



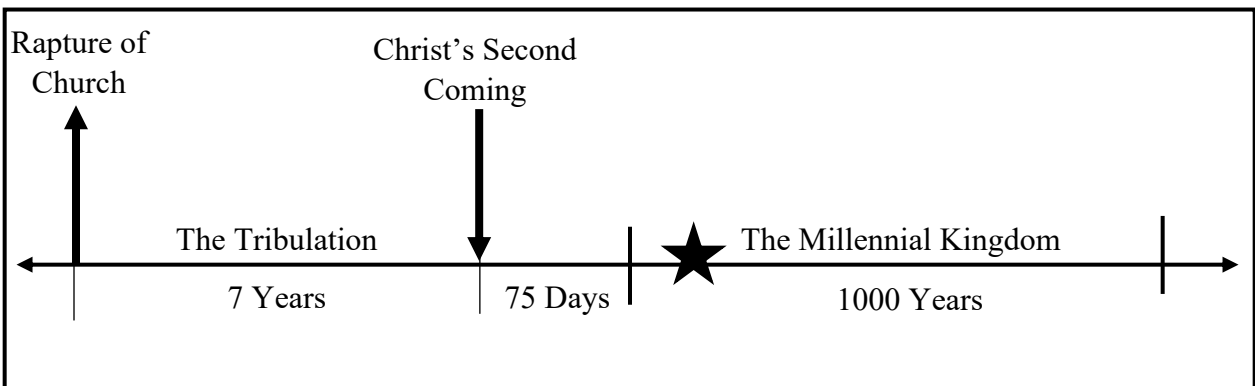
Eschatology – A Study of the End Times

Lesson 23: The Millennial Kingdom, Part 2

Introduction

After the seven-year tribulation period, Jesus is going to set up His kingdom on earth where He will rule and reign for one thousand years. In theological circles, this is known as the millennial kingdom. In the last lesson, we looked at what people will be like in the kingdom and how God is going to fulfill the land covenant that He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In this lesson, we are going to look at more details of what the millennial kingdom will be like during the one-thousand-year reign of Christ.

Timeline of End Times



The Nature of the Millennial Kingdom

Monarchy and priesthood were the two bases of the Old Testament theocracy.¹ Israel had both a king and a priesthood. However, because of Israel's constant failure, they lost both the monarchy as well as the priesthood. Since Israel's failure, they have been awaiting a future restoration of both the monarchy and the priesthood. According to Jeremiah 33:14–18, there will be a future restoration of both the monarchy and the Levitical priesthood in the millennial kingdom.

¹ Charles L. Feinberg, "Jeremiah" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 6*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelain (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1986), 592.

A Millennial Temple Is Built²

The book of Ezekiel speaks of a temple that is going to be built in the millennium. In Ezekiel 40–48, the details are given for the construction of the millennial temple and the animal sacrifices that are going to be instituted (Isa. 56:6 – 8). Scholars have debated the question about whether these prophecies should be taken literally or in some figurative sense.

Those who take this to be figurative suggest that the temple is somehow a representation of the church in the millennium. However, the text of Ezekiel 40–48 gives specific dimensions, specifications, and instructions regarding the operations that will take place in the temple. Therefore, it seems best to take this passage literally. Further, Ezekiel was told in Ezekiel 40:4, “Son of man, see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that I am going to show you; for you have been brought here in order to show *it* to you. Declare ***to the house of Israel*** all that you see” (bold and italics added). It seems impossible to conclude that this is supposed to symbolize the future church.

The millennial temple will be a final temple for Israel. The dimensions that are given in Ezekiel make this temple significantly larger than the other three temples built in Israel’s history—Solomon’s temple, the postexilic temple, and the tribulation temple. The tribulation temple will be destroyed as Jerusalem will experience a great earthquake and be split into three parts (Rev. 16:19). The millennial temple will then be built and represent God’s presence among His people during the millennium (Ezek. 37:26–28).

The restoration of Israel to their land will also be a restoration of God’s presence (and glory) visibly reentering the temple (Ezek. 43:5). This temple will be a worship center of Jesus Christ during the entire millennium (Ezek. 43:7; Zech. 14:16). It will be built at the beginning of the messianic kingdom by Christ (Zech. 6:12–13), redeemed Jews (Ezek. 43:10 – 11), and representatives from the Gentile nations (Hag. 2:7; Zech. 6:15). Not only will Jews be worshipping in the temple, but redeemed Gentiles will be included in worship in the millennial temple (Isa. 60:6; Zeph. 3:10; Zech. 2:11).

Why will there be sacrifices in the millennial temple?

Many people wonder why there will be sacrifices offered in the temple when Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice has taken away sin and has caused the Mosaic law of sacrifices to be abolished (Heb. 7–10). In answering this question, we must understand that not only are Israel and the church distinct today (1 Cor. 10:32; Rom. 9–11), but they will also be distinct in the millennial kingdom. It is, therefore, best to understand that the temple activities in the millennium relate primarily to Israel and not to the church, although redeemed Gentiles will be able to participate (Isa. 60–61).

There are two main views on the sacrifices in the millennial temple. The first view is called the memorial view. Bible scholars who hold this view believe the millennial sacrifices will be a kind of Jewish memorial of the price Christ had to pay for the salvation of the believing but not yet glorified Jews in the kingdom (Heb. 10:3). The Jews, who are in their mortal bodies, will be sacrificing as a memorial, allegedly functioning much like the Lord’s Supper does today, as a

² The following is adapted from *The End Times in Chronological Order* by Ron Rhodes.

memorial ritual (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:25–26). In the same way that the Lord’s Supper currently serves as a memorial that neither supplements nor undermines the sufficiency of Christ’s death on the cross, so it will be with the millennial sacrifices in the future kingdom.³

The problem with the memorial view is twofold. First, there is no clear indication in Ezekiel itself that these sacrifices will be memorial in nature. Second, the fact that Ezekiel says that these sacrifices will actually “make atonement” of some kind (Ezek. 43:20, 26; 45:15, 17, 20) seems to render the memorial function of these sacrifices as secondary at best.⁴ While the memorial view provides a reasonable explanation for how to harmonize the millennial sacrifices with Hebrews and Ezekiel, it fails to account for the details of the sacrificial language used in Ezekiel 40–48. Although these sacrifices may provide some kind of visual reminder of the work of Christ on the cross, it is difficult to see that that is their primary function in the millennial kingdom.

The second view is called the ceremonial cleansing view. This view states that the sacrifices in the millennial temple are to remove ceremonial uncleanness and prevent defilement from polluting the purity of the temple environment. Therefore, the sacrifices will not merely serve as a reminder of Christ’s death, and they will certainly not provide redemption that only comes through Christ’s all-sufficient work on the cross. Instead, they will provide the temporary cleansing and ceremonial purity for non-glorified people to dwell and worship in the glorious presence of God during the millennial kingdom.⁵

Atonement used throughout the Old Testament appears to indicate a foundational meaning of “cleansing” or wiping away. There are three ways atonement is used: 1) sometimes it refers to atonement for sin that results in *forgiveness*; 2) it is used of *purification* (in which the “unclean” person or object becomes “clean”); and 3) it is used of *consecration* (in which a “common” person or object is set apart as “holy”). Atonement in Ezekiel 40–48 falls into the latter two categories and is related to temple service in the millennial kingdom rather than the forgiveness of sins.⁶ Since Yahweh will again be dwelling on earth amongst sinful people (and therefore unclean) mortal people, these sacrifices will be necessary. The sacrifices will thus remove any ceremonial uncleanness in the temple.

Christ Reigns from the Throne of David

God promised David that one of his descendants would rule forever on his throne (2 Sam. 7:12–13; 22:51). Like the land promise given to Abraham and his descendants, this covenant is unconditional. It did not depend on David in any way for its fulfillment. 2 Samuel 7:13 says, “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.” The three key words of the covenant are *house*, *throne*, and *kingdom*. These words point to a political future of Israel. The word translated *house* refers to a royal dynasty.

³ Matt Waymeyer, “The Millennial Sacrifices of Ezekiel 40–48” in *To Seek, To Do & To Teach*, eds. Douglas D. Bookman, Tim M. Sigler, and Michael J. Vlach (Cary, NC: Shepherd’s Press, 2022), 112.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid, 113.

⁶ Ibid, 114.

The covenant finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ who was born from the line of David (Matt. 1:1). When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to inform her of the birth of the Messiah through her womb, he spoke to her in Davidic terms. Luke 1:30–33 says,

The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the *throne* of His father David; and He will reign over the *house* of Jacob forever, and His *kingdom* will have no end.” (bold and italics added)

In the millennial kingdom, Jesus will rule from the throne of David. This rule of Christ will extend beyond the Jews to include the Gentile nations as well. The prophecies given in the Old Testament regarding a king who would rule over Israel find their fulfillment in Christ during the millennial kingdom.

Christ Brings Physical Blessings

Scripture reveals that those who enter into Christ’s millennial kingdom will enjoy some unique physical blessings. These six are representative sampling.

1. People will live in a blessed and enhanced environment.

The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it will blossom profusely and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. (Isaiah 35:1-2).

2. Rain and food will be plentiful.

Then He will give *you* rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread *from* the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture. Also, the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork. (Isaiah 30:23-24).

3. Animals will live in harmony with each other and with humans.

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also, the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. (Isaiah 11:6-7).

4. Longevity will be greatly increased.

No longer will there be in it an infant *who lives but a few* days, or an old man who does not live out his days; for the youth will die at the age of one hundred and the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be *thought* accursed. (Isaiah 65:20).

5. Physical infirmities and illnesses will be removed.

On that day the deaf will hear words of a book, and out of *their* gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. (Isaiah 29:18).

And no resident will say, “I am sick”; the people who dwell there will be forgiven *their* iniquity. (Isaiah 33:24).

6. Prosperity will prevail, resulting in joy and gladness.

“They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion, and they will be radiant over the bounty of the Lord—over the grain and the new wine and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; and their life will be like a watered garden, and they will never languish again. Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old, together, for I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow. I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance, and My people will be satisfied with My goodness,” declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 31:12-14).

These and many other physical blessings will be abundantly present during the future millennial kingdom.

Christ Brings Spiritual Blessings

The spiritual blessings that will predominate during the millennial kingdom are based on the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). As an outworking of this wondrous covenant, abundant spiritual blessings will shower the earth. Here are seven examples.

1. The Holy Spirit will be present and will indwell all believers.

I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:27).

It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29).

2. Righteousness will prevail around the world.

Then all your people *will be* righteous; they will possess the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified. (Isaiah 60:21).

3. Obedience to the Lord will prevail.

“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Jeremiah 31:33).

4. Holiness will prevail.

Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain. So, Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will pass through it no more. (Joel 3:17).

5. Faithfulness will prevail.

Thus says the Lord, 'I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts *will be called* the Holy Mountain.' (Zechariah 8:3).

6. All the world's residents will worship the Messiah.

For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is* pure; for My name *will be* great among the nations," says the Lord of hosts. (Malachi 1:11).

7. God's presence will be made manifest.

My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.(Ezekiel 37:27-28).

The millennial kingdom will be a place of great spiritual blessing. What a place this will be!

Application:

1. Worship the Lord for His perfect rule over all creation. One day He will rule perfectly as our King in His kingdom.
2. Thank the Lord for what He has and will accomplish for us. One day we will live in a kingdom where righteousness and holiness will prevail.