

15. THE MILLENNIUM

The millennium is the thousand-year reign over the Earth of Jesus the Messiah, and his Church. It begins at his glorious return and ends on judgment day when he hands the kingship of the world back to the Father (1 Cor 15:24).

Sequence of revealed millennial events

- Satan is incarcerated for 1000 years (Rev 20:1-3)
- The entire nation of Israel is converted (Zech 12:10-12, 13:1, Rev 11:13) and live in their promised land supervising the worship at Jerusalem
- The Messiah is enthroned in Mount Zion (Ps 110:2)
- The Messiah rules the world (Isa 65:17-19, Zech 14:9, Rev 11:15-18, 19:15-16, 20:4-6, 21:1, 22-26).
- The New Jerusalem descends from heaven - the saints' eternal state (Rev 21:2-22:5)
- The saints are rewarded (Lk 14:14, 2 Cor 5:10, Dan 7:27)
- The resurrected will not be married and like angels they don't die, they are God's children (Lk 20:35-36)
- The saints rule the world (Rev 5:10).
- Creation is renewed (Rom 8:18-21, 21:1)
- All nations make pilgrimage to Zion to worship the Lord (Isa 60:3, 11-12)
- Satan is released and rebels for the last time (Rev 20:7-9)
- Satan is destroyed (Rev 20:10)
- The wicked are judged (Rev 20:11-15) after which death and Hades are banished forever.
- The physical universe comes to an end (Rev 20:11)

❖ **The binding of Satan**

There should be no doubt about the length of this incarceration or its effectiveness. After the Messiah's return described in Revelation 19, Satan is seized by an angel and bound for a thousand years. He is thrown into the Abyss, in the spiritual realm, which is locked and sealed so that he cannot deceive the nations during the millennium. (Rev 20:2-3). Those who say that Satan is currently bound are deluded. The apostle John said: The whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19). Paul calls him the god of this age (2 Cor 4:4). Those who like to believe that Jesus is ruling the world now are also mislead. Seated on the Father's throne he rules the universe, but concerning the Earth, he is still an heir, yet to be glorified (Rom 8:17). He begins his reign of the Earth at the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:17 19:6) and Satan's arrest is an immediate consequence.

❖ **The conversion of Israel**

It is from Zion that the Lord Jesus Christ will go out and fight the armies besieging Jerusalem, and it is from Zion that he will turn godlessness away from Jacob (Zech 12:9-10, Rom 11:25-26). The Holy Spirit will be poured out on Israel (Isa 44:3, Ezek 39:29, Joel 2:28-32, Zech 12:10, 13:1) and as a result, Israel will look at the one whom their ancestors pierced and mourn for the fact that their ancestors were responsible for his death (Zech 12:10-12, Mt 24:30, Jn 19:37, Rev 1:7).

❖ **All Israel return to their promised land**

All Israel will be gathered to their land from other lands (Isa 11:11-12, Jer 23:3-8, Ezek 20:41-42, 37:25, Mic 2:12-13, Zeph 3:19-20) and God will make a covenant of everlasting peace with them. His temple will be among them, and they will organize worship for the nations (Ezek 44:9, 15-16). Israel will be redeemed and regenerated by the Spirit of God, but their ancestors forfeited the kingdom and only those who became Christians are part of the resurrected community who will rule the Earth from New Jerusalem. However, this remnant of Israel will be God's people on Earth and the nations will recognize that the Lord sets Israel apart and lives among them forever (Ezek 37:24-28). God's commitment to Israel is irrevocable (Jer 31:36-37, Rom 11:29). God will take the Israelites out of the nations where they were exiled

and bring them back to their land. They will be his people and he will be their God. 'David' (Jesus, the descendant of David) will be king over them forever and they will live in the land he gave to Jacob. God will put his sanctuary among Israel forever and then the nations will know that the Lord sets Israel apart (Ezek 37:21-28).

All Israel will be saved at Jesus' return, but only after the first resurrection, so that they will live on Earth as survivors of the Great Tribulation. They will live in their promised land, Israel, during the millennium and serve the Messiah (Ezek 37:21-28). At the last judgment, Israel, as God's chosen people, will be resurrected to join the elect in New Jerusalem. During the millennium, Israel and the Church are both designated God's people, but Israel live on the Earth, while the resurrected Church live in New Jerusalem.

The borders of Israel that will be divided among their tribes include southern Lebanon (Ezek 47:15). An enlarged version includes Egypt and Assyria, and parts of Syria and Iraq, whose inhabitants will also be regarded as the Lord's people (Isa 19:23-25). Ezekiel divides the smaller version into twelve parallel regions from West to East, one for each tribe. The temple is in the middle of a special area between Judah and Benjamin, while Jerusalem, which Ezekiel calls 'The Lord is There,' is 5 km south of the temple (Ezek 40:2, 48:8, 15). The priesthood will be restored and Levites who are descendants of Zadok will minister before the Lord. (Ezek 44:15).

❖ The Messiah's earthly throne

When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, he told her she would bear a son and call him Jesus. God would give him the throne of his ancestor David and he would reign over Jacob's descendants forever (Lk 1:31-33), thus fulfilling God's promises to David (2 Sam 7:11-13, Isa 9:6-7, 16:5). When Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord coming from the East, it entered the temple in Jerusalem and filled the temple. Then the Lord, speaking from inside the temple, told Ezekiel it was the place of his throne and the place for the soles of his feet, where he would live among Israel forever (Ezek 43:1-6). From that millennial temple, Jesus will rule the Earth (Zech 14:9). These promises are to do with this present world but in a new age. This reign of Jesus has not yet begun because he currently has no throne on Earth, he is waiting in heaven (Ps 110:1, Heb 10:13). As he said, his throne will be in the temple in Jerusalem. His rule is not spiritual or in people's hearts or in heaven.

The Lord will extend the Messiah's mighty scepter from Zion and tell him to rule in the midst of your enemies (Ps 110:2). At the same time, Jesus will be present in New Jerusalem (Rev 21:2 – 22:5). The throne of God and the Messiah will be in the Holy City and his servants (the elect) will serve him. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. Jesus, as the Messiah, will rule the world from his throne in Jerusalem, and the Church will rule the world for him from their home in New Jerusalem. Jesus told the apostles they would rule over and judge the twelve tribes of Israel, and by analogy, Christians from other nations may well rule over the areas with which they were familiar during their lifetimes.

We are not told that Jesus will be visible to Israel and the nations of the world who come to worship him at Jerusalem. His glory will fill the temple and be visible above it. His throne will be there and he'll rule from there as the promised descendant of David, the Messiah. However, it is also possible that Jesus will make appearances to people as he did during the forty days after his resurrection. The Lord told Ezekiel that he would make an everlasting covenant of peace with Israel. He would establish them and increase their numbers and put *his temple* among them forever. His dwelling place will be with them, and he'll be their God and they'll be his people. Then the nations will know that the Lord sets Israel apart when his sanctuary is among them forever (Ezek 37:26-27).

❖ **The Messiah begins his reign**

After Satan is captured and bound for 1000 years (20:1-3), Jesus begins his reign on earth. He cannot do it while Satan is in control which is the situation now because the present age is evil (Gal 1:4). The 1000-year reign of Christ is mentioned six times in Revelation 20 - just to make sure we don't overlook it! Those who had been martyred because of their Christian testimony and the word of God are resurrected to reign with Christ. This is the first resurrection. The renewed Earth over which he rules is mentioned briefly in 21:1. God says he is making everything new, for the old order of things has passed away. More details are found in the writings of the OT prophets (Isa 65:17-25, Zech 14).

Then people will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory, and he'll send his angels to gather his elect from all directions, from one end of the Earth to the other (Mk 13:26).

The seventh angel blew his trumpet and loud voices came from heaven, saying: The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Messiah, and he'll reign forever. The twenty-four elders who were seated on their thrones before God bowed their heads and worshiped God, saying: We thank you, Lord God Almighty who was and is, because you have taken your great power and *begun to reign*. The nations were angry, and you have poured out your wrath on them. The time for judging the dead has come. You'll reward your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small, and you'll destroy those who destroy the Earth (Rev 11:15-18).

The judgment of the sheep and the goats occurs at Jesus' return. Judgment results in separation. The righteous dead are resurrected to eternal life in New Jerusalem where they'll take their inheritance, the kingdom that was prepared for them since the creation of the world. The rebels are killed by the wrath of God on the Day of the Lord and they go to Hades where they'll be judged at the Last Judgment after the millennium (Isa 24:21-23). Those who survive the Day of the Lord judgment (Zech 14:16) will continue to live on Earth where the Messiah and his monarchy will rule them with a rod of iron (Rev 2:26-27, 19:16).

❖ **The Kingdom of God – the Messianic Reign**

The millennium is the name given to the coming age which begins with Jesus' return because its duration is a thousand years. Whether literal or symbolic, 'a thousand years' is repeated six times to emphasize the long duration (Rev 20:1-6). Jesus will reign the world with an iron fist resulting in a reign of justice, righteousness, and peace. The kingdom has its source in God the Father, its king is the man Jesus the Messiah, and the monarchy is the Church who inherit the kingship (Dan 7:22, 27, Matt 5:3, 5, 10). The subjects are unbelieving survivors of the Great Tribulation period (Zech 14:16). Jesus will rule the world with an iron scepter because the subjects of his kingdom are not redeemed (Ps 2:8-9, Rev 2:27, 12:5, 19:15-16). His reign will be characterized by justice and righteousness (Isa 9:7, 11:4-5). Knowledge of the Lord will spread over the Earth as waters cover the seabed (Isa 11:9, Hab 2:14). Jesus will reign as king over the world until he has destroyed all opposing dominion, authority, and power. God's enemies include all forms of evil and rebellion against

his will. It will take time to rebuild the world that was destroyed, to reclaim deserts and tame rebellious man and animals, to reverse genetic malfunctions caused by mutations and eliminate all disease, to rebuild godly family relationships and loving societies that are not based on pride and greed.

❖ **The saints reward is to rule the world**

The Messiah will reward the saints for faithful service they have done on Earth during their lifetimes (2 Cor 5:10, Eph 6:7-8). Fire will test the quality of each person's work, and some will be burnt up like wood, hay, or straw (1 Cor 3:8, 12-15). All the saints inherit the kingship of the world and rule with Christ during the millennium (Dan 7:18, 22, 27, Mt 25:34, Rev 5:9-10, 20:6). They constitute the monarchy in the kingdom; they are not subjects. They inherit the kingship that Israel forfeited (Mt 8:11-12). Details of the reign are not revealed, but in a relevant parable, Jesus told a faithful servant to take charge of ten cities (Lk 19:17). They inherit the Davidic kingship (Dan 7:22, 27, Mt 5:3, 5, 10, Rev 3:21, 5:10) and rule the world from their heavenly home, New Jerusalem.

George Eldon Ladd thought it was impossible to think of two peoples of God through whom God is carrying out two redemptive purposes (The Gospel of the Kingdom p. 118), but we can't avoid it. Israel and the Church are different communities and God made different covenants with them both. The Church includes present-day Jews, and redeemed Israel will include foreigners, but the two communities should not be confused. The covenant promises to Israel include the promised land, Jerusalem, a future millennial temple, and a benevolent rule by their future king, the Messiah - all earthly promises. The covenant promises to the Church include union with Christ, forgiveness of sins, redemption through his blood, a sharing in the divine nature, resurrection bodies, an eternal future in New Jerusalem, adoption as sons into God's family, and a sharing in Christ's rule over the nations, a privilege that Israel forfeited when first-century Jews rejected Jesus

❖ **The nations will flock to Zion to worship the Lord**

All nations will go and worship the Lord making pilgrimages to the temple and bringing their wealth as offerings (Ps 22:27-28, Isa 2:3-4, 11:10-11, 45:22-25, 51:3-5, 60:1-7, 11-14, Dan 7:13-4, Zech 14:16-17, Rev 15:3-4, 21:24-26).

Israel's ancient enemies, Egyptians and Assyrians, will worship together with Israel. They will bring sacrifices and offerings and make vows to the Lord. The Messiah will rule over them strictly, with a rod of iron. Any nation that doesn't go to Jerusalem to worship the Lord will have no rain.

❖ **The renewal of all things – the liberation of creation and the River of Life**

The millennium follows a time of great distress in the world: warfare, famine, and the death of at least half of the world's population. Finally, there is the destruction that will result from the wrath of God being poured out on a rebellious world: worldwide earthquakes, volcanoes, meteorites, and the destruction of cities and roads. All the people on Earth will tremble at my presence. Mountains will crumble, cliffs will collapse, and every wall will fall to the ground (Ezek 38:20). The divine presence is Messianic. All passages that speak of the Earth shaking on the Day of the Lord are Messianic (Isa 24:19-23, Ezek 38:17-23, Joel 3:15-16). Peter says: On that day the heavens will be destroyed by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. But God has promised a new Earth and a new sky and we look forward to that place where righteousness will exist (2 Pet 3:12-13). Jesus called the millennium 'the renewal of all things.' Peter said it will be a time when God restores everything (Act 3:21).

Paul said that creation waits in expectation for the children of God to be revealed. After the righteous are glorified with new bodies at the resurrection, the whole creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay (Rom 8:18-22). The nations will not wage war with each other. Isaiah sees the removal of violence from nature (11:6-9). People will live longer lives exceeding one hundred years (65:20-25). The apostle John saw a renewed sky and Earth in a vision (Rev 21:1). What can be seen as different in the sky? Maybe the cloud cover will be different and also there will be the glory of the Holy City in the sky in the Middle East. On Earth, there was 'no more sea,' which may refer to the cessation of warfare. The sea often refers to the turbulent nations (Dan 7:2-3). The nations are still there (21:24-26), but instead of fighting one another, they are now worshipping the Lord.

The living waters that flow from the temple in Jerusalem east to the Dead Sea and west to the Mediterranean as seen by several prophets (Joel 3:18, Ezek 47:1-12, Zech 14:8) depict the fertility and

productiveness of Israel during the millennium. The description of the River of Water of Life and the Tree of Life in New Jerusalem symbolizes its paradisaical nature and the healing and restoration the inhabitants will bring to the nations (Rev 22:1-2). The way the prophets talk about the River of Life suggests a literal river, a harbinger of rich and productive agriculture which may characterize the renewed world rather than modern technology.

❖ **New Jerusalem – Life in Paradise**

New Jerusalem belongs to the new age, the millennium (Rev 21:1-2) and yet it exists in the heavenly realm. Currently existing as the heavenly Jerusalem, its community consists of God, Jesus, angels, and the spirits of the righteous (Heb 12:22). It will descend from heaven as the resurrection when Jesus returns to Earth with those who have fallen asleep in him (1 Thess 4:14) who after resurrection become the Bride of Christ, the community of the redeemed, the resurrected children of God from both OT and NT eras. They'll dwell in the heavenly realm in the sky above Mount Zion (Isa 60:1-3) and the initial event there will be the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, as the Messiah and his people are united in a new and glorious way for eternity. New Jerusalem is what renews the sky, its bright and glorious presence will transform the sky in the Middle East (Isa 60:1-3, 19-21). The throne of God and the Lamb are in the city and the glory of God shines from it, so that it has no need of sun or moon (Isa 24:23, Rev 21:23, 22:5). The nations will walk by its light and the kings of the Earth will bring their splendor to it (Rev 21:24).

The New Jerusalem is the saints' eternal home. God will be there with his people, and they'll see his face. The Holy City is a metaphor for the community of the redeemed (Rev 21:2-3, 7, 9-10, 27, 22:3-5). Jesus said he would build his Church (community), and this is it, a multitude of redeemed people from every tribe, people, nation, and language. For them, there is no more death, mourning, crying, or pain (Isa 25:6-8, 65:18-19, 1 Cor 15:26, Rev 7:17, 21:4).

Life in New Jerusalem begins the moment the Church is resurrected and meets the Lord in the air. At the same time heaven comes down to Earth (Rev 21:9-10). This is expressed in three ways:

1. Jesus returns with those who have fallen asleep in him (1 Thess 4:14).

2. The dead in Christ rise and those who are still alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever (1 Thess 4:16-17).
3. An angel said he would show John the bride, the wife of the Lamb, and then he sees the Holy City, the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22) coming down out of heaven from God.

The Church is united with her Lord at his return and remains with him forever in New Jerusalem. They rule the world together during the millennium from this heavenly city in the sky; they do not live on Earth.

❖ **Satan's Final Rebellion and his Destruction**

The whole world is presently under Satan's control (1 John 4:19). He is not willing to relinquish that control. He opposes God's plan for the world, especially the Messianic kingdom, a just and peaceful reign of righteousness. Satan is 'the adversary,' hostile to humanity, opposing and hurting them with his evil influence. Educated people ignore the idea of supernatural forces but for aboriginal peoples, sorcery, black magic, and demon possession are recognized and are very relevant to their worldviews. Satan will be bound during the millennium but will then be released to go and deceive the nations one more, persuading them to rebel against God's authority. Why is he released? For the same reason that God allows idolatry or deviant sexual behavior - so that the evil desires of the heart might be exposed. Even after a thousand years of ideal life on Earth, mankind still chooses evil. As before at Armageddon, they surround the Holy City in opposition to God, but this time fire comes down from heaven and devours the rebels. It is not Armageddon; there is no battle. Satan is captured and thrown into hell where the Antichrist and the False Prophet had previously been thrown a thousand years earlier.

❖ **Judgment day – the end of the universe**

This is the last event recorded in prophecy apart from the statement that God's servants will reign forever and ever. Heaven and Earth flee from God's presence and leave no trace, the same expression used for the disappearance of Nebuchadnezzar's statue (Dan 2:35). This is the end of the physical universe (Rev 20:11). God is seen sitting on a great white throne symbolizing his justice and the wicked dead are judged according to what they have done. The righteous are judged and

rewarded before the millennium as part of their reward is to inherit the kingdom prepared for them since the creation of the world (Mt 25:34). Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life are saved. This must include millennial Israel who are converted after Jesus' return and any others who believe during the millennium. Anyone whose name was not in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire. There will be those whose names are in that book and they will be resurrected with immortal bodies at this time so that they can join their brethren in New Jerusalem.

The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor 15:26). Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire symbolizing annihilation. The redeemed have been immortal since they were transformed by resurrection and rapture, but death continued during the millennium among the human population and in nature. There are billions of dead in Hades.

At the end of the millennium and after the last judgment, Jesus will hand over his kingship to God the Father. As God's Son and Regent, it is normal that he should surrender all to his Father so that he might be all in all (1 Cor 15:28). Father, Son, and Holy Spirit continue in their eternal relationship together with the angels and the redeemed whom God has chosen to reign with him forever. The New Heavens and New Earth have come and gone. There is no Biblical teaching about another Earth or planet and no details are given about the eternal state of the redeemed apart from what is said about them as inhabitants of New Jerusalem, the city of God.