

The Priestly Covenant and the Millennial Kingdom - Part 1 (Jeremiah 33:14-22)^a

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Sharing from God's Word for two Wednesdays

1. Tonight - set the stage for a better understanding of what is perhaps the most neglected covenant in the Bible: the *priestly covenant*
2. Next Wednesday - look in greater detail at this neglected covenant and its relation to the temple in the millennial kingdom
3. The central passage which we'll be starting from: Jeremiah [33:14-22](#)

[14] '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.' " [19] And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, [20] "Thus says the LORD: 'If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, [21] then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. [22] As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.' " (Jeremiah [33:14-22](#))¹

Battle for the Bible

1. External attacks (disbelievers)
 - A. Science disproves the Bible
 - B. Bible contains fanciful stories and borrowed historical ideas
 - C. Israel purposefully created a fictitious history to claim unique relationship with God
 - D. Vague recollections and borrowing of pagan myths
 - E. Reasonable to follow in matters of faith and religion, but not history or science (i.e., *reality*)
2. In-house attacks (by professing "believers")

- A. **Authors aren't who the Scriptures or church history claims**
 - B. **Gospels are not historically reliable—Jesus and Paul were mistaken about some things they said or wrote**
 - C. **Genesis is not literal history**
 - I. **Genesis is merely a moral story: Adam and Eve are not literal**
 - II. **Evolution is compatible with Scripture**
 - D. **Low view of Scripture**
3. **But what if we have a high view of Scripture? What then?**
- A. **What if you aren't buying any of that? What approach does the enemy use instead?**
 - B. **Bend/distort what is said by promoting faulty interpretation**
 - I. **Battle for the meaning of the Bible**
 - a. **Yes, the Scriptures are entirely the inspired Word of God**
 - b. **Yes, the Scriptures are without error**
 - c. **But how do we understand them? What do they mean?**
 - II. **Treating the OT as inferior revelation**
 - a. **Spiritualizing and allegorizing — using the NT to “reinterpret” the plain meaning of passages in the OT**
 - b. **OT not understandable unless read through the lens of the NT?**
 - c. **Premise: God's communication was unclear until, hundreds of years later, He gave more—the NT**
 - d. **How could Jesus hold the people accountable to knowing the Scriptures when the NT was not even around yet?**
 - i. Jesus: “The [OT] Scriptures testify of Me..”
 - ii. Pharisees: “Where are you in the Scriptures?”
 - iii. Jesus: “In types and shadows”
 - iv. Pharisees: “How can anyone rightly interpret these types and shadows?”
 - v. Jesus: “By the New Testament”
 - vi. Pharisees: “By the what?”
 - vii. Jesus: “It won't be written for about 50 years, and won't be widely available for longer than that, but you need the NT to rightly interpret the [OT]”

Scriptures.”

- viii. Pharisees: “So until we can read a copy of this NT I guess we can suspend judgment on your claim that the Scriptures testify of you?”

III. The OT can add/enhance/broaden what God said in the OT, but it cannot fundamentally change the meaning

- a. Else God was misleading in His original communication
- b. The God of Scripture is not a prevaricating God!

IV. Another often encountered, but flawed assumption

- a. If something God stated in the OT isn’t repeated in the NT, then it no longer holds
- b. Does God have to say things twice?
- c. Example: the promised land having literal, physical borders and relating to Israel
- d. Inconsistent: require NT to restate land promise, but not covenant with Noah

4. The “Battle for the Bible” becomes the “Battle for the *Meaning* of the Bible”

- A. Revelation 1:3 — *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*
- B. How are we to “keep” the things that are written if they are not understandable?

One example of the battle over meaning: the coming kingdom of Jesus on Earth

1. What is the kingdom, exactly?
2. How will we know when it has arrived?
3. How does it come—is the Church ushering in the kingdom of God gradually by the conversion of the nations and through programs of social justice?
4. What does the kingdom of God look like ultimately?
5. Widespread denial that the kingdom includes geopolitical aspects (both *geo*, and *political*)

A. Geo - the literal earth (restored), Jerusalem

I. God intends to redeem both spiritual and physical realms

B. Political

- I. **More than a Spiritual kingdom in the hearts of those who love Jesus and obey Him**
- II. **A real kingdom where even those who harbor rebellion in their hearts toward Jesus will really know who is boss (ala Psalm 2; Zec. 14)**
 - a. **Ps. 2:8-9 - *Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.***
 - b. **Zec. 14:16 - *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.***

You may say, “Tony, isn’t this abstract? Why is the Christian’s understanding of the millennial kingdom important?”

1. **Mistaken notions concerning the nature of God’s kingdom, when it arrives, and how it arrives**
2. **Perverts the purpose of the Church - distracts the Church from its true calling**
 - A. **Away from personal salvation and preaching the scandal of the cross and reconciliation found in Jesus**
 - B. **Toward: social justice, equity, and even environmentalism as the means by which God intends to “redeem society” here-and-now**
 - C. **Denial of the Biblical teaching concerning apostasy and the ultimate rejection of God which culminates this age — a rejection of what Daniel, other prophets, and the Book of Revelation predict is coming**
3. **The Lord’s Prayer - “. . . Your kingdom come . . .”**
 - A. **A future kingdom**
 - B. **How will we know: “. . . Your will be done . . .”**
 - C. **This only occurs following the return of Jesus upon a God-rejecting world in judgment**
 - I. **What is the millennial kingdom?**
 - a. **Passages which sound like heaven, but which contain aspects which don’t fit with heaven**

- b. **Not now (long life, peace in the animal realm and among nations, Jesus physically ruling on a literal throne on earth)**
 - c. **Not heaven (sin, death, rebellion)**
 - d. **Many passages in OT, some in NT, including Revelation 20 which gives us the duration: 1,000 years or a millennium**
- II. **The millennial kingdom plays an important role in God's plan for history**
 - III. **A key one (among many): fulfillment of many outstanding promises made by God, both in OT and NT**
 - IV. **What I hope to show: the very strong promises we read in Jeremiah 33 require both a millennial kingdom and a literal temple**
 - V. **Thus, the priestly covenant provides strong evidence for a literal interpretation of the end of Ezekiel (Eze. 40-48).**
- D. **A particularly sore point: the millennial temple and its sacrifices**
- I. **If, as the author of Hebrews maintains, Jesus offered Himself "once for all" (Heb. 7:27), then how could there possibly be future animal sacrifices as Ezekiel and other passages seem to describe?**
 - II. **A boxing match: Ezekiel vs. Hebrews, pitting one against the other**
 - a. **How often does the average Christian read Hebrews (in the NT)? Ezekiel (in the OT)?**
 - b. **Are Christians reading Ezekiel with any understanding of the setting and details? Or only as a devotional diet?**
 - c. **During our devotions, if we stumble on the verse: *The chamber which faces north is for the priests who have charge of the altar; these are the sons of Zadok, from the sons of Levi, who come near the LORD to minister to Him.* (Eze. 40:46), what do we do with it?**
 - d. **Who are these "Zadokian priests"?! Is this a Star Trek episode?**
 - e. **Why are they mentioned? Did they ever officiate in the way described here in a temple like that described here?**
 - III. **The interpretive cop-out: it must be one or the other: *it can't be both***
 - a. **As if the Holy Spirit were not the ultimate author of both**
 - b. **Not either/or, but both/and**

- c. **A point of attack which attempts to undermine the plain meaning of Scripture - surely both Hebrews and Ezekiel can't both be taken plainly?!**
- E. **KEY POINT:** biblical promises made by God require a future temple during the millennium—including the most difficult of all topics related to the millennium: animal sacrifices
 - I. **Not enough time to go into detail concerning animal sacrifices, their purpose, how they differ from the work of Christ**

Priestly Covenant

1. Covenant

- A. **How does a covenant differ from a promise?**
 - I. **Differ from promises: Rom. 9:3-4 - *For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises***
 - II. **Contain promises: Eph. 2:12 - *at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.***
- B. **Why does God use covenants? Aren't His promises always guaranteed? Isn't everything He says absolutely trustworthy?**
- C. **When God highlights/underscores a message by declaring it a formal covenant, how careful do you think He is about establishing an unambiguous meaning?**
- D. **Can God change the meaning of words He has already spoken?**
- E. **Can God hold men accountable to understand messages He gave which are ambiguous, subject to reinterpretation hundreds of years later, or not understandable until after they die?**
- F. **Why am I hammering on these aspects of Covenant?**
- G. **Because if you don't absolutely believe that God means what He plainly says, you'll skip a track when you hit a difficult passage: *you won't be willing to follow where it must lead!***

2. Promise of Davidic King and Levitical Priest

A. Jeremiah 33:14-22

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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.' " [19] And the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, [20] "Thus says the LORD: 'If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, [21] then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. [22] As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.' " (Jeremiah 33:14-22)²

B. Who fulfills the king part?

C. Who fulfills the priest part? Jesus? Why or why not?

- I. **Nelson Study Bible: "The Levitical priesthood would likewise be heirs to a divine succession in overseeing the sacrificial system in the Jerusalem temple. Jesus, as Priest and King, fulfills both offices in the New Covenant."**
- II. **If Jesus had to be a *physical descendant* in the line of Judah to qualify as Messiah, how can it be said he doesn't have to be a *physical descendant* in the line of Levi to fulfill the similar promise to Levi?**
- III. **Concerning the role of Jesus as an eternal priest in the order of Melchizedek, the writer of Hebrews tells us**
 - a. **For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. (Heb. 7:13-14)**

IV. How can we know which road to take?

- a. **This is a COVENANT - God is underlining: read My lips!!!**
- b. **Solemn covenants are not the place for allegorical and spiritual understandings!**
- c. **We can't have it both ways**
 - i. Use Jesus' descent from Judah (genealogies in Matthew, Luke) to prove His legal right to the Davidic throne as Messiah
 - ii. Then Claim He also fulfills the equal requirement in the same passage to be a descendant of Levi!
 - iii. If Jesus can fulfill the Levitical requirement of this passage without being a

descendant of Levi, then why can't another fulfill the Davidic requirement without being a physical descendant of Judah?!

D. To be continued . . .

Sun Jun 14 15:55:34 2015



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Endnotes:

1. [NKJV](#), (Jeremiah [33:14-22](#))
2. [NKJV](#), (Jeremiah [33:14-22](#))

Sources:

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Links Mentioned Above

a - See

http://www.spiritandtruth.org/teaching/topics_by_tony_garland/18_The_Priestly_Covenant_and_the_Millennial_Kingdom/index.htm.

b - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org/id/tg.htm>.

c - See <http://www.spiritandtruth.org>.