

THE MILLENNIUM

Interpreting the “thousand years” of Revelation 20

Millennium is not a biblical word; you won't find it in your Bible, but it simply means a period of a thousand years, and here specifically a thousand-year period that is mentioned six times in Revelation 20. This chapter follows the return of Jesus Christ in chapter 19 and follows that event chronologically. The Antichrist and the false prophet were captured in chapter 19 and thrown into hell. Now in chapter 20 Satan is seized and bound for a thousand years so that he will not deceive the nations any longer during that period, at the end of which he will be released from his prison and go throughout the world to deceive the nations. God's people who refused to worship Antichrist or take his mark on their foreheads or hands and were beheaded by him during the great tribulation will come back to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years. That is the first resurrection, and the rest of the dead (the wicked) will not come back to life until the thousand years are over.

That is clear enough, but some people have preconceived ideas about these future events and do not want to understand the passage literally. They believe, for example, that Jesus is reigning already. True, God is sovereign over all, and Jesus sits at his right hand, but Jesus is not yet king of this world; the kingdom of God has not yet begun. Nowhere in the New Testament does it say that Jesus will reign over the earth before he returns as the conquering Messiah. As John tells us, “The whole world is in the power of the evil one.” It is after the blowing of the seventh trumpet at the end of the age that an angel announces that “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). This is the first time that the Lord will take over the rule of this world. If Jesus is going to reign on earth and the Bible tells us six times that it will be for a period of a thousand years, there is no need for us to doubt that it will

be a thousand years, and there is no reason to say it will be more or less.

Many verses say that the Messianic kingdom has no end, it will continue forever (Psalm 89:29, Daniel 7:1). ‘Forever’ may mean, as long as the earth remains.

The Bible contradicts the evolutionists and teaches that this world has only existed for about six thousand years. According to biblical chronology:

Creation to Abraham	approx. 2,000 years
Abraham to Jesus	approx. 2,000 years
Jesus to today	approx. 2,000 years

The church fathers, as is well known, drew from Hebrews 4:9 the inference that the world would last six thousand years, followed by a Sabbath millennium: “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.” Just as God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh day, the world will continue in its striving for six thousand years, followed by a thousand-year paradisaical era.

“For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exodus 20:11).

“With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (2 Pet 3:8).

“Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6).

It is ironic, but quite possible, that although the church fathers recognized the significance of these millennial eras, the generation approaching the Messiah’s return will ignore it.

Isaiah prophesied that there would be new heavens and new earth (Isa 65:17-20), and his prophecy is very clearly a description of a renewed earth, during which the Messiah will reign. There is no prophecy about a newly created planet in the Bible. Isaiah speaks of death occurring and of the wolf and the lamb feeding together, of people building houses and farming.

The millennium is called a new age, or a new world, but it is not the end of the present world. The world will increasingly become an ideal place as the Messiah restores it from its state of destruction. As a result of the upheaval during the Great Tribulation, there will be no more roads or bridges, and all the cities will be history. In John's vision of the renewed earth, there was no longer any sea. The word "sea" has a figurative meaning in many biblical contexts, referring to the turbulent, unruly nature of the nations (Isaiah 57:20, Daniel 7:2-3), and that may be true in Revelation 13:1, 20:13, 21:1. It will be a completely renovated earth, and the sky will also be different, especially over Israel. But Isaiah says people will build houses and live in them. They will plant vineyards and eat their fruit (Isaiah 65:21).

The converted Jews will be natural inhabitants of the world during the millennium. Those who haven't already done so will come home to Jerusalem with their wealth, assisted by the nations where they are living. They will believe in the Lord and his Messiah. There will be old people with staff in hand in the millennial Jerusalem, and boys and girls will play in the streets. Their farms will be fruitful (Isa 65:20-25, Zech 8:3-6, 12). They will not have resurrection bodies as the Messiah's monarchy will have, however, they will be living under a just king in truth and righteousness. The whole earth will be renewed and enjoy a prosperity never known before. Jerusalem and Israel will be honored as the city and land of the king. The sky will produce its dew and the earth will produce its full yield. Jerusalem will be the center of the earth and nations will flock there to pray, to seek guidance from the Lord, and to worship him.

The binding of Satan for a thousand years

Satan, “the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 2:2), will be bound and removed from the world during the millennium.

And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time (Revelation 20:1-3).

Satan, otherwise known as the evil one or the devil, is a powerful bodiless spirit from the heavenly realm, so chaining and locking him up are metaphors for detention. John tells us that the whole world presently lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19), who Jesus calls the ruler of this world (John 12:31, 14:30). Peter said he prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). As a result, the present age in which we live is evil (Galatians 1:4). That will all change after Jesus’ return. The great deceiver will be locked up so that he cannot deceive the nations during the messianic reign. In the end, Satan will be released, and he will go out once again to test the faithfulness of mankind and will succeed in instigating another rebellion.

Despite the thousand years of peace and righteousness and submission to God, humanity will once again be deceived by Satan and will march defiantly from all directions and surround the camp of God’s people and God’s beloved city, Jerusalem. The word ‘camp’ alludes to the Israelite camp in the wilderness which was a ceremonially clean area around the Tabernacle where the Israelites had their tents (Numbers 5:1–4). Jesus, the reigning Messiah, and his monarchy in the New Jerusalem will allow this final rejection of God’s authority, just as God will

allow the rebellion to occur during the Great Tribulation so that Satan and the wicked condemn themselves by their actions.

The outcome is swift. Fire will come down from heaven and consume the rebels. The devil will be captured and thrown into hell (Revelation 20:7–10) where the Antichrist and the false prophet were thrown a thousand years earlier.

The last judgment will take place and the physical universe will be dissolved. The earth and the heavens will flee from God's presence, and there will be no place for them (Revelation 20:11-15). The dead will be judged, each person according to what they had done as has been recorded. Death and Hades will be banished forever, and unbelievers will be cast into hell. Then the redeemed of all nations, whose names are recorded in the Lamb's book of life, will reign with God forever (Revelation 22:3-5).

The Messiah, who had been appointed as God's regent to rule the earth (Psalm 2:7, 110:1-2, Isaiah 9:6-7, Daniel 7:13-14), will hand back his kingship and reign to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Jesus the Messiah, the future king of the world

Immediately after Jesus' return, he will begin his reign on this earth as stated in Revelation 20. The vast army that fights at the battle of Armageddon will be struck down and killed (Revelation 19:21), but hundreds of millions of unbelievers will survive the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord and will continue to live on earth during the millennium (Zechariah 14:16). God said that on the day of the Lord, he will make people scarcer than pure gold (Isaiah 13:9-12), so we should think of the world's population as a fraction of what it is today. After the greatest earthquake the world has ever known, cities will be destroyed, islands will disappear, and the mountains won't be recognized (Revelation 6:14, 16:20).

So, the millennium is a thousand-year reign on earth by Jesus the Messiah, which follows immediately after his return to earth. In the Gospels, whenever Jesus spoke about the coming Kingdom of God, he was talking about this millennial reign, or its king, or its monarchy - the saints. The Christian hope is not going to heaven; it is a keen hope that Jesus will return and establish his reign on earth, and that we will reign with him.

The land of Israel is at the center of the world and the Messiah will rule from their capital city Jerusalem. Israel has been God's people ever since he chose Abraham and his descendants, as recorded in Genesis 12:1-3. The Messiah is Jewish and a descendant of Abraham. According to numerous Old Testament prophecies, he will reign from Jerusalem over a converted Israel. Jerusalem is the city of God, the eternal holy city chosen by God as the only place on earth for his temple. In Romans, Paul describes God's choice of Israel as his people, their subsequent unbelief, and their final salvation (Romans 9-11). He said that all of Israel would be saved, as the prophets predicted. The Deliverer will come from Zion and *banish ungodliness* from Jacob (Romans 11:26). This is a comprehensive national conversion. Paul quotes from Isaiah 59:20 and Jeremiah 31:31-34, which focus on the conversion of ethnic Israel under a new covenant. Jesus will return to Zion and then he will roar out from there to defeat Israel's enemies (Joel 3:16). This time the Lord will put his law within the people of Israel, he will write it on their hearts, he will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more. This will not only apply to the survivors who live in Israel and Jerusalem but to all Jews who survive in the other nations of the world (Isaiah 11:11-12, 14:1-2, 43:5-7, 60:4, 9, 66:20, Zechariah 8:8). They will all return to the Jewish homeland.

The Messiah will rule the whole world and all nations will submit to his rule (Zechariah 14:9, Revelation 11:15-17). He will rule the nations strictly with a rod of iron. Justice will be done everywhere, and people will do what is right (Isaiah 11:4-6). However, there is no evidence that Jesus will rule physically

on earth. In Daniel 7 the Messiah is given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His kingdom is everlasting (Dan 7:14). But then it says that the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever (Dan 7:18). Finally, he says that the sovereignty, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. **His** kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him (Dan 7:27).

Even for the saints, we don't know how they will rule the world (Rev 5:10), but Jesus said they would inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5), they would possess the Messianic kingdom (Matthew 5:3, 10), and the apostles will reign over Israel (Matthew 19:28). In kingdom parables, Jesus said he would put his faithful servant in charge of all his possessions (Matthew 24:47), or over much (Matthew 25:21). He also tells the righteous to take their inheritance, the kingdom prepared for them since the creation of the world (Matthew 25:34). Just as Jesus is the Father's regent, so the saints are the regent's monarchy. Their resurrection bodies are suited to life in heaven or on earth, and in this way, the saints will exist as Christ's body, his hands and feet. Their judgment during the millennium may be principally the administration of justice.

A kingdom consists of a king, his monarchy, his subjects, his domain, and his reign. The future king of the whole earth is Jesus Christ. His royal family, those chosen by God through faith in Jesus, are the monarchy that will rule with him. Their resurrection and exaltation as rulers are part of their glorification. So the millennial government will consist of millions of people from all over the world; the community of true believers in Jesus Christ. Each one will serve in the royal priesthood according to his or her gift and God's plan. The subjects of the kingdom will be those unbelievers who survived the horrific time of death and destruction during the seven years of the Great Tribulation before Jesus returns. When the Messiah begins his rule, Satan and his demons will no longer be there.

They will be securely imprisoned, so that they can no longer deceive the nations.

The messianic kingdom is a theocracy. The population of the world will be ruled by the Messiah strictly with an iron rod. It is a long era of peace, justice, and righteousness (Isaiah 9:6). The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9). Instruction will go forth from Jerusalem and all nations will make pilgrimages there. The nations will beat their swords into plowshares. They will manufacture tools instead of weapons, and wars will cease worldwide (Isaiah 2:3–4). The subjects of the kingdom will live normal human lives: farming, building houses, and bearing children (Isaiah 65:21–23).

The King will reign from his glorious throne in the sky in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 22:3). As the promised Messiah, he will rule Israel as the promised descendant of David. On the one hand, he will care for the poor with justice and faithfulness, on the other he will rule strictly. If any nation does not offer due honor and respect, they will have no rain. The nations will come and worship at Jerusalem under the supervision of the Levites. Israel will have their own prince, who will lead them well (Ezekiel 34:23-24).

Jesus will be present in the New Jerusalem, not as the Messiah, but as the Lamb, who gave his life to reconcile all things to himself by his blood shed on the cross. The river of the water of life and the tree of life are there to give eternal life to the redeemed and full satisfaction from its monthly batches of fruit. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. As the saints reign over the earth, they bring healing from above to the inhabitants of the earth below. They will be the doctors, the counselors, and the carers. They will worship God and the Lamb and see his face and reign with him forever.

The subjects of the messianic reign

Along with Israel, the unbelieving survivors of the Great Tribulation will live normal human lives on earth as subjects of the messianic kingdom.

This is the plague with which the LORD will strike all the nations that fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. ... Then *the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem* will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain (Zechariah 14:12, 16-17).

And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him (Zechariah 8:22).

See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you (Jerusalem) and his glory appears over you. *Nations* will come to your light, and *kings* to the brightness of your dawn (Isaiah 60:2-3).

The *nations* will walk by its light, and the *kings* of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it (Revelation 21:24-26).

Salvation during the millennium

We live in the church age, an age of grace, where God is calling people from all nations to be united to Christ and live with him throughout eternity. Before Pentecost, God concentrated on the nation of Israel, but there was an opportunity for people from other nations to trust in the Lord.

Under the first covenant with Israel, if Gentiles sought peace with God, they had to join Israel. All people have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and only by coming under a covenant with God is their salvation. Before Jesus came, the Gentiles did not know God, they were “separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12), but under the new covenant, salvation has come to them (Romans 11:11).

Before Abraham, there were people like Abel, Noah, and Melchizedek, who showed their faith in God by offering sacrifices and calling on the name of the Lord, but they seem to be few. Not everything is revealed to us, but we know that God loves the world of humanity and desires all people to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). He does not want anyone to perish but wants everyone to repent (2 Peter 3:9). However, ultimately, salvation is through faith in Christ alone.

The millennium will be the climax of this world’s history and the gracious and patient Lord we know is not going to reign over this glorious period without the inhabitants of the earth having the chance to be saved. The whole nation of Israel will be saved at the beginning of the millennium so that the Messiah will be reigning over his own redeemed nation (Ezekiel 39:21-29, Joel 2:28-32). Israel will lead in the worship of the Lord for all the nations who will bring their offerings to Jerusalem. During the millennium, the temple will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

“It will come about in the last days that the mountain that is the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of mountains and will be raised above the hills; all the nations will stream to it. Many groups of people will come, commenting, “Come! Let’s go up to the temple of the God of Jacob, that they may teach us his ways. Then let’s walk

in his paths. Instruction will proceed from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3).

The initial population of the world during the millennium will consist of unbelievers who chose Antichrist over Christ during the Great Tribulation. They took his mark on their bodies and worshiped the Antichrist and his image. They will be forced to submit to Messiah's rule whether they like it or not.

If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, they will have no rain (Zechariah 14:17).

Over time, the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea, and on that day the Messiah will stand as a signal for the nations and they will rally to him, and his residence will be glorious (Isaiah 11:9-10).

As always, people will be saved through faith. The fact that after Satan's release from his prison, he can deceive the nations and gather them for battle against God's people, shows that many people will remain unregenerate. Those who are regenerated will be resurrected and glorified at the last judgment.

The monarchy of the messianic reign

In the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5-7), the emphasis of Jesus' initial teaching to his disciples was that they would be the monarchy under the Messiah during the millennium. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven, they will inherit the earth, and they will be called children of God. Paul confirmed this:

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings so that we may also share in his glory (Romans 8:16-17).

The resurrected church will inherit the kingdom of God and not as subjects, but as his monarchy reigning over the earth. The New Jerusalem described in Revelation 21:2-22:5 will be the home of the resurrected redeemed. It will come down out of heaven from God and remain in the sky above Jerusalem where its glory will be seen. Rewards, including resurrection bodies, are always spoken of as being prepared for us in heaven, but that is not the place where we will enjoy them. The New Jerusalem will come down *out of heaven* and remain aloft between heaven and earth. God will be among his people, making his home with them, and there will no longer be death, grief, crying, or pain.

The inhabitants of the New Jerusalem will be resurrected people with immortal bodies and supernatural powers. When Jesus was resurrected, he could walk through walls. He came to earth and returned to heaven at will for forty days, making various appearances to his disciples. He talked to them, ate with them, and they touched him. When he prepared a meal for them by the lake, he produced fire, bread, and fish from nowhere. During the millennium, the saints will have bodies like Jesus' glorious, resurrected body. They will move from one place to another instantaneously as he did. They will be priests of God and the Messiah and will rule with him.

John saw the thrones of the elect who were reigning with Christ (Revelation 20:4–6). He saw the martyrs who had died during the Great Tribulation. Jesus told the church at Laodicea, that he would enable those who conquer to share his throne, just as he had conquered and shared his Father's throne (Revelation 3:21). The twenty-four elders in heaven sang a new song (Revelation 5:9–10), saying that Jesus had been killed and with his blood had redeemed people for God from every tribe, language, people and nation, and that he had made them a kingdom and priests for God, and that they would reign over the earth. To make people a kingdom is to confer a kingdom upon them, to put them in positions of authority. Kingdom in this sense is the monarchy or government, those who exercise kingship. The saints are children of God and everyone in God's household will be a ruler.

Paul told Timothy, that if we endure, we will reign with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12). Jesus promised his twelve apostles that in the new world, when he sits on his glorious throne, they would sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). Putting all this together, all the righteous will rule with Christ during the millennium; not just those who are martyred during the Great Tribulation. This New Testament teaching is based on Daniel's prophecy that the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the saints (Daniel 7:27).

The saints will receive and possess the kingdom forever (Daniel 7:18). Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection! They will reign with the Messiah for a thousand years (Revelation 20:6). It was a regular feature of Jewish eschatology that the followers of the Messiah would share in his final rule. In Rabbinical teaching, the Jerusalem that is above (Galatians 4:26) would be let down to earth during the messianic period. Abraham was looking forward to this city that had permanent foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:10). Others were longing for a better country (Hebrews 11:16), heavenly in origin but not heaven itself.

The saints are the future rulers of the world. The Jews saw themselves as the saints in Daniel's prophecy, but progressive revelation shows that it is the church that will reign, including born-again Jews. In rejecting Jesus, the unbelieving Jews forfeited their right (Matthew 21:43). The saints will have authority over the nations and will rule them with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:26). They will be priests of God and the Messiah. Our priesthood under the Messiah will be a mediatorial service that declares his will to the subjects of the kingdom. The saints will spread the knowledge of God to the nations, giving instructions on how they should live and obey and worship the King. And they will continually worship him themselves. The throne-room vision in Revelation 4 has twenty-five thrones; the throne of God is surrounded by twenty-four thrones on whom are seated twenty-four elders. Only humans are created in the

image of God, and only humans are appointed by God to rule the world as his regents. These twenty-four elders are representatives of the elect, twelve representing the tribes of Israel, and twelve representing the apostles of the church. Compare Revelation 21:12–14, where the twelve gates of New Jerusalem are named after the twelve tribes and the twelve foundations are named after the twelve apostles.

In addition to being appointed priests and rulers, the righteous will be rewarded according to their faithfulness and service for God. In the parable of the ten coins, the nobleman commended the good and faithful servants telling one he would have authority over ten cities and another that he would have authority over five cities (Luke 19:11–27). Obedience in this life will result in greater responsibility and status during the millennium. In the chapter on the resurrection, Paul tells us to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord our labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Jesus' aunt asked Jesus if her sons could have the privilege of sitting at his right and left in his kingdom (Matthew 20:21). Jesus taught that those who practice and teach his commands are those who will be great in the kingdom (Matthew 5:19).

The monarchy will be resurrected upon Jesus' return and will govern the world during the millennium having immortal, imperishable bodies (1 Corinthians 15:50–52). They will not live with the subjects; they will live in the New Jerusalem. The description of New Jerusalem is symbolic because it belongs to the heavenly realm. It reflects the beauty, perfection, and glory of the home of the righteous. God will live with them, and they will rule over the earth (Revelation 5:9–10).

New Jerusalem and earthly Jerusalem will be intricately related but not the same. The light of New Jerusalem will shine above earthly Jerusalem. The communities will exist in different dimensions, Israel on earth, the righteous in the sky.

The renewal of the world

Since the fall, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, the world has been under a curse. When God created the world and declared it to be very good, it didn't have all the causes of suffering that we experience today: thorns and thistles, dangerous animals, bad weather and diseases, wars and dictatorships, and all the problems caused by man's disobedience to God's guide for living. The world came under the control of Satan, the evil one. Paul calls our world, this present evil age (Galatians 1:4).

Added to this will be the destruction that will occur during the Great Tribulation. The Lord will empty the earth and make it desolate; he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. They will be scorched, and few people will be left. The cities will lie in ruins. The earth will be utterly broken, split apart, and violently shaken (Isaiah 24:1–19). When the angel pours out the last bowl of God's wrath, there will be a great earthquake, such as has never occurred since man has been on the earth, and the cities will collapse (Revelation 16:17–19). The sun and moon will be darkened, mountains will crumble, and islands will be submerged (Revelation 6:12, 14). These statements are meant to be taken literally. It is apocalyptic language because this *is* the apocalypse, a revelation of the violent and destructive end of the age.

During the millennium, heaven and earth will be renewed (Isaiah 65:17-25, Revelation 21:1, 5) as the curse is progressively lifted from the world and as the Messiah renews and rebuilds according to his great wisdom and power. The wild animals will learn to live in harmony with man, and the creation will be set free from its bondage to corruption and enjoy the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:21).

The world will be completely transformed. Eye hasn't seen, and ear hasn't heard, and man hasn't imagined what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9). It will be more beautiful and glorious and interesting than our wildest

dreams. Wild animals will no longer be dangerous, and agriculture will flourish. Among the subjects, there will be a decreasing occurrence of war, crime, corruption, pain, mourning, and tears, but this is not quite paradise. When Satan is released, he will succeed in deceiving the nations once again.

During the millennium, the earth will be restored to its original condition as God created it. It is described as the new heavens and the new earth (Isaiah 65:17, 66:21–22, Revelation 21:1, 2 Pet 3:13), but is better translated as ‘the renewed sky and earth.’ Jesus called it ‘the new world,’ ‘the regeneration’ or ‘the renewal of all things’ (Matthew 19:28). Peter, preaching in Jerusalem after the resurrection, said that heaven had received Christ until “the time comes for God to restore everything,” which he had spoken about by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago (Acts 3:21). Paul wrote that the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed when the creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God (Romans 8:19–21). We eagerly await release from the limitations of our present bodies.

The curse which was imposed on the earth (Genesis 3:17) will be progressively removed. During Messiah’s reign, he will renew the earth until there are no more natural disasters. The wolf will live with the lamb and the leopard with the young goat (Isaiah 11:6–9). What better way to describe the harmony of a perfected earth? What is said about the animal world will also be true about all of God’s creatures, including harmful bacteria and viruses. However, the world will not attain the perfection of Eden because not all the subjects will be redeemed. The regeneration will start with the land of Israel and from there spread out over all the earth (Isaiah 51:4–5).

John saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. However, Zechariah said that the Messiah’s rule will extend from sea to sea (Zechariah 9:10), and on that day living waters will flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the Dead

Sea and half of them to the Mediterranean (Zechariah 14:8–9). The word “sea” is often used metaphorically in the Bible for the rebellious and turbulent nations. David says that God stills the roaring of the seas and their waves, and the turmoil of the nations (Ps 65:7).

Oh, the raging of many nations, they rage like the raging sea! Oh, the uproar of the peoples – they roar like the roaring of great waters! (Isaiah 17:12).

When John says that the sea was no more (Revelation 21:1), he is more than likely using the word symbolically, meaning that the new world will be at peace, without the turbulence created by warring nations.

Large cities, especially megacities will no longer be on the agenda. We don't know what technology will be deemed beneficial, or what transport or education there will be, but the world will be freed from the tragic effects of sin and the curse, of rampant greed and pride. Everything will be recreated. The future hope that Christians through the ages have always vaguely thought about as heaven will initially be a renewed heaven and earth. The redeemed saints will be fulfilled in their role as rulers, teachers, and carers of the new world.

There are prophecies in Romans 8:18-23 and Isaiah 65-66 that speak of the renewal of the world and the glorious messianic reign which complement what Jesus said. He told his disciples that when he sits on his glorious throne in the renewed creation, they would also sit on twelve thrones, governing the twelve tribes of Israel. The words of Romans 8 apply to the messianic reign and should be read with that in mind. Our hope is in the return of the Messiah, in the resurrection of the righteous, and the renewal of all things. The creation is waiting for that day when it will join God's children in glorious freedom from death and decay. Paul says that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed to us. The creation has become subject to futility; it is frustrated and not achieving its original purpose.

The millennial temple

The Messiah's glory will be seen above Jerusalem (Isaiah 4:5, 60:1-3) and will also fill the temple (Ezekiel 43:2-4). All the nations will make yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship the Lord (Zechariah 14:16-18). The knowledge of the Lord will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).

The millennial city of Jerusalem and its temple will be glorious and in need of the world's precious resources. All nations will go there to worship the Lord and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor to it (Isaiah 60:9–11, Haggai 2:7–9, Revelation 21:24).

Only the redeemed can enter the New Jerusalem, so the nations and kings cannot bring their wealth there; it would be superfluous. The unregenerate survivors of the nations will be healed of their animosities through God's word that goes forth from Zion.

When John saw his vision of the future Jerusalem, he saw the glorified New Jerusalem. Even in Revelation 21:24–27 he speaks about the New Jerusalem. The nations will come to its light and kings bring their wealth to it, and its gates will never be shut. But they can't enter New Jerusalem, it is only for those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life. They will bring their offerings to Jerusalem, but they are destined for the earthly city, not the celestial city. They will offer their gifts and worship the Lord at the temple.

The mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it (Isaiah 2:2). The temple will be on top of the mountain and the city itself will be on the southern slope (Ezekiel 40:2). The New Jerusalem will be in the sky above Mount Zion (Isaiah 4:5, 60:1-3).

The land of Israel will be inhabited by God's chosen people, the Jews, and also by the foreigners who reside among them and

have children. People of the Middle East who live in the enlarged Israel, including Palestinians, will not be rejected. They will be allotted an inheritance when the land is divided among the population (Ezekiel 47:22-23). The whole earth will be characterized by peace and justice, and the knowledge of the Lord.

He has founded his city on the holy mountain. The LORD loves the gates of Zion more than all the other dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are said of you, city of God (Psalm 87:1-3).

After the earthquake at Jesus' return, Mount Zion will be raised above the surrounding district and the temple will be built on top of it. The nations of the world are the unbelievers who survived the Great Tribulation and who now live in submission to the King of kings. They will bring their worldly resources to Jerusalem and give honor to the king. Nearly all of the latter prophets talk about a glorified Jerusalem, with Israel victorious, and their former enemies living peacefully and in submission to them.

Millennial Life

The millennium, as far as has been revealed to us, is the final thousand-year history of this earth. The Messiah, Jesus, will rule, and the church will be his government. However, there are no scriptures that portray them as physically ruling the earth. As resurrected beings, their home is the heavenly realm, more specifically, in the New Jerusalem in the sky above Israel. Jesus has made his people to be a kingdom and priests to serve their God and they will reign over the earth (Revelation 5:9-10). The inhabitants of the earth during the millennium are on the one hand Israel, the people of God, and on the other hand, the unregenerate nations, the survivors of the day of the Lord (Zechariah 14:16). These nations will go up year after year to

worship King Jesus, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles, in a similar way that present-day Muslims make a pilgrimage to Mecca. The nations will be ruled over by the Messiah with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:9, Revelation 2:27, 12:5), implying that they are not redeemed. They begin as survivors of the rebellious nations, and they end after a thousand years as nations deceived by Satan and rebelling against God once more. Israel will be converted at the beginning of the millennium and will be God's people on earth, organizing worship at the temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 43) in which chapter Jesus' return is described, and where he tells Ezekiel: "Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. Compare Like 1:32-33, Revelation 11:15.

Although not emphasized, there is hope that individual Gentiles will be saved by faith during the millennium. The temple will be a house of prayer for all nations, and God will bring foreigners who bind themselves to him to his holy mountain and give them joy in his house of prayer (Isa 56:6-8).

Isaiah said that while the new heavens and the new earth endure, so Israel's name and descendants will endure, as separate from the nations. The nations will come and bow down before the Lord at Jerusalem and there they will view the skeletons of those who rebelled against God at Armageddon, a loathsome sight and a warning to all mankind (Isaiah 66:22-24). Jerusalem will be a delight and its people Israel a joy to the Lord who will not let them suffer or mourn anymore. They will build houses, plant vineyards, and enjoy life in security. They will live long lives and bear children (Isaiah 65:17-25), unlike the resurrected church who will no longer marry or bear children. The latter will live like angels in New Jerusalem and the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be theirs.

All rulers on earth will serve and obey them (Daniel 7:27, Revelation 20:4, 6).

The saints will live in New Jerusalem from the day of their resurrection, after meeting the Lord in the air, and the heavenly city comes down out of heaven from God (Revelation 21:10). This is paradise restored. The river of the water of life is there and the Tree of Life continually bears fruit. They will see God, they will serve him, and they will reign forever. The leaves of the tree of life in the holy city are for the rehabilitation of the nations on earth. The inhabitants of the holy city don't need healing, only those who are outside, those who are still described as "dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood" (Rev 22:15). The saints, those who are victorious in this life (Revelation 2:26), will rule over them with justice and righteousness, and the world will be renewed under this clean government that only has the welfare of the nations at heart. So, the nations will walk by the light of the holy city and they will bring their splendour to it as offerings. Nevertheless, the Messiah and his saints will rule the world with an iron sceptre, so that all nations will come and worship the Lord (Revelation 15:4). The redeemed are never referred to as the nations. They are those who came out of every nation, tribe, people, and language. During the millennium, the nations will be well cared for by the saints who will be their medical personnel, their lawyers and judges (1 Corinthians 6:2, Mathew 19:28, Luke 22:29-30), and their government (Luke 19:17-19).

There is no mention of redemption in the blood of Jesus for these subjects of the millennial kingdom. They are not given a second chance. The last generation is again deceived by Satan. They rebel against God in a repeat of Armageddon, and fire comes down from heaven and devours them. After that the final judgment takes place. The physical heavens and earth flee from

God's presence without leaving a trace (Compare Daniel 2:35). King Jesus will hand over his kingdom to the Father, and after that, only the New Jerusalem remains, together with its inhabitants: God the Father, Jesus, the angels and the redeemed. Nothing else about the eternal state has been revealed.

Integrate what has not been covered from the following:

THE MILLENNIUM

(Rev 20:2-7)

The millennium is the 1000-year reign on earth by Jesus the Messiah, which will follow immediately after his return to earth. In the Gospels, whenever Jesus spoke about the coming Kingdom of God, this millennial reign was what he was talking about. The Bible says he is coming soon, and the New Testament was written over 1900 years ago. This means that the church is always meant to have a sense of expectancy. The Christian hope is not going to heaven; it is a keen hope that Jesus will return soon and establish his reign on earth.

Jesus is the Savior of the whole world and his followers come from every tribe, people, language, and nation, but he is first and foremost the Jewish Messiah. God revealed himself to Abraham and his descendants first, and it was Abraham whom he promised would be heir of the world (Gen 17:4-8, Rom 4:13). When Jesus returns from heaven his feet will touch down on the Mount of Olives on the eastern side of Jerusalem (Zech 14:4). Jerusalem will be the center of activities at the end of this age, a city that will be surrounded by the armies of the nations at the battle of Armageddon, and the place where Jesus will return to defeat them.

A kingdom consists of a king, his monarchy, his subjects, and the domain. The future king of the whole earth will be Jesus Christ the Messiah. A huge monarchy, the royal family, will consist of the elect, those chosen by God through faith in Jesus. This will be part of their glorification. The millennial government will consist of millions of people from all over the world, a community of true believers in Jesus Christ. The subjects of the kingdom will be those who survive the horrific time of death and destruction during the seven years of the Great Tribulation before Jesus returns (Zech 14:16). At least half the world's population will perish at that time. Satan and his demons will not be there. He will be securely imprisoned, so that he can no longer deceive the nations, the surviving unbelievers.

The nation of Israel will be at the center of the kingdom because Israel has been God's people ever since he chose Abraham and his descendants, as recorded in Gen 12:1-3. The Messiah is Jewish, and according to numerous Old Testament prophecies, he will reign from Jerusalem over a converted Israel. Jerusalem is the city of God, the eternal holy city chosen by God as the only place on earth for his temple. Three chapters in the book of Romans describe God's choosing of Israel as his people, their unbelief, and their subsequent salvation. Paul said that all of Israel would be saved, as the prophets predicted. The Deliverer will come from Zion and banish ungodliness from Jacob (Rom 11:26). This is a comprehensive national conversion. *All* Israel will be saved, and ungodliness will be *banished* from Jacob. Paul quotes from Isa 59:20 and Jeremiah 31:31-34, which focuses on the conversion of ethnic Israel under a new covenant. Isaiah says the Deliverer will come to Zion, but Paul's quotation says he will come from Zion, in line with Ps 53:6. Jesus will return to Zion and then he'll roar out to defeat Israel's enemies (Joel 3:16).

This time the Lord will put his law within them, he'll write it on their hearts. He'll forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more. This will not only apply to the survivors who live in Israel and Jerusalem, but to all Jews who survive in the other

nations of the world (Isa 11:11-12, 14:1-2, 43:5-7, 60:4, 9, 66:20, Zech 8:8). They will all return to the Jewish homeland.

The converted Jews will be natural inhabitants of the world during the millennium. They will be brought home to live as the people of God. They will come to Jerusalem with their wealth, assisted by the nations where they are living. They will believe in the Lord and his Messiah. There will be old people with staff in hand in the millennial Jerusalem, and boys and girls will play in the streets. Their farms will be fruitful (Isa 65:20-25, Zech 8:3-6, 12). They won't have resurrection bodies like the Messiah's monarchy, however, they will be living under a righteous King in truth and righteousness. During the millennium, the whole earth will be renewed and enjoy a prosperity never known before. Jerusalem and the land of Israel will be especially honored as the city and land of the King. The sky will produce its dew and the earth will produce its full yield. Jerusalem will be the center of the earth and nations will flock there to pray, to inquire of the Lord, and to worship him.

What about New Jerusalem described in Rev 21-22? Where does it fit in? It will be the home of the resurrected redeemed, corresponding to earthly Jerusalem, but in a different space-time dimension. Its glory will be seen above earthly Jerusalem. It is the home of the resurrected saints and of the Messiah and God himself. Paul mentions Jerusalem above in contrast to the present-day Jerusalem (Gal 4:25-26). Abraham is waiting for a city with permanent foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb 11:10). These men of faith in Hebrews 11 were longing for a better country, that is, a heavenly one. God has prepared a city for them (Heb 11:16). The Greek adjective 'heavenly' can mean 'being in heaven, belonging there, or coming from there'. The third sense is relevant here. We have no permanent city here but are looking for the one that is coming (Heb 13:14). This city will come down out of heaven from God (Rev 21:2, 10). It is Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22). Rewards, including resurrection bodies, are always spoken of as being prepared for

us in heaven, but that is not the place where we will enjoy them. As New Jerusalem will come down to earth *from* heaven, it is not helpful to equate it with heaven.

There is scriptural evidence that the city, or at least its glory, will be seen above Jerusalem, shining as a bright light of the glory of God (Isa 60:1-3). The inhabitants of New Jerusalem will be resurrected people with immortal bodies and special powers. When Jesus was resurrected, he could walk through walls. He came and went at will for 40 days, making various appearances to his disciples. He talked to them, ate with them, and they touched him. He prepared a meal for them by the lake. During the millennium, the saints will have bodies like Jesus' glorious, resurrected body. They will be priests of God and the Messiah and will rule with him. God will be among them, making his home with them, and there won't be any more death, grief, crying, or pain.

John saw the thrones of the elect who were reigning with Christ for 1000 years (Rev 20:4-6). He saw the martyrs who had died during the tribulation. Jesus had told the church at Laodicea, that he would enable those who conquer to share his throne, just as he had conquered and shared his Father's throne (Rev 3:21). The 24 elders sang a new song (Rev 5:9-10), saying that Jesus had been killed and with his blood had purchased people for God *from every tribe, language, people and nation*, and made them a kingdom and priests for God, and that *they would reign over the earth*.

Paul told Timothy, that if we endure, we will reign with Christ (2 Tim 2:12). Jesus promised his twelve apostles that in the new world, when he sits on his glorious throne, they would sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt 19:28). Putting all this together, all the righteous will rule with Christ during the millennium; not just those who are martyred during the Great Tribulation. All this New Testament teaching is based on Daniel's prophecy that the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven would be given to the saints (Dan 7:27).

The saints will receive and possess the kingdom forever (Dan 7:18). Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. If we endure, we will reign with him (2 Tim 2:12). Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection! They will reign with the Messiah for 1000 years (Rev 20:6).

The saints are the future rulers of the world. The Jews saw themselves as the saints in Daniel's prophecy, but progressive revelation shows that it is the church who will reign. In rejecting Jesus, the Jews forfeited their right (Mt 21:43). The saints will have authority over the nations and will rule them with a rod of iron (Rev 2:26). They will be priests of God and the Messiah. Our priesthood under the Messiah will be a mediatorial service that declares his will to the subjects of the kingdom. The saints will spread the knowledge of God to the nations, giving instructions on how they should obey and worship the King. And they will continually worship him themselves. The throne room vision in Rev 4 has 25 thrones; the throne of God is surrounded by 24 thrones on whom are seated 24 elders. Only humans are created in the image of God, and only humans are appointed by God to rule the world as his regents. These 24 elders are representatives of the elect, 12 representing the tribes of Israel, and 12 representing the apostles of the Church. Compare Rev 21:12-14 where the 12 gates of New Jerusalem are named after the 12 tribes and the 12 foundations are named after the 12 apostles.

In addition to being appointed priests and rulers, the righteous will be rewarded according to their faithfulness and service for the Lord. In the parable of the ten minas, the nobleman commended the good and faithful servants and told one he would have authority over ten cities, and another that he would have authority over five cities (Lk19:11-27). Obedience in this life will result in greater responsibility and status during the millennium. In the chapter on the resurrection, Paul tells us to be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,

knowing that in the Lord our labor is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The world will be completely transformed. Eye hasn't seen, and ear hasn't heard, and man hasn't imagined what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9). It will be more beautiful and glorious and interesting than our wildest dreams. Wild animals will no longer be dangerous. The world will flourish. There will be an ever-decreasing occurrence of war, crime, corruption, pain, mourning, tears, and destructive weather.

The kingdom will be a theocracy. The population of the world will be ruled by the Messiah 'with an iron rod'. It will be a long era of peace, justice, and righteousness (Isa 9:6-7). The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isa 11:9). Instruction will go forth from Jerusalem and all nations will make pilgrimages there. The nations will beat their swords into plowshares. That is, they'll manufacture tools instead of weapons, and wars will cease worldwide (Isa 2:32-33). The subjects of the kingdom will live normal human lives, farming, building houses, and bearing children (Isa 65:17-25).

The king will reign from his throne in New Jerusalem (Rev 22:3). As the Messiah, he will rule from David's throne as prophesied by the latter prophets (Jer 33:14-18). Jerusalem itself will be raised up high and the surrounding area will be lowered as a plain (Isa 2:2, Zech 14:10-11).

The monarchy will be resurrected at Jesus' return (Mt 24:31, 1 Thess 4:13-18). Those governing the world will have immortal, imperishable bodies (1 Cor 15:50-52). They will not live with the subjects; they will live in New Jerusalem which will come down out of heaven from God (Rev 21:2-22:5). The description of New Jerusalem is very symbolic, reflecting the beauty, perfection, and glory of the home of the righteous. God himself is there with them and they will rule with him over the earth (Rev 5:9-10). The millennial Jerusalem and New Jerusalem are intricately related, but they are not the same. The New Jerusalem

may hover above earthly Jerusalem, or it may occupy the same space but exist in a different dimension. As the glorified Jesus came and went during 40 days after his resurrection, appearing to people, talking to them, and eating with them, the resurrected saints will do the same.

During the millennium, the earth will be restored to its original condition as God created it. It is described as ‘the new heavens and the new earth’ (Isa 65:17, 66:21-22, Rev 21:1, 2 Pet 3:13), but is better translated as ‘the renewed sky and earth’. Matthew calls it a ‘new world’ or a ‘regeneration’ (Mt 19:28). Peter, preaching in Jerusalem after the resurrection, said that heaven had received Christ until the time for restoring all things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago (Acts 3:21). Paul wrote that all creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God when the creation will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom 8:19-21). The curse that was imposed on the earth’s visible surface (Gen 3:17) will be progressively removed. During Messiah’s reign, he will renew the earth until there are no more natural disasters. The wolf will live with the lamb and the leopard with the young goat (Isa 11:6-9). What better way to describe the harmony of a perfected earth? What is said about the animal world will also be true about all God’s creatures, including harmful bacteria and viruses. The world will return to the perfection of Eden. This regeneration starts with the nation of Israel and from there spreads out over all the earth (Isa 51:4-5). The Messiah’s resting place will be glorious. Isa 60 speaks of the future glory of Jerusalem and some of the verses are quoted in Rev 21:23-25 which describe New Jerusalem. All the nations will help with the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The last enemy death will finally be destroyed at the end of the millennium.

The devastation during the Great Tribulation will be enormous, as described by Isa 24. The Lord will empty the earth and make it desolate; he will twist its surface and scatter its inhabitants. They will be scorched, and few people will be left. The cities

will lie in ruins. The earth will be utterly broken, split apart, and violently shaken (Isa 24:1-19).

When the angel pours out the last bowl of God's wrath, there will be a great earthquake, such as has never occurred since man has been on the earth, and the cities will collapse (Rev 16:18-19). The sun and moon will become darkened, every mountain will crumble, and every island will be submerged (Rev 6:12, 14).

So, the Lord's first task will be to restore the desolated earth. Civilization will start again from scratch. In John's one-verse description of the of the new earth, he said that the sea was no more. That doesn't mean the world will have any less water, but its distribution would be different; more lakes and rivers, more subterranean water, or a greater cloud covering. When Noah's flood began, all the springs of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened (Gen 7:11). In the Assumption of Moses, God appears in the last days to punish the Gentiles and the sea retires into the abyss (10:6). In the Sibylline Oracles, a great star falls from heaven and burns up the deep sea (5:158-59). Even if there is no sea, the same volume of water on earth would remain, whether in the abyss or more abundant lakes and rivers, or in the atmosphere. God will have something better for us.

However, there is another interpretation. Zech 14:8-9 says that 'on that day' living waters will flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the Dead Sea and half of them to the Mediterranean. And on that same day, the Lord will be king over all the earth, indicating that seas will still be there. Looking at Ps 65:7, 89:9, 93:3-4, Isa 17:12, Dan 7:2-3, 17, Lk 21:25, and Rev 13:1, 20:13, and 21:1, one can see that 'sea' is often used as a metaphor for the turbulent sinful nations. So, when John says that the sea was no more, he may mean that the world will then be at peace without the turbulence created by warring nations.

Large cities, especially megacities will no longer be on the agenda. We can't be sure what technology will be deemed beneficial, or what transport or education. The world will be

freed from the tragic effects of sin and the curse. Everything will be recreated anew. The future hope that Christians through the ages have always thought of as 'heaven' is better envisaged as the New Jerusalem and a renewed earth. The redeemed saints will be fulfilled in their role as rulers, teachers, and managers of the new world.

At the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be released from his prison in the abyss, and he will go out once again to test the faithfulness of mankind. He is the spirit who works in those who are disobedient (Eph 2:2) and he will soon succeed in instigating a rebellion. Despite 1000 years of peace and righteousness and submission to God, mankind will again be deceived and will march from all directions towards Jerusalem, the camp of God's people. This alludes to the Israel camp in the wilderness which was a ceremonially clean area around the tabernacle where the Israelites had their tents (Num 5:1-4). They will surround earthly Jerusalem, not New Jerusalem and the resurrected saints. Fire will come down from heaven and consume the armies and the devil will be captured and thrown into hell. The Last Judgment will follow.