



The Good News

Article Reprint

The Millennium

Coming Soon: The Magnificent Millennium

by Don Hooser

The fact that a large portion of Bible prophecy describes the Millennium proves it is extremely important to God. And the more you understand it, the more important it will be to you!



The time known as “the Millennium” is described in a great many scriptures, but, interestingly, the word *millennium* is not in the Bible. What does it mean?

Millennium is derived from two Latin words: *mille*, meaning “thousand,” and *annum*, meaning “year.” *Millennium* simply means 1,000 years. A specific thousand-year period definitely *is* in the Bible.

“The Millennium” (with the M typically capitalized) refers to *the future thousand-year reign on earth of Jesus Christ commencing with His second coming*.

Because the word *millennium* is so often associated with the utopian conditions prophesied to exist in the future 1,000-year period, the adjective form, “millennial,” has come to refer to not just the wonderful age to come but any beautiful and inspiring setting that seems ideal,

idyllic or Edenic (i.e., harkening back to the Garden of Eden).

A world restored to Eden-like conditions

In a short but powerful sermon, the apostle Peter referred to the time after Christ’s return as “times of *refreshing*” and as “the times of *restoration of all things*, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:18-21, emphasis added throughout).

Ever since Satan the devil appeared in the Garden of Eden as the wily serpent and enticed Adam and Eve to sin, he has been *corrupting everything!* Today, Romans 8:22 tells us that “the whole creation groans”!

One of the most important things Bible prophecy reveals about the Millennium is that during this time there will be a massive *restoration project* to bring the world

back to Eden-like conditions. Paradise lost will become paradise restored! It will end up being far better than all the secular ideas of utopia that man has dreamed up!

Notice what Bible prophecy tells us about this time: “For the LORD will comfort Zion [that is, Jerusalem, representing all Israel], He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness *like Eden*, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody” (Isaiah 51:3).

And: “Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt. The desolate land shall be tilled instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass by. So they will say, “This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden; and the wasted, desolate, and ruined cities are now fortified and inhabited.”’

“Then the nations which are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the LORD, have spoken it, and *I will do it!*” (Ezekiel 36:33-36). What a breathtaking scene!

The literal thousand-year reign of Christ

Revelation 19:11-16 describes how Jesus Christ will return as “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” to establish His reign on the earth. He will also crush the mighty armies that oppose Him (verses 17-21).

When Jesus appeared on earth the first time, most people did not recognize that He was the Messiah because they were expecting a conquering king who would deliver them from Roman rule. Today it’s the opposite. People are now used to the image of a suffering Savior and are not really expecting Him to return and reign over the world. But He absolutely promised that He *will* return—as a *conquering King to rule all nations!*

Revelation 20 then describes what happens next: Christ banishes the forces of evil—Satan and his demon minions—the

primary instigators behind the world's wickedness. Christ will send an angel to bind Satan and lock him away for this thousand-year period (Revelation 20:1-3).

Why is this such an urgent priority? God's Word tells us that today "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). It is Satan who, ever since the time of Adam and Eve, powerfully "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

The all-pervasive, unseen influence of Satan is the number one reason why "human nature" is so bad. Our minds can be compared to computers that have been infected with a destructive virus. After the source of the virus—Satan—is removed, minds can be cleansed from the lingering effects and then reprogrammed with godly education and God's Holy Spirit!

God's servants resurrected to serve alongside Christ

The next thing John sees in vision in Revelation 20 is God's faithful servants who have been martyred but are now alive again! "And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation verse 4). Jesus earlier stated that these resurrected servants will be immortal (Luke 20:36).

When Revelation 20:5 says, "This is the *first* resurrection," it is referring back to verse 4. The word "first" implies that there will be more than one resurrection. And as verse 5 tells us, a second resurrection will be for "the rest of the dead" who "live again" after "the thousand years were finished." That is when they will have their opportunity for salvation.

Verse 6 provides crucial information about the first resurrection: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

The first resurrection is indeed the "better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35) because those in it are raised to glorified eternal life, so a person in the second resurrection could die "the second death" if he then refused to repent and obey Christ.

These three verses in Revelation 20 just cited—verses 4-6—give us some facts about the Millennium. All the other millennial prophecies throughout the Bible fill in the wonderful details!

Sad to say, countless people have chosen not to accept Revelation 20 as being literally true. Under Satan's influence, they

have, through many interpretations, seen these verses as being merely symbolic.

But the wording of these verses is quite explicit, specific, detailed, sequential, logical and in harmony with the rest of the Bible. There is no justification for understanding them in any way except literally.

Whom will they be reigning over?

Jesus and those resurrected to immortality at His return will rule over all remaining human beings on earth who survive the devastating end-time wars and plagues leading up to that time. They will also rule over angels (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). And they will rule over generations of human beings to follow. Indeed, in this new world of peace and plenty, many, many others will be born throughout the Millennium.

God delights in children. He told Adam and Eve, "Be fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). During the wonderful world of tomorrow, with its child-friendly conditions and attitudes, couples will be fruitful and people will multiply!

Regarding the Holy Land during the Millennium, God said: "I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities shall be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt. I will multiply upon you man and beast; and they shall increase and bear young" (Ezekiel 36:10-11). There will even be plenty of animals to enjoy!

In thinking about the Millennium, we need to consider both the perspective of the physical human beings alive then as well as the perspective of the resurrected and glorified saints, the servants of God from this age who will then be given eternal life as immortal spirit beings. Keep in mind that most of the millennial prophecies are describing ideal conditions for physical human beings, including earthly pleasures that sound extremely appealing.

But to be a glorified spirit member of the God family will be infinitely better than living as a human being! Even though it's difficult for us to imagine what it will be like to be a spirit being, we should have full faith that God has something much, much better



A Millennial Sabbath and a Sabbatical Millennium

Several scriptures indicate that we should expect a millennial "Sabbath" after six 1,000-year millennial "days" have expired.

Peter said, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8; compare Psalm 90:4).

At creation, God instituted the weekly cycle of seven days. When He "rested on the seventh day," He "sanctified" it, which means He made it a holy day forevermore (Genesis 2:1-3).

When one adds up the biblical chronology and historic records, it's clear that the lapsed time since Adam and Eve has been almost 6,000

years, which is six millenniums. If Christ returns at the end of 6,000 years, His reign will be the *seventh* millennium.

Can it be that God intends for us to think of the Millennium as a 1,000-year "Sabbath" of rest from the evils, stresses and suffering of the previous 6,000 years? From what Hebrews 4:1-11 tells us, the answer is "yes." This passage is comparing three "rests." The weekly Sabbath rest and the rest for the Israelites after they ceased from wandering and entered the Promised Land of Canaan are types of the *ultimate* "rest for the people of God" after they enter the Kingdom of God! (verse 9).

in store for us when we're raised to existence on the divine level to be like Him! (1 John 3:2).

And those who are physical human beings won't be missing out for long. They also will be given the opportunity to be raised to immortality.

The role of the glorified saints as kings and priests!

Long ago, God told the prophet Daniel that "the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever" (Daniel 7:18).

The Millennium Pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles

The seven annual sacred festivals commanded in the Bible portray the great sequential events in God's master plan for mankind's salvation. They all are thoroughly explained in two important booklets that we offer free of charge: *Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Observe?* and *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind*.

Of the seven festivals, the highlight of each year is when God's people enjoy the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles that pictures the coming Millennium.

"You shall observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days . . . And you shall rejoice in your feast . . . Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the LORD" (Deuteronomy 16:13-15).

In Exodus 23:16 it is called "the Feast of Ingathering" because it celebrates each year's autumn harvest (in the northern hemisphere). More importantly, it celebrates the great *spiritual* harvest that will take place during the Millennium as millions upon millions of people come to understand God's truth and have the opportunity to receive His gift of salvation!

During the Millennium there will be great emphasis on keeping the Feast of Tabernacles and using that time to come to Jerusalem to worship: "And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16).

Next is a description of "the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (verses 17-19). Christ will insist that everyone keeps this all-important Feast! It will be a wonderful time of learning as well as a joyful celebration.

In Revelation 20:6, we saw that the resurrected saints will "be *priests* of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

In Revelation 1:5-6, John's vision reveals that Christ is making the saints "*kings and priests* to His God and Father." That is why Jesus Christ is called "Lord of Lords and King of Kings" (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). The resurrected saints will be the lords and kings who serve under Him!

Notice this millennial prophecy that reveals the teaching role of these spirit leaders when they visibly appear to people to teach them, warn them and remind them: "Your teachers will be hidden no more; with your own eyes you will see them. Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'" (Isaiah 30:20-21, New International Version).

All this is important to understand because God's purpose for human beings is much greater than most people think. Even most Christians think the destiny of



the saints is to be angels or something like that, but angels will not rule the world to come (Hebrews 2:5), whereas the saints *will* under Christ (verses 6-11). As already mentioned, the saints will be *over* the angels. Notice what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:3, cited above, "Do you not know that we shall judge angels?"

Angels will always be on a lower level than the family of God. When God calls us "My sons and daughters" (2 Corinthians 6:18), it is much more literal than what most people believe. Angels are not literal spirit-begotten children of God (Hebrews 1:5), while true Christians *are* (Romans 8:16; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 John 3:1-2; 5:1).

As soon as people repent and are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and

to receive God's Spirit (Acts 2:38), "Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers" (Hebrews 2:11, New International Version). What an incredible honor! (To learn more, request or download our free booklet *What Is Your Destiny?*)

Reunited Israel will be a godly role model for the world

Many people are confused as to why so many prophecies emphasize Israel and Judah. Under the ancient kings David and Solomon, Israel was one nation composed of 12 tribes. After Solomon's death, the nation split into two nations, the "house of Israel" and the "house of Judah." Those who belonged to the house of Judah became known as Jews, while those of the house of Israel, carried into captivity by the Assyrian Empire, lost their identity and became known in history as "the lost 10 tribes."

Why did God bring the Israelites out of Egypt to be His "chosen" nation and "holy people"? One stated objective was for them to be a right example to the world, a role

model to demonstrate the wonderful fruit of living life based on God's perfect laws (Deuteronomy 7:6-14). However, because of weak and sin-prone human nature, and because God did not give them the Holy Spirit, they didn't have the "heart" to consistently obey, and so they failed most of the time (Deuteronomy 5:29; 29:4).

During the very first part of the Millennium, Christ will give special attention to making the modern-day descendants of the Israelites His model nation,

which will greatly help in the education and conversion of the rest of the world. (To learn who these modern-day Israelites are, request or download your free copy of the booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Why will Israel succeed in becoming a model nation when it failed in the past? Because after thousands of years of trying to live apart from God's law, they will learn that it is the *only* way to true happiness and fulfillment. They will then turn to Jesus Christ who will be ruling the earth, and they will receive a "new heart." Carefully consider the following prophecy:

"For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries [where the Israelites have been in captivity

as punishment from God], and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

“I will give you a *new heart* and put a *new spirit* within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh [a soft, receptive heart]. I will put *My Spirit* within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; *you shall be My people, and I will be your God*” (Ezekiel 36:24-28).

The “Holy Land” will finally live up to its name and be a truly holy land!

In Ezekiel’s next chapter, we learn that God “will make them *one nation* in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all; they shall no longer be two nations [Israel and Judah], nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again” (Ezekiel 37:22).

Who will be the “one king” over the reunited Israel? It will be the resurrected King David (Ezekiel 37:24-25; 34:23-24).

Jesus also revealed who will reign over the 12 tribes: “Jesus said to [His disciples], ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel’” (Matthew 19:28).

Based on these passages, God will likely assign other top responsibilities to resurrected patriarchs, prophets, apostles and other righteous men and women who proved faithful as godly leaders.

Truth spreads throughout the earth

Jerusalem will be the capital of the world as well as a safe and delightful place! “Thus says the LORD: ‘I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, the Mountain of the LORD of hosts, the Holy Mountain.’ Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing’” (Zechariah 8:3-5).

God further says of Jerusalem that “all nations shall flow to it” to learn and to worship. “Many people shall come and say, ‘Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house [temple] of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:2-3).

When Jesus Christ teaches and enforces the way of peace, peace will break out everywhere! “He [Christ] shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their

“I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”



spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore” (Isaiah 2:4).

Isaiah refers to Jesus as the “Prince of Peace” and then writes, “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Isaiah is known as “the messianic prophet” because his book is full of prophecies of the Messiah and the Millennium. It’s interesting that Isaiah’s name means “the LORD saves.”

Peace and prosperity fill the land

Another biblical prophet, Micah, gives some of the same details Isaiah does

(Micah 4:1-3) and adds this: “But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid” (verse 4). This short verse is pregnant with meaning. It not only portrays peace and security but indicates the blessing of each family owning fertile, productive property.

It will be a marvelous time for farming, gardening and all kinds of outdoor activities: “I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land; and they will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

Is the Millennium the Same Thing as the Kingdom of God?

Although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, strictly speaking they are not identical.

The Millennium is a *period of time*—1,000 years. The Kingdom of God is the *reign* of God and the *family* of God, which so far has two members—God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of God will rule the earth during and after the Millennium.

And the Kingdom will rapidly expand at that time. God’s incredible plan is to increase His family by transforming human beings into literal children of God!

“But as many as received Him [Jesus Christ], to them He gave the right to *become children of God*, to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

God calls us His children from the moment that we receive the gift of His Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9, 14, 16, 21; 1 John 3:1-2). However, we become fully and permanently the transformed and glorified children God at the resurrection when Christ returns, when we receive a “spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). That’s when we “inherit the kingdom of God” (verses 50-54).

During Jesus’ earthly ministry, He preached “the gospel of the kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14). *Gospel* means “good news.” Jesus was preaching the good news that all human beings can become members of the Kingdom—the family—of God as well as what the rule of God’s Kingdom will mean for the world’s future.

When Christ returns, an angel will announce, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15, NIV).

“I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing. Then the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase” (Ezekiel 34:25-27).

Jesus Christ will not only change the nature of human beings; He also will change the nature of animals! No more will animals be predatory and dangerous: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.



“The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den” (Isaiah 11:6-8). Amazing!

This prophecy is both literal and figurative—peace in the natural realm serving to signify peaceful relations between peoples, as nations are often represented by animals in Scripture.

Indeed, the dramatically inspiring verse that follows shows the human focus here by explaining peace as the result of right knowledge: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9). People will be unlearning their false ideas and learning the knowledge of God.

Preaching and teaching the truth to everyone will be greatly facilitated by the fact that all people will communicate in one “pure language” (Zephaniah 3:9)!

“The truth shall make you free!”

Jesus said, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall

know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Once the people of the world understand and are living by God’s laws, which James calls the “law of liberty,” they will enjoy the greatest freedom that is possible for human beings (James 1:25; 2:12). The ultimate freedom, of course, will come when each person escapes all physical limitations by becoming spirit!

Imagine what the world will be like when *everyone* will be living by *all* of the Ten Commandments! It will be a world virtually *free* of most of the problems it suffers from today—including wars, violence, crimes, murder, adultery, broken homes, theft, dishonesty, dirty politics and oppressive governments! It will also be a world free of idolatry and pagan superstitions and traditions.

The Ten Commandments define how to love God and how to love people, as summed up in the two great commandments (Matthew 22:36-40).

During the Millennium, everyone will have the opportunity to become spiritually converted so God’s laws can become internalized—*written in their hearts!*

Here is a concise summary of the New Covenant that will be offered to all people: “I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:33-34; Hebrew 8:10-12).

Christ will offer all people freedom from ignorance and freedom from the guilt and penalty of their sins.

The Millennium—time of healing, health and happiness!

Isaiah 35 offers one of the most inspiring portraits of the Millennium. Following are portions of it.

“The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall

blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing” (Isaiah 35:1-2).

“Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.’ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing” (verses 3-6).

Besides receiving miraculous healing, the people will be taught the principles of healthful living so sickness can be prevented. And the healing of physical illnesses here, while literal (as Christ demonstrated through the miracles of His first coming), also pictures an even more important healing that will come—the healing of humanity’s *spiritual* problems.

“For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water” (verses 6-7).

“A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness . . . And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (verses 8-10). These prophecies, too, are meant literally as well as figuratively—portraying both physical and spiritual blessings.

Imagine that!

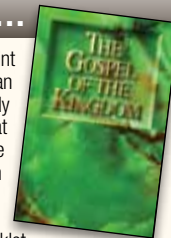
The people of the earth will be saying, “My cup runneth over” with blessings! (Psalm 23:5, King James Version).

Looking forward with heartfelt passion, then, let us all pray as Christ instructed, “Your Kingdom come”!

May the Millennium come soon! **GN**

To Learn More...

The Millennium is a central point of Bible prophecy and God’s plan for mankind. This article has only scratched the surface of what the Bible reveals about this time of Jesus Christ’s coming reign on the earth. To learn more, request or download your free copy of our eye-opening booklet *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Learn about the best possible news our world could hear!



Contact any of our offices, or request or download it from our Web site.

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Just What Is the Millennium?

The old Latin word Millennium doesn't appear in the English Bible, but it has been used to describe a prophesied time of peace. Is it a biblical allegory, or will it be real? What should the Millennium mean to you?

by Don Henson

Many people have heard that the Bible talks about a period of peace known as “the Millennium,” but they aren’t quite sure what that means. The many views among Christian denominations and religious teachers don’t help clear up the confusion.

What is the Millennium described in the Bible? Is it merely a nice-sounding ideal or an allegory? Or is it a time the Bible describes as real? Let’s explore the answers straight from the Bible.

Although the Bible does not specifically use the word millennium, it clearly refers to a period of 1,000 years that will serve as the turning point for humanity. It reveals that during that time the world will finally achieve the elusive ideals of peace, prosperity and purpose. It is assuredly not merely a dream, wish or fantasy; rather, the Millennium holds a sure promise of hope for humanity.

To understand the prophesied Millennium, let’s set the stage by briefly describing events that will take place immediately before the beginning of this 1,000 years.

A world in peril

Shortly before His death, Jesus’ disciples asked Him what events would occur before the end of the age and His return to earth (Matthew 24:3). Jesus warned that the future would bring religious confusion and deception, war, natural disaster, persecution and tribulation, even as the gospel would spread to all the world (verses 4-14). Then He told them that those who are watchful and obedient could be protected from the destructive events that would yet occur (Luke 21:18, 28, 36).

Jesus went on to prophesy that immediately before His return the

world would be gripped by unparalleled difficulties so severe they would threaten humanity with extinction: “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22).

He said the time of turmoil would be followed by dramatic signs in the heavens, and then He would return in power and glory. “The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (verses 30-31).

From Paul’s writings we learn that the gathering of “His elect” at the “sound of the trumpet” is the resurrection of faithful Christians: “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep [dead]. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

Rejoicing or rebellion?

Jesus said the “tribes of the earth will mourn” at His return (Matthew 24:30). That statement seems odd, since

you would expect that all would rejoice at His second coming. Why does mankind resist, rather than rejoice, when Christ returns?

Revelation 18 gives us more background information. This chapter describes the destruction of an economic, political and religious system called Babylon the great (verse 2). But before its destruction it will be the source of great wealth to those who are part of this pervasive system (verse 3). Verses 9-20 describe the abundance and prosperity this system will bring to the nations and their shock and fear at its sudden destruction.

In a vain effort to protect their system, and because Satan has deceived them, the armies of the world will fight against Jesus when He returns (Revelation 19:11-19). Verse 20 describes the destruction of the political and religious leadership of this ungodly system.

Having destroyed Babylon the great, Jesus will deal with the unseen “god of this age” (2 Corinthians 4:4), Satan. Revelation 20:1-2 tells of John’s vision of this future time: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.”

The Millennium begins

The prophecy goes on to show that Satan will be bound so he can no longer deceive humanity (Revelation 20:3). Although many Old Testament prophecies reveal what will take place during the Millennium, this is the first specific reference to a period of 1,000 years.

The “elect” gathered “from the four winds” (Matthew 24:31), who will receive eternal life when Jesus returns (1 Corinthians 15:51-52), includes those

who were persecuted because they refused to be part of the ungodly system the Bible calls Babylon. Now resurrected and having received God's gift of eternal life, they will rule the earth with Jesus Christ during this time.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

The reign of the Messiah

Daniel 7 contains another prophecy of events that culminate in the establishment of God's Kingdom. Verses 13 and 14 describe Jesus Christ being given this kingdom: "I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed."

Jesus Christ's return to establish God's Kingdom on earth will fulfill the prophecy recorded long before His birth: "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever" (Isaiah 9:7).

Jesus will return to a battered and beaten earth. People will have endured a time of terrible tribulation, bloody battles and horrifying disasters. Zechariah 14 summarizes events surrounding Christ's return and the beginning of the Millennium.

Verses 1-2 discuss "the day of the LORD," the time just before His return when Jesus begins to intervene in world affairs and set the stage for His second coming. Verses 3-5 speak of His battle against the nations and His descent onto the Mount of Olives just outside

Jerusalem. Verses 6-9 describe Jesus' impact as He immediately begins to comfort earth's inhabitants and institute God's way of life.

The "living waters" mentioned in verse 8 symbolize the healing that will spread out to all lands from Jerusalem.

A world of prosperity and peace

The Millennium is the first 1,000 years of the eternal Kingdom of God. The purpose of the Millennium is to establish God's government on earth and provide a way for every person, protected from Satan's deception and temptation, to prepare to receive an eternal inheritance in God's Kingdom.

Isaiah was inspired to record many prophecies of the Millennium. He describes a world completely different from ours in which Jesus Christ will rule over all the earth. People from all nations will seek to learn God's law and live according to it. As a result, society will have an entirely new orientation and approach based on godly values. Humanity's creativity and resourcefulness will be used for peaceful purposes instead of war and destruction.

Isaiah further prophesies that not only will man's nature change for the better when Satan is removed from the scene, but even the nature of animals will be different: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6).

A prophecy by Amos shows the earth benefiting under Jesus Christ's rule. The nations will be richly blessed. For example, crops will be so abundant that the preparations for the next year's planting will be slowed because the current year's harvest hasn't even been completed. "'Behold, the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; the mountains shall drip with sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it'" (Amos 9:13).

Those who are part of the resurrection that takes place when Jesus returns are also described as teachers who will give people guidance and direction in God's way of life (Isaiah 30:20-21).

Faithful Christians who prepare in this life for the Kingdom of God will reign with Jesus Christ in the Millennium. As kings, priests and teachers, they will have the privilege of assisting Him in governing and teaching mankind the way and the truth of God.

A world filled with purpose

Why will the world be so different during the Millennium? God will provide what is sadly lacking in today's world. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).

When people live according to the knowledge of God, they will experience peace and prosperity—the result of understanding the true purpose of life and how God intends humanity to live. It's difficult for us to grasp how negative an influence Satan is on our lives. We live in a world that lacks the knowledge of God, an understanding of His instructions and the purpose of life. We can only try to imagine what the world will be like when it is saturated with God's truth and humanity is free to pursue the purpose for existence.

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant between God and humanity. Jesus established this covenant (Matthew 26:28); but during this time when Satan is present to spread his deceptions (Revelation 12:9), God has called relatively few to enter into that covenant.

During the Millennium, however, when Satan is bound and God fills the world with knowledge of Him and His ways, mankind as a whole will have an opportunity to enter into this covenant.

The promise of salvation through the New Covenant will not be limited only to descendants of Israel, but will extend to all mankind. In reference to Jesus' work of salvation, one of Isaiah's prophecies puts it this way: "Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You

The Millennium: The Vision That Won't Die

What does the Bible really say about the Millennium, the prophesied 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ? Is it a fantasy or a promise on which you can stake your future?

by Darris McNeely

In 1972 President Richard Nixon stunned the world with his historic trip from Washington to China to meet with Communist Party chairman Mao Zedong. President Nixon observed, "The chairman's writings moved a nation and have changed the world." Chairman Mao more realistically replied: "I have not been able to change it. I have only been able to change a few places in the vicinity of Beijing."

This was the assessment of one of this century's most powerful rulers about the lasting effect of his ideas and reforms on the world's most populous nation.

In a later publication President Nixon's secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, reflected that Mao "could not escape the nightmare that shadowed his accomplishments and tormented his last years: that it might all prove ephemeral, that the exertions, the suffering, the Long March, the brutal leadership struggles would be but a brief incident in the triumphant, passive persistence of a millennial culture which had tamed all previous upheavals, leaving little more in their wake than the ripples of a stone falling into a pond."

What a commentary about one of the century's most influential political ideas. Communism, like so many others, has risen and fallen on the tides of time. Like many other movements, communism may yet see itself consigned to the dustbin of history. Another effort at creating a utopian world will have been tried and found wanting, joining the many other political and governmental systems that failed to last even a few centuries, much less 1,000 years or more.

Yet there is one idea, first put to writing a few thousand years ago but not born of human imagination (2 Peter 1:21), that

promises a world of peace and prosperity for all. It is the biblical teaching of the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. We call it, appropriately enough, the Millennium.

This truth, which connects with some of the Bible's earliest statements and is abundantly expressed by the Hebrew prophets, continues to hold the imagination of many over the centuries, in spite of attempts to undermine and explain it away.

God's promise of a millennial kingdom stands as a symbol of hope for mankind. A study of the sayings of Scripture and a review of efforts to overturn this teaching can help us understand our world and the promised peace of the Kingdom of God.

The future foretold

In the book of Revelation the apostle John records that after the second coming of Jesus Christ the saints will reign with Him for 1,000 years.

"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for *a thousand years*... Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him *a thousand years*" (Revelation 20:4, 6, emphasis added throughout).

These verses summarize the Bible's many references to the age to come. It is from this verse that we can define the initial period as the Millennium, which simply means "thousand years."

A study of the sayings of Scripture and a review of efforts to overturn this teaching can help us understand our world and the promised peace of the Kingdom of God.

The book of Revelation provides a summary of other biblical descriptions and promises about the millennial age and beyond. God, through His servants, foretold this period time and time again. It was the hope of Israel's prophets throughout much of that nation's history, especially during the nation's downfall and captivity. This same hope was shared by the apostles as they questioned Christ about the restoration of Israel's ancient kingdom (Acts 1:6).

Isaiah, writing during the time of Israel's decline, offered a clear picture of this future when he wrote of a time when Israel would be reunited under one leader and the knowledge of God would fill the earth:

"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD... The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

"The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious" (Isaiah 11:1-10).

Isaiah's stirring words remain unfulfilled. They have fired imaginations for centuries and crystallized the concept of the Millennium. Isaiah describes a complete change in the physical order. No part of the world we know will be left unchanged.

The nature of man will change to allow the building of a just world based on God's Word and His laws. The deception that has gripped the

world will dissipate as the true knowledge of God's plan spreads to all humanity after Christ's return.

Confirmation from other prophets

Ancient Israel didn't live to experience this prophesied transformation of society. This dream, this vision, never materialized during the time it was a nation. Nor has it been fulfilled since.

From the bleakness of captivity and loss of Jewish national sovereignty, the prophet Daniel was given the promise of an enduring Kingdom that would replace the failed efforts of human rule:

"And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall *never* be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and *it shall stand forever*" (Daniel 2:44).

In yet another vision Daniel saw the promise of a literal kingdom encompassing the earth: "Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed... Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Daniel 7:14, 27).

In the midst of the Babylonian captivity, God showed the Jewish people that a kingdom would come on the earth under a divine ruler. There was no doubt this promise was of a literal, earthly kingdom. The Jews expected the Messiah to restore their kingdom and national



During the Millennium, families will grow stronger with each generation and produce a tightly knit society that will not come unraveled.

greatness. But just as a fuller understanding of the words of Daniel's prophecies was for a future time, so would the coming of this everlasting Kingdom have to wait.

Christ's promise to fulfill prophecy

Centuries after Daniel's day, the angel Gabriel revealed to Mary that her Son Jesus would be the head of this Kingdom: "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:33).

During His ministry Christ spoke clearly of His destiny to fulfill these scriptures. He showed that His followers would be among those who would reign in this Kingdom: "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit

on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

The expectation of 2,000 years ago in the Holy Land was that a Messiah would overthrow Roman rule and restore an Israelite monarchy. Many who followed Jesus Christ, including His closest disciples, believed He was the One who would restore the Kingdom to Israel. But on the day of His death He said that His Kingdom was not of that day and age. “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36).

The time for Christ’s Kingdom to be established was not at hand—not during the age of man—in “this present evil age,” as the apostle Paul put it (Galatians 1:4).

The early New Testament Church preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God extensively in the following decades. It was the central idea and hope for which the followers of Christ gave their lives in devoted service.

Persecution and heresy

Near the end of the first century the Church and the truth of God’s Kingdom came under severe attack from both within and without. The integrity of Christ’s teachings was subverted by heresy. The Roman government killed many Christians, including Christian leaders. The apostle John was exiled on the Aegean prison island of Patmos.

At the height of this crisis John received Christ’s revelation that affirmed the truths of the triumphal establishment of the Kingdom of God. The knowledge of the Millennium gave the Church encouragement, as it always has done for those who look to God for their hope (1 Peter 1:3; 5:4).

During this tumultuous epoch the teaching of the literal Kingdom of God on earth became mixed with forms of heresy and in some circles was discredited. In the second, third and fourth centuries the concept of a literal earthly reign of Christ came under the most severe attack.

There were misguided attempts by some to predict the time of the return of Christ, contrary to His own teaching (Matthew 24:36, 44; 25:13; Acts 1:6-7). Montanus, a self-proclaimed prophet of the third century, founded a movement predicting the imminent second coming of Christ. Some gnostics also adopted a form of millennial teaching.

Origen, the third-century Alexandrian thinker, arrived at a radically different conclusion about the Kingdom of God. The focus of his view “was not upon the manifestation of the kingdom within this world but within the soul of the believer, a significant shift of interest away from the historical toward the metaphysical, or the spiritual” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, “Millennialism”).

Because of the influence of Origen and similar thinkers, the Kingdom of God came to be viewed not as a literal future kingdom, but as a *spiritual* kingdom subject to varying interpretation. The scriptural references were to be understood as symbolism and allegory, not to be taken at face value.

Holding fast

In the midst of these heresies, many still held to faith in a coming Kingdom as it had been received from the apostles. “Bishop Papias of Hierapolis, a disciple of St. John, appeared as an advocate of millenarianism. He claimed to have received his doctrine from contemporaries of the Apostles, and Irenaeus narrates that other ‘Presbyteri,’ who had seen and heard the disciple John, learned from him the belief in millenarianism as part of the Lord’s doctrine. According to Eusebius (Hist. Eccl., III, 39) Papias in his book asserted that the resurrection of the dead would be followed by one thousand years of a visible, glorious earthly kingdom of Christ, and according to Irenaeus (Adv. Haereses, V, 33), he taught that the saints too would enjoy a superabundance of earthly pleasures” (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1914 edition, “Millennium”).

In these early centuries, among

the last known proponents of the teaching of the 1,000-year earthly reign of Christ’s Kingdom was a bishop of Laodicea named Apollinaris. By the fifth century the doctrine was largely overwhelmed by the views of Augustine, the most influential theologian of the Catholic church. His teaching that the *church* was the Kingdom of God on earth replaced the biblical teaching that God would intervene in history and establish a Kingdom that would never end.

In Augustine’s view, God had already triumphed over Satan, and His Kingdom was a spiritual matter in the hearts of men, manifest in the role of the church on earth. “The millennium had become a spiritual state into which the church collectively had entered at Pentecost—the time of the reception of the Holy Spirit by Christ’s disciples soon after his Resurrection—and which the individual Christian might already enjoy through mystical communion with God” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, “Millennialism”).

This coincided with Roman Emperor Constantine’s official adoption of Christianity as the religion of the empire. From this point there was no need for a literal belief in Christ’s reign on earth. The church had become politically and spiritually wedded to the power of the empire.

What historian Edward Gibbon called “the ancient and popular doctrine” now became an appendage with little use or support. He writes: “But when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ’s reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism” (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Great Books edition, 1952, p. 188).

A dark age descends

Augustine’s view became the accepted teaching of the church. Whatever remained of the belief in

the literal rule of the Kingdom of God on earth went underground. It was virtually unheard of for approximately 1,000 years, until the period that followed the Protestant Reformation. It is interesting that this medieval period has been called the Dark Ages of Western civilization. It is as if the lights went out on learning and the advancement of culture on all fronts. Historian William Manchester describes the period as a “portrait...of incessant warfare, corruption, lawlessness, obsession with strange myths, and an almost impenetrable mindlessness” (*A World Lit Only by Fire*, 1992, p. 3)

A close look at this “medieval millennium” reveals a time during which religious authority took on the form of a literal, triumphant kingdom on earth. Manchester continues: “As aristocracies arose from the barbaric mire, kings and princes owed their legitimacy to divine authority, and squires became knights by praying all night at Christian altars. Sovereigns courting popularity led crusades to the Holy Land. To eat meat during Lent became a capital offense, sacrilege meant imprisonment, the Church became the wealthiest landowner on the Continent, and the life of every European, from baptism through matrimony to burial, was governed by popes, cardinals, prelates, monsignors, archbishops, bishops, and village priests. The clergy, it was believed, would also cast decisive votes in determining where each would spend the afterlife” (ibid., p. 11).

During this time the advancement of Western civilization had largely ground to a halt, and “nothing of real consequence had either improved or declined. Except for the introduction of waterwheels in the 800s and windmills in the late 1100s, there had been no inventions of significance. No startling new ideas had appeared, no new territories outside Europe had been explored. Everything was as it had been for as long as the oldest European could remember” (ibid., pp. 26-27).

Dawn of a new world

The Bible reveals that a world of light will result from the return of Jesus Christ. The social order effected by the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth will be far different from anything ever produced by human effort.

Nations will seek out the way of God. Fear will be banished from among the peoples of the earth as righteousness—obedience to God’s law (Psalm 119:172)—guides international relations.

Endless conflicts will disappear, and the art of warfare will be forgotten. Families will grow stronger with each generation and produce a tightly knit society that will not come unraveled (Micah 4:1-5). When God’s Kingdom arrives, there will be nothing to deny its long-held promise and hope of bringing peace on earth.

As we have seen, the teaching of the Millennium begins early in the Hebrew Scriptures and continues through the book of Revelation. Christ’s last words on the subject are perhaps the clearest and plainest in the Bible. Jesus Christ, the true author of the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:1), says there will be a period of 1,000 years during which the resurrected saints will reign with Him in a just and benevolent Kingdom on this earth. Will we take Christ at His word and believe what He said?

Ideas are a powerful force in human affairs. They have sparked revolutions and toppled centuries-old dynasties. They can sometimes arise in the humblest of ways to create large followings. Mao Zedong took a relatively modern idea and with it ruled the most populous nation on earth. Yet by his own admission he failed to change a deeply rooted ancient culture.

The millennial rule of Jesus Christ, an idea that is older than time, will endure and ultimately transform the world. ❖

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“JUST WHAT IS THE MILLENNIUM?” (Continued from page 8)

should be My salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6).

Eternal life offered to all

Societies will be based on the law of God, which will be taught to all nations (Isaiah 2:3). People will learn to obey God from their hearts, motivated by understanding, love, devotion and appreciation.

The apostle Paul wrote that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4).

As Jesus rules on earth during the Millennium, people will have the opportunity to learn about Him and God’s plan for salvation. All will have the opportunity to come to see Jesus as their Savior, realizing they can enter into eternal life only through Him (Acts 4:12). Finally recognizing Jesus as Savior and King, people will honor, worship and obey Him (Philippians 2:9-12).

Prophecy need not be confusing

Confusion and misunderstanding about the Millennium abounds, but the Bible is clear. The Millennium is the first 1,000 years of God’s eternal Kingdom. During that time Jesus will establish God’s government, the world will be at peace, and mankind will flourish as the knowledge of God fills the earth. Humanity will come to understand and prepare for its eternal destiny in God’s family and Kingdom.

In His Word God has revealed much about the Millennium that strengthens our faith, sense of purpose and hope for the future. We hope that you will continue your study to learn of and prepare for your part in God’s incredible plan for you.

This article has only briefly discussed some of the many prophecies of the Millennium and Jesus Christ’s coming rule on earth. To discover more of what the Bible teaches about this exciting new world, be sure to download or request *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. To better understand how the Millennium fits with God’s plan as laid out in Bible prophecy, please see *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy*. ❖