

Dispensations, Part 8

Before we begin our study of the seventh and final dispensation, the Millennium or Kingdom, we need to establish some conditions that must be met first. Several things must occur between the Second Advent and the start of the Millennium to lay the groundwork for this period.

Judgment

At the Second Advent and before the Millennium begins, judgments will take place. Since only the saved will enter the Kingdom, there will be a separation of the saved from the lost among the survivors of the Tribulation. The Kingdom/Millennium symbolizes the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, and not everyone will receive an invitation to the “party.” God intends to clarify this before the “wedding supper” begins. There are two judgments for those who remain alive after the end of the Tribulation: one for Israel and one for the Gentiles.

Before Israel can be judged, it must first be regathered after being dispersed among the nations since AD 70 and the fall of Jerusalem. The regathering of Israel into the land since 1948 is not the regathering mentioned in Matthew 24:30-31.

Matthew 24:30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
³¹ And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

(Also see Isaiah 24:12; Jeremiah 12:15, 24:6; Isaiah 27:12; 43:5-7; Ezekiel 20:42; Hosea 12:9; Joel 3:1; Amos 9:14-15; Micah 4:6; Zephaniah 3:20; Zechariah 10:10.)

Before the Second Advent and this regathering, Israel will undergo a conversion that will prepare them to meet their Messiah and enter the Kingdom Age.

Isaiah 1:27 Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. ²⁸ But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

(See also Jeremiah 24:7; and Ezekiel 11:19; Ezekiel 36:25-26; Joel 2:32; Micah 7:18-19; Zechariah 13:1, 9; Zephaniah 3:12-13).

Those who have repented and are righteous will be redeemed. Those who are “rebels and sinners” will be “broken.” The term “broken” is derived from the Greek word *sheber*, which means destroyed.

Ezekiel 20:34 I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out. ³⁵ And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶ As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, declares the Lord God. ³⁷ I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. ³⁸ I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me. I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

Note that verse 38 states that some will not enter the land of Israel because God will “purge out the rebels” and “those who transgress against” Him. Israel will come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, but not all of Israel. Verse 37 indicates He will make them “pass under the rod.” The rod is the shepherd's tool He uses as He counts His sheep and separates His own from those of another shepherd. Jesus will gather Israel (all Jews still alive) and separate His flock from that of Satan. God will bring His own sheep (born-again Israel) into the "sheepfold" (Millennium).

What was Nicodemus told when he asked what he must do to enter the Kingdom? Jesus told him that he must be born again (John 3:7). Regenerate Israel will enter the Kingdom, while unregenerate Israel will not. Only the righteous shall enter the Kingdom. This fulfills God's promise to redeem His people, which is part of the New Covenant we recently studied.

The surviving Gentiles will also be judged at this time.

Joel 3:1 “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, ²I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, ³and have cast lots for my people, and have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it.

The term for "nations" derives from the Hebrew word for the uncircumcised, *goyim*, and refers to all nations and peoples other than the Israelites.

Matthew 25:31 Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴Then 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

Jesus will also gather the nations (Gentiles still alive) and divide them into sheep (saved) and goats (unsaved). The saved will be invited to the Wedding Supper of the Lamb. The goats will be removed and face eternal punishment. Thus, only the righteous living beings (saved) will enter the Kingdom/Millennium. The Millennium will commence with only saved individuals in human bodies, in contrast to the Tribulation, which began with only the unsaved remaining on earth.

Resurrections

In addition to the resurrected Saints from the Church Age (the Bride of Christ), the resurrected Saints from all previous dispensations and Tribulation martyrs will also be present.

There are two resurrections associated with the Second Advent. One is for the martyrs of the Tribulation who died due to their testimony for Christ and their refusal to accept the mark of the beast. They will be resurrected and

evaluated, just like the Church at the Bema. The other group consists of Old Testament believers, who will also be resurrected and evaluated.

There are two "kinds" of resurrections spoken of in Scripture: the resurrection to eternal life and the resurrection to judgment or condemnation. There is no instance in Scripture where someone is resurrected with their final disposition truly in question, that some are sent to heaven while others are sent to hell. The resurrections can be described as destination-specific.

Philippians 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Here, we have a reference to the resurrection of the Church (Rapture) in the phrase "resurrection from the dead." It is often translated as "resurrection *of* the dead." However, we must consider the presence of the little preposition *ek*, which should be translated as "from," so the verse should be more accurately rendered as "*out from among* the dead." This implies that some are resurrected while others are not. Some come out of the graves, while some remain for a later resurrection. Those who are resurrected are "in Christ" (v.9) and comprise all Church Age believers saved through their faith in Christ as Savior. All who are resurrected at *that* time ascend to heaven in the Rapture.

John 5:28 Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice ²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.

Jesus speaks of two resurrections. Although mentioned in the same passage, they are actually 1,000 years apart. The first group, "those who have done good deeds," a reference to the divine good performed by believers, is a resurrection of Tribulation believers, also noted in Revelation 20:4. Additionally, Old Testament believers are resurrected to eternal life at this time. One way we know this is because Jesus is speaking to Israel at this point in His earthly ministry. These two resurrections occur just before the Millennium begins. "Those who have done evil" are those resurrected to judgment at the end of the Millennium, a thousand years later.

The resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs and Old Testament believers is followed by a judgment of these risen souls. This is an evaluation very much like the one the Church experiences at the Bema judgment. Their salvation is not in view. Sin was judged at the Cross, and these believers trusted in that fact. They are resurrected to eternal life. What is in view is their faithfulness to God and His Word. For the Jew, this means keeping the Law, as they were under the Law Covenant and trusted in the promises of God concerning His plan for redemption as revealed to them in their respective dispensations. Assured of salvation *because of their faith*, they will be evaluated and rewarded for their faithfulness. These resurrected and rewarded believers will enter the Millennium in resurrection bodies, just like Church Age believers.

Daniel 12:1 "At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book. ²And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

As we saw in the John 5:28-29 passage, here in Daniel, there is a reference to the resurrection of the lost mentioned alongside the resurrection of the saved at the Second Advent, which occurs one thousand years earlier. There is no indication that these events happen simultaneously; in fact, they do not.

The phrase "time of trouble such as has never been" (Daniel 12:1) refers to the Tribulation. At the end of this period, all Old Testament believers "who are found written in the book" (the Book of Life) will be resurrected to everlasting life along with the martyred believers of the Tribulation. Every person's name is entered into the Book of Life, but only the names of the redeemed remain inscribed there after their death. The names of the lost are blotted out upon dying (Revelation 3:5).

The second group, "those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:29), refers to the resurrection of the damned, also mentioned in Revelation 20:11-14. Their "evil deeds" are not sins; sin was judged at the Cross and will not be judged again. The "evil deeds" are what we define as human good, "good" works that glorify man. Divine good, in contrast, consists of works performed by believers, guided and enabled by God for His glory. The first group, "who did good deeds" (divine good, therefore believers), is resurrected to eternal life. The second group, comprised of those who did "evil deeds" (human good, thus not believers), is resurrected to eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire.

We will see this "book" (of Life), along with the Book of Works, presented and utilized at the Last Judgment at the end of the Millennium.

Revelation 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire

This is the Great White Throne Judgment, also known as the "Last Judgment." It will be a judgment of the lost from all of human history. Thus, none of those being judged here will be found written in the Book of Life.

Their names have been blotted out. Consequently, they will be judged by their deeds (human good) as recorded in the Book of Works, which cannot secure their salvation. For them, it will be the Lake of Fire, as they relied on their own works and rejected God's grace provisions for salvation.

Shortly after the Second Advent and before the Millennium/Kingdom Age begins, God will have established the following conditions:

- Tribulation martyrs and believers from the Old Testament have been resurrected and granted their glorified resurrection bodies.
- None of the lost have been resurrected so far. That will occur at the end of the Millennium.
- Israel has been regathered and judged.
- Israel has received its national redemption - many Jews have embraced Christ as the Messiah.
- The nations have been gathered
- The Gentiles who survive the Tribulation are judged, and Jesus separates His sheep from Satan's goats.
- The goats are condemned to damnation.
- Jesus, as judge, has separated the believers from the unbelievers.
- Unbelievers are cast into damnation.
- Believers enter the Millennium.

The Millennium

We begin the Dispensation of the Millennium under unusual circumstances, the most significant of which is the visible presence of Jesus Christ reigning as King of Kings.

Reigning with Him are the resurrected members of the Church Age (the Bride of Christ) and resurrected Old Testament believers, including the resurrected Tribulation martyrs (Revelation 20:4). All of these individuals exist in their glorified eternal state and are free from their sin natures. Many will hold positions of responsibility during the Millennium, assisting Christ the King with matters such as serving as judges in legal cases (1 Corinthians 6:1-8) and holding positions of responsibility in the King's government.

Also present are believers who have survived the Tribulation. They remain in their human bodies with fully functioning Adamic natures and are subject

to committing sins. They will procreate and repopulate the Earth, and their children will also possess sin natures.

What may be the second most important aspect of the Millennium is the status of Satan and his demons. The demons, along with the Beast and False Prophet, have been cast into the Lake of Fire, and Satan has been banished to the abyss, where he will be kept in chains until his release at the end of the Millennium to cause mischief once more (Revelation 20:1-3; 20:7). During the Millennium, Satan and his demons cannot directly influence those who remain in their human bodies with their Adamic natures. All temptation must originate from within man.

This dispensation marks an unparalleled time of God revealing Himself in the Person of His Son, Jesus Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords on earth. His presence will be physical and established in Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2:3, 9:7, 59:20, 60:1-4, Matthew 25:31, Jeremiah 3:17, 14:21, 33:14-17. Also, Daniel 7:13-14 quoted by Jesus in Matthew 26:64.)

The revelation of God's Person and Law is very clear during this time.

Jeremiah 31:34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The idea of "no longer shall each one teach his neighbor," saying, "know the Lord," is hyperbole used to express that the nations will universally know the Lord due to the immediate and visible presence of Christ on earth. This revelation will entail justice and righteousness being upheld worldwide.

Isaiah 9:7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Jeremiah 32:5 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and

deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'

Such righteous rule is by Christ personally, with some responsibilities delegated to those in glorified status.

Revelation 20:4 Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed ...

It fulfills the long-standing promises from the Old Testament regarding how rulership will come from Israel (Jacob) (Numbers 24:17-18, Jeremiah 33:15-16).

Jeremiah 32:37 Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. ³⁸ And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. ³⁹ I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. ⁴⁰ I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. ⁴¹ I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.

Clearly, the Millennium represents a time of utopia, peace, prosperity, safety, righteousness, and blessings that everyone longs to experience on earth.

The Test of Man

Scripture indicates that Christ will rule "with a rod of iron" (Revelation 2:27), and justice and righteousness will prevail, which means that injustice and unrighteousness will be punished. The "iron rod" suggests that sin will not be tolerated and will be dealt with swiftly and justly. While many, or perhaps even most, of those living in the Millennium will respond positively to Christ's leadership, it is clear that some will not.

There is no reason to believe that the gospel will not be proclaimed during the Millennium, and faith in the Lord is essential for pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6). A response of faith will still be required for justification (Romans 4:5, Galatians 2:16). Obedience and service to Christ are also required. Where disobedience is practiced, God will exercise chastisement.

Zechariah 14:16 Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. ¹⁹ 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.

The larger test during this dispensation is whether man, as a species, will submit to God in a perfect environment where sin is punished and Satan is absent. Can humans restrain their Adamic nature?

The Failure of Man

It should be again noted that both entering the Millennium and throughout the Millennium, individuals will possess a fallen, Adamic nature. This fallen nature will be the source of rebellion and disobedience.

Romans 8:7 For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Additionally, there are the ominous verses of Revelation 20:7-9.

Revelation 20:7 And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. ⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints

and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,

Some people in the Millennium will rebel when Satan is unleashed on the earth at the conclusion of the Millennium, and they will try to destroy God's people.

Isaiah 2:4 He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Considering this Isaiah passage that states the weapons of war were destroyed at the beginning of the Millennium, and that man would learn war no more, how is this Gog and Magog thing a "battle"? I was troubled by the word translated as "battle." It is the Greek word *polemos*, which can mean "battle" or "war" but may also refer to a dispute, strife, or quarrel. I don't think this was a "battle" in the usual sense we understand the term. I believe this passage speaks more of a protest, perhaps violent, but not a battle using any weapons other than possibly sticks and stones. Satan is released at the end of the Millennium, and God knows that he will do exactly this and, thus, reveal all those who were not the Lord's sheep for the world to see.

It is difficult to understand why or how anyone could rebel against Christ's rulership, but I suspect that some people alive then will not have accepted Christ as their Savior and will have silently chafed under the rule of the "iron rod" (iron scepter), hating every moment of it. Yet, Verse 8 states that they are "deceived," indicating their belief in their own power and ability to alter Christ's reign so they can do as they please. This underscores the magnitude of the arrogance present in opposing Christ in His glory. We are reminded of the words attributed to Satan in Isaiah.

Isaiah 14:13 You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

With a perfect Ruler present and justice prevailing globally, man still finds excuses for his rebellion against God's rule! The Adamic nature seeks an outlet in the deceptive work of Satan. But just as quickly, these proud fools meet their destruction.

Revelation 20:9 And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,

Like all previous dispensations, the Millennium starts with blessings and a test for mankind. Man will ultimately fail the test, leading to judgment at the conclusion of the Millennium for that failure. Despite the perfect environment of the Millennium and the presence of the King of Kings reigning righteously, man will still reject that in favor of what Satan will offer and will rebel against the Lord. Sadly, the opportunity for man to live under the wise and righteous leadership of Jesus Christ is rejected. In the best situation, humans refuse divine direction and suffer for it.

Revelation 20:10 and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

With this judgment, we have the final removal of Satan to the Lake of Fire forever, joining his earlier henchmen: the Beast and the False Prophet. Their wickedness justly deserves eternal punishment. Whatever purpose the presence of Satan served during human history is now terminated forever.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 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."

⁵ And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.”