

The Millennium (4)

The OT contains many promises, some of which are national and some of which are individual. The vast majority of OT promises of future blessing were given to the nation as a whole. These promises were eternal and unconditional and will be fulfilled by the nation itself.

For example, the **new covenant** (Jeremiah 31.31-34), which enlarges the promises of blessing found in the original **Abrahamic covenant**, will be fulfilled by the conversion of the nation at the Second Advent of Christ. *Romans 11.26-27: And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.*

There are, however, many individual promises and hopes contained within the OT. There was the hope of:

- **Resurrection.** *Daniel 12.2: And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.* See also Isaiah 26.19-20, Daniel 12.13, Hosea 13.14, Job 19.25-27. This resurrection and reward will take place at the Second Advent (cf. Revelation 11.18).
- **Judgment and Reward.** *Isaiah 40.10: Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him.* See also Ezekiel 11.21, 20.33-44, 22.17-22, Daniel 12.3, Zechariah 3.7, 13.9, Malachi 3.16-18, 4.1.

It seems that the national promises of future blessing will be fulfilled **at** the time of, and **in** the millennium on **earth**. Individual promises will be fulfilled **at** the time of the millennium, but not necessarily **in** the millennial earth. It is worth remembering that the millennium's purpose is to display the rule of heaven through the Lord Jesus on earth and comprise the final test of mankind under the most ideal of circumstances. Resurrected individuals do not need this testing, neither need to be brought into subjection to the King. They therefore have no rightful place on the earth at this time as this is not God's purpose for the millennial earth.

The Hope of the OT Saints

It is not until we come to the NT that there is a more specific outline of the OT individual's hope: *Hebrews 11.10: For he (Abraham) looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Abraham's hope centred on a city. This was not only Abraham's hope, but also that of other OT saints. *Hebrews 11.16: But now they (those of faith in Hebrews 11) desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.* This same city is further described in Hebrews 12.22-23 where it is called the 'city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem'. It is also called 'Jerusalem which is above' (Galatians 4.26), 'the city of my (Christ's) God' (Revelation 3.12), the 'holy city, new Jerusalem' (Revelation 21.2) and 'that great city, the holy Jerusalem' (Revelation 21.10). This city is the realisation of all the hopes of the church and is likely that to which the Lord Jesus referred in *John 14.2: In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

The Inhabitants of the City

Hebrews 12.22-23: But ye have come to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, the universal gathering; and to the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven; and to God, judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect. Believers are said to have 'come' (or entered into its membership) to mount Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem. Here, there is a festive (note the contrast with Sinai), universal gathering of myriads of angels (cf. Deuteronomy 33.2, Galatians 3.19, Revelation 5.11).

This city is said to be occupied by the 'church (or assembly) of the firstborn'. The word 'church' is *ekklesia*, a 'called out company' and the usual word for church or assembly in the NT (cf. Matthew 16.18, Acts 2.47, 1 Corinthians 1.2). The word 'firstborn' is often used in the singular of the Lord Jesus (cf. Colossians 1.15, 18), but here it is in the plural and better reads 'firstborn ones'. This assembly of the 'firstborn ones' is the Church of the NT whose names are enrolled in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3.20, cf. Luke 10.20).

The city is also occupied by the 'spirits of just men made perfect' This describes the souls of righteous men and women who have already died (cf. Hebrews 10.14). These are the OT saints, the great company represented by the men and women of faith of Hebrews 11. They are 'perfect' in their present state (not resurrected) because nothing is lacking in their relationship with God (cf. Hebrews 10.14). They enjoy His presence in the city.

That there is a distinction between the OT saints and the believers of the Church age is seen in *Hebrews 11.39-40*: *And these all, having obtained a good report through faith (OT saints), received not **the** promise: God having provided some better thing for us (NT saints), that they **without us** should not be made **perfect***. OT saints received many particular promises in their lifetime (e.g. Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Hebrews 11), but they did not receive 'the' promise, that of a coming Messiah who would bring the blessing of eternal life in a 'better heavenly country' or the 'city' (Hebrews 11.10). This was not their own fault, but rather it was in the master plan of God. He had something better planned for our day (Hebrews 7.19, 22, 8.6, 9.23), and it was His plan that they should not reach perfection (completion in the sense of their resurrected bodies and the promised city, cf. Luke 13.32) without us. God must gather together all things in Christ. The first resurrection must be completed. God must gather His family together into the heavenly fold before the Kingdom festivities commence.

So here is a picture of the heavenly city, and the completed company of the people of God: the resurrected and translated Church and the resurrected OT and tribulation saints. This is supported by verses in *Revelation 21.12-14*: *And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*. Here again is reference to angels, the twelve tribes of the children of Israel (OT saints) and the twelve apostles (NT saints). Note. This is not where the living saints who are on earth will dwell during the millennium. They will look to the rebuilt, earthly Jerusalem as their capital city.

The first resurrection includes all individuals who are raised to eternal life. *Revelation 20.6*: *Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years*. Those who have part in this resurrection include believers from the church age, OT believers and the tribulation saints. All will not be raised at the same time, but all have part in this first resurrection. As all who have part in this resurrection 'shall reign' with Christ 'a thousand years' it seems likely that they have a common destiny, the New Jerusalem, from which they will be associated with the reigning Christ. We shall not, however, be completely dissociated from the millennial age (cf. Matthew 19.27-28, 1 Corinthians 6.2). The Apostles will sit as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel and the saints shall judge the world.

It is possible that this city will find its location in heaven, somewhere above Mount Zion, during the millennium (Hebrews 12.22). It will be clearly visible to the earth as heaven will be opened in that day (John 1.51, Revelation 19.11). Scripture does describe the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven at the beginning of the Eternal State. *Revelation 21.2*: *And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*. This verse does not suggest that the city is the Bride, nor does it suggest that it is not a literal city. The idea is that the city is as beautiful and radiant as a bride on her wedding day, and so it ever remains! It is clear, though, that the bride, the Lamb's wife, has a unique and privileged place within this city (Revelation 21.9).

Resident within the city is God, Christ and the Holy Spirit as it is referred to as the habitation and temple of God (Revelation 21.3, 22). As God dwells with his people, sorrow, death, crying and pain will be abolished in fellowship with Him (Revelation 21.4). There will be the full enjoyment of eternal life, and the satisfaction of spiritual longing symbolised by the 'fountain of the water of life' (Revelation 21.6) and 'river of the water of life' which flows from the throne 'of God and of the Lamb' (Revelation 22.1). On each side of this river is found 'the tree of life' (Revelation 22.2). This tree was found in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3.22, 24) but was kept from Adam. If he had eaten of it in his sinful state, he would have lived forever in a sinful body. Now there is free access to the tree which has leaves 'for the healing of the nations' (Revelation 22.2). This does not mean there will be sin or sickness in the Eternal State, but rather the leaves will be 'health-giving'. They will promote enjoyment of life, just as fruit does today. The city is described as being aglow with the glory of God (Revelation 21.11) and having twelve gates (Revelation 21.12) upon which are written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The wall of the city (speaking of security and separation) has twelve foundations, upon which are written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21.12-14). The number twelve speaks of perfect administration.

The city is astonishing not only in terms of appearance, but also size (Revelation 21.15-17). It is a cube (as the Holy of Holies, cf. 1 Kings 6.20) approximately 1,500 miles in height, length and breadth. The walls are 144 cubits thick (Revelation 21.17), equating to about 65-70m. In the Eternal State this city will presumably rest on the new earth (it has foundations) and people will come and go, as there are gates for entry and exit (Revelation 21.25). Many of the materials used within the city are translucent and therefore the light of God will penetrate every corner (Revelation 21.18-21). The city is marked by what it does **not** have. There is no temple, no tabernacle, no sacrificial rituals, no sun, moon or stars, no darkness, no closed gates and nothing that brings abomination. In this eternal state, we shall simply serve God (Revelation 22.3).