

Lesson # 69 Life in the Millennial Kingdom

Date: March 10, 2013

“The Kingdom can draw near to men (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15, etc.); it can come (Matt. 6:10; Luke 17:20, etc.); arrive (Matt. 12:28); appear (Luke 19:11); be active (Matt. 11:12); God can give the Kingdom to men (Matt. 21:43; Luke 12:32); but men do not give the Kingdom to one another. Further, God can take the Kingdom away from men (Matt. 21:43); but men do not take it away from one another, although they can prevent others from entering it. Man can enter the Kingdom (Matt. 5:20; 7:21; Mark 9:47; 10:23, etc.); but they are never said to erect it or build it. Men can receive the Kingdom (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17), inherit it (Matt. 25:34), and possess it (Matt. 5:4), but they are never said to establish it. Men can reject the Kingdom, ie., refuse to receive it (Luke 10:11) or enter it (Matt. 23:13), but they cannot destroy it. They can look for it (Luke 23:51), pray for its coming (Matt. 6:10), and seek it (Matt. 6:33; Luke 12:31), but they cannot bring it. Men may be in the Kingdom (Matt. 5:19; 8:11; Luke 13:29; etc.), but we are not told the Kingdom grows. Men can do things for the sake of the Kingdom (Matt. 19:12; Luke 18:29), but they are not said to act upon the Kingdom itself. Men can preach the Kingdom (Matt. 10:7; Luke 10:9), but only God can give it to men.”ⁱ

I. OT Prophecies of the Millennial Kingdom

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i.) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel

In the OT, prophetic passages abound, but it is often difficult to sort out what they are prophesying about. In some cases, a near event is in sight, and in the middle of the passage, the prophecy points to something hundreds or even thousands of years off. Only the context (ie. in the case of the Millennium, long life, harmony among animals, peace among people, etc. provides context) offers clues as to when this is referring to. Phrases or clauses like, “in the latter days”, “the day of the Lord”, or “it shall be that I will gather”, or something similar tend to reveal a focus that has shifted to the end of time where international judgment, peace, worship, restoration, salvation from imminent disaster, etc. so that we can understand what the prophet is now “seeing”.

There are many key Millennium passages in both the major prophets and minor prophets (called “minor prophets” only because their work is shorter, not because it is less important biblically). We will not take time to look at all of them in detail, but here is a list of some of the more well known passages: II Sam. 7:8-16; Ps. 2:6-12; 46:4-5; 89:3-4; 132:11-12,17-18; 145:12-13; Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:4-16; 35:1-10; 60:1-22; 61:3-11; 65:17-25; 66:12-24; Jer. 23:3-8; 30:8-11,18-20; 31:31-40; 33:15-17; Ezek. 34:23-31; 37:15-28; 39:21-48:35; 40-48; Dan. 2:44; 7:14,27; Hosea 2:16-23; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15; Obadiah 17-21; Micha 4:1-7;

Zephaniah 2:9,11; 3:9-13; Haggai 2:9; Zechariah 6:12-15; 8:1-23; 14:4-11; 14:16-21; Malachi 3:12 + many others in the NT.

ii.) New Testament

Most of what we know in detail about the Millennium comes from the OT, although “The Kingdom” is referred to and looked at in the NT in passages such as Matthew 5-7, although there is not a lot of detail about it shared, even in our key passage of Revelation 20. A number of Jesus’ parables are pointing to the Kingdom, especially the “Kingdom Parables” of Matthew 13, of which there are 7:

- The Parable of the Sower – Matt. 13:1-23
- The Parable of the Tares – Matt. 13:24-30
- The Parable of the Mustard Seed – Matt. 13:31-32
- The Parable of the Leaven – Matt. 13:33-43
- The Parable of the Hidden Treasure – Matt. 13:44
- The Parable of the Pearl – Matt. 13:45-46
- The Parable of the Dragnet – Matt. 13:47-52

All of these parables, with the exception of the first, begin with the phrase, “The Kingdom of heaven is like...” and in v. 19, Jesus ties the first parable to the Kingdom as well when he teaches the meaning of the parable to the twelve disciples, “when anyone hears the word of the Kingdom”, and in v. 11, “the mysteries of the Kingdom” provides some context in advance.

We do not have the luxury of time to launch an extensive exegetical review of all these parables but there are numerous good books available which you can study on your own.ⁱⁱ Two of these parables are explained by Jesus – cf. Matt. 13:18-23 (the Sower); and 13:36-43 (the Tares). One shows us the importance of hearing and acting on the “word of the Kingdom”, and the other describes the penalty and judgment of those who refuse to hear, alongside the end of the righteous in v. 43a.

We will not take the time to examine the Abrahamic, Davidic, Palestinian or New Covenants here because we have already looked at these in some detail in lesson # 65, but be aware that they are of great importance and help narrow down the focus of the Millennial Kingdom to Israel who plays a key role in it, and whose presence in the Millennium offers blessing to “the nations” who are also in the Millennium. Christ will reign from the midst of Israel (in Jerusalem) and all the nations will flow to His throne to worship Him there.

Now, because of the complexity and scope of the topic of the Millennium, I thought it might be best to look at one OT passage with some focus rather than attempt to capture everything said about the Kingdom from all sources, and I figured this passage in Isaiah to be a good source of much detail. Let’s use it as a kind of home base for this study.

II. Isaiah 65:17-25

i.) New Heavens and Earth vv. 17-19

These verses depict what is really (especially v. 17) out of chronological order – as the creation of the new heavens and new earth occur in sequence after the Millennium – cf. Rev. 21:1ff – and the Great White Throne Judgment – Rev. 20:11-15 – but they set the scene for us proleptically and once the Millennial Kingdom is in place, there is 100% certainty that the eternal state of heaven will follow it. We know from what follows these verses that this passage is chiefly about the Millennial Kingdom, and not heaven because of verse 20. There will still be death and Rev. 21:4 confirms this – death is done away with at the beginning of the eternal state – Rev. 21:4, not the Millennium.

It is clear from vv. 17-19, as the entire Bible has made clear, that God alone has created everything that is and when His purposes for His created order have been completed, He will create a new heaven and earth that will last throughout eternity – a concept we cannot really fathom to a helpful degree yet. We are told to be glad and rejoice forever in what God creates (reminiscent of James 1:17) – forever. Why? Because He creates Jerusalem as a rejoicing and her people as a joy. Then, in v. 19, God too will rejoice in Jerusalem and His people!

At v. 19b, the idea of weeping and crying within Jerusalem (New Jerusalem) will be unheard of so that in v. 19, the eternal state is still in the writer's thoughts, but by v. 20, the Millennial Kingdom is being spoken of. ③

ii.) Longevity v. 20

This verse seems to be saying that, although death will still come upon people (who are still in an unglorified state, and still having babies), it will be like the early state of man, even after the fall (but prior to the flood – cf. Gen. 5:1-32) where people lived for centuries. One will be considered young when 100 years old, and old men will fulfill their days. But even in this great news, there is a hint that sin has not yet been fully eradicated (so this is definitely not yet heaven), because there will still be death, and then the last part of v. 20 states, *“the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old will be accursed.”* There will still be sin in the Kingdom.

Who will be sinning in the Kingdom? Well, for starters, believers who have not yet been glorified. You & I are believers as yet unglorified, and we sin. So why expect that these believers won't sin also? Beyond that, their children will sin, because they'll be born with a sin nature. The infant of v. 20, being 100 years old, will not be born saved and some will remain unsaved. This verse seems to indicate that those unsaved by 100 years old will be accursed. Why? Because they are being brought up in a perfect environment, with constant gospel influence, with Jesus Himself reigning amongst them, and righteous judgment without corruption emanating from whatever legal system will be in place, and Satan and his demons have been locked away for the full 1,000 years,

so there is no demonic influence causing people to sin. To remain unsaved in a society like that will mark a person as a godless rebel.

According to v. 23, the bearing of children will be a blessing and they will not be snatched away by infant death, cancer or be prone to debilitating diseases. Children will be expected to live long lives under God's blessing. One of the main blessings of the Millennial Kingdom will be physical longevity.

iii.) Building Dwelling Places and Vineyards vv. 21-22

The main aspects of life as history has known it – building, planting, eating, drinking, social events, etc. – these things are what people will be doing. There will be industry and commerce of some kind – at the very least agricultural – along with construction work, etc. In fact, we are told that there will be no industry promoting war – cf. [Isa. 2:1-4](#); Micah 4:3-4. Swords will be converted to implements for farming. [Amos 9:11-15](#) parallels what Isaiah is seeing in his prophecy, especially vv. 13-14. Farming will be successful, and not so prone to losses due to weather or pestilence – the land will be fertile – cf. [Isa. 35:1-10](#) & [Amos 9:13](#) – with so much bounty that there will be almost constant harvesting and gardens full of fruit, which people will grow and enjoy. Possibly, there is a hint here that the curse of weeds has been lifted in the Millennium.

Furthermore, people will build cities & inhabit them. There will be no idea of people building something and then someone else enjoys it, and then the builder returns to his own hovel and lives in abject poverty. Everyone will have a home, but they will work for it, not under the curse, but likely with an enjoyment of work because of what it produces, and the joy of fulfilled purpose & successful endeavour. ④

Living in the Millennial Kingdom will be a communal experience – everyone helping everyone else – envision an Amish barn raising for example. That's the way I envision it, except more modern. Verse 22 is talking about the fact that people will build their houses and their neighbours' houses and no one will fear that some army is just around the corner waiting to take it from them by force, and no mortgage company will take it back for missed payments. If there is an economically structured society, because of the joyous work ethic, no one will be poor and not taken care of.

Again (v. 22b), people will live long productive lives, and will enjoy the work of their hands. They will not grow old and lose their homes or have their families torn from them. The ESV & HCS are clear here as to what this means. I find the NASB a bit obscure here, as it says, "My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands." Better is the HCS – "My chosen ones will fully enjoy the work of their hands."

iv.) A Tight Relationship With God vv. 23-24

Work will achieve its' goals – failure will be rare or non-existent. “Children will not be born to calamity”. This will be the norm during the Kingdom and refers not to sin but to early death.ⁱⁱⁱ

The infant mortality rate will be the lowest ever. Coupled with a 1,000 year period (25 generations @ 40 years /generation), longevity, death a rarity, etc. this will be a period of exponential population growth, and **Isa.35:5-7** tells us that birth defects will be virtually non-existent. Verse 23 provides a reason...”for they (the children) shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord.” – cf. Matt. 25:34.

Verse 24 tells us of a time of intimate fellowship with our Lord. We will be so tightly attuned to Him that our every need will be anticipated by Him and supplied even as the request is on our tongue. Prayer will operate the way we wish it operated now. See **Isa. 58:9-14**. God will be there for His people because His people will count heavily on Him and will rejoice to be in His presence and experience His justice and goodness.

v.) A Covenant With Nature v. 25; 11:6-9a; Hosea 2:16-23

Not only will our work be fruitful and the land fertile, but God will restore the conditions that must have existed before the fall in Eden. Even those animals that are deadly to man (and other animals) today will be tame. Lions, tigers, alligators, cobras, leopards, etc. will have their natures changed and will be vegetarians. Thus the animals will not hunt and kill one another. We are so used to seeing the circle of life in nature which includes the sudden, violent and bloody death of prey animals under the fangs and talons of fierce predators that this can barely be envisioned. ⑤

I must point out here how some theologians try to ‘get around’ what appears to be quite obvious in the text when it doesn’t quite suit their theology on certain passages. In this case, notice John Gerstner’s take on what it means for the wolf to lie down with the lamb (Isa. 11:6);

“A host of OT prophecies, understood by non-dispensationalists to refer to the church, are thought by dispensationalists to speak of a millennial reign of Christ on earth.

A good example of this is the dispensational interpretation of Isaiah 11:6 which says that “the wolf will dwell with the lamb.” The question now becomes, how does it happen that dispensationalists have come to have the wolf and the lamb actually lie down together while the non-dispensationalist sees a figure of speech? Is it a different hermeneutical principle when interpreting prophecy as is often thought? No, they both agree that Scripture should be interpreted literally if possible and necessary in prophecy. Conservative non-dispensationalists agree that it is quite possible for God to cause wolves and lambs to lie down together but contend that this is not a plausible interpretation here. They note that this passage seems to be dealing with human beings and not animals, and that it

seems to refer to the present age and not some future time. They would admit that if it were not referring to an era still future it would conceivably and probably have a literal meaning. The dispensationalists would admit that if it referred to human beings in this dispensation it could conceivably and probably would have a figurative meaning....

The question is, is it plausible, given the whole teaching of Scripture, to interpret this passage as referring to a literal fellowship of wolf and lamb in a literal millennial kingdom? It is not whether God is capable of achieving such a situation. Both sides agree on the doctrine of divine omnipotence. Rather, it is a matter of the compatibility of such an interpretation with the Biblical witness as a whole.”^{iv}

Dr. Gerstner goes on to present 8 points of argument for his position, which he expresses as an alternative view in his 7th point;

“If figurative language is not incompatible with literalism, as we have shown, would not this matter of expression be especially appropriate? Not only would Jews and Gentiles, being one in Christ, be like wolves and lambs lying down together peaceably, but instances of personal reconciliation such as the zealot, Simon being in the same apostolic band with Matthew the tax collector are aptly depicted by this imagery.”^v

In my opinion, there is no warrant to use this passage to argue for his conclusion. Other OT prophecies did not have to go to these lengths to produce an acceptable realization of having been fulfilled, such as the prophecies of Judas’ betrayal, and the thirty pieces of silver, etc. One does not typically see the band of diverse men with Jesus and say, Aha! Isaiah 11:65:25! ⑥

In many of these OT passages, we have a fairly representative outline of what Millennial life will be like. I realize we have just scratched the surface here because there is so much about this future time period in the OT and NT. We could go on for months (& I guess we have), but we’ll look at one more important aspect of Millennial life next – what will worship be like? For that, we will examine Ezekiel 40-48. After that, we’ll move on to the record of the final rebellion in Rev. 20:7-10.

Next lesson – Lesson # 70 -- Worship in the Millennial Kingdom – Ezek. 40-48

ⁱ George Eldon Ladd, as quoted by Kevin DeYoung & Greg Gilbert in “What is the Mission of the Church?”; Crossway Books, 2011; pp. 132-133

ⁱⁱ For example; Richard C. Trench, “Notes on the Parables of Our Lord”; Simon Kistemaker, “The Parables of Jesus”; Ada R. Habershon, “The Study of the Parables”; Herman C. Hanko, “The Mysteries of the Kingdom”; A.W. Pink, “The Kingdom Parables of Matthew 13

ⁱⁱⁱ John MacArthur – ESV study bible note on this verse.

^{iv} John H. Gerstner, Ph.D.; *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth – A Critique of Dispensationalism*; Wolgemuth & Hyatt; 1991; pp. 90-91

^v IBID, p. 92