“When once the existence of God guaranteed the existence of Israel, today the continued existence of the people Israel guarantees the existence of God.”
Emil Fackenheim

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LURKING DEATH AND PARADISE LOST

SIGNS OF THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH
part IX
“Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan.”
(Lev. 25:9-10)

In Hebrew the fiftieth year is called Yovel, a celebration year, jubilee. It is the year of the blowing of the ram’s horn. Thus Yovel got its name from the shofar announcing the beginning of the year.
The sound of the Yovel declares the beginning of a new era, the era of God’s favour towards Israel.
In Hebrew the word yovel can be read in two ways. Either “yovel”, which means a ram or a ram’s horn like a shofar, or in passive voice “yuval”, is led or was led, like in Isaiah 53: “he was led like a lamb to the slaughter... for the transgression of my people he was punished.”

Like a lamb which has a desire to follow its shepherd humbly, to be led, “yuval”.
The three names of the shofar are like a road signs on our salvation path: Keren, which is the name including the personal calling, rose up in smoke with the sacrificed ram instead of Isaac (Gen. 22:13).
On Mount Sinai the Israelites heard the sound of that horn, Shofar, for the first time when it called the people to make the change, a turn a round, teshuva.
The nation learned the sound of the shofar when The Lord himself blew the horn (Ex. 19:16).
From that point on the Israelites were commanded to blow themselves on the shofar (Lev. 25:9), until The Sovereign Lord himself blows it, this time the shofar called Yovel (Zech. 9:14).

Then He will announce freedom, liberation, a jubilee to all nations, to all of those who will hear His voice.
Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus Christ, started his ministry in the synagogue declaring with the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 proclaiming good news to the poor, freedom for the captives, release from darkness for the prisoners and proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favor.
Proclaiming the jubilee, which is The Messiah himself.
In Him is the heritage restored, the one we lost in the garden of Eden.
In Him is the essence of Yovel.

Markus Nurmesniemi
(Ethiopia, Addis Abeba & Ambo, February – March 2020)

A landing of a long flight, to the start of the Lord’s work.

Months of waiting is now over. Here we are again. The familiar and beloved scenery of Ethiopia. The hills welcome us once again.

We came along with a bundle of suit cases. Suit cases full of smiles, life, love and prayers. They have travelled with us wrapped into a form of little shoes, clothes, toys, reflectors, other items and aid.

Our brother Eyu has put in a huge effort for the congregation. With not sparing himself he has taking care of the church house, raised the Bethel-cafe into a new space, helped and took care of the youth and the single parenting mothers with the kids. He has been a logistic wheel to the cafeteria and to the congregation. He will not admit a rest to himself, but God is with him. Almighty God strengthens him. And together we can get to walk in the works He has made for us in before hand. And this time isn’t any exception either.

But something is different in the atmosphere. Something has opened up. The Spirit moves in a wider range. It carries us to the work, lifts up a call in which we gladly respond. We step on the streets. We walk in prayer and ask the guidance of our Heavenly Father. Men, women, children, they want to meet and to be met. We get to pray, to declare the victory of our Lord and rejoice together with these people. We get to pray the salvation prayers with them, to walk beside them and to encourage them in the name of Jesus, Yeshua the Messiah. We get to pray against the powers of darkness and to praise the victory of the cross. We get to praise for His Kingship over us.

We walk the streets every day. It will be our rhythm of life which we breathe. Every day starts with a street mission. We get to walk beside the congregation’s kids as well and rejoice through their joy when they receive the presents from the Finnish donors. We feel the joy and the love. We feel humble and small in front of the Lord. It even breaks the toughest walls within the heart. How such a small thing can make a person to rejoice with all his being. How grateful can a receiver be of one’s aid. The greetings, thank yous’ and prayers are sent to all the Finnish donors and prayers. And we get to be the mediators of all this. We get to preach, to declare and to pray as a called servants in this congregation.

We also encounter a strong worship and prayer group, which is a group of people gathered from all over the world. They reside under the same roof with us. We get to pray and worship together with them. God leads us into beautiful encounters. They invite us to join them into a prayer conference, which they are doing on the town’s stadium. We deploy ourselves into the crowds and pray over people. The amount of testimonies after this four day conference blows one’s mind: 400 people gave their lives to Jesus. Healings, breaking of the bonds. Huge joy and love. The unity which only the God of Israel can provide. The blessing facing the town of Ambo is also sprinkling in physical rain drops. There has not been any rain for months in the region before these days.

The second last day of the trip. We spend time with the families. With prayer, worshipping and giving aid. When all of the planned work is accomplished by the grace of our God we head into the main street of Ambo. Beautiful sunset and the full moon are painting the evening. We are driving down the main road which the locals call “One road, one heart”.

Then, something unforgettable happens. We are over runned by a huge crowd. They all are singing and shouting together as one: “The gospel is everything! Jesus is everything!” The crowd has taken the whole street. Cars are slowing down and finally stopping. Then slowly moving along with the crowds. We are slowly driving upstream. Hundreds of rejoicing men, women and children. The road is full of joy and love. There are more than thousand of them. One heart, one love. One road, one heart. Yes, this is it.

We got to experience so much. There were so much we got to do in so little time. All of that was and is the work of our Lord. All praise be to Him. He is the one who does the work. All the thanks, all the glory and all the praise to our Almighty Father in the name of Jesus Christ, Yeshua the Messiah. Amen.

The travel report here is a reminder for that God is doing His work during the corona pandemic. He isn’t restricted by this realm. Most of all, He is using the global situation to show His mercy and to extend His arm to those who still doesn’t know Him. This season at hand is a call to seek Him. This season is also a warning, a call to repent. And that, if what else, is mercy. He still gives time for us to cleanse ourselves through the blood of Yeshua. Those who are saved by grace through faith can build eternal and everlasting relationship with our God through Yeshua our Lord. And to do that with all the joy and peace.

So let us continue with resilience to pray for one another and for those who are not saved. It is always good and favourable!

With blessings,
Markus Nurmesniemi, editor
The profound life that God had created out of nothing and deposited in the clay capsules that he had extracted from the fine elements of the earth was the ultimate demonstration of the gevurot, the infinite powers of God.

As the Gevurot blessing declares, God is the one who has the power over death and life. The words of this benediction represent a prayerful affirmation of the specific words of Holy Scripture which declares, “The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up.”

The Gevurot confirms the fact that while God is the source of life, he is also the one who brings death where it is deserved or where he wills it. As Madigan and Levenson have pointed out, the Gevurot blessing “affirms simultaneously the cold, hard, unavoidable reality of death and the unshakable truth that God will revive the dead in the eschatological future.”

Shortly after breathing life into the inert body that became God-designed gender-specific humanity, God established the prototype of what he has since repeated countless times throughout human history when he set before Adam and Eve the choice of life or death, and urged them to “choose life.”

All the instructions that God then gave them were positive and provided blessings except for one, which first said, “From the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,” and then pronounced the penalty for non-compliance: “for in the day that you eat from it, you will surely die.”

Centuries later, God set precisely the same choice before the newly created nation of Israel that he had offered to their primordial ancestors: “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants.”

From the moment when they were created from absolute nothingness, human beings have always been accorded a level of free will that mirrors the image of God. The choice is simple enough: obey God’s instructions and receive life; disobey his mandates and receive death. While nothing could have been easier to understand, humans have often tragically chosen to rebel against God’s commands, and they have been penalized accordingly.

The First and the Last Enemy

God’s will for humanity has always been the same thing that he created in the beginning: existence from nothingness, life from the dead. This is why even after millions of human beings have failed to obey divine instructions and thereby escape death, “the gift of God is [still] eternal life.” God has always been for life, not death.
The unfortunate reality is this: death is the enemy of humanity. Death is not, however, God's cosmic arch-enemy.

There is simply no dualistic struggle between two equal and all-powerful beings, God and death, or God and ha-Satan. God is ultimately in charge of death and life, and he has complete sovereignty over both of them.

The “theology that underlies Gevurot is far from dualistic,” for “the same God who is ‘powerful to save’ and ‘faithful to revive the dead’ is also the ‘king who brings about death’—in other words, death’s own author, the One who gives life but also withdraws it.” Since God is the one who brings forth life, he must also be the one who brings about death.

Death is the first and the last enemy of humanity. Death, however, has always been the penalty exacted upon humans for their failure to live by divine instructions and imperatives. Indeed, it has always been true that “the wages of sin is death.” Such was the case in the Garden of Eden.

God gave Adam and Eve only one negative commandment: “You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” and both of them violated it. Both were summarily judged and punished by God. The sentence was, as God had predicted, the death penalty: “You will surely die.” And, the same judgment was inherited by all of Adam’s descendants because there was no one in Adam’s race who could overcome the sin of disobedience and the finality of its ultimate penalty. It is inescapable that “in Adam all die.”

The eschatological conclusion returns to the primordial beginning: “The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

The groaning of all human beings against the finality of death was expressed eloquently by Paul: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is infected by death?” And the answer to that quintessential question is the same that Paul gave: “Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

The one who delivers human beings from their first and last enemy is the God who created human existence from nothing by imbuing humanity with the divine breath of life. The same divine Word that spoke life into existence out of the void of utter nothingness in the beginning will deliver the Chosen People of all ages from the final enemy and bring them into eternal life.

Then, the power of death that has ruled over humanity since its corporate head, Adam, chose to subject himself to its dominion by disobeying God’s commandment will be swallowed up in the victory of God’s geruerot.

Restoring the Path to the Tree of Life

God’s design for human beings has always been for them to have life, abundant life, and even eternal life; however, God’s design for life is for a life of bliss and happiness, not a life of curse and damnation. This is the reason why even when Adam and Eve sinned, God maintained an open channel that would bring them back to life. God is simply never willing that anyone should die: “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise . . . but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

This divine preference for human beings, even in their rebellion and sin, was the reason why God expelled the first human couple from the Garden of Eden.

After it was clear that Adam and Eve had, indeed, sinned by disobeying the divine command, God proceeded to exact the penalty for sin and to make predictive statements of the consequences of their choices. Then, in the final act of the judgment, he banished both of the humans from the blissful garden where he had placed them.

Here is the reason that God gave for their expulsion: “Lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.”

What has almost always been viewed as a penalty exacted upon Adam and Eve for their sin was actually an act of divine mercy. God did not expel fallen humanity from the Garden because he was angry or disappointed with them.

He removed Adam and Eve, closed the gates to the Garden, and stationed cherubim with flaming swords to guard its entrance for one reason only: to ensure the fact that no sinful human would ever eat of the tree of life in a sinful state and then live forever as an irredeemable sinner.

Apparently after they had been given the choice of eating of every tree in the Garden of Eden, including the Tree of Life, or eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve had not partaken of the Tree of Life.

Living in a state of bliss, they were ill equipped to recognize the importance of partaking of the fruit of life. They were more intrigued with the prospects of what was concealed in the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

They simply neglected the ultimate treasure that was right in their grasp: eternal life. If they had chosen to eat of the Tree of Life, the focal point of the Garden of Eden, they would have immediately achieved immortality.

Most theologians have believed that Adam and Eve were either created as immortal beings or they were created with an immortal soul. For these thinkers, the sin and subsequent judgment against the primal couple caused
them to lose their original immortality. It is obvious, however, they did not actually possess immortality of any sort, for if they had been immortal, there would have been no discussion about barring them from the Tree of Life following their sin.

Reflecting on this situation, Levenson concludes, “It may be that Genesis 3 sees in the disobedience of the primal parents the origins not of the loss of immortality itself but of the chance to acquire immortality.”

Milton Steinberg also confirms this perspective as a part of traditional Jewish thought. A first-century Jewish rabbi and Christian apostle also reflected on this situation, and he reached the very same conclusion: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corrosion into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

Paul declared that this is the reason why the entire human creation “groans and suffers the pains of childbirth” and why believers also “groan,” waiting eagerly for “the redemption of our bodies.”

Eden, then, was simply a proving ground, a place for choices. God wisely made humans as mortal creatures to provide even more options should they fail to fulfill his design for their lives.

By giving them free will, God ensured that whatever decisions they made would be their own and would be made either out of love for him or out of their own self-interest.

Sadly, the newly created humans made the worst possible decision: they chose to disobey God. The one profound truth about God, however, is this: he is ever faithful, and he never gives up on his children.

Following the rebellion in Eden, God continued to deal with the fallen humans, albeit on a far diminished level, one that did not maintain the degree of intimacy that had existed between God and humanity when “the spirit of God walked in the garden in the cool of the day.”

God chose to disclose himself in different ways and at different times to men and women who were inclined toward him in faith, seeking to hear the revelation of his divine will, and he also continued to set before his children the choice between life and death, blessings and curses.

At Sinai, the Lord of creation codified his instructions for humanity in the Torah which he delivered to Moses on behalf of the Chosen People, the children of Israel. When those divine words of revelation were committed to writing on parchment, the scrolls that resulted were wound around cylinders or simple pieces of wood.

Over time, the ones on which the scrolls of the Torah were rolled came to be known among the Israelites as the Etz Chayim (“Tree of Life”). This designation demonstrated the great respect that the Jewish people had for the words of Torah as being the very words of life itself.

In reality, the Word of God is life. This is why Solomon said, “The commandment is a lamp and the [Torah] is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life,” and why David had similarly declared, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light unto my path.”

No wonder the Psalmist boasted of the Lord, “With you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.”

This same theme that assigns the giving of life to the Word of God can be seen in Jesus’ statement: “The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

This is why John observed that in Jesus was life, and the life that was in him was the light of humanity. Since he was the Word incarnate, Jesus could say, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” because he personified the very truth and the very life of God.

It was in the spirit of this understanding of truth and life that Jesus declared, “Blessed are those who . . . have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.”

And this truth is the foundation of his promise: “To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.”

Searching for Alternatives to Eden

Faced with the inevitability of decay and death, countless human beings in cultures around the world have sought in vain for a way to a fountain of youth, to the elixir of life.

Amazing efforts have been put forth to achieve eternal life, some of them fatal in themselves. Consider the case of Qin Shi Huang, the first leader of the Qin Dynasty in China, who became obsessed with a quest to achieve immortality and thought that by following his physicians’ prescription by eating powdered jade and by drinking mercury, he could become immortal.

The problem was that what he thought was “living silver” that would make immortal was the deadly heavy metal mercury. Instead of giving him life, his physicians’ prescription killed him.

Then, there was the famous Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon who spent years traversing the New World that Christopher Columbus had discovered searching for the Fountain of Youth that he knew just had to be there since no one had found it in the Old World.

The legend of the Fountain of Youth was actually thousands of years old, first documented in the writings of fifth-century BC Greek historian Herodotus. De Leon’s quest for eternal youth ended in death, for no
Fountain of Youth was to be found in the New World or anywhere else!

The inevitability of death, therefore, has loomed large over all those humans who have ever lived on planet Earth. No matter how they may have groaned within themselves, there has never been an escape from the ravages of time, the deterioration of a mortal body, and the inescapable end of human existence.

Everyone who has ever lived has died. The only questions have when, where, and how. And the expectation remains the same: “Human beings are destined to die and after that to be judged.”

The Inevitability of Death

Endless numbers of dreamers have searched for the secret to immortality; however, they all had two things in common: they all looked in the wrong place, and they all died. Whereas, in Eden, there was a death-arresting antidote, an agent that could stop the dying process in its tracks, there was nothing anywhere in the earth that could resolve the death dilemma.

The way to the Tree of Life was barred. The death-destroying, life-giving fruit of that tree was no longer available. No one could reach it.

And the simple truth still remains: everyone is born dying, and the dying process is unarrestable and inescapable. The judgment of God upon Adam and Eve, “you shall surely die,” has been conveyed with absolute certainty upon all of their progeny.

Consequently, a natural means of escape from the inevitability of death has never been found.

There is, however, an alternative, because the idea that “death represents an absolute terminus, as it does to the modern mind, is not a foregone conclusion in biblical thought.” In this biblical view, says Levenson, “death does not lose its reality or its grimness but only its finality.”

As long as God exists, there is life from the dead. He who alone has immortality commands the power to renew life and even reverse the final ravages of death through the resurrection of the dead.

Based on God’s original intention for human beings to have eternal life by partaking of the Tree of Life, there is hope because the purposes of God cannot forever be thwarted.

They may be delayed while alternate means of achieving those purposes are worked out, but they will ultimately come to fruition. God will have the final word in the dynamic saga of human existence, and that word will be “life from the dead.”

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The Messiah is Coming

Written by:
John D. Garr, Ph.D.

At the very heart of all biblical faith is the concept of Messianism, the belief the Messiah will come to earth to banish evil and establish universal peace.

The first promise in the Bible is a Messianic promise: A[the woman’s son] will bruise [the serpent’s] head (Genesis 3:15). The very last promise in the Bible is also a Messianic promise: Surely I come quickly (Revelation 22:20).

The expectation of the Messiah’s coming is the scarlet thread that is woven through the warp and woof of the entire fabric of Holy Scripture, making Messianism the one unified theme of the Word of God.

The two great biblical religions, Judaism and Christianity, rest on the secure confidence that the God of heaven and earth will send the Messiah to this planet to establish his dominion over all the earth.

For millennia the Jewish people around the world have affirmed their expectation of the coming of the Messiah.

Then he offered this aside: >When the Messiah comes, I want to ask him the same question that I have asked thousands of pilgrims to this holy land, >Is this your first visit to Jerusalem, or have you been here before?

Regarding the Messiah’s advent, Teddy Kolleck, the long-time mayor of the city of Jerusalem once said, >I have the most difficult job of anyone, that of preparing the capital city of the world for the coming of the Messiah.

The Hebraic understanding of the coming and return of the Messiah is unique among the religions of the world, all of with prophetic insight that continually unfolded and expanded the understanding of the person and the work of the Mashiach. From the simple promise to Eve that a Son would be born, to Gabriel’s annunciation to Mary that the fullness of the time had come for her to conceive the Aholy thing that would be called the Son of God, God continued to reveal his determination to bring the Messiah to the earth to make the fullest possible disclosure of his person, his Word, and his will.
which have a completely different world view and mind-set than that of biblical faith.

The Greek philosophers believed that the ideal was for the sparks of the divine that had been entrapped in evil matter (their own bodies) to escape and to be absorbed into the spiritual, the realm of ideas.

Eastern monism believes that the ideal is achieved when one escapes the endless wheel of reincarnation by passing into nothingness. Biblical religion, however, is not an escapist faith. It insists that God is the Creator of heaven and earth and that good will ultimately triumph over evil when the same God sends the Messiah to establish his dominion over the earth.

It also teaches that all the righteous of the earth, both Jew and Gentile, will stand with the Messiah in the resurrection of the dead. Further, these righteous ones will rule with the Messiah over this planet so that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the water covers the sea.

Much of Christianity has bought into the escapism of the neo-Platonist philosophers that was brought into the church as it was Hellenized and Latinized during the Middle Ages. Most Christians think of going to heaven, escaping the confines of this evil, ever-degenerating planet earth. This escapist mentality has fostered in many Christians a lack of concern for the society of man. The Jewish understanding of the Messianic expectation, however, is that of Tikun Olam, the restoration of the world in which man in partnership with God works continually at the improvement of the earth and the society of man, all the while expecting the Garden of Eden experience to be restored fully when the Messiah comes.

Other Christians have subscribed to the Augustinian concept of amillennialism that suggests that the earth will gradually be pervaded with the gospel and that Christianity will assume control of the world through political manipulation, dispelling evil in the process.

This concept virtually eliminates the idea of the coming of the Messiah from the understanding of much of the church. The incontrovertible evidence of history is that man cannot bring universal peace and brotherhood through his own volition.

Though he is responsible for working toward that lofty goal, it will be realized only when the Messiah comes.

The truth is that the earliest church was thoroughly Messianic, both in its faith in the completed work of Jesus on Calvary for the redemption of mankind from sin and in its expectation that this same Jesus would return to the earth, bringing the righteous dead with him and catching the living saints up to be with him in his Kingdom. Apocalypticism and eschatology were centerpieces of apostolic teaching and faith.

The concept that Jesus was the Messiah and that he would return to bring the resurrection and the age of universal peace in the kingdom of God was not an apostolic innovation, however. It was merely the actualization of the long-established Jewish Messianic expectation. The Apocalypse (the Revelation of Jesus Christ) serves the single purpose of teaching what has been, what was, and what would be concerning the person of Jesus Christ.

It is fully realized in chapter 19 when the Person of the Word of God returns to the earth, followed by the armies of heaven.

The angels promised the believers who witnessed Jesus’ ascension into heaven, This same Jesus will return in like manner. And, indeed he shall: the same Jesus (not an apparition or an emissary) will return to the same place from which he ascended (the Mount of Olives) and in the same manner in which he ascended (in clouds).

Though as Peter predicted, scoffers have come, saying, Where is the promise of his coming, the day of Messiah will come, and the faith of millions of Jews and Christians will be realized. When he returns, Jesus will still be the same Jewish Lord and Savior, of the lineage of Abraham and David, not a faceless wraith of abstractions.

Jews through the centuries have publicly affirmed their belief: “with perfect faith” in the Messiah’s coming according to Maimonides’ articles of faith. Millions have died with the same expectation of Messiah in their hearts that was a song on the lips of the martyrs in the Warsaw ghetto:

I believe, I believe, I believe
Sincerely, firmly, and devoutly
In the coming of the Messiah.
I believe in the Messiah,
And, though he tarry,
No less firmly I believe.
And though he tarry longer still,
Nevertheless, I believe in the Messiah,
I believe, I believe, I believe
Likewise, multiplied millions of Christians have affirmed their faith in the returning Messiah in their affirmation of faith in the Apostles’ Creed. Untold numbers have died with their hearts anchored firmly on this expectation: Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). May every believer echo Paul’s exclamation, Maranatha! (“Come, Lord!”)

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www.hebraiccommunity.org

Photo: Markus Nurmesniemi
Written by:  
Dr Clifford Denton

How does the God of Israel choose whom He will save?

This is an issue that divides Christian denominations. Some teach that, in a mysterious way, beyond our human ability to fully understand, those whom He saves were known by God even before the creation of the world. There is much to attract us to accept this as the truth. The idea seems to elevate our understanding of God much higher than in other theologies. There is a sense of security that God will take His chosen ones through to eternal life whatever they might do, and free will is over-ridden for all who are chosen in the important matter of eternal destiny.

Others take a view at another extreme, where the choosing is an individual’s choice of God as much as God’s choice of an individual. Christian doctrine lies between these two poles depending on the denomination, and the theologies come under the broad scope of either Calvinism or Arminianism. The principle of election overlaps other principles. Among these are predestination, foreknowledge and walking with God. If we try to develop systems of theology they must be robust enough to have no contradictions when viewed in the light of all truth.

Yeshua said in His teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven, “Many are called but few are chosen”.

There seems to be a difference between those who are called and those who are chosen. One question we must ask is how much God leaves to the “here and now” in His choosing, rather than pre-planning through many years of human history.

There are some things that He has determined thousands of years in advance. He has made a Covenant with Abraham that will not be revoked. There will be a multitude drawn from every nation, redeemed from the curse of the Fall who will live with Him forever.

He has made Covenant with the Nation of Israel that will not be forgotten. But can we identify the exact representatives from the history of the world who will be in the final redeemed family drawn from all nations? We neither have the list of names nor the formula for identifying the individuals, which is why we can only go so far with our understanding.
Language and culture influence our interpretation of biblical truth. Greek language and culture has influenced much theology in the Christian Church.

This is why some theologies are over-philosophical in the Greek sense. In seeking to “dot every i and cross every t” of theology ideas have emerged that, when pushed to their philosophical conclusion, imply that God has, before even the creation of the world, chosen exactly who will be saved and who will not be saved.

This implies that, even before they were born, some people had no possibility of eternal life. Without denying how much God pre-plans and sees ahead of time, or denying that He could work this way if He so desired, there is something that jars with this sort of biblical interpretation.

More and more believers are looking at the Bible again through Hebraic eyes and seeking to live a life of faith that is in accord with this. Hebraically, knowing is not just the knowledge of facts: it is an intimate relationship. If God foreknows us it implies a beginning of relationship involving a sort of wooing by God. The Bible teaches that He predestines those whom He foreknew (Romans 8:29).

Hebraically, then, we form a picture of God building a relationship with an individual through a kind of wooing, so that He might find a response in that person that the person might then be transformed into the image of His Son.

This is in “real time” as far as an individual is concerned. God has an unfailing plan to draw multitudes to Him, but the identity of individuals is one at a time as they are won through His seeking after them. There will be a Covenant family, but individuals are called into this group at the time they are physical beings on the earth not before they are born.

The call of God goes out across the entire world. Psalm 19 declares that even the Creation speaks in a visual language of the existence of God. God’s other resources are through the preaching of the Gospel, through signs and miracles and even through dreams and personal direct revelation. The calling is not the choosing, but through the calling many find a heart response towards God which He uses to reveal more of Himself and uses for early relation-building as a lover would woo His beloved. This is the beginning of commitment and brings about the first step of Halakhah (walking with God).

Many are called and the call results in God’s choosing when response leads to interaction and a building of relationship that results in the full measure of Covenant promise being afforded to an individual. Hebraically, we cannot settle for what may be wonderful philosophy through Greek eyes but which does not necessarily build relationship between a man or woman and their Maker.

A picture of how God calls and chooses is found in the history of Israel. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob entered into Covenant and then the Tribes were called out of Egypt where a walk with God began.

The culmination of that walk both for Israelites and for those who respond to the call from the Gentile world will lead to the final choosing for eternal life.

Many are called but few are chosen. If you hear the call from God through the witness of His Creation or through the preaching of the Gospel, even a beginning tentative response in faith will be used by God and lead to the call becoming a choosing for eternal life.
Written by: Keijo Lindeman

“For we know in part and we prophesy in part” (1 Cor. 13:9).

As in the days when you came out of Egypt, I will show My wonders. Nations will see and be ashamed, deprived of all their might. They will put their hands over their mouths, and their ears will become deaf. They will lick the dust like a snake, like reptiles slithering on the ground.

They will crawl from their holes in the presence of the LORD our God; they will tremble in fear of You (Micah 7:15-17).

When God delivered the people of Israel from the slavery of Egypt in the days of Moses, it was after the tenth plague through which the Lord punished Egypt and the proud pharaoh (Ex. 5-14).

God made wonders through Moses in the midst of Egyptians then (Ex. 11:9), and these wonders and plagues will occur again in the end time. The world will also see the final great exodus, when God gathers his people back to their own land “not leaving any behind” (Eze. 39:28-29). When we turn to the Book of Revelation, we find there all the plagues of Egypt occurring in the end time, such as they were, or in a modern form. One of these plagues was pestilence, a serious infectious disease.

Plague on Livestock in Egypt

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh and tell him that this is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: ‘Let My people go, so that they may worship Me. But if you continue to restrain them and refuse to let them go, then the hand of the LORD will bring a severe plague (hebrew dever=plague, severe infectious disease) on your livestock in the field—on your horses, donkeys, camels, herds, and flocks. But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die.’” The LORD set a time, saying, “Tomorrow the LORD will do this in the land.” And the next day the LORD did just that. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one animal belonging to the Israelites died. Pharaoh sent officials and found that none of the livestock of the Israelites had died. But Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he would not let the people go” (Ex. 9:1-7).

A severe plague on livestock was the fifth plague God punished Egypt with. All these plagues were directed against the idols of Egypt and the proud pharaoh who was considered the son of sun-god Ra and a god according to the Egyptian religion (Ex. 12:12). But the Israelites were kept safe from the plague on livestock, and from all plagues.

The plague killed the firstborn of Egypt

“He unleashed His fury against them, wrath, indignation, and calamity—a band of destroying angels. He cleared a path for His anger; He did not spare them from death but delivered their lives to the plague. He struck all the first-
born of Egypt, the virility in the tents of Ham” (Ps. 78:49-51).

The Book of Psalms describes the tenth plague of Egypt. In his hot anger God struck down the firstborn of Egypt. The plague went through the whole land of Egypt so that all the firstborn, the pharaoh’s firstborn included, died of a severe pestilence (Ex. 12:29-30). Only the firstborn of Israel were not touched (Ex. 12:21-23). Eventually God hurled the army of the pharaoh into the Red Sea (Ex. 14). This was the final blow to the proud pharaoh and Egypt for having enslaved and oppressed the Israelites for 400 years and drowned their male children in the river Nile into the jaws of crocodiles (Ex. 1:13-22).

End time plague – a sign of Yeshua’s coming

“When you hear of wars and rebellions, do not be alarmed. These things must happen first, but the end is not imminent.” Then He told them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, famines, and pestilences (Greek NT loimoi; Hebrew dever) in various places, along with fearful sights and great signs from heaven” (and enormous storms, Aram. NT) (Luke 21:9-11).

When Yeshua told his disciples about the signs of the end time and of his coming, he talked about many things that would tell that his coming was near (Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21). There would be deception, natural catastrophies, violent storms, rebellions (manifestations), rumours of war, fighting that would even lead to a global war, turning away from faith, persecution, hard times and great tribulations. One of the signs of the Messiah’s coming is pestilence.

Pestilence in Revelation

“Or if I send a plague into that land and pour out My wrath upon it through bloodshed, cutting off from it both man and beast, then as surely as I live, declares the Lord GOD, even if Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they could deliver neither sons nor daughters. Their righteousness could save only themselves. For this is what the Lord GOD says: ‘How much worse will it be when I send against Jerusalem My four dire judgments—sword, famine, wild beasts, and plague—in order to cut off from it both man and beast?’” (Eze. 14:19-21).

“And when the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” Then I looked and saw a pale horse. Its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed close behind. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill by sword, by famine, by plague (Greek NT: thanato=death; Hebr NT dever=pestilence), and by the beasts of the earth” (Rev. 6:7-8).

In Ezekiel’s days God was angry at Israelites because of their sins and idolatry. God threatened to discipline his people with four dire judgments: sword, famine, plague, and beasts. Not even the three righteous men, Noah, Daniel and Job, if they were in the midst of the people, could not save the people from judgment. These three righteous men would only save their own lives because of their righteousness.

When the Lamb, in Revelation, opens the fourth seal, similar judgments are poured on the ungodly world in the end time: sword, famine, plague and wild beasts. In the modern world wild beasts like lions, bears, and panthers are not so great a danger to man as man is to them.

The text refers to the beastly kingdoms of the end time, about which Daniel 7 and Revelation 13 speak. These four plagues, severe infectious diseases included, strikes a fourth part of the earth.

In the past, a global pandemic called Spanish flu made havoc in the years 1918-1920. It was caused by a remarkably deadly H1N1 virus, a mutation of influenza A. The worst stage of the pandemic lasted about eighteen months. The number of deaths is estimated to be from 39 to 100 million. In recent years there have been epidemics of Asian flu, swine flu, bird flu and SARS. At the end of 2019, coronavirus emerged in Wuhan, China.
from where it has spread all over the world. Because of this pandemic emergency procedures and laws have been enforced in most countries to restrict freedom of movement and public gatherings. Elderly people and people belonging to a high risk group have been advised to stay at home in quarantine. For the first time after the II World War the Finnish Government was authorised to use emergency powers.

All around the world millions of people have been infected and hundreds of thousands have died, especially aged and sick people. There is the danger of a second or even a third wave of coronavirus pandemic which delays the end of this pandemic and kills more people.

This pandemic has caused chaos in economic life which may bring about recession, bankrupts, and increase of unemployment and national debt. Many people think that life will be permanently changed after the coronavirus pandemic.

The situation is uncertain; no one knows what the future will bring. People walk like blind men when there is no way to see clearly into the future, just as the prophet Zephaniah has prophesied would happen when the great day of the Lord is near in the end time (Zeph.1:14-18).

This plague of coronavirus pandemic is just a reminder from God for us to repent and turn to the living God and give Him the glory. Unless this happens, we may expect much worse things to happen also in economic life (Isa. 13:9-13).

**Corona in the book of Proverbs**

“A man’s spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?” (Pro. 18:14).

In the Hebrew Scriptures this verse reads as follows: “Ruakh ish jekhalkel makhalehu veruakh nekheah mi jishaenah”, in English: “A spiritual man endures his sickness, and who can bear an anxious mind.”

The Aramaic Bible (Targum) uses here the word “corona” instead of sickness. Corona in the Aramaic text does not mean “crown” but “sickness, weakness”. Therefore the first part of the verse reads as follows: “A spiritual man endures his corona (sickness, weakness)...” Corona, meaning weakness or sickness, is found also in the Aramaic texts of the New Covenant (e.g. Matthew 8:17; Luke 13.12).

**Masque and Quarantine in the Torah**

“A diseased person must wear torn clothes and let his hair hang loose, and he must cover his mouth [Hebrew NT: moustache] and cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean!’ As long as he has the infection, he remains unclean. He must live alone in a place outside the camp” (Lev.13:45-46).

During this coronavirus pandemic the authorities have given instructions and orders on how to behave. All people, especially those infected, must take care not to infect other people, nor let themselves be infected. Big events and gatherings, such as festivals, sports events and the like, are forbidden or restricted during the pandemic.

People must keep a safety distance between each other and a masque covering the lower part of the face is recommended. The masque is obligatory for those involved in health care.

There is nothing new here. God already gave through Moses similar instructions on how to prevent leprosy from spreading. People who had contracted the disease were obliged to live isolated, in quarantine, and cover their mouth (moustache).

They had to shout “unclean, unclean” so that healthy people would stay in a safe distance from them. God has given good instructions thousands of years ago to the people of Israel, and when they have followed these instructions, they have enjoyed better health than other people. The result was, however, tragic: superstitious people thought they were “witches” and persecuted them.

**Israelites Were Saved by the Blood of the Lamb**

“Then Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and told them, “Go at once and select for yourselves a lamb for each family, and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a cluster of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin, and brush the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe. None of you
shall go out the door of his house until morning. When the LORD passes through to strike down the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway; so He will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down” (Ex. 12:21-23).

“The next day John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29).

“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death” (Rev. 12:11).

“A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it” (Pro. 22:3).

When the plague killed the firstborn of Egypt, Israelites were safe. God told them to stay indoors, in their homes (“in quarantine”), as the plague passed by striking down all firstborn of Egypt. Israelites had put some blood of a slaughtered lamb on the sides and tops of the door-frames of their houses, and the plague never touched any of them.

This is what is going to happen in the end time. When the coronavirus pandemic is spreading in Finland and all over the world, the government and health care authorities have recommended to avoid gatherings and stay indoors (in quarantine). This is vital for the aged and the sick.

Believers’ safeguard is the blood of the Lamb of God, Yeshua the Messiah, that He shed on the cross as atonement for our sins. It is by the power of the blood of Yeshua that believers overcome the powers of darkness.

It is also good to follow the orders given by the authorities, and avoid taking unnecessary risks. A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge.

God is the believer’s refuge

“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the LORD, “You are my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” Surely He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly plague. He will cover you with His feathers; under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and rampart.

You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the calamity that destroys at noon. Though a thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, no harm will come near you” (Ps. 91:1-7).

The most important piece of advice against the pestilence and plagues of the end time is: “Trust the Almighty God!” The Bible tells us that even the hairs of our head are numbered (Mt. 10:30; Lk. 12:7). If a hair falls down from our head, we don’t even know it, but God does. Nothing happens to God’s own people without His knowledge and permission. Let us not be afraid. Let us trust in God and take refuge under the atoning blood of Yeshua, and follow the advice of the authorities. Eventually everything turns out for the best for God’s children.
For we know in part and we prophesy in part. (1 Cor. 13:9).

The Glorious Resurrection
Condition of Believers

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ the firstfruits; then at His coming, those who belong to Him. Then the end will come, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power (1 Cor. 15:20-24).

And many who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, but others to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2).

Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out—those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment (Joh. 5:28-29).

But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to subject all things to Himself, will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body (Phil. 3:20-21).

But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” You fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or something else. But God gives it a body as He has designed, and to each kind of seed He gives its own body. Not all flesh is the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another, and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies. But the splendor of the heavenly bodies is of one degree, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is of another. The sun has one degree of splendor, the moon another, and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead: What is sown is perishable; it is raised imperishable. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Now I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must be clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality (1 Cor. 15:35-44, 50-53).

Let us consider a bit closer believers’ wonderful state of
resurrection as they, in their resurrection bodies, reign in the so-called Millennial Kingdom of Peace alongside with the Messiah.

The Bible tells us that the resurrection of the dead is not a single happening once and for all in connection with the Day of Judgment, although this view is taught in many Christian circles, because resurrection is divided in turns. Firstly, the resurrection of the dead can be divided in two parts: there is resurrection to life and resurrection to be condemned, or the first resurrection and the resurrection of judgment (Rev. 20:1-6).

The first resurrection, or the resurrection to life, occurs before the Millennial Kingdom of Peace and the resurrection of condemnation occurs after the the reign of the Millennial Kingdom of Peace, in connection with the Last Judgement, when the ungodly are raised from the dead to shame and eternal torment (Rev. 20:1-15).

On the other hand, the resurrection to life, or the resurrection of the righteous, is also divided in turns. The first-born is the Messiah, who was resurrected as the first-born of the dead. And when Yeshua was resurrected, He raised to life with Him in Jerusalem the saints of the Old Covenant (Lk. 14:14; Mt. 27:50-53).

This was “the sheaf of first-fruits” that the High Priest Yeshua the Messiah “waved” in front of the Father in the heavenly temple (Lev. 23:9-14; Heb. 9:11-28; further comments on this in the writer’s book Apostolinen seurakunta ja antikristuksen eksyys [The Apostolic Church and the Anti-Messianic Deception]).

The actual main body of the resurrected will be raised when the Messiah comes to fetch His own in His second coming. Those who have died in faith will be raised first and those believers who are still alive will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, through a process similar to death, and taken together with the dead in Christ up to the air to meet the Lord, so that we may always be with the Lord.

After that the end will come. This is commonly understood to mean that the second phase of the resurrection of the righteous will occur in the connection with the Last Judgement that follows the Millennial Kingdom of the Messiah.

The Bible is not very clear about this, however, it is usually understood that those who have accepted Yeshua as their Lord during the Thousand Year Kingdom, i.e. the latter part of those belonging to the resurrection to life, will be raised in connection with the Day of Judgment.

When the Lord Yeshua comes, the dead in faith will be resurrected, and those believers who are alive will be changed and given their resurrection body in the twinkling of an eye. When the Apostle Paul says that “we will not all sleep”, he does not mean that believers will be spared death; it is written that all people must die because of sin (Rom. 5:12; Heb. 9:27).

However, as for believers, the process of dying at the Lord’s coming is so quick that there will be no time for funerals; no time to bury them in their graves “to sleep”, as the Bible so gently refers to the dead in Christ in their graves (Joh.11:11-13; Isa. 26:19).

At he Lord’s coming, people living in faith will in a split second undergo death and transformation into the state of resurrection. All must, however, fulfill the law of death, because flesh and blood will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. Flesh must die so that there won’t be any rebirth of flesh in the heavenly condition (Rom. 7:18-25).

At the Lord’s coming believers will be given a new wonderful resurrection body, like the one Yeshua had after His resurrection.

This earthly body is like a dying seed from which the new resurrection body comes up. The resurrection body is an immortal body, an imperishable body, a spiritual body, and a body of power and glory with different shades of glory according to our ministry and faithfulness on earth (Dan. 12:2-3; Mt. 13:43).

In that heavenly condition we will be transformed from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). It is a body totally without pain or sickness or any deficiency (Rev. 21:4). It is a body with no need of food, however, it is able to enjoy food (Lk. 24:36-43).

It is a body in which we can translate from place to place in a second, appear to people gathered in a locked room, for instance, and disappear again in a split second (Joh. 20:19-29). It is a body like a bridge between two worlds, this material and visible world and the invisible realm of the spirit.

It is a heavenly state in which people neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they will be like the angels in heaven (Mt. 22: 23-32). It is a body in which we know fully as we ourselves are fully known, in a condition full of righteousness, peace, love, and joy (1 Cor. 13:1-13; Mt 25:21).

Man Restored – Image of God

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them (Gen. 1:2).

Not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of
the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (Rm. 8:23).

Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Beloved, we are now children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is (1 Joh. 3:1-2).

When God created man in the garden of Eden, man was the image of God. It is most obvious that before the Fall man had a “spiritual” (immortal) body, in the likeness of the Messiah, and was able to utilize the capacities of this spiritual, glorious body.

When man then committed sin in the early Garden, the glory of the spiritual body disappeared and the fallen man remained prisoner of a mortal body and was no more able to utilize the capacities of the body of grace in his sinful state. (Gen. 3:1-24; Rom. 3:23; Ps. 104:1-2; Ex. 34:29-35; Job 19:25-27, further comments are found in the writer’s book Apostolinen seurakunta [The Apostolic church]).

When the Lord Yeshua redeemed mankind on the cross, every person’s spirit, soul, and body were redeemed from their decay back to God. Every person who repents and in faith accepts Yeshua as their Lord will have their sins forgiven, and redemption comes into effect for their spirit and soul. In principle, also the body of the offspring of fallen Adam has been redeemed on the cross, but the actual redemption of the body awaits its time.

Until then we must wait for the redemption of our bodies and live in this mortal body, in which powers of death and sickness are at work so that finally our bodies will be meat for worms (Rm 7: 24-25; 8:17-23).

At the Lord Yeshua’s coming He will, in His coming, transform with His power our bodies of decay into the likeness of His glorious body. That is when the redemption of the bodies of believers will be finally completed and man will again become the image of God; a resurrected human being in the likeness of the Messiah, in which spirit, soul, and body form one heavenly entity.

The restoration of the fallen man of the Adamic line will then be reality. The Thousand Year Messianic Kingdom of Peace will be a time in which the restored descendants of Adam in their resurrection state may “practise” in ministerial and administrative tasks and thus prepare themselves for the time of the new heavens and the new earth, in which the saints will minister and reign in the future world with God and the Messiah (Rev. 22:1-5; 2 Pt. 3:13).

Israel as the People of Priests of God in the Edenic Kingdom

They will rebuild the ancient ruins; they will restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. Strangers will stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners will be your plowmen and vinedressers. But you will be called the priests of the LORD; they will speak of you as ministers of our God; you will feed on the wealth of the nations, and you will boast in their riches (Isa. 61:4-6).

This is what the LORD of Hosts says: “Peoples will yet come—the residents of many cities—and the residents of one city will go to another, saying: ‘Let us go at once to plead before the LORD and to seek the LORD of Hosts. I myself am going.’ And many peoples and strong nations will come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem and to plead before the LORD.” This is what the LORD of Hosts says: “In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue will tightly grasp the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.’” (Zec. 8:20-23).

This is what Isaiah, son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: In the last days the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say: ‘Come, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law (Hebrew Torah, teaching, doctrine, law) will go out of Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore (Isa. 2:1-4).

For then I will restore pure lips to the peoples, that all may call upon the name of the LORD and serve Him shoulder to shoulder (Zeph. 3:9).

For the LORD will comfort Zion and look with compassion on all her ruins; He will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and melodious song (Isa. 51:3).

I will rejoice in Jerusalem and take delight in My people. The sounds of weeping and crying will no longer be heard in her. 20No longer will a nursing infant live but a few days, or an old man not live out his years. For the youth will die at a hundred years, and he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses for others to inhabit; nor plant for others to eat. For as is the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, and My chosen ones will fully enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain or bear children doomed to disaster; for they will be a people blessed by the LORD—they and their descendants with them. Even before they call, I will answer, and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but the food of the serpent will be dust. They will do no harm nor destruction on all My holy mountain, says the Lord (Isa. 65:19-25).

Fishermen will stand by the shore; from En-Gedi to Englaim they will spread their nets to catch fish of many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. Along both banks of the river, fruit trees of all kinds will grow. Their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. Each month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will be used for food and their leaves for healing (Eze. 47:10,12).

There have been possibly already two Edenic kingdoms, or at least one, on the earth (Eze.28:13-19; Gen. 2:8-15). The Messianic Kingdom will also be a time of the Edenic Kingdom (the second or possibly the third Eden on earth). In the times of Noah, the sea
of fog that surrounded the atmosphere rained down over the earth causing the Flood (Gen. 1: 6-8; 7:1-13). During the birth-pains of the end times part of the waters of the earth will rise and protect the earth as a sea of fog; thus the climate and conditions of the earth will be restored to their Edenic state (Rev. 8:8-9; Isa. 4:1-6; Acts 3:19-21). The sun does not shine too intensely, the climate and conditions are ideal for a paradise on earth. These Edenic conditions bring many blessings. Vegetation will be abundant and there will be plenty of food for everyone on the earth (Joel 2:23-27). And as in the beginning, people will be vegetarians in general (Gen. 1:29), also fish will be eaten, as we learn from Ezekiel’s vision (Eze. 47:10). Because of God’s Spirit all animals will be so tame that lions, bears, and other beasts are as tame as cattle, and they will use “every green plant” for food (Gen. 1:30; some scholars consider this an allegory).

In the Edenic Kingdom people will live to be hundreds of years old (but not as to reach one thousand), as in Adam’s days (Isa. 65:20-22; Gen. 5). There are at least three reasons for this. Firstly, the orbit of the earth is evidently a little closer to the sun, which implies that the years are a little shorter. Secondly, the living conditions on this Edenic earth are healthy, which makes it possible for men to live long. Thirdly, God’s blessing must have part in keeping people alive, so that no one will die young or not live out his years. In the midst of the judgments of the End Time great cities, nests of sin of the world, have been thoroughly wiped out; in the Edenic Kingdom the living is more country-like, everyone can have their own vine and fig tree (Rev. 16:19; Zeph. 3:6; Mic. 4:4; Zec. 3:10).

From under the threshold of the temple of Jerusalem flows a river with two branches, one branch goes to the Mediterranean (Western Sea) and the other to the Salt Sea (Eastern Sea) which comes alive and swarms with fish for the fishermen to catch (Eze. 47:1-12; Zec. 14:8; Joel 3:18).

The riches of nations will flow to Jerusalem and Israel will possess all their wealth (Isa. 60). It will be a time of bliss and blessings for Israel and the whole earth. There will be no more armies in the world, people are not taught to make war, because the Millennial Messianic Kingdom will be a Kingdom of Peace ruled by the Prince of Peace, Yeshua the Messiah and His resurrected saints.

God’s own people, Israel, will be particularly blessed, and they will serve as people of priests, according to their original calling, and take the gospel to all nations (Ex. 19:6). Nations will flow to Jerusalem, to the highest mountain on the earth, to hear the teaching of the Word of God. The believing remnant and their descendants will proclaim the Good News in the midst of all nations. That is when we can speak of Christian nations in the real sense of the word, for so large are the crowds who will accept the message of salvation.

There are people who interpret biblical prophecies, those of Isaiah and others, so that they do not refer to any Thousand Year Edenic Kingdom but to the age of new heavens and a new earth. Usually these people also deny the literal existence of a Thousand Year Kingdom of Peace, and say that Revelation 20, for instance, is to be taken symbolically.

It is true, indeed, that the prophecies of Isaiah 65, for instance, concern ultimately the age of the new heavens and the new earth, as it is clearly stated there (Isa. 65:17). However, it is not
possible that the prophecies of Isaiah 65 only refer to the age of the new heavens and the new earth, because there is neither death nor sin in the new heavens and the new earth (Isa. 25:8; Rev. 20:11-21:8; 2 Pt. 3:13).

It is remarkable though that Isaiah prophesies that in that Edenic Kingdom the youngest person dies at the age of a hundred, and who dies at less than a hundred will be thought cursed (Isa. 65:20).

It seems clear therefore that Isaiah’s prophecy must have its first fulfillment in the Messianic Kingdom of Peace already before its ultimate fulfillment in the age of the new heavens and the new earth in which there is neither death nor sin any more.

The Prophet Isaiah’s prophecy must therefore also be a description of the Thousand Year Edenic Kingdom before the age of the new heavens and the new earth, age in which people (those who have survived the judgements of the end times, and their descendants) still live in mortal bodies on the earth and nevertheless reach a high age. In the Kingdom of Peace people live in sinful bodies and need the good news of the Gospel to salvation, although sin does not rule people as it does today. Although satan is bound and cannot incite people to rebellion, each person’s fleshly desires keep on trying to make them fall into sin.

People still need salvation in the age of the Kingdom of Peace, and huge crowds will turn to Yeshua and the Gospel and the knowledge of righteousness will reach nations (Jac. 1:12-15; Mt. 24:14; Isa. 11:9; Zeph. 3:9, 12-17).

People who don’t accept the literal interpretation of the Thousand Year Kingdom of Peace also generally reject the idea of Israel having a special status and role in the future.

According to their distorted interpretation God rejected Israel when Israel rejected their Messiah, and for them Israel is just a nation among nations and will be saved one by one just as the rest of the nations (Jer. 31:35-37; Rm 11:1-2). This theory claims that the church has inherited Israel’s place in the New Covenant.

To these representatives of replacement theory who interpret falsely the Bible we need to say that if the numerous prophecies concerning the scattering of Israelis among the nations and their gathering to their own land from among the nations in the last days have literally been fulfilled as far as earthly Israel is concerned, so will the prophecies concerning Israel’s spiritual reformation and salvation to a people of priests be literally fulfilled as far as the remnant of earthly Israel is concerned, and not as far as the church is concerned which is what the false antisemitic replacement theology teaches (Ezek. 36-37).

What God has declared in His Word will come literally true for Israel as well as for the church of God.

It is worth while to follow faithfully Yeshua the Messiah in order to be included in the coming Messianic Millennial Kingdom and the everlasting Kingdom of God in the new heavens and the new earth thereafter (Rev. 20-22).
"...that all of them may be one (echad)..." Joh. 17:21