

A Note from Dr. Tim LaHaye

The millennial kingdom gets its name from the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation. *Millennium* is derived from the Latin words *mille* (one thousand) and *annum* (year).

The Millennium defines the duration of Christ's kingdom following the Rapture and Tribulation and prior to His creation of a new heaven and new earth. During the Millennium, Christ will physically reign on earth.

Not many details are provided about Christ's millennial kingdom in Revelation 20, except the final order of last-days events, the windup of history as we know it, and the length of the reign. There are, however, enough details to provide an idea of the way things might unfold. Many passages in the Old Testament and the New tell of the future kingdom of Israel within Christ's kingdom.

I feel the need to clarify that the millennial kingdom is not heaven. While in some ways it can be seen as a foretaste of heaven, sin will still exist. Those who enter this period after already having been in heaven are the redeemed saints, of course. And those who survived the Tribulation are also all saints. So the first few days of the Millennium will be idyllic, with Christ on the throne and all citizens of the earth believers.

But as newborns come along, obviously, they will be sinners in need of forgiveness and salvation. I believe the scriptural prophecies indicate that anyone who does not trust Christ by the age of one hundred will be accursed. And while some may disagree, popular consensus among those of us who take the Bible literally wherever possible is that such people will die on their hundredth birthdays, thus exposing themselves as unbelievers.

You may also find it instructive to see the Millennium as yet another of God's efforts to reach the lost. He started by providing the perfect environment, the Garden of Eden.

But sin invaded.

Then came the faith age, in which Old Testament heroes acted on their trust in God. The New Testament book of Hebrews contains a faith Hall of Fame, each description of each saint's acts preceded by the phrase "By faith."

But sin invaded.

Then came the age of the law, during which God's people tried to please Him by following meticulous rules.

But sin invaded.

Then came the age of grace, when Jesus died for our sins and all we had to do was trust Him and His work on the cross for our salvation.

Still men and women rejected God.

Then will come the Rapture and the Great Tribulation, and despite these obvious signs that God is sovereign, humans will turn from Him and go their own ways.

Finally, the Millennium will put Jesus Christ on the throne of the earth. His light will illumine the globe. His justice will prevail. It seems inconceivable that anyone could still reject Him, and yet Scriptural prophecy is clear. When Satan is again loosed for a season at the end of the Millennium, despite that the earth is massively populated with more believers than have ever lived, there will still be those who live for themselves and constitute the army of the rebellion against God.

Only heaven itself will finally be populated with only believers.

It should be plain from our treatment of this great future period that we are the opposites of anti-Semites. Indeed, we hold that the entire Bible contains God's love letter to and plan for His chosen people. If Israel had no place within the future Kingdom of God, we could no longer trust the Bible.

I have been studying the prophecies of the Word of God for my entire adult life—more than six decades—and still I thrill anew at what is in store. Now come along as Jerry tells the story of how this could all play out. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

PROLOGUE

From Glorious Appearing

Rayford tried to stay with Chaim. The men had left the Rosenzweig home without breakfast and without a word, as if they all somehow knew where they must go. Rayford decided that whatever was to come, he wanted to be close enough to Chaim to ask questions. The others must have had the same idea, as they all stuck together despite the crowds.

“When you see My throne, join those on My right, your left.”

The words of Jesus were more than impressed on Rayford's heart. He had actually heard them. He moved to his left without question, and as waves of people moved both directions, suddenly the view before Rayford became clear. Directly below and centered under the vast heavenly hosts, saints, and angels, a great platform bore a throne on which Jesus sat. Behind Him stood the three angels of mercy. On either side of Him stood the archangels Michael and Gabriel.

Rayford knew instinctively that every living person on earth was gathered in that valley.

Chaim explained: “Half a billion or more were raptured seven years ago. Half the remaining population was killed during the Seal and Trumpet Judgments during the next three and a half years. Many more were lost during the Vial Judgments, and millions of believers were martyred. What you are looking at is probably only one-fourth of those who were left after the Rapture. And most of these will die today.”

Indeed, Rayford realized, those assembling on Jesus' right were scant compared to those on His left.

It took most of the morning for the masses to find their places and settle. To Rayford it appeared that those to Jesus' left were puzzled at best, frightened at worst.

Gabriel stepped to the front of the platform and stretched out his arms for silence. “Worship the King of kings and Lord of lords!” he shouted, and as one the millions on both sides of the throne fell to their knees. In a cacophony of languages and dialects they cried out, “Jesus Christ is Lord!”

Those on the left of Jesus began rising to their feet, while all around Rayford, everyone remained kneeling. “Clearly two different groups here, eh, Chaim?”

“Actually three,” the old man said. “Those are the ‘goats’ over there, the followers of Antichrist who somehow survived to this point. You are among the ‘sheep’ on this side, but I represent the third group. I am part of Jesus' ‘brethren,’ the chosen people of God

whom the sheep befriended. We are the Jews who will go into the Millennium as believers, because of people like you.”

Gabriel was gesturing that all should stand. When everyone was in place and quiet, he spoke in a loud voice:

“John the revelator wrote: ‘I saw an altar, and underneath it all the souls of those who had been martyred for preaching the Word of God and for being faithful in their witnessing.

“‘They called loudly to the Lord and said, ‘O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before You judge the people of the earth for what they’ve done to us? When will You avenge our blood against those living on the earth?’”

“‘White robes were given to each of them, and they were told to rest a little longer until their other brothers, fellow servants of Jesus, had been martyred on the earth and joined them.’

“People of the earth, hearken your ears to me! The time has been accomplished to avenge the blood of the martyrs against those living on the earth! For the Son of Man has come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and He will now reward each according to his works! As it is written, ‘At that time, when I restore the prosperity of Judah and Jerusalem,’ says the Lord, ‘I will gather the world into the ‘Valley Where Jehovah Judges’ and punish them there for harming My people, for scattering My inheritance among the nations and dividing up My land.

“‘They divided up My people as their slaves; they traded a young lad for a prostitute, and a little girl for wine enough to get drunk.’”

The group to Jesus’ left immediately fell to their knees again and began shouting and wailing, “Jesus Christ is Lord! Jesus Christ is Lord!”

Jesus stood and walked to the edge of the platform.

With anger and yet sadness, He said, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.”

The millions began shouting and pleading, “Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?”

Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me. You will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

“No! No! No!”

But despite their numbers and the dissonance of their bawling, Jesus could be heard above them. “As the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”

“We honor You! We do! You are Lord!”

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

“But My Father has given Me authority to execute judgment also, because I am the Son of Man. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is

righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.”

“Jesus is Lord!” the condemned shouted. “Jesus is Lord!”

Gabriel stepped forward as Jesus returned to the throne. “Silence!” Gabriel commanded. “Your time has come!”

Rayford watched, horrified despite knowing this was coming, as the “goats” to Jesus’ left beat their breasts and fell wailing to the desert floor, gnashing their teeth and pulling their hair. Jesus merely raised one hand a few inches and a yawning chasm opened in the earth, stretching far and wide enough to swallow all of them. They tumbled in, howling and screeching, but their wailing was soon quashed and all was silent when the earth closed itself again.

Everyone on the platform moved back into place, and from the throne Jesus said, “Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, and as I have purposed, so it shall stand.”

Gabriel came forward again. He said, “God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

“Through Him you have received grace. You also are the called of Jesus Christ; grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In His gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’

“The wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppressed the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God was manifest in them, for God had shown it to them.

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes were clearly seen, being understood by the things that were made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

“Amen!” the assembled shouted.

“These who have been cast into outer darkness and await the Great White Throne Judgment a thousand years hence were indeed without excuse. God sent His Holy Spirit as on the Day of Pentecost, plus the two preachers from heaven who proclaimed His gospel for three and a half years, plus 144,000 witnesses from the twelve tribes. Endless warnings and acts of mercy were extended to these who continued to be lovers of themselves rather than of God.”

It hit Rayford that all who were left were believers, worshipers of Christ, and that he himself was among those who would populate the millennial kingdom.

Gabriel gestured that everyone should sit. When all were situated, he smiled broadly and pronounced loudly, “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.

“The Mighty One, God the Lord, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God will shine forth. Our God has come, and shall not keep silent; He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people!”

With that Jesus stood, and Gabriel moved to stand behind the throne with the other angles. And Jesus said, “Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice! Come forth!”

From everywhere, from the earth and beyond the clouds, came the souls of those who had died in faith, whom Chaim and Tsion had often referred to as “the believing dead” and whom Rayford knew now also included Tsion himself—along with many more of Rayford’s friends and loved ones.

Jesus began by honoring the saints of the Old Testament, those Rayford had only heard and read about. Rather than handling this the way He had the individual audiences with the tribulation saints—supernaturally dealing with them all in what seemed an instant—Jesus this time gave the spectators His strength and patience. The ceremony must have gone on for days, Rayford eventually decided, but he felt neither hunger nor thirst, no fatigue, not even an ache or a cramp from sitting in the sand that long. He loved every minute, knowing that when Jesus finished with the Old Testament saints, he would get to the tribulation martyrs. Waiting for his friends and loved ones to be recognized would be akin to waiting for Chloe’s name to be called when she graduated from high school, but the reunion afterward would make it all worthwhile.

He glanced at his watch every few hours and realized how long it had taken to cover most of the Old Testament saints. Many he had never heard of—either he had not studied enough or these were some whose exploits had not been recorded. And yet God knew. He knew their hearts, knew of their sacrifice, knew of their faith. And one by one Jesus honored them as He embraced them and they knelt at His feet, and He said, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

As they came to Him one by one, Jesus said, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to My Father must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”

There was Noah, humbly kneeling, receiving his reward. Jesus said, “By faith, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, you moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of your household, by which you condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

Hours later it seemed everyone roused when it was Abraham’s turn. Jesus said, “By faith you obeyed when you were called to go out to the place you would receive as an inheritance. And you went out, not knowing where you were going. By faith you dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with you of the same promise; for you waited for the city which had foundations, whose builder and maker was God.”

Sarah was right behind him, and Jesus said to her, “By faith you yourself also received strength to conceive seed, and you bore a child when you were past the age, because you judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, your husband, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.”

Jesus addressed the spectators. “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore I am not ashamed to be called their God, for I am preparing a city for them.

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead.”

Later Jacob approached the throne, and Jesus said, “By faith, when you were dying, you blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of your staff.”

And behind him, Joseph. Jesus told him, “By faith you, when you were dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning your bones.”

All around, Jews began to stand. Soon everyone was on their feet. Moses himself was kneeling at the feet of Jesus with a man and a woman, and the Lord embraced them and said, “Well done, good and faithful servants. By faith, when your son was born, you hid him three months, because you saw he was a beautiful child; and you were not afraid of the king’s command.

“And you, Moses, when you became of age, by faith refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasure of sin, esteeming My reproach greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for you looked to the reward. By faith you forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for you endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

“By faith you kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

“By faith you led My children through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned.”

A woman knelt before Jesus. He said, “By faith, Rahab, you did not perish with those who did not believe, because you received My spies with peace.”

When all the heroes of the Old Testament, including Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also David and Samuel and the prophets had been honored, Jesus stood and said, “These through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

“Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

“Still others had trial of mocking and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

“And all these obtained a good testimony through faith.”

“It might be a little late to be asking this, Chaim,” Rayford said, “but what kind of a

relationship will I have with Irene now? And Amanda. I know that's the kind of question Jesus was asked when the Pharisees were trying to trip Him up, but I sincerely need to know."

"All I can tell you is what Jesus said. 'In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age'—meaning this time period right now—'and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage.' I cannot make it any plainer than that."

"So only the people who reach the Millennium alive will marry and have children."

"Apparently."

Rayford also looked forward to meeting his heroes from the Old Testament. "We *do* get to interact with those guys, don't we?"

"Absolutely," Chaim said. "In Matthew 8:11 Jesus says, 'Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.' "

But for now the Old Testament saints were not mingling. They too had become spectators, because the multitude that no man could number was lined up at the throne, awaiting their rewards.

"Those who were killed for the testimony of Jesus," Chaim said, "which pretty much covers any believer who died during the Tribulation, will be honored. But those who were actually martyred will be given a special crown."

Gabriel stepped forward one more time and announced, "John the revelator wrote, 'And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus, for proclaiming the Word of God, and who had not worshiped the Creature or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They had come to life again and now they reigned with Christ for a thousand years.' "

Chaim's assessment proved accurate. Somehow the Lord arranged it so that only those who knew each tribulation saint witnessed them getting their reward. So, rather than Rayford's having to wait through the ceremonies for a million or two strangers to see a friend or loved one, as soon as the festivities began, Bruce Barnes approached the throne.

"Bruce!" Rayford called out, unable to restrain himself, and he stood and applauded. All around him others were doing the same, but they were calling out other names. "Aunt Marge!" "Dad!" "Grandma!"

After Rayford witnessed the honoring of many old friends and acquaintances and loved ones, finally there was Chloe, and right behind her Buck and Tsion. Rayford kept shouting and clapping as his daughter, son-in-law, and spiritual adviser received their *well-done*, their embrace, and their martyr's crown. The entire heavenly host applauded each martyr.

Of Chloe, Jesus said, "You too suffered the guillotine for My name's sake, speaking boldly for Me to the end. Wear this for eternity."

Of Buck he said, "You and your wife gave up a son for My sake, but he shall be returned to you, and you shall be recompensed a hundredfold. You will enjoy the love of the children of others during the millennial kingdom."

Jesus took extra time with Tsion Ben-Judah, praising him for "your bold worldwide proclamation of Me as the Messiah your people had for so long sought, the loss of your family—which shall be restored to you—your faithful preaching of My gospel to millions

around the world, and your defense of Jerusalem until the moment of your death. Untold millions joined Me in the kingdom because of your witness to the end.”

Rayford enjoyed Jesus’ welcome to dozens of others whose names he had forgotten, underground believers in various countries who had worked through the co-op, hosted Trib Force people, and sacrificed their lives in defense of the gospel.

Only by the miraculous work of God through Jesus, the honoring of more than two hundred million tribulation martyrs and saints was suddenly over. Jesus stood at the front edge of the vast platform and spread His arms, as if to encompass the mighty throng of souls, most with glorified bodies, the rest mere mortals who had survived the Tribulation.

“I will declare the decree,” He said. “The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’

“Now therefore, I say be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

“I welcome you, one and all, to the kingdom I have prepared for you. Rayford, welcome.”

“Thank You, Lord.”

How anyone found anyone else in the endless mass of souls was a miracle in itself. Rayford saw Chaim making a beeline to Tsion, who was already in the embrace of his wife and two children. Albie and Mac were laughing and shouting and hugging.

There were Buck and Chloe running to Kenny as he ran to them.

And seemingly out of nowhere, at Rayford’s elbow stood Irene. One thing he could say for the glorified body: She looked herself, and as if she had not aged. Indeed, she looked younger. No way could she say the same for him.

“Hi, Rafe,” she said, smiling.

“Irene,” he said, holding her. “You’re permitted one cosmic I-told-you-so.”

“Oh, Rayford,” she said, stepping back as if to get a good look at him. “I’ve just been so grateful that you found Jesus and so thrilled at how many souls are here because of what you and Chloe and the others did.” She looked behind him. “Raymie,” she said, “come here.”

Rayford turned and there was his son, suddenly full grown. He scooped him in a tight embrace. “Even you knew the truth that I didn’t,” he said.

“I can’t tell you how great it is to see you here, Dad.”

Rayford pointed to Buck and Chloe and Kenny. “You know who that is?”

“Of course,” Irene said. “That’s my grandson—your nephew, Raymie.”

They approached shyly, but it was Buck who broke the ice as Chloe gathered in her parents. “So nice to meet you, finally,” he said, shaking his mother-in-law’s hand. “I’ve heard so much about you.”

As they laughed and hugged and praised God for each other and for their salvation, Amanda White Steele approached. “Rayford,” she said. “Irene.”

“Amanda!” Irene said, pulling her close. “Would you believe I prayed for you even after I was raptured?”

“It worked.”

“I know it did. And you and Rafe were happy for a time.”

“I was so afraid this would be awkward,” Rayford said.

“Not at all,” Irene said. “I didn’t begrudge you a good wife and companionship. I was so thrilled that you both had come to Jesus. You’re going to find that He is all that matters now.”

“And I,” Amanda said, “am just so happy you made it through the Tribulation, Rayford.” She turned back to Irene and took her arm. “You know, your witness and character were the reasons I came to the Lord.”

“I knew that was your testimony,” Irene said. “But I hadn’t recalled making any impression on you.”

“I don’t think you tried. You just did.”

Rayford had the feeling that his family would be close, affectionate friends throughout the Millennium. He didn’t understand it all yet, in fact hardly any of it. But he had to agree with Irene: Jesus was all that mattered anymore. There would be no jealousy, envy, or sin. Their greatest joy would be in serving and worshiping their Lord, who had brought them to Himself.

The Seventy-Five-Day Interval

Daniel 12:11-12 indicates a seventy-five-day interval between the glorious appearing of Christ on earth and the start of the thousand-year kingdom: “And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days.”

Jesus returns at the end of the “seventieth week” (Daniel 9:24-27), which is divided into halves of 1,260 days each. A careful reading of the entire chapter of Daniel 12 tells us that Christ’s return occurs at the end of the second set of 1,260 days.

Daniel 12:11 speaks of something accomplished at the end of 1,290 days—thirty days beyond the Glorious Appearing. As the verse deals with temple sacrifices and the “abomination of desolation,” it is safe to conclude that the first thirty-day interval relates to the temple. Ezekiel 40–48 tells us that the Lord will establish a temple during the Millennium, thus the thirty days will likely be when He accomplishes that.

Daniel 12:12 tells of those “blessed” who reach 1,335 days, which adds another forty-five days to the interval. The “blessed” are qualified to enter the thousand-year messianic kingdom.

From this we conclude that the seventy-five-day interval is a time of preparation of the temple and for the kingdom. Because so much of the earth will have been destroyed during the judgments of the Tribulation, and because the earth will have been leveled except for the area surrounding Jerusalem, it seems logical that the Lord would renovate His creation in preparation for the kingdom.

The Millennial Kingdom

While most everything our fictional heroes experienced during the Tribulation would be different after the Glorious Appearing, a few things will remain the same. As in the days before the Rapture and the Tribulation, the sun will rise in the east and set in the west. But what a sun! It will be so bright that people will have to wear sunglasses any time they are outside, twenty-four hours a day. The Scriptures foretell this in Isaiah 30:26: “Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold.” It should not be beyond speculation that these orbs will be supercharged by the Shekinah glory of Christ.

With the moon as bright as the sun is now, people will have to get used to sleeping while it is light outside.

And everyone will speak Hebrew fluently, even if they are unaware of knowing a word of it. In Zephaniah 3:9, the Lord said, “For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord.”

Hardly anything else, however, will remind anyone of the past. Those who had died and been in heaven with Jesus will recount for the others stories of the spectacular marriage of the Lamb.

Everyone will be assigned temporary housing until Jesus reconstructs the earth. Eventually they will build their own dwellings, but first they will occupy countless structures left empty by the “goat” judgment.

During the seventy-five-day interval that precedes the thousand-year reign of Christ, Jesus will set about re-creating Eden on earth. As the second person of the triune Godhead, long before Jesus first came to earth in human form, He had created the entire earth in six days, merely speaking into being everything that existed.

Between the Tribulation and the Millennium, it appears He will be content to take His time. Jesus will have as His canvas an entire globe that has been shaken flat—except Israel. Around the world, debris from the planetary earthquake will lie hundreds, sometimes thousands, of feet deep. Rock, foliage, buildings, and water will create a residue that coats the earth, leaving everything at sea level. That means, naturally, that in some places the altitude of the sea will have increased with the leveling of mountains. In others, the sea will disappear under new landmasses.

The only place elevated will be the Holy City itself, where the Mount of Olives will have been rent in two and Jerusalem raised hundreds of feet. How appropriate that the new, holy capital of the world should stand high above all other cities and nations, more than a thousand feet high and gleaming, pristine, and ready to be redesigned and decorated for and by the Lord Jesus Himself. Every day the landscape will change as full-grown greenery appears.

Do you ever wonder whether this thousand years that precedes the new heaven and the new earth might be boring? Yes, Jesus will be there, He whom we all have longed to see and worship in person ever since we became believers. But with only the like-minded there—at least initially—what will everyone do? Sit around and worship?

Perhaps. But imagine euphoria that shows no sign of abating. We’ll feel full of the glory and presence of God through Jesus. In our current lives, we are aware of our sin and lowliness. But in the presence of Jesus, the contrast between us and our Savior will be even starker.

Perhaps Jesus will not allow us to dwell on that. Every moment should be filled with joy and wonder and worship, as Jesus continually impresses upon our hearts that He died for us, arose for us, and is preparing a place for us. The Millennium will be all about Jesus, worshipping the Lamb who was slain and now lives forevermore.

The newly developing city of Jerusalem will see its boundaries expanded to accommodate the new temple eighteen miles north of the city, near Shiloh. It will be massive. A paved causeway will lead all the way from Jerusalem to the new temple, where the courtyard alone will be larger than the Old City had been, more than a mile square. The holy neighborhood for the priests and Levites will encompass an area forty by fifty miles, more than six times the size of greater London and ten times the circumference of the original ancient, walled city.

The reason for this immensity is that the millennial temple will be the only temple, and the entire population of the earth will make use of it at one time or another. Daily during the seventy-five-day interval will come reports of vast creations throughout the rest of the world. Entire continents will become lush and green with rich, black soil extending down hundreds of feet to seas of pure water that spring up to irrigate the land.

As the vast new temple grows each day in the distance, so will the pristine farmlands and orchards throughout the world.

Jesus will be ever present, physically in the city of Jerusalem, soon occupying the temple and retaking the throne of David. The nations will have been granted to Him as an inheritance, and He is to rule the world with an iron rod. People will occupy themselves planting and harvesting and building their own homes.

During the seventy-five day-interval between the Glorious Appearing and the actual start of the millennial kingdom, every day, everywhere we look will bear the divine handiwork of Christ. Everything will be perfect, from the plants and shrubs and trees to the grasses and fields and orchards. The earth will teem with produce and animals of all kinds.

Strangely, all of us will lose any desire to eat meat. Animals will no longer be our meat. Our sustenance will come from the bounty of the trees and bushes and vines and from what we ourselves harvest from the earth. God says, "Be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying. No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.

"They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit; they shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat. For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them" (Isaiah 65:18-24).

As for what prayer will be like in that day, the Lord says, "Before they call I will answer; and while they are still speaking I will hear" (Isaiah 65:25).

You may be a stellar student or an athlete or even a bit of a techie, but you will not have to be good with your hands. You may not be a gardener let alone a farmer, and perhaps you always pay to have carpentry, wiring, or plumbing done around the house.

But in that day God will plant within you the desire—and the acumen—to do all those things yourself. On the first day of the Millennium, you will exercise new muscles, new ideas. You will plant vast acres, tend massive orchards, and build houses. All the knowledge, and the desire, will be poured into you.

You will meet for worship and praise with friends and loved ones, joined by new acquaintances of all colors and nationalities. Some will be compelled to tend animals, and not just tame ones. You will need fear no creature anymore, as “the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together” (Isaiah 11:6).

ONE

Rayford Steele had to admit that the first time he saw a bear and then a leopard moving about in public, something niggled at him to keep his distance, to not show fear, to make no sudden movements. But when he saw the bear and the cat cooperate to climb a tree and make a meal of leaves and branches, he was emboldened to trust God for the whole promise. It wasn't just he who had become a vegetarian. It was true of all former carnivores.

Rayford moved quietly to the trunk of the tree and watched the animals cavort and eat. And when a branch fell, he himself tasted the leaves. He enjoyed fruit and vegetables more, but he could see what the creatures found in the plants. He trusted Christ to calm him when the great leopard leaped down and nuzzled his leg the way a house cat would, purring, then sitting to rest.

As for the bear, it ignored him and stretched out beside the big cat. Talk about a whole new world. . . .

Rayford deduced that the sun was brighter without being hotter, because Tsion Ben-Judah taught that its light was somehow enhanced by the ever-present glory of Jesus. A simple contraption out in the open allowed Rayford to concentrate the light through a magnifier and heat vegetables he and Irene and Raymie had gathered for a special feast. Irene had made butter from milk she had collected from a cow, so when everyone had assembled, they were met with steaming piles of fresh produce, drenched in butter.

And when they had eaten their fill, they retired outside to hear Irene's account of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

* * *

Like everyone else, Cameron Williams was fascinated with all that had gone on and what was yet to come. Of course, as a late martyr, he had spent very little time in heaven—just long enough to reunite with his wife, Chloe, and look forward to seeing their son back on earth at the Glorious Appearing. Now he anticipated the special dinner where his mother-in-law was to tell yet another story of Jesus.

No one called Cameron *Buck* now, because, he said, “there's nothing to buck here.” And strange about Cameron and Chloe's relationship was that they still loved each other, but not romantically. Their entire hearts' desires were on the person of Jesus and

worshiping Him for eternity. In the Millennium, they would live and labor together with Kenny and raise him, but as there would be no marrying or giving in marriage, their relationship would be wholly platonic.

“It’s bizarre,” Chloe told Cameron. “I still love and admire and respect you and want to be near you, but it’s as if I’ve been prescribed some medicine that has cured me of any other distracting feelings.”

“And somehow that doesn’t insult me,” Cameron said. “Does my feeling the same offend you?”

She shook her head. Her mind, like his, must have been on Jesus and whatever He had for them for the rest of time and eternity.

“Do you realize, Chlo’, that we still have to raise Kenny in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and see to it that he decides for Christ?”

Only true believers and innocents had survived the Tribulation and the sheep-and-goats judgment to make it into the kingdom. “How many children of the Tribulation must there be,” Chloe said, “who still have to choose Christ over living for themselves?”

“Children of the Tribulation,” Cameron said. “I like that.”

“God has been impressing on me that Kenny will be only one of many children in our charge.”

“Me too, Chloe. I find that amazing.”

As they talked, it became clear that the Lord had shown them both that their recompense for giving their lives and—in essence—losing their son for a time because of that would be the blessing of a hundredfold more children to love. Cameron could only imagine where these children would come from, but his old mentor Tsion Ben-Judah reminded him that “a hundredfold” in the Scriptures very likely meant many more than a hundred.

“I cannot imagine the havoc unbelievers could wreak in this new world. I hope God grants us the strength to do with them what He wants.”

“Oh, you know He will.”

One morning Cameron was praising Jesus with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs when he noticed Kenny was not playing alone. Half a dozen other kids—all seven or under, of course, because youngsters alive at the time of the Rapture had been taken and returned as grown-ups at the Glorious Appearing—had joined him and were getting acquainted.

In a flash it came to Cameron to call this group COT (Children of the Tribulation), and as negative as the name sounded, it didn’t grate on him. It was merely fact. Here were representative children born after the Rapture who had survived to enter the kingdom. As the thousand years progressed, of course, kids would be born who could still be called children of the Tribulation, because someone in their ancestry had to have lived through it.

When Cameron rushed out to greet them, it was as if they knew he was coming. They immediately quit running and jumping and playing and sat in a semicircle, looking up at him expectantly.

They’re ready. Am I?

“I’m Cameron,” he said.

A boy raised his hand. “So, start telling us all about Jesus. She can tell us too.”

Cameron glanced behind him to find Chloe, who had also apparently been drawn to

the kids.

“Lord, where do I start?” Cameron prayed silently.

“In the beginning,” Jesus told him. “Where we always start.”

“But surely these kids know the basics.”

“Start at *your* beginning. They don’t know you. They know only that they’re to listen. And be prepared. Tomorrow there will be more.”

Cameron sat in the grass, and two youngsters immediately climbed into his lap. Others leaned against Chloe.

“I had heard about God and Jesus all my life,” Cameron began, and he was struck by the lack of fidgeting and distraction. These kids hung on his every word. “But I never really gave faith a serious thought until seven years ago, when I found myself on an airplane bound for England in the middle of the night. . . .”