

31. WORLD RENEWAL

Harmony in the world of nature characterizes the peace of the millennium, the peaceful existence between animals, between animals and man, and a return to the paradisaical conditions of Eden. The wild animals will no longer hurt or destroy all over God's holy mountain, and when the Messiah rules over the world, these new conditions will become universal. A lion eating straw like an ox is hard to imagine, but the reason given is that during this future era, the Earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord. The Creator who gave animals their natures and instincts is just as able to produce harmony between them and man as he was in putting enmity between them (Isa 11:6-9, 65:25).

Hos 2:18 *In that day*, God will make an agreement for Israel with wild animals, birds, and reptiles. This covenant with the animal world reflects the restoration of the Earth during the millennium and the harmony of man with the world of nature.

Joel 3:18 *In that day*, the mountains will drip new wine, the hills will flow with milk, and all the ravines of Judah will run with water. Literally? No. This is a poetic description of the ideal conditions in Israel during those days. The ravines of Judah will all run with water, and a fountain will flow out of the Lord's house and water the Valley of Acacias. Literally? Why not? This fountain is also prophesied by Ezekiel and Zechariah. The Valley of the Acacias is part of the Kidron Valley whose stream descends 4000 feet over a twenty-mile course from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, near Engedi.

Ezek 47:1-12 describes water issuing from the threshold of the Messianic temple (Ezek 43:1). It exits South of the temple and the altar and passes through Jerusalem before turning East. The stream gets deeper and becomes a river as it descends toward the Dead Sea. Trees grow on both banks providing fruit for food and leaves for healing. This water brings life by making the salt water fresh, and as many species of fish will be there as there are in the Mediterranean. Fishermen will spread their nets from Engedi to Eneglaim, but the marshes will be left as a supply of salt. A literal interpretation is easier than trying to spiritualize the details.

Zech 14:8-9 *In that day*, living waters will flow from Jerusalem as it becomes the center of restoration for the world during the Messianic reign. Half of the water will flow to the eastern sea (the Dead Sea) and half to the western sea (the Mediterranean). This is literal. The water flows all year round, in both summer and winter. There is no reason why this should not be a physical feature of millennial Israel in stark contrast to its past aridity. The east-west valley caused by the earthquake (14:4) would be an ideal course for water to flow to both the Mediterranean and Dead Seas.

These prophecies are all Messianic. The place names and details given suggest a literal interpretation. There will be geographical changes as a result of the great earthquakes and Jerusalem will remain aloft on its site and will dwell in security (Zech 14:10-11). The river is symbolic of the blessings flowing from Jerusalem, as is also seen in New Jerusalem (Rev 22:1-2), where the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flows from the throne of God and of Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city, with the tree of life growing on both banks bearing fruit and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. There are many references to it: There the Lord will show us his majesty. It will be like a place of broad rivers and streams (Isa 33:21). I'll make rivers flow on barren heights, and springs within the valleys. I'll turn the desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs (Isa 41:18). I'll pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground. I'll pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants (Isa 44:3). There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, that holy place where the Most High dwells. God is in that city, it won't be conquered. God will help her at daybreak (Ps 46:4-5).

Ezek 34:25-31 also speaks of harmony in the animal kingdom after God has installed his servant David as shepherd and prince over Israel. God will make a covenant of peace with the savage beasts. Israel will no longer be plundered by the nations, nor will wild animals devour them. 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 will know that he is the Lord and that they are his chosen people.

What does the NT say about world renewal?

Jesus spoke about the ‘palingenesis,’ a future era when the Messiah would be sitting on his throne (Mt 19:28). The Greek word *palingenesia* means regeneration, the renewal of all things, the new age, the New Heavens and the New Earth prophesied by Isaiah. This is not a new planet, but a renewed world after the terrible destruction caused by the Great Tribulation. It is what Paul spoke about when he said that one day the creation will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom 8:20). Peter called it the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).

Heaven and Earth will be renewed (Rev 21:1, 5) as the curse is progressively lifted from the world. The animal kingdom will be in harmony with man, and the Messiah will rule the nations with a rod of iron; with justice and righteousness (Acts 3:21, Rom 8:19-21).

The Hebrew adjective is based on the verb “to renew or repair” and the content of the prophecy is clearly on restoration. Human lifespan will be extended, the fierceness of nature will be tamed, the climate will be ideal, and all mankind will come and worship the Lord at Jerusalem. Isaiah says: The former things will not be remembered. John said: The former things have passed away (Rev 21:4).

The covenant with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things on the ground reflects the restoration of nature during the millennium, resulting in harmony between man and beast and within the hierarchy of nature as the creation is set free from its bondage to decay. Creation is wonderful, but it is under a curse. We don’t like pulling weeds, being stung by scorpions, bitten by snakes, bushfires, drought, earthquakes, or tsunamis. These things weren’t around when God created everything and declared everything good. Things will change when the children of God are revealed at the resurrection and during the Messianic reign. Society will be transformed by the resurrected saints who will rule the Earth when the greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be given to them (Dan 7:27).

The bow, the sword, and war will be abolished from the Earth during this era of peace (Isa 65:21-22). The saints will rule with righteousness, justice, love, and mercy. In the absence of war, there will be great prosperity. The climate as well as the world of nature will be more friendly. There will be no more earthquakes, destructive

storms, floods, tsunamis, pandemics, cancers, droughts, famines or bushfires. The spiritual blessings depicted by the river of life and its trees (Rev 22:1-2) represent the blessings that flow from the restorative reign of the Messiah and his saints who dwell there. This is how the leaves of the Tree of Life symbolize the healing of the nations on Earth as the nations walk by New Jerusalem's light.

The millennium is an era of restoration for the world. Nature will be set free from its bondage to corruption. The river that flows from God's temple through the wilderness of Judah and into the Dead Sea represents the transformation that will take place in the world as it is ruled by the Messiah and the sons of God (Rom 8:19) and relieved of its curse. The river of the water of life has its source in God and brings about the abundant, happy, fully satisfied life that we associate with paradise.

When John saw a vision of a New Heaven and a New Earth (Rev 21:1), he said: And the sea was no more. A waterless planet would be like Mars or the moon. John uses "sea" symbolically, referring to the world of rebellious nations from which world empires arise and whose armies slaughter people (Rev 12:17, 13:1, 20:13). There is no other mention in the Bible of a new Earth. The Hebrew adjective is based on a verb meaning to renew or repair, and the content of the prophecy is clearly on restoration. Human lifespan will be extended, the fierceness of nature will be tamed, and all mankind will come and worship the Lord at Jerusalem. Building houses, planting vineyards, and bearing children are not activities we would associate with an eternal in heaven; they are activities we associate with an ideal world. It isn't easy to see how some amillennialists deny the existence of a Messianic reign on Earth.

The apostle John had a vision about the River of Life and the Tree of Life. He was prophesying for the Church, not Israel, and he uses terminology originating from Genesis 2. His river and trees are in the Holy City, New Jerusalem, where nothing is cursed. The inhabitants of the holy city are enjoying eternal life, but they still have a ministry on Earth. The leaves of the trees are medication for the healing of the nations they are ruling over, producing peace, justice, and right living.