

# The Millennial Kingdom

In the book of Revelation we're told that one day the Lord Jesus Christ will rule over the nations for a thousand years:

**Revelation 20:4:** "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

This period is usually referred to as the Millennial Kingdom. Now, there are some people who reject the idea that the Millennial Kingdom is literal. They claim that it is a purely spiritual kingdom and that Jesus Christ isn't *really* going to return and rule over the nations as some kind of earthly political ruler. I think this viewpoint is incorrect. The Bible claims in numerous places that the coming Kingdom is not symbolic or spiritual but is very literal. For example, take a look at the book of Daniel. In Daniel chapter 2 the Bible tells us that King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that disturbed him, and he demanded that his magicians tell him what his dream was and how to interpret it. Daniel did exactly that:

**Daniel 2:31:** "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.

32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass,

33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

After telling the king his dream Daniel then provided the interpretation. He explained that the statue represented four kingdoms that would control the world from the time of Nebuchadnezzar until the end of days. The fourth kingdom, however, would not last forever. Instead it would be broken into pieces by God Himself and would be replaced with an eternal kingdom that would never be destroyed:

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

45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

What I would like to point out is that the last kingdom – the eternal kingdom that God Himself establishes – *replaces* the kingdoms that came before it. It does *not* coexist alongside them as some sort of spiritual or symbolic kingdom. This last kingdom is also going to rule over the Earth just as the other four kingdoms did. This means that the Kingdom of God *cannot* be a purely spiritual kingdom. After all, it *violently destroys and replaces the kingdoms of the world*. The passage describes it as an actual, physical kingdom, not a spiritual one.

This final kingdom that God establishes is the Millennial Kingdom. Although people commonly say it will last for a thousand years, it actually lasts for all of eternity. The thousand-year period refers to the time when Satan is bound and the Earth enjoys a period of unprecedented peace:

**Revelation 20:1:** “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

After the thousand years are over, Satan launches one last attempt to destroy the saints of God. This attempt, however, fails spectacularly:

**Revelation 20:7:** “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

After this the Great White Throne judgment takes place, where the lost are judged and cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity. Then the Lord creates a New Heaven and a New Earth – a place where there is no more death, crying, or pain, for the former things are passed away. However, the kingdom of Jesus Christ is not destroyed and it does not disappear. It endures long after the thousand-year period has ended; in fact, it endures forever, just as Daniel foretold. Jesus Christ will reign for all of eternity.

In fact, Jesus commands us to pray for the coming of His kingdom! This fact gets easily overlooked. Do you remember how the Lord's Prayer begins?

**Matthew 6:9:** “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”

What is the *very first thing* that we're supposed to ask for? That the Lord's Kingdom would come and that His will would be done on Earth. That is nothing less than asking for the advent of the Millennial Kingdom! Where does Jesus place this on our list of priorities? At the very top.

So what does the Bible have to say about the Millennial Kingdom? Quite a lot, actually. However, most of the information about the Kingdom is found in the Old Testament. The Book of Revelation does not have a lot to say about it, although the details that it does provide are important and are not found elsewhere. Revelation tells us that when it begins **Satan will be bound and unable to deceive the nations** any more (Revelation 20:1-3). It also says that **those who were martyred during the Tribulation will be resurrected** and will reign with Christ during the Millennium (Revelation 20:4).

Now, some might ask, what about the Church? Well, the Church was resurrected at the Rapture, which happened before the Tribulation began. We don't need to be raised from the dead at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom because our resurrection already happened. Revelation 5:10 tells us that we will also be reigning on the Earth:

**Revelation 5:9:** "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;  
10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

This song is being sung by the 24 elders in Heaven, which represent the raptured Church. The Tribulation saints are not the only ones who will reign on the Earth; we will reign as well.

Although Revelation itself does not have a lot to say about the Millennial Kingdom, the Old Testament spends a lot of time talking about it. What I'd like to do now is go through a number of passages from the Old Testament and discuss the various aspects of life during the Millennium.

The book of Isaiah gives us several exciting glimpses into life during the Millennium. For example, there is this passage:

**Isaiah 2:1:** "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.  
2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.  
3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  
4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

This short passage contains a great deal of information. First of all, we see that during this time the Temple of the Lord will be established in the top of the mountains. This Temple will be a centerpiece of the whole earth; all nations will visit it. People from all over the world will go to the Temple to learn God's ways, and they will obey His words. During this time the Lord Jesus Christ will reign from Jerusalem; verse 4 tells us that He will judge the nations and rebuke "many people". In this era the nations will no longer fight each other. Instead they will take their weapons and turn them into farming equipment, and they will no longer learn the art of war. It will be a time of unprecedented peace.

The Temple of the Lord is going to be one of the prominent features of the Millennium. It is

described in great detail in the book of Ezekiel, starting in chapter 40 and continuing on for eight more chapters. First, Ezekiel tells us that God will establish His sanctuary in their midst:

**Ezekiel 37:26:** “Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

28 And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.”

The amount of detail that God provides concerning this Temple is staggering. I'm not going to repeat it all here, or even attempt to summarize it. Instead I'll just mention a few of the key details.

First of all, the Ark of the Covenant will be missing. The Ark was not included in Herod's Temple (which was the one that existed at the time of Christ) and it will not be in this one either. We are told this in the book of Jeremiah:

**Jeremiah 3:16:** “And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more”

In other words, the time of the Ark of the Covenant is over. It will not be a feature of the Temple. It has served its purpose and it is no longer needed. The new Temple will not be a return to the Mosaic Law and the old way of doing things; instead it is a new Temple and the start of a new order.

One of the surprising things about this temple is the fact that there will be sacrifices offered. However, this will *not* be a return to the sacrifices described in the Law of Moses. Instead this is a new sacrificial system that has different rules and different offerings. It seems utterly bizarre that sacrifices will be offered *after* the resurrection and after the return of Christ, but Ezekiel is very clear about this. For example:

**Ezekiel 43:18:** “And he said unto me, Son of man, thus saith the Lord God; These are the ordinances of the altar in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon.

19 And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord God, a young bullock for a sin offering.

20 And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it.

21 Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary.”

As you can see, the passage clearly describes burnt offerings during the Millennium in which animals are slaughtered in the Millennial Temple! There are other passages as well that describe Millennial sacrifices – both in Ezekiel and in other books of the Bible. So what's going on here? What possible reason could there be for resuming animal sacrifices? After all, doesn't the New Testament tell us that the time of offerings for sin is over? As a matter of fact, it does:

**Hebrews 10:18:** "Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin."

What this tells us is that the Millennial sacrificial system has a very different purpose from the Levitical sacrificial system. This can be seen from the fact that the two systems have different offerings, different rules, different holy days, and different procedures (something that is far outside the scope of this paper). It appears that the sacrifices during the Millennium are focused not on the forgiveness of sins but on removing ceremonial uncleanness. This is how one person put it:

Critics of future millennial sacrifices seem to assume that all sacrifices, past and future, always depict Christ's final sacrifice for sin. They do not! There were various purposes for sacrifices in the Bible. An overwhelming majority of sacrifices under the Mosaic system were for purification of the priests and objects used in various rites. This is why atonement can be said in the past to be effective, yet still need Christ's future sacrifice, because many of the sacrifices did atone ceremonially, cleansing participants and objects in Temple ritual. Just as we never finish the task of washing clothes, ceremonial cleansing was an ongoing need. The same is clearly the case in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel 43:20 and 26, the atonement is specifically directed at cleansing the altar in order to make it ritually fit for sacrifice. The only other uses of atonement also refer to cleansing objects so that ritual purity may be maintained for proper function of further worship... Since all the sacrifices of Ezekiel relate to purification of the priests for Temple service, they do not specifically depict or represent Christ's atoning sacrifice. The presence and purpose of sacrifices neither diminishes the finished work of Christ nor violates the normal and "literal" interpretation of the prophetic passages. Nothing in Ezekiel 40-48 conflicts with the death of Christ or New Testament teaching at any point. The supposed contradictions between a literal understanding of Ezekiel and New Testament doctrine evaporate when examined specifically. (Dr. Thomas Ice, *Pre-Trip Perspectives*, June 2000, pg. 4-5)

In other words, the sacrifices in the Millennial Temple are not about obtaining forgiveness. Instead they are about **maintaining ceremonial cleanliness** and keeping the Temple and its contents from being defiled. The reason this is important is because God Himself is dwelling on Earth, and His glory is manifested in the Temple. Since a holy God is dwelling on a sinful world, there is a need for a way to maintain ceremonial cleanliness. That is the purpose of the Millennial sacrificial system.

Isaiah chapter 11 gives us another look at life during the Millennium. We are told that just as there is peace among nations, there is also peace in the animal kingdom:

**Isaiah 11:6:** "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

7 And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8 And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

9 They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Right now the animal kingdom is full of predators and prey, as one species hunts, kills, and eats other species. During the Millennium, however, that will change. Animals that used to be carnivores will become herbivores and “eat straw like the ox”. Lions and bears will stop hunting and will eat plants. On top of that, animals will no longer hunt man, and children will be able to play with deadly serpents and not be harmed. Life will be radically different from the way it is now.

Another important fact is that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea”. This will be a time when the world is *saturated* with the knowledge of the Lord. These days very few people know the Lord and His ways. During the Millennium, however, that will not be the case. In that day the knowledge of the Lord will be everywhere, and men will walk in His ways.

We find another glimpse of life during the Millennium in Isaiah 65. At first it seems like this passage is talking about the Eternal State, because it mentions a “new heavens and a new earth”:

**Isaiah 65:17:** “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

However, that is not the case. This passage is speaking about the Millennium. The reason we know this is because during this time there is still sin and death:

**Isaiah 65:20:** “There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.”

In the New Heaven and Earth that is created after the Great White Throne judgment there is no sin or death because they were done away with during the final judgment. Since sin and death still exist in Isaiah 65 then these verses must occur *before* the judgment – which means that they are speaking of the Millennium.

So why does God call it a new heaven and earth? Well, to understand that we need to back up a little bit. The Millennial Kingdom begins shortly after the Tribulation ends. During the Tribulation God will pour out His wrath upon the Earth and make the planet almost uninhabitable. I'm not going to go into all of the judgments that are listed in Revelation, but by the time they are over there isn't much left of the world. This passage tells us that the Lord is *not* going to spend the Millennium ruling over a planet that has been utterly destroyed. Instead He is going to create a new earth and rule over that.

Yes, there will still be sin during the Millennium. The Church itself will not sin, nor will anyone who has been resurrected, but those who survived the Tribulation and those who are born during the Millennium will sin. There will even be those who reject God and refuse to repent – and they will be accursed.

There will also be death during the Millennium. Death, however, will come at a later age than it does now. Those who die at the age of 100 will be considered to be just a child. This is reminiscent of the time before the Flood when men lived to be more than 900 years old. Lifespans will be greatly extended. (Of course, those who were resurrected will not be subject to death; they will live forever.)

The passage also tells us that the Millennium will be a time of tremendous joy:

**Isaiah 65:18:** “But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.”

The Millennium will not be a time of pain, sorrow, or woe. Instead it will be a time of great

rejoicing and gladness. We are told that in Jerusalem the voice of weeping and the voice of crying will not be heard. Those things simply will not happen.

It will also be a time when people will work and enjoy the fruits of their labor:

**Isaiah 65:21:** “And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.

22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them.”

What will we be doing during the Millennium? This passage says that we will build houses and live in them; we will plant and reap the fruits of our labors. Our work will not be done in vain, and the fruits of our labor will not be taken from us by others. We will not have to worry about thieves and robbers stealing what we have worked so hard to obtain. We will enjoy the work of our hands.

It may come as a surprise to imagine people *working* in the Millennium and living in houses and planting things, but that is what the passage says – and it makes sense if you think about it. During the Millennium life will go on. Nations will still exist and civilization will continue. There will be work to do, businesses to accomplish, and lives to lead. People will still need to be fed. Since sickness, disease, and death will still exist, there will need to be doctors. People will still need jobs and will need to provide for their families.

Now we, as the Church, are in a different category altogether. We will be living on the Earth as immortals, dwelling in the midst of people who are *not* immortal and who have *not* been resurrected. We will have our glorified bodies, whereas the Tribulation survivors will not. We won't have to worry about doctors, hospitals, and death. The Bible also tells us that we will be reigning as kings with Christ. In other words, we will be part of the ruling class.

It is hard to say what that means or how it will play out. It may be that during the Millennium people will no longer elect their rulers. Instead Christ may place members of His Church (and the Tribulation martyrs) into positions of power over the nations. After all, Christ promised thrones to His disciples:

**Matthew 19:28:** “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

During the Millennium each disciple will sit on a throne and judge one tribe of Israel. The Lord may also give us thrones as well – not over Israel, but perhaps over other political jurisdictions. Time will tell.

Another intriguing facet of the Millennial Kingdom is that our prayers will be answered much more quickly than they are today:

**Isaiah 65:24:** “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”

In other words, the Lord will answer some of our prayers *before we even have time to pray them*. Other prayers will be answered while we are still speaking!

But that is not all that the Bible has to say about the Millennium. The book of Zechariah also

has some things to tell us. Much of the book discusses events during something it calls the Day of the Lord (which we refer to as the Tribulation), but Zechariah does mention the Millennium. One thing we are told is that before the Millennium begins the Lord will stand on the mount of Olives and tear the mountain in two:

**Zechariah 14:4:** “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.”

In other words, the Mount of Olives will be torn in half and replaced by a great valley. Israel will then undergo a series of dramatic topographical changes:

**Zechariah 14:10:** “All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.”

The topographical changes are necessary because the Temple Mount isn't big enough to contain the Temple that is described in Ezekiel. On top of that, the Temple will be located on the top of a mountain. As we can see, some pretty dramatic landscape work is going to be necessary before the Millennial Temple can be built! This passage describes some of those changes.

There will also be a stream of living water:

**Zechariah 14:8:** “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.”

Most importantly, however, the Lord will assume the throne and will take control of the nations:

**Zechariah 14:9:** “And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.”

Every year these nations will be required to come before the Lord and worship the King:

**Zechariah 14:16:** “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

As you can see, not only will the nations be required to come to Jerusalem to worship God, but they will also be required to *keep the feast of tabernacles*, which is one of the feasts mentioned in the Mosaic Law. The Gentile nations will be required to come to Jerusalem *in order to keep one of the Jewish feasts!* That is remarkable. Every year during the Millennium the *entire planet* will make a journey to Jerusalem!

The Lord is quite clear that everyone is required to attend. The nations that refuse to come will be punished:



**Zechariah 14:17:** "And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles."

This is another reminder that there will still be sin during the Millennium. Even though Jesus Christ is reigning from Jerusalem in all His glory, there will still be those who refuse to come and worship Him. There will be those who reject His commands and will not obey. In this age the Lord is patient and longsuffering and gives men an opportunity to repent. During the Millennium, however, He will reign with a rod of iron. Those who refuse to come will be punished, and the nations that will not obey Him will be sent a terrible drought. Jesus will not accept rebellion during His reign.

There is one more thing that Zechariah has to say about the Millennium:

**Zechariah 14:20:** "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness Unto The Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

21 Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and see the therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts."

What this passage is saying is that during the Millennium there will be a tremendous manifestation of holiness. The Lord God will dwell in the Temple and His holiness will saturate Jerusalem and Judah. Even the smallest and most minor things will be as holy as the vessels on the altar. The nation of Israel will be absolutely saturated with holiness. It will be everywhere.

In closing, I'd like to point out that the Bible has more to say about the Millennium than what I have collected here. I haven't covered the land promises that God has made to Israel or the coming reign of David. The Bible also has quite a bit to say about how the Millennial Kingdom will be governed. However, I will leave those topics as a subject for another time.

What we can see from this study is that the Old Testament is filled with references to the Millennial Kingdom. The Millennium is not an idea that only appears in Revelation. It is mentioned by numerous prophets in the Old Testament, who had a great deal to say about its characteristics. The coming Kingdom is not figurative or merely spiritual; it is a real kingdom that will reign over a real Earth for a real thousand years. Jesus commands us all to pray that this kingdom would come and that His will would be done on Earth. I think it is time that we started doing exactly that.