

# The Millennial Earth

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According to the book of Revelation, our hope for the Parousia also includes a thousand-year reign of righteousness on earth of the glorified Christ (Rev. 20:1-7). During this time, Satan will be bound in a pit, till the end of the thousand years (Rev. 20:2, 7).

How are we to interpret this? The early Fathers of the Church believed that there would be a millennium of peace and righteousness on earth such as the world has never seen (Walvoord 1959, p. 119-121). St. Augustine, however, interpreted this text as referring to the present glorious reign of Christ now in the kingdom of God that Christ brought to the earth at his birth and that he established with his death, resurrection, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Walvoord, 1959, p. 49-50). The millennium has also been interpreted as Christ's present reign in glory with the saints in heaven.

Nonetheless we are still faced with many Scriptures that cause us to ask whether in addition to our present reign with Christ now through faith, there is not still something more offered to us. Revelation 20:4 tells us that those that do not worship the beast—the final Antichrist—and those that were martyred for their faithfulness in not worshipping him will reign with Christ for a thousand years, while Satan is bound (Rev. 20:1-3).

Another indication that the hope that the Scriptures lay out for us is even greater than St. Augustine imagined is Ezekiel's long prophecy about the future messianic temple (Ezek. 40-47). Ezekiel gives a minutely-detailed, eight-chapter-long description of a temple such as the earth has never seen. Its dimensions fit no known temple. Why does he give such a detailed prophetic description of the future temple? Of what use are all these measurements concerning windows, doors, etc.? The only reasonable explanation seems to be that Ezekiel intended to prophesy an actual earthly temple that would be built on a grand scale in the future, in the messianic age. Will this then be the temple of the millennium that will be used during the coming thousand-year kingdom of Christ on earth after he returns at his Parousia? If so, then the Old Testament animal sacrifices would be restored at that time by believing Jews (Ezek. 43:27) as a memorial of the one adequate sacrifice of Christ on Calvary for our sins.

Then there is the extraordinary prophecy of Daniel interpreting Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years as seventy weeks of years. This prophecy is astoundingly accurate in its prediction of the date of the Messiah's death in 33 AD.

Daniel prays and begins considering Jeremiah's prophecy that there would be 70 years before the end of the desolation of Jerusalem (Dan. 9:2; Jer. 25:11). At the end of Daniel's prayer, the angel Gabriel reveals to him the meaning of Jeremiah's prophecy—namely that there would be seventy *weeks* of years (490 years) “to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place” (Dan. 9:24). This is an impressive statement that immediately catches the eye, indicating that something extraordinary is being revealed here, something that far overshoots normal

historical events. Gabriel is talking about putting an end to sin, atoning for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness!

But at the end of 69 of these weeks of years (483 years), Gabriel says, “an anointed one shall be cut off, and have nothing” (Dan. 9:26). He says that the count for these 70 weeks of years begins “from the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:25). If we take this to mean the year that Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to reconstruct the wall, which was in the twentieth year of the Persian king Artaxerxes (Neh. 2:1), namely 444 B.C., then this 69<sup>th</sup> week when “the anointed one [the Messiah] shall be cut off” (Dan. 9:26) will end in 33 AD, the year of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It is figured out as follows.

The 69 weeks of years (483 years) until the anointed one (the Messiah) is cut off equals 476 prophetic years (Rev. 11:3, 2; 12:6) of 360 days each. This is figured out by multiplying 483 years by 360 days, which equals 173,880 days, divided by 365 days for a normal year, which then gives us 476.38 normal 365-day years. So 69 weeks of prophetic years equals 476 normal years. 476 normal years from 444 BC ends up in 32 AD (476 minus 444 equals 32).

If you add the extra days for leap years, it comes out to 33 AD—that is, 476.38 normal years divided by 4 equals 119 extra days to be added for leap years to the 173,880 days contained in 69 weeks of prophetic years. This equals 173,999 days, divided by 365 days for a normal year equals 476.7 normal years. Then 476.7 normal years minus 444 BC equals 32.7 AD, or in round figures 33 AD, the year of Jesus’ death!

This is an extraordinary prophecy, and its astounding accuracy gives us confidence to take the rest of what it says seriously. So if 69 weeks of years bring us to 33 AD, identified by the prophecy as the year that the anointed one is cut off, that then leaves us with one more week of years to complete the 70 weeks of years.

The Old Testament prophets normally prophesied Christ’s first and second coming as a single event although we now know that they are two events far apart in time. Daniel’s prophecy seems to be no exception to this rule, and so it seems that we should refer the final verse (Dan. 9:27) of this prophecy to the future—to the time of Christ’s second coming. In this final verse, the angel Gabriel explains to Daniel that sacrifices will again be offered and then be cut off until the final end of the desolator comes. Put this together with Ezekiel’s prophecy of the messianic temple and his description of its sacrifices, and we have a vision of the future that seems to include a rebuilt temple and animal sacrifices. When will all this occur? Would it not be reasonable to conclude that this will take place in the end times near the second coming of Christ?

Then there are so many prophecies and divine promises given to Abraham that God would give the land of Canaan to his descendents forever (Gen. 13:15; 17:8), and later there are promises to David that his kingdom and throne would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:12-13, 16; Ps. 89:3-4, 28-29, 33-37). Yes, these promises are fulfilled in Christ’s kingdom now, and Christ reigns with us now and also with the saints in heaven on the throne of his Father. This is true and of great importance to us, but may there not be still more involved, an even more literal and striking fulfillment of these promises and prophecies about the millennial earth?

If Christ were to come again to set up a glorious kingdom of righteousness on earth for a thousand years, reigning from the literal throne of David in Jerusalem, would this not be an even fuller consummation of God’s promises to his people. St. Paul says

that God has not rejected his people (Rom. 11:1) and that in the end “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:26). How and when will this come about? Do not the Scriptures themselves give us the answer? Will it not happen on the millennial earth (Rev. 20:1-7; Ezek. 40-47; Dan. 9:27)?

Is this not our great hope? Is this not the vision that the Scriptures hold out for us—a time of unprecedented glory and righteousness on earth, a peace that knows no bounds, a time of light and splendor such as the world has never seen, a time of beauty and happiness—the millennial earth? Then at the end of a thousand years would come the eternal state with the descent of the new and heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2, 10) to the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. 21:1) that would be created after the destruction of the present heavens and earth (Rev. 20:11; 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:10-13).

Is this not our blessed hope for the future Kingdom of God on earth? First there will be a glorious millennial kingdom characterized by righteousness and prosperity such as the world has never seen. Then after a thousand years of the glorified Christ reigning over us from the literal throne of David in Jerusalem, this reign will merge with the eternal state, which is the new Jerusalem, which will come down from heaven after the destruction of our present earth and rest on the new earth created by God. There we will live for ever as resurrected people.

