

15. Future Ages

Scriptures provide a glimpse into the future Millennium Age and New Jerusalem Age. Two events shape the character of the Millennium Age. First, an angel binds Satan and throws him into the Abyss for a thousand years. Then Israeli believers who died during the final 43 months of the end-times are resurrected. With Satan removed from the scene and all God's people resurrected from the dead, the Millennium Age occurs. Following the Millennium is the final resurrection. These people are brought before the Great White Throne to face judgment and eternity in the lake of fire. Then the New Jerusalem, which is the eternal heaven, descends to earth.

BEYOND THE END-TIMES

Timeframe	Events
Pre-Millennium	Satan is bound for 1,000 years Resurrection of Israelis martyred the final 3 ½ years
Millennium Age	Satan is released at the end of 1,000 years Enemies prepare to attack Jerusalem; God stops this attack
Pre-New Jerusalem	The Great White Throne Judgment – of the damned
New Jerusalem Age	New Jerusalem, a garden city, is placed on a restored earth

Pre-Millennium Events

At the end of our Post-Flood Age, an angel binds Satan and casts him into the Abyss for a thousand years. *I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.* (Revelation 20:1-2) Accordingly the Millennium Age is described as a thousand years of peace. Yet even with Satan bound, sins resulting from human weaknesses continue. The prideful boasting of what we have (possessions), or boasting about what we do (position, ability), or lusting the things we see—come from weakness in our own character (1 John 2:16).

Also Israelis who died during the final 43 months are resurrected, bringing to life all God's people. *I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.* (Revelation 20:4)

Those with *authority to judge* encompass all believers (1 Corinthians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 6:3). Those *beheaded* are predominately end-time Israeli martyrs. Throughout history countless Jews have been beheaded; this execution type started when Muhammad beheaded Jews in Medina. All believers – both Jew and Gentile – will reign with Christ during the Millennium.

Inserted is a reference to the fate of the damned, and a contrast is made to the good fortune of believers. *(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.* (Revelation 20:5-6)

That the rest of the dead are not resurrected until the thousand years were ended—refers to the final and largest harvest, which resurrects persons bound for hell.

The first six harvests are grouped together; the term to describe them is the “first resurrection.” The people who take part in the first resurrection will reign with Christ during the Millennium Age and enjoy eternal life.

The Millennium Age

God will restore the earth from the ecological catastrophes and make it fit for habitation. Just as the Ark took Noah’s family from the Pre-Flood Age into the next Age, there will be Israelis alive at the return of Christ who move from the Post-Flood Age into the Millennium Age. Persons born into the Millennium Age will live to be hundreds of years old, like the extended life spans typical in the Pre-Flood Age (Genesis 5:5, 9:29). During the Millennium Age, Jesus will reign on earth as King. His people will reign in subordinate roles.

The following reads like an eternal heaven. However because people still die it must be referring to the Millennium Age. *“Behold, I will create a new*

heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain," says the LORD. (Isaiah 65:17-25)

The Millennium Age ends with Satan being released to organize the enemies of God. *When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. (Revelation 20:7-9)*

The Great White Throne

The final harvest follows the Millennium Age. This harvest resurrects people destined for hell and brings them before Jesus' throne. *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.* (Revelation 20:11-15)

These unfortunate people will stand before the great white throne of Jesus Christ. Even after being resurrected, this pathetic group is still described as *the dead*. Decayed bodies are resurrected in no better condition than at the time of death. The damned will have a body that is constantly dying, but unable to die. Jesus said that hell was a place where, *'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'* (Mark 9:48) The word "worm" refers to maggots. People are also tormented with burning sulfur (Revelation 14:10; 21:8). Organic sulfur causes the odor associated with rotten eggs, and sulfur dioxide has a suffocating odor. The book of life records names of all who have eternal life (Exodus 32:31-33; Revelation 3:5; Philippians 4:3).

God will judge his people with a kinder and gentler judgment, featuring rewards. *For we will all stand before God's judgment seat* (Romans 14:10). During this judgment, fire will test the quality of each man's work. *If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward* (1 Corinthians 3:13-14).

New Jerusalem

God sends the holy city, New Jerusalem, to earth. This final heaven will be a garden city where God dwells with his people. The tree of life seen the Garden of Eden, will be in this Garden of Jerusalem (Genesis 2:9; 3:22; Revelation 22:2).

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:2-4)