

End-times: Daniel's Seventieth Week

Part 2: The Millennial Reign of Christ (Epoch F)

Millennial Viewpoints

The term 'millennium' (Latin for 1,000) does not appear in the Bible, but it is synonymous with the 1,000 period referred to six times in Rev 20. As with week 70, there are differing viewpoints. At Christ's return some see the end of a millennial period on the earth and the start of a new heaven and a new earth. Others see Christ coming as the start of the millennium and the ushering in of a very real and glorious state of this present earth. A third group argue that the millennial period referred to in scripture is a *symbolic* description of the church age and that we are now in the millennium. These viewpoints are formally referred to as *Postmillennialism*, *Premillennialism* and *Amillennialism* respectively.

There are major problems with the Postmillennial and Amillennial viewpoints. Both deny the bodily reign of Christ on the earth and place His Second Coming at the end of the 1,000-year period. But the disciples were told that Jesus would come back (to *this* earth) in exactly the same way as He departed (Acts 1.11), and prophecy clearly states that He will go on to be 'king over all the earth' (Zech 14.9). Moreover, as we shall see, there is so much detail given about the millennium in scripture that it is difficult to take this dispensation as anything but a *literal, future, and very different period of life on this earth*. If the millennium is symbolic of the church age (Amillennialism) then where is this glorious blessing of the earth? Where is the justice, where is the righteous government, where is the peace? And if the millennium is to be ushered in by the church (Postmillennialism) then we have already been waiting 2,000 years. When is it coming, when will Satan be bound, and who will rule the nations during the millennium? The evidence today is that the church is on the defensive in western society and under severe persecution in many places. Moreover, in both Postmillennialism and Amillennialism, national Israel has little significance, and yet we have already seen that Israel has increasing significance on the world scene. Indeed, the following sections describe Israel's future world role in great detail. And since all the prophecies of Christ's first coming were fulfilled literally, surely it is logical to assume a literal fulfilment of prophecies relating to His Second Coming? Why replace Israel with the church when there are so many prophecies to contradict this?

In order to reconcile these problems, many believe Daniel's prophecy

'... to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place' (Dan 9.24).

refers to a future 1,000-year dispensation in earth's history with Christ ruling the nations from Jerusalem (Isa 2.1). This Premillennial viewpoint is held here. We shall see that it is consistent with many prophecies and themes of scripture. It is also consistent with the *gematria* basis of the Hebrew and Greek languages (where characters and words also represent numbers). For instance, the simple numbers from 1 to 40 have significant

spiritual meaning. In particular, the number 11 denotes *judgement* (as in the eleven judgements upon Pharaoh's people and army), whilst 12 denotes *governmental perfection*. Just as 12 follows 11, so we find in scripture that Christ's 1,000-year reign (Rev 20.1-6) follows directly after His judgement upon the beast and his armies in Rev 19.11-21. Whilst much of Revelation cannot be regarded as time sequential, these two prophecies do indeed seem to be just that.

F1 Dispensations of the Earth

Secular sources state that modern (Neolithic) man appeared 7,000 - 8,000 BC in the Middle East. It was around this time that man first lived in villages, domesticated and bred animals, and cultivated cereal crops. Archaeological evidence for this is found between latitudes 30 deg N and 40 deg N, and especially around the Euphrates and Tigris region (Iran and Iraq). Without too much imagination, we can reasonably place Biblical, Adamic man in the same geographic region (see Gen 2.14) and at roughly the same time (c4,000 BC, Biblical dating). And we know that Adamic man grew crops and kept animals (Gen 4.2).

The correlation between the Biblical scenario and Neolithic archaeology is significant when compared to the supposed long-term evolution of man over hundreds of millions of years. When measured on this time scale, Neolithic man and Adamic man are virtually synchronous in time and what, if anything, preceded this period in terms of human evolution is not emphasised in the Bible. Indeed, the concept of a man-like creature evolving over millions of years prior to the time of Adam seems inconsistent with theology. Such a scenario implies a life-death cycle over millions of years, but according

to the Bible Adam was created perfect and without a finite life span. Death only entered through Adam's sin (Gen 2.17), implying there had been no death up to the time of Adam. Adam was the first creature capable of worshipping God; at this point in time God breathed His Spirit into man and '*man became a living being*' (Gen 2.7).

Here we make no apology for assuming a literal 'Adam'. Whilst 'Adam' has the connotation of 'mankind', it is also a proper name, as in Gen 2.20. And according to the Bible, God placed *an individual* (not a race) in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2.8). In the NT, the gospel of Luke traces the genealogy of Christ from Adam (Lk 3.23-38), and Paul referred to Adam as a literal person (Rom 5.14). Also, Jude, a brother of Jesus, placed Enoch in the seventh generation from Adam (Jude 14).

Since Adam, man has had some 6,000 years in which to develop and from a Biblical point of view this period can be divided into six (unequal) 'dispensations'. Let us define a dispensation as:

'A period in earth's history during which God dealt with the earth and its inhabitants in a specific way'

The first dispensation is that of Adamic man, as indicated in Fig. 2. Initially man was innocent and had perfect communion with God. Then, because of sin man came under the Law, and then under grace and forgiveness through Christ. *In all we might identify seven such dispensations, each one starting and ending with some dramatic and divine intervention in world affairs.* In the light of past dispensations it is clear that the current dispensation, the so-called age of grace or church age, will not run indefinitely without direct intervention from God. Most Christians see the return of Christ as the expected intervention.

The duration of this future dispensation is much debated, although a period of 1,000 years is stated six times in Rev 20! Some support for a literal 1,000 years can be found in the creation account. Recall that God rested on the seventh ‘day’ (Gen 2.2) but there was ‘divine toil’ for the first six days. Similarly, spiritually aware man has toiled for some 6,000 years, or symbolically ‘six days’ (see 2 Pet 3.8), on this earth and the earth has never been at rest. During this time the whole of creation has been groaning as though it were in childbirth (Rom 8.22). Following this line of thought, the ‘seventh day’ of the earth will be a 1,000-year period during which the earth (nature) and its inhabitants rest under the millennial reign of Christ. Looked at another way, God has permitted man to subdue and govern the earth for some 6,000 years, and we note that ‘6’ is man’s number (Rev 13.18). Likewise, an overall period of 7,000 years completes God’s plan for Israel and the nations, and we note that ‘7’ is the number of completion or perfection in scripture (it is used in this context throughout the Bible). It is also interesting to note that ‘7’ was the most sacred Hebrew number. Viewed from the 21st century, the above time-scale is not unreasonable: after some 6,000 years from Adamic man many see world events (economically, politically, demographically, and climatically) as rapidly coming to some threshold or break-point.

According to our literal interpretation of a millennial earth, the *new heaven and new earth* referred to in scripture appears to be a final and eternal dispensation following the destruction of the present earth and its works by intense heat (2 Pet 3.10). Some will see a paradox here. On the one hand ‘the day of the LORD’ referred to in 2 Pet 3.10 is inferred to be time-synchronous with the destruction of the earth. On the other hand, ‘the day of the LORD’ also refers to a time of judgement, primarily of the nations, but also of Israel. Moreover, prophecy indicates that the remnant of this judgement will go on *into the millennial earth*. So ‘the day of the LORD’ seems to refer to two time-distinct events. One solution would be to see the millennial earth as part of the new heaven and new earth, but, as we shall see, this view seems to be incompatible with many scriptures. Alternatively, 2 Pet 3.10 could be taken as referring to the *final* judgement of rebellious nations at the end of the millennium.

<p>Adamic man, man's 'spiritual start'.</p> <p>AGE OF INNOCENCE</p> <p>Death - Adam driven from God's presence.</p>
<p>Cain and Abel, world-wide sin.</p> <p>AGE OF CONSCIENCE</p> <p>Noah enters the ark. The Flood.</p>
<p>City of Babel, Babylon.</p> <p>AGE OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT</p> <p>Destruction of the Tower of Babel.</p>
<p>Abraham and the Covenants. The Passover.</p> <p>AGE OF PROMISE</p> <p>Crossing of the Red Sea</p>
<p>Moses and the Law. Israel's kings.</p> <p>AGE OF LAW</p> <p>The crucifixion, completion of the Law.</p>
<p>The resurrection. The gifts of the Spirit.</p> <p>AGE OF GRACE</p> <p>Second Coming of Christ. Satan bound.</p>
<p>Christ rules the earth.</p> <p>KINGDOM AGE – THE MILLENNIUM</p> <p>Satan loosed - the final conflict. Earth melts.</p>
<p>New Heaven and New Earth</p>

Fig. 2: Seven Dispensations of the Earth (Pre-millennial Viewpoint)

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F2 Why the Millennium?

Assuming that the millennium is a very real dispensation shortly to be played out on *this* earth, we may reasonably ask ‘why should God plan such a dispensation?’.

Looked at from a macroscopic viewpoint (Fig. 2) the millennium could be seen as the ‘coming of age’ of God’s creation. It represents the last stage of man’s struggle through progressive spiritual phases and revelations. After ‘the fall’ he was lost and struggled in sin and self-will until God gave Moses the Law and promised to reveal Himself through His chosen nation, Israel. But Israel lacked faith and, like the rest of the nations she fell back into sin. A more perfect way to God was then revealed through Jesus Christ during the age of grace. This dispensation is more perfect than the age of law in the sense that *communion with God was opened up to all who accept Christ as LORD and Saviour*. Even so, the age of grace is marred by spiritual warfare (Eph 6.12) and Christians are all too aware of their imperfect walk with the LORD.

- ◆ To exalt Christ amongst the nations and to usher in His kingdom upon the earth: *‘And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.’* (Zech 14.9)
- ◆ To provide a forum for the fulfilment of the unconditional covenants. This period of the earth sees fulfilment of the Abrahamic, Davidic, Palestinian and New Covenants. For instance, during the millennium, Israel will become a great nation, Christ will sit on David’s throne, the land of Israel will become very fruitful (‘flowing with milk and honey’) and God will write His Law on the hearts of both Jew and Gentile.
- ◆ To restore Israel to her intended place: *‘to be His servant and witness amongst the nations’* (Isa 43.10). At last the world will recognise and acknowledge Israel as a very special people. This will be a fulfilment of one aspect of the Abrahamic covenant. Remember that Israel is the ‘olive tree’ in scripture and the church has merely been grafted in (Rom 11).
- ◆ To enable millions of Gentiles to come to know the Lord. The Lord’s people will not only be Israel, rather, they will come from *many nations* (Zech 2.11). It appears that those who die in the Lord during the millennium will be resurrected at the end of the millennium to enter the New Heaven and New Earth.
- ◆ To provide a period of perfect communion between the saints of the first resurrection and their Lord (Rev 20.4-6). During the millennium they reign over the people of the earth as priests of God and of Christ, but their true home will be the ‘heavenly city’.
- ◆ To provide a ‘day of rest’ for nature. Not only will mankind be in near-perfect communion with the Lord, but also will nature. It is probable that imperfect aspects of nature, such a drought, locust, earthquake and flood will be removed (except when ordained as judgement on a nation). Nature will be at peace (Rom 8.21). A new law enabling the wolf to dwell with the lamb, the cow to graze with the bear, and the lion to eat straw like and ox (Isa 11.6,7), supersedes the law of the ‘survival of the fittest’.

Table 5. Purpose of the Millennial Earth

In contrast to preceding dispensations, the millennial period permits a near-perfect walk with the LORD because Satan is bound from the beginning (Rev 20.2,3). He is bound from deceiving the nations for a 1,000 years. During this dispensation God brings man back into a union with Himself not unlike that held by Adam and Eve in the age of innocence. In fact, there are prophecies depicting the LORD walking with mankind just as He walked with Adam and Eve. This is the time when the LORD's prayer finally comes true:

'Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Mat 6.10)

The whole earth falls into a form of peace last known by Adam (Zech 9.10). Even the animal kingdom will be changed to reflect peace and harmony; the wolf and the lamb graze together and the lion eats straw like an ox (Isa 65.25).

On the other hand, *it is not perfection*. Detailed study reveals that the true character of this dispensation is more complex than that usually portrayed. For example, the millennium is also a time of *sin, death and harsh judgement*, and many scriptures indicate that its true character falls between our age of grace and the future sinless coexistence of the redeemed in the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21). Given this semi-perfect scenario, we might list the prime objectives of the millennium as in Table 5. These are some of the glorious hopes of the millennium – a truly fitting end to life on this earth. Let us examine some of these points in more detail.

F3 Christ Rules the Earth

Pilot crucified Jesus with the inscription 'THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS', much to the annoyance of the Jews of the day. However, when Jesus returns both Jew and Gentile will at last acknowledge Him as king (Zech 14.9). At last Christ is acknowledged as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev 19.16). The earth will experience not only a monarchy, but also a *theocracy*, as God in the form of Christ will have sole rule over the earth. Corrupt world governments will have been crushed and Christ's kingdom will embrace the *whole earth* (Dan 2.35). In the words of Isaiah

'... the government will rest on His shoulders ...' (Isa 9.6)

The millennium sees the fulfilment of this prophecy. At this time Christ will physically walk the earth, *but His home will be heavenly, just as when He first walked the earth*. Generally speaking, the Jews of the day found the concept of God walking with man an impossible concept, but does modern man with all his scriptural knowledge and hindsight find it any easier? Probably not! Like the Jews, most of us find the concept of Christ ruling the earth in person (from Jerusalem) and simultaneously ruling the heavens (Eph 4.10) too much to handle. Yet, as we shall see, prophecy paints such a detailed picture that it is difficult to argue otherwise. It is also helpful to recall that God descended to Moses on Sinai, *but He never relinquished His heavenly throne!* Similarly, when Moses and Elijah physically stood on the Mount of Transfiguration, *their home was actually in heaven with Christ*. The picture we must grasp is one of God walking with man as He did with Adam (Gen 3.8,10), and simultaneously reigning from His throne in heaven (Isa 66.1).

The millennial theocracy is centred on Jerusalem. It is interesting to note that the likely derivation of the name of this city is 'City of Peace', and Isaiah calls it 'the Holy City' (Isa 52.1). In the millennium this city will also be called 'the City of Truth', reflecting the governmental and judicial role of the city:

'Thus says the LORD, I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth ...' (Zech 8.3)

'... For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between nations ...' (Isa 2.3,4)

Rule with a Rod of Iron

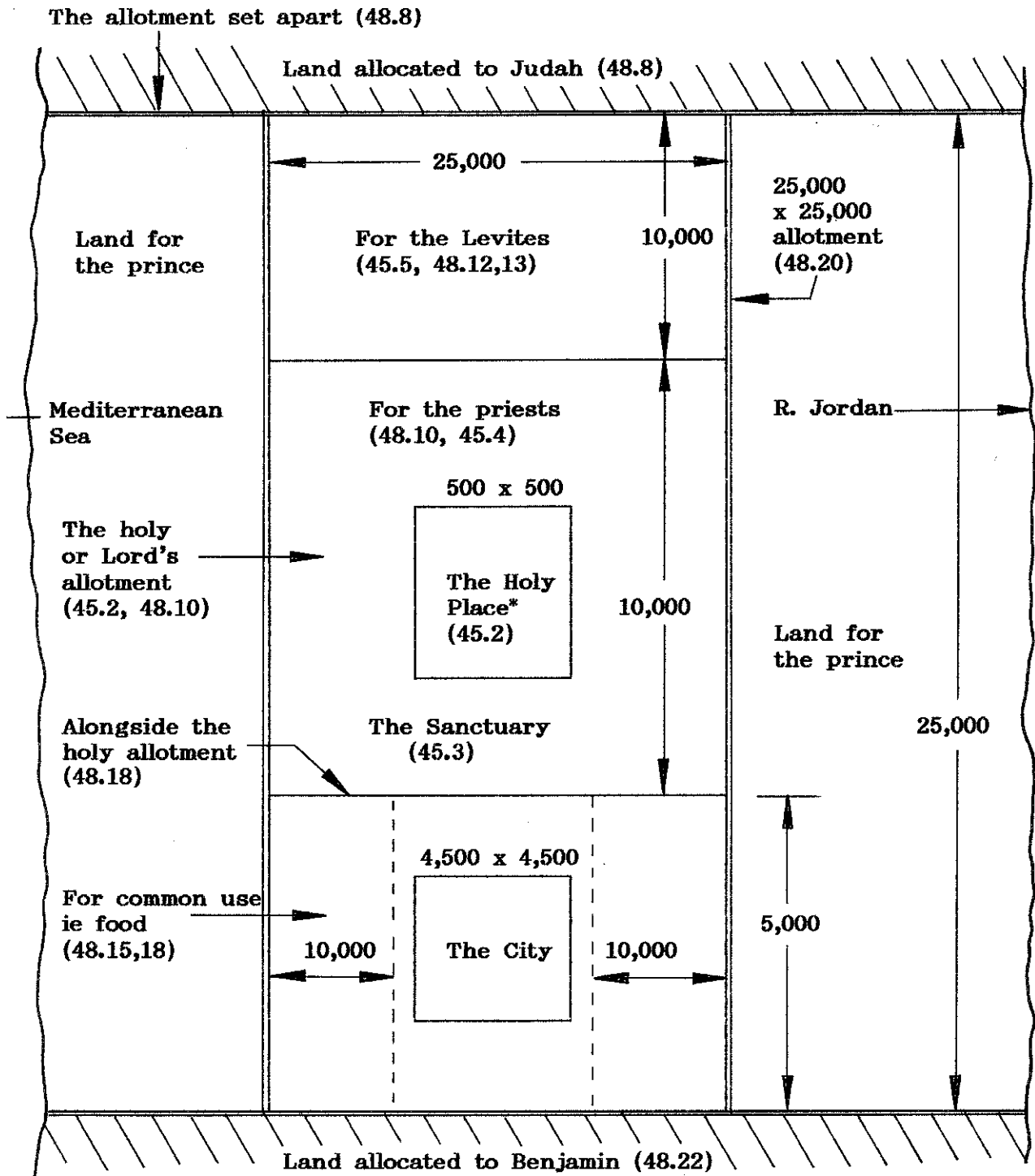
The scenario is one of perfect rule over a less than perfect world. Millennial life will not be perfect and will need 'policing' in the following ways:

- ◆ Firm rule, like ruling with a rod of iron (Rev 2.27, 12.5, 19.15).
- ◆ Although nations will not go to war, there will be a need for arbitration between nations and peoples (Isa 2.4).
- ◆ Defence of the humble and poor (Isa 11.4).
- ◆ Verbal correction of the wicked (Isa 11.4).
- ◆ Punishment of nations who do not go up to worship at Jerusalem (Zech 14.17-19).
- ◆ Just decisions when resolving disputes (Ezek 44.24).
- ◆ The provision of sin offerings for cleansing (Ezek 43.18-27, 44.27, 45.13-25).

This aspect of the millennial kingdom is often overlooked. All is not *perfect* peace, rather, it is a world-wide peace maintained by God's law and just rule. There will be need for arbitration, punishment, and forgiveness. Despite the binding of Satan, man will still have to learn that he has two natures, one warring against the other, the spiritual nature warring against the fleshly nature (Rom 7.14-25). It seems that man's fleshly nature will periodically come to the surface, only to be quelled by righteous and firm rule from Jerusalem. The situation has been likened to gunpowder without the spark (Satan) to ignite it. Only in the new heavens and new earth will all restrictions of the flesh be removed.

F4 *The LORD's Sanctuary*

Here we examine some of the more convincing scriptural evidence for a millennial age upon this earth. It is convincing in the abundance of physical detail surrounding millennial Jerusalem and in particular the LORD's future sanctuary.



* comprising outer and inner courts, temple and altar

Fig. 3 Future land allocation around Jerusalem according to Ezekiel 45,48 (measurements in cubits, 1 cubit approximately 0.5m)

We start by noting that, one day, the law will emanate from Zion (Mic 4.2). In the O.T. Zion came to mean Jerusalem, and the *temple area* in particular. This indicates that Christ will rule from some future temple and its surrounding area. Messianic Jews expect such a temple to be built in the near future, and we find a graphic description of such a temple in Ezek 40-48. We have discussed the meaning of these chapters in

section **C1** and concluded that, despite various interpretations, there is strong justification for taking them to refer to a *future* temple. Taking this viewpoint, it will be a place of pure holiness, the focal point of worldwide worship and the dwelling place of the LORD.

A detailed study of Ezek 45 and 48 reveals future land allocation along the lines of Fig. 3. First a large strip of land some 25,000 cubits (approximately 13 km) north to south and running the full longitudinal range of Israel in the region of Jerusalem is 'set apart' (Ezek 48.8). The longitudinal length of this strip of land extending from the Mediterranean Sea (Ezek 47.20) to the river Jordan, will be about 100 km. Within this strip is a 25,000 × 25,000 cubit allotment (Ezek 48.20) and this is divided into three sections, one for the Levites (Ezek 45.5), one for the LORD and His priests (Ezek 45.1, 48.9,10) and a smaller section for common use and which embraces Jerusalem. The millennial Jerusalem will be some 10 km in circumference (Ezek 48.35), a surprisingly small area for the most prominent city of the millennial world!

The most important land allocation is the holy allotment or sanctuary adjoining the common land allocated to the city. Within this holy portion will be a special holy place some 500 × 500 cubits square (Ezek 45.2) and associated with this will be an outer court (Ezek 40.17), an inner court (Ezek 40.23), and the temple and altar itself (Ezek 41.13, 40.47). The inner court will be a most holy place and only the Levitical priests are permitted to enter this area in order to minister to the LORD (Ezek 44.15-17). The outer court is for the people (Ezek 42.14, 44.19). Here is further support for the imperfect state of man during the millennium; there is a *division* between what is holy and what is for the people (Ezek 42.20). Just as when Moses came down from Sinai and his face shone with holiness, so the Levitical priests will be in danger of transmitting holiness to the people (Ezek 44.19). The scenario is similar to that at Sinai when God communed with selected men, who then communicated to the people.

The future Zion will be a beautiful, glorious place that attracts the nations. It will be a place of rivers and wide canals (Isa 33.21), a place of beautiful trees such as the juniper, the box, and the cypress (Isa 60.13). It will be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD (Isa 62.3), a place of praise and rejoicing for both man and his God (Isa 62.5,9). Referring to the future temple the LORD says

'And He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever."' (Ezek 43.7)

F5 Israel in the Millennium

Israel the Servant

The millennium will see the fulfilment of the promises in the unconditional covenants and in particular the fulfilment of the so-called sceptre and birthright promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. The great sceptre promise to Israel can be summarised as follows:

Seventieth Week

‘ “You are My witnesses,” declares the LORD, “And My servant whom I have chosen ...” And what nation on the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people and to make a name for Himself, and to do a great thing for You and awesome things for Your land, before Your people whom you have redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, from nations and their gods?’ (Isa 43.10)(2 Sam 7.23)

These few verses explain the whole purpose behind national Israel!

Put simply, Israel is to be God’s witness to the nations and is to glorify Him. She is chosen by God and is very special to Him. She is like a beautiful green olive tree (Jer 11.16), a special possession (Exod 19.5), the apple of God’s eye (Zech 2.8). She is to be a way of grace (forgiveness and salvation) to the millennial world.

Before Israel can be a servant she must be remarried to the LORD. Currently the tribes of Israel are divided into two kingdoms and both are separated from the LORD. To the House of Judah Jesus said *‘the kingdom of God will be taken away from you’* (Mat 21.43), whilst the House of Israel was given *‘a writ of divorce’* (Jer 3.8). This state of disunity within Israel, and between Israel and her LORD is hardly fitting for a servant nation, indeed, for several thousand years Israel has not been a servant nation. However, as we have seen, Israel is refined and mourns her harlotry as she comes through the great tribulation (section **E1**), and she enters the millennium reunited within her ranks and remarried to her LORD. Israel will repent at the Second Coming of Christ:

‘ ... they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn ... ’ (Zech 12.10)

Then two kingdoms will be reunited as one nation:

‘Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will put them ... with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand. And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; ... and they will no longer be two nations ... ’ (Ezek 37.19,22)

And the one nation will be cleansed and given a new heart to serve God:

‘Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you ... ’ (Ezek 36.25,26)

The millennial period sees God’s original plan for national Israel restored:

‘ ... they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.’ (Jer 30.9)

As Paul puts it, *‘how much more shall these (national Israel) who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?’* (Rom 11.24). At this time the nations will at last recognise the LORD and His servant, Israel. They will grasp the coat of a Jew and say:

‘ Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’ (Zech 8.23)

Priests to the LORD

The forgoing discussion reveals how God will use Israel as an interface between Himself and the Gentile nations. Israel will also serve the LORD in a very close, personal way via the tribe of Levi (Isa 66.21). In Fig. 3 we note that special areas are reserved for this tribe since they are to serve the LORD in and around the sanctuary. The distinction between the Levitical priests (the descendants of Aaron) and the remainder of the tribe of Levi is given in Ezek 44.9-15. Here it is stated that the 'Levites' are permitted to be ministers in the LORD's sanctuary, but because of their past unfaithfulness they are not permitted to come near to the LORD *in the role of a priest*. On the other hand, the 'Levitical priests' are deemed to have remained faithful to God and so are permitted to come near to the LORD and to minister to Him (Ezek 44.15). As discussed, the concept of literally walking with the LORD, coming close to Him and communicating with Him is worthy of meditation. But it is no more incredible than that of the first disciples walking with Jesus in Galilee.

Israel and the Church

The genealogy of Christ can be traced 42 generations from Abraham, via the Jews to Jesus (Mat 1.1-17), and hence it is claimed '*salvation is from the Jews*' (Jn 4.22). Unfortunately, Israel totally failed her LORD and so we find the church ('spiritual' Israel) being grafted into the 'olive tree' of national Israel (Rom 11). At this point in history national Israel had become like dry, dead branches on the tree, and the church took on the role of God's servant. On the other hand, the blessings and role of *millennial* Israel will be similar to those of today's church:

- ◆ Millennial Israel will be the sons of God (Hos 1.10) – so is today's church.
- ◆ Millennial Israel will be under the Mediatorship, Sacrifice and Priesthood of the New Covenant (Jer 31.31-34) – so is today's church.
- ◆ Millennial Israel will be raised at the last resurrection in the same way as the church (Isa 66.22)(Rom 11.26,27)(1 Cor 15).

In summary, *it appears that Israel will be to the millennial world what the church is to the present world. We might regard future Israel as the 'millennial church' that leads the Gentile world to Christ.*

F6 The Future Land of Israel

God made a covenant with Abraham, saying to him:

‘*To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates ...*’ (Gen 15.18)

Despite Israel's future disobedience, this promise was *unconditional* in that the land was to be theirs forever. No strings attached.

‘*I will give to you and to your descendants ... all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession*’ (Gen 17.8).

Let's try and identify the geographical boundaries in more detail.

As the Israelites conquered more territory the term ‘Canaan’ was gradually applied to all the lands west of the Jordan valley, and there are references to Canaanites living in the valleys and plains of this region (Num 13.29)(Jos 11.3)(Judg 1.27). In time the LORD gave more detail of the geographical boundaries. For example, in Num 34.1-12 we find the boundaries given to Moses as he was about to divide up Canaan for the twelve tribes.

These are:

Western: the Mediterranean Sea.

Eastern: from Kadesh-barnea, via Zin and the salt sea to Zedad and Hamath in the north.

Southern: from the River of Egypt (not the Nile) to Kadesh-barnea.

Northern: from the Mediterranean Sea to Mount Hor, to Hamath.

More boundary detail is given in Ezek 47.13-21, where it is clearly stated that the Jordan is the eastern boundary. In reality, the tribes occupied only some of this land and in addition occupied some land east of the Jordan. The land was divided according to the size of each tribe (Jos 13) and so resulted in very unequal division e.g. the tribe of Manasseh took a large share. In contrast, Ezek 47 and 48 state that the land in millennial Israel will be divided *equally* between the tribes; each tribe having one portion as shown in Fig. 4.

At first sight it appears that there is some discrepancy in the *northern* boundary, since initially God told Abraham this boundary would be the River Euphrates (much further to the north). The kingdoms of David and Solomon did indeed stretch from the river of Egypt on the Sinai peninsula (not the Nile), across the Syrian Desert to Tiphseh on the Euphrates, but the Euphrates boundary is absent from Num 34 and Ezek 47. A possible explanation is that God is giving boundaries for two time periods. At the Second Coming of Christ there will be significant geological changes in the Middle East (Zech 14.4,10)(Isa 11.15,16) and one of these is the drying up of the Euphrates (Rev 16.12). So whilst the Euphrates served as a boundary for David and Solomon, it virtually ceases to be a landmark in the millennium.

Comparison with present-day Israel

It is interesting to compare the future Biblical boundaries and land division with the current situation in Israel. Clearly, the Biblical boundaries include both the Gaza strip and the West Bank (of the Jordan). They also include significant parts of present-day Syria i.e. up to Hamath, and probably all of Lebanon.

More significantly, God provides for the non-Jew who happens to be living in Israel. Referring to these so-called aliens in millennial Israel, God says:

‘*“And they shall be to you as the native-born among the sons of Israel; they shall be allotted an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel”*.’ (Ezek 47.22)

This is nothing new. God commanded OT Israel to allow ‘strangers’ (non-Israelites) to live amongst them (Lev 25.47) and to treat them the same as fellow Israelites (Deut 10.19)(Num 9.14). This command also applies today!

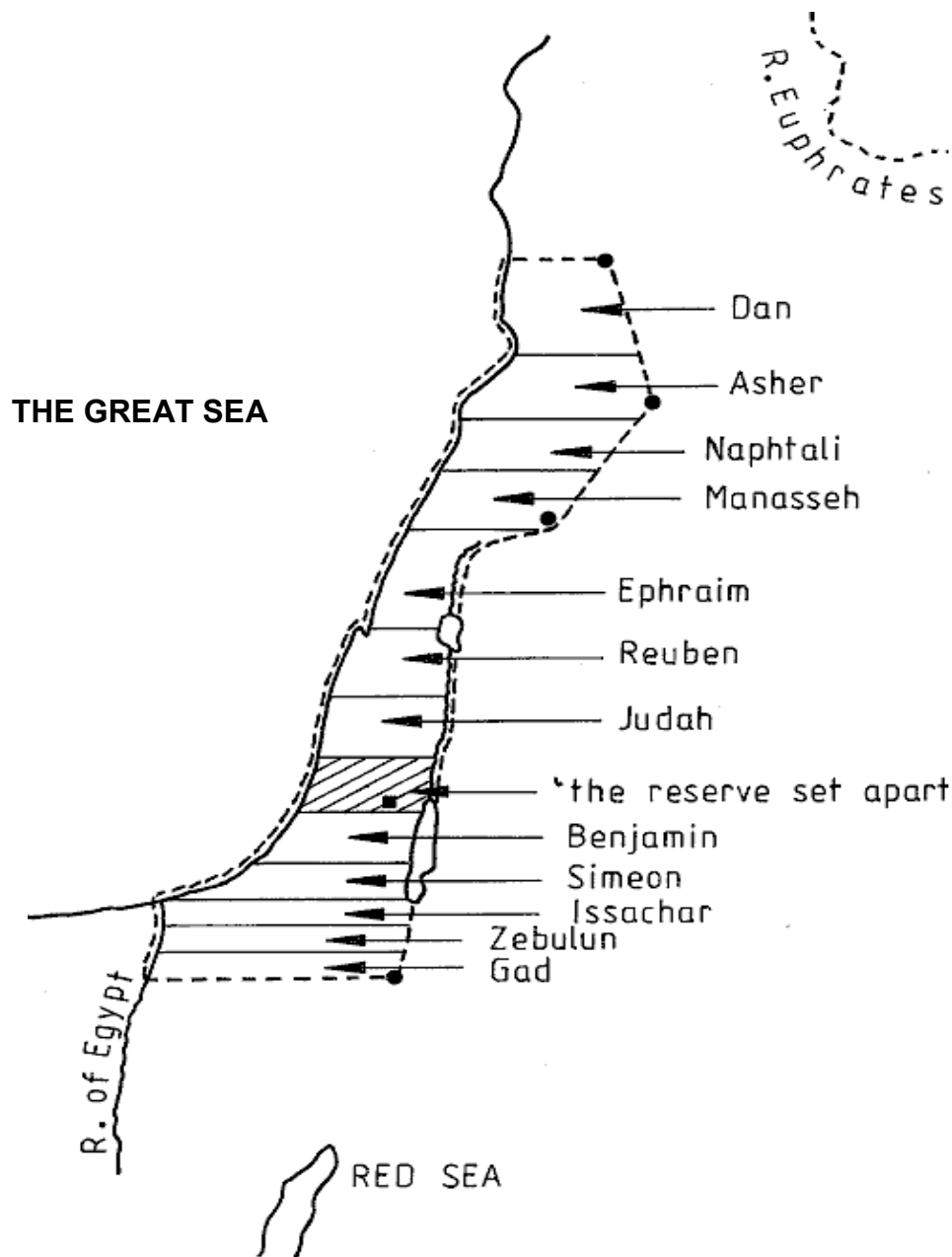


Fig. 4 Future Occupation of Israel (Ezek 47,48)

A Prosperous Land

In some respects, millennial Israel will be similar to the Garden of Eden. Consider the following promises:

'... and I will call for the grain and multiply it ... I will multiply the fruit of the tree and produce of the field ...' (Ezek 36.29,30)

'The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah (desert) will rejoice and blossom like the crocus. It will blossom profusely ... the scorched land will become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water ...' (Isa 35.1,2,7)

'... the ploughman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed ...the mountains will drip sweet wine ...' (Amos 9.13)

‘... Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with fruit.’
(Isa 27.6)

‘And they will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden ...’
(Ezek 36.35)

These and many similar texts fit happily into the context of a millennial age, although there are indications that the world will see Israel start to ‘bud’ *before* the millennium. For example, in Ezekiel we read:

‘But you, O mountains of Israel, you will put forth your branches and bear your fruit for My people Israel; for they will soon come.’ (Ezek 36.8)

The well-known parable of the fig tree (Mat 24.32) also implies that the world will see Israel bud and break into leaf *prior* to the LORD’s coming. As discussed in section **C1**, Many believe that we can see this ‘budding’ today in her political, economic and agricultural development. For instance, prior to 1948 much of the land was semi-arid due to deforestation and soil erosion. By the late 1960’s more than 200 million trees had been planted. Today sycamore, tamarisk and myrtle trees abound and magnificent forests clothe the once barren hills of Judea. Since independence in 1948, Israel has increased the cultivated area from 165,000 ha to over 420,000 ha. Rich harvests of cotton and ground nuts are now gathered from northern Galilee. By the close of the 20th century, fruit orchards covered some 60,000 ha and in 1997 produced some 571,000 tons of fruit. This included apples, pears, peaches, apricots, bananas, mangoes, dates, olives, grapes and avocados.

The Bible says, ‘in the last days, Israel will blossom and fill the whole world with fruit’ (Isa 27.6)

From the above prophecies and from modern evidence we are left in little doubt that the replenishment of the land of Israel will be a very literal event. Indeed, it is well underway. Of course, wherever man ceases to rape his environment and tries instead to replenish it (particularly with trees) then the land will revive. This has happened in Guanxian and Shandong Province in China for instance, where rural reforms were introduced in 1982 under the UN World Food Program. Under this scheme some six million ha (nearly 15 million acres) of trees were planned up to 1990 in eleven provinces of north, east, and north-west China. Already this has beneficially altered the climate and increased food production. Clearly, this type of programme is to be welcomed but we must remember that this replenishment was instigated by *man* (human Government). How much more then will be the blessing of the land of Israel when *God* decides to intervene!

It is important to realise that Israel’s future prosperity will come not only from the land, but also from the wealth of other nations and from the *seas* associated with Israel. Nations will bring their wealth to Israel (Isa 60.5,16, 61.6), and the seas of Israel will become abundant not only in fish but probably also in terms of their hidden mineral wealth. Recall that water flows from the LORD’s sanctuary near Jerusalem (Ezek 47) and this builds into a river the banks of which are lined with all kinds of trees for food. At
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first we might be tempted to regard this as symbolic, until we realise that the waters flow into *literal* seas and that this has a very *literal* effect. These are LIVING WATERS or Holy waters from the sanctuary, and wherever they flow they give life. Half of the waters flow west towards the Mediterranean Sea, and half flow east towards the 'eastern sea' (Zech 14.8). A glance at the map shows the latter to be the Dead or Salt Sea (Ezek 47.8, Josh 3.16), and so we see 'living waters' flowing into the northern end of the Dead Sea. The effect is to remove the salt and enable 'very many fish' to live there (Ezek 47.9). Fishermen will stand beside this, now living sea from Engedi (about half way down the sea shore) to Eneglaim (v10), whilst the southern end of the sea is 'left for salt' (v11). Such prophetic detail warrants a literal rather than symbolic interpretation of these scriptures. Also, such detail cannot apply to the new heavens and new earth since there will be no sea (Rev 21.1)!

F7 The Nations in the Millennium

Who will Populate the Earth?

It is reasonable and necessary to ask ourselves 'who will populate the earth during the millennium', or, put another way, 'to whom does Israel act as God's witness?'. Are there any survivors after the LORD has finished judging the earth and, if so, what happens to them when the LORD comes again? Are they 'whisked away to make room for the church, or do they go on into the millennium? We might also use the Bible to speculate on the *pattern of life* during the millennium.

First and foremost we must realise that during the millennium Israel is a witness to the NATIONS and so, by definition, there must be millions of Gentiles on the earth in addition to the nation of Israel. There are many texts to support this view.

Imagine the world scenario just after the LORD's coming. We look upon a world which has suffered the judgement of the LORD and which has just come through the most dramatic events in history. The earth will have been physically shaken (Isa 24.19,20) and will have experienced the most violent earthquakes ever (Rev 16.18). The LORD via His angels will have inflicted loathsome sores upon all those who had accepted the mark of the beast, and new plagues will have ravaged the earth (Rev 9.3). A third of mankind will have been killed by plague (Rev 9.18), and the armies who had attacked Israel will have suffered awful plague (Zech 14.12). The pattern of life as we know it (globalisation) will have been totally disrupted as 'commercial Babylon' is destroyed, alongside a third of the world's shipping (Rev 8.9). It is also worth noting that much of the commercial world is heavily reliant upon satellite communication and the Internet and that such high technology systems are very vulnerable to climatic and geological changes. Such systems are fragile!

The implication throughout these judgements is that millions die *but some survive* and come through into the millennium. Initially at least, they will be only too ready to embrace the LORD having now realised the great darkness they have suffered under the beast. Zechariah foresaw this time and wrote:

'Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went up against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths' (Zech 14.16)

It seems this is no reprieve for those who have borne the mark and yet may have survived the wrath of God on the earth. Rather, those who have born the mark appear to forgo the millennial world to suffer eternal torment (Rev 14.10). We might surmise that Zech 14.16 refers to those who were too young to bear the mark i.e. too young to register for employment, and to those who have simply endured and persevered without the mark throughout the beast's short reign (Rev 14.12). The young especially may never have heard of the LORD since they will have lived thorough a spiritually dark period, and it could well be these people who are among those evangelised by Israel (Isa 66.19).

Man Still 'In the Flesh'

There will be regular worldwide worship of the LORD during the millennium:

'Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths.' (Zech 14.16)

Nations will willingly go up to Jerusalem to worship Him and listen to His teaching (Mic 4.2)(Isa 66.23). It also appears that one of the OT festivals is reinstated, the Feast of Booths. On OT times this feast was a time of rejoicing, sacrificing and thanksgiving to God, and it reminded Israel that her life rested upon redemption and the forgiveness of sin. In the millennial world the feast will serve the same purpose, but now it applies worldwide, to Jew and Gentile alike. Worldwide worship implies that millions come to know the LORD through Israel's witness (Zech 2.11)(Mic 4.2) – a concept which may feel alien to evangelical Christians. Many Christians believe that the 'day of salvation' closes at the end of the church age, but this view does not harmonise with many prophecies relating to the millennium. Rather, *such prophecies indicate that the day of salvation continues throughout the millennium!*

This view is compatible with the concept that man is still 'in the flesh' during the millennium, and therefore he still has within himself the conflict of two natures (Rom 7). Perhaps the most poignant evidence for this is the reality of *death* ! Yes – people will be born and will die in the millennial earth, just as in the present age. Man's life span may well extend to at least 100 years (Isa 65.20,22) but physical death inevitably follows. Death is the last enemy and is not destroyed until the close of the millennium. Moreover, since man still suffers the inner conflict of two natures, it appears that sometimes his old, unregenerate nature will dominate and rebel against the LORD's rule. Sometimes for example, certain peoples will not honour or serve Israel and the LORD rebukes them (Isa 60.12). Sometimes nations will not go up to worship the LORD at Jerusalem and He will rebuke them (Zech 14.17-19). Remember that this is NOT satanic deception (Satan is bound) but it is simply man's self-will setting itself up in opposition to the LORD. No wonder the nations will require firm rule - rule by a 'rod of iron' !

Wherever sin abounds there is sickness as well as death, and the reference in Ezek 47.12 to healing may well be provision for such sickness. There is also a need for cleansing and

the Bible provides elaborate detail of the sacrificial ceremonies and feasts that are apparently to be reinstated (Ezek 45 and 46). Such reinstatement is also strongly implied in Zech 14.21, which is given in the context of Christ's theocratic rule over all the earth:

'Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts, and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them ...'

Such sin offering is stated to be 'for the House of Israel' (Ezek 45.17) but bearing in mind that many nations join themselves to the LORD (and therefore to Israel), the atonement could possibly apply generally, to all peoples. Such ceremonies are necessary 'for everyone who goes astray or is naïve' (Ezek 45.20), that is, for anyone who succumbs to his or her own will in opposition to the LORD's will, or for anyone who has come into contact with death (Ezek 44.25-27).

Why, we may ask, are such ceremonies necessary when Christ has offered one sacrifice for sin FOR ALL TIME (Heb 10.12)? Certainly spiritual Israel (the church) in the current age is under 'a new and living way' and there is no longer any need for sin offering (Heb 10). Similarly, in the millennium, national Israel will be under a new covenant and God's law will be written on their hearts (Jer 31.27-34). Having said this, Christians are still in the flesh and need to regularly confess their sins to the LORD (1 Jn 1.8-10), and in the same way millennial Israel will need forgiveness from time to time. The key to this paradox may well lie in the *mechanism* of forgiveness. Today the church is sanctified through prayer and faith in an *invisible* LORD, whereas millennial Israel will actually come *physically near* to the LORD during such ceremonies (Ezek 46.9). Thus, whilst not minimising Christ's one-time sacrifice, millennial forgiveness can take an active role, including festivities, in contrast to the forced spiritual role of today's church. We should not overlook the rich meaning of such ceremonies in the life of Israel, the sin offering forming part of a range of offerings, including burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings and peace offerings (Ezek 45.17). These will take on a new meaning as they are performed in the presence of the Lamb.

The fact that sin is a characteristic of the millennial earth clearly distinguishes this final earthly age from the 'new heaven and the new earth'. The two scenarios are markedly different. The millennial earth has flesh and blood, sin, sickness, death, and seas, all of which are absent in the new heaven and new earth (1 Cor 15.42-50)(Rev 21.1). In order of perfection, the millennial earth seems to fall between our present age and the eternal age embracing the new heaven and new earth. God has reserved the very best for eternity!

Daily Life

It is interesting to speculate on the social order and daily way of life in the millennium. Man will still have his daily work but there is some indication that the bias of work will be towards husbandry (farming) and hunting (fishing) rather than industrial manufacturing (Ezek 47.10)(Isa 60.5, 65.21)(Amos 9.13,14). For example:

'The remainder of the length alongside the holy allotment ...(shall produce) food for the workers of the city. The workers of the city, out of all the tribes of Israel, shall cultivate it.' (Ezek 48.18,19).

We might construe that there will be a return to a pre-industrialised society, to a society where individuals are more self-employed and relaxed (Isa 65.22)(Mic 4.4), to a rural rather than an urban way of life. Even today there are indications, particularly from ‘politically green’ people, that many would prefer a simpler way of life, closer to nature, and this may well be fulfilled in the millennium. People may tend to *live* in cities rather than work in them (Amos 9.14) and what manufacturing *is* done may well be for essentials, such as building materials (Isa 65.22).

Recall that the LORD will have destroyed the ‘commercial Babylon’ of this present age – a system based upon profit and self-gain, upon the survival of the fittest, and rarely upon love. Gone will be the massive arms industries (Isa 2.4)(Mic 4.3). Gone will be the take-overs and redundancies. Gone will be globalisation and unjust trading. Gone will be the rape of the earth’s resources and environmental pollution. The millennial economy may well be a ‘zero-growth’, environmentally friendly economy based on *trust* and *love of one’s neighbour* and where any commercial transactions are just and fair (Ezek 45.9-12).

F8 *The Role of the Saints*

Having discussed the role of national Israel during the millennium, it is natural to ask ‘where is the church?’ What has happened to all those saints who have died in the LORD over the centuries, or who were translated to be with the LORD at the rapture? These are intriguing questions which deserve careful answers.

Irrespective of where we place the so-called rapture with respect to Daniel’s 70th Week, the living church will at some point in time be taken to be with the LORD. These believers take their part in the *first resurrection* (Rev 20.5). As Paul says, at the Second Coming of Christ, all those who have died in the LORD (see also section **C6**) are raised first followed by the rapture of the living saints (1 Thes 4.13-17). The body of each saint, whether corrupted beyond all recognition by death, or whether in the flesh, is changed *instantaneously* (1 Cor 15.52) into an *incorruptible* and *spiritual* body (1 Cor 15.42,44). The well-attested resurrection of Christ is our guarantee that such a resurrection will take place, or, in more traditional terminology, the risen Christ represents the first fruits of those who are asleep (1 Cor 15.20,21).

Let’s expand on this scenario. At the rapture the saints are first gathered ‘from one end of the sky to the other’ (Mat 24.31). Here ‘sky’ is translated from the Greek word ‘ouranos’ which conveys the idea of *elevation* e.g. the sky or heaven or abode of God. In other words, Mat 24.31 infers that the risen saints are gathered in a context of happiness and eternal communion with God. They are gathered as spiritual, immortal beings having much the same relationship to God as the heavenly angels do today. Once gathered, the saints accompany the LORD as He returns to the earth (Zech 14.5)(1 Thes 3.13). But now the millennial scenario appears paradoxical to say the least! On the one hand we have the remnant nations and national Israel - all ‘in the flesh’ – whilst on the other hand it now appears that earth’s ranks are to be swelled by millions of immortal beings!

To resolve our dilemma it is helpful to consider the *role* of the saints during the millennium. First and foremost they are to ‘reign with Christ’ and to be ‘priests to God’ :

'If we endure we shall also reign with Him ...' (2 Tim 2.12)

'... and they (the saints) came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.'
(Rev 20.4)

'And You have made them (the saints) to be ... priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.' (Rev 5.10)

The saints referred to here are those gathered from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and especially those who suffered and died under the reign of the beast.

Over who does this resurrected church reign? Surprisingly, the LORD has provided us with some specific answers to this question, namely,

- The twelve tribes of Israel (Mat 19.28)(Lk 22.30)
- The world i.e. Gentile nations (1 Cor 6.2)
- Angels (1 Cor 6.3)

In other words, the resurrected saints are to reign with Christ *over the complete millennial world*, and even over angels. Surely this underscores the value Jesus puts upon His church and how precious and important each Christian is in His sight. But some may ask, 'how can the saints reign with Christ and simultaneously enjoy their heavenly mansions (Jn 14.2,3)? Even now Jesus is preparing a place for each saint in heaven, so how can the risen saints be in two places at once?

An answer to this paradox, and to the paradox of mortal and immortal dwelling together on earth must lie in the nature of the resurrected body. It is not limited to time or space just as Christ's resurrected body is not limited. After His resurrection Jesus came through locked doors to visit the disciples (Jn 20.26), and He suddenly appeared and disappeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24.13-35). He simultaneously fills the whole universe (Eph 4.10) and yet is to appear in the same bodily form as He left the earth; His feet shall stand on the Mt. Of Olives and He shall reign from, and dwell in, the temple in Jerusalem (Ezek 43.7). Yet, His future earthly reign will in no way usurp His position at the right hand of our Father in heaven (Eph 1.20). When God descended to give the Law on Mt. Sinai He did not relinquish His glory in the heavens. Similarly, when Moses and Elijah appeared at the transfiguration (Mat 17.3,4) they talked with the LORD and were fully visible to flesh and blood, *but their home was in heavenly places*, and they did not remain on the earth. It is reasonable to assume that the risen saints will interface to the millennial earth in a similar way. We might conjecture that, from time to time, the saints would appear in visible form to those on earth, whilst simultaneously being seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph 2.6). Their earthly appearance will in no way usurp their real home in heaven.

The role of the saints in the millennium is therefore

- *To serve the LORD by ministering to those on the earth, and especially to the tribes of Israel.*
- *To act as priests, interceding for Israel and the nations in heavenly places.*
- *To judge, teach, guide, help and encourage people, perhaps in much the same way as the angels do in the present age.*

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These resurrected saints (spiritual Israel) are the first fruits (Rom 8.23) of the olive tree, Israel, and eventually the *whole* tree will bear fruit for the LORD in the sense that all national Israel and all Gentile nations will glorify the LORD. It seems the millennium will see millions more saints added to those who came to Him during the church age, and millions more names added to the book of life.

In conclusion, we can say that the millennium is essentially *Jewish*, reigned over by Christ and His resurrected church.

F9 The Conclusion of Life on this Earth

As we have seen, in order of perfection, the ranking of the millennial age falls between that of the church age and the age characterised by the new heaven and the new earth. Earth's inhabitants are still 'in the flesh' compared to the immortality of the risen saints. The millennial earth is sharply distinguished from that of the new earth, in which there is:

- No sea (Rev 21.1)
- No death (Rev 21.4)
- No temple (Rev 21.22)
- No sun or moon (Rev 21.23)
- No night (Rev 21.25)

Recall, while the *first* earth remains, day and night will not cease (Gen 8.22) and for the millennial earth there are clear implications of night and of the moon (see for example Ezek 46.2,3). Clearly then, the millennial earth is not the same as the new earth.

The transition from the millennial age to that eternal age is just as dramatic as that from the church age to the millennium:

'When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations ... to gather them for war ... and they ... surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire ...' (Rev 20.7-10)

In passing, we note that these verses strongly refute the idea of Amillennialism. This viewpoint holds that we are now in the millennium, in which case we ask; "if Satan is now in prison, who is currently carrying on his work? If the nations of today are not currently deceived, then why are they in such turmoil?" It is surely more logical to take the Premillennial viewpoint, which sees God permitting one final test of the dual nature of man by releasing Satan for a brief period at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ (v7). Once more it seems, the sinful nature of man will respond to a lie, even after 1,000 years of glorious peace and prosperity under the LORD. However, it is important to realise that *only the Gentile nations are deceived* and that Israel herself remains faithful to the LORD. The vision is one of millions marching upon Israel and upon Jerusalem in particular, only to be utterly defeated and destroyed by the LORD (v8,9). This momentous time is also marked by eternal banishment of all evil (v10) and by the disintegration of

the first creation (v11)(2 Pet 3.10). In passing we note that Rev 20.7-11 is also a stumbling block to those who believe that *we are currently in the millennial period, that Satan is currently bound, and that Satan is shortly to be released*. This philosophy forces the destruction of the devil to occur at about the same time as the destruction of the two beasts of Rev 13, whereas according to Rev 19.20 and Rev 20.4,7 there is a clear 1,000-year interval between these two events! Even v10 itself implies a time period between the punishment of Satan and the punishment of the two beasts.

We see in Rev 20.9 that saved (regenerate) Israel is now referred to as THE SAINTS – a highly significant description. For thousands of years national Israel has strived after God, but only at this time does she fully take her place with all the saints who have gone before her. Here at last we see national Israel grafted back into her own olive tree (Rom 11.23,24); put another way, spiritual Israel (the risen church) and national Israel become one tree. This unification is symbolised by the New Jerusalem (Rev 21.10-27), the bride of wife of the Lamb (Rev 21.2,9). Here we see the twelve tribes of Israel lending their names to the twelve gates of the city (Rev 21.12) and the twelve Apostles (representing spiritual Israel) lending their names to the twelve foundation stones of the city wall (Rev 21.14). In conclusion, we see that all the saints, either from the millennial age or from the previous ages are represented as *one* body, *one* bride, and *one* glory in the symbolism of the new Jerusalem, and God's plan for ALL ISRAEL is accomplished:

'...a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved ...' (Rom 11.25,26)

The seventh dispensation on the earth (the millennium) comes to an end and is followed by an eighth dispensation, the new heavens and new earth. We note that in scripture the number eight signifies a *new creation* or *new beginning*.

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Dear Reader

This article has pointed to the reality of God as His plans unfold in human history. It has demonstrated the truth of the Bible as prophecy is fulfilled before our eyes. Prophecy of a corrupt, cruel, and godless worldwide government is coming true, and prophecies concerning Israel are being fulfilled. We have seen how God is bringing this age to a rapid close, maybe in our lifetime.

Despite the momentous events soon to overtake the world, we are not alone and there is no need to fear. Jesus is close to all that call upon Him for help and forgiveness. As the Bible says:

'God loved the world so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, so that whoever believes and trusts in Him will not perish, but have eternal life' (Jn 3.16)

Don't delay - He is coming soon for His church. Call upon Jesus right now and your name will be written in the 'Book of Life'. This is your visa to the 'heavenly city'. Not everyone will enter that city:

'and nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life' (Rev 21.27)

Ask Jesus into your life and you will be saved from the coming judgement of the nations. You will reign with Him in the millennium. You will enter with Him into the new heaven and new earth. And you will live eternally in that heavenly city.