Ezekiel’s symbolism (how it is lived out). Preterists agree with Warner that the Second Coming **PRECEDES** the vision, but agree with the strength of the A- and Post-schools on the *nature* of how this vision is lived out now. This is just one example of demonstrating that Preterists are not operating in a vacuum, but build on the strengths/weaknesses of the previous models tradition has given us. In fact, Warner wrote that the A- view would “agree on nearly everything Frost wrote.” In conclusion of this first issue, when Warner wrote, that my interpretation of the vision does not “in any

way support preterism,” he is entirely false, misleading or simply confused as to the point I made. Ask yourself, Mr. Warner, that if Ezekiel’s vision is being fulfilled NOW in the church, and if, in your view, the Second Coming PRECEDES the fulfillment of this vision, then are you willing to assert that this does not “in any way” at all support preterism? That is like saying corked bats do not “in any way” help the batter gain distance for the ball!

Now that the reader understands my angle for selecting this portion of Scripture, we can move on to consider the points Warner champions. 7 pages is a lot to respond to for a four page article, but I will try anyhow.

Warner still falsely posits a dichotomy between “hidden meanings” and his “plain sense” meaning. Yet, as his paper demonstrated, “atonement” does not mean “atonement”! When it says “atonement” it is only a SYMBOL of atonement in Jesus according to him. Hidden meaning, Tim? The PLAIN SENSE is that atonement means atonement. The PLAIN SENSE is that “sin-offering” means “sin-offering”. But, no, Warner says these are not REAL sin-offerings in Ezekiel, these are mere “symbols” to convey the once and for all “sin offering” of the Lamb of God. Agreed. But, Mr. Warner, you had to write a few pages to elicit that “meaning” into the word “atonement”. The continued false attack that we advocate “hidden meanings” then is just silly. Mr. Warner and myself are in AGREEMENT that the offerings in Ezekiel SYMBOLIZE (i.e., have a “hidden meaning”) Christ. The ISSUE is, is *how will these activities be carried out?* Let’s stay focused here and save paper.

He wrote, “after Christ died any further animal sacrifices would be blasphemous.” This is NOT what I said (though, being honest, from my statement it could appear that that is what I meant, and for that Warner’s assertion here is entirely an honest mistake). The Reformed theologians are wrong to assert that the “old covenant” stipulations “died” when Christ “died.” *Hebrews 8.13* asserts plainly enough that the “old” would “soon vanish”. This was written some 30 years after Christ’s death. Warner agrees with Preterists that this refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when the sacrificial system completely collapsed. *That* is when the “old” vanished and when the “new” came into full maturity (or what Paul called *pleroma* or “fullness”). Therefore, Warner’s rather longwinded way of asserting that I must offer a contradiction because of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem continuing to offer sacrifices, including Paul, is false. It is false on this basis: *in Preterism, the Jewish economy continued in validity until the vanishing of the old covenant for all Jews.* It is crucial to understand this.

Let me quote from Mr. Warner concerning areas where we agree on this matter. First, there was no “inherent conflict” with Paul offering sacrifices in Jerusalem after the death of Messiah. Second, Paul, Peter, James, John and the others, saw no problem *for Jews* offering sacrifices “when done with the full knowledge of their real symbolic meanings.” Third, Paul “commonly exhorted Gentile Christians not to take up the rituals of the Law.” However, there is an amazing statement here. Warner asserts that Paul was doing this “not because doing so would be some kind of abomination.” That is, Paul was telling Gentiles not to be circumcised not because, if they did, it would be some sort of abomination. Interesting. Let’s read Paul: “Mark my words, if you (Gentiles) let

yourselves be circumcised *Christ will be of no value to you at all* (5.2). Seems rather clear. Paul forbade Gentiles to be circumcised. In fact, he opposed any Jew, including Peter himself, who would support such a notion. Warner wrote that under the Law, “Any Gentile who wished to come to the Temple *must first become proselytes through circumcision*” (italics mine). Agreed. That is what the Law stipulated. That is what Paul told Jews NOT TO DO TO GENTILES. We have a problem here.

If the Law commanded circumcision for Gentiles, then the Jews who demanded circumcision (*Acts 15.1,5*), who were also “believers” and “zealous for the Law”, were correct to insist on this command. However, Paul insists on this not being done. We can see, now, how Paul can be accused of being a law-breaker by his Jewish brethren.

Let us throw in another text: “I came not to abrogate the law and the prophets, but fulfill them. I tell you the truth, *until heaven and the land disappear not one jot nor tittle will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished*” (*Mt 5.18*). What was “vanishing” according to *Hebrews 8.13*? Jots? Clearly, Paul forbade the Law’s insistence that Gentiles be circumcised. Why? Why did he forbid some things of the law and not others? Was the Law in process of “vanishing” or “disappearing”? Yes. Heaven and the Land of Israel “according the flesh” were passing away, but ALSO still had VALIDITY under the OLD COVENANT “until” the OLD disappeared. That “disappearance” was “soon.” The old covenant VANISHED *fully* in the A.D. 70 coming of the Lord in judgment. This entirely solves the problem, but causes a contradiction in Warner’s assertions.

He wrote, “the Law of Moses permitted *absolutely no deviation from the rituals established by God*” (italics mine). Then why did Paul deviate? Was he *following prophecy*? Warner wrote, “Yet these prophecies show enormous differences with the Law of Moses.” Let me get this straight. The Law allowed for no deviation, but the prophecies state that there would be deviation. I smell Preterism! Let me quote Mr. Warner again: “The Law of Moses prescribed certain feasts and ordinances that *must be carried out to the letter*. But, Ezekiel’s prophecy, while having *some things* in common with the Law of Moses, also *indicates radical departures from the Law of Moses*” (italics mine). When did Jesus say that “jots and tittle” would depart? “When heaven and the Land” depart. Was Paul departing from the Law of Moses? To answer “no” would be to fly in the face of everything biblical. “Christ is our Passover, therefore, let us keep the feast.” The “weak and beggarly elements” were “destined to pass.” When? Were they “already passing” in Paul’s day? Yes. Did the old covenant “soon vanish”? Yes. Therefore, we have Paul *living in the days of Ezekiel’s Vision*.

Syllogism: If the Law of Moses demanded obedience to the letter and Ezekiel’s prophecy departed from the Law of Moses, and Paul departed from the Law of Moses, then Paul must have been living in the times when the departures from the Law of Moses was being fulfilled. Therefore, Paul must have been living when Ezekiel’s visions were being fulfilled. The old covenant was vanishing. Thus, Paul could obey “some things” of the Law, but not “all things” to “the letter” because the “the letter” was fading and the “glory” was coming. Heaven and the Land, old covenant Israel, was vanishing. New

Covenant Israel was coming into reality. A.D. 70 settled the matter once and for all. There is no Temple today in Jerusalem. The Temple is in heaven “where ye also are.”

The logic of Warner’s position reveals that he has shot himself in the foot. Paul himself quotes *Ez 37.27* in *II Co 6.17*. This was becoming the reality. This same verse is quoted in *Revelation 21.3* in the new heavens and the new earth. Ezekiel was seeing the “new heavens and the new earth.” The generation of Paul was witnessing the “vanishing/departures” from the Law of Moses until, FINALLY, it vanished completely. Heaven (what the Jews called the Temple, for it was a copy of heaven) and the Land (what they Jews called the Land of Israel) passed. A.D. 70 made that painfully clear. Moses can now no longer be carried out “to the letter.” Its “jots and tittles” cannot be carried out. We are in a new HEAVENS, purified by the blood of Jesus, and a NEW Land, the eternal “inheritance” of God’s people.

Warner may try to sidestep this and say, “well, in the Millennium, the Law of Moses will be carried out.” But he denies this. The letter was not carried out under Paul, and cannot at all be carried out now, and in Warner’s admission, will not be carried out “to the letter” when Ezekiel is fulfilled, in his view, in the Millennium. That MUST mean that at least SOME jots and tittles have PASSED. Did the Bible foresee of a time when these departures would occur? Yes! In Ezekiel! Have these departures occurred? YES!

Warner quotes *Jer 3.16-17*. There, the ark of the Lord is no more. Is it today? Didn’t the Romans sack the Temple? “At that time” says Jeremiah, “Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD.” Warner still childishly insists that Jerusalem here means Jerusalem over there in Israel located on dirt. Paul, on the other hand, noted that Jerusalem “above” is the “mother of us all.” Is that not that “throne of the LORD”? Does God “dwell in temples made by hand”? Yet, Warner still pharisaically sees a time when Jesus will dwell on a concrete slab on dirt in the U.N. designated land of Israel. There is no ark today. Children seek after it today. Jeremiah is fulfilled. “All nations” are being gathered together under one Lord and one King. It’s called “missions.” A.D. 70 released, fully, the world from the shackles of the Letter that brought Death. It is now no longer an issue as to whether or not we should be circumcised as it was in Paul’s day BEFORE the vanishing of the old covenant. New Moons and rituals for the Gentiles is no longer an issue pressing us from “those from Jerusalem” as it was in Paul’s day before God had made judgment known in A.D. 70 as to what “way” he accepted. The Gospel is unshackled by Jewish oppressors, who, in the time of Paul had a claim. Today, all men, all backgrounds, all origins, all colors, can come to God’s throne through Christ. His true, eternal throne in the true eternal “city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (*Hebrews 12.22*).

Before wrapping this up, a few more brief criticisms can be made. Warner quotes from *Hebrews 10.1-4* to note that the blood of animals “never atoned for sin.” But, is that what the passage says? No. To deny the efficacy of any atonement qualities whatsoever of the OT sacrificial system is, again, to destroy the “plain meaning” of the Law. “The life is in the blood” Leviticus said. The offerings “were a sweet smell” to God. In several OT stories, after sacrifice was made, God “was pleased.” To even touch the ark of God,

Uzzah died. For Saul to offer sacrifices unlawfully cost him his kingdom. To say that these sacrifices had “no atoning quality” at all is simply unbelievable.

The *context* of these verses state that the “yearly” offerings “make those who approach *perfect*.” If it could, the writer argued, then why were they offered year after year? Obviously, such a system of atonement could never *ultimately* “take away sins.” It could never take away sins to the extent that in the removal of sins it would bring perfection and thereby remove the need for atonement. Atonement was needed. The Law provided for it. The blood of bulls and goats took away sins. But, guess what. The sins came back. And they would have to offer more bulls and goats. Then sins were forgiven and atoned for. Then, guess what, sins came back. They would have to offer more bulls and goats. Sins were forgiven. Then, guess what? Sins came back...and on and on and on it went. Such a system could not “perfect” the sinner. Such a system showed them that for sins to be forgiven under it, then this system must go on forever. This is clearly contrasted with the “once and for all” sacrifice of Jesus Himself. He ENDED the system. He ENDED the Law. He FULFILLED it. And it VANISHED as a result in A.D. 70. Thus, ask yourselves, are we living in a time today when we have no literal “ark” and do not have a yearly “Day of atonement”? If you answer, “yes”, then welcome to Ezekiel’s and Jeremiah’s world. When did the day of atonement end? A.D. 70. Do we have it now? No. Did Ezekiel see a time when God’s priests had no day of atonement? Yes. If Tim is correct, then we have no day of atonement *now* and will not have one in the Millennium, either. But did Ezekiel envision two periods of time when atonement was no longer needed? No. He only saw one. If he only saw the Millennium period, then where is period of time that describes our day of atonement-less time? The Dispensational answer: The Prophets do not mention the Church Age Dispensation! And cows jump over the moon.

Warner, as I have stated, was correct to see that Paul had no issues with Jews carrying out the sacrificial system and knowing Christ as well. However, what of this insistence when Jerusalem was “surrounded by armies” (*Lk 21.22*)? What if, for a time, such an arrangement was tolerated but increasingly became more difficult as the “end” drew near? What if, even in the face of encroaching doom, some Jews *insisted* on carrying out the sacrifice of the lambs? This is the context of *Hebrews 10*. “If we (Jews) continue to sin after we have received the knowledge of the truth (Jesus), then *no sacrifice for sins are left*, but only a fearful *expectation of judgment and raging fire that will consume the enemies of God* (A.D. 70).” The writer goes on: to continue in the Law of Moses and offer sacrifices will lead to trampling the blood of Christ and insulting the Spirit. This is how it is in our day. To insist today that we offer sacrifices would be to insult God. For a time, it was permitted, but not now. To insist on circumcision for the Gentile was, for a time, permitted. These Jews were not immediately blasted out of Jerusalem by the apostles James, Peter, and John. But, now, it is even silly to suggest. To stay in Jerusalem in order to obey Moses rather than “flee the city” when the storm clouds of God’s wrath were gathering according to the signs of the times would not only be foolish, but would be in direct disobedience to God’s revelation of Jesus that these things have now ended. Things have changed. Therefore, in Warner’s view, to reinstitute a sacrificial system after the VANISHING once and for all of the old covenant is simply wrong. To think that God would once again institute sacrifices *of any kind*

after he pronounced judgment *on those very things* is, simply, nonsense. Yet, Tim has us slaughtering animals in the Millennium in the name of Jesus! All this bloodshed just to have a symbol. All this blood-letting just for plain show. And, yet, having the REALITY in Christ, we are still obligated to shed millions of gallons of blood for Jesus in the Millennium. Warner advocates this nonsense picture because he understands the implications of the alternative. Since he simply refuses to understand some prophecy spiritually, and insist on literal-ness, then this is what God has in store for us: a thousand years of slaughtering yet more animals. You can have it, Tim. What was for a brief time acceptable to Paul and the Jerusalem Jews who were also believers in Messiah is now NO LONGER ACCEPTIBLE since God has judged that system once and for all. To offer sacrifices would be to “trample the blood of the covenant and insult the Spirit of God.”

The “temple of the LORD” is Jesus himself. He is a house of prayer for all nations. Warner quotes this as insisting that Jesus foresaw thousands of years into the future when Jerusalem would once again be for all nations. What is odd is that the United Nations established Israel! Where is that in prophecy?! Irony indeed. However, Warner fails to quote the passage Jesus quoted in *Mk 11* from *Jer 7.11*. There, *Jer 2-9* is a block of prophecy concerning Jerusalem and is an anti-Temple polemic (see 7.4). Jerusalem was going to be judged by the Babylonians. They claimed privilege and Temple. God said: “judgment.” Then, strikingly in comparison, Jesus alludes to *Jer 8.13* in *Mk 11*. Then he tells a parable (*Mk 12*) concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and that they will be given to another (*Jer 8.10*). Also, Paul quotes *Jer 8.11* in *I Th 5.3*. Israel was crying “peace and safety” in Jeremiah’s days as they were in Paul’s. But doom had found them out, and doom was “at hand.”

In conclusion to all of this, it has been demonstrated that Mr. Warner must, if he is honest, rework a great deal of his beliefs. We are in the time of Ezekiel’s vision, serving day and night as a nation and kingdom of priests. We serve God and have entered into his holy city and throne through the blood of Jesus. We are priests. The time of change has come. John’s vision of the New Jerusalem parallels exactly Ezekiel’s. For example, Ezekiel is taken in by a man and led to a mountain and shown a vision of the city and temple. So is John. John’s angel had a measuring rod. So did Ezekiel’s. The first thing John mentioned is the “walls.” So, too, Ezekiel. John saw gates facing “east, north, south, west”. Ezekiel follows the same pattern: east, north, south, west. John sees living waters. Ezekiel does, too (47). They are seeing the same thing. Another problem happens, though. For Warner, Ezekiel’s vision is in the millennium. For John, the New Jerusalem is in the new heavens and the new earth! Is the Millennium the new heavens and the new earth? Not on Tim’s watch! Then how can he explain it? He can’t, but I am sure he will try. This is embarrassing. The vision of Ezekiel is the same as John’s, and John’s vision is of the new heavens and the new earth, therefore, so was Ezekiel’s. Where is the Millennium, then? Does the “living waters” of Ezekiel flow in the Millennium “for the healing of the nations” and *also* flow in the new heavens and the new earth “for the healing of the nations”? Maybe they are seeing two completely different types of “living waters”! I digress.

One last thing, Tim never dealt with the Gentiles in *Ez 44.9*. He wrote that Gentiles will celebrate at the throne of the Lord. Ezekiel denies this. *No foreigner*, whether circumcised in *heart* or in *flesh* shall *enter my sanctuary*, but *only* the sons of Zadok. Too bad for Gentile believers in the Millennium. But, since Tim has us cutting up animals anyhow, that should not bother him. It bothers me, though. Solution: Paul: “therefore, ye (Gentile) are NO LONGER FOREIGNERS AND ALIENS BUT FELLOW CITIZENS WITH GOD’S HOLY PEOPLE.” Problem solved. I am not a foreigner, but a member of Israel. As a priest, a “son of Zadok” (which in Hebrew means “son of righteousness”), I have full access. Tim denies access because this “spiritualizes” Ezekiel. Last I checked, though, Paul talked about Israel’s “spiritual things”. I digress.

Folks, the issue is solved if we think outside the “traditional” box and realize that we have “every spiritual blessings” in Christ and that all the promises are “yes and amen” in Christ and that we serve God “day and night in his temple.” Let’s live like that. Let’s demonstrate to the world that reality. Let us, once again, turn this world upside down by truly showing from Scriptures a true *alternative universe* in King Jesus, Ruler of all things and all peoples!