

# Where Will the Tribulation Martyrs Go?

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The great tribulation that Christ predicted in his Olivet discourse (Matthew 24; cf. Revelation 6-19) will cause many to die. Of these, some will be martyrs. Now if we assume with Revelation 20:1-7 that there will be a reign of a thousand years of righteousness on earth with the glorified Christ, into which the saints will enter in their natural bodies, then we must also assume that after Christ comes to take all the living and dead saints up with him into the air and give them their resurrection bodies (1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-53), there must be an interval before the setting up of the millennium to allow for the coming into existence of a whole new generation of non-resurrected saints that can enter the millennial kingdom in their natural bodies. If we put Daniel's seventieth week of years (Dan. 9:26-27) in here, that would give a seven year interval during which the tribulation predicted by Jesus (Matthew 24) and the book of Revelation (Revelation 6-19) can take place. This tribulation and persecution by the Antichrist (Revelation 13; 2 Thess. 2:3-12) will create the new living saints and dead martyrs who can enter the millennium. If the millennium were set up at the same time as the taking up and resurrection of all the saints in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, there would be no living saints left on earth in their natural bodies to enter into the millennial kingdom.

Where, though, do the tribulation martyrs go? These are the new saints that come to be and are martyred during the tribulation period. According to Revelation 20:4, they will reign with Christ for a thousand years. St. John says, "Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4).

So it seems that we are to assume that among the inhabitants of the millennial earth, some will be people like ourselves still in their natural bodies, while others (the tribulation martyrs, the new saints of the tribulation period that died natural deaths, the Old-Testament saints, and the resurrected Church) will already be in their resurrection bodies.

Only the non-resurrected, of course, will work the millennial earth and have children and grandchildren, seeing in this way the fulfillment of the glorious prophecies given to Israel. The tribulation martyrs and the translated and resurrected Church of 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 may perhaps have some connection with the new Jerusalem described in Revelation 21 and 22, which St. John says is in the air above the earth at the end of the millennium after the destruction of the present earth (Rev. 20:11; 21:1-2, 10). According to Revelation 21:2, 10, the heavenly Jerusalem only descends after the millennium and only comes to rest on the new earth after the destruction of the present heavens and earth (Rev. 21:1-2). Perhaps the new Jerusalem will already be in existence during the millennium and may even hover over the earth at that time, though we have no Scripture that clearly indicates this. It is, however, a

possibility that during the millennium the resurrected saints will rule with Christ over the millennial earth from the new Jerusalem.

A judgment of living converted Jews and living Gentile saints will take place at the end of the tribulation, for they only became saints at this time—otherwise they would have already been resurrected with the coming of the Lord for all the living and dead members of the Church mentioned by St. Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

At the end of the tribulation, there will therefore be many new saints, both Jews and Gentiles, both living and dead, who were not yet saints when Christ came for his Church (both living and dead) in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. It is therefore these new living saints who will enter into the millennial kingdom in their natural bodies and work the land and have children. The new saints who died naturally or were martyred during the tribulation of Matthew 24 and Revelation 6-19 will also enter into the millennial earth, but as resurrected people, along with the risen Church. All these resurrected saints may perhaps dwell primarily in the new Jerusalem, located above the earth (Rev. 21:2, 10)—if it is already in existence—from which they can reign over the millennial earth. If the new Jerusalem has not yet been created, they will simply live on the millennial earth among the saints who are still in their natural bodies.