

Webb Mealy Point-By-Point Response to “Last Days Detective” YouTube Video Entitled “Millennial Population”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7Xo9Y0W7xA>

(1) He reads a long portion from Zech. 14 to demonstrate that there will be unresurrected people populating God’s kingdom in the age to come. I acknowledge that the MT (Hebrew Masoretic Text), on which English Bibles are usually based, appears to picture the kingdom age as one in which God has to force some nations to go up and worship at Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths:

And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, **there will be no rain on them**. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths” (14:17-18).

Sometimes the LXX (the Septuagint Greek translation of the OT, ca. 200 BC) reflects a more ancient (and correct) Hebrew text than the MT (9th–10th century AD, more than a thousand years later). The LXX version of Zech. 14:17, thanks to a small but crucial difference from the MT, essentially affirms that any nation that will not go up and (willingly) worship the LORD will suffer exactly the same fate as those who actually fought against Jerusalem in the last battle of this age—namely, they will be instantly destroyed:

12 And this shall be the calamity with which the Lord will cut off all the peoples who waged war against Jerusalem: their flesh shall melt away as they stand on their feet, and their eyes shall ooze from their sockets, and their tongue shall melt in their mouth. ... 15 And this shall be the overthrow of the horses and the mules and the camels and the donkeys and all the animals that are in those camps, according to this calamity. 16 And it will be that all who remain of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall also go up year after year to do obeisance to the King, the Lord Almighty, and to keep the Feast of Booths. 17 And it shall be that all who do not go up from all the tribes of the earth to Jerusalem to do obeisance to the King, the Lord Almighty, **they too shall be added to the others** [i.e. to those who were instantly destroyed in v. 12]. 18 And if the tribe of Egypt should not go up or come, **then on these shall be the calamity with which the Lord will strike all the nations** [i.e. instant destruction, see v. 12, 17], as many as will not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.

I suspect that the LXX faithfully reflects the original Hebrew, and that the MT reflects a later expansion and elaboration designed to make sense of the curt phrase “they too shall be added to the others” (v. 17). If the LXX does indeed reflect the original Hebrew better than the MT, then Zechariah 14 teaches that all the survivors from the nations will willingly go up and worship the LORD in Jerusalem—a promise that is fulfilled in the new creation by the international community of the faithful (see, e.g., Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9-17; 21:24-27). Note that Rev. 21:27 affirms that only those whose names are in the Lamb’s Book of Life will be allowed to enter the New Jerusalem.

(2) He says, commenting on Mt. 25:31-46, the Judgment of the Nations, “Those who are left of all the nations will be treated according to how they treated the believers. Those among the nations who treated them well will be reckoned by Christ to be worthy of entering the kingdom, in the state that they are in, that is, as mortals.”

In support of this, he quotes Jesus as earlier having prophesied, "He who the one who receives a righteous person because he is a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward." (Mt 10:41). He takes this (as I also take it) as speaking about people who treat Christ's disciples kindly. I agree as to who he is talking about. But if they are to receive the same reward as the believers, as in Mt. 10:41, this ought to mean that they receive the incorruptible and age-lasting life of the age to come. This, indeed, is what Jesus says about the sheep: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'" This is the same kingdom that Paul says flesh and blood (i.e. mortal people) *cannot* inherit (1 Cor. 15:50, see below). He goes on to say of the sheep, "And these...the righteous will go into eternal life." The expression "eternal life" does not here, nor anywhere in the New Testament, refer to mortal life.

(3) He then quotes Rev. 2:26-27:

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

But he leaves off the part about breaking crockery into smithereens—an entirely negative imagery, the imagery of slaying and completely destroying enemies, as becomes the more unquestionable when we compare the OT background of this language and the use to which it is put in Revelation 19:

"You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:9).

"From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty" (Rev. 19:15; cf. also 12:5).

(4) He says the glorified believers will reign over the peoples who are still mortals. He then says that "Mortals in the millennium will eventually die." As proof of this he cites Isaiah 65. But Isaiah is, beyond any reasonable doubt, speaking about those who live in the New Jerusalem in the new creation when he speaks of their long (but not everlasting) lifespan:

But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it [i.e. the New Jerusalem] an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man [who lives in it] shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner [who lives in it, who dies at] a hundred years old shall be accursed.

The picture of citizens of the New Jerusalem in the new creation living long, prosperous, and secure—but mortal—lives is simply impossible to take literally. The only reasonable alternative is to understand that Isaiah is being given a hint of a reality that was not to be fully revealed in his generation—the reality of resurrection to everlasting and incorruptible life, which is revealed fully in Rev. 21:4, "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (compare this to Isa. 65:19, and see also Isa. 25:7-9).

(5) He says 1 Cor. 15:21-28 indicates that death will not be abolished until after the millennium. I agree with this. But not because mortals take part in the age to come—after all, Paul himself says, a little later in the same chapter, “I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:50). He then explains that we believers—if we should live to see Christ’s coming in glory—will have to be transformed into an incorruptible state completely equivalent to the state of the resurrected ones, in order to survive the transition between this age and the fully-manifested kingdom of God. Those who are not so transformed, i.e. “flesh and blood,” i.e. mortals, *will not inherit* the kingdom of God.

(6) Lastly he says Rev. 21:4 says that “from then on” there will be no death, but a proper understanding of the relationship between Rev. 21:1-2, 9 and 19:6-9 dictates that the condition of no more death “from then on” refers to those who take part in the new creation, which comes into being when Jesus comes again in glory, not later. This promise is directed at those who take part in the New Jerusalem as its citizens. Those who are, for the millennium, in Hades, are still in death, and so death still exists until it is finally abolished at the resurrection, judgment, and complete removal of the unrepentant along with the devil and his angels after the millennium (Rev. 20:7-10 || 20:13-15, esp. 14).