

THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM

Revelation 20:1-10

Jesus will defeat the army of the Antichrist and bring the seven year Tribulation to an end. Following the Tribulation, Jesus will establish His Kingdom here on earth.

In fulfillment of God's unconditional covenant promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants many passages in the Old Testament speak of a future kingdom ruled by the Messiah during which time Israel will dwell securely in the land area God promised. Further, the nation of Israel will be brought into the New Covenant as a nation and every Jew will know the Lord during the Messianic Kingdom (Jer. 31:31-40; 50:17-20). The expectation of a Messianic Kingdom is based on a large amount of material in the Old Testament Scriptures.

The contribution of Revelation 20:1-10 to the revelation of the Messianic Kingdom is that this passage reveals the duration of the Messianic Kingdom. It is stated six times in these ten verses that the Messianic Kingdom will last for one thousand years. The duration of the Messianic Kingdom was not revealed in the Old Testament. Revelation 20:1-10 clearly reveals a duration of one thousand years. When we refer to the Kingdom as the Millennial Kingdom we are emphasizing its duration.

According to Daniel 12:11-13 there will be a seventy-five day interval between the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. Many things will take place in this interval including the binding of Satan and the resurrection of martyred Tribulation saints.

SATAN BOUND FOR A THOUSAND YEARS (20:1-3)

Revelation 20:1-3 (ESV)

¹ *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.*

The "bottomless pit" is the *Abyss*, one of the four areas of the underworld. You might remember that it will be from the *Abyss* that an army of demons will come to torment earth's inhabitants for five months (Rev. 9:1-11).

² *And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.*

During the Millennial Kingdom, Satan will be bound in the *Abyss*. His demonic forces will be imprisoned in the destroyed city of Babylon (Rev. 18:2). There will be no active Satanic or demonic influence in the Kingdom. But among gentiles (non-Jews) there will still be sin. Despite living under the personal, perfect rule of Jesus Christ administered by resurrected Old Testament, Church Age and Tribulation saints, many citizens will rebel and join Satan for one final battle against Christ (Rev. 20:8). The Millennial Kingdom will prove for all time and eternity the wickedness of the human heart (Jer. 17:9-10). The last sentence of verse three reveals Satan's release from the *Abyss* at the end of the thousand years. Verses seven through ten reveal his final attempt to defeat Christ. We'll study that in a moment.

Verses four through six reveal that martyred Tribulation saints will be resurrected before the Millennial Kingdom begins.

THE RESURRECTION OF MARTYRED TRIBULATION SAINTS (20:4-6)

Revelation 20:4-6 (ESV)

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

Before the Millennial Kingdom begins, judges will be seated and will execute judgment. Though John does not reveal their identity, other Scriptures reveal some of these judges.

Between the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom there will be a 75-day interval (Dan. 12:11-13). It seems likely that during this interval, Jesus will execute the Sheep & Goats Judgment.

Matthew 25:31–32 (ESV)

³¹ *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² 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.*

The Sheep & Goats Judgment determines who of the gentiles surviving the Tribulation, will enter the Millennial Kingdom.

In addition to Jesus, the Apostles may also be those sitting on these thrones. Jesus promised His disciples that they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel in the Kingdom (cf. Luke 22:29-30).

Matthew 19:28 (ESV)

²⁸ *Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Some scholars speculate that the twenty four Elders whom we met in Revelation 4 may also be given authority to judge. They may be judging the resurrected Tribulation saints in the sense of rewarding their faithfulness, giving them authority and assigning them their responsibility in the Kingdom. There may be other Church saints, the overcomers from the church of Laodicea, who also will be given authority to judge (Rev. 3:21).

John not only saw the thrones and judges, he also saw the martyred Tribulation saints come back to life. Believers killed during the Tribulation will be resurrected presumably during the 75 day interval between the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom (Dan. 12:11-13).

Revelation 20:4–6 (ESV)

⁴ *...Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

Tribulation saints will serve in Christ’s administration during the Millennial Kingdom.

⁵ *The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.*

This refers to all of the unrighteous dead from the creation of the human race through to the end of the Millennial Kingdom. This can only refer to the unrighteous dead because 1) all Old Testament saints will be resurrected before the start of the Millennial Kingdom (Dan. 12:1-3, 13), 2) all Church Age saints will be resurrected/translated at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18), 3) all martyred Tribulation saints will be resurrected before the start of the Millennial Kingdom and 4) Millennial believers will not die (Isa. 65:20)¹. The resurrection of Tribulation saints before the Millennial Kingdom will complete the *resurrection of life* spoken of by Jesus in John 5:28-29.

¹ Verse 20 is especially significant, for it discusses life and death in the Kingdom. This verse teaches several things. *First:* there will no longer be any infant mortality in the Millennium; everyone who is born in the Kingdom will reach a certain age. *Second:* the specific age at which one may die is the age of one hundred. With infant mortality removed, everyone born in the Millennium will live at least until his hundredth year of life. Because of the prolongation of life in the Millennium, those who die at the age of one hundred will be considered as having died young. *Third:* this verse limits the people dying at the age of one hundred to those who are sinners; namely, unbelievers, as only they would be considered *accursed*. So, then, death in the Kingdom will be for unbelievers only.

Comparing this passage with what is stated about salvation in other passages, the entire concept of life and death in the Kingdom can be summarized as follows. When the Kingdom begins, all natural men, both Jews and Gentiles, will be believers. The Jews in their entirety will be saved just prior to the Second Coming of the Messiah. All unbelieving Gentiles (goats) will be killed during the seventy-five day interval between the Tribulation and the Millennium, and only believing Gentiles (sheep) will be able to enter the Kingdom. However, in the process of time, there will be birth in the Kingdom of both Jews and Gentiles. These newly born, natural people will continue to inherit the sin nature from their natural parents and will also be in need of regeneration. Although Satan is confined, thus reducing temptation, the sin nature is quite capable of rebelling against God apart from satanic activity. In time, there will be unsaved people living in the Kingdom in need of regeneration. As in the past, the means of salvation will be by grace through faith and the content of faith will be the death of Messiah for sin and His subsequent resurrection. Those born in the Kingdom will have until their hundredth year to believe. If they do not, they will die in their hundredth year. The unbeliever will not be able to live past his first century of life. However, if they do believe, they will live throughout the Millennium and never die. Thus, death in the Millennium will be for unbelievers only. This is why the Bible nowhere speaks of a resurrection of millennial saints. This is why the resurrection of the Tribulation saints is said to complete the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4–6). **It is also clear from the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31–34 that there will be no Jewish unbelievers in the Kingdom; all Jews born during the Kingdom will accept the Messiah by their hundredth year. Unbelief will be among the Gentiles only and, therefore, death will exist only among the Gentiles.**

Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *The Footsteps of the Messiah : a Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*. Rev. ed. Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 2003.

This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

To be clear, the *first resurrection* refers more to a *type* of resurrection than to a *sequence* of revelation. The *first resurrection* includes all believers resurrected to eternal life with God in heaven. Jesus is the first order of the *first resurrection*. Church saints resurrected at the Rapture will be the second order of the *first resurrection*. Old Testament saints and Tribulation saints resurrected during the 75-day interval between the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom will be the third and fourth orders of the *first resurrection*. With the resurrection of the Tribulation Saints, the *first resurrection* will be complete.

The rest of the dead who come back to life at the conclusion of the Millennial Kingdom are part of the *second resurrection* which is the resurrection of judgment (John 5:28-29). The rest of the dead will be resurrected to face judgment at the Great White Throne Judgment. The destiny of those participating in the *second resurrection* is the *second death*. The *second death* is eternal separation from God in the Lake of Fire – the outcome for all defendants at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

This is why those sharing in the *first resurrection* are blessed and holy: they are blessed because they will be delivered from the Great White Throne Judgment and the Lake of Fire and they are delivered because they are holy, forgiven and washed clean by the blood of the Lamb. In addition, those sharing in the *first resurrection* will have the joy, privilege and challenge of serving in Christ's Kingdom administration.

SATAN'S FINAL DEFEAT AND PUNISHMENT (20:7-10)

Revelation 20:7–10 (ESV)

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, 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.*

Many of us wonder why Satan will be released and allowed to lead this final rebellion. One scholar suggests four reasons:

- *to demonstrate that man even under the most favorable circumstances will fall into sin if left to his own choice;*
- *to demonstrate the foreknowledge of God who foretells the acts of men as well as His own acts;*
- *to demonstrate the incurable wickedness of Satan;*
- *to justify eternal punishment, that is, to show the unchanged character of wicked people even under divine jurisdiction for a long period of time.²*

It is quite incredible that after living under the righteous reign of Christ there will be a massive number of unbelievers who will be deceived by Satan and will join his forces against Jesus. Another commentator has eloquently expressed the light the Millennial Kingdom will shine on the human heart:

The golden age of the kingdom will last a thousand years, during which righteousness will reign, and peace, prosperity, and the knowledge of God be universally enjoyed. But this will not entail universal conversion, and all profession must be tested... Will not a thousand years under the beneficent sway of Christ and the manifested glory of God suffice to render men immune to his [Satan's] temptations, will they not have radically changed for the better, and become by the altered conditions of life and the absence of Satanic temptations, children of God and lovers of His

² Robert Govett, *The Apocalypse Expounded*, pp. 506-8, quoted in John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Galaxie Software, 2008), 302.

*will? Alas! It will be proved once more that man whatever his advantages and environment, apart from the grace of God and the new birth, remains at heart only evil and at enmity with God.*³

Just as God's fire from heaven will destroy the city of Babylon so also it will destroy the army of Satan even as it surrounds the *beloved city*, Jerusalem. Satan will then be cast into the Lake of Fire to join the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Thus in torment the counterfeit trinity will languish for eternity.

³ William Hoste, *The Visions of John the Divine*, pp. 160-61, as quoted in John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Galaxie Software, 2008), 302.