

## 28. THE MESSIANIC REIGN

### **The Messiah will reign from Jerusalem**

The world will be ruled by a divine, human descendant of David from Jerusalem after the kingdoms of this world have been brought to a sudden and catastrophic end. The survivors of Israel and the nations will be the subjects of his kingdom during the millennium on this present Earth that he'll renew. The resurrected saints, on the other hand, will inherit royal authority and rule the world for the Messiah as his monarchy.

The Davidic throne was inextricably bound to Jerusalem and particularly to the hill called Mount Zion. Solomon built his palace with a throne hall and a hall of justice, but there is no mention of such structures during the millennium; all emphasis is on the temple. The Messiah and the saints will rule over Israel and the nations from New Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from God (Rev 21:2). New Jerusalem is the Holy City (Heb 12:22) which comes down from heaven to be near the Earth. Its inhabitants include the Church, millions of people from all nations who will be resurrected and raptured to meet the Lord in the air and from that moment to live and reign with him forever.

Peace will reign among the nations, and justice will be done everywhere. There will be universal knowledge of the Lord, with teaching coming from Jerusalem. The kingdom's subjects will learn to behave correctly and to make pilgrimages to worship the Lord at his temple in Jerusalem. There will be a gradual restoration of the original conditions in the world, called a rebirth or the renewal of all things (Mt 19:28), resulting in improved climate, productive land, taming of wild animals, less sickness, and longer lifespans. There will be an end of secularism and no false religions, idolatry, or worship of spirits. By the end of the millennium, all ungodly practices will have been eliminated, but then, Satan will be released from his imprisonment in Hades.

The throne of God and his regent, Jesus, will be glorious, whether in New Jerusalem (Rev 22:2) above or in the old Jerusalem on Earth (Ezek 43:7). The following Scriptures should be understood literally. Don't distort the meaning by spiritualizing them or giving them a figurative or symbolic meaning they are not meant to have. These prophecies were given by Hebrew prophets and concern the nation of Israel and God's chosen city, Jerusalem. There is no indication in the OT or the NT that they refer to the Church. The natural interpretation, as with other teaching of the Bible, is to be taken literally.

**Ps 2:6, 8-9** God the Father installs his king (the Messiah) on Zion, calling him his son or regent, and offering him the nations to rule over, and the entire Earth as his territory. After crushing kings on the day of his wrath, he'll rule all the nations with an iron scepter.

**Ps 110:2** The Father extends the Messiah's mighty scepter from Zion, from where he'll reign over his enemies. The surviving nations are not believers; they surrendered to the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation. The Messiah will live in the midst of them.

**Ps 132:13-14** The Lord has chosen Zion, desiring it as his eternal dwelling place. He'll sit enthroned there because that is his desire.

**Isa. 2:2-4** In the end-times, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains. After the earthquakes at Jesus' return, Mount Zion will be elevated above the surrounding area, and all nations will stream to the temple of Israel's God on its summit. The Messiah will teach them his ways and they'll walk in his paths. The law will go out from Zion, and the Messiah will settle disputes between nations.

**Isa 4:5-6** The Lord will create over Mount Zion and those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over everything the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. Isaiah didn't know about New Jerusalem, but this seems to be the import of the prophecy. New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God and the implication is that it rests above Israel in the sky. Thus, Isaiah 60:1-3 says that "the Lord rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn."

**Isa 9:6-7** To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulder .... Of the greatness of his government and

peace there will be no end. He'll reign on David's throne and over his realm, establishing and governing it with justice and righteousness forever.

**Isa 24:23** The moon will be embarrassed and the sun will be ashamed, for the Lord Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before its elders - with great glory.

**Isa 52:7-10** How good it is to see the bearer of good news coming across the mountains. He proclaims peace and tells Zion their God reigns: Listen! Your watchmen's voices are raised, they shout for joy together because they have seen the Lord returning to Zion. Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of *Jerusalem*, for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed *Jerusalem*. The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the Earth will see the salvation of our God.

**Isa 60:19** The sun will no longer be Jerusalem's light by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will be her everlasting light, and her God will be her glory. This is because the brightness of God's glory emanating from New Jerusalem during the millennium will eclipse the light of the sun and moon. There will be new heavens as well as a new Earth.

**Isa 62** is an impassioned plea for the vindication of Jerusalem. God has worked with the rebellious descendants of Abraham for 4,000 years and for the last 2,000 years Jerusalem has been in the hands of the Gentiles. It is inconceivable that the world could come to an end without God revealing to everyone that Israel is his chosen race, Jerusalem his chosen city.

**Isa 62:1-7** Because of Zion, I won't keep silent, because of Jerusalem I won't remain quiet until her vindication shines forth like a bright light, her salvation like a blazing torch. The nations will see your vindication, and all kings will behold your glory. You'll be known by a new name that the Lord will give. You'll be a glorious crown in the Lord's hand, a royal turban in the palm of your God's hand. No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. You'll be called My Delight, and your land Married, for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married. As a young man marries a young woman, so your Creator will marry you. As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so your God will rejoice over you. Jerusalem, I have posted watchmen on your walls; they won't be silent day or

night. You who call on the Lord, don't give up, don't give him any peace until he establishes Jerusalem and makes her a city that the world praises.

**Ezek 37:27-28** My residence will be above them. I'll be their God and they'll be my people. The nations will know that I the Lord make Israel my people when my residence is among them forever.

**Mic 4:6-8** In that day, the Lord will gather the lame and those whom he drove away and those whom he afflicted. He'll transform the lame into a remnant and make them a strong nation, and he'll reign over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever. As for you, Zion, watchtower of the flock and stronghold of the population. The former rule will be restored; kingship will return to Jerusalem.

**Zech 2:4-5, 10-12** Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the size of its population and animals in it. And the Lord (the Messiah) said: I'll be a wall of fire surrounding it and its glory within. ... People of Zion, ululate with joy, for I'll come and live among you. Many nations will join me in that day and become my people. I'll live among you, and you'll know that God Almighty has sent me to you.

**Zech 8:2-8** This is what the Lord Almighty says: I'm zealous for Zion, I'm very zealous for her with burning anger. I'll return to Zion and reside in Jerusalem. Jerusalem will then be called the Faithful City and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain. Old men and women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with cane in hand because of their age! The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing. ... It may surprise the remnant of this people in those days, but it won't surprise me. I'll save my people from the lands of the East and the West. I'll bring them back to live in Jerusalem. They'll be my people and I'll be their God, just and reliable.

This prophecy was partly fulfilled after the Babylonian captivity, but Keil comments: Jerusalem becomes a faithful city for the first time through the Messiah, and it is through him that the temple mountain first really becomes the holy mountain (p.312).

**Zech 14:16-17** The survivors of all the nations that came and attacked Jerusalem will go yearly to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. If any of the families of the Earth do not go to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, there will be no rain for them.

**Amos** finished his prophesies by saying: The days are coming ... when I'll return my captive people Israel to their former condition. They'll rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They'll plant vineyards and drink their wine, they'll make gardens and eat their fruit. I'll plant Israel in their own land never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them, says the Lord your God

**Hosea** speaks of Israel's conversion "in that day" when he'll allure her into the wilderness, reminiscent of when Israel was saved from Egypt and the Lord made a covenant with them at Mt Sinai (Hos 2:14-19). He'll make a marriage covenant with her, he'll betroth her to himself forever in a relationship characterized by righteousness, justice, love, mercy, and faithfulness. He'll make a new covenant with the people of whom he had said, you are not my people, and they'll now be called children of the living God. God will also make a covenant with the animal kingdom: the wild animals, birds, fish, and reptiles for Israel's benefit during the millennium. Nothing will harm them anymore. He'll abolish war in the world and there will be security. All these blessings are characteristics of the millennium when the Messiah reigns: Israel's conversion, their restoration as God's people, the restoration of the Earth and nature, and world peace. Israel and the nations inhabit the Earth while the saints inhabit New Jerusalem with God and the Lamb in the sky (Rev 22:3).

**Isaiah** gives us interesting information about the other inhabitants of the Earth during the long centuries of the Messiah's reign. He says that many peoples (ethnic groups) will come and worship at the temple in Jerusalem and learn God's ways (Isa 2:3-4). The Messiah will administer justice with truth and authority. Everyone will be obliged to worship the Lord and his Messiah and recognize that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that the nation of Israel is his chosen people. They will be eager to learn God's ways and to walk in his paths. Jerusalem's population will be called holy (Isa 4:3) because they are God's people, saved and regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

As of old in the wilderness after Israel's exodus from Egypt, God's glorious presence will be shown by a cloud by day and a flaming fire by night over Mount Zion (Isa 4:5). Multitudes of people will gather there to worship. The nations are not God's people; they are the survivors of unbelievers who overtly rebelled against God in the last days. The knowledge of God will fill the world and there will even be harmony in the animal world as the wolf dwells with the lamb (Isa

11:4-10) and the child plays over the cobra's hole. The Messiah will be the center of worship at Jerusalem, and the nations will come to pray at his temple which will be a magnificent, glorious structure. The ransomed of the Lord will return via a way of holiness and see the glory and majesty of the Lord. They'll experience everlasting joy with sorrow and sighing a thing of the past. This highway will lead the remnant of Israel back through the desert and wilderness that will be physically transformed to Zion (Isa 35:1-10). The Church likes to spiritualize passages like these and sing about them, but it should not be forgotten that the redeemed who are returning to Zion are the newly converted Israel. The passage does not have much relevance for the NT Church; Zion is not New Jerusalem. Israel will have a highway to lead them back through the wilderness to Mt Zion. They'll live on Earth and their blessings are earthly; water gushing in the desert, healing for the blind, the deaf and the lame. They now sing for joy because their time of suffering is over. Their blessings are often spiritualised but there is nothing in this chapter to connect the redeemed with the Church. It is better to recognize that God has two peoples, Israel and the Church. The blessings of the former are earthly, in the physical realm, those of the latter are for resurrected beings living in the heavenly realm.

There is an emphasis on agricultural life during the millennium (Isa 30:23-26). The fruit of the land will be Israel's pride. There will be abundant rain and streams, and large pastures with healthy livestock. There is no indication that modern technology and transport will be used during the millennium. The prophets didn't know about these things, so the picture they paint is a relaxed rural setting. We can be confident that the modern lifestyle based on greed, pride, luxury, and entertainment will be absent. People will build houses and work on farms and have no enemies to fear.

The Messiah will be king of the whole Earth, and he'll be righteous in all his ways. His rulers, resurrected OT and NT saints (Rev 5:9-10, will provide justice, security, shade and refreshment (Isa 32:1-5). The fool will no longer be called noble. No longer will people call evil good and good evil. There will be no more war.

God will create Renewed heavens and a Renewed Earth, a restoration of the world after its almost total destruction. People won't remember the old world. Jerusalem will be a joy devoid of crying and distress. Infants won't die anymore and people will live to a good old age.

People who die at a hundred years will be considered youth. This is not in a heavenly, eternal realm. Death will still occur during the millennium, but its power is diminished. The disabled will be healed and the poor will be satisfied, while the wicked and ruthless will be justly punished. All mankind will come to worship the Lord at Jerusalem (Isa 65:17-25, 66:19-24).

As well as saving the remnant of Israel, the Messiah will be a light to the nations (Isa 42:6, 49:6, 51:4). The coastlands will put their hope in him. Paul quoted this as his command to bring salvation to the Gentiles. Jesus is the light of the world, whether we think of the present nations or the nations who will be alive during the Messiah's future reign. There is no definite teaching that individuals will be saved during the millennium. It is more a time of God's vindication than man's salvation. The coastal peoples will put their hope in me and put their faith in my strength (Isa 51:5) is in a millennial context and is more about justice and righteousness than personal salvation.

Isaiah's final word concerns the corpses of the world's rebels who dared to go to war against the Lord and his Anointed. Their dead bodies are preserved and open for view on the outskirts of Jerusalem so that the pilgrims can see the terrible punishment that awaits the rebellious. Their maggots don't die and the fire is not extinguished. It is a graphic representation of hell (Isa 66:24). And yet, when Satan is released from his prison, he succeeds in deceiving the nations to rebel against God once more (Rev 20:7-8).

**Micah 4:1-3** repeats the Messianic reign passage of Isaiah 2:1-4 and then adds in vs. 7 that the Lord will reign over Israel in Mount Zion from that day forth. The former dominion will be restored to Zion, kingship to Jerusalem (Mic 4:8). The wealth of the nations will be brought to the Lord of the whole Earth (Mic 4:13). Micah also prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and that he would become great to the ends of the Earth (Mic 5:4).

**Jeremiah** speaks briefly of the Messianic reign (Jer 3:15-18). The Messiah will be a Good Shepherd, leading his people sincerely with their welfare in mind. Israel will not need the ark of the covenant, because the Messiah will be with them and Jerusalem will be called the Lord's throne. Israel will return there as a united people, and all nations will come to worship there.

**Daniel** Even though the book of Revelation depends to a large extent on the book of Daniel, there are only three places where the Messiah is referred to, and he is never in focus. When relating to Nebuchadnezzar the contents of his dream, Daniel told him that a *rock* was quarried – but not with human hands – and it struck the statue and crushed it (Dan 2:34). Then the *rock* became a mountain that filled the Earth. In his interpretation, Daniel does not explain that the *rock* represents the Messiah (he is talking to Nebuchadnezzar); he only says that the *rock* that was quarried from a mountain would crush the previous kingdoms and that God would set up a kingdom that would last forever (Dan 2.44). The *rock* represents the Messiah who comes from Mount Zion and who, at his return, will kill the Antichrist and crush the armies of the world's nations (representing past kingdoms) who have laid siege to Jerusalem. Even in Daniel 7:13-28, where the Son of Man is introduced, the saints who are in focus, being mentioned six times. They will possess the kingship in all the kingdoms under heaven.

**Ezekiel** speaks of harmony in the animal kingdom after God has installed his servant David as shepherd and prince over Israel. There will be no savage animals during the millennium. There will be abundant rain, productive land, and security. Israel and Jerusalem will be a blessing to the world, and Israel will no longer suffer reproach. The Messiah will be with them, and they'll know that he is the Lord and that they are his special people (Ezek 34:23-30).

**Joel** prophesies about the glorious future of Judah which will be inhabited forever: The Lord will dwell in Zion, his holy mountain. Jerusalem will be holy, and no foreigners will invade her again. There will be abundant rain and streams and no shortage of milk and wine. A fountain will spring from the temple and water the land, but Egypt and Edom will remain a wilderness (Joel 3:17-21) as punishment for their bad treatment of Judah. Prophecies like this have never been fulfilled historically; they can only be fulfilled during an earthly Messianic reign.

**Zechariah** says that the Lord will be king over all the Earth (Zech 14:9a). His rule will be from sea to sea and from the Euphrates River to the ends of the Earth (Zech 9:10). The Lord will be one and his name one. There will be one God and one religion; no more idolatry (Zech 14.9b). He'll be the supreme authority worldwide and the only God. There will be no sects of Buddha or Allah or Brahma; all will follow

the same faith and practice under one Lord and King, the Messiah, Jesus. The survivors of all the nations that came against Jerusalem at Armageddon will go up year by year during the millennium to worship the King. Any of the families of the Earth who do not worship the Lord will be denied rain, and afflicted with a plague (Zech 14:16-18).

**Ezekiel, Joel, and Zechariah** all speak of a river flowing from Jerusalem to the Dead and Mediterranean seas all year round. It will issue from the temple and flow East and West to those seas. Zechariah speaks of 'living waters' which normally means fresh, running water, the purest form. Jesus told the woman at the well that he could give her 'living water' and later declared that if a person believed in him, rivers of living water would flow from his heart. He was talking about the Holy Spirit (Jn 7:37-39). In a vision, John saw 'the River of the Water of Life' flowing from the throne of God through the middle of the street of New Jerusalem. Prophecy of a river flowing from Jerusalem all year round sounds literal. As in the Garden of Eden, there will be rivers to ensure agricultural prosperity.

When it comes to Jesus, the living water symbolizes the Holy Spirit whom those who believed in him were to receive. Similarly, in New Jerusalem, it is the Holy Spirit who indwells the redeemed, filling them with love, joy, peace, and immortality in union with God.

Note the role of the saints in the Messianic kingdom. They receive the kingdom and possess it forever. Receiving a kingdom means inheriting the kingship, the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven. All authorities on Earth will serve and obey them (Dan 7:18, 21-22, 27). Daniel 12:27b is better translated as: "Their kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey them." The singular pronoun relates to the singular masculine Hebrew word for 'people.' The Messiah was referred to thirteen verses back, too remote for this pronoun to refer to him.

Once resurrected, the saints will meet the Lord in the air, and from then on, they'll be with the Lord. Their home will be with the Father and the Son in New Jerusalem, which descends from heaven at the same time. The Holy City is the bride, the wife of the Lamb. From there they'll rule the Earth as a kingdom of priests. They are not called a kingdom because the Messiah reigns over them, but because they will receive royal authority. The basic meaning of 'kingdom' in Hebrew and Greek is kingship. They'll reign over the Earth and serve their king as mediators between God and man. Israel will also be

priests of the Lord, organizing worship at the temple in Jerusalem (Isa 61:6). The Church, as the Messiah's monarchy, will be in charge of justice and other portfolios.

The Messiah's glory will be seen in the temple; he may be no more visible than that. How visible then will the saints be? There will be hundreds of millions of saints. If resurrected Christians are like the resurrected Jesus, as we are told, they'll not be restricted by time and space. They'll travel instantaneously, as Jesus did after his resurrection, and as angels do. They'll possess the kingship, and they'll reign on Earth (Rev 5:10), although the preposition in combination with the verb 'reign' is more naturally translated as 'over'. Possessing kingship implies positions of authority in all forms of world government. The resurrected saints will rule all the nations of the world, including Israel (Mt 19:28). The Messianic government will major on peace, welfare, justice, righteousness, and teaching the knowledge of the Lord, which is in contrast to human governments which have always been characterized by corruption, immorality, war, and greed. As Jesus said, blessed are the meek, for they'll inherit the Earth, and blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (the Messianic reign). The nations will need local and national governments, a justice system, and the usual portfolios of health, trade, water, agriculture, transport, environment, education, religion, foreign affairs, and social services. The saints will advise them in all these areas and rule with an iron rod (Rev 2:26). Like Jesus before them, they will speak with authority.

## **The Messianic reign in the New Testament**

The word 'millennium' is not found in the Bible; it refers to the thousand-year Messianic reign taught in Revelation 20. In addition to the many OT Messianic prophecies we have studied, the millennial era is spoken about frequently in the NT, often referred to as the Kingdom of God, which I interpret as an ablative expression. The emphasis is not on a kingdom that belongs to God (although that is also true); it is a kingdom that comes from God, one that he will establish on Earth for his Son, the Messiah (Dan 2:44, Col 1:13). The following 34 NT verses imply that there will be an era of Messianic reign on Earth after his physical return to Earth.

## **Jesus' reign in the Gospels**

- Mt 4:23            The good news of a coming kingdom was Jesus' major theme.
- Mt 5:3, 5, 10    The humble and persecuted will possess the kingdom and inherit the Earth.
- Mt 6:10            Jesus tells us to pray for the kingdom's arrival.
- Mt 9:35            Jesus proclaimed the kingdom in all the Judean towns.
- Mt 19:28           When the Messiah reigns in the new world, his disciples will reign with him.
- Mt 24:14           The good news of the Messiah's coming kingdom will be preached in all the world, then the end will come.
- Mt 25:34           The kingdom has been prepared for the righteous since the world's creation.
- Lk 1:33            The Messiah will reign over Israel forever.
- Lk 13:29           Believing Gentiles will enjoy the Messianic banquet together with the Jewish patriarchs and prophets.
- Lk 19:17           Some of the righteous will rule cities during the millennium.
- Lk 21:31           The kingdom will be established at the end of the age.
- Lk 22:16, 18    The Passover, commemorating Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, will find its fulfillment in a future Messianic banquet, as the King and his community rule over a redeemed world from New Jerusalem.
- Lk 22:29-30     Jesus confers kingship on his disciples to rule with him in his coming kingdom.
- Lk 23:42-43     Jesus assured the thief on the cross who believed in his coming kingdom that he would be in paradise with him that very day. Cf. the heavenly city of God (Heb 12:22-24).
- Jn 18:36           Jesus' kingdom is not from (ἐκ) this world, it is from God.

## **Jesus' reign in the balance of the NT**

- Acts 1:6        Having heard all of Jesus' teaching, the disciples ask him at his departure when he would restore the kingdom to Israel.
- Rom 14:17      The future Messianic kingdom is about weighty matters: righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit; not about quibbling about food.
- Rom 15:12      The Messiah will arise to rule the nations and the Gentiles will hope in him.
- 1 Cor 4:20      The future Messianic kingdom is about power and authority; not mere talk.
- 1 Cor 6:2        The Lord's people will judge the world.
- 1 Cor 6:9        Wrongdoers will not inherit the Messianic kingdom.
- 1 Cor 15:24-25 The Messiah will reign until he subdues all enemies, and then surrender his kingship to the Father.
- 2 Tim 2:12      Christians who endure will reign with the Messiah.
- Heb 1:8         The Messiah will reign forever with justice.
- Heb 12:28      The Messianic kingdom that the saints will inherit is unshakeable.
- 2 Pet 1:11      The godly will receive a rich welcome into the Messiah's eternal kingdom.
- 2 Pet 3:13      We are looking forward to a renewed Earth and sky where righteousness dwells.
- Rev 2:26-27    The overcomers will have authority over the nations and rule them with an iron scepter. The overcomers are those who conquer Satan and the Antichrist during the Great Tribulation by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, even unto death (Rev 12:10).
- Rev 5:10        The saints from every tribe and nation will reign over the Earth as the government in the kingdom.
- Rev 11:15      The kingdom of the world becomes the Messiah's kingdom when the seventh trumpet is blown.

Rev 19:11-16 After the fall of Babylon, the Messiah will arrive with the armies of heaven to strike down the nations surrounding Jerusalem and he will rule them as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Rev 20 Satan will be incarcerated so that he cannot deceive the nations during the millennium. Christians are given authority to judge, including those who were martyred under the Antichrist. They are resurrected at the Messiah's coming and they reign with him for a thousand years. At the end of the millennium, Satan is released, and he deceives the nations again, persuading them to rebel against God. The armies are destroyed by fire and Satan is thrown into hell where the Antichrist and false prophet were thrown a thousand years earlier. At the second resurrection, all the wicked are judged and cast into hell along with Death and Hades. Only those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life are saved. Earth and sky disappear on judgment day. Only New Jerusalem and its inhabitants survive because they are in the heavenly realm with Almighty God.

Rev 21:24 During the millennium the nations will walk by the light of New Jerusalem and their leaders will bring their glory to it.

## **Different ages or (a)eons**

The Bible talks about eons, very long periods associated with this world. The disciples asked Jesus what would be the sign of his coming and the end of the age (Mt 24:3). The King James version translated the 'end of the age' as the 'end of the world,' a bad mistake, because the disciples weren't expecting the Messiah to usher in the end of the world, but a new age, the kingdom age. Christians brought up with that KJV teaching tend to believe that when Jesus comes, it is the end of the world.

The god of *this age* has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the gospel (2 Cor 4:4), but in the Messianic age, Satan will be bound to keep him from deceiving the nations (Rev 21:2). Ages are infinite long periods, but the Messianic age is defined as 'a thousand years' six times (Rev 20:2-7).

Jesus said that whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come (Mt 12:32). When he explained the parable of the weeds, he said the weeds (sons of the evil one) will be gathered and burned at the end of the age, then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Mt 13:38-43). There are only two destination for mankind, the righteous are heading for eternal life, the wicked to eternal punishment (Mt 25:46). The harvest occurs at the end of this age when Jesus returns and separates the righteous from the wicked. He sends out the angels to gather the righteous: "One will be taken and the other left" (Mt 24:40-41). No longer will the saints dwell together with the wicked. In the new age, the saints will dwell in New Jerusalem, the wicked who survive Armageddon will continue to dwell on Earth during the millennium, and the spirits of the wicked who are slain at Armageddon will be shut up in prison (Hades) and punished after many days (Isa 24:22) at the last judgment (Rev 20:12-13).

At the ascension, Jesus commissioned his disciples to make disciples of all nations promising to be with them always to the end of the age (Mt 28:20). When asked by the Sadducees about the resurrection, Jesus said: The people of this age marry and are given in marriage but those whom God considers worthy of resurrection from the dead and participation in the age to come will neither marry nor be given in marriage there. They can no longer die for they are like the angels. They are God's children, people who have risen from the dead (Lk 20:34-36). The age to come is the resurrection age. It is an age belonging to this world with renewed Earth and sky, but the righteous will be promoted to live in the heavenly realm with God.

Jesus return begins with a *day of judgment* for the entire world. The Earth will be harvested; the righteous will be raptured and will join the righteous dead who will be resurrected and enter eternal life. Half the unbelievers will be killed by war, earthquake, and plague, and their spirits will enter Hades where they'll await personal judgment at the end of the world. The remaining half will remain on Earth to be ruled over by the Messiah as he becomes the supreme ruler. In this way the present age will pass away and a new age, the Messianic reign, will begin.

## **The purpose of the Messianic reign**

The purpose of the Messianic reign can be seen in the following verses:

That God himself, in the person of the resurrected Messiah, Jesus, might reign on Earth with justice and righteousness resulting in peace and prosperity (Jer 23:5, Mic 4:2-3, Mt 6:10).

That Christ might become King and Lord of the world (Ps 2:8, 72:8-11, 89:27, Dan 7:14)

That Christ might be glorified in his saints and marveled by them (2 Thess 1:10).

That Jesus might be revealed as the Son of God and Savior of the world (Zech 14:9, 16).

That the Earth might be set free from its bondage to corruption and return to its paradisaical glory (Rom 8:18-22).

That Jerusalem, God's chosen city, might be glorified and be praised by all the inhabitants of the Earth (Isa 60:19-20, 62:1-7).

That knowledge of the Lord might be revealed to all (Isa 11:9).

That Israel might be revealed as God's people (Deut 32:36, Ps 135:14)

That the saints, for whom the kingdom was prepared since the creation of the world, might be rewarded (Mt 25:34).

That God's promise of a new Earth and sky where righteousness dwells might be fulfilled (2 Pet 3:13).

That God's mysterious plan that he has executed through the Church might be revealed to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm (Eph 3:10).

We are ignorant of the complexity of the heavenly realm in terms of angels, rule, authority, cosmic powers, spiritual forces of evil, and the inhabitants of hell, but we are told that they exist and should not belittle their significance.

The geographical and agricultural details given in these prophecies are evidence that we are expected to interpret the prophecies literally. Accordingly, at the end of the age, Israel will be restored to their land and they'll enjoy idyllic conditions during the Messianic reign. A glorious temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem as testified to on numerous

occasions, and the Levitical priesthood will be reestablished. The ministry of the priests will enable the nations to worship the Lord at the temple. The significance of the offerings will be symbolic, looking back at the great sacrifice that Christ made for the world, rather than types pointing forward to the antitype. Emphasis is laid upon Israel continuing on Earth as the people of God's people under a new covenant. Their role will be different from that of the resurrected Church. The NT does not teach that the Church has replaced Israel as the God's people. Paul makes it clear that a partial hardening has come upon Israel, but only until the full number of the Gentiles comes to faith. When the Messiah returns, all Israel will be saved, as prophesied: The Deliverer will come from Zion and remove ungodliness from Jacob. When Paul says those who have faith are Abraham's offspring (Gal 3:29), he is stressing the fact that God's people are saved by faith, not works. Those who are a new creation in Christ are the Israel of God (Gal 6:16), but he never suggests that the Church has replaced Israel. Those who follow replacement theology see no future at all for ethnic Israel, a position that contradicts a multitude of OT prophecies and ignores God's purpose for them.

Confusion arises when the various communities of people during the Messianic reign are not differentiated. Jesus is the coming Messiah and he'll rule the world for a thousand years as stated six times in Revelation 20. A thousand years is as one day with the Lord, and a day is like a thousand years. His perspective on time is different, but for us humans, a day is a day and a thousand years is a thousand years.

Those who are born again will rule with Jesus. They have entered the kingdom (monarchy), inherited the kingship, and constitute the sons of the kingdom, the Messianic government. They have gained the privilege that Israel lost through unbelief, but they have not replaced Israel as God's chosen nation on Earth. At the Messiah's return, Israel will be converted and grafted back into the olive tree that symbolizes God's people.

On the Day of the Lord, God will defeat kings in his wrath, saying: I have installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain. He'll extend the Messiah's mighty scepter from Zion, saying: Rule in the midst of your enemies! Both the Messiah and the saints will live in New Jerusalem in their immortal bodies, and from there they'll rule the world. As New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, it is heavenly in nature. It exists in a different time/space dimension to planet Earth, but its descent to

Earth indicates that it will be intimately connected with earthly Jerusalem. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in New Jerusalem (Rev 22:3). However, on Earth, the Messiah will suddenly come to his temple (Mal 3:1) and his temple will subsequently be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isa 56:7, Mk 11:17).

Israel will live on Earth in their promised land, centered around Jerusalem with a new temple built on the summit of newly elevated Mount Zion. The whole area around Jerusalem will be holy, and the Levites will administer the worship of Jesus, whom God has made both Lord and Messiah (Actes 2:36). Israel will finally accomplish the purpose of their calling, a blessing in the midst of the Earth to all nations. In modern times, Levites are integrated into Jewish communities, but they have always kept a distinct status. There are an estimated 300,000 Levites among Ashkenazi Jewish communities and a similar number among Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews combined. The total percentage of Levites among the wider Jewish population is about 4% (Wikipedia).

Isaiah 11 describes the Messianic rule. There will come forth a shoot (descendant) from the stump of Jesse (David's family) and this branch from his roots will bear fruit. He'll be a successful king in every way, bringing righteousness, peace, and prosperity. This powerful Messiah will strike the Earth with the rod of his mouth and kill the wicked with the breath of his lips. He'll subdue the rebellious, secular, nations with a rod of iron and dash them to pieces like pottery (Ps 2). He'll crush kings on the day of his wrath, judging nations, heaping up the dead, and crushing the rulers of the Earth (Ps 110:5-6). This will happen soon, when Jesus, the descendant of David, arrives as the conquering Messiah, judging and waging war (Rev 19:11-15).

After the judgment associated with his coming, there will be a long era of peace, the Messianic reign, when God will rule the world through his Son, the Messiah. The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the Earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. There will be harmony in the animal world as the creation is set free from its bondage to corruption, and there will be no more war, as the nations turn their swords into plowshares and go up to Jerusalem to learn the ways of the Lord. This prophecy will never be accomplished by human desire or effort, not even by the wonderful power of the gospel in changing individual human lives, because whole countries have never become fully Christian. Until the return of Jesus, Satan will

continue to deceive the nations and false prophets will always be around to disseminate their false ideas and create division.

The knowledge of the Lord will determine the philosophy of all who live on Earth. The isms will be gone: communism, secularism, paganism, etc. In that day the descendant of David will stand as a signal for the people; the nations will come to pay homage to him and to receive counsel. The Messiah will dwell in the temple at Jerusalem, which will be surrounded by light, the glory of the Lord (Isa 60:1-3). Jerusalem and its temple will be the most glorious place on Earth. The nations will walk by Jerusalem's light and the kings of the Earth will bring their splendor to it (Rev 21:24). Romans 15:12 quotes from the Septuagint version of Isaiah 11:10, which says: The Root of Jesse will be in that day, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles. In him will the Gentiles hope. Paul uses this passage among others to emphasize the inclusion of the Gentiles among the people of God along with the Jews but it is only during the millennium that the Messiah will rule the nations. The original context of the Isaiah passage is earthly; the Messiah will recover the remnant that remains of his people from Assyria (Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Syria, Turkey), Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan, and the Mediterranean islands.

The nations will be on Earth when Christ rules. His reign is what Jesus called the Kingdom of God. He did not talk about a Kingdom of God being on Earth in his time, or in heaven, as some interpret it. The Kingdom of God is a future reign when Jesus returns to Earth. The resurrected Church will be co-heirs with him in his kingdom (Lk 22:30). The nations will be the subjects of his kingdom. Initially, they constitute the survivors from among the unbelievers of all nations, and subsequently, their descendants. They will make yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship the King. If they don't, there will be no rain for them. The question then naturally arises, whether these unbelievers are getting a second chance to be saved.

## **Salvation during the Messianic reign**

Zechariah's prophecies focus on the Messiah's millennial reign, not on his incarnation and past ministry (Zech 2:4-5, 10-12, 6:12-13, 8:4-8, 20-23, 9:9-10, 13:1, 14:8-9). It seems clear that many subjects of the Messianic reign will put their faith in the Messiah, both Jews and Gentiles. All the surviving Jews will be converted as we have already discussed. So these people are getting a second chance. They were

alive before Christ returned, and they did not respond to the gospel. After Christ comes, he'll pour out his Spirit upon them and they'll be saved. However, they are not part of the Church and it is not revealed whether they'll one day be resurrected and glorified. But it may be assumed on the basis of what Paul says about their election (Rom 11:11-32).

We also saw that the land of Israel will be extended from Egypt to Iraq, and the whole population of the extended nation will be the Messiah's nation, not only the Jews. People from many nations will join themselves to the Lord in that era.

Ululate with joy, population of Jerusalem! For I am coming and I'll live among you, declares the Lord. Many nations will bind themselves to me in that day and will become my people. I'll live among you and you'll know that the Lord Almighty has sent me to you. The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land and he will again choose Jerusalem. Let everyone be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling (Zech 2:10-13).

This is what the Lord Almighty says: Many peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will yet come, and the inhabitants of one city will go to another and say: Let us go and pray to the Lord Almighty. I myself am going. And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek audience with the Lord Almighty and to pray to him (Zech 8:20-22).

This is not the Church age, where salvation is on an individual basis. Here it is the nations who align themselves to the Lord who is dwelling in Jerusalem.

Many peoples will come and say: Come, let us go up to the Lord's mountain, to the God of Jacob's temple. He'll teach us his ways, and we'll walk in his paths. For the law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa 2:3, Mic 4:2).

In that day, the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious (Isa 11:10). Cf. Isa 60:1-3, 11-12, 19-20.

In that day, a highway will go from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt, and the Egyptians to Assyria, The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship the Lord together. In that

day, Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the Earth. The Lord Almighty will bless them, saying: Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my possession (Isa 19:23-25).

When the Lord returns and conquers Israel's enemies and brings about the conversion of the whole nation, the borders of Israel will be extended as promised to Abraham and his descendants as an everlasting possession, from the river of Egypt to the great Euphrates River. This will include parts of the ancient kingdoms of Egypt and Assyria, which extend from Egypt up through Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, to Iraq. When Israel is enlarged in this way, Arab nations to the North and South of Israel, for millennia their enemies, will be reconciled to them as these descendants of Abraham now recognize the lordship and deity of the Messiah. The Middle East, comprising the peoples of Egypt, ancient Assyria, and Palestine, will be reconciled and will bring blessing to the rest of the Earth.

Is there salvation during the millennium? The door to the Church is closed, not even Israel will enter the Messianic kingdom as rulers. That is the special privilege given to those who believe in the Messiah before he returns. God will act, not for Israel's sake, but to vindicate the holiness of his reputation. It is inconceivable that the history of the world would finish without God making clear to mankind that the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem belong to him and his people Israel, and not to their enemies. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords but it will only be during the Messianic reign that this will be evidenced. Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven; that is a matter of faith for believers, but one day:

Jesus will reign where'er the sun  
doth his successive journeys run;  
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore  
till moons will wax and wane no more.

(Isaac Watts 1674-1748)

The millennium will vindicate the holiness of God's great name before the eyes of the nations. They'll understand the veracity of the Bible, the divine origin of Judaism and Christianity, and the vindication of faith. God has kept himself invisible during the ages, but he is not disinterested in his creation. He loves the world he created, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Many are called but few are chosen. Unfortunately, many have chosen the way to destruction. In the final age of planet Earth, Jesus will reign for a thousand years and the nations will acknowledge him as Lord and worship him as God (Dan 7:14, Ps 102:15-16, 21-22). The nations will acknowledge God and come to Jerusalem to worship him, however there is no clear evidence that individuals will be saved during those thousand years. Rather, there is a final rebellion, where the nations, in number like the sand on the seashore, march to Jerusalem against God's people Israel and are destroyed by fire from heaven (Rev 20:8-9).