

# Will the Earth be Desolate During the Millennium?

*Central Highland Church of God*

We believe that Christ and His followers will spend the millennium transforming our almost destroyed earth into a near-paradise for those people who survive the Day of the Lord. Some Christian groups do not teach anything about what will happen to the earth during the Thousand Years of Christ's Rule. Others, including the Seventh Day Adventist Church, claim that the earth will be a barren, uninhabited wasteland during that time, serving only as a prison for Satan.

This article explains the scriptural basis for our beliefs about the millennium, and looks at the basis of the SDA's beliefs. We ask you to search the scriptures to find out if these things are so (Acts 17:11).

We have used the Seventh Day Adventist publication ***THESE TIMES- The Amazing Prophecies of Daniel and Revelation*** - pages 74 and 75 as a reference to their beliefs. We will look at all of the scriptures used in the publication relating to this issue.

## **Human Survivors**

The Bible clearly teaches that there will be a time of massive disruption and death leading up to Christ's Return and the setting up of His Kingdom, as shown in Matthew 24:3-31 and Zechariah 14:1-16. But does the Bible teach that there will be **no** survivors?

Reading the scriptures the Adventists use in their Biblical context reveals that there will definitely be mortal human survivors on Earth during the Millennium. We will examine these quotes and see how they are misused.

The *These Times* article claims that 2 Thessalonians 2:8 tells us that all those who have rebelled against Christ will be destroyed by the brightness of his coming. In fact, this scripture actually tells us that *the lawless one* will be thus destroyed, not all of humanity.

Isaiah 11:4 is used to support the idea of an uninhabited earth. But if we keep reading we see that God's revelation does not stop at verse 4. Verses 6 to 9 tell us of the marvellous conditions humanity will be living under after Jesus kills the wicked. In verse 10 God tells us that during this time Jesus "shall stand as a banner to the people" and that the Gentiles shall seek Him. At this time the remnants of Judah and Israel shall be gathered from the four corners of the earth, reunited and given dominion over the surrounding nations. Chapter 12 continues with a glimpse into the glory that will be given to Christ and His Father during the Millennium. There is not one mention in this entire sequence of the earth being uninhabited for even a split second. Instead of emptiness, God speaks of making a highway so the remnant of His people can return to the land of Israel (Isaiah 11:16). This is a pointless idea if the earth is uninhabited.

The article then quotes Isaiah 63:1-6; 64:1-3 and 66:15-16 to prove that earth will be uninhabited. Not one of these passages say that the earth will be uninhabited. Isaiah 66:16 does say that the slain of Jehovah will be many, but it does not say that there will be no survivors. Reading all of the last three chapters of Isaiah shows that the opposite is true. Carefully read chap. 66, verses 18 to 24. It tells us that the physical Israelites will be brought to the land of Israel by the gentiles **after** this destruction. It tells us that people will be able to go and look at the corpses of those who transgressed against God. This cannot refer to a time after the Millennium as then there will be no more grave, no more death (Rev 21:4).

Look closely at Isaiah 65:20-25. We are told that during this era a person who is a hundred years old when they die will still be regarded as a child. The era is again the Millennium. It must mean

that human lifespans are restored to what they were before the Flood. And as death can still occur it cannot be after the Millennium.

The *These Times* article also quotes Jeremiah 25:30-33. As verse 33 states, the slain shall not be lamented, gathered or buried. But that is because at that time the survivors will be so few and so concerned about saving their own skins that they will not have the time to think about the dead as Jeremiah 4, discussed next, shows.

The publication next quotes Jeremiah 4:23-26. Very convincing if one only reads these four verses. However, God then explains what Jeremiah saw. Verse 27 makes an interesting statement - “Yet I will **not** make a **full** end.” Verse 29 explains why Jeremiah saw no man: “The whole city shall flee....They shall go into thickets and shall climb up on the rocks. Every city shall be forsaken, and not a man shall dwell in it.” He saw no one because they were all hiding.

Back to Isaiah. This time the article quotes Chapter 24, verses 19 to 22. We certainly agree that there is going to be massive death and destruction on a scale perhaps even worse than the Flood. But where does it say that the earth will be uninhabited? The very next verse says that God will reign in Jerusalem. Again there is no mention of a thousand year gap between these things. And what about verse 6? It tells us that those who dwell in the earth are desolate, not that the earth is desolate. It also tells us that after the destruction of those days that **few** men are left, not that **no** men are left. Jesus says of those times: “if those days had not been shortened, no flesh would be saved.” (Matt. 24:22) Isaiah 6:11-13 prophesies of this time and says that only one-tenth will be left, and they will be purified.<sup>1</sup> As Paul

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<sup>1</sup> One-tenth of the earth’s current population surviving means that more than seven hundred million people will survive the Great Tribulation and live into the Millennium of Peace.

says in 1 Corinthians 15:50, “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God”. In verses 44 to 49 of the same chapter, God explains how those in the first resurrection will no longer have a body of flesh -a natural body- but instead will be given a new spiritual body (also Rev 20:4-6). -So the flesh saved is not those who are changed to spirit beings at the time of Christ’s return. Nor have those in the flesh yet inherited God’s Kingdom, but they will be blessed by being allowed to dwell in it.

### **Israel During the Millennium**

The Bible teaches that Israel will be restored to glory during the Millennium and Jerusalem will become the capital of Christ’s world-wide Kingdom. This can only happen if the earth is inhabited. Again the Adventist publication rejects this position.

Isaiah 34:8-12 makes the earth look pretty grim during the Millennium. However, reading the rest of the chapter, especially vs. 5 and 6, make it clear that these conditions apply specifically to Edom (known as Jordan today). Chapter 35 contrasts this with the glorious conditions that will exist in Israel. Obadiah tells the same story. Joel expands on this theme, read especially 3:11-21. Ezekiel 36:22-36 makes it clear that God does this for the sake of His Holy Name, not because they deserve it. Ezekiel 37:11 to 28 details how Jehovah God will reunite the kingdoms of Judah and Israel and establish them forever. Jeremiah 31:31-37 states that God’s plans for the house of Israel and the house of Judah must come to pass.

Those who believe that the divided Kingdoms of Judah and Israel were reunited during the return to Jerusalem from Babylon will find no support for this idea in either God’s Word or in history. In 2 Kings 17:6 God says that the Israelites were taken to Assyria. Verse 18 says that only members of the tribe of Judah were left in the former Kingdom of Israel. Later the Kingdom of Judah, composed of the tribes of Judah, Levi and Benjamin, was taken to Babylon for its

unfaithfulness. Ezra 1:5 tells us that some of the descendants of these same three tribes eventually returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and the city. The other tribes have still not returned to this day. Note that Scripture shows that modern Israel (actually Judah) will indeed return into captivity yet again before Jesus returns and sets up the Kingdom of God on earth.

However, in Ezekiel 20:33-38 God states that those who continue to rebel against Him will be destroyed just as the Israelites who refused to obey Him after being freed from the bondage of Egypt were destroyed. The Golden Calf (Exodus 32) and the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16) are examples of this. Zechariah 13:8-9 says that only one-third of them will survive. This applies to the beginning of the Millennium as most of the Jews have not accepted Jesus as the Messiah and are thus not truly God's people yet, as Romans Chapters 9 to 11 makes clear. (esp. 9:25-26)

The "Battle Feast" of Ezekiel 39:17-20 is also used in the Times article to "prove" that the earth will be uninhabited during the millennium. Reading the context of these verses really produces some headaches for followers of the empty earth theory. If we look at vs. 1-16 of Chapter 39 we are given more details of the battle and an account of how the Israelites spend the next seven months burying the bodies of those that came against Christ in Jerusalem. As verses 17 to 20 show, the Israelites' clean-up begins after the animals have finished their feast.

Verses 21 to 29 again tell us that the nation of Israel shall be recalled from captivity and be permanently restored to their land and God's Grace.

The rest of the book of Ezekiel tell us of conditions in Israel during the Millennium. We are given descriptions of what the temple will be like, the Holy District, the city of Jerusalem and how the land will be divided between the various tribes. Non-Israelites will be

included in the division of the land (Ezek 47:22-23). We are also told of the healing waters that shall flow from the temple (Ezek 47) where Jesus will reign from (Ezek 43:1-7). These are all things that have never existed yet. Nor can these things exist in the same manner after the Millennium as then we will have the New Jerusalem and there will be no temple, for God Almighty and the Lamb shall be its temple (Rev. 21, esp vs 22).

As Jesus says: “I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am you may be also.” (John 14:3) He tells us that He is bringing His reward for us with Him (Rev 22:12). Rev 5:10 tells us that we will reign **on** the Earth. Acts 1:9-11 says that just as Jesus went up from the Mount of Olives into the clouds, so shall He return. Zechariah 14 tells us how Jesus will come in God's name, stand on the Mount of Olives and fight against the nations.

### **Satan's Prison**

We believe that Satan will be imprisoned in a specially constructed “zoo” where people will be able to look at him and wonder how he ever had such an enormous influence. As mentioned earlier, the Adventists teach that the entire earth is his prison. They claim that the ‘bottomless pit’ of Revelation 20:1-3 is the same as the ‘deep’ of Genesis 1:2. As the ‘deep’ covered the whole earth then, they think that it follows that Satan’s prison must be the whole earth. But this logic is based on ignorance. Firstly, the original words, like the translations, are different. The ‘deep’ is translated from Hebrew, the ‘bottomless pit’ is translated from Greek. The Hebrew word *tehhome* means a surging depth of water, as used in Exodus 15:5 and Ezek 26:19. The Greek equivalent is *buthos*. This is the word Paul uses in 2 Cor 11:25. The Greek word *abussos*, which is the word translated as ‘bottomless pit’ means the exact opposite of these words. The only reasonable conclusion is that Satan is to be confined in a small (depthless) space. That this is the case is confirmed by

Isaiah 14:16-17, where God describes how Lucifer (Satan) will be put on display during the Millennium.

### **Jesus's Parables**

Several of Jesus' parables contain elements that can only be fulfilled by the existence of 'flesh and blood' people on the earth during the Millennium. One of these is the parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14. Here we see three groups of people. The first group are God's servants, then those who are being invited as guests (vs 2-3), and then the rest who were not invited and killed his servants (vs 6). The time setting is revealed in Revelation 19:5-9. The groom (Jesus), has already come back for His Bride (the transformed Christians). His servants (the angels and people who have turned to Christ after the resurrection) call everyone to the feast. Those who come must accept Christ's cleansing to enter properly into the feast. The Battle of the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:9-17) occurs during this interval. In Matthew verse 8, *after* the king has destroyed the wicked ones that persecuted his servants, he sends out other servants to invite people to his feast. Verses 11 and 12 also add an interesting feature to this account. The wedding garments were provided by the hosts in Biblical days. The wedding garment referred to here is the righteousness of Christ that we put on through faith in Him (Galatians 3:26-27). So how can someone who has not put on Christ wander into the Wedding Feast if it is not on the Earth and there is no one left but God's servants? It is only after this feast that God's Kingdom is fully set up.

The account of the Judging of the Nations in Matthew 25:31-46 also has these three groups; the brethren, the sheep and the goats. The cup of water in Matthew 10:40-42 shows this clearly.

The parable of the Wheat and the Tares is also interesting (Matthew 13:24-30 and 13:36-43). This shows that the tares are burnt up and the wheat is left. Note Matthew 5:5 - "Blessed are the

meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

### **Conclusion**

We will be transformed when Jesus returns, caught up into the clouds and go to the Mount of Olives with Jesus. There we will see Him proclaim His authority over all the Kingdoms of this earth. At this point, many will finally realize that the message Bible-believing Christians were proclaiming is true and many will believe. They will be too late to be in the First Resurrection, but they will be cleansed by Christ (Zechariah 12:10 to 13:2). We will watch the kingdoms of earth bring together their armies in an attempt to overthrow Christ. We will march with Him as He totally annihilates them and then help restore Jerusalem and build the Holy District from which we will administrate His kingdom over the earth. See Daniel 2:31-45; note vs.44- “And in the days of these kings the God of Heaven will set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed.” The Kingdom is to be set up straight away- in the days of these kings.

For God to leave the Earth a barren waste for a thousand years is to allow Satan to accomplish his goal of destroying humanity for at least that period of time. Remember, God says He formed the earth to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18). Instead of leaving a wasted earth in Satan’s hands, God intends to use that thousand years to make the earth into what He wanted it to be before Adam and Eve fell. It shall grow in strength and beauty for that thousand years like the stone in Dan 2:35 that grows into a great mountain. The physical people who live during the Millennium will be taught what life was like when Satan was loose before the Millennium. Then Satan shall be released and each person must decide who they really want to obey, Jehovah



God or Satan (Rev 20:1-8).<sup>2</sup> Those who join Satan will be destroyed, and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire. This will, at last, truly be the last war, followed by true paradise for eternity (Rev 20:9 to 22:21).

We hope and pray that we may be able to serve Christ with you, both now and in His Kingdom. May Jehovah God guide you and bless you with understanding.

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<sup>2</sup> There are many who believe that nearly everyone will be resurrected at the end of the thousand years and be tested with Satan's final temptation along with those who have lived during the Millennium.