

The Millennium

A Valley Bible Church Position Paper

www.valleybible.net

Throughout the course of human history there has been the dream, the longing, the looking forward to some sort of paradise on earth. Various religions and cultures have encouraged people with the idea that there is something better to come. Obviously there is a significant difference of opinion as to how one comes into possession of this hoped for paradise. Some have suggested that it will come through human technology and education. Others have insisted that it will come through religious experience or expression. While some insist that it will require divine intervention.

Since the first sin in the Garden of Eden and the loss of paradise (Genesis 3), there has been a craving for paradise within the heart of mankind. Fortunately, someday the biblical reality is that people will enjoy and experience paradise on earth. The Old Testament prophets anticipated a golden age for Israel, under the reign of their Messiah, which would include all the nations of the earth. Likewise, the New Testament apostles were strengthened by a future hope of Christ's return and reign on the earth. The Apostle John speaks of this future reign of Christ in Revelation 20:1-10.

In this passage, six times, we are told of a one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth. This is referred to as "Christ's millennial reign" or "the millennium." The word "millennium" comes from the Latin words [MILLE] "thousand" and [ANNUS] "year." Many believers are longing for this future time when they will see their Lord face to face as He reigns on the earth. Unfortunately, believers are not united on when and how the Lord Jesus will reign. Thus, there is a divergence of opinion among believers regarding the millennium.

The Divergent Views Regarding the Millennium

What are these divergent views? What is this difference of opinion among believers in regards to the millennium? There are three main views regarding the return of Christ and His millennial reign upon the earth. The first view is amillennialism, which believes that there will not be an earthly kingdom of Christ. The second view is postmillennialism, which believes as the coming of Christ approaches; Christ, through the Church, will bring in a long period of peace and righteousness. And lastly there is the view of premillennialism, which believes that the return of Christ will be prior to the reign of Christ on the earth. This view usually accepts a rapture of the church, a future period of tribulation upon the earth, and the second coming of Christ followed by His one thousand year reign upon the earth as described in the book of Revelation. Let us now examine these major views of the millennium.

1. The Amillennial View

Amillennialism is considered to be the majority end times view since both the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church have adopted it. It has also been embraced by a large segment of Protestantism as well. Although it may be considered the majority view, the validity of any view must be determined by a study of the Scripture.

Description of Amillennialism

Often times placing an “a” in front of a word negates it. Therefore, the word “amillennial” actually means “no millennium.” Unfortunately this does not accurately describe what amillennialists truly believe. Amillennialists hold that there will be no physical millennium. They do not believe in a literal, physical reign of Christ on the earth. Rather they believe that there will be a spiritual millennium.

They view Satan as bound since the first coming of Christ and that the present age between the first and second comings is the fulfillment of the millennium. Amillennialists are divided on whether the millennium is being fulfilled by the saints in heaven or in the hearts of believers upon the earth during this age. Amillennialists also believe that until the return of Christ, good and evil will develop in parallel. After the second coming of Christ at the end of the world there will be a general resurrection and a general judgment of all people.

History of Amillennialism

Amillennialism as a system of theology is usually traced back to Augustine (A.D. 354-430). Prior to this time the majority view of the church was that of premillennialism. There is one notable exception and that is Origen of Alexandria Egypt (A.D. 185-254). Origen and others from Alexandria were greatly influenced by Greek philosophy. According to this particular philosophy all things that were material and physical were inherently evil. Therefore, they could not accept a view where Christ would rule in an earthly kingdom with physical blessings. Origen believed that this one thousand year reign must be a spiritual, nonphysical reign.

Origen was also the first to adopt the allegorical method of interpretation. He had a desire to find hidden and mystical meanings in the Scripture. His approach to Scripture was simply to spiritualize it. He came to deny any literal meaning of prophecy. Although Origen and the Alexandrian school began to question premillennialism, amillennialism as a view was popularized and systematized by Augustine. Augustine was also educated in Greek philosophy and he also embraced the allegorical method of interpretation for prophetic passages. Augustine taught that this one thousand year reign of Christ was found in the existence of the church in the world.

Since the time of Augustine the amillennial view has dominated the church. Most of the reformers were also amillennial as they took that system of eschatology with them from the Catholic Church when they separated from it or were cast out. However, it must be noted that many of the reformers never got around to seriously addressing the doctrine of eschatology. As a result, amillennialism continues into the modern era, and is even defended by some conservative theologians.

Doctrinal Distinctives of Amillennialism

Many amillennialists are liberal in doctrine and many are conservative, however, they are united on several points:

- While premillennialists argue that the biblical promises of a future earthly millennium are yet to be fulfilled, amillennialists believe those promises are either fulfilled spiritually in the church or they were conditional and the conditions were not met.
- Amillennialists deny there will be a literal, physical reign of Christ upon the earth. They view this reign as taking place in the hearts of believers in the church and will continue over the souls of the saints in heaven.
- Amillennialists believe that this spiritual millennial kingdom began at the first coming of Christ and will continue until His second coming.
- Amillennialists, therefore, deny the rapture, believing that there will only be a second coming of Christ to usher all of God's people into heaven and to judge all of the ungodly.
- Amillennialists deny there will be a Great Tribulation period, believing that all passages referring to a tribulation period or to a coming wrath are the trials and suffering of the church on earth. Remember they tend to spiritualize prophetic passages.
- Amillennialists believe that Satan was bound at the first coming of Christ and that Christ is now ruling in heaven on the throne of David (cf. Revelation 20).
- In regards to the two resurrections found in Revelation 20:4-6, amillennialists believe the first to be a spiritual resurrection that takes place at the new birth and the second to be a physical resurrection that takes place at the end of the spiritual millennium.

Analysis of Amillennialism

Amillennialism is based in Covenant Theology as opposed to Dispensational Theology, and holds that God has a single overall program in all ages for His people. Since, according to this view, the Church and Israel share in one continuous plan, then God's promises to Israel are applicable to the church. By using an allegorical method of interpretation and spiritualizing prophetic passages, God's promises to Israel about a land, a nation, a king and a kingdom will be fulfilled by the church. Therefore the millennium is to be interpreted spiritually as fulfilled in the Christian Church.

The primary problem with the view of amillennialism is that it is rooted in this allegorical method of interpretation. Many amillennialists will interpret Scripture literally until they come to prophetic passages, where they will adopt an allegorical method of interpretation. Many amillennial theologians have acknowledged that if they took a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies and of Revelation 20, they would conclude that there would indeed be an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures. The decision therefore is not, "which millennial system should I choose?" but "how do I think the Bible should be interpreted?" Out of this primary problem, the allegorical method of interpretation, many secondary issues with Amillennialism show forth.

- First, they understand the binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1-3 as taking place at the first coming of Christ, which they view as the beginning of the millennium. This does not square with the Scripture, which emphasizes Satan's present authority over the earth (1 John 5:19). Nor does it take into consideration the chronological consistency of the book of Revelation.
- Second, they ignore the emphatic nature of the phrase, “a thousand years,” used six times in Revelation 20:1-6 and understand it figuratively. This does not agree with the book of Revelation's consistent, definite and literal use of time. While there is some use of symbolism in the book of Revelation, a great majority of the numbers and time references used in the book are quite literal.
- Third, they misunderstand the two resurrections found in Revelation 20:4-6. According to the Apostle John in the passage, the first resurrection mentioned occurs before the millennium begins, while the second resurrection takes place after it is over. Once again a normal reading of the text would indicate that both of these resurrections are literal, physical resurrections. In addition, those who participate in the first resurrection were beheaded because of their identification with Christ. They were already regenerated before they were put to death, therefore this resurrection cannot refer to a spiritual resurrection at the new birth, as amillennialists would view it.

In analyzing amillennialism the great issue remains the spiritualization of prophetic passages, especially those pertaining to the millennium. If one evaluates Scripture with a consistent method of interpretation, it would not lead to the amillennial view.

2. The Post-millennial View

Description of Postmillennialism

The term “postmillennialism” conveys the idea that Jesus Christ will return after the millennium. This view holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals. They see the world as eventually being Christianized and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the “millennium.” Most postmillennialists do not hold to a literal 1,000 years for the period of the millennium. Some view it as encompassing the period of time between the two advents of Christ, while others see it as applying to a golden age of peace and righteousness that will be brought in by the spread of the gospel. They view the millennium as a time of glorious triumph for the church rather than a physical reign of Christ on the earth.

History of Postmillennialism

There is no trace of postmillennialism during the first three centuries of the church. During the first three centuries, premillennialism was the predominant viewpoint, while amillennialism became the predominant view after the time of Augustine. However, in the centuries that followed, some theologians found deficiencies in Augustine's amillennial view and began to suggest changes.

In addition, they were turning away from much of the allegorization of amillennialism. Some turned back to premillennialism, but others began to follow the postmillennial view of Daniel Whitby (1638-1726).

Whitby, who was a Unitarian minister in England, believed that after the world was converted to Christ, the Jews would be restored to the Holy Land and then Christ would return. Whitby was viewed as a theological liberal and his writings on the Trinity were publicly burned since he was denounced as a heretic. Although Whitby was branded a heretic, his postmillennial viewpoint was well received and quickly became popular. The emphasis on man's role in bringing in the kingdom of God fit very well with the prevailing views of the time. Many began to see the marvelous advances in science and the industrial revolution as evidence to support postmillennialism. Liberal scholars who believe the world is getting better by the power of man joined the camp of postmillennialism with their more conservative counterparts.

This system of eschatology began to fade as the twentieth century arrived. By the First World War, many became convinced that the world was not improving. After the Second World War, postmillennialism fell out of favor to the point where it had practically no adherents and many proclaimed postmillennialism dead. Recently, however, postmillennialism has been growing in popularity as some amillennialists have become attracted to postmillennialism under their belief in theonomy, which is discussed below.

Doctrinal Distinctives of Postmillennialism

Most postmillennialists believe that God will work through the church to bring about the millennium on earth by fulfilling the Great Commission. At the end of the millennium, Christ will return, followed by a general resurrection of the dead and a general judgment. There are three different groups of postmillennialists, but the basic elements of postmillennialism remain the same:

- As the name “postmillennial” indicates, this view teaches that the return of Christ follows the period of the millennium.
- Postmillennialists believe that the “thousand years” of Revelation 20 should not be taken in a literal way, but represents a long period of time. Thus they see the length of the Millennium as not necessarily 1,000 years, but probably a much longer time period. It will be a time of peace where Christian principles will dominate the earth and sin will be greatly reduced.
- Postmillennialists do not view the millennium as a literal earthly reign of Christ, rather it is considered to be spiritual as Christ rules in the hearts of believers.
- Postmillennialists possess an optimistic view of this present age. They believe that the world will be continually improving. Certain examples are cited: social conditions are improving (i.e. for women); money given to the church is growing; the Bible is the best-selling book in the world; and the gospel is spreading out further than ever.

- Postmillennialists view Revelation 20 in a similar way as do amillennialists: They see the binding of Satan as having already taken place; they view the thousand years figuratively rather than literally and they see the first resurrection of Revelation 20 as a spiritual resurrection and the second as a physical resurrection.
- Postmillennialism agrees with premillennialism as far as the chronology of Revelation 19 and 20, however they see the rider on a white horse in Revelation 19 as a picture of Christ being victorious over His enemies through the preaching of the gospel in the present age rather than a literal second coming of Christ to the earth.
- Postmillennialism also endorses an allegorical interpretation for some Scripture passages as does amillennialism.

Types of Postmillennialism

1. Liberal Postmillennialism

This view promotes the world as getting better through humanism rather than through the power of God and His Word. They have a tendency to focus on societal transformation rather than on personal conversion. They view the church as a liberating force to free mankind from poverty, racism, disease, war and other injustices. They believe that through progress mankind will overcome all problems and bring in a golden age.

2. Classic Postmillennialism

This view was very popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This classic view of postmillennialism takes seriously the doctrines of the Scripture and the need to spread the gospel. Proponents of this view believe that the church operating in the power of the Holy Spirit will bring dramatic changes and thus transform the world. Most postmillennialists view the millennium as coming at the latter part of the age between the first and second coming of Christ, while a few postmillennialists view the millennium as being the entire period between the first and second coming of Christ.

3. Theonomic Postmillennialism

This newer view, also known as “reconstructionism” or “dominion theology,” has become popularized in recent years through the writings of R.J. Rushdoony and several of his followers. This view believes that the millennium will come through the preaching of the gospel and the imposition of the Old Testament Law. Theonomy (meaning “law of God”) sees no distinction between the church and Israel and therefore believes the whole Mosaic structure is operative for today (in contrast to dispensational theology). Furthermore, theonomists believe it is the duty of the church to bring civil powers into subjection to God's law, with its precepts and penalties. It is through the law of God that the world will become Christianized and prepared for the postmillennial return of Jesus Christ.

Analysis of Postmillennialism

Unfortunately, many of the same comments about amillennialism can be made here about postmillennialism. Like amillennialism, postmillennialism adheres to a figurative method of interpretation rather than a literal one. This once again results in the same interpretative problems for Revelation 20 as with amillennialism.

- First, they understand the binding of Satan in Revelation 20:1-3 as taking place at the first coming of Christ. As mentioned earlier, this does not agree with the Scripture, which emphasizes Satan's present authority over the earth (1 John 5:19).
- Second, they ignore the emphatic nature of the phrase, "a thousand years," used six times in Revelation 20:1-6 and understand it figuratively. This does not agree with the book of Revelation's consistent, definite and literal use of time. While there is some use of symbolism in the book of Revelation, a great majority of the numbers and time references used in the book are quite literal. If the literal sense makes plain sense, then we should seek no other sense.
- Third, they misunderstand the two resurrections found in Revelation 20:4-6. According to the Apostle John in the passage, the first resurrection mentioned occurs before the millennium begins, while the second resurrection takes place after it is over. Once again a normal reading of the text would indicate that both of these resurrections are literal, physical resurrections. In addition, those who participate in the first resurrection were beheaded because of their identification with Christ. They were already regenerated before they were put to death, therefore this resurrection cannot refer to a spiritual resurrection at the new birth, as the postmillennialists or amillennialists would view it.

Although postmillennialism has the same problems as amillennialism, there are other issues that must be overcome.

- First, there is a failure of most postmillennialists to see Israel and the church as distinct. The Law of Moses was given to the nation of Israel, not to the church (2 Corinthians 3:1-11; Romans 7:1-6, 10:4). The Old Testament promises made to Israel are for Israel, not for the church. (See the position paper on "The Christian's Obligation to the Law of Moses").
- Second, the close of this present age will be marked by apostasy, not by the triumphal success of the gospel and a golden age of success by mankind (cf. Matthew 24:4-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:3ff; 2 Timothy 3:1-5). Nor does it seem in line with reality that the world is consistently improving. In fact, it appears to be consistently deteriorating and growing increasingly wicked.

Postmillennialism must be rejected as an acceptable eschatological view based off its lack of consistency with the Scripture. If one evaluates the Scripture with a consistent method of interpretation, it would not lead to the postmillennial view.

3. The Pre-millennial View

Definition of Premillennialism

Premillennialism teaches that the second coming of Christ will occur before He establishes His earthly millennial reign of one thousand years. After Christ's return to earth, He will establish His kingdom for 1,000 years, after which will be the eternal state with a new heaven and new earth. Premillennialism is sometimes called “chiliasm,” after the Greek word CHILIOI, meaning “a thousand.”

History of Premillennialism

Premillennialism was the dominant belief in the early church although it was not specifically called so in the early stages of the church. Leaders such as Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, Papias, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Tertullian affirmed premillennial ideas. However, they did not appear to teach extensively on eschatology. After opposition by Augustine (d. 430 A.D.), premillennialism was overtaken by amillennialism as the majority view.

The reformers came out of the Roman Catholic Church and took amillennialism with them. Only the smaller reformation movements held to premillennialism, such as the Anabaptists, the Moravians and the Mennonites. However, it should be noted that the reformers did not deal extensively with the doctrine of eschatology.

Over the last century, premillennialism has seen a resurgence. Today it is the most commonly held millennial position among conservative evangelicals. It is endorsed most strongly in Bible churches, the majority of Baptist churches, Evangelical Free churches, and the para-church movements. In addition, most mission boards are either exclusively or primarily premillennial.

Doctrinal Distinctives of Premillennialism

Liberal scholars usually reject premillennialism and therefore those who hold to this view tend to be conservative evangelicals, embracing a high view of Scripture. While there can be small differences among premillennialists, the following is a list of the major distinctives of the premillennial position:

- Premillennialists adopt the literal method of interpretation consistently throughout the Scripture including all prophetic passages unlike amillennialists and postmillennialists.
- Premillennialists believe there will be a literal one thousand year millennium on earth, with Christ reigning as King.
- Premillennialists believe that the second coming of Christ to the earth occurs just prior to the establishment of His millennial reign on the earth.
- Premillennialists believe that Revelation 20:4-6 speaks of two literal physical resurrections, which are separated by the thousand year reign of Christ. The first resurrection refers to the

resurrection of believers, which will take place prior to the start of the millennial kingdom. After the thousand-year reign, another resurrection will take place, this time for unbelievers.

- Premillennialists believe that the purpose of the millennial kingdom is to fulfill the Old Testament Covenant promises made to Israel. They see a distinction between the church and Israel.

Analysis of Premillennialism

As mentioned, premillennialism is based upon the literal method of interpretation. This method can be seen in the two major arguments used to support premillennialism: (1) The Old Testament promises of a future glorious age will be established on the earth (cf. Isaiah 4; 11; 32; 34; 52; 61; 66; Amos 9:11-12; Zechariah 12:8-9; 14:16). (2) Revelation 20:1-6 speaks directly to a reign of Christ for 1,000 years. It is a difficult passage for non-premillennialists to deal with. They suggest that this reign of Christ is in heaven, not on earth.

However:

- The earth is the setting for Christ's return (Revelation 19:1-16; Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:15-51), and the saints will reign with Him (Revelation 20:4).
- At the conclusion of the thousand years, the saints are still on the earth when Satan comes to attack them (Revelation 20:9).
- Revelation 5:10 claims the saints will reign on earth.
- OT Messianic prophecies look to an earthly kingdom (Psalm 2:8; Isaiah 11:1-10; Daniel 7).

Non-premillennialists also say the one thousand years is not literal but is symbolic of a long period of time. They suggest that the nature of prophetic literature refers to completeness, not a period of time.

However:

- Note the frequent mention of the time frame in Revelation 20:2-7 (six occurrences of “thousand years”).
- In the Bible whenever a Greek or Hebrew word for “year” is used, the reference is always to a literal meaning for year.
- Prophetic literature is not entirely symbolic but uses symbolism. There must be evidence before concluding that a symbolic figure is being used.
- 1 Peter 3:8, used often by amillennialists against premillennialism, states that a thousand years is as one day with God but it does not deny that it is actually a thousand years with man.

Non-premillennialists also say the occurrence of the thousand years is not future but present. However:

- The events of Revelation 19-20 are in a natural chronological sequence beginning with the second coming of Christ. (Note phrases like “and I saw” and “when.”) Since the text shows that the second coming precedes the thousand years, the thousand years are still future.
- Revelation 20:1-3 is future since it depicts Satan as bound. While Satan has been judged (1 John 3:8; Gen. 3:15; Isaiah 53:12), he is not presently bound (1 John 5:19; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4) as that judgment is yet to be executed.

Non-premillennialists also say the resurrection, which occurs first in Revelation 20:4 is a spiritual resurrection occurring at salvation, while the second resurrection of Revelation 20:5 is an actual bodily resurrection. Therefore, there are not two separate future resurrections but those who are regenerated will be raised from the dead after a thousand years.

However, the first resurrection of 20:4-5 is a literal bodily resurrection and is one thousand years before the second bodily resurrection because:

- The use of the verb “came to life” is used elsewhere in Revelation 2:8; 13:14; Matthew 9:18; and Romans 14:9 to refer to a bodily resurrection.
- The verb “came to life” should be taken in the same sense in verse four as it is in verse five. To change the meaning of the verb from spiritual resurrection in verse 4 to bodily resurrection in verse 5 requires a compelling reason.
- Of the over forty occurrences of “resurrection,” all are bodily resurrections with the exception of Luke 2:34.
- From the context, the two resurrections involved different groups. The first resurrection is for the saints who enter the millennium and the second is a resurrection to judgment for unbelievers (cf. John 5:29).

While the premillennial system does not rest solely upon one text, nevertheless Revelation 20 poses a very substantial problem for amillennialism and postmillennialism.

Types of Premillennialism

Within premillennialism there exists differing views regarding the timing of the rapture: pretribulationism, posttribulationism, midtribulationism, the pre-wrath rapture view and the partial rapture theory (see our position paper on the rapture).

There is a segment of individuals who hold a view called covenant premillennialism or historic premillennialism, which usually embraces a literal thousand year reign of Christ following His second coming, but they base it completely on Revelation 20 and ignore Israel. They accept a literal reign of Christ, but apply the Old Testament promises made to Israel to the church.

Summary of Premillennialism

Premillennialism is the view that Jesus Christ will return to this present earth prior to the establishing of His millennial kingdom. Jesus will reign supreme in power and great glory and will be the object of worship for all mankind. This kingdom will be on an earth where the curse of sin has been removed and where righteousness and peace are universal. Prior to the millennial kingdom there will be a resurrection of believers and following this thousand years there will be a resurrection of unbelievers for judgment. The primary purpose of this period of time will be to fulfill the covenant promises made to Israel. When this kingdom comes to an end, the next phase of God's plan, the eternal state on a new earth, will commence.

A Description of the Millennium

The Nature of the Millennium

As we have examined earlier, amillennialists claim that the promises of the kingdom are fulfilled by the church in the present age. Premillennialists believe Christ will establish an earthly kingdom upon His return at the end of the tribulation period.

Those who speak of the kingdom of God in the present do so on the basis of the rule of God in the lives of believers. Since the essence of Christ's kingdom is His rule and reign, many premillennialists have emphasized the kingdom of God in the sense of God's present rule over His followers.

It is certainly true that as Christ becomes Lord of the life of an individual His authority and dominion is manifested over the very people who will enjoy the kingdom. The kingdom may be said to exist presently in that a portion of the people who shall inherit the kingdom are alive today.

However, this is something short of the biblical concept of the kingdom of God. Strictly speaking, the kingdom of God refers to the prophesied and coming kingdom on earth.

The Length of the Millennium

Six times in Revelation 20:2-7 the length of the millennium is stated to be 1,000 years. There must be solid evidence to reject the literal time of 1,000 years. As we have seen earlier, this compelling evidence does not exist.

The Government of the Millennium

1. The Nature of the Government

The government in the millennium will be a theocracy with the Lord Jesus ruling personally over all mankind (Daniel 7:14). There will be complete and perfect justice (Isaiah 11:4; 65:20). The city of Jerusalem will be the seat of government, exalted and glorified (Isaiah 2:3; 24:23; Zechariah 14:10).

2. The Rulers in the Government

The parable of the ten minas (Luke 19:11-27) indicates that those who were faithful in serving the Lord will be given authority. Resurrected saints will reign with Christ (Matthew 19:28; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 5:10; 20:6). The apostles will have authority over the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). King David will also apparently hold an important place in the kingdom (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24-25).

3. The Subjects of the Government

The subjects will be those who survive the tribulation and enter the kingdom in earthly bodies. At the outset of the millennium, all the people of the earth will be redeemed. As time goes on there will be children born of those who survived the tribulation. Many of these descendants will grow up to oppose the Lord, climaxing in the rebellion at the end of the millennium (Revelation 20:7-9).

Life in the Millennium

1. Righteousness

The Lord will reign in righteousness and will judge righteously (Isaiah 11:4-5; 16:5; 32:1). As Israel is regathered in the promised land, Zion will be the city of righteousness (Isaiah 1:26) and the righteous shall be satisfied (Matthew 5:6).

2. Peace

As a result of righteousness, the millennium will be peaceful. Enemies of Israel will be at peace with the nation (Isaiah 19:23-25; Zechariah 8:4-5) and the whole earth will dwell in peace (Isaiah 2:4).

3. Restoration

The human life span of those with earthly bodies will increase (Isaiah 65:20-23), sickness and deformities will be healed (Isaiah 29:17-19; 33:24).

The earth itself will also experience restoration as its decay will be reversed and the topography of the earth will be changed (Isaiah 2:2; Ezekiel 47-48; Zechariah 14:4-10; Romans 8:19-23). Social problems of poverty will be solved (Psalm 72:12-13). The earth will enjoy renewed productivity as even the deserts and wilderness will become useful (Isaiah 35:1-7; Amos 9:13-14; Zechariah 14:8). The curse upon the earth due to the fall of man will be reversed, though perhaps not completely overcome, until death is conquered at the end of the millennium.

4. Worship

The knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth (Isaiah 2:2-3). There will be a millennial temple, different from prior temples, where animal sacrifices will be offered as memorials to the death of

Christ (Ezekiel 40-46; Isaiah 56:7; 66:20-23; Jeremiah 33:17-18; Malachi 3:3-4). The feasts of Passover and Tabernacles will be reinstated (Ezekiel 45:18-25; Zechariah 14:16-21). It is in the millennium when the New Covenant will be ultimately fulfilled, as all will know the Lord (Ezekiel 36:25-32; Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Conclusion

In light of the premillennial return and literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth, as believers we must look forward to this future time when we will reign with Christ in a kingdom of righteousness and peace. This future opportunity to reign with Christ should drive us to endure our present suffering (2 Timothy 2:12) as we look forward to the time when those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied (cf. Matthew 5:6).

Completed: May 2006