

Jesus And The Millennium

INTRODUCTION

Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to explore the whole area concerning the Return of Jesus Christ, His reign and the End of the Age.

We will review the different interpretations which surround this and cover such questions as:

- What is the Millennium?
- What does it mean to us and our faith?
- Is it relevant today?
- Is it better to avoid the whole subject of the future?

This study will not give you a definitive answer, but is aimed at encouraging you to seek the Word for yourselves and strengthen your faith in He who holds the future.

Keep to the Facts

Our aim in this study is to keep to the Biblical and historical facts. To aim go on what we actually know rather than hypothesise or emotively defend traditions. We will be very clear where assumptions or speculations are made.

Our view is that an approach that tries to fill in and explain every detail is open to error, especially as the Bible gives us what we need to know rather than all we want to know. It is our Gentile thinking that wants to believe only after every detail has been defined and explained.

This study will use a combination of:

- New and Old Testament
- Other historical sources such as the Talmud and Targums.

Basis of Belief.

We are Bible Believers, and the whole basis of this study is founded on the accuracy of the Word of God as contained in the Scriptures. Whilst we need to allow for certain differences of interpretation, we believe that the original source is pure, and we do not allow for assumptions which require Scripture to be held in error or having been corrupted.

Understanding the Big Picture

It is always important to keep the 'big picture' in mind when understanding prophecy, God's overall purpose from Adam's fall is to restore a people to Himself. These are His own special people, serving Him from the heart.

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. Deuteronomy 7 v 6

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light 1Peter 2v9

There is also a consistent theme of two types of peoples in the Bible:

- Believers and Unbelievers
- Righteous and Unrighteous
- Obedient and Lawless
- Sons of Light (Day) and Sons of Darkness (Night)

There is no middle ground in the Bible. The first group is reserved for salvation, the second for judgement.

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What is the Millennium?

The Millennium is the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth as defined in the **Revelation 20 v 1 - 15**

This is the only place in the Bible where a 1000 year earthly reign is specifically mentioned, although many Old Testament writings (mostly from the Prophets) refer to a Messianic Age to come when the Lord reigns and there is universal peace and ideal conditions on earth are restored.

Two Primary Views

There are many different views about the Millennium, but the majority of fall within two main categories, or a mixture of them.

Literal Interpretation.

This takes the view that the Bible should essentially be interpreted as read. Although some passages have a symbolic meaning, this is usually clear from the context.

The literal view will thus interpret the 1000 year reign as being an actual period in which the Messiah will rule upon the earth prior to the final judgement.

There are several views within this, mostly relating to the timing of the Great Tribulation and the Rapture of the Church in relation to the millennium.

Literal interpretations generally (though not all) hold the view that Israel will play a central role in the Tribulation and Millennium periods.

Allegorical Interpretation.

This view generally states that since the Book of Revelation is highly symbolic and allegorical, then the interpretation of the 1000 year reign can only be taken figuratively. It is felt that this must especially be so since the 1000 year reign is only stated in this one place throughout the whole Bible.

There are many different views within this, but the general one is that the 1000 years is symbolic of an indefinite period of time, and that this millennial reign is effectively the Kingdom of God inaugurated after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Satan is already bound and now Jesus is reigning through the Church with His saints in the heavenlies.

Those who support the allegorical interpretation also generally hold the view that the Church has replaced Israel in God's prophetic agenda, and that the prophecies relating to Israel are to be applied 'spiritually' to the Church. The 1000 years can be applied allegorically to the struggle and ultimate victory of the Church in the world.

Prophetic Principles

- The Big Picture is normally the most important
- Prophecies can be 'time sliced' (partial fulfilment) or be outside of time
- Unfolding prophecy can be likened to watching a painter working on a canvas ... filling in detail here and there rather than chronological.
- Some are written to be understood at the time of fulfilment
- Can have parallel or dual role in fulfilment (lesser and greater)
- Prophecies are not for private interpretation. Beware of trying to interpret in 'our image'.
- Prophecy testifies to Jesus (Rev 19v10)
- Fulfilled prophecy is exact, so we should expect unfulfilled to be the same. God keeps His Word !

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Table of the Main Views

The following is a summary of the 5 main interpretations relating to the millennium.

Most others tend to be variations on a theme, normally concerning where the Rapture and the Great Tribulation occur, and who it involves.

DESCRIPTION	MAIN FEATURES	Issues
Pre-Millennialism (Dispensation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Generally literal Interpretation of Biblical Prophecy ➤ The Great Tribulation is an actual event of 7 years. Characters such as Antichrist are literal. ➤ Rapture of the Church variously interpreted as at the beginning, middle or end of the Tribulation ➤ Rapture may be full or partial ➤ 1000 year reign on earth inaugurated at the coming of Jesus, with his saints ➤ Kingdom of God is a physical reign on earth at this time where there is universal peace. ➤ Normally claims restoration of Israel to fulfil its true destiny during the Millennium ➤ Claims Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messianic kingdom are fully fulfilled in the millennial reign ➤ Final Battle, Judgment, New Heaven and Earth follow the millennial reign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Leads to speculation about end times. ⇒ Many different interpretations of times, places and people ⇒ Need to reconcile to Bible references which imply that New Heaven & Earth come immediately after the return of Jesus.
Pre-Millennialism (Historical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normally combination of literal and symbolic interpretation • Christ will return to institute a physical reign on earth • Apostasy and the Tribulation will occur prior to the millennium • Rapture occurs immediately preceding the millennial reign • 1000 may be seen as literal or figurative • Temple Worship re-established as a remembrance of Christ's Sacrifice • The Church is the fulfilment of Israel • Millennium ends with the rebellion against the kingdom and final judgment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Re-interpretation of passages relating to Israel can be selective ⇒ Mixes allegorical and literal translations ⇒ Ignores Biblical prophecy relating to Israel
Amillennialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is no literal millennium. ▪ The 1,000 years is symbolic and stands for the whole time between the life of Jesus on earth and his second coming. ▪ There is a symbolic millennium: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The saints are raised with Christ at the new birth, this is the first resurrection, (Eph 2:6, Col 2:12, Col 3:1), ○ They reign with Christ in life (Rom 5:17). ▪ Tends to assume that Israel has been replaced by the Church in God's prophetic agenda. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Who decides where prophecy is allegorical or literal ⇒ Fulfilled Biblical prophecy has been literal and specific ⇒ Leaves the Bible open to all sorts of strange interpretations ⇒ Does not take into account Israel and the Covenant nature of God ⇒ Does not reconcile to current and historical reality

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DESCRIPTION	MAIN FEATURES	Issues
Post-Millennialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Christ returns after the millennium. ○ 1000 years may be literal or symbolic ○ The Millennium is the Golden Age of the Church during which the large majority of world will be converted to Christianity. ○ The Church is made ready to receive Christ ○ Christ's rule is not physical but spiritual via the Church ○ Millennium may be seen as happening through history rather than a series of events ○ Tribulation can be interpreted as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurring through history and showing the ultimate triumph of the Church. • Occurring at the end of the Millennium ○ Postmillennialism is an extension of Amillennialism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ As for Amillennialism. ⇒ Again history and claims of Satan being bound do not seem to reconcile to Church History
Preterist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claims all the prophecies as having been fulfilled during the First century, especially 70 AD. • The Tribulation refers to the Jewish wars AD 66-70. culminating in the fall of Jerusalem • Claim that the Kingdom Age is being lived out now • Do not generally accept that there is a Rapture • Do not accept Israel has a future fulfilment • Interpretation can be figurative • There is also 'partial Preterist', which accepts some future fulfilment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Present Kingdom does not seem to match to reality ⇒ Need to explain about the Return of Jesus ⇒ Still leave a lot of unfulfilled prophecy to explain

The Literal View

From this point on we will take the more literal interpretation of the prophetic writings, which is:

1. Age of the Gentiles
2. The Great Tribulation as a specific period
3. The return of Jesus to inaugurate a physical 1000 year reign on the earth
4. The final rebellion
5. Final judgment of all
6. The New Heaven and Earth

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THE JEWISH MESSIAH

It is important to understand the Jewish interpretation and expectation concerning the Messiah, particularly at the time of Jesus and the early Church when the book of Revelation was written.

It is our belief that in order to more fully understand the eschatology of the New Testament we need to know its Jewish frame of reference.

Although the modern Jewish community is divided in its thoughts concerning the Messiah, one fact remains true: the concept of the Messiah is and has been one of the fundamental tenets within Judaism for over two thousand years.

Descriptions of the Messiah and writings of the Messianic era are found not only in the Bible but also in the Talmud and other Jewish commentaries, including the Dead Sea Scrolls. Although non-Biblical, there are significant texts that throw light on an unfolding revelation of the Messiah, His rule and character. These would have been clearly understood at the time of Jesus.

What Messiah means

The word Messiah comes from the Aramaic word *mešîhâ*, which in turn is from the Hebrew *māšîah*.

These words were usually translated into Greek as *Christos* and into Latin as *Christus*, whence the English word *Christ*.

All these words mean simply 'anointed one', anointment with oil being widespread custom to show that someone had been appointed and authorised. In Israel kings, priests and prophets were anointed to affirm their ministry. In that respect they were anointed ones.

There is however one special person prophesied and long awaited, who would be **the** Anointed One who is called the God himself to be King, Priest, Prophet and the Deliverer of Israel.

This is the Messiah or HaMoshiach.

Hatikva (The Hope)

Messianic fervour has often been at its peak when Israel has been oppressed and fighting for (or to keep) independence. Such periods would include:

- ✧ Last years of the Kingdom of Judah
- ✧ Babylonian Captivity
- ✧ Return from Captivity
- ✧ Hasmonean Period
- ✧ Roman Occupation First Century

Jewish interpretation of the Messiah has always been focussed on an earthly rule, the Messiah being an anointed Jewish ruler from the line of David. Even the disciples and many followers of Jesus were looking to Him as being the Messiah who would set Israel free from Roman oppression and usher in the longed for Messianic kingdom

This Messianic expectation was particularly high among the Essene community (who left us the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran) and many of their writings are apocalyptic. However after the dissolution of Israel following the Bar Kochba revolt in AD 135, the Messianic fervour has been tempered and some Messianic texts played down or re-interpreted.

Jewish tradition is that the Messiah will return when Israel is at its lowest ebb and in the most danger. This is borne out by Biblical prophecy which states that the Messiah will come to a besieged Jerusalem.

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The Two Messiahs

Ancient Judaism came to believe in two Messiahs:

Messiah ben Joseph : The Suffering Messiah
Messiah ben David The Reigning Messiah

This was the interpretation to account for the two different strands of Messianic prophecies.

In Isaiah 53 the suffering Messiah is seen as the Redeemer who takes upon Himself the sins of Israel so that not one Jewish soul shall perish. Whilst later Judaism applied this passage to the people of Israel as being the Servant, the traditional, older Rabbinic view was that this spoke of the Messiah.

Daniel 9:24- 26a also talks of the Messiah that would be 'cut-off' or killed, and apparently not reach his objective. Since he will die he would need to be followed by Messiah, the Son of David, who will deliver Israel from all their enemies and restore the kingdom.

Two Ages

Jewish thinking makes a distinction between This World (Olam Hazei) as being separate in time from the World to Come (Olam Habah). The Messianic Era is a part of This World, and not the World to Come.

The World to Come is associated with the End of the Age, or End of Days.

The Messianic Age

The following is an extract from the famous Jewish Sage Maimodes. Although written in the middle ages it is a recognised interpretation of the Talmud:

"The Messianic age is when the Jews will regain their independence and all return to the land of Israel. The Messiah will be a very great king, he will achieve great fame, and his reputation among the gentile nations will be even greater than that of King Solomon. His great righteousness and the wonders that he will bring about will cause all peoples to make peace with him and all lands to serve him.... Nothing will change in the Messianic age, however, except that Jews will regain their independence. Rich and poor, strong and weak, will still exist. However it will be very easy for people to make a living, and with very little effort they will be able to accomplish very much.... it will be a time when the number of wise men will increase...war shall not exist, and nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation.... The Messianic age will be highlighted by a community of the righteous and dominated by goodness and wisdom. It will be ruled by the Messiah, a righteous and honest king, outstanding in wisdom, and close to God. Do not think that the ways of the world or the laws of nature will change, this is not true. The world will continue as it is. The prophet Isaiah predicted "The wolf shall live with the sheep, the leopard shall lie down with the kid." This, however, is merely allegory, meaning that the Jews will live safely, even with the formerly wicked nations. All nations will return to the true religion [monotheism, although not necessarily Judaism] and will no longer steal or oppress.

The End of Days

The End of days, or End of the Age comes when New Heavens and Earth are created.

The Four Characteristics of Messiah

1. Messiah as King
2. Messiah as Sage
3. Messiah as High Priest
4. Messiah as 'the Prophet like Moses'

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THE MESSIAH THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD

At the time of Jesus the whole land was swept by a wave of Messianic longing, a fact which is also attested to in Luke chapter 2 where both the aged devout Simeon and the 84 year old prophetess Hannah belonged to those who awaited in the Temple the "consolation of Israel" and the "redemption of Jerusalem".

It was however the ministry of John the Baptist that would have really increased Messianic hope. It maybe that even John was expecting Jesus to act as the Deliverer of Israel:

Luke 7 v 19 - 23

Even after the Resurrection the disciples were still thinking in terms of an earthly Messianic Kingdom:

Acts 1v6

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

This expectation of Jesus as the earthly Messiah together with the political turmoil in Israel at that time is important background to understanding the unfolding events leading up to the Crucifixion, but this is outside the scope of this study. It should however be an important lesson to us to not jump to conclusions too quickly, or try and interpret everything purely in the light of current events

The Messiah is The Lord Himself

The single most important revelation that came with the ministry of Jesus is Peter's confession: "You are the Christ the Son of the Living God" or 'You are the Messiah the Son of the Living God'.

Matthew 16 v 13 – 21

Jesus told Peter that this was a divine revelation. Perhaps it was not just because Peter had seen Jesus as the Messiah, but that it was **the Lord Himself is the Messiah** and Deliverer of Israel. This unfolded further when it was revealed that not only is He the Messiah of Israel, but that the Gentiles would also trust in Him.

The next most profound revelation is that it is **in Jesus Himself** that both Messiahs are fulfilled. He is in one person both Messiah the King and Messiah the Suffering Servant. His first appearance is to come as the Sage who would suffer for the sins of the people.

Matthew 16 v 21 - 25

Luke 24v13 – 48 Even after the Crucifixion His disciples could not grasp what had really happened !

The second coming of Jesus will be as King and Deliverer (Mathew 24 v 30)

Jesus in the four Messianic Types

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Messiah the King	Proclaimed as King Jesus will return as the kingly Messiah. Jesus earthly ancestry established Him as a son of David,	John 1 v 49 John 12 v 12-16 Rev 19 v 16 Matt 1 v 1
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Messiah as Sage	Fulfilled in the teachings and ministry of Jesus 'Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God'	Luke 7 v 19 – 23 Luke 9v11 1Cor 1 v 24
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Messiah as Priest	Cleansed the Temple Declared in Scripture as a Priest after the Order of Melchizedek	Matt 21 v 12-14 Hebrews 5
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Messiah as the Prophet	Testimony of Jesus as the Prophet like Moses The 'I am' discourses and Jesus as the Good Shepherd	John 5 v 46 Acts 3 v 19 -24 John 10

Of course what we understand now is that He not only came as the Messiah of Israel, but as Messiah for all who come to Him, both Jew and Gentile. He is Yeshua HaMoshiach.

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LEAD UP TO THE MILLENNIUM

Age of the Gentiles

Hosea 3 v 4-5

Luke 21 v20 - 24

Apostasy

2Timothy 3v 1 – 7

2 Peter 3 v 3-4

2 Thessalonians 2v3-4

The Great Tribulation

Mathew 24v21

"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."

This is the time of the Antichrist and the false covenant with Israel. All starts well, but second half (3 1/2 years) is the Great Tribulation when the wrath of God is poured out. It is also a time of great persecution for the saints who remain at this time.

By the end of the Tribulation the earth is desolate and the population has been decimated.

Sacking of Jerusalem & Messiah Comes

Zechariah 12 v 9 - ch13 v1 : Israel's Repentance

Zechariah 14 v 1 – 11 : The Lord saves Jerusalem & Israel

Mathew 24v29 - 30

²⁹ *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.*

³⁰ *"Then 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.*

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Some Points to note:

Battles

Ezekiel 38/39	Gog Magog (1)	God fights for Israel. Distinct clear-up period required afterwards. Some think that this could be pre-Tribulation or at the beginning, others match it to the battle at the end of the Tribulation (Rev 19 v 11-20) Certainly it is a time in the 'latter days' when Israel has returned and appears to be dwelling safely.
Revelation 16 v 12-16	Armageddon	Speaks of the gathering of the nations against Israel by the Dragon, Beast and False Prophet. Context does not imply the Final Battle, but the lead up to the battle at the end of the Tribulation
Zechariah 14 v 1-9		The nearly successful attempt by all the nations to destroy Jerusalem, resulting in the return of Messiah
Zephaniah 3 v 8-20		God gather nations for judgement and rescues Israel. Could tie in with Zechariah.
Revelation 20 v 7 - 10	Gog and Magog (2)	The Final Battle as the rebel nations surround Jerusalem and the 'camp of the saints'. Although refers to Gog and Magog this is a different battle from that in Ezekiel.

The Rapture

Different interpretations as to who will be in the Rapture (departure) of the Church and when it will take place

- ❖ All believers or only the faithful
- ❖ Before, during or after the Millennium.

The Day of the Lord

This is nearly always representative of The Lord's Judgment. It could be what was coming at that time on a disobedient Israel, but more often refers to the Great Day of The Lord, when He pours out His judgment over the nations. For example

Isaiah 13 v 6 – 13.

Acts 2v20

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

In that Day

Refers to a time of fulfilment and execution of God's Word.

This can also refer to aspects of the Millennial Kingdom:

Isa 11:10

"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.

Zechariah 2 v 10 -12

10 *"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the LORD.*

11 *"Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.*

12 *"And the LORD will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem*

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LIFE IN THE MILLENNIUM

Traditional Expectations of the Millennium

1. The beast and false prophet are disposed of and Satan is bound for 1000 years
2. Jesus returns to earth to reign
3. We (the saints/the church) shall reign with Him
4. The earth and all creation is restored to pre – fall perfection
5. There is universal peace and harmony, as the whole earth serves the Lord

As already said, we need to be careful about how we read and interpret scripture. We cannot just confine ourselves to one or two 'favourite' passages but need to seek the whole counsel that Scripture gives.

Also whilst we need to pay attention to detail in the text and the context, we should not be dogmatic about all the details of interpretation where they are not altogether clear.

Since the Bible, particularly prophecy, has not necessarily been written in chronological order, it can be difficult to be sure whether certain passages refer to the millennium, some other time on earth or even the Heavenly Kingdom which follows the millennium. Some can have a dual fulfilment.

No single prophet had a complete revelation (e.g. the Church was a mystery not revealed until the resurrection of Christ)

Should we speculate?

Whilst it is perfectly natural to want to know all the detail and to use our imagination, we must always be clear about the difference between speculation and biblical fact.

Many questions are not answered in scripture and we must be content to wait and find out the answers at the time and not fill in the gaps ourselves. For example:

Will we still be working and earning a living in the same ways as we do now?

Will there still be money?

Will children go to school?

Will we build houses to live in, in towns and villages?

What kinds of governments will we have in the nations?

Will we have local government?

Will there be institutions such as hospitals, universities?

Will there be shops, commerce, industry, farming, T.V., telephones, mobile telephones, computers, cars, trains, planes, satellites, sanitation?

Will people still die?

What about sin?

We must be careful to go with what the Lord reveals, and not shape the Word and prophecy into our own image of how we think things should be.

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WHAT DOES THE BIBLE ACTUALLY TELL US?

Rev. 19: 20 – 20:6

Satan is bound; Jesus has returned and is reigning.

There are saints reigning with Christ, but they are specifically tribulation martyrs. We do not have any indication here that *all* the saints are included.

Micah 4:1- 8 (also Isaiah 2 v 1-4)

The Messiah is reigning from Mount Zion. The lame and the outcast and the remnant are those God has afflicted, i.e. Israel. However Messiah's judgement and rule extends beyond the borders of Israel to "many peoples".

Universal peace will exist on the earth among all nations, but it seems that they will not all serve Messiah as God.

Isaiah 11: 6-9 and Isaiah 65: 25.

The peaceful co-existence of predator and prey is certainly idyllic, but when we look at verse 9 in Isaiah 11 it says "*in all My Holy Mountain*" So we only know for sure that this is happening in Zion.

Although it says "... ***the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.***", this does not itself imply that the earth itself is restored.

Isaiah 65: 17-25

This passage begins with reference to the new heavens and new earth. So it could be that this has nothing to do with the Millennial reign? The word "but" at the beginning of verse 18 may suggest that the prophet is being warned not to despise the present creation just because the new is coming. If that is the case we have a wonderful description of the nature of life at least in Israel. There is peace, longevity, children born into a safe environment, success in working life and possession of land and homes.

Ezekiel 47:8-12

Ezekiel chapters 40 – 48 deal with the new temple which will be built. It's construction, the worship, sacrifices and priesthood. In this section there is a description of the waters which flow from it and the abundance that comes to the land as a result.

This certainly shows blessing in the land of Israel but not necessarily the whole earth. The mention of medicine is also interesting and could imply not all is perfect.

Isaiah 55:9 – 13

Taken in context the Lord is speaking to Israel. In fact generally speaking Old Testament passages seem to be speaking to and of Israel, because the understanding of the church was still a mystery and not yet revealed.

Another difficulty is that the Hebrew word for earth "eretz" can mean land, soil, a specific area or country as well as the world. So can we really be sure that the whole earth is restored?

We will see later in Zechariah that perfect climate in the other nations is conditional on them attending the Feast of Tabernacles

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Romans 8:18-23 : The groaning of believers and nature itself for restoration

Psalm 72: Messiah's dominion is worldwide and so the abundance in verse 16 can refer to the whole world.

Acts 3: 17-21 Restoration of all things

It is possible, *and this is conjecture*, that a gradual restoration will take place over the millennial period and that the earth will as it were be comforted with the presence of the Lord and it will be healed. By comparison with the after-effects of the fall of man and subsequent curse, its recovery will be very much swifter.

But we must remember that "all things" (in Acts) means *all things* and that means not just the physical realm of the geology, climate and nature of the earth, but also the nation of Israel as God's example to the nations of a Godly society as He finally rules in person from Zion.

There are many unanswered questions and probably questions. One thing is clear that we are not going to know all the answers at the end of this study, or indeed before we enter the millennial age, but the Lord has revealed enough to give us an exciting hope.

THE POPULATION OF THE EARTH

So far we only have tribulation martyrs who reign with Christ. Are there any others reigning? And in any case you don't reign without having something or someone to reign over. So we are going to take a closer look at the people who populate the earth before we try to piece together a picture of how things will be.

We have already seen that at the end of the Great Tribulation and before Messiah begins His reign there is tremendous bloodshed and destruction on Earth and the population is decimated. We believe that the saints have been rescued from the worst of it at the rapture, together with the "dead in Christ" in accordance with 1 Thessalonians. 4; 13-18

Zechariah 14:1-21

Here we not only have an idea of who inhabits the earth, but we are beginning to see the nature of Christ's rule and we have a major geological change in Jerusalem.

(the 6th seal and the 2nd and 3rd trumpets of Revelation suggest that there will be many other geological changes worldwide caused by what may be meteors or asteroids falling to earth. Signs in the sun may also be huge solar flares or bursts of plasma which have already been known in our day to reach earth's gravitational pull and have wreaked havoc with power supplies and communications.).

Rev. 5: 6-10

Rev 14:1

The following passage tells us who the 144,000 are and give us a few more

Rev. 7: 9 – 17

So we now have:-

- Raptured and resurrected saints (these must be those He brings with Him),
- Tribulation martyrs (also resurrected)
- Jews that have fled through the split Mount of Olives
- Those left from the nations that did not go up against Jerusalem.
- 24 elders
- 144.000 from the 12 tribes of Israel
- Believing Tribulation survivors

But the only ones who we can say categorically are reigning are the Tribulation martyrs and the 24 elders.

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None of the others are said to be reigning so where do we get this idea from? Our third point seems to be flawed.

Could it be any of the following scriptures?

Psalm 149: 5 - 9

Dan. 7: 18,22,27

Jude 1:14,15

1 Cor 6:2,3

All these passages suggest that the saints come to earth with Jesus and have positions of authority, rulership or judgement on the earth. Also they possess the kingdom. But which group of saints are they? Those that Jesus brings with Him would have to be those He collected at the "meeting in the air" The rest appear in our list, but

Does possession of the Kingdom mean the same thing as reigning?
Do we have to be reigning in order to be judging? That is certainly not the case now.

Certainly it would seem that if all the millions of saints from all time are ruling it is a disproportionate number to the population of the earth.

What we can be sure of though is that one way or another we will be there. Let us praise Him for that.

David

There is some indication that David himself will be resurrected to rule in Israel:

Acts 15:16,17

Amos 9:11-15

Ezekiel 37:24-28

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Summary

1. The beast and false prophet are disposed of and Satan is bound for 1000 years

Rev. 20:2 clearly establishes this.

2. Jesus returns to earth to reign

Micah 4:7; Isaiah 2:3; Zech.14:4; Rev 5:6; Rev 7:15; Rev 14:1; Rev 19:15,16

Israel is now the focal point of the world and as such will finally fulfil God's calling as His priestly nation.

Messiah rules the nations from Zion with a rod of iron.

Temple worship will be restored (Ezekiel 40 -48)

All the nations that fought against Jerusalem will come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Other feasts will also be kept.

With Messiah ruling we can expect that there will be perfect justice. This will mean the punishment of the rebellious (specifically those nations who fail to keep the feast of Tabernacles).

The poor and oppressed will be delivered and helped (Psalm 72)

1. The Saints reign with Him

It not certain that all saints reign in an executive sense. We can be sure of the 24 elders (Rev 5:6 – 10) and resurrected Tribulation martyrs (Rev. 20:4) The rest of the saints possess, inhabit and enjoy the Kingdom and may have positions of authority in it.

2. The earth and creation is restored

Most scriptures indicate Israel as the land that is blessed in this way with predatory animals that no longer predate and abundance of grain etc. Ezekiel 47:8 -12; Isaiah 11:6 – 9; Isaiah 65:25 and Isaiah 55: 9-13.

However Romans 8:18 – 23 and Acts 3:17 -21 lead us to believe that all the earth will be restored and is waiting for just that to happen. Psalm 72 suggests the same.

We can conclude that the global environments will be much healthier than now.

3. There is universal peace and harmony,

Isaiah 2:1 -4; Micah 4:1 -8 and Psalm 72 all indicate this.

However of the seven groups of people that populate the earth at the beginning of the Millennium, not all are in resurrection bodies. Some have survived the Tribulation and refrained from coming up against Jerusalem and rejected the mark of the beast.

This means that they are as we are. James 1:14 & 15 (*But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death*) shows us clearly that we do not need the devil around in order to be able to sin.

So the "rod of iron" may be more necessary than we would care to believe.

Also at the end of the millennium there is the final battle so this implies that during this period there is enough resentment and rebellion under the surface in some groups to be deceived by a released Satan.

Birth, Sickness and Death

The evidence is that that there will be births, sickness and deaths in the Millennium.

This is still 'old earth' rather than the new. Famine and plagues will be part of the punishment of those nations that refuse to go up to the feast of Tabernacles.

Death will be present, but considered a curse since human longevity is restored.

Note: **1Corinthians 15:26** *The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.* This happens after the Millennium.

Isaiah 65:17 - 23

Zech. 8:1-5

Jesus And The Millennium

THE END OF THE AGE

The Final Rebellion

REV 20 v 7 – 10

At the end of the Messianic reign there will be one final battle as Satan is released from prison. This will in effect be the final identification of the 'tares' to make them ready for their removal.

Gog and Magog

Gog and Magog are also mentioned in Ezekiel 38/39, and there is much discussion as to their identity, which is outside of the scope of this study.

The important point is that Gog and Magog represent those who completely reject the rule of God, even when conditions are ideal. It is a testimony to the sin and rebellion in the heart of fallen man.

The battle defined here is not the same as that in Ezekiel, but the rise of Gog and Magog again is showing that there is an underlying group of people whose ways and hearts are continually against the rule of God and His chosen. This is expressed in **Psalm 2**.

The Great White Throne

Rev 20 v 11 – 15

The judgment of God is awesome and does not involve annihilation, but eternal torment for unbelievers.

New Heaven and Earth

Rev 21 v 1 - 8

The New Jerusalem

Revelation 21 v 9 – Ch22 v 5

Epilogue

Revelation 22 v 6 - 21

Jesus And The Millennium

CONCLUSION

The question many ask is whether all this is relevant today. Many say that all we need to do is accept Jesus and not be worried about such things, and that speculation about the future is dangerous.

However we must accept that the Lord has included this in Scripture for good reason and that as written in 2 Timothy 3 v 16-17:

- 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*

Correct understanding affects the way in which you read the Bible and draw close to the Heart of God.

It is not about knowledge (knowledge puffs up Love builds up) but about really knowing Him, His ways and His purpose and then to pray and live our lives accordingly.

It is to keep in the Truth and not be carried away by various doctrines. Jesus warned about false messiahs, and there have been and will be many of these. We also avoid false ideas (often nationalistic or religious triumphalism) ideas about the Kingdom.

The Lord also wants us all to understand that we you have not only been saved from Judgement, but are being prepared for a wonderful purpose not only in this life but the life to come. Knowing what is going to happen should spur us on to be the manner of people in Christ we should be:

2 Peter 3 v 1 -14

Our lives are to be lived as His disciples and not just saved people. Knowing that the true reality is in the heavenlies, not that which is temporary upon the earth. We are strangers and pilgrims seeking the Heavenly City!

In summary understanding that which is to come should exhort us to:

1. Seek to live a crucified, holy and righteous life in Jesus
2. Seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness
3. Set you mind on that which is above
4. Aim to be a disciple, maturing and becoming more like the Master in preparation for that day
5. Be a faithful servant with ready for the Master
6. Keep a love for the Word of God and humbly seek the Lord that you will not be deceived
7. Not be blown about by every wind of doctrine and fashion
8. Live as a member of His Body, corporately encourage one another and making use of the time
9. Live in expectation
10. Pray for the His Kingdom to come!

2 Peter 1 v 10-11

- 10 Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;
11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!