

Millennium Promises, Population, and the Faithfulness of God

Introduction

During the 20th century mankind experienced the fastest population growth rate in recorded history – during one period averaging over 2% annually. This exponential increase began in the 1800s and continues today. (Refer to the World Population Growth graph on page 10)

During the future Millennium Kingdom the population will likely grow even more rapidly due to the restored earth's Eden-like environment, greatly extended life spans, the blessings of child rearing restored, sin nipped in the bud, and Satan bound.

If we assume a very conservative annual population growth rate of 2% and if the Millennium commences with only 4 million people, then by the middle of the Millennium there would be about 80 billion people, and by the end of the Millennium the population would swell to over a thousand trillion people!¹ As this article will explain, I believe this number is very conservative.

God's Eternal Promises

You might be saying “Who cares – why is this important?” I believe this has deep theological ramifications concerning the nature of God and His faithfulness to His promises to mankind. In the beginning God commanded mankind, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28; 9:1, 7). Due to mankind's sin and resultant curse, this has never happened – yet.

Later God promised to Abraham, “‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be’” (Gen. 15:5). God promised Abraham that his descendents would number as the stars of heaven! This clear guarantee is reiterated over and over in God's Word (Gen. 13:16; 22:17; 26:4; Exod. 32:13; Deut. 1:10; 1 Chron. 27:23; Jer. 33:22; Heb. 11:12; etc.).

I believe the Lord will literally fulfill His promise to both the physical descendents and the spiritual descendents of “Abraham, who is the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16). “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. (God) does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ” (Gal. 3:16. See also Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Through faith in Christ an innumerable multitude will be saved!

¹ To calculate the future population, use the following formula: $P_n = P(1 + r)^n$ in which P is the population at any certain time, r is the proportionate annual increase in population, and P_n is the population n years later. So for our example $P_n = 4,000,000 \times (1 + 0.02)^{1000} = 1.593 \times 10^{15}$

Who will repopulate the Millennial Earth?

Zechariah chapters 12 and 13 explain that one-third of all the Jews will survive the Tribulation, finally trust in their Messiah, and enter the Millennium saved. They, along with believing Gentiles who survive through the Tribulation, will have healed bodies and repopulate the earth during the Millennium (Matt. 25:31-46; Is. 33:24; Is. 35; Ps. 72:16; Mic. 4:7). All those who enter the millennial earth will be redeemed, however their offspring will still have a sin nature (Is. 65:20) and have to choose whether to sincerely trust in the Lord.

All the Old Testament believers, New Testament church, and Tribulation martyrs will receive their glorified bodies and return with Christ to reign as kings and priests for one thousand years (Exod. 19:6; Dan. 7:13-14; Zech. 14:5-9; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Jude 14-15; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).

Millennium Population Explosion and Rebellion

“When the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea” (Rev. 20:7-8).

At the end of the Millennium there will be a great number of people on the earth who will rebel against God. Though they are living in ideal conditions with the Prince of Peace reigning from Jerusalem, as many “as the sand of the sea” will choose to rebel and follow Satan. Their revolt does not last long because “fire (comes) down from God out of heaven and (devours) them” (Rev. 20:9).²

Based on this passage, many good Bible teachers believe that the majority of those living on the earth will reject the Lord. And sadly, many will rebel. However if we survey the numerous Scriptures describing the Millennium promises, it appears that many will be saved!

Revival in the Millennium!

The good news is that there are several passages which indicate that many, perhaps the majority, will trust the Lord! Referring to the Jews during the Millennium, God promises: “Your people shall all be righteous; They shall inherit the land forever, The branch of My planting, The work of My hands, That I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I, the LORD, will hasten it in its time” (Is. 60:21-22).

² This rebellion, under near perfect conditions, will forever silence the humanist’s lie that man is basically good given an ideal environment. We need our Creator to redeem and change us.

Zechariah provides this encouraging insight: “Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘Peoples shall yet come, Inhabitants of many cities; The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, “Let us continue to go and pray before the LORD, And seek the LORD of hosts. I myself will go also.” ‘Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.’ Thus says the LORD of hosts: ‘In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”’” (Zech. 8:20-23).

Not only will the Jews be saved and made righteous by faith in the Lord, but “a small one” from the Jewish remnant will become “a strong nation” and “many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem”!

Psalms 72:7-8 adds “In His (Messiah’s) days the righteous shall flourish, and abundance of peace, until the moon is no more. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

Verses 15-19 provides these amazing promises: “Prayer also will be made for Him continually, and daily He shall be praised. There will be an abundance of grain in the earth, On the top of the mountains; Its fruit shall wave like Lebanon; And those of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; All nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who only does wondrous things! And blessed be His glorious name forever! And let the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen and Amen.”

Psalms 22 describes the suffering and the victory of the Messiah. It concludes with this assurance: “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You” (v. 27). This does not sound like most are feigning submission to the Lord – they are truly turning to and trusting in Him!

In fact, these and other Scriptures declare that the greatest revival ever will occur during the Millennium. Yes, there will be sin (Ps. 2:8-9; Is. 60:12; 65:20; Zech. 14:16-19; Rev. 2:27), and a great many will revolt at the end (Rev. 20:8), but it also appears a great many will be saved.

In the New Testament we read: “None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Heb. 8:11). This is the New Covenant promise God made in Jeremiah 31:31-34 to the Jews – but the Book of Hebrews applies it not only to Jewish believers, but to all who will trust the Lord!

Remember God's incontrovertible covenant: "Thus says the LORD: 'If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea measured, so will I multiply the descendants of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me'" (Jer. 33:20-22). David, Israel's greatest king, was given the same promise as Abraham (2 Sam. 7:11-16).

God's promise to Abraham and the Israelites is unfailing: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son – 'blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice'" (Gen. 22:16-18).

Do these promises refer only to Abraham's and David's physical descendents or to all of the redeemed? Romans chapter 4, Galatians and Hebrews explain that Abraham is the father of all who trust in Christ (Rom. 4:16). All true believers in the Lord – both Jew and Gentile – are the ultimate fulfillment of this promise. God is going to save an enormous multitude, and the greatest revival is yet future!

Revival during the Tribulation

After the Rapture of the Church, the earth will experience the darkest time in all of history. Those who refuse to look to their Creator, repent of their sin, and trust in Jesus Christ will suffer God's wrath and be eternally damned. However, even during this time of severe tribulation, "a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" will trust in Jesus Christ and be saved (Rev. 7:9, 14).

This coming revival is also described in Daniel chapter 12. The context of Daniel 12 is the Great Tribulation, and verses 9 and 10 state: "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. 'Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.'"

How many will be saved? The Apostle John was told the number of an army in the last days – 200 million (Rev. 9:16). This was the approximate population of the world at that time. That John also beholds "a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" coming out of the Great Tribulation at the end of the age (Rev. 7:9, 14), indicates an enormous number of people on planet earth in the last days.

Now if John could number a 200 million man army, but he is unable to number this great multitude of redeemed people coming out the Tribulation, how many might this be? If he could number 200 million it seems reasonable he could number 300 or 400 or 500 million. Is it possible over a billion souls may surrender to the Lord during the Tribulation? I believe the Holy Spirit purposely inspired the words “no one could number” to make sure that everyone knows he or she is invited – there is no limit!

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” (Rev. 22:17).

Though God will judge the multitudes who turn their backs and ignore His Word and Savior, God’s desire is to save. “(God) desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). “‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?’” (Ezek. 33:11).

God loves His creation – particularly those made in His image. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). In fact Jesus’ name literally means “The Lord is salvation.” So even during the time of greatest wrath, God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Future Revival!

Now if there will be such a great revival during earth’s darkest days, what type of revival will occur during the righteous and wonderful rule of Christ?! A time when: “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.” (Is. 11:9-10). (See also: Is. 2:1-5; Hos. 1:10; Rom. 15:12)

“And in that day you will say: ‘Praise the LORD, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted. Sing to the LORD, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all the earth’” (Is. 12:4-6).

“‘Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,’ says the LORD. Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you” (Zech. 2:10-11). The Lord Himself will rule and reign from Jerusalem and many nations shall become His people!

For 2000 years believers have prayed, “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). Surely this prayer will be answered during the Millennium and then completely fulfilled in the New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21 and 22)!

In Romans chapter 11, Paul explains that God is not through with the Jewish nation. He has always preserved and saved a believing remnant – even in their apostate times – and turned even their disobedience for good: “Now if their (Israelites) fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!” (Rom. 11:12). Their fullness will occur during the Millennium – and a great, great multitude of both believing Jews and Gentiles will trust in their Creator, Lord, and Savior Jesus Christ!

The Innumerable Angels

How many angels are there and does their number relate at all to the number of the redeemed? Scripture repeatedly refers to angels as the “sons of God” (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7), and states that there are “an innumerable company of angels” (Heb. 12:22). Might there be as many angels as there are stars in heaven? Yes, there may!

In fact, the Bible likens the angels to the stars of heaven: “You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven (angels) worships You” (Neh. 9:6).

“I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven (angels) standing by, on His right hand and on His left” (1 Kings 22:19).

How many angels follow the Lord? “(Satan’s) tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth” (Rev. 12:4). Apparently one third of the angels fell; therefore two-thirds still follow the Lord – an innumerable company of holy angels.

Millennium Fulfillment of God’s Grand Plan

God has never rescinded His original Dominion Mandate to mankind: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen. 1:28). However, due to mankind’s sin and the resultant curse, God’s original intent was greatly restricted. Raising children under the curse involved great sorrow and pain (Gen. 3:16), and tending and harnessing the earth became much more difficult (Gen. 3:17).

However, at the end of the Tribulation the earth will be resurfaced by great earthquakes that will destroy every city, lift every valley, lower every mountain and move every island (Rev. 6:12-14; 16:17-21; Is. 24:1-4). Jerusalem will be lifted up and Mt. Zion will become the highest of all mountains (Zech. 14:10; Micah 4:1). Significant changes to the environment will occur when Christ returns to Jerusalem (Zech. 14), including “the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Matt. 24:29). Other transformations include “the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold” (Is. 30:26).

At the onset of the Millennium, the curse will be substantially lifted and the earth will be restored to near ideal conditions. A protective canopy will likely be restored because life spans will be expanded to what they were at the beginning of creation (Is. 65:20-22). All the earth will become rich once again with lush vegetation, the deserts will blossom abundantly, and the sick healed (Gen. 1:29; Is. 4:2; 30:23-26; 35; Amos 9:13-14). Healing waters will flow from Jerusalem and give life to the Dead Sea and wherever the waters flow (Ezek. 47:1-9; Is. 30:25). There will be trees that bear fruit every month and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for medicine (Ezek. 47:12).

Nature shall be reconciled to itself: “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; And a little child shall lead them. ...And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, ...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:6-9).

As Many as the Stars of Heaven?

Before the Flood, man's lifespan was about 900 years (Gen. 5). Childbearing years were also greatly extended compared to today – Noah was 500 years old when he had children! With global righteousness, peace, and plenty, combined with long life spans and the blessing of child rearing restored, the population will mushroom quickly. To calculate how many and how quickly, we must estimate the saved population that will survive the Tribulation and estimate the likely annual population growth rate.

How many repopulate the earth? At the end of the Tribulation when the Lord returns to set-up His millennial kingdom, Isaiah tells us “Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left” (Is. 24:6). Jesus explains, “And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened” (Matt. 24:22). Therefore, only the elect and a small fraction of earth's population will survive the Tribulation period.

Today's population is about 7 billion. But during the Tribulation we know many will die: "And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth" (Rev. 6:8). Subsequent plagues kill even more: "By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed" (Rev. 9:18). The remaining Bowl Judgments will kill even more people (Rev. 15 & 16).

How many will survive? Concerning the Jews, Zechariah provides this insight: "And it shall come to pass in all the land," Says the LORD, 'That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it: I will bring the one-third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, "This is My people"; and each one will say, "The LORD is my God."'" (Zech. 13:8-9).

Officially there are an estimated 13 to 14 million Jews alive today. Some believe the number is much higher because many Jews do not identify themselves as Jewish due to fear of persecution. I spoke to the head of one Messianic Jewish group who believes there are over 20 million Jews alive today. Only God knows for certain, but I suspect he may be right. If the Tribulation period began today and one-third are preserved, then about 4 to 7 million Jews will enter the Millennium saved and will repopulate the earth.

Can we estimate how many Gentiles will make it through saved? Zechariah 8:23 provides this clue: "Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'" Could it be that ten times as many Gentiles enter the Millennium redeemed?

We know that most of the Gentiles who survive the Tribulation will not be believers.³ So if we estimate that only 280 million Gentiles survive the Tribulation (4% of the current population), and one quarter of these are believers in the Lord, then 70 million believing Gentiles will enter the Millennium – or 1% of the world's current population.

But let's start with very conservative numbers and say that 4 million Jews and only 6 million Gentiles enter the renewed earth. Assuming a conservative population growth rate of 3%, by the end of the Millennium there would be ~69 X 10¹⁸ people! That's 69 million trillion people!

However, I think it is possible that 7 million Jews and 70 million Gentiles are preserved and saved at the end. Further, a population growth rate of 4% seems likely based on the restored Edenic conditions. If these estimates are correct then there would be over 10²⁴ people on the

³ In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus explains that those of all the nations who remain alive after the Tribulation will be judged and the righteous will inherit His kingdom on earth. Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7 tell us that at Christ's return "all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him." Apparently most people who remain are not saved and they mourn because they know that they must now face judgment.

earth at the end of the Millennium! This number is in the range of all the stars in the universe and all sand grains by the sea combined! Might God literally fulfill His promise to Abraham?

Conclusion

The current earth could never support such a huge population. However, as we've reviewed, the millennial earth will be renewed and perhaps greatly enlarged. The Millennium Temple complex will be significantly larger than previous temples (Ezek. 40-48. Cf. 2 Chron. 3:3). And the New Jerusalem that descends from heaven to the earth at the end of the Millennium will be 1500 miles square – far too large for the present earth.

And there is another clue that the population of saved souls may be as the stars of heaven. It is found in a parable concerning the coming kingdom. In this parable Jesus exhorts His followers to serve Him diligently until His return. Those who invested in the Lord's work and faithfully served Him in this life will receive a wonderful commendation: "Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'" (Luke 19:16-19).

The church, the Old Testament saints, and all the Tribulation martyrs will be glorified and reign as kings and priests with Christ for a thousand years. Each of the Lord's disciples will receive an eternal inheritance in proportion to their faithfulness in this life. Some will be over ten cities!⁴

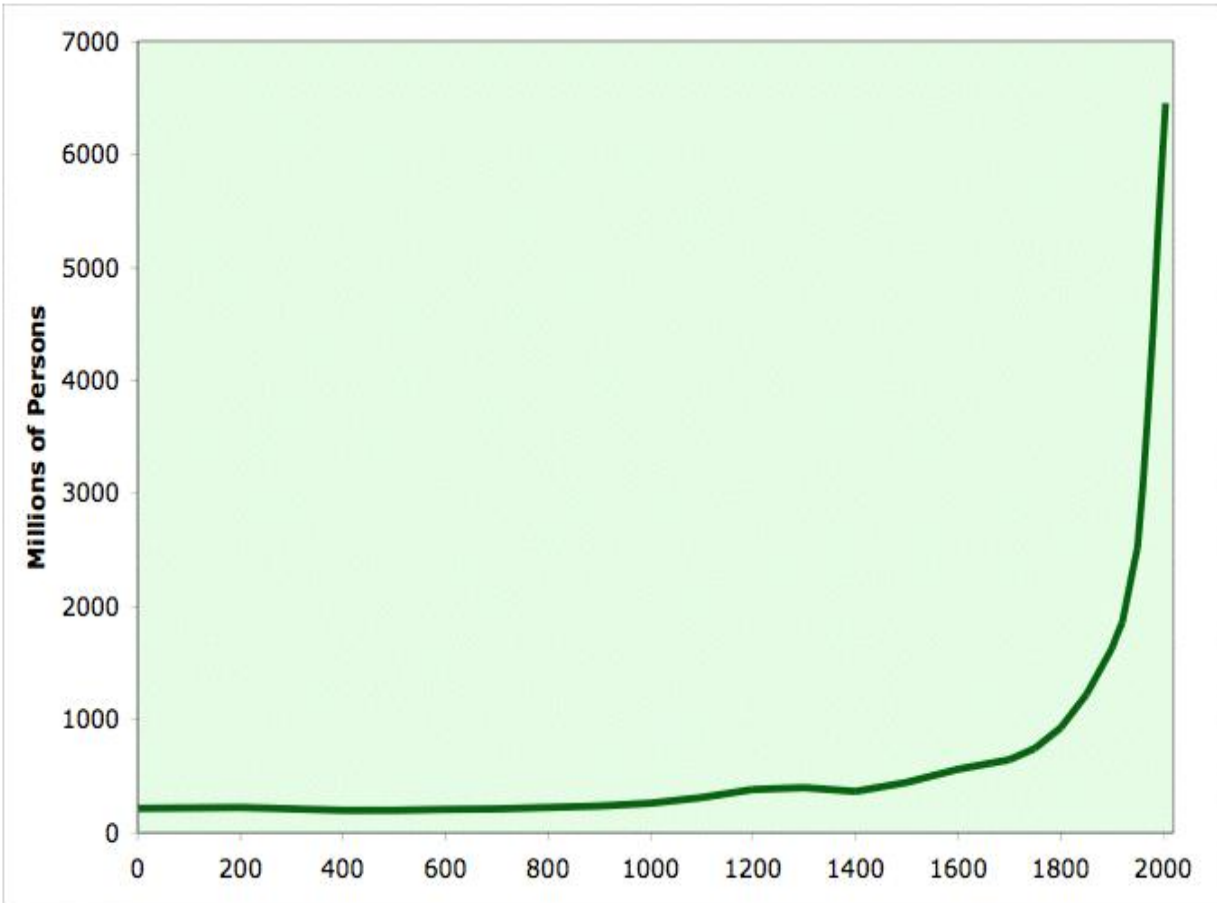
"The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession'" (Psalm 2:7-8). Jesus has been interceding for lost souls to be reconciled to God, and surely He shall see the labor of His soul and be abundantly satisfied (Hebrews 7:25; Isaiah 53:11)!

Messiah will receive the nations as His inheritance, and apparently many (perhaps most?), of the souls will be redeemed and be a part of His eternal inheritance!

After the Millennium, God will make a new heaven and a new earth; the Lord will dwell with man in all His glory; usher in everlasting righteousness; there will be no more sin, death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain – no more curse! The Lord will make all things new and we shall inherit all things (Rev. 21 and 22)! "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming quickly.' Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20)!

⁴ If 10 billion souls throughout the ages are saved and glorified, and if the population is 10²⁴ (a trillion trillion) at the end of the Millennium, then on average, each glorified saint will be over trillions of people by the end of Millennium.

World Population Growth



Addendum

Jesus said “Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done” (Matt. 21:21). I believe we may literally fulfill this promise during the Millennium. Let’s say you are reigning over a town and the families are quickly outgrowing their area. Perhaps you will pray to the Lord to shift a mountain or remove a few hills to make more room for the burgeoning population! “And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” (Matt. 21:22).

During the Millennium there will be some death and limited sin (Is. 65:20). Though the saints will be glorified and full of the joy of the Lord, we may have limited sorrow and tears during the Millennium, and particularly at the end when some of those who we’ve disciplined rebel. After that there will be no more death, sorrow, crying, pain, or curse ever again!