

Questions about Events in the “End Times”

Introduction

One of the concepts that is described in Scripture is the idea that there are two primary “ages” – or periods of time – during which people will live. The first of those ages is our *current age* - i.e., the period of time that we are living in now. The second age is the *age to come* – i.e., a period of time that will take place, in the *future*.

There are a number of passages in Scripture that mention *both* this current age, *and* the age to come. Here are just a few of them:

Matthew 12:32 (ESV):

³² And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.

Luke 18:30 (NIV):

²⁹ “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God ³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Ephesians 1:20-21 (ESV):

he [God] worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

A simple, overall "comparison" of these two basic ages is as follows:

- In this current age, sin is *extremely* prevalent everywhere; but in the age to come, there will be no sin *at all* – everyone will follow God completely.
- In this current age, people get injured, become sick and die; but in the age to come, there will be no injury, no sickness, and *no death* – people will live forever.
- In this current age, human governments exercise limited authority over the earth; but in the age to come, God Himself will have complete authority over the earth.

The “Transition” Periods

From my experience, there is broad agreement about the *existence* of the two basic ages, above – as well as about (most) of the general *properties* of those two ages. However, there is quite a bit of *disagreement* about the exact **events** that will occur, which will cause us to go *from* this current age, *into* the age to come. So, it seems useful to discuss some of the ideas, about *what* those events will be.

The first point to note is that it appears that the age to come does not begin *immediately* after the end of the current age. Instead, there appear to be several “transition” periods that occur, **in between** the current age and the age to come.

To be specific, there appear to be three distinct “transition periods”, between the current age and the age to come. I refer to those transition periods as follows:

- The “tribulation” period;
- The “messianic” period;
- The “short season” period

Some general information about these three “transition periods” follows below.

The Tribulation Period

First off, at the very end of this current age, a period of great “tribulation” is prophesied to occur. This period of time will entail *enormous* persecution and suffering – especially for Jews and Christians.

It appears that this tribulation period will last for a total of seven years. In addition, that during that period, a charismatic leader – who is an **enemy** of God and Christ – will come to power. This leader is referred to as “the man of lawlessness” and as “the beast”.

Interestingly, the term “the antichrist” is *not* explicitly used in reference to this leader. The word “antichrist” only appears in three verses in Scripture: 1 John 2:18, 1 John 2:22 and 1 John 4:3. The first two verses state that there are many antichrists, who are *already* here – and that an “antichrist” is **anyone** who denies that Jesus is the Christ. The last verse refers to the spirit of antichrist, which is **already** in the world.

Nevertheless, in the popular vernacular, the phrase “The Antichrist” refers to the leader during the tribulation period.

It appears that this leader’s authority will be somewhat limited during the first half of the tribulation period. However, in the *second* half of the tribulation – i.e., during the final “42 months” – this leader will obtain absolute authority over the earth. As a result, the second half of the tribulation will presumably entail much more suffering – and outright *evil* – than the first half.

The Messianic Period

At the end of the tribulation period, a new period begins – the “messianic” period. In this period, Jesus will return to the earth - and he will *end* the reign of the man of lawlessness. He will then rule over the earth for 1000 years, and his followers will *assist* him with that rule. Also note that Satan will be “imprisoned” during this period of time.

Some people contend that this period will not be a *literal* 1000 years – because the number “1000” is often used in a figurative sense in Scripture. In other words, Scripture sometimes uses the number 1000 to

mean “a very large number”. An example of this can be found in 2 Peter 3:8, which states “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day”.

In any case, whether the 1000 year duration is literal or not, there will certainly be a period of time in which Jesus, himself, will personally rule over the earth.

Another item to note is from what I can see, *most* of the references to “the future age”, which occur in the Old Testament, *actually* refer to the **messianic period**. In other words, most of the Old Testament prophecies about a “future, beneficial period of time” are actually referring to the **messianic period** - when Jesus rules the earth – *rather* than referring to the Age to Come, when God rules the earth. This is one reason why there are almost *no* references in the Old Testament to eternal life – because the vast majority of people will not obtain eternal life until the Age to Come (i.e., most people will still be *mortal* in the messianic period).

The “Little Season” Period

At the end of the messianic period, Satan will be released for a “little season”, or “short time”. We are not told exactly how long this period of time is; but presumably it is significantly *shorter* than the duration of the messianic period – since it is referred to as a “short” time. Of course, if the messianic period is 1000 years in duration, then the “short season” could easily be 100 years long (or more) – as 100 years is significantly shorter than 1000 years.

Scripture also tells us that during this little season, Satan will be able to convince an *extremely* large number of people to follow him – and to oppose Jesus. The reason why this is so remarkable is because this little season occurs *immediately* after the millennial reign of Jesus – when Jesus brings peace, prosperity and righteousness to the world.

To a certain extent, this is reminiscent of the accounts in Exodus. Basically, *some* of the Israelites rebelled against Moses, again and again - even *after* Moses had led them out of Egypt, and had performed many miracles for them (most notably the parting of the Red Sea).

In other words, it appears that some people will *consistently* rebel against God (and His agents) – no matter how obviously God manifests His power to them.

Seven Questions about the Transition Periods

As mentioned in the introduction, there is quite a bit of disagreement among Christian denominations, about *what* events will happen – and *when* they will occur – in between the two main “ages”. So, it is instructive to take a look at some of the events in question, and to see what ideas different Christian groups have about them. This will hopefully assist all of you in developing your own beliefs about the end time events.

Discussions about seven specific end times events are listed below. Each section is posed as a question, about the event in question.

Question 1: When will the rapture occur?

One of the most frequently discussed issues about the end times is the exact timing of the rapture. The term “rapture” does not occur in Scripture; but it is used as a reference to the event when Christians will be “gathered together” with Jesus. Basically, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15 state that when Jesus returns, he will first resurrect dead Christians, and give them immortal bodies. Then, he will transform the bodies of Christians who are still alive, so that they become immortal as well. Finally, all of those Christians will be gathered together with Jesus.

The biggest debate about this rapture involves **when** it occurs. In particular, the overall question is: when will the rapture occur, in reference to the *tribulation* period? There are three main beliefs about this question:

- The rapture will occur **before** the tribulation begins – i.e., a “pre-tribulation rapture”;
- The rapture will occur **halfway through** the tribulation – i.e., a “mid-tribulation rapture”;
- The rapture will occur **after** the tribulation is over – i.e., a “post-tribulation rapture”

In essence, the pre-tribulation rapture doctrine holds that immediately prior to the tribulation, Jesus will bring all Christians to **heaven**. As a result, all Christians will be safely ensconced in heaven, during the entire tribulation period – which means that Christians will not have to go through any of the suffering and persecution that occurs on the earth during that time.

The mid-tribulation rapture doctrine is similar to the pre-tribulation rapture – in that Jesus will take Christians to heaven. The main difference is that Christians are not taken to heaven until the “halfway point” of the tribulation – i.e., 3 1/2 years into the tribulation. This means that Christians will have to endure the first half of the tribulation, but not the second half. (As mentioned above, the second half of the tribulation – i.e., the final 42 months – will presumably be much worse than the first half.)

In contrast, the post-tribulation rapture doctrine holds that Christians will have to endure the *entire* tribulation – because the rapture does not occur until after the tribulation period is complete. In other words, in this doctrine, Christians do not “sit out” the tribulation at all – instead, Christians are in the middle of it, for the entire duration.

To put it briefly, it appears to me that the post-tribulation rapture doctrine is the closest to the truth. First of all, throughout the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles continuously warn Christians that they, *themselves*, are going to suffer many trials and persecution. As a result, the concept that Christians will be “exempt” from the tribulation does not appear to be consistent with Scripture – as the tribulation is the *ultimate* period of trials and persecution of Christians.

Even more importantly, the post-tribulation rapture appears to be supported by the events listed in Revelation. First, 1 Corinthians 15:52 states that dead Christians will be resurrected at the sound of the “**last** trumpet”. That wording implies that there were a *series* of trumpets that sounded – and that Christians will not be resurrected until the last one sounds. Interestingly, there is a series of seven trumpets listed in Revelation chapters 8, 9 and 11. The seventh - and last – of those trumpets is introduced as follows:

Revelation 11:15 (ESV):

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

This certainly appears to tell us that the seventh trumpet will not sound, *until* Jesus gains control over the world. Of course, that will not happen until *after* the tribulation is complete. So, if this seventh trumpet is also the “last trumpet” listed in 1 Corinthians 15:52, then the rapture definitely will not occur until after the tribulation – because the seventh trumpet sounds after the tribulation is complete.

Question 2: Will there be a peace treaty with Israel?

Another item that is frequently discussed is the belief that there will be a formal, international peace treaty with Israel, for the first half of the tribulation period. The initial evidence that is used for such a treaty is contained in Daniel chapter 9, especially verses 26 and 27:

Daniel 9:26-27 (NASB):

²⁶ Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end *will come* with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. ²⁷ And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations *will come* one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

Of course, that passage does not explicitly mention a formal peace treaty with Israel. However, it does state that a “covenant” – or agreement – is made among “many”. This would certainly seem to imply some sort of international treaty.

The passage also mentions the “prince who is to come”, who will “destroy the city and the sanctuary”. This prince presumably refers to the “man of lawlessness” – i.e., the ruler of the tribulation period. This same leader is also the person who will arrange the “covenant with the many” – which is evidently some type of peace treaty.

Also note that the “weeks” listed in that passage are evidently seven **years** long – rather than seven days long. This is indicated in many places, but especially in Revelation chapters 12 and 13. In those chapters, the *second half* of the tribulation – in which the leader persecutes believers - is listed as being 1,260 days long, and 42 months long, respectively. Of course, both 1,260 days and 42 months equal 3.5 years (with each month being the Jewish-standard 30 days). So, if 3.5 years is half of the tribulation, then the entire tribulation period will last 7 years – i.e., the tribulation “week” is seven years long.

The most interesting piece of information in the above passage, though, is that it states that in the “middle of the week”, this leader will put a stop to sacrifices and grain offerings. This definitely indicates that during the **first** half of that week (the first 3.5 years), sacrifices and grain offerings will be being made. Of course, in order for sacrifices and grain offerings to be made, the **temple** must exist in Jerusalem. In other words, the temple must be *rebuilt*, in order for sacrifices to be made again – because the temple is the final place that God appointed for sacrifices to be made.

The reason why this is important is because the place where the temple stood – the “temple mount” – currently has two *Islamic* structures built on it – the Dome of the Rock, and the al-Aqsa mosque. The Dome of the Rock, in particular, is located on the area where Scripture indicates that the temple must be built.

So, in order for the temple to be rebuilt, the Dome of the Rock must be moved (or demolished). Of course, that structure is the third holiest site in Sunni Islam; so any attempt to move that structure right now would undoubtedly result in an *enormous* outbreak of war – with Islamic countries launching full-scale invasions of Israel.

Here is a summary of this overall “peace treaty with Israel” topic:

- Scripture indicates that during the first half of the tribulation, sacrifices and grain offerings will be made.
- In order for sacrifices and grain offerings to be made, the temple must be rebuilt on the temple mount.
- Currently, the Dome of the Rock sits on the exact location where the temple must be rebuilt – so rebuilding the temple requires *displacing* the Dome of the Rock.
- The Dome of the Rock is one of the holiest sites in Islam – so there is no way that that structure can be moved under the current world conditions.

From all of the above information, it certainly appears that some sort of formal, **worldwide** peace treaty must be made with Israel, during the first half of the tribulation period. That peace treaty would then allow the Dome of the Rock to be moved – and that, in turn, would allow the temple to be rebuilt. Once the temple is rebuilt, that will then allow sacrifices and grain offerings to be made in the temple once again.

The above assertions – that there will be a peace treaty with Israel, and that the temple will be rebuilt – lead to several other interesting observations. First of all, the modern country of Israel did not even exist, until the year 1948. So, it was not even *possible* for a peace treaty to be made with Israel, until 65 years ago. In other words, almost 2,000 years passed by, from the time of Jesus until the creation of the state of Israel – and during that entire time period, it was not even possible for some of the important end time events to occur. Those events can occur now, though – and that leads one to believe that we may be getting rather *close* to the end time events.

The other item to note is that if the temple is rebuilt, that will be an extremely obvious, **tangible** indication that the tribulation events have begun to occur. In other words, the rebuilding of the temple is an event to be “on watch” for, as part of the unfolding of the end times.

Question 3: What will happen to unbelievers who die during the tribulation?

As mentioned earlier, it appears that the tribulation period will last for seven years - with the second half of the tribulation being much worse than the first half.

It turns out that some Christian denominations have a very specific belief about the tribulation. This belief deals with people who die, *during* the tribulation period.

In essence, the belief is as follows: If a person dies **during** the tribulation – *and* if that person is **not** a believer in God and Jesus – then that person will never be resurrected. In other words, if a non-believer's life ends, *during* the tribulation, then that person will never be resurrected at all – instead, he will be condemned to **permanent death**.

So, is this belief supported by Scripture? In other words, is it really true that all non-believers who die during the tribulation will be *permanently* destroyed?

The most obvious item to consider, about this overall question, is as follows: millions upon millions of people have *already* died, without ever **hearing** about God and Jesus. In other words, those people have never received *any* information about the God of Israel, and His beloved Son – i.e., they “died in ignorance” of Yahweh. As a result, those people never had *any* opportunity to be saved, during this age.

From what I can see, it appears that people who died in ignorance *will* have the opportunity to be saved, *after* Jesus returns. An article that deals with that subject can be found [here](#).

So, this raises another question: How much knowledge about God will exist, during the tribulation period? In other words, is God going to ensure that **everyone** learns about Him – and therefore, that everyone has the opportunity to be saved – *during* the tribulation?

If every single person does know the truth about God during the tribulation, then it might make sense that unbelievers who die during that time will never be resurrected. However, if some people do not have accurate knowledge about God during the tribulation, then those people certainly **will** be resurrected – even if they die during the tribulation.

So, is there any indication that *everyone* will learn the truth about God and Jesus, during the tribulation? Well, Revelation 14:6-7 states the following:

Revelation 14:6-7 (ESV):

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people. ⁷ And he said with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.”

At first glance, that passage might appear to imply that everyone will hear about God during the tribulation. However, consider this: in Mark 16:15, Jesus tells the disciples to “proclaim the gospel to **the whole creation**“. Similarly, in Matthew 28:19, Jesus told them to “make disciples of **all nations**“. Of course, the disciples did *not* actually spread the gospel to *every single person* on the earth. So, the above passage in Revelation does not necessarily mean that every single person on earth will hear the gospel, during the tribulation.

In addition, consider this – there are many people who are *mentally incapable* of **understanding** about God – even if that information is presented to them. For example, newborn babies simply do not possess the mental faculties to understand the gospel – even if someone tells them about it! People who have severe mental disabilities would fall into that category as well. So, even if the gospel is *presented* to everyone during the tribulation, there will still be many people who do not *understand* it at that time.

As a result, it appears to me that there will definitely be at least some people who do not understand the truth about God, during the tribulation. That, in turn, implies that unbelievers who die during the tribulation still *could* be resurrected - because those people might not have ever heard about God.

In other words, from what I can see, the belief that “All unbelievers who die during the tribulation will never be resurrected” does not appear to be supported by the whole of Scripture.

Question 4: Where will Jesus and the apostles be, during the millennium?

As mentioned previously, the millennium period will begin immediately after the tribulation period. In essence, Jesus will end the reign of the “man of lawlessness”; and then he will rule the earth, for 1000 years. In addition, Jesus’ followers – most notably, the apostles – will *assist* him in that rule.

Some Christian groups have a specific belief about Jesus’ rule during the millennium. The belief is that Jesus and his followers will live in heaven during the millennium. That is, Jesus and his followers will rule the earth “from afar” – i.e., they will be **ruling** the earth, while they are actually **located** in heaven.

The most obvious passage to consider, when debating this question, is Revelation 5:9-10. Here is that passage:

Revelation 5:9-10 (ESV)

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you [Jesus] to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation,
¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
and they shall reign on the earth.”

The last part of that passage states that Jesus has made his followers “a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth”. With that translation, it is clear that Jesus’ followers will actually be located on the earth during the millennium – **not** in heaven.

Almost all English translations of the Bible are very similar – i.e., almost all of them state that Jesus’ followers will reign “on”, or “upon“, the earth. So, in *almost every* translation, it is obvious that the apostles will live on the **earth** during the millennium – not in heaven.

However, there are a *few* English translations of the Bible that render that verse a bit differently. For example, here is the Amplified Bible’s translation of Revelation 5:10:

Revelation 5:10 (AMP):

¹⁰ And You have made them a kingdom (royal race) and priests to our God, and they shall reign [as kings] over the earth!

That translation states that Jesus’ followers will reign “over” the earth. Some groups use that translation to state that Jesus’ followers will actually reside in *heaven* during the millennium. Basically, those groups

assert that the phrase “reign **over** the earth” means that the followers must be located in *heaven* – so that the followers will *literally* be “over” the earth.

As it turns out, the English phrase “reign over” does not necessarily mean that the person in authority resides in some *other* location, than the place that he is ruling. For example, consider this: Queen Elizabeth II is currently **reigning over** England. Does that mean that she is living in some *other* location than England? No, of course not – she is living in England, while she is reigning over England.

Similarly, the few Bible translations which state that Jesus’ followers will reign over the earth do **not** necessarily mean that they will be located in some other place – i.e. they could live on the earth, while they reign over the earth. (This is especially true since almost *all translations* explicitly state that the followers will be located on the earth, during their reign.)

There are several other passages to consider about this question as well. First, consider this passage; which takes place immediately after Jesus ascended into heaven:

Acts 1:10-11 (NIV):

¹⁰ They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

In the above passage, angels tell the apostles that Jesus will come back, in the same way that he left. This certainly implies that Jesus will return to the earth, at the beginning of the millennium. That, in turn, implies that Jesus (and his followers) will be located on the earth during the millennium.

Some people assert that the above passage does *not* mean that Jesus will return to the earth. Basically, some people state that Jesus will appear in the atmosphere *above* the earth – but he will *not* come “all the way back down” to the earth. So, is that assertion true? Is it really true that Jesus will not “set foot” on the earth, when he returns? To answer that, consider the following passage:

Zechariah 14:3-4 (ESV):

³ Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. ⁴ On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

From the New Testament, we know that the above passage refers to the return of Jesus, at the beginning of the millennium. Of course, that passage is clear that Jesus will come “all the way back” to the earth – because “his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives”. Interestingly, Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives – and Acts 1:11 tells us that he will return the same way he left. So, it appears that when Jesus returns, the *place* that he will return to will be the Mount of Olives.

The final passage to consider is the following:

Luke 1:30-33 (ESV):

³⁰ And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He

will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

That passage states that Jesus will “inherit” the throne of David’s kingdom. This is a fulfillment of the prophesy in 2 Samuel 7:12-16, in which God tells David that one of his descendants will rule his kingdom, forever. In other words, Jesus is the descendant of which that prophesy spoke.

Of course, David’s kingdom consisted of land on the earth – with a king ruling the kingdom from Jerusalem. So, since Jesus will inherit David’s kingdom during the millennium, that implies that Jesus will reside on the **earth** during the millennium.

A summary of the above information is as follows:

- Almost all translations of Revelation 5:10 state that Jesus’ followers will reign “on”, or “upon”, the earth. That explicitly indicates that those followers will be located on the earth, during the millennium.
- Acts 1:11 and Zechariah 14:4 state that Jesus will literally return to the earth, at the beginning of the millennium – i.e., that Jesus will actually *stand* on the earth at that time.
- Luke 1:30-33 states that Jesus will inherit the kingdom of David, during the millennium – and that implies that Jesus will live in Jerusalem (i.e., on the earth) during the millennium.

So, all of the above information indicates to me that Jesus and the apostles will live on the earth during the millennium – rather than living in heaven.

Question 5: Will animal sacrifices take place during the millennium?

Another belief about the millennium deals with the subject of sacrifices – specifically, *animal* sacrifices. Basically, some groups believe that animal sacrifices will take place, during the millennium – within the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

There is definitely Scriptural evidence that sacrifices will be re-established in the future. In particular, Ezekiel chapters 40-46 explicitly prophesy that sacrifices will be re-established in the future, in the rebuilt temple. Basically, chapters 40 through 43 describe the properties of the temple, itself; while chapters 44 through 46 describe the sacrifices that will take place in that temple.

All of the information in the above chapters is presented in *painstaking* detail – and as a result, it is very unlikely that that information is just “figurative” in nature. In other words, it certainly appears that the temple *will* be rebuilt; and that sacrifices *will* take place in it.

Of course, the re-establishment of sacrifices is rather difficult to “reconcile” with some of the passages in the New Testament. Basically, some of the statements in the New Testament appear to indicate that animal sacrifices have been completely *abolished* – so that they will **never** return. For example, consider this passage:

Hebrews 10:5-14 (ESV):

⁵ Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;
⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.
⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

⁸ When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second.
¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

The above passage tells us that followers of Christ have been sanctified “once for all”, by the single sacrifice of Jesus. It also states that Jesus “does away” with animal sacrifices, in order to establish God’s will. As a result, that passage certainly *seems* to indicate that animal sacrifices will never take place, ever again.

So, there appears to be a “contradiction” here. Ezekiel 40-46 states that sacrifices will be re-established in the future – but Hebrews 10 appears to state that sacrifices have been abolished, never to return.

Of course, I do not believe that Scripture ever contradicts itself. So, what can we make of this *apparent* contradiction?

First of all, as indicated in part 1 of this article, sacrifices definitely will occur during the tribulation period. Basically, Scripture indicates that sacrifices will take place in Jerusalem, during the first 3.5 years of the tribulation.

So, it is possible that Ezekiel 40-46 is actually referring to the sacrifices that will take place, during the first half of the tribulation? That seems rather *unlikely*. First of all, the temple and the sacrifices are described in *great* detail – so it doesn’t seem to “fit” that that temple will **only** be used for 3.5 years. Even more importantly, the prophecies in Ezekiel 40-48 indicate that the world is at peace, and is being healed – and of course the world will not be at peace during the tribulation period.

It appears to me that one of the “keys” to this issue is contained in verse 14 of Hebrews 10, above. That verse states: “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

Notice: that verse does not state that **everyone** has been perfected by Jesus’ sacrifice – it states that only “those who are being sanctified” have been so perfected. Presumably, this means that *only* followers of Christ have **already** been perfected by Jesus’ sacrifice.

Of course, as mentioned previously, millions upon millions of people have lived and died, without ever hearing about God and Jesus. So, evidently those people have not (yet) been perfected by Jesus’ sacrifice. In addition, those people have never even heard about God’s entire plan of salvation – and of course, God’s plan is contained in **both** the Old Testament **and** the New Testament.

So, it appears to me that animal sacrifices may be made during the millennium, for the benefit of people who were not followers of Christ during this age – because those people will not **yet** be “covered” by Jesus’ sacrifice. Those animal sacrifices will also *teach* those people about the “foreshadowing” of animal sacrifices, to the sacrifice of Jesus.

This concept of bringing people to repentance, during the millennium, appears to harmonize with the “healing of the nations” concept mentioned in Ezekiel 47:12 – *and* in Revelation 22:1-2.

Of course, animal sacrifices definitely will **not** be appropriate for people who were followers of Christ during this age – because as mentioned above, Christians have *already* been “perfected” by the sacrifice of Jesus.

Question 6: Is the “die at 100 during the millennium” doctrine correct?

Another belief about the millennium deals with the *life spans* of people during that time. Basically, some groups believe the following: during the millennium, unbelievers will have exactly 100 years to become followers of Jesus. If an unbeliever does become a Christian within that 100 years, then he will continue living past 100 years. However, if an unbeliever does not become a Christian during that time, then his life will come to an abrupt end on his 100th birthday.

The Scriptural passage that is normally used to support this belief is as follows:

Isaiah 65:19-20 (ESV):

¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem
and be glad in my people;
no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping
and the cry of distress.
²⁰ No more shall there be in it
an infant who lives but a few days,
or an old man who does not fill out his days,
for the young man shall die a hundred years old,
and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

Notice the very last line in that passage – “and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed”. With **that** translation, it might *appear* that the following is true: “If a person reaches the age of 100, without accepting Christ, then he will be cursed – i.e., his life will end.”

However, take a look at some of the *other* translations of that last line:

NASB: And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred Will be thought accursed.

HCSB: and the one who misses a hundred years will be cursed.

ISV: and one who falls short of a hundred years will be considered accursed.

The above translations state the following: “If a person does not reach the age of 100, then people will think he is accursed.” In other words, those translations simply state that people’s normal life spans will be *extremely* long during the millennium; and therefore, if a person dies **before** he reaches 100, then people will **think** he is accursed – because he died *prematurely*.

It appears to me that the above three translations are much closer to the truth. Throughout the Bible, many people have **thought** that all sorts of problems – premature death, infertility, physical deformities, etc – were *curses from God*, due to sin. Even the disciples had that mindset. Consider this passage:

John 9:1-2 (ESV):

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

So, it makes sense that during the millennium, if an individual dies *before* reaching 100, then many people will *think* that he was accursed.

Not only that, but the *context* of the above passage does not mention *anything* about following Christ. So, it appears to me that the belief of “accept Christ before your 100th birthday – or die” is not supported by the whole of Scripture.

Question 7: When will “ignorant” people be resurrected?

As mentioned earlier, there are several different periods of time, **in between** this current age, and the age to come. In particular, Scripture refers to the following time periods:

- The “tribulation” period;
- The “millennium” period;
- The “short season” period

Also, as mentioned earlier, it appears that “ignorant” people – that is, people who never heard about God and Jesus, during this age – *will* be resurrected. This resurrection will allow those people to *learn* about God’s plan of salvation – and that, in turn, will give those people the *opportunity* to be saved.

So, the final question to consider is the following: when, exactly, will “ignorant” people be resurrected? In other words, during which of the above time periods will ignorant people be resurrected?

To my knowledge, there is one – and **only** one – passage in Scripture, which appears to address this question directly. That passage is the following:

Revelation 20:4-6 (ESV):

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

That passage *primarily* describes the followers of Christ coming to life at the beginning of the millennium – and then reigning with Jesus, during that 1000 year period. However, in the *middle* of that passage – almost as an “aside” – the following sentence appears: “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.”

At first glance, that sentence certainly **appears** to state the following: people who were *not* followers of Christ during this age will not be resurrected *at all*, until after the millennium is over. If that is the case, then of course “ignorant” people will not be resurrected during the millennium period.

However, there are some additional items to consider, about this overall issue. First of all, Scripture states that there are two types of life: “mortal” life, and “immortal” life. In addition, there are two types of bodies – “natural” bodies and “spiritual” bodies. Consider this passage:

1 Corinthians 15:42-44,53-55 (ESV):

⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵ “O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

Basically, during *this* age, people have **mortal** life. However, in the *next* age, followers of Christ will have **immortal** life. The reason why this is important is because Revelation 20 primarily speaks about the resurrection of *followers of Christ*. When followers of Christ are resurrected, they will *immediately* be granted **immortal** life. We know this because the above passage states that the second death has “no power” over them.

So, Revelation 20:4-6 is primarily speaking about followers of Christ being granted immortality. As a result, the last sentence in Revelation 20:4 could presumably be written this way:

They came to **immortal** life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Of course, people who were *not* followers of Christ during this age will *not* be granted immortality at that time. So, the first sentence of Revelation 20:5 could presumably be written as follows:

The rest of the dead did not come to **immortal** life until the thousand years were ended.

In other words, non-Christians will not be granted *immortal* life, until *after* the millennium. However, they still could be granted **mortal** life, during the millennium! In other words, “ignorant” people certainly could be resurrected to mortal life, during the millennium – without contradicting Revelation 20:5.

The reason why this is important is because there are only two periods of time, when ignorant people *could be* resurrected – the millennium period, and the “short season” period. Of course, Satan will be

released during the short season – and he will evidently convince many, *many* people to oppose God and Jesus during that time.

So, if ignorant people are not resurrected during the millennium, then presumably they will be resurrected during the “short season”. That, in turn, means that all of the ignorant people would have to learn about God – and decide to *follow* Him – during the time that Satan has an **enormous** negative influence over mankind.

In other words, if ignorant people do not get resurrected until the short season, then it will be **far** more difficult for them to ever follow God, than it will be if they were resurrected during the millennium.

Of course, God wants *everyone* to be saved – i.e., He does not want *anyone* to perish. (See 1 Timothy 2:4 and 2 Peter 3:9.) As a result, from all of the above information, it appears to me that the following events will occur:

- At some point during the millennium, “ignorant” people will be resurrected to **mortal** life.
- Those people will then learn about God and Jesus; and will have the opportunity to follow God.
- During the short season, Satan will be released. Ignorant people will then need to *maintain* their faith in God, during that time.
- At the end of the short season, those people who did maintain their faith will be granted **immortal** life.

In any case, the most important point to note about this overall issue is that ignorant people will have the *opportunity* to be saved, at **some** point in the future. In other words, ignorant people are not “doomed to destruction”, simply because they never *heard* about God during this age.

Conclusion

As mentioned in this article, there are *many* different beliefs about the exact events that will occur during the “end times”. In other words, the various Christian denominations all have their own views about those events. However, one belief really “stands out”. Basically, most Christian churches teach that Christians will be “raptured up to heaven”, *before* the tribulation period begins.

It seems to me that that belief is rather *dangerous*. This is because if a Christian has that belief, then he may become extremely distraught, if he finds himself enduring the tribulation years. In other words, he may think that God does not consider him to be a Christian – since he was *not* raptured up to heaven before the tribulation.

So, hopefully this article will be useful in stimulating discussion about the end times.