

THE MILLENNIUM

Sequence of Millennial Events

- The binding of Satan (Rev 20:1-3)
- Converted Israel (Zech 12:10-12, 13:1, Rev 11:13) live in their promised land
- The Messiah's throne is in Zion (Ps 110:2)
- The millennial rule (Isa 65:17-19, Zech 14:9, Rev 11:15-18, 19:15-16, 20:4-6, 21:1, 22-26).
- The New Jerusalem - the saints' eternal state (Rev 21:2-22:5)
- The saints are rewarded (2 Cor 5:10, Dan 7:27)
- The saints rule the world
- The renewal of heaven and Earth (Rom 8:18-21, 21:1)
- All nations come to Zion to worship the Lord (Isa 60:3, 11-12)
- Satan's final rebellion (Rev 20:7-9)
- Satan's destruction (Rev 20:10)
- The end of the physical universe (Rev 20:11)
- The Last Judgment (Rev 20:11-15) after which death and Hades are banished forever.

❖ **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 and bound for a thousand years. He is thrown into the Abyss, in the heavenly 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 John 5:19). Paul calls him the god of this age (2 Cor 4:4).

❖ **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 is 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, Matt 24:30, John 19:37, Rev 1:7).

❖ **All Israel return to their promised land – the Borders of their 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 ruling the world from the heavenly Jerusalem. However, this remnant will be God's people on Earth and the nations will recognize that the Lord makes Israel holy 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 makes Israel holy (Ezek 37:21-28).

All of Israel will be saved at Jesus' return, but not until after the first resurrection, so 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 will presumably be resurrected to join the elect in the New Jerusalem. During the millennium, Israel and the Church are both God's people, but Israel will live on the Earth, while the resurrected Church will live in the 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 the Judah and Benjamin regions, and Jerusalem, which Ezekiel calls 'The Lord is There,' is 5 km South of the temple (Ezek 40:2, 48:8, 15). It is not clear how literal Ezekiel's vision should be taken.

❖ **The Messiah begins his reign**

After Satan is captured and bound for 1000 years (20:1-3), Jesus begins his reign on earth. The 1000 reign of Christ is mentioned six times in chapter 20. Those who had been martyred because of their testimony for Jesus and because of 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 that he is making everything new, for the old order of things has passed away. More details are found in the writings of the Old Testament prophets, especially Isa 65:17-25 and Zech 14.

“At that time people will see the Son of Man, coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels to gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the Earth to the ends of the heavens” (Mark 13:26).

“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders who were seated on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was because you have taken your great power and have *begun to reign*. The nations were angry, and your wrath has come. The time for judging the dead and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your people who revere your name, both great and small – and for destroying those who destroy the Earth (Rev 11:15-18).

The judgment of the sheep and the goats occurs at Jesus' return. Judgment results in their being separated from each other. The righteous are raised to eternal life in New Jerusalem in their resurrection bodies where they will take their inheritance, the kingdom that was prepared for them since the creation of the world. Many of the wicked are killed by the wrath of God on the Day of the Lord and go to Hades where they will be judged at the Last Judgment after the Millennium (Isa 24:21-23). Those who survive the Day of the Lord judgment (Dan 7:12, Zech 8:20-23, 14:16) will continue on Earth where the Messiah and his monarchy will rule them with a rod of iron (Rev 2:26-27, 19:16).

❖ **The Messiah's earthly throne**

The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her she would bear a son and call him Jesus and God would give him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over Jacob's descendants forever (Luke 1:31-33), thus fulfilling God's promises to David (2 Sam 7:11-13, Isa 9:6-7, 16:5). Ezekiel saw the glory of the Lord coming from the East, entering the temple in Jerusalem through the gate facing East and filling the temple. Then the Lord spoke to Ezekiel from inside the temple saying it was the place of his throne and the place for the soles of his feet, where he would live among the Israelites forever (Ezek 43:1-6). From there Jesus will rule over the Earth (Zech 14:9). These promises are to do with this present world but in a new age. Jesus' reign 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 your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, 'Rule in the midst of your enemies' (Ps 110:2). At the same time, Jesus will be present in the New Jerusalem as described in 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, the Messiah, will rule over 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, other Christians would rule over the areas with which they were familiar during their lifetimes.

Jesus may not be visible to the Israelites 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 in the temple, and he will rule from there as the promised descendant of David, the Messiah. But it is also possible that Jesus will make appearances to people, as he did during forty days after his resurrection and before the ascension. The Lord told Ezekiel that he would make a covenant of peace with Israel, an everlasting covenant and that he would establish Israel and increase their numbers, and he would put *his sanctuary* 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 makes Israel holy when his sanctuary is among them forever (Ezek 37:26-27).

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

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 is characterized by justice and righteousness (Isa 9:7, 11:4-5). "The Earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (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 rebuild godly family relationships, to reclaim deserts, to tame rebellious man and animals, to reverse genetic malfunctions caused by mutations and eliminate all disease, and to rebuild loving societies that are not based on pride and greed.

❖ **The saints reward – they rule the world**

The Messiah rewards the saints for what they have done on Earth in faithful service (2 Cor 5:10, Eph 6:7-8). Fire will test the quality of each person's work, and some of it 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, Matt 25:34, Rev 5:9-10, 20:6). They are the monarchy in the kingdom, not subjects. They inherit the kingship that Israel forfeited (Matt 8:11-12). Details of the reign are not revealed, but in a parable, Jesus told a faithful servant that he should take charge of ten cities (Luke 19:17). They inherit the Davidic kingship (Dan 7:22, 27, Mat 5:3, 5, 10, Rev 3:21, 5:10) and will rule the world from their heavenly home, the 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 I don't think we can avoid it. Israel and the Church are different communities and God made different covenants with them. The church includes Jews, and Israel includes foreigners, but the two cannot be confused. The covenant promises to Israel include the promised land, Jerusalem, a future temple, the human ancestry of the Messiah who is a descendant of David, and future sovereignty over the nations, which they forfeited when the first-century Jews rejected Jesus. They are 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, the resurrection of the body, sharing in Christ's rule over the Earth, an eternal future in the New Jerusalem, and adoption as sons into God's family. Because we are sons, we are also heirs.

❖ **The Nations make Pilgrimage 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).

In that day, Israel's ancient enemies, the Egyptians and the Assyrians, will worship together with Israel. They will bring sacrifices and offerings and make vows to the Lord.

❖ **The renewal of all things – the Liberation of Creation – 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 destruction resulting from the wrath of God being poured out on a rebellious world: worldwide earthquakes, volcanoes, meteorites, the destruction of cities and roads. "All the people on Earth will tremble at my presence. The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble, and every wall will fall to the ground" (Ezek 38:20). The divine presence is Messianic. 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: That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new Earth where righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:12-13). Jesus called the millennium 'the renewal of all things.' It is 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 heaven and Earth in a vision (Rev 21:1) the main emphasis being the presence of the Holy City in the sky. 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 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 the 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 makes us believe it is a literal river that symbolizes the rich and productive agriculture of that time. This suggests that the renewed world will be centered on agriculture rather than technology.

❖ **New Jerusalem – Life in Paradise**

The New Jerusalem belongs to the new age, the Millennium, or the New Heavens and New Earth (Rev 21:1-2). It presently exists as a heavenly community of God, the angels, and the spirits of the righteous (Heb 12:22) and will descend from heaven as the resurrection occurs. The Lord will return with those who have fallen asleep in him (1 Thess 4:14) and immediately on being transformed with supernatural, immortal bodies, they will meet the Lord in the air. The New Jerusalem that John saw coming down out of heaven from God is the Bride of Christ, the community of the redeemed, the resurrected children of God from both OT and NT eras. They will dwell in the heavenly realm in the sky above Mount Zion (Isa 60:1-3) and the initial event will be the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, as the Messiah and his people are united for eternity. The New Jerusalem is what renews the heavens, 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 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, where God will dwell with his people, and they will 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 of Hebrews 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 from the same place, a heavenly city in the sky, not on the millennial 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. Satan will be bound during the thousand years of the Millennium but will then be released to go out 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. As before at Armageddon, they surround the Holy City in opposition to God, but this time fire comes down from heaven and devours them. There is no battle. Satan is captured and thrown into hell where the Antichrist and the False Prophet had 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 did. 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 (Matt 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 others who believe during the millennium. "Anyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire." This implies that 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.

People from the nations are ruled with an iron rod during the millennium and they will come to Jerusalem to worship God. The last enemy to be destroyed is death (1 Cor 15:26). Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire (hell). The redeemed have been immortal since they were transformed by resurrection and rapture, but death continued in nature during the Millennium and among the human population. And there are billions of dead in Hades. At Judgment Day, creation is dissolved, the unsaved are judged and thrown into the lake of fire, and death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire. Death, which entered the world through one man's sin (Rom 5:12) is no more for those who have immortal resurrection bodies. Death is cast into hell which is the second death; a place of eternal conscious torment prepared for the devil and his angels and the majority of humanity whom he deceived.

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.