

THE MILLENNIUM
SHOCKING FACTS ABOUT
A MISUNDERSTOOD PROPHECY
AND YOUR ETERNAL DESTINY

By Steve Wohlberg

A lie can travel halfway around the world, while truth puts on its shoes.
 – Mark Twain (1835-1910)

Massive confusion exists within Christian churches about the “Millennium,” a unique thousand-year period depicted in the book of Revelation. Some teach that this period is entirely symbolic, and not worth fretting over. Others say we’re in the Millennium now, and that it began when Jesus Christ defeated Satan by His death and resurrection. Most prophecy teachers contend that this apocalyptic period is still future, that it will immediately follow the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and will be a time of universal peace on earth as Jesus Christ governs all nations from Jerusalem.

What is the truth about the thousand years?

To discover the answer, we must carefully examine the only authoritative source where it’s taught, the Bible, especially the book of Revelation, chapter 20. Let’s see what Revelation 20 specifically says, *and doesn’t say*.

Here’s Revelation 20 in its entirety:

(1) Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. (2) He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; (3) And he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. (4) And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (5) But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (6) Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (7) Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison (8) And will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. (9) They went up

on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. (10) The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (11) Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. (12) And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. (13) The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. (14) Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (15) And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Let's look at a brief summary of each verse:

- vs. 1 – An angel descends from heaven with a key and a chain.
- vs. 2 – Satan is bound for 1000 years.
- vs. 3 – During the 1000 years Satan can no longer deceive the nations.
- vs. 4 – Martyrs are resurrected to reign with Jesus Christ for 1000 years.
- vs. 5a – The rest of the dead will be raised at the end of the 1000 years.
- vs. 6 – Those in the first resurrection will reign with Jesus for 1000 years.
- vs. 7 – Satan will be released at the end of the 1000 years.
- vs. 8 – After the rest of the dead are raised, Satan deceives them again. There will be billions of them, like the sand of the sea. They are called Gog and Magog, and Satan gathers them for a final battle.
- vs. 9 – Satan and his host surround God's City. Fire descends and devours them.
- vs. 10 – Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet are cast into this lake of fire.
- vs. 11 – Before this fire falls, a final judgment occurs.
- vs. 12 – All the resurrected lost are judged.
- vs. 13 – Another description of the resurrected lost being judged.
- vs. 14 – Death and Hell are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.
- vs. 15 – All the lost are cast into the lake of fire.

Here is an even shorter summary of the entire chapter: there is a good resurrection (called "the first resurrection") at the start of the 1000 years (vs. 4-6), whereas "the rest of the dead" are resurrected at the end of the 1000 years (vs. 5a). Satan is bound during the entire 1000-year period (vs. 3), but is loosed "when the thousand years are expired" and "the rest of the dead" are raised (compare verses 5a and 7). Satan gathers the lost for a final battle against God's City (vs. 8). A final judgment occurs, and then the lost are punished in the lake of fire (verses 9, 14, 15). Then the old earth passes, and the new earth comes (21:1).

The above points are undeniable, for this is exactly what Revelation 20 says. Two significant facts should be noted:

1. *Revelation 20 doesn't say there will be peace on earth during the Millennium.*
2. *Revelation 20 doesn't say Jesus Christ will rule during the Millennium from the present city of Jerusalem.*

Although these common doctrines (Points 1 and 2) are being taught worldwide, they are absent from Revelation 20, *the only place* in God's Book that specifically mentions the 1000-year period. Now let's go deeper.

The Two Resurrections

Two defining bookends mark the beginning and the end of the thousand years – the two resurrections (vs. 4-6). Let's take a closer look at them.

Jesus Christ declared, "Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29, KJV). Paul agreed when he wrote, "[T]here will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust" (Acts 24:15). Thus both Jesus Christ and Paul taught two resurrections, the first being "the resurrection of life" for the saved, the second being "the resurrection of damnation" for the lost.

Revelation 20 revolves around these two resurrections. As we've already seen, verses 4-6 reveal that one takes place at the beginning of the 1000 years, the other at the end. The Word says, "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (vs. 6). This is the good, or "first resurrection," at the start of the 1000 years. Those in it need not fear the second death. "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished" (vs. 5a). This is the bad or second resurrection, at the conclusion of the 1000 years. Jesus Christ called it "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29).

Thus it is plain that there are two resurrections – one at the beginning of the Millennium, in which true believers in Christ are raised to eternal life; and one at the opposite end of the Millennium, in which the "unjust" awake to something else entirely.

The Second Coming

If the 1000-year period begins with the resurrection of the saved, the question is, When does this good resurrection take place? When we find the answer, we'll understand what initiates the thousand years.

Scripture teaches that the return of Jesus Christ results in the resurrection of His saints. In 1 Corinthians 15:23, 51, 52, Paul tells us plainly that it is at "His coming," when "the trumpet will sound," and when "the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Paul also wrote, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the

clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

According to Paul, "the dead in Christ will rise first." This is "the first resurrection" depicted in Revelation 20:6.

In summary, Revelation 20:4-6 begins the 1000 years with the resurrection of the saints. 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 teach that the resurrection of the saints, who are called "the dead in Christ," occurs when Jesus Christ returns. Thus, it is the return of Jesus Christ, when His saints are resurrected, that marks the beginning of the Millennium.

Left Behind

Jesus returns, the righteous dead are raised, and along with the righteous living, they are all "caught up" to meet the Savior in the air. This is great news for true believers!

But what about those who are not "caught up," those who are left behind? Popular teaching says they will have a second chance during a seven-year Tribulation period, an idea heavily promoted in the wildly popular *Left Behind* novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. Although those books have sold by the millions, the important concern for us should be whether or not this theology is truly biblical.

Immediately after Paul describes the righteous being "caught up," he declares, "[T]he day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them ... And they shall not escape" (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3). Thus, according to Paul, those who are not "caught up" will reap "sudden destruction" and "not escape."

Does this sound like the "second chance" so graphically depicted in *Left Behind* novels and films? Hardly.

It gets worse. How widespread is this "sudden destruction"? Jesus Himself explained it: "And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. *Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed*" (Luke 17:26-30, emphasis added).

In Noah's day, all who refused to enter the ark were *left behind*, destroyed in the deluge. In Lot's day, everyone except Lot and his family were consumed by falling fire. Jesus Christ said, "Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed."

Other texts make it clear that when Jesus returns, those left behind will be destroyed, not given another chance during some hypothetical "seven-year Tribulation"

(which, by the way, is nowhere specifically referred to in the Bible). Here are just a few texts describing the global desolation that follows Christ's return.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 – When Jesus returns in flaming fire, the lost will be destroyed.

Revelation 16:16-19 – At Armageddon, cities crumble around the world.

Revelation 6:14; 16:20 – Every island sinks, and all the mountains disappear.

Jeremiah 4:23-26 – Planet Earth is totally devastated, with "no man" left alive.

Jeremiah 25:30-33 – Those slain by God lie dead, unburied, all around the world.

Revelation 19:17, 18, 21 – Birds eat the flesh of every lost human being worldwide.

These verses teach that those not "caught up" when Christ returns will be destroyed, and the destruction will encompass all the earth, as it did during Noah's flood. Jesus Himself taught this. "The flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:39).

The Rest of the Dead

The last sentence in Revelation 19 describes birds feasting upon the flesh of all people (vs. 21, compare with verse 18). Immediately following is Revelation 20, which depicts the binding of Satan "so that he should deceive the nations no more" during the 1000 years (20:1-3). Why not? The answer's easy – there's nobody left alive on earth to deceive! Those in the first resurrection were "caught up" to be with Jesus, and the rest, those left behind, were slain.

This helps explain what follows (read carefully): "that he [Satan] should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished" (20:3). Notice these three little words "no more till." What do they tell us? They teach that those "nations" are entirely Satan's nations. Satan is deceiving them now, but can't *continue* deceiving them during the Millennium, "until" a certain time.

What time is that? When the 1000 years are over, obviously. Now put two and two together. At the end of the Millennium, "the rest of the dead" (those who missed "the first resurrection") are raised back to life. Then Satan deceives them once more. Look again at God's Word, and don't let anyone convince you otherwise:

Verse 5a - "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished."

Verse 7 - "When the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison."

At the end of the 1000 years, "the rest of the dead" are raised, and Satan is "released." Therefore, the raising of the "rest of the dead" is what "releases" the devil. Satan then swoops into these resurrected nations (*now* alive in the four corners of the earth), deceives them again, and then gathers them for the grand finale (verses 8, 9).

What does all this mean? The answer will come shortly after we examine a few more crucial points. What should be clear so far, however, is that popular teachings about the Millennium leave much to be desired. In fact, most are completely bogus.

The Bottomless Pit

Crucial to understanding the Millennium are the first texts of Revelation 20, verses 1 and 2. According to these verses, Satan is bound with "a great chain" and confined to "the bottomless pit" for 1000 years. The expression, "a great chain," doesn't mean a literal chain. Even today all of "the angels that sinned" with Lucifer are described as being in "chains of darkness" (2 Peter 2:4). These words do not refer to actual clinking and clanging metal, but to *circumstances* of darkness that these angels find themselves in after having been booted out of heaven.

During the 1000 years, Satan is represented as being bound with a chain because his new circumstances prevent him from deceiving the nations during the Millennium (Revelation 20:2). Again, what are those circumstances? Everyone left on earth is dead.

What is this "bottomless pit"? In the Old Testament the word "pit" often refers to a grave, a cemetery, or to the place of the dead.

Ps. 55:23 – Evil men will go "down to the pit of destruction."

Nu. 16:32, 33 – "the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up... into the pit."

Ezek. 32:23 – "Her graves are set in the recesses of the Pit... all of them slain."

Ps. 28:1 – David prayed not to "become like those who go down to the pit."

Ps. 69:15 – "Let not the pit shut its mouth on me."

Isaiah 14 contains one of the Old Testament's clearest prophecies about Lucifer. He was kicked out of heaven (vs. 12) for exalting himself (vs. 13) and will eventually be brought down "to the lowest depths of the Pit" (vs. 15). Isaiah 14:18-20 parallels the prophecy in Revelation 20:1-3. "All the kings of the nations, all of them, sleep in glory [kings are given an honorable burial]. Everyone in his own house [the grave]; But you are cast out of your grave like an abominable branch. Like the garment of those who are slain, thrust through with a sword, who go down to the stones of the pit, like a corpse trodden underfoot. You will not be joined with them in burial [at the Second Coming]" (Isaiah 14:18-20).

These verses predict a time when the kings of the earth lie silently in their graves, yet Satan "will not be joined with them in burial." Instead, the Prince of Darkness will be left to wander among earth's ruins. Notice carefully: "Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, thou inhabitant of the earth... The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be moved like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit,

and shall be shut up in prison, and *after many days shall they be visited*" (Isaiah 24:17–22, KJV, emphasis added).

This is a prediction of a destroyed and devastated earth. Its inhabitants are gathered as prisoners in the pit [the grave]. When Revelation 20:1–3 describes Satan as bound with a chain for 1000 years, this means that a chain of circumstances will prevent him from deceiving the nations. The major circumstance is the return of Jesus Christ in "flaming fire" (2 Thess. 1:8), the "sudden destruction" of sinners (1 Thessalonians 5:3), the largest earthquake in history (Revelation 16:18), the crumbling of cities worldwide (Revelation 16:19), the disappearing of mountains and islands (Revelation 16:20), and the total depopulation of planet Earth just like "it was in the days of Noah" (Matthew 24:37–39). This "day of the Lord" will come "as destruction from the Almighty" (Joel 1:15). "And at that day the slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented, or gathered, or buried [those slain at the Second Coming]; they shall become refuse on the ground" (Jeremiah 25:33).

Earth will then be like one gigantic bottomless pit, a huge cemetery. Jeremiah predicted: "I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth. I beheld, *and indeed there was no man*, and all the birds of the heavens had fled. I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of the LORD, by His fierce anger" (Jeremiah 4:23–26, emphasis added). As Satan and his angels behold their kingdom in ruins, they can only wander about, counsel together, and contemplate with trembling the final events to occur at the end of the 1000 years.

Yet it doesn't end here. We mustn't forget the last section of Isaiah 24:17–22, which predicts that those who lie dead in their graves will "be visited" (Isaiah 24:22, KJV). What could that possibly mean other than what we've seen in Revelation 20:5? "But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished." It's what Jesus was talking about when He warned about the "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29). This occurs at the end of the Millennium.

Therefore, instead of being a time of pristine earthly glory when Jesus reigns from the present city of Jerusalem, the Millennium is a time when earth lays waste, in desolate ruins, a prison house for Satan and his demons.

The Saints in Heaven

If discovering earth's true state during the Millennium doesn't sound inviting, it's because it isn't supposed to be inviting. It's a time of chaos, desolation, and ruin, when sin takes another step toward its horrific end. The Millennium is not some idyllic era of peace and goodness upon this old earth, with Jesus ruling from Jerusalem, but a time of utter devastation and judgment.

What about God's people? What about those who participated in "the first resurrection," who were "caught up" to Jesus as opposed to being left behind? What happens to them during the Millennium?

Near the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus told His followers that He was going to heaven, where He would be preparing mansions for His children (John 14:1,2). When He returns, He will take us to Himself, "that where I am, there you may be also" (vs. 3). When He comes, Jesus will take us to the place where He is now, the New Jerusalem (see Revelation 3:12; 21:10). As we saw earlier, 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 tells us that at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ we shall be "caught up." Thus we are going up to glory. In perfect agreement with this is Revelation 19:1, 2, which teaches that immediately after Mystery Babylon's destruction (Revelation 18:8-24), John beheld God's saints *in heaven*. "After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her'" (Revelation 19:1, 2).

According to Revelation 20:4, 6, the saints will reign with Jesus for 1000 years. Contrary to popular opinion, Revelation 20 *does not say* they will reign on earth during that time. Why would Jesus and His people rule over a devastated world anyway? The Bible says we will ascend when Christ returns (1 Thessalonians 4:17), that He will take us to the New Jerusalem (John 14:1-3), and that we will then be in heaven praising God (Revelation 19:1, 2).

Some might wonder how we can reign for 1000 years if we're in heaven. Don't we have to be on earth to reign over others during this time? Not necessarily. The Bible also says the saints will "reign forever and ever" (Revelation 22:5). This implies that we will be in some position of authority, just as Adam originally exercised dominion over the earth, that's all.

Now, if planet Earth is depopulated, with no survivors (except Satan and his angels), and the saints are in heaven, then what is the purpose of the 1000 years?

A few possibilities exist:

(1) It gives the loyal universe an opportunity to behold the terrible results of Satan's rule; (2) It gives the saints in heaven an opportunity to go through heaven's records and to have all their questions answered about why some of their loved ones are there and some are not; (3) It provides a period of time when Jesus and the saints together can make decisions about the just punishments to be carried out upon the lost at the end of the 1000 years (see 1 Corinthians 6:2,3); (4) It also gives the saints a period of time to prepare mentally for the events at the end of the Millennium, at which time many of their loved ones will be resurrected, judged, and sentenced to the lake of fire (Revelation 20:5a, 11-15).

The Resurrection of Damnation

We've seen that at the Second Coming, Jesus returns, the saved (both the resurrected dead and those alive at His return) are taken to heaven where they reign for a thousand years, the earth is destroyed, and Satan remains captive there for the allotted thousand years. What then happens at the *end* of the Millennium?

Revelation 20 (as we've already seen) is clear that two events occur:

- 1) The "rest of the dead" are resurrected (vs. 5a).
- 2) Satan is "released" (verses 3, 7).

Both events occur simultaneously. When the lost are resurrected, Satan now has people once again to deceive; thus he is, in effect, "released" from his chains. Satan then "will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea" (vs. 8). The "sand of the sea" means myriads of people (all the lost – from the days of Adam down to the last person who experienced "sudden destruction" at Christ's return). During the 1000 years, they remain in their graves; now, they are raised to life in a hopelessly dismal "resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29).

Immediately after the lost are resurrected, Satan gathers them "together to battle." What Hollywood movie producer could even envision such a scene: billions of lost people, including no doubt, great military commanders, gathered together in one final burst of rebellion?

Who will this terrible army prepare to fight? The Bible makes it plain: "They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city..." (vs. 9). This is the New Jerusalem, the home of the saved (Revelation 3:12; 21:10), which must have descended from heaven to the earth (Revelation 3:12; 21:2) right before the second resurrection. Then Satan and his macabre army surround the "camp of the saints" in a last-ditch effort to conquer God's fortress.

Picture this scene: The entire world's lost and all the world's saved are together for the first and last time – the saved inside the city, the lost outside. The lost will then behold the reward of the righteous, while the saved witness the doom of the damned.

This is Satan's last stand, his final opportunity to conquer Jesus Christ, His New Jerusalem, and the redeemed of all ages. But he can never defeat the King of the Universe. He failed miserably when Jesus was a lowly carpenter in human flesh. What chance does he have against Him now as King of the New Jerusalem? None whatsoever!

Fire from Heaven

After Lucifer's legions gather around God's holy city to make war against it, what happens next? The Bible explains explicitly: "[Satan] will go out to deceive the [resurrected] nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the

breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them” (Revelation 20:8, 9).

Notice, “fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.” That’s the fate of the lost!

Before the fire falls, a vast cosmic judgment scene unfolds. "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it... And I saw the [resurrected] dead standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (Revelation 20:11-12).

This judgment occurs while Satan’s army is gathered around the city; it concerns only the lost, who are then judged “according to their works.” As books are opened above them, they are allowed to see the complete record of their lives. They are shown why they are lost, why they are outside God’s City, why they have forfeited eternal life with Jesus. As the Book of Life is opened, they discover their names are missing. Then Jesus will undoubtedly show them how much He loved them, how He tried hard to save them, and yet how by their own persistent efforts they resisted His tender appeals. Yes, they will see that Jesus Christ died for them, that on the cross He paid the full penalty for all their sins, and that they could have been inside the city with His saints; but now they are outside with another master, the master of their own choosing. They will see that, though Jesus willingly took upon Himself the punishment that was theirs, they spurned Him, and now they are forced to stand before His Holy Majesty in the shame of their spiritual nakedness, with every wrong thought, every wrong word, and every wrong deed bearing down upon their consciences to condemn them, and there is no longer any Mediator to represent them and intercede for them.

After sentence is pronounced, the fire of God brings final retribution upon the lost. By this time, all the unsaved understand why they are lost. This destruction is an act of both justice and mercy, not cruelty. It is just because the wicked receive exactly what they deserve, and merciful, for by their own choices the lost have formed evil characters which are unable to enjoy God’s Presence. The book of Revelation is clear about God’s uprightness. "Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints" (15:3); "You are righteous, O Lord ... Because You have judged these things" (16:5); and "For true and righteous are His judgments" (19:2).

The judgment at the close of the Millennium will be perfectly just, without any taint of imperfection chargeable upon God. By rejecting His love and mercy, and by a life of continued sinning, the lost have earned their just reward. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). The Father, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, holy angels, and the saints will all weep over the unsaved. But nothing more can be done. Now it’s too late.

Revelation 20:8 says the lost will march across “the four corners of the earth” right before the fire falls upon them. Thus we conclude that God’s fire will descend all over planet Earth. This unquenchable downpour will become a "lake of fire" (14, 15)

boiling everywhere. Malachi 4:1, 3 says that entire fateful day will come "burning like an oven." 2 Peter 3:10 adds "...the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." Thus God will totally purify and cleanse our sin-polluted earth with flames. In fact, 2 Peter 3 parallels the destruction of the world by water in Noah's day with the purification of the earth by fire at the end of the 1000 years (2 Peter 3:5-7). In Noah's day, the whole earth was under a global lake of water; at the end of the 1000 years, this planet will be wrapped in "a lake of fire." In Noah's day, God's people floated in the midst of the water but were protected inside the ark; at the end of the Millennium, when a lake of fire envelops our planet, God's "saints" will be right there, riding the storm safely inside the New Jerusalem.

The New Heaven and New Earth

Revelation 20 concludes with these solemn words, "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (20:15). Fortunately, that's not the end of the story. The next verse reads: "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Revelation 21:1).

New heaven (sky), new earth! What happened to the old ones? We just saw that the lake of fire consumed them. When the Bible says, "...the first heaven and the first earth had passed away," this must include the lake of fire! After God's fire completely purifies this planet and its atmosphere, He will recreate the earth and sky, so long under the contaminating effects of sin. God will make "a new heaven and a new earth." Eventually the cleansing fire will disappear, after purifying this earth from every trace of sin, sinners, Satan, and demons, and in place of a smoggy heaven and polluted earth the Lord will recreate a pure and perfect earth belted by a clear new sky.

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

Revelation 21 also adds, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He that sat upon the throne said, 'Behold, I make all things new.' And He said to me, 'Write, for these words are true and faithful'" (21:4, 5).

"Write, for these words are true," says God Almighty. When this finally happens, the lake of fire, death, sin, sorrow, crying, and pain will have "passed away." There will be no more terrorists, no more tears over the World Trade Center, nor crying over a million other things like natural disasters, sickness, divorce, child abuse, or graveside services. These will all have "passed away."

As Noah and his family finally walked out of the ark onto a cleansed world, so will God's redeemed saints finally step out of the New Jerusalem into a brand new world.

Conclusion

Contrary to popular opinion, the biblical Millennium is a time of desolation and ruin, followed by more rebellion, then judgment, and finally, re-creation – when the Lord who first spoke heaven and earth into existence (Genesis 1) repeats His creativity, “His wonders to perform”!

The most important issue, however, isn't so much our knowledge of millennial details, but our knowledge of the God who has revealed the truth about it. What this study shows us, perhaps more than anything else, is that there is no second chance, no middle ground, no neutrality in this Great War between Jesus Christ and Satan. Remember, the devil deceives “nations” (Revelation 20:3) in many areas, *including this one*. We will be on one side or the other. We will either be inside the city, safe and secure with Jesus, looking down on the hordes outside; or we will be outside, deceived by the Devil, looking up at what might have been ours had we only repented and given ourselves fully to Jesus Christ for faithful obedience.

Jesus died for you! He died so that you could have a place with Him in that New Jerusalem and in the new heavens and new earth that are coming. Your final destiny, inside or outside, eternal life or eternal destruction, depends upon *your choice*. Will you give yourself to the One who gave Himself for you, and thus have eternity with Him, or will you continue resisting His pleadings?

The Millennium is coming; nothing you can do will change this. All you can do is decide – *for* or *against* Jesus – where you are going to spend it.

The Lord is pleading with you. Choose Jesus Christ now, before it's too late.