

# 36

## The Eternal Ages

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new...

And he said unto me, It is done...

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 21:1, 2, 5a, 6a; 22:1-5).

Revelation chapter twenty-one moves beyond the Millennium into the eternal ages. And the first six verses provide the complete story concerning conditions at the beginning of these ages, conditions which will be brought into existence at that time and continue to exist throughout the endless ages of eternity. This is seen in the text itself, along with the manner in which the passage closes in the first part of verse six.

Note the words, “It is done [*lit.*, ‘It has been done, completed, brought to pass’]” (v. 6a). These three words are the translation of one word in the Greek text, a verb in the perfect tense, indicating that the matter *has been brought to completion in time past and exists during present time in a finished state*.

This, for example, is the same verb tense used of Christ’s finished work at Calvary in John 19:30 (“It is finished [*lit.*, ‘It has been finished’]”), or of the Divinely finished work in man’s eternal salvation in Eph. 2:8 (“For by grace *are ye saved* through faith [*lit.*, ‘For by grace *you have been saved* through faith’].” In the perfect tense usage in the preceding respect, *nothing can either be added or taken away from that which exists in a finished state*.

The consummation of the whole of the matter throughout Man’s Day and the Lord’s Day — throughout 7,000 years — *will have been brought to pass*. God’s redemptive work throughout man’s 6,000-year day will be *past*; the Son’s 1,000-year reign will be *past*; and *the Son will have delivered the kingdom up to His Father*, that God might be “all in all [*lit.*, ‘all things in all of these things’]” I Cor. 15:24-28). And the manner in which conditions will exist in that day, seen in Rev. 21:1-5 immediately before the announcement is made that it has all been brought to pass (v. 6a), is *the way in which these conditions will exist throughout the endless ages to follow*.

Then, Rev. 21:9-22:5 — a parallel section of Scripture — presents the same scene from another vantage point, *with numerous details added*. And, rather than ending with the statement, “It is done [‘It has been brought to pass’],” as seen at the end of the first of these two parallel sections (21:6a), this second section ends with the statement, “and they shall reign forever and ever [*lit.*, ‘and they shall reign with respect to the ages of the ages’]” (22:5b). Viewing these two parallel sections together, *redeemed man will*

*reign throughout the endless ages of eternity, in the conditions which God will have brought to pass, as seen at the end of the first of these two parallel sections (21:1-6a).*

The new Jerusalem is extensively described in this second section (21:9-22:5). Within this description, “the tree of life” is brought to the forefront, and *the leaves of the tree* are said to be for “the healing of the nations” (22:2). And information concerning the tree of life and the healing of the nations (the Gentile nations) is placed between two statements concerning “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (vv. 1, 3). *Regality is seen throughout.*

### The Tree of Life

“The tree of life” is mentioned nine times in Scripture, in three different books — three times in Genesis (2:9; 3:22, 24), four times in Proverbs (3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4), and twice in the Book of Revelation (2:7; 22:2). But what was *the original purpose* for the tree of life (seen in Genesis), which will be realized yet future (seen in the Book of Revelation)?

*The tree of life* was one of the numerous trees in the garden in Eden. And Adam, with Eve, was commanded to eat of all these trees, with the exception of one — “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen. 2:9, 16, 17). Adam, the first man, had been created for the specific purpose of assuming *the rulership over the earth*, and the fruit of the tree of life was singled out as *a specific provision* for man as he exercised this rule.

An evident connection between man’s rule and his partaking of the tree of life can be seen by noting *the appearance of this tree* in the beginning when man was in a position to rule, *the absence of this tree* during the entire period when man is not in a position to rule (aside from the tree being referenced in Proverbs), and *the reappearance of this tree* in the Book of Revelation when man will be brought back into a position to rule (*cf.* Gen. 1:26-28; Rev. 2:26,27). The period during which man has been barred from eating of the tree of life *began* following Adam’s fall, resulting in his disqualification to rule; and this period will *end* following the issues of the judgment seat, at which time man will once again

find himself in a position to rule.

Adam, following the fall, was driven from the garden to prevent his partaking of the tree of life. Adam could not be permitted to eat of this tree in a fallen condition, for had such occurred, Adam, in a fallen state, would have realized that which fruit from this tree was meant to provide. Thus, not only did God remove Adam from the garden, but “Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way,” were placed at “the east of the garden...to keep the way of the tree of life [to prevent fallen man from reentering the garden and partaking of this tree]” (Gen. 3:22-24).

Studying Gen. 3:22-24 apart from the context and related Scripture could lead one to believe that the purpose for the tree of life in the beginning, in Genesis, was to provide perpetuity of life for Adam in his unfallen state. However, such could not have been the case at all. “Death” *did not* enter into the picture until *after* Adam’s sin (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:6ff; cf. Rom. 6:23), at which time he was barred from the tree of life.

Adam had lived in an *undying state* prior to his sin, as he continued to live in an antithetical *dying state* following his sin; and to say that the tree of life was given to Adam in his unfallen state to provide perpetuity of life, preventing death, cannot possibly be correct. Nor could it possibly be correct to say that the tree of life would have had anything to do with providing *physical life* (*keeping Adam alive physically*) following the fall. A tree can produce *only* “after his kind” (Gen. 1:11, 12). In this respect, *fruit* from the tree of life simply *could not have produced one result before man’s fall and another following man’s fall*.

In Rev. 2:7, partaking of the tree of life has been promised to the overcomers from among those *already possessing eternal life*. Consequently, in this passage, the tree of life can have nothing whatsoever to do with perpetuity of life; and it is the same in the Genesis account when man was first brought upon the scene to rule and to reign.

The tree of life in both Genesis chapters two and three and Revelation chapter two appears in a different setting entirely. The tree of life reserved for Christians in Rev. 2:7 is associated peculiarly with a provision *for those who will rule and reign as co-heirs with Christ*; and viewing Adam’s position in the Genesis

account — created *to rule and reign*, in possession of an unending life, with the fruit of the tree of life at his disposal — the same thought concerning *regality in connection with the tree of life* would hold true. Thus, Adam in a fallen state, *no longer in a position to rule*, could not be allowed to eat of the tree of life, for fruit from this tree would provide “life” in relation to *regality*.

This whole overall thought concerning the tree of life in Scripture *would have to hold true*, for that seen relative to this tree in *Revelation chapter two* is drawn from that which was *first* seen relative to this tree in *Genesis chapters two and three*. The fruit of the tree of life *was in the past* (seen in the Book of Genesis) and *will be in the future* (seen in the Book of Revelation) a provision for the rulers in the kingdom. *This is an evident fact which must be recognized.*

And, as previously seen, the tree of life in that coming day will be for “the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:2). The Greek word translated “healing” is *therapeia*, from which the English word “therapy” is derived. This is a medical term which has to do with *restorative healing*. In that day God will *restore all of saved mankind to the original place which man occupied at the time of his creation*. And, consequently, *the whole of saved mankind, with regality in view, will have access to the tree of life.*

During the preceding Messianic Era, the tree of life will have been made available to overcoming Christians (Rev. 2:7), those ruling and reigning as co-heirs with Christ. And this tree will possibly be made available to certain others at this time as well, others occupying regal positions with Christ in His reign from the heavens over the earth (*e.g.*, certain Old Testament saints, Tribulation martyrs [Matt. 8:11, 12; Rev. 20:4-6]).

But following the Messianic Era, in the eternal ages, this tree is seen being made available to the nations of the earth, something which would have been completely out of place during the Millennium. And this will be an apparent end result of Israel’s evangelistic endeavors during the Millennium, along with Christ’s rule with a rod of iron during this time.

Man was created in the beginning *to rule and to reign*. And though only a part of saved mankind will have been brought back into a position to occupy the throne at the beginning of the

Millennium (with the tree of life made available to them at this time), at the end of the Millennium the whole of saved mankind will be brought back into this position (with the tree of life made available to them at this time).

(For additional information on *the tree of life* in the preceding respect, refer to the author's book, JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST [Revised Edition], Chapter V. Material in this chapter shows how the tree of life would have provided in the past [preceding man's fall] and will provide yet future [following God's redemptive work lasting six days, 6,000 years] the necessary *wisdom and knowledge* for man to rule and reign.)

### **Duration of Power and Authority**

Scripture clearly teaches that the exercise of governmental power and authority by Christ and His co-heirs will not end when the 1,000-year millennial day has run its course. Rather, the exercise of such power and authority will extend into and last throughout the eternal ages beyond the Millennium. But Scripture *does not teach* that this rule will continue *unchanged* into these eternal ages. To the contrary, Scripture teaches just the opposite. The rule by Christ and His co-heirs during the ages beyond the Millennium will be *quite different* than their rule during the Millennium.

#### *1) Christ's Throne*

Christ's throne is *eternal*, but not as a separate entity from the Father's throne. Conditions of this nature are millennial only (Heb. 1:8; Rev. 3:21; 22:1, 3). Christ, with His co-heirs, will reign from His Own throne until He has "put down all rule and all authority and power." Then, when "all things" have been subjected unto Christ (all regal powers, death rendered powerless), the kingdom will be delivered up "to God, even the Father," in order that "God may be all in all [that 'God may be all things in all of these things']" (I Cor. 15:24-28).

After Christ has delivered the kingdom up to His Father, after the new heavens and the new earth have been brought into existence, and after the new Jerusalem has come down "from God out of heaven," Christ will assume a position on a central throne with

His Father, called “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1, 3).

## 2) *Location of Christ's Throne*

During the Millennium, Christ's throne will be in the new Jerusalem positioned in the heavens above the present earth. During the eternal ages, “the throne of God and of the Lamb” will, likewise, be in the new Jerusalem; but the location of the new Jerusalem will be quite different. The present heavens and earth will be destroyed following the Millennium, and a new heavens and a new earth will be brought into existence.

During the eternal ages, the new Jerusalem will rest upon the new earth, and God Himself will reside therein, sitting on a throne, with His Son alongside. A rule from the heavens over the earth (millennial) will be a thing of the past, and “the throne of God and of the Lamb” will become the central point in the heavens of an eternal rule extending throughout the universe (*cf.* II Peter 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1ff).

## 3) *Manner of Christ's Rule*

During the Millennium, Christ and His co-heirs will rule the nations with “a rod of iron”; but a rule after this fashion would be out of place during the eternal ages. During the Millennium, absolute force will be used to bring and keep the nations under subjection; but such will be unnecessary during the eternal ages. Conditions on the new earth will be quite different than millennial conditions on the present earth. There will be no more sin, death, etc. (Rev. 21:1, 3, 4); and this will allow for numerous changes in the manner of the administration of governmental affairs.

Satan will be bound in the abyss during the Millennium, but at the conclusion of the Millennium he will be loosed for “a little season [‘short time’].” The rebellion evident among nations during the Millennium, necessitating the rule with “a rod of iron,” will be brought to a head at this time. The rebel nations will ally with Satan and under his banner march against Christ and the Jewish people in one final, vain, climactic thrust. The entire matter though will be speedily brought to an end through *fire* “from God out of heaven” (Rev. 20:7-9; *cf.* Ezek. 28:18b, 19).

Satan will then be cast into the lake of fire; the judgment of the unsaved dead from throughout Man's Day will occur, and they, as well, will be cast into the lake of fire; and the time for major changes will then be at hand (Rev. 20:10-15).

It will be at this time that the kingdom will be delivered up to the Father, the present heavens and earth will pass out of existence, the new heavens and new earth will come into existence, the new Jerusalem will descend from heaven to rest upon the new earth, and the throne of God and the throne of Christ will become *one throne* — “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” The nations will then dwell upon the new earth, with God Himself dwelling in their midst.

(God presently rules from a place in the heavens over the entire universe. Provinces throughout the universe are governed by appointed rulers [angels] who apparently exercise their delegated power and authority from places in the heavens in relation to the provinces being ruled [*e.g.*, Satan (an appointed provincial ruler) and his angels presently rule from a place in the heavens in relation to the earth (*cf.* Dan. 10:13-20; Eph. 2:2; 3:10; 6:11, 12)], and this structured rule would evidently be the same relative to provinces ruled by angels elsewhere in the universe [*i.e.*, ruled from places in the heavens in relation to the different provinces]. It is in this manner that “the heavens do rule” [beginning with God, the supreme Ruler over all].

During the Messianic Era, Christ and His co-heirs will exercise delegated power and authority over the earth from the same sphere in which Satan and His angels presently rule [seen in the typology of Saul and David, foreshadowing Satan and Christ; *ref.* Chapter XXXI, pp. 379, 380, in this book].

Then, during the eternal ages, the new earth will be *the place in the heavens from whence universal rule will emanate* [the new earth will be located in a heavenly place in relation to the entire universe, as God's present dwelling place is located in a heavenly place in relation to the entire universe].)

### **Crowns, Rewards — Millennial or Eternal**

Promises to Christians concerning crowns, rewards, etc. are to be realized during the millennial age rather than during the

eternal ages. Many conditions surrounding proffered positions with Christ will not exist during the eternal ages, as noted in previous comments concerning differences in Christ's reign during the Millennium and during the ages beyond.

(Note, for example, the overcomer's promises in Revelation chapters two and three. That these promises are *millennial only* in nature is made plain by several of the promises.

In the overcomer's promise to the Church in Smyrna, it is evident that death will exist during the Millennium [Rev. 2:11; cf. Rom. 8:13]; but this will not be the case beyond the Millennium, during the eternal ages [Rev. 21:1, 4]. In the overcomer's promise to the Church in Thyatira, ruling with "a rod of iron" is in view [2:26, 27]. And no such scene as this exists during the present dispensation; nor will such a scene exist during the eternal ages. Then, in the overcomer's promise to the Church in Laodicea, Christ's throne is in view. Christ is not seated on His Own throne today; nor will this throne exist separate from the Father's throne beyond the Millennium [cf. Heb. 1:13; Rev. 3:21; 22:1, 3].

Thus, it is plain that the things seen in the overcomer's promises in Revelation chapters two and three can be realized during *the Messianic Era alone*. They can have nothing to do with the eternal ages beyond the Millennium.)

This, however, *does not at all* teach that the reign of Christ and Christians will end at the conclusion of the Millennium. This only shows that their reign during the eternal ages will be *outside the scope* of these overcomer's promises and *quite different* than their reign during the preceding Millennium.

God's revelation to man concerns itself with "time" — *7,000 years of time* — from the creation of Adam to the end of the Messianic Kingdom. Very little is revealed about that which occurred before the creation of Adam, and very little is revealed about that which will occur beyond the Millennium. Scripture does reveal though that the reign of Christ and Christians will continue, and the length of this continuing reign is specifically stated to be "forever and ever [Gk., *eis tous aionas ton aionon*, 'with respect to the ages of the ages,' i.e., 'throughout the endless ages']" (Rev. 11:15; 22:3-5).

The activity of Christ and Christians in this continuing reign is

not revealed in so many words, but Scripture does present enough information that several observations can be made:

### 1) *Extent of Christ's Rule*

The rule of Christ itself during the eternal ages will no longer be limited to the earth. Rather, it will extend beyond the earth (the new earth), *out into the universe*.

Christ will be seated upon a throne from which there will be an administration of power and authority *throughout the universe* — “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1, 3); and the Christians’ continuing rule “with Christ” (Rev. 22:5) would have to be of a like nature, for the power will no longer emanate from *Christ's throne*, but from *the throne of God and of the Lamb*. In this respect, the rule by Christ and His co-heirs *over the earth* during the Millennium can only be extended to a rule *over worlds throughout the universe* following the Millennium.

### 2) *Millennial and Eternal Blessings*

To what extent though, if any, will rewards realized by overcoming Christians during the Millennium carry over into the eternal ages beyond? The question is really unanswerable.

The wiping away of all tears at the conclusion of the Millennium and the fact that the overcomer's promises are millennial only in nature would clearly indicate that distinctions which existed during the millennial age between overcoming and nonovercoming Christians will not exist during the eternal ages beyond the Millennium. But, to take matters beyond this point and say that *no rewards* exercised by overcoming Christians during the millennial age will extend over into the eternal ages following the Millennium (or have any bearing on the place which they will occupy following the Millennium) would be carrying matters beyond Scriptural grounds. Scripture simply does not deal with the matter.

And the position which man (all of saved mankind) will occupy in this universal rule is *unrevealed*, though, as previously seen, it appears clear that man's rule in that day will be *universal* since power will emanate from “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Possibly this rule will have to do with, or include, positions under

God over provincial rulers (angels) in the multiplied billions of provinces scattered throughout the multiplied billions of galaxies comprising the physical universe. But, again, we're not told. This is something yet to be revealed.

### All Things New

The Millennium *will not*, as many envision, be a time of *perfection*. Such a state awaits the first of the endless ages beyond the Millennium. *The restoration of all things* will occur before the Millennium, at the end of 6,000 years of time; but *all things being made new* awaits the completion of the Millennium, at the end of 7,000 years of time (*cf.* Acts 3:21; Rev. 21:5). *Only then will a perfect order exist in all of God's creation.*

As the present age (Man's Day) has a purpose, so will the millennial age (the Lord's Day); and *the ultimate goal of all* will be realized in the ages beyond. The rulers for the millennial age are being acquired during the present age; and during the millennial age these rulers will, as co-heirs with Christ, participate in the age-long work of bringing all things under subjection to Christ.

Such a work, brought to pass through a rule with "a rod of iron," anticipates the ages beyond the Millennium, in which a rule with "a rod of iron" will no longer be necessary; and the reason for man's creation will then be realized *in its fullest sense*.

Man will not only realize the reason for his creation during the Millennium but also during the eternal ages beyond the Millennium. Dominion will be restricted to this earth during the Millennium, but not so during the eternal ages after the new heavens and new earth have been brought into existence. Man's rule in that day can only extend into places throughout the multiplied billions of galaxies comprising the universe itself, and man will, in this manner, have access to the universe (something which will not be the case at all during the Millennium).

This is *the clear teaching* derived from Scriptures touching upon the subject.

