

New-Creation Millennialism: A Response to Thomas R. Schreiner (and G. K. Beale) and a Proposal

Thomas Schreiner describes himself as being on a “long journey” through various millennial positions, having held to both premillennialism and amillennialism in the past.¹ In his most recent commentary on Revelation, Schreiner opts for a third way—new creation millennialism.

This paper will argue that it is possible to understand the millennium as the first stage of the new creation, as Schreiner proposes, while maintaining a premillennial understanding of Revelation 20 and of key Old Testament texts. First, Schreiner’s view will be briefly summarized. Second, agreement between premillennialism and Schreiner’s new creation millennialism will be noted. Third, Schreiner’s critiques of premillennialism will be answered. Fourth, distinctives and difficulties with Schreiner’s proposal will be analyzed and evaluated. Finally, this paper will respond to a potential objection to new creation premillennialism. The purpose of this paper is not simply to critique Schreiner’s proposal. Rather, it will argue that Schreiner’s claim that the millennium is the first stage of the new creation is an important insight that premillennialists should embrace. In doing so, premillennialists will be advancing in exegetical precision as well as enriching premillennialism theologically.

Summary of Schreiner’s New-Creation Millennialism

Schreiner outlines his view of new creation millennialism in eleven points.

1. “The millennium is the first age of the new creation.”² For Schreiner this means that “no one dies, weeps, or sins during the millennium.”³
2. Schreiner holds that his view solves the problem of unglorified people living during the millennial period. This is a problem to Schreiner because he understands Revelation 19:21 to teach that all the wicked living on earth will be killed at the time of Christ’s return.⁴ Presumably he also believes that all the saints will be glorified when Christ returns. Thus there are no unglorified people to enter the millennium.

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Revelation*, BENCT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2023), 677. In his first commentary on Revelation he spoke highly of both premillennialism and amillennialism, but he gave the edge to amillennialism. Thomas R. Schreiner, “Revelation,” in *ESV Expository Commentary* 12 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 723-25. Schreiner indicates in both of the preceding sources that he has never found postmillennialism persuasive. See especially, Schreiner, *Revelation*, 664-65.

² Schreiner, *Revelation*, 677.

³ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 677.

⁴ Schreiner, *Revelation* 678.

3. He concludes that Revelation 20's silence regarding "Jerusalem or the Jewish people" falsifies what he terms "a dispensational reading of the millennium." In contrast, Schriener claims that Revelation 20 presents the reign of all the saints over the all the earth.⁵
4. Against amillennial readings, he argues that during the millennium Satan is bound such that "no one is deceived by his stratagems and wiles."⁶
5. The "first resurrection" of Revelation 20:4 is, as premillennialists argue, a bodily resurrection. However, against premillennialism, there will be no death in the ensuing period.⁷
6. Schriener acknowledges a present reign of the believer with Christ, but he argues that this is consummated during the millennial period since there are texts that indicate that "ultimate vindication" still awaits the saints (Rev 6:9-11; cf. 2:26-27; 3:21).⁸
7. Schreiner deems it "irrelevant to my view" whether the millennium will be a thousand years in length or whether that is a figurative number for a long period of time. He favors a figurative reading. Nonetheless, he insists that the millennium will be an actual period of time bounded by the binding and release of Satan.
8. The nations that Satan will gather after his release are the unbelieving dead who, upon their resurrection, gather against the saints.⁹
9. Against the objection that "such an attack is senseless" since the saints cannot be killed, Schreiner retorts, "Evil at its roots, however, doesn't make any sense."¹⁰
10. Against the objection that Revelation 10:11 speaks of the earth and sky fleeing *after* the proposed millennial period (and thus in the midst of the new creation), Schriener proposes that either verse 11 describes something that took place at the beginning of the new creation (which on his view is also the beginning of the millennium) or that all of 20:11-15 took place at the beginning of the new creation. Schriener favors the former view.¹¹
11. Against the objection that his view presents resurrected unbelievers being killed upon their resurrection (Rev 20:7-20)—requiring another resurrection of the wicked dead for the final judgment—Schriener avers that the fire from heaven that consumes the wicked refers to the lake of fire.¹²

⁵ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 678.

⁶ Schriener, *Revelation*, 678.

⁷ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 678.

⁸ Schriener, *Revelation*, 679.

⁹ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 679-80.

¹⁰ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 680.

¹¹ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 681.

¹² Schreiner, *Revelation*, 682.

Agreement between New Creation Millennialism and Premillennialism

Four points of agreement exist between Schriener's new creation millennialism and premillennialism.

First, Schriener finds the amillennial view that Satan is presently bound unpersuasive (see point 4 in the above summary). Schriener grants that the imagery of Satan being bound and cast into an abyss is symbolic, but he argues that this symbolism "more naturally means that Satan is completely disabled" rather than that Satan can no longer prevent the gospel from going to Gentile nations.¹³

Second, Schreiner holds that the first resurrection (Rev 20:5) is a "physical resurrection" (point 5 in the summary).¹⁴ He rejects claims that the first resurrection refers to regeneration or to the death and heavenly reign of believers.¹⁵

Third, he rejects the amillennialist proposal that the millennial reign of the saints with Christ takes place during the intermediate state. He notes that Revelation 6:9-11 does not portray the souls of those in heaven as reigning but as "awaiting final vindication."¹⁶ Schriener asserts that "ultimate vindication doesn't take place during the present age but commences in the new age that is inaugurated by the millennium" (point 6 in the summary).¹⁷

Finally, Schreiner notes that even taking a symbolic view of the thousand years, the symbol stands for a long period of time. He observes, "this stands in tension with amillennial readings, where the reign of some saints before Christ's coming would be very brief."¹⁸ Though many premillennialists would argue that the time reference is not merely symbolic, they would agree with Schreiner's basic point.

New Creation Millennialism's Critique of Premillennialism

Schriener critiques premillennialism on three counts. However, one of these critiques does not pertain to premillennialists who hold to a pretribulational or pre-wrath rapture. The other does not pertain to non-dispensational premillennialists (nor to some dispensationalists). Thus, neither of these critiques is fatal to premillennialism per se. Schreiner's third claim, that there is no death or sin in the millennial period, sets his view apart from all forms of premillennialism.

Two Minor Critiques of Premillennialism

Schriener believes that there can be no death or sin during the millennium because there are no unglorified people who survive to enter the new creation. This conclusion is based in

¹³ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 669, cf. *ibid.*, 678, 684-85.

¹⁴ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 678.

¹⁵ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 670-72; cf. *ibid.*, 688-89.

¹⁶ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 673.

¹⁷ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 679.

¹⁸ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 674.

part on his exegesis of Revelation 19:21, which he understands to teach that all unbelievers will be killed when Jesus returns.¹⁹

However, pretribulational and pre-wrath premillennialists do not have trouble at all on this point. They could interpret Revelation 19:21 according to Schreiner's preference since on their views those converted during the preceding day of the Lord judgment could enter the millennium and have children who reject Christ and rebel at the end of that period. Posttribulational premillennialists therefore will need to weigh whether Schreiner's interpretation of Revelation 19:21 is compelling or not.²⁰

Second, Schreiner sets his position against what he identifies as dispensational premillennialism: "the millennial reign—the first age of the new creation—isn't centered on Jerusalem or the Jewish people." Schreiner claims that "nothing at all is said about such things in Rev. 20."²¹ First, this is not quite accurate. Revelation 20:9 does refer to Jerusalem, "the beloved city." Second, while Schreiner is doubtless correct that the millennium concerns the "reign of Christ and his saints over the whole world," this is still a world made up of nations, as Revelation 20:3 indicates. Would not Israel be one of the nations included? Third, the reigning Christ has a human body (of Israelite and Davidic descent, one might add), and he must reign from some location. Must that location *not* be Jerusalem? Fourth, Schreiner seems oddly focused on Revelation 20 alone, and he fails to take into account parallel Old Testament passages. Granting that those passages will be focused on Israel because they were initially addressed to Israel, and granting that Revelation expands the focus beyond the Jewish people to the nations, and granting that in a New Testament context the redeemed nations must receive due emphasis, Schreiner seems to be over-correcting to perceived dispensational excess.

Major Critique: No Death or Sin during the Millennium

The primary distinctive that sets Schreiner's new-creation millennialism apart from premillennialism is his claim that "no one dies, weeps, or sins during the millennium."²² This puts Schreiner's view in tension with passages like Isaiah 65:17-25 and Zechariah 14:16-19. Schreiner recognizes this tension, and observes, "I think Beale's (2018) interpretation of Isa. 65 is convincing, showing that the text isn't describing a time on earth when people die."²³

¹⁹ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 656.

²⁰ Those who believe that there are unbelieving survivors who enter into the Millennium are not limited to posttribulational premillennialists. Buist Fanning argues that the "rest" refers to "the kings and their armies" rather than to "all unbelievers on earth." Buist M. Fanning, *Revelation*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 491. Zechariah 14:16 provides support to this view.

²¹ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 678.

²² Schreiner, *Revelation*, 677.

²³ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 678.

Isaiah 65:17-25

Given Schreiner's reliance on G. K. Beale at this point, Beale's argument must be examined at some length. He argues for his position in seven points.²⁴

First, Beale acknowledges that the final phrase of Isaiah 65:20 could be translated either "and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed" (ESV; cf. KJV, NKJV) or "And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed" (NASB; cf. NIV, CSB). He argues that the translation of אֲשֶׁר־יִשָּׁן at this point is not dispositive; he can fit either translation to his view.²⁵ Since either translation is possible, this point will not be examined further except to note and comment on Beale's suggestion that the potential reading "a sinner" could refer to redeemed sinners.²⁶ This is unlikely given that the "sinner," if that translation is adopted, is called accursed in 65:20.

Second, Beale argues that Isaiah 65:20 occurs within the context of clear new creation passages (65:17-19 and 65:21-25). It is so linked to its context that it is not possible to argue that 65:20 is about a preceding millennial period.²⁷ Not only is the verse "sandwiched" between new creation verses, the opening statement, "No more shall there be in it" links verse 20 back to verse 19, "I will rejoice in Jerusalem ... no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping."²⁸

Beale is correct that 65:20 is integrally linked to its context. However, his argument against a premillennial reading only works with two assumptions. First, he assumes that the new creation in 65:17-19 and 65:21-25 is the consummated new creation. But this is to assume what he must argue for. Beale's argument only falsifies a premillennial approach that distinguishes the millennium from the new creation. These verses fit nicely into a premillennial framework in which the millennial period is the first stage of the new creation. On this view, the commencement of the new creation in 65:17 is therefore not referring to the commencement of the period *after* the millennial period but to the commencement of the period *beginning with* the millennial period. Note also that in addition to death, this period includes people of various stages of life: infants, young men, old men, and those giving birth (65:20, 23). Thus, the characteristics of the new creation described in the verses surrounding 65:20 fit better with an inaugurated millennial phase of the new creation than with the consummated new creation. Second, Beale assumes that references to things that the text says are true "in Jerusalem" (65:19; cf. "in it," 65:19, 20) are true for all the world in this inaugurated phase of the new creation.²⁹ But this is not a safe assumption. Some texts of Scripture can speak of the conversion of Israel and reign of Christ from Jerusalem alongside rebellious nations that come under judgment from the

²⁴ For a summary of his argument, see G. K. Beale, "An Amillennial Response to a Premillennial View of Isaiah 65:20," *JETS* 61 (2018): 490.

²⁵ Beale, "An Amillennial Response," 464.

²⁶ Beale, "An Amillennial Response," 464.

²⁷ Beale, "An Amillennial Response," 464.

²⁸ Beale, "An Amillennial Response," 464–466, 475.

²⁹ Beale thinks that the new Jerusalem *is* the whole new creation. However, Revelation 21 pictures the new Jerusalem descending from heaven to the new creation. It also pictures the New Jerusalem as the Holy of Holies (it is a cube) and the rest of the creation is thus part of the temple fulfillment. See Revelation 21:1-2, 16.

Messianic King in Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:1-13:1; 14:16-19).³⁰ Thus, it is not a foregone conclusion that statements made about Jerusalem necessarily apply to the whole inaugurated new creation.

Third, Beale argues that Isaiah 65 alludes at various points to Genesis 3 in such a way that it is clearly positing a new creation that reverses the Fall. For instance, Beale argues that the phrase translated in all the major translations as “like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be” (Isa 65:22, ESV; cf, KJV, NKJV, NIV, CSB) could be rendered “for as the days of the tree, so shall be the days of My people.” He further argues that “the tree in view” in this rendering would be the tree of life. Thus, the passage is indicating that these people will have eternal life.³¹ Without adjudicating the merits of this interpretation,³² it does not tell against the premillennial viewpoint to say that Yhwh’s chosen people will have eternal life in the millennial period. Sinners are those who die in this period.

Beale also proposes that Isaiah 65:23’s statement that children will not be born “for calamity” alludes to Genesis 3:19 and indicates that none of the children will die. He claims, “‘Calamity’ (כָּלָה) refers to death here, as it does in its three other uses elsewhere (Lev 26:16; Jer 15:8; Ps 78:33).”³³ It is true that this word occurs in contexts where people die, but the word itself does not refer to death or mean *death* in any of these places. The lexicons gloss it as “dismay, sudden terror, or ruin” (BDB), “terror” (CHALOT), “dismay, terror” (DCH), and the versions translate it in Isa 65:20 as “calamity” (ESV, NASB95), “disaster” (CSB, NASB20), “trouble” (N/KJV), “misfortune” (NIV), “terror” (LSB). This passage is not saying that the children of Yhwh’s chosen people would never die in this period (if they rebelled against God). That would contradict 65:20. It is saying that these children will not be born in a world characterized by calamity.³⁴

Beale also claims that the statement “and dust shall be the serpent’s food” alludes to Genesis 3:14-15, and from this he concludes, “this refers to the serpent being consummately defeated, so that there will be no more harm or evil in the new age (which could not be true

³⁰ Interaction with Beale’s interpretation of Zechariah 14 will occur below.

³¹ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 468.

³² Calvin rejects it. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 4:401–402. John Gill entertains it. John Gill, *An Exposition of the Old Testament*, (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1810), 5:386–387. Modern commentators generally do not consider it. See, for instance, John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 2:659-60; Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 722. Goldingay, however, does mention it as reflected in the LXX, Targums, and in Justin Martyr. John Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, ICC (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 473.

³³ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 480.

³⁴ Also, Oswalt, 2:660; Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1993), 531. Goldingay, however, observes, “But the cause of such ‘dismay’ is often sudden death; the word is almost a euphemism,” and he notes that the Targum renders the word “death.” This leads Goldingay to reflect, “the causes of dismay might include stillbirth or death in infancy, or losing one’s children to sickness or war.” Goldingay, 474. Shalom Paul suggests that the parallel phrase, “they shall not labor in vain” may mean that they will not suffer miscarriages. Shalom M. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 606. Thus, even if כָּלָה refers to death, this interpretation need not stand in tension with 65:20. It could be a reaffirmation of the statement “no more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days.”

of the millennial age).³⁵ While this is a valid allusion, Beale is here claiming more than the text says. This verse speaks of actual animal behavior in the new creation, and it is indicating two things: the serpent remains humiliated as a sign of Satan's humiliation, and these animals will not hurt or destroy on Yhwh's holy mountain.³⁶

Fourth, Beale argues that a “combination of unique verbal and thematic parallels” indicates that Isaiah 65:17-25 alludes to Isaiah 25:7-10. Beale then observes, “If Isaiah 65, indeed, is actually alluding to this Isaiah 25 passage, then there is little doubt that Isa 65:17–20 refers to an eternal new creation.”³⁷ Notably, Isaiah 25:8 says, “He will swallow up death forever.” Beale concludes from this that Isaiah 65:20 should be read in light of the earlier passage, which means that any reading which finds death in Isaiah 65:20 should be rejected.³⁸ However, the features that these passages share are those which would be true of both the inaugurated and consummate new creation. The differences between these passages—death in one and no death in another—are best explained by the differences between the two stages of the new creation. Further the hint of two stages occurs within the Isaiah 25 context (see 24:22), which means that this idea of multiple stages to the new creation would not be foreign to the readers of Isaiah.

Fifth, Beale argues there are indications in the text that alert the reader to interpret Isaiah 65:20 figuratively. For instance, Beale argues that the final part of Isaiah 65:20 could be paraphrased as follows: “If one lived only 100 years, people would think that person was under some curse. Of course, people will not live to be just 100 years old and people will not be under a curse in God’s newly created world.”³⁹ But this is simply not what the verse says. Beale can get Isaiah 65:20 to fit his system by reading it as a hypothetical, but it should be acknowledged that “for the young man shall die a hundred years old” is an odd way to describe eternal life.

Beale must also deal with the presence of infants, the old, and youths during this period since age does not seem to be a feature of the consummate new creation. He proposes that the reference to these extreme age ranges is a “merism” that simply means “all inhabitants’ of the New Jerusalem.”⁴⁰ Doubtless a merism is being used here, but it need not follow that those inhabitants are ageless. It must be acknowledged that the mention of various ages is an odd way to communicate that those resurrected in ageless bodies will never die. It is more natural for the merism to refer to people within the age range indicated. Beale addresses this by claiming, “Thus, we can say that ‘the youth’ who ‘will die at the age of one hundred’ would be figurative for someone who *would be considered* a youth who died at one hundred, a condition that, in fact, would not happen in the new era, since all would live

³⁵ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 468.

³⁶ Smith, 724.

³⁷ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 471.

³⁸ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 472.

³⁹ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 474.

⁴⁰ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 478.

eternally as resurrected beings.”⁴¹ But once again, Beale is having to re-work the text to fit his view—on the assumption that his view is correct.⁴²

Beale attempts to lessen the problem of needing to make the text say other than it says by claiming that the premillennialist also has to paraphrase or rework the text:

If the phrase “the youth will die at the age of one hundred, and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred shall be thought accursed” is taken strictly literally, then it means that all youths will die at one hundred or less, which would contradict a strictly literal view of all old men living out their days (v. 20b) and of all who do not reach the age of one hundred being cursed.⁴³

Ironically, to make this claim against the premillennialist, Beale again re-works the text. The text does not say “all youths will die at one hundred or less.” It says that when a person dies at one hundred years old, he will be considered as having died a young man—and will be thought accursed for dying so young. In short, Beale’s attempted figurative readings are necessary for the text to fit his system, but they are not arguments in favor of his position. A premillennial new creation reading better fits the data.

Sixth, Revelation 21:1–22:4 alludes to Isaiah 65, which indicates that John understood it to refer to the new creation rather than to a millennial period. The clearest allusion is John’s statement in Revelation 21:1, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” Revelation 21:4 alludes to Isaiah 65:19 with its statement, “neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore.” Beale notes that the same verse in Revelation says, “death shall be no more,” and he holds that this should govern the interpretation Isaiah 65:20. In any event, it demonstrates that Isaiah is about “an eternal state and not a temporary millennial era.”⁴⁴ Beale is clearly correct that John is alluding Isaiah 65, including verses around 65:20, in his description of the consummated new creation. However, both the similarities and the differences should be observed. In Revelation 21 the blessings of the inaugurated new creation continue and are expanded.⁴⁵ Thus, John can draw on language from Isaiah 65 which describes the inaugurated new creation to describe the consummated new creation. Nonetheless, Isaiah 65 indicates that death remained a possibility in the inaugurated new creation whereas Revelation 21 indicates that it will be entirely absent in the consummate new creation. Both the similarities and the differences between these passages must be accounted for.

Seventh, Beale claims that “the irreversible nature of eschatology itself favors the conclusion that Isa 65:20 is not about a temporary, eschatological millennial state but about

⁴¹ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 479.

⁴² Beale is confident about the correctness of his position because he is convinced that a premillennial position is incompatible with this passage. However, the premillennial new-creation view being proposed here does not fall afoul of Beal’s critique, and it avoids needing to rework the text as Beale does.

⁴³ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 479.

⁴⁴ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 483-85.

⁴⁵ Some of the blessings mentioned in Isaiah 65 were specifically tied to Jerusalem. While the New Jerusalem is prominent in Revelation 21-22, there are textual indications that the rest of creation is in view as well.

the eternal new heavens and earth.”⁴⁶ Toward the end of his article, Beale acknowledges that some premillennialists might claim that “Isa 65:22 is about the inaugurated stage of the new creation,” but he objects to that construction by noting that the new creation has already been inaugurated in the inner man of the believer. He further argues that once an aspect of the new creation is inaugurated, it cannot be reversed or destroyed.⁴⁷

Premillennialists hold to a corruptible form of inaugurated fulfillment of new creation in a millennium. On the other hand, amillennialists believe that *even the inaugurated stage begins with a fulfillment of spiritual resurrection of the heart that is incorruptible and will never be reversed*. Though it is true that this inaugurated fulfillment of the heart occurs in the midst of a corruptible body and world, *the only part of the inaugurated new creation is “the inner man” and not the outer person’s body or any part of the physical world* (cf. 2 Cor 3:16). This new creation of the heart is irreversible and will become part of a new body later in a new incorruptible physical world. In fact, part of the definition of true NT eschatological fulfillment is that what begins fulfillment will never be reversed and will eventuate into a never-ending consummate state.⁴⁸

However, the premillennial new creation view argued for here rejects the sequence of a temporary restoration during the millennium followed by the destruction of the world. The view articulated in this paper acknowledges that the new creation with regard to the inner man of the believer is inaugurated in each believer at regeneration, but it would hold that the millennial period is the inauguration of the physical new creation. The millennium is the time when the last Man leads redeemed humanity to exercise dominion over the earth in submission to the Father. What follows the millennium is not the dissolution of the redeemed creation but the consummate new creation.⁴⁹

Zechariah 14

G. K. Beale also proposes an amillennial reading of Zechariah 14. He suggests that the referents of the symbolism in this chapter are found in the church age. In his first coming Christ defeated the nations (cf. Ps. 2:8-9). The judgment Zechariah speaks of is judgment on nations that “feigned” belief in Christ during the church age.⁵⁰

Beale also raises two objections against the premillennial reading. First Beale argues,

⁴⁶ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 490.

⁴⁷ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 488-490.

⁴⁸ Beale, “An Amillennial Response,” 489.

⁴⁹ See below for an argument that 2 Peter 3 does not teach the dissolution or destruction of the present world between the millennium and the consummate new creation.

⁵⁰ G. K. Beale, “The Millennium in Revelation 20:1-10: An Amillennial Perspective,” *Criswell Theological Review*, NS 11 (2013): 62. For a survey of viewpoints see Al Wolters, “Zechariah 14: A Dialogue with the History of Interpretation,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 13 (2002): 39-56. For early eschatological readings among Jews and church fathers, see Al Wolters, “Zechariah 14 and Biblical Theology: Patristic and Contemporary Case Studies,” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, ed. Craig Bartholomew, et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 265, 272-73, 275-76. For recent eschatological readings, see Kenneth L. Barker, “Zechariah,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 8:814; George L. Klein, *Zechariah*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2008), 397–398; Michael B. Shepherd, *A Commentary on the Book of the Twelve: The Minor Prophets*, KEL (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018), 472–473.

both Zech. 14:11 and Rev. 22:3 (in addition to referring to Zech. 14:11) allude to the curse of Gen. 3:14-19 and both say that this curse will be forever done away with in the new creation. Yet according to the premillennial view, more nations will be cursed during the millennial period since Zech. 14:16-19 portrays the nations being “plagued” and “punished.” This is a seemingly unsolvable problem for the premillennialist.⁵¹

Second, Beale says this passage is inconsistent with premillennialism because it involves judgment during the millennium whereas premillennialists believe the judgment occurs at the end of the millennium.⁵²

This second objection is easily dismissed. National judgments on disobedient nations during the millennium is not inconsistent with premillennialism. Indeed, it is part of the argument for premillennialism.⁵³

The first objection is more interesting. While the relevant term is translated “curse” in the RSV and NASB, the Hebrew word is **חָרָם**, not **מָאֲרָה** (the word which is almost universally translated “curse” across translations).⁵⁴ In Zechariah 14:11 **חָרָם** is variously translated: “utter destruction” (KJV, NKJV), “decree of utter destruction” (ESV), “doomed to destruction” (NRSV), “devoted to destruction” (LSB), “be destroyed” (NIV), “curse of complete destruction” (CSB). To say “there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction” against Jerusalem is entirely compatible with the millennial period. This point is reinforced in the next sentence: “Jerusalem shall dwell in security.” To be sure, Revelation 22:3 alludes to Zechariah 14:11 and extends it universally to the entire consummate new creation. However, this extension of Zechariah’s prophecy should not override the clear original meaning in the original context.

Zechariah does describe the events of this chapter in terms of the new creation. Verse 6 says, “In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle” (NASB).⁵⁵ Notably

⁵¹ Beale, “The Millennium,” 61.

⁵² Beale, “The Millennium,” 61-62.

⁵³ Matt Waymeyer’s argues that the presence of sin and the need for judgment in the era of Christ’s reign on earth after the second coming requires the premillennial position. Here is a representative passage: “according to Isaiah and Micah, as the Messiah reigns from Jerusalem He will ‘judge between the nations’ and ‘render decisions for many peoples’ (Isa 2: 4; cf. Mic 4: 3). This need for the Lord to render judgments and settle disputes among the people of the nations is clear evidence that sin will still be present during this time.” Matt Waymeyer, *Amillennialism and the Age to Come: A Premillennial Critique of the Two-Age Model* (Woodlands, TX: Kress, 2016), Kindle locations 655-658.

⁵⁴ David J. Fuller, “Zechariah 14: Its Usage in Revelation 16, 19, and 20,” in *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism*, McMaster Biblical Studies Series (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2023), 213, n. 327. **מָאֲרָה** is translated as “curse” or “curses” in every occurrence in every major translation aside for Deuteronomy 28:20 in the NSRV, where it is translated “disaster.” The related verb, **אָרַר**, is translated as *curse* or with a variant of the same in every occurrence in every major translation except Numbers 5:24 in the CSB, which translates the second occurrence of **אָרַר** in this verse as “bitter suffering.”

⁵⁵ The translations of the latter portion of this verse vary, with several translations (ESV, NIV) following the LXX and other ancient translations rather than the MT. The NASB provides a functional equivalent rendering. A more formal translation reads: “the sources of light in the heavens will congeal” (NET). For a defense of this reading, see Mark J. Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 762.

other texts indicate that the heavenly bodies will be significantly affected during the final day the Lord (Joel 2:31; 3:15; Isa 13:10; 34:4; 51:6; Mt 24:30 2 Pet 3:10-12; Rev 6:12-14).⁵⁶ Zechariah thus envisages a destructive judgment that makes way for the new creation.⁵⁷ Verse 7 gestures toward the new creation when it follows its description of the darkening of the heavenly bodies with the observation, “it shall be one day” (NKJV). This is an allusion to the first day of creation: “there was evening and there was morning, one day” (NASB; cf. CSB).⁵⁸ After the de-creation of the day of the LORD comes the first day of a new creation. Verse 8 furthers the new creation imagery when it describes rivers flowing from Jerusalem just as rivers flowed from Eden.⁵⁹

Nonetheless, subsequent to the final day of the Lord judgment and the enthronement of “the King, the LORD of hosts” in Jerusalem (14:16),⁶⁰ there remains the possibility of rebellion and judgment (14:17-19). McComiskey seeks to evade the idea that there will be a phase of the new creation in which rebellion will still need to be put down by proposing that this is simply a “hypothetical” that “envisions the end of all rebellion against God.”⁶¹ However, it would be odd to signify the end of rebellion by describing potential rebellion. Further, Zechariah 14:17-19 is not the only passage in which the returned Messiah is rendering judgment on an earth that is being renewed. Isaiah 2:4 and 11:3-4 also present the Messiah rendering judgment in the inaugurated new creation.⁶²

⁵⁶ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 10:621; Klein, 407-8.

⁵⁷ “The undoing of God’s creative work lays the foundation for what he wants to establish. In other words, demolition precedes construction. Merrill comments, ‘Whereas Genesis is describing creation out of chaos, Zechariah speaks of chaos out of creation.’” Klein, 409, citing Eugene Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 351; cf. Shepherd, 143.

⁵⁸ Merrill, 351-52; Anthony R. Petterson, *Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, ApOTC, 291; Boda, 762-63; cf. Edward Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and Its World* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 34; Shepherd, 475, n. 94.

⁵⁹ Klein, NAC, 411; Shepherd, KEL, 475.

⁶⁰ For an argument that Zechariah connects “the King, the LORD of hosts” with the Davidic Messiah, see Petterson, 299.

⁶¹ Thomas Edward McComiskey, “Zechariah,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 3:1242.

⁶² A critique of a premillennial view of Zechariah 14 is articulated by Richard Phillips. “First, and mainly, it envisions the Lord Jesus Christ returning at the end of the gospel age to establish the law of Moses, which is an unthinkable regression in redemptive history. The book of Hebrews makes plain that the law was a shadow that passed away with the coming of the reality in Christ (Heb. 10:1). It is impossible to imagine Jesus, having shed his own blood once for all, coming back to have bulls and goats and sheep shed once more for the remission of sin.” Richard D. Phillips, *Zechariah*, REC (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 320. Phillips is correct on this point. For this reason, the Feast of Booths mentioned in verses 16 and 19 is best understood not as the reinstatement of the Mosaic feast but as the eschatological realization of that feast. Just as the Lord’s Supper has displaced Passover in the present age, so in the inaugurated new creation, there will be an analogue to the Feast of Booths. This is fitting, for as Phillips notes, the Feast of Booths celebrated the deliverance of God’s people from Egypt so that they could enter the new land, and Zechariah anticipates the entrance of God’s people into “the true and final Promised Land.” Further, “This feast alone possessed an eighth day, which many believe pointed to the eternal state beyond the resurrection” (cf. Rev 21:3). Ibid, 319. Second, Phillips claims that Zechariah 14 looks forward to “the final and

Zechariah 14, on the reading proposed above, supports new creation premillennialism. The new creation is inaugurated after the return of Christ, but sin and rebellion are judged and not yet entirely eliminated in the first stage of the new creation.

Conclusion

Isaiah 65:17-25 and Zechariah 14 both reveal the existence of an inaugurated but not yet consummated new creation that include elements such as death and judgment. Schreiner's new creation millennialism, in which "no one dies, weeps, or sins during the millennium," is at odds with key Old Testament texts.

Difficulties for New Creation Millennialism

Schriener's new creation millennialism also faces its own exegetical difficulties. Schreiner is well aware of the potential objections to his view, and he has developed responses.

Rationale for Schriener's Millennial Period

Schriener responds to the objection that an attack against glorified saints who cannot die is pointless and irrational by noting that "evil at its roots, however, doesn't make any sense."⁶³ That is fine as far as it goes, but Schriener never explains why God in his providence would begin the new creation with a millennial period that culminates in this final rebellion.

On a premillennial view, the millennium plays an important role in the biblical storyline. Genesis opens with a commission for man to rule over God's creation in submission to God (Gen 1:28). However, Adam's sin led to the earth being subjected to a curse of futility (Gen 3:17-19; Rom 8:20). A necessary component of redemption is for man to rule over creation in submission to God. Jesus is the Man who leads redeemed humanity to fulfill God's original purpose for mankind and subdue the earth.

An amillennialist might argue that that Jesus could accomplish this role in the new creation. But if the new creation will be complete and perfect from the beginning, there will be no subduing to take place. By contrast, Paul provides a sequence of events in 1 Corinthians 15 that allows for a period of subduing the earth before delivering up the kingdom to the Father:

1. Christ is resurrected as the first fruits (v. 23a).
2. Christ's people are resurrected at His Second Coming (v. 23b).
3. Christ abolishes all of His enemies (v. 24c).
4. Christ delivers up the kingdom to the Father (v. 24b).
5. Then comes the end (v. 24a).⁶⁴

eternal state of heaven" rather than to "a millennial hiatus in earthly Jerusalem." Ibid., 320-21. Here Phillips errs in locating the eternal state in heaven rather than upon the new earth. In addition, while Zechariah 14 does refer to the new creation, verses 17-19 include indications that this new creation has an inaugurated phase, and these verses cannot simply be dismissed.

⁶³ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 680.

⁶⁴ Waymeyer, Kindle locations 3896-3901; cf. Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 281-82; Michael F. Bird, *Introducing Paul* (Downers' Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 121.

The millennial period is a time for cultivating and restoring an earth devastated by day of the Lord judgments, but it is also a period for defeating enemies, including death itself (1 Cor. 15:26). Neither an amillennial scheme nor Schriener's new creation millennialism gave a space for Christ to lead redeemed humanity in subduing the creation.

The Identity of Jerusalem's Final Antagonists

If those dwelling on earth during the millennium are exclusively glorified saints, as Schriener holds, who are the nations that gather for battle against Jerusalem? Schreiner argues that the deceived nations are “the same group who were resurrected after one thousand years.”⁶⁵ He notes in favor of this view, “The armies come up (ἀναβαίνω, *anabainō*, 20:9) out of the abyss, from the realm of the dead; the verb ἀναβαίνω elsewhere in Revelation describes those coming up out of the abyss, the realm of the dead (9:2; 11:7; 13:1; 17:8).”⁶⁶ Schreiner finds confirmation of this reading in a parallel he sees between Revelation 20:9 and Daniel 12:2. He notes that Daniel described the resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous, “and we are told that they ‘rise on the breadth of the earth’ (ἐν τῷ πλάτει τῆς γῆς ἀναστήσονται, *en tō platei tēs gēsanastēsontai*).” This he finds to parallel “the words ‘they come up on the breadth of the earth’ (ἀνέβησαν ἐπὶ τὸ πλάτος τῆς γῆς, *anebēsan epi to platos tēs gēs*, 20:9).

The proposed parallel between Revelation 20:9 and Daniel 12:2 is intriguing, but there is a wrinkle. The LXX at this point does not reflect the Hebrew text. The LXX of Daniel 12:2 can be translated, “And many of those sleeping in the breadth of the earth will arise” (LES). The MT of the same verse can be translated, “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake” (ESV). The Hebrew text doubtless maintains the correct reading because “sleep in the dust [רָפַץ] of the earth [הָאָרֶץ]” is an allusion to and reversal of Genesis 3:19, “...till you return to the ground [הָאָרֶץ], for out of it you were taken; for you are dust [רָפָץ], and to dust [רָפָץ] you shall return.”⁶⁷ Furthermore the word ἀναβαίνω is used of going up to battle elsewhere in the Old Testament (Judg 1:1; 12:3; 1 Sam 7:7; 2 Sam 11:1; 1 Kgs 20:1; 22:4; Isa 36:10)—including in Ezekiel 38:9, 11, 16, the passage to which this whole section alludes.⁶⁸ The phrase τὰ πλάτη τῆς γῆς is used in Habakkuk 1:6 to describe Babylon's invasion of Israel, and it may be alluded to by John here.⁶⁹ Thus, it is highly unlikely that Revelation 20:9 describes this army that marches on Jerusalem as made up of the resurrected dead.

There are two further difficulties with Schreiner's view, both acknowledged by him. First, the deceived nations are “at the four corners of the earth” and need to be gathered. Why would these nations need to be gathered if they are being raised from the abyss? Schreiner dismisses the objection: “But the language shouldn't be pressed.... This is simply John's

⁶⁵ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 696.

⁶⁶ Schriener, *Revelation*, 696.

⁶⁷ Andrew E. Steinmann, *Daniel*, ConcC (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2008), 561; J. Paul Tanner, *Daniel*, EEC (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 736-37. Steinmann also notes an allusion to Isaiah 26:19.

⁶⁸ David E. Aune, *Revelation 17-22*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1998), 1096; Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 425 (noted, though not adopted); Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 713; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation*, AYB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 778; Fanning, 515.

⁶⁹ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1026.

way of saying that we have a worldwide army.”⁷⁰ However, text presents Satan as released from his imprisonment and going out to deceive and gather the nations. At the very least the scenario presented by the text is different from the one required for Schreiner’s view to work.

Second, Schreiner notes that one might object that the resurrection of the wicked dead is for the purpose of the final judgment rather than for fighting against Jerusalem. Schriener counters, “but the judgment in 20:11-15 takes place *after* the second rebellion, and thus this objection isn’t decisive.” And yet, not only is the judgment subsequent to the rebellion, the resurrection of the unrighteous is also presented subsequent to the rebellion.

A third objection, not noted by Schriener, may be raised. Revelation 20:3 says that Satan was imprisoned so that he would not deceive the nations. This implies that nations liable to deception are on the earth during the millennium.

The Referent of the Fire from Heaven (Revelation 20:9)

The fire that falls from heaven and consumes the nations arrayed against Jerusalem poses a problem for Schreiner since, in his view, the nations that attacked Jerusalem are the wicked dead who have been raised to participate in the final judgment. It would be passing strange for them to be killed again and then raised again to stand in the judgment. Schreiner recognizes this and proposes that the fire that falls from heaven to consume the nations refers to the lake of fire. In other words, the text uses the imagery of fire falling from heaven to describe being cast into the lake of fire.

However, since the lake of fire is explicitly mentioned as Satan’s punishment in the next verse, it seems unlikely that the fire that falls from heaven should be interpreted symbolically as the lake of fire. In addition, Schreiner notes allusions to when Elijah called down fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:10, 12) and to the Gog and Magog prophecy, which says that God “will rain upon him and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur” (Eze 38:22) and that God “will “send fire on Magog” (Eze 39:6).⁷¹ These allusions also tell against the lake of fire interpretation. They indicate that both in history and in prophecy fire from heaven is a judgment from God distinct from that of the lake of fire. In sum, Schreiner’s interpretation of the fire from heaven is not derived from the text but is necessitated to harmonize the text with his new creation millennialism.

Difficulty with the Chronology of Revelation 20:11-15

Schriener views the millennium as the first part of the new creation, but Revelation 20:11 indicates that in the judgment following the millennium “earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.” How can the millennium be the first stage of the new creation if the earth and sky are dissolved or annihilated after the millennium? Since it would be problematic for this to occur *after* the new creation had commenced, Schreiner proposes that this actually occurred at the beginning of the millennium: “Relative clauses in John (cf.

⁷⁰ Schriener, *Revelation*, 696.

⁷¹ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 697.

13:12) often revert back to previous events in history.”⁷² In addition, Schreiner is clear that he understands this to be the “transformation” of the old creation into the new creation, not the annihilation of the old creation.⁷³

Contextually, it is unlikely that the fleeing of earth and sky precedes the millennium. It is from the presence of the one on the great white throne that the earth and sky flee (20:11). However, it is only fair to note that this verse poses an even greater problem for the new creation premillennialist.

The premillennialist cannot place this transformation at the beginning of the millennium, as Schreiner does. This is especially the case if the verse indicates a radical transformation that involves, in some sense, the dissolution of the present earth. For the premillennialist, the millennium is not yet the perfected new creation. Unglorified believers (at least) transition from the final day of the Lord judgment into the millennial period.

It is also problematic for the new creation premillennialist to place a dissolution of the earth at the end of the millennium. If the millennium is the inauguration of the new creation, and if the millennial period is the time in which Christ leads redeemed humanity to subdue creation so that Christ can deliver “the kingdom to God the Father” (1 Cor. 15:24), why would the earth be dissolved at the end of the millennium?

In addition, other Scripture texts point to continuity between the new creation and the present earth. God promised Abraham a land that would be “an everlasting possession” (Gen. 48:4). Solomon said, “the earth remains forever” (Ecc. 1:4). Jesus spoke of the new earth as the regeneration (Matt. 19:28). Peter spoke of the “restoring of all things” (Acts 3:21). Paul said that the creation is “longing” to be “set free from its bondage to corruption” (Rom. 8:19-21). These last three passages are especially significant. A redeemed (“set free from its bondage”), regenerated, restored earth does not sound like an earth that is going to be annihilated or dissolved. One might argue that it is only in the millennial period that the earth will be redeemed, regenerated, and restored after which, it will be annihilated and replaced or dissolved and remade. However, it was argued above that passages like Isaiah 65:17-25 and Zechariah 14 envision the millennial period as the inauguration of the new creation. Thus, there are strong reasons to not see the earth annihilated or dissolved at any point.

How, then, should Revelation 20:11-15 and related passages be understood? To say that the earth and sky ran away from the presence of the one seated on the throne, with no place being found for them (to hide) is clearly metaphorical language. When this is followed with the statement, “I saw the dead, great and small standing before the throne,” the metaphor is seen to communicate (1) the fearsome nature of standing before the divine judge—even the earth and sky run in terror—and (2) the exposed situation of the resurrected wicked dead who have nowhere to hide. Thus, Revelation 20:11 is not saying that a thousand years into the new creation, the earth and the sky literally vanished.

⁷² Schreiner, *Revelation*, 700.

⁷³ Schreiner, *Revelation*, 701.

Nor does the statement in Revelation 21:1, “then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,” indicate the annihilation or destruction of the old creation at that point. This verse is alluding to Isaiah 65:17, which in its original context is referring to the inaugurated new creation since in the narrative and chronological flow of the text death, birth, youth, and old age are all mentioned (Isa 65:17-25). John, by alluding to this verse in the way that he does at this point, indicates that the Messiah’s work in renovating the creation is complete. There is now a transition from the inaugurated, in-process new creation to the consummated new creation.⁷⁴

Difficulties for New Creation Premillennialism from 2 Peter 3:10-13

The new creation premillennialism articulated above entails that the earth is not annihilated, dissolved, or in any way destroyed at the end of the millennium. Yet many believe that 2 Peter 3:10-13 indicates that the earth will be annihilated or dissolved just before the (consummate) new creation. The words, “the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burnt up” combined with the statement that “all these things will be dissolved” (3:10-11. NKJV) seem to refer to either the annihilation or the dissolution of the present heavens and earth.

In responding to this line of interpretation three issues must be addressed. First, the textual variant in verse 10. Second, the meaning of στοιχεῖα in this passage. Third, the meaning of λύω in verses 10-12.

Second Peter 3:10: εὐρεθῇσεται or κατακαησεται

The textual variants in 2 Peter 3:10 are not as significant to this debate as some think. Even if someone were not inclined to admit that εὐρεθῇσεται (“found,” ESV mg., “exposed,” ESV) is the superior reading and wished to defend κατακαησεται (“burned up,” NKJV), the overall interpretation of the passage would not be affected.⁷⁵ On neither reading does the phrase require that the earth will be annihilated or dissolved.

Second Peter 3:10, 12: The Meaning of στοιχεῖα

The word στοιχεῖα when used of physical objects can mean either the “basic *elements*” of “earth, air, fire, water” or the “*heavenly bodies*.”⁷⁶ It is most unlikely that στοιχεῖα refers

⁷⁴ Matthew 5:18 and 24:35 should be understood in the same way. Heaven and earth will pass away not in that they will be dissolved or annihilated but in that they will be transformed into a new creation.

⁷⁵ In favor of εὐρεθῇσεται, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 636; Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 301; Thomas R. Schriener, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 385-86; Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 331; cf. Al Wolters, “Worldview and Textual Criticism in 2 Peter 3:10,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (1987): 406–408.

⁷⁶ BDAG, s.v. στοιχεῖον. The term can also refer to “*fundamental principles*” or to “*elemental spirits*.” Ibid. However, neither of these senses fit this context. Bauckham entertains the idea that

to earth, air, fire, and water since fire cannot burn up and destroy fire and since earth is also mentioned alongside στοιχεῖα.⁷⁷ Though air fuels fire and though water can be vaporized, it would be odd to speak of fire burning up and destroying air or water. In any event, στοιχεῖα stands for the *basic elements* together not one or two of them singly.⁷⁸ The sense *heavenly bodies*, on the other hand makes good sense. It is positioned between a statement of the destruction of the heavens and judgment on earth in verse 10 and in conjunction with the destruction of heaven in verse 12.⁷⁹ Finally, numerous other passages speak of an eschatological destruction of the heavenly bodies (Joel 2:30-31; Isa. 13:10; 34:4; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12-14).⁸⁰

Thus, nothing is said in 2 Peter 3 of the basic elements that make up the earth being melted or dissolved.

Second Peter 3:10–12: The Meaning of λύω

Finally, what is to be made of the λύω words, which are translated “dissolved” by the KJV, NKJV, ESV, and CSB in 3:10, 11, 12. These words are best translated “destroyed” (NASB, LSB) here. Notably KJV, NKJV, ESV, and CSB translate λύω words as “dissolved” only in 2 Peter 3. No translation translates a word from the λύω root “dissolved” anywhere else in the New Testament.⁸¹ The translation “dissolved” is an interpretation of the text; the translation “destroyed” is better because it does not determine for the reader the nature or the extent of the destruction.

Thus, the best translation of 2 Peter 3:10-12 would be the ESV modified by replacing “dissolved” with “destroyed”:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and destroyed, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be destroyed, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the

angelical beings are included, but only in conjunction with the sense *heavenly bodies*. Bauckham, 316. Note that the “elements such as those identified in the periodic table” are not what Peter has in view here. That would be anachronistic. Craig A. Blaising, “The Day of the Lord Will Come: An Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1–18,” *BSac* 169, (2012): 398.

⁷⁷ Johann Albrecht Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866), 5:107–108; Henry Alford, *Alford’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Guardian Press, 1976), 4:416; Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 286; Blaising, 398.

⁷⁸ Johann Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of Peter and Jude*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1893), 367–368.

⁷⁹ R. H. Strachan, “The Second Epistle General of Peter,” in *The Expositors Greek New Testament*, (Peabody, MA, Hendrickson, 2002): 145; J. N. D. Kelly, *The Epistles of Peter and of Jude*, BNTC (London: Continuum, 1969), 364; Blaising, 399.

⁸⁰ Strachan, 145; Bengel, 107; Huther, 368; Alford, 4:416, Kelly, 364; Bauckham, 316.

⁸¹ A survey of occurrences in the LXX reveals that “dissolved” would not sensibly translate any occurrences of λύω words in the Old Testament either. The same holds true for a survey of occurrences in the Apostolic Fathers. The sense “to reduce someth. by violence into its components” does appear in BDAG. However, the suggested gloss is “destroy,” and apart from 2 Peter 3:10-12 the examples involve tearing down buildings or walls, the breaking up of a ship, or the breaking up of a meeting.

coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and destroyed, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

Notice that though the heavens pass away and heavenly bodies melt and are burned up, the earth is not annihilated or dissolved.

A New Creation Premillennial Interpretation of 2 Peter 3:10-13

Those who read 2 Peter 3:10-13 as describing the dissolution of the earth must locate these verses *after* the return of Christ to earth. On this view 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Revelation 20:11; 21:1 are parallel passages. However, Peter clearly had in mind the final day of the Lord judgment that *precedes* the return of Christ to earth: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief” (2 Pet 3:10). This unexpected day of judgment will not happen *after* the millennial period but *before* it.

The preceding context bears out this interpretation. Peter refuted the scoffers who mocked the possibility of a coming day of the Lord judgment by drawing attention to the Flood. Peter could have referred to any number of judgments, but “[h]e concentrates *exclusively* on the flood story” because “it is the one biblical example of God intervening to *destroy* the world.” Thus, Peter “does not see the point at stake as whether or not God can intervene to judge. Rather, for him, the question is whether the cosmos is subject to destruction.”⁸²

Peter’s use of the Old Testament further supports the eschatological day of the Lord referent.⁸³ Alec Motyer observes, “It is from Zephaniah as much as from any other biblical writer that Peter learned that the present cosmic order is reserved for fire in the day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:7, 10-12).”⁸⁴ The Flood narrative uses language that evokes the idea of de-creation and re-creation,⁸⁵ and this is captured in Zephaniah.⁸⁶ In the Noahic covenant God

⁸² Adams, 207. Adams does not hold to the view being advocated here, but his observations on this point support my argument.

⁸³ The eschatological day of the Lord includes both the tribulation period preceding the return of Christ to earth *and* the millennial period that follows (Zeph 3:11-16). However, the day of the Lord in judgment precedes the millennial period, and it is to this phase of the day of the Lord that Peter refers.

⁸⁴ J. Alec Motyer, “Zephaniah,” in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 3:924.

⁸⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 206-7; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, NAC (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 351; Adams, 26, 214-15.

⁸⁶ Zephaniah’s opening declaration recalls the Flood narrative. “I will utterly sweep away from the face of the earth [אֶרֶץ כְּדָר],” declares Yhwh” (1:2). This alludes to Yhwh’s statement to Noah: “every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground [אֶרֶץ מְדָרָה]” (Gen 7:4; cf. Gen 6:7). O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 258; Richard D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 299, 301; Larry L. Walker, “Zephaniah,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 8:662; Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah*, AYB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 81. Zephaniah envisioned the de-creation of creation: “I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked” (1:3, ESV mg.). O. Palmer Robertson observes, “The order in which items are listed for destruction is precisely the reverse of the order in which they appear in the creation narrative.... Originally it was fish, birds, beasts, and man that God created.” Robertson,

promised “I will never again destroy every living thing” (Gen 8:20), while Zephaniah sees a comprehensive destruction of living things. This indicates that the judgment Zephaniah foretold must be the eschatological judgment that brings the present age to its conclusion.⁸⁷ In both Zephaniah and 2 Peter, the Flood serves as a type of the eschatological day of the Lord.⁸⁸

Significantly, Zephaniah described the eschatological day of the Lord in terms of judgment by fire. “For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed” (3:8). If Revelation 6-19 presents readers with the eschatological day of the Lord judgment,⁸⁹ these chapters would cover the event that is the focus of Peter’s attention (2 Peter 3:10). Notably these chapters of Revelation emphasize judgment by fire. Peter’s descriptions say, “the heavens will pass away like a roar” (3:10), and he says, “the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved” (3:12). Revelation 6:14 says that “the sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up.” The second, third, and fourth trumpet judgments describe things falling from the heavens or the heavenly bodies being darkened or otherwise affected (8:7, 8; cf. 8:5). In the fourth bowl judgment the sun itself burns people “with fire” (16:8). Finally, the prostitute and Babylon will be destroyed by fire (17:16; 18:8-9, 17). These day of the Lord judgments correspond to Peter’s description.

When read closely and in connection with other parallel texts, 2 Peter 3 is best read as a description of the eschatological day of the Lord judgment that precedes the inaugurated new creation (the millennium). Like the Flood that typified it, it is a de-creation of the world but not one that will involve physical annihilation or dissolution.⁹⁰

Conclusion

In sum, Schriener is correct to see the millennium as the inauguration of the new creation, but he is wrong to see no death, sorrow, or sinning during this period. A new creation premillennialism better fits the data.

New creation premillennialism also best meets amillennial critiques of premillennialism. It provides stronger interpretations of Isaiah 65:17–25 and Zechariah 14 than amillennial and standard premillennial interpretations. It also addresses the significant amillennial

258; cf. Motyer, “Zephaniah,” 3:911-12; Berlin, 13, 81. Further, by including fish, the judgment Zephaniah envisioned exceeds that of the Flood in scope. Motyer, “Zephaniah,” 3:911.

⁸⁷ This is not to deny that Zephaniah also foretold a day of the Lord near to his own time as well.

⁸⁸ Bauckham, 299; Green, 321.

⁸⁹ See Brian Collins, “The Futurist Interpretation of Revelation: Intertextual Evidence from the Prologue,” *Journal of Biblical Theology and Worldview* 2 (2021): 33-52; Brian Collins, “The Futurist Interpretation of Revelation: Evidence from the Seal Judgments’ Reliance on the Olivet Discourse,” *Journal of Biblical Theology and Worldview*, 4 (2024): 1-18.

⁹⁰ Bauckham, 299; D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude* (Greenville, SC: BJU Press, 1989), 148-49. This comparison is conceptual, as in Zephaniah 1. It need not rely on using the same words for destruction or a specific word of comparison. It is true that the main point of comparison that Peter makes is between God speaking a word of judgment in both cases. But given the Zephaniah background and the fact that Peter places these two judgment events side-by-side, it is difficult not to compare them.

critique that the Bible has a two-age eschatology. Amillennialists argue that the Bible speaks only of this present age and the age to come and does not speak of an intermediate period between these two ages. New creation premillennialism defuses this objection by identifying the millennium as the first stage of the age to come.⁹¹

The most compelling reason to accept new creation premillennialism is that it makes the best sense of the biblical storyline. It avoids a dualistic eschatology in which the material world is annihilated and envisions a truly redeemed and restored creation. The millennial period is a time for cultivating and restoring an earth devastated by the day of the Lord judgments, and it is also a period for defeating the last enemies, including death itself (1 Cor. 15:26). The millennium is the inauguration of the new creation in which the Second Adam leads redeemed humanity in subduing the creation and delivering it up to God the Father.

⁹¹ Waymeyer notes that Geerhardus Vos himself provided a potential response to critique: “According to Vos, the immediate succession of the two ages isn’t necessarily incompatible with the eschatology of premillennialists, for ‘under their scheme the millennium could in part be identified with the age to come as the beginning thereof.’” Waymeyer, Kindle locations 2315-24, citing Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (1930; repr., Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 25.