

## **What the Bible Says About the Millennial Kingdom**

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### **Introduction**

The kingdom of God is one of the central themes of the Bible; some students of the Word view it as “the” central theme. In many ways the Bible relates to us that God is the sovereign Lord of creation, though the expression of that kingdom, at least from the human perspective, may take different forms.

### **Aspects of the Kingdom of God**

At least three distinct aspects of the kingdom of God are alluded to in Scripture, the universal kingdom, the visible kingdom, and the invisible kingdom. While our present topic is the visible kingdom, and particularly its millennial phase, it would be helpful to survey all three aspects before proceeding.

### **The Universal Kingdom of God**

God’s sovereignty over all creation is often referred to as his “universal kingdom.” This concept appears early in Israel’s history and is a frequent theme in the Psalms (cf. 10:16; 29:10; 103:19-22; 145:10-13). The universal kingdom of God encompasses all creation, and therefore includes even the ungodly, for they too are under the sovereign rule of God.

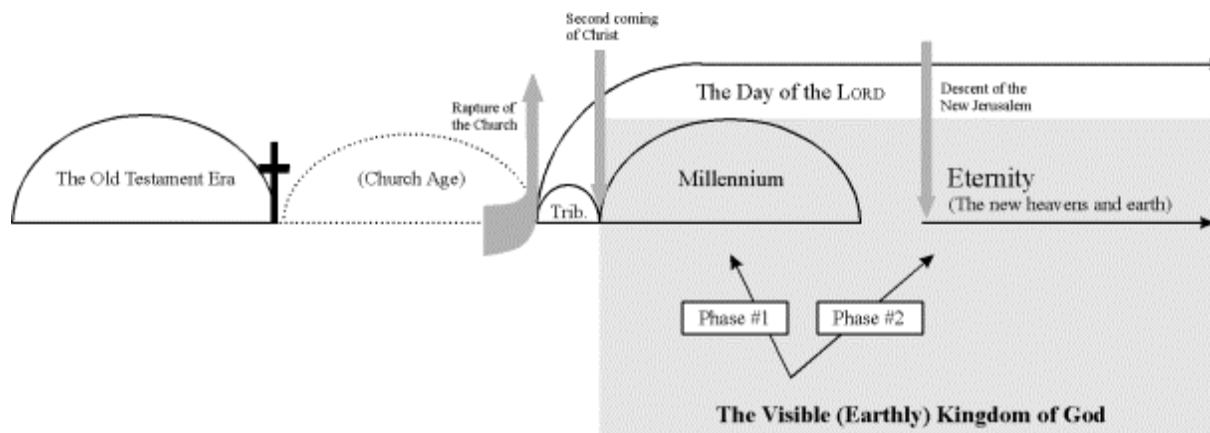
### **The Visible Kingdom of God**

To the Jewish mind, in the Old Testament, the kingdom of God was equated with God’s theocratic rule over the Nation of Israel. Ultimately this rule was to have its fullest expression in the rule of God through his Messiah, at which time Israel would be vindicated and led to victory over her enemies, and experience the joy of profuse divine blessing and peace.

Only in the New Testament does the millennial conception of the kingdom of God come into sharp focus, in contrast to the Old Testament, which made no distinction between the Millennium and eternity. With the recording of the Book of Revelation, it became apparent that the earthly kingdom rule would occur in

two phases (see below). The first phase is to occur in the Millennium (Rev. 20:4-10), which as the name suggests, encompasses the first one thousand years of the visible kingdom (approximately). The second phase of the visible earthly rule of God occurs in eternity with the creation of a new heavens and earth, and the New Jerusalem, the home of the saints, resting upon the new earth (Rev. 21:1-22:5).

### The Visible Kingdom of God



### The Invisible Kingdom of God

The invisible kingdom of God refers to God's rule in the hearts of those yielded to him, and thus is a present reality. This aspect of the kingdom is largely developed in the gospels (cf. Matt. 6:33; 18:1-4; Mk. 9:1; Lk. 17:20-24; Jn. 18:36), but can be found elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. Col. 1:13). The kingdom of heaven, discussed extensively in Matthew, should not be confused with the invisible kingdom of God. While the invisible kingdom of God includes only the truly saved, the kingdom of heaven encompasses all who outwardly profess faith in Christ. The parables of Matthew 13 indicate that, as the present age progresses, the kingdom of heaven will be corrupted by the presence of the unregenerate. The kingdom of heaven then is a visible manifestation of the invisible kingdom of God, along with many who profess faith in Christ but are not truly saved. The visible church, which includes both saved and lost, is, at the present time, representative

of the kingdom of heaven, but strictly speaking the two cannot be equated since the kingdom of heaven extends beyond the Church-age.

### **The Necessity of a Future Earthly Kingdom**

The Old Testament concept of an earthly kingdom emerges first from the Abrahamic Covenant, and is then expanded upon in the Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants. These four covenants shape the Old Testament idea of the visible kingdom of God (which, as we will see, is inseparably tied to the nation of Israel). A simple analogy may help to illustrate the relationship of these covenant promises to other Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom. If we think of the covenants (the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants) as the bold lines of a coloring book—determining the shape of the picture—then we could also think of other prophecies as the colors applied within those lines. The covenant promises form the outline of God’s plan for Israel. Other millennial prophecies supply additional details that must be understood within the framework of the covenant promises. Since these covenants define the kingdom program for Israel, in studying the Millennium it is important to begin with a thorough examination of the covenants before proceeding to other prophetic passages.

### **The Abrahamic Covenant**

The Abrahamic Covenant is mentioned in Genesis 12:1-3, 6-7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-14 and 22:15-18. In these passages, God makes the following promises to Abraham personally. 1) His name will be great (12:2). 2) He will be the father of many nations (17:5). 3) His descendants will be innumerable (13:16; 15:5; 22:17). 4) Kings will come from him (17:6). 5) God will be his God (17:7). 6) The one who blesses Abraham will be blessed, and the one who curses Abraham will be cursed (12:3). 7) The covenant is to be a perpetual (eternal) covenant (17:7).

In addition to the personal promises made to Abraham, God also made the following promises to his descendants. 1) They will become a great nation (12:2). 2) They will, at some time, come to possess the promised land forever (17:8). 3) God will be their God (17:8). 4) They will be victorious over their enemies

(22:17). 5) God's covenant will be established with them forever (17:7). The covenant also includes a blessing for the Gentiles, that they would, in some yet unspecified way, be blessed (12:3; 22:18).

The Abrahamic Covenant expressly promises that Abraham's descendants will come to possess the land and that they will live in that land as recipients of divine favor forever. That these promises have never been invalidated is a point that will be considered later; first the relationship that exists between the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants will be explored.

### **The Palestinian Covenant**

The Palestinian Covenant, so called because it was made with Israel upon their entrance into the Promised Land, is recorded in Deuteronomy 29:1-30:20. Moses indicates its connection to the Abrahamic Covenant when he said:

[Deut. 29:12-13] "You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." [Italics added for emphasis.]

What God swore to Abraham, in the Abrahamic Covenant, he was prepared to implement as the people of Israel stood on the verge of their entrance into the land. This covenant seems to have two purposes: 1) to ensure that the people understood their inheritance of the land was the direct result of the promises previously made to Abraham (29:12-13); and 2) to clarify for the people the conditions under which they could expect to enter into the enjoyment of this promise—the condition being their continued subjection to him (29:16-29). One of the most interesting features of this covenant is found in 30:1-10, for there God indicates that they would rebel in the future and their rebellion would cost them the enjoyment of this covenant blessing, such that they would be dispersed from the land, but the covenant itself would not be invalidated. Rather, the blessing would be reserved for a generation that will call upon him and to which he will respond by bringing them back into the land. The Palestinian Covenant then, is an

amplification of the land promises previously made under the Abrahamic Covenant, and its perpetual validity is apparent from the language of the covenant itself. It reinforces the promise made to Abraham that his descendants would someday come to possess the Promised Land forever.

### **The Davidic Covenant**

The Davidic Covenant is recorded in 2 Samuel 7:12-17. It has four main provisions. 1) David will have a son who will build the house of the LORD (v. 13), which was fulfilled in Solomon. 2) While God would correct David's son, he would never take the throne from him (vv. 14-15). 3) God promised that David's house (his lineage) would endure forever (v. 16). 4) God also promised that the right to the throne of Israel would forever remain with the house of David (v. 16).

While the text itself does not make reference to the Abrahamic Covenant, the connection is apparent since the people which David's line will perpetually have the right to rule are the people of promise under the Abrahamic Covenant. The prophet Jeremiah later demonstrated a connection between these two covenants when he uttered the following prophecy:

[Jer. 33:25-26] “. . . This is what the LORD says: ‘If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed laws of heaven and earth, then I will reject the descendants of Jacob and David my servant and will not choose one of his sons to rule over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and have compassion on them.’”

The Davidic Covenant expands upon the national aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant by specifying that the right to the throne of Israel is to remain with David's line.

### **The New Covenant**

The prophecy of the New Covenant is found in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Through this prophecy, God promised that he would someday establish a New Covenant with Israel, a covenant by which he will write his laws on their hearts (v. 33), probably a reference to the giving of the Spirit, indicative of regeneration. The result will be

that all Israel will know the LORD (v. 34). While the implementation of this covenant is dependent upon the work of Christ upon the cross, that work does not, in itself, fulfill this promise, for it has not yet resulted in the salvation of Israel as a nation. We must conclude, therefore, that the New Covenant is yet to be fulfilled. The New Covenant essentially reveals the nature of the special relationship that Israel is to have with God as a result of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. Of course, this does not leave Gentiles out of the picture, since they too are blessed under the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:3; 22:18).

### **The Unconditional Nature of the Covenants**

It is important to recognize that the Abrahamic Covenant, as well as the other three related covenants, are unconditional in nature. This does not mean that there are no conditions that must be met in order for them to be fulfilled, for in that sense, there is a condition—genuine faith. Rather, the unconditional nature of these covenants refers to the fact that Israel's disobedience both past and present, has not, indeed cannot, invalidate these covenants, because their continuance was never linked to Israel's response to God. Though generations of Abraham's descendants have turned from him, yet God maintains his covenanted promises, ready to fulfill them to that elect generation who will, in the future, turn to their rightful Messiah—Jesus Christ.

When the unconditional nature of these covenants is understood, it becomes apparent that whatever limited benefits Israel may have enjoyed historically as a result of these covenants, in no sense can it be said that they have been fulfilled. The position of covenant theology, which generally sees no place for the fulfillment of these covenants in the future, is that their fulfillment, as with all the covenants, was conditioned upon Israel's faith, and since Israel broke faith with God (manifested ultimately in the rejection of her Messiah), these covenants have been invalidated.

**There are three reasons for believing that God has not abandoned his covenant made with Abraham.**

1) The form of the covenant given in Genesis 15:9-21 is that of an unconditional covenant, in which all of the responsibility for the fulfillment rests with God. The scene in Genesis 15:1-21, in which Abraham divided various animals, and God—depicted by a great smoking furnace—passed between the divided pieces, is a picture of the sealing of the covenant, somewhat equivalent to the signing of a modern treaty. The fact that only God passed between the divided pieces is significant. Normally, in this type of covenant, known as a suzerainty-vassal treaty, both parties would pass between the pieces together, thus indicating their mutual obligation to keep the conditions of the covenant, lest they bring upon themselves a curse and become like the slain animals. That God alone passed between the pieces is indicative that the covenant obligations rest solely upon him. In other words, it was not up to Abraham or his descendants to do anything to validate this covenant. Of course, no individual, nor the nation as a whole, could enter into the blessings of the covenant apart from faith (Gen. 17:13-14). Nevertheless, faithlessness on the part of an individual or an entire generation of individuals would not invalidate the covenant itself; it merely excluded that individual, or generation, from the covenant blessings. In other words, the validity of the covenant and the enjoyment of it by a specific set of people are two entirely distinct issues. God rejected those who rejected the covenant relationship. If a generation arises which will accept the covenant relationship, they will have the covenant fulfilled to them. Since the promises were made concerning a people, they will be fulfilled when an elect generation of Jews turns to God through acceptance of their Messiah.

2) Even though Abraham's descendants were disobedient and fell into idolatry, subsequent statements made in the Scripture indicate that their disobedience had not invalidated the covenant. For example, the Abrahamic Covenant is invoked in 1 Chronicles 16:16-18, a thousand years after it was made with Abraham. During much of that time, Israel had lived in idolatry, yet the covenant itself was not invalidated. The psalmist in Psalm 105:1-11 says,

“He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac. He

confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: ‘To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.’”

If disobedience and lack of faith could invalidate the Abrahamic Covenant, it surely would not have survived the first one thousand years of Israel’s history.

3) The subsequent Palestinian, Davidic and New Covenants are also indicated as being unconditional, eternal covenants. When seen in light of their connection to the Abrahamic Covenant, it becomes clear that they all must share the same unconditional quality. Concerning the unconditional nature of the Davidic Covenant, God—through the psalmist—in Psalm 89 says:

[vv. 28-37] “I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail. I will establish his line forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure. If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquity with flogging; but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness—and I will not lie to David—that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun; it will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.”

Almost four hundred years later, on the eve of Israel’s expulsion from the land because of rampant idolatry, God spoke these words through the prophet Jeremiah:

[Jer. 33:20-22] “This is what the LORD says: ‘If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant—and my covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before me—can be broken and David will no longer have a descendant to reign on his throne. I will make the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister before me as countless as the stars of the sky and as measureless as the sand on the seashore.’”

Both the nature of these covenants and subsequent biblical statements reflecting back on them indicate that they were made unconditionally—meaning that they

have not been invalidated by Israel's past unbelief—and that God intends to see them fulfilled through his sovereign election of a future generation (Jer. 31:31-37).

### **Implications of the Abrahamic, Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants**

When taken as a whole, the end-time implications of these covenants are as follows. The Abrahamic Covenant, which promises the descendants of Abraham a land forever, has neither been invalidated nor fulfilled. Unless God intends to renege on his promises, the fulfillment must be a future reality. The connection between the Abrahamic Covenant and the subsequent prophetic descriptions of such a kingdom (e.g., Isa. 11:4-10; 35:5-10; 60:1-22; 65:17-25; Ezek. 34:25-31; Joel 2:21-27; 3:18-21) leaves no doubt that the Abrahamic Covenant is the basis of the kingdom promises for Israel.

The Palestinian Covenant repeats the land provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant and further expands upon the provisions for Israel's enjoyment of this promise—which is faithfulness to the LORD. In this covenant, God foresaw Israel's disobedience and dispersion (Deut. 30:1-8) and promised their restoration upon return to him. Of course, Israel's ultimate return to the LORD can only occur as a result of inward spiritual conversion.

The Davidic Covenant is an expansion upon the national aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant, in that it specifies that David's house is to have a perpetual right to the throne of Israel. The promise requires that when the kingdom prophecies are fulfilled, a member of David's house must rule over Israel. This will ultimately be fulfilled in the person of David's son, Israel's Messiah (Isa. 9:6-7).

The prophecy of the coming New Covenant specifies how God intends to bring about the implementation of the Abrahamic Covenant. The blessings, which God promised to Abraham, can only be brought about by genuine spiritual renewal on the part of Abraham's descendants. It would be nonsense to suppose that a non-elect, unregenerate people could live in a state of perpetual blessing and special divine relationship as envisioned in the Abrahamic Covenant. Thus, before God can fulfill his promises to Abraham, he must first raise up an elect generation of

Jews who will respond to his offer of salvation and thus enter into the blessings of the covenant. It is important to recognize that election is at the heart of Israel's conversion, for if salvation ultimately depended upon man, the fulfillment of these promises could never be anything more than a remote prospect. Yet, God intends by his sovereign choice, to bring spiritual life to Israel so that his covenanted promises can be infallibly brought to pass.

In summarizing the implications of these four covenants, we note that God intends to regather Abraham's children, to breathe within them spiritual life, to plant them securely in their land, with David's Son, their Messiah, ruling over them forever. The implementation of this program will necessitate a full regathering of Israel early in the millennial period (Isa. 11:12; 49:8-26; 66:1-20; Amos 9:11-15; Zech. 8:1-23).

### **The Millennial Phase of the Visible Kingdom**

Naturally, since the promises made in the Abrahamic Covenant, and subsequently confirmed to Israel and expanded upon in the Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants are eternal, they cannot be fulfilled in any finite period of time. The visible kingdom, envisioned in Old Testament prophecy, is an eternal kingdom. As stated previously, it is only in the New Testament we learn this kingdom is to be manifested in two phases: the first phase, generally referred to as the Millennium, involves the first one-thousand years (approximately) of the kingdom which will take place on the present earth (Rev. 20:4-7). The second, final phase of the kingdom will be manifested in the new heavens and earth (Rev. 21:1-22:5). Because the characteristics of these two phases differ significantly, they are generally treated separately as the Millennium, and eternity (see Figure 5.2). Only the millennial phase of the visible kingdom will be discussed here.

The Time, Location, Duration, and General Character of the Millennial Kingdom

#### **The Time of the Millennium**

The millennial kingdom is a future reality. This is apparent from two simple observations: 1) the promises and prophecies concerning the Millennium have never been fulfilled, and 2) Scripture indicates that the Millennium will be

inaugurated shortly after the second coming of Christ (Zech. 14:1-9; Rev. 19:11-20:6). Although it is only a hint, Daniel 12:11-12 indicates the possibility that the resurrection associated with the beginning of the Millennium will occur as much as forty-five days after the end of the Tribulation period.

### **The Location of the Millennium**

The Millennium kingdom will be global; however, Israel—and Jerusalem in particular—will be the center of attention during the period, for it is from there that Messiah will reign (Isa. 2:1-4), and Israel will occupy a special place of honor at the head of the nations (Isa. 60:1-22; 61:4-9; 62:1-12; Jer. 16:14-18; 30:18-22; Mic. 4:1-2; Zeph. 3:20).

### **The Duration of the Millennium**

As the name suggests, the Millennium lasts approximately one thousand years (Rev. 20:2,3,4,6,7). Satan's confinement, which begins before the inception of the Millennium, is to last for one thousand years, after which he will be released. Satan's release will result in a final rebellion and the deaths of those who follow him (Rev. 20:7-10). The amount of time which lapses between Satan's release and the final rebellion is not stated in Scripture; therefore, it is not possible to give a precise figure for the duration of the period. The destruction of the rebellious marks the end of the Millennium.

### **The General Character of the Millennium**

Humanly, the Millennium will be a period characterized by health, prosperity, satisfaction, and longevity (Isa. 65:18-25, cf. 35:3-7). Only regenerate people will enter the kingdom from the Tribulation (Matt. 25:31-46). They will be joined by the glorified Church-age saints (having been removed from the earth prior to the commencement of the Tribulation), as well as the resurrected Tribulation saints who did not survive to the second coming, and the resurrected Old Testament saints. Of these four groups, only the saints who survived the Tribulation will be in their natural bodies. While the Scripture does not explicitly address the question of whether these saints living in their natural bodies will be subject to death, there is reason to believe they will survive the entire period, since the

resurrection of the righteous occurs at the beginning of the Millennium and there is no mention of any subsequent resurrection of righteous dead. If this hypothesis is true, then only the unsaved will die during the Millennium. The unsaved are, naturally, the descendants of believers who came into the Millennium in their natural bodies. Still, even though subject to death, they will live much longer lives than is presently possible (Isa. 65:20-22). As the period progresses, the population of unsaved people will swell to enormous proportions, possibly far exceeding the population of the saints (Rev. 20:7-9). Some additional elements of human life included in the Millennium will be worship (Zech. 14:16), labor (Isa. 65:21-23), healing and wholeness—both physical and emotional (Isa. 35:3-7; Isa. 25:6-9).

Governmentally, the Millennium will be a theocratic kingdom with Christ ruling the world from Jerusalem, which will serve as both the religious and political capital of the world (cf. Isa. 9:6; Rev. 20:6). However, each nation will continue to have a significant measure of freedom in governing itself (Isa. 2:2-5). Apparently some laws will be uniform, since they will originate from Zion. The presence of people in their unglorified state, including an increasing number of unregenerate people, especially toward the end of the period, will naturally result in problems. Disputes between nations will still occur, but perhaps with less frequency and certainly with less intensity, since Christ will be present to mediate. Apparently, it will be necessary on occasion for Christ to remind some of the nations of their dependence upon him (both spiritual and political) by depriving them of blessings, such as rain, for failure to fulfill their obligation of worship (Zech. 14:16-19).

Economically, the Millennium will represent a time of unparalleled prosperity (Joel 2:21-27; Amos 9:13-15). The amelioration of the effects of the Edenic curse upon the earth (cf. Isa. 11:6-9; Rom. 8:18-24) will undoubtedly account for much of this prosperity. However, the presence of Christ and the influence of godliness in business, government, social institutions, and the sciences will certainly have an effect, not to mention the positive economic impact brought about by the elimination of war and the lack of need for maintaining standing armies (Isa. 2:4).

Socially, the Millennium will be characterized as a time of unprecedented peace, world harmony, and justice (Isa. 9:1-7). The presence of Christ and the absence of

Satan's influence, at least until the end of the period, will affect the world in such a positive way that even with an ever increasing population of unredeemed people, the world will experience unparalleled harmony both in the natural and human realms, not seen since before the fall of man. At the present time, the ways of the world dominate society; in the Millennium, the knowledge of the LORD and his ways will be the predominant influence (Isa. 9:11; 54:13; Hab. 2:4).

Religiously, the peoples of the earth will worship the true God. In Ezekiel 40-48, Ezekiel records what must certainly be the plan for the Millennial Temple. Isaiah also mentions the Millennial Temple (Isa. 2:3; 60:13), and adds that burnt sacrifices will be offered (Isa. 56:6-7; 60:7). Jeremiah echoed the same thought when he prophesied that the Levitical priests would never fail to have a man to stand before God continually "to offer burnt offerings and to present sacrifices" (Jer. 33:18). Zechariah, while not making explicit reference to the Temple, did indicate that all the peoples of the earth will be represented at the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, on pain of divine displeasure. Although worship will be quite natural for the saved who enter the period, as time progresses and the population of the unsaved increases, there will apparently be increased reluctance to render worship to God (Zech. 14:16-19). The idea that there are to be animal sacrifices in the Millennium (Jer. 33:18) has proved to be problematic for some who perceive this as a reversion to the Old Testament law. However, when the true historical significance of the biblical sacrifices is understood, as pointing to Christ's sacrifice, their use in millennial worship is easily understood, as a memorial to Christ's work upon the cross rather than an addition to it. As such, the sacrifices do not indicate a return to an earlier economy (the law), rather they function as a remembrance—much like the Church's present celebration of the Lord's Supper.

### Events and Chronology of the Millennium

As stated, the duration of the period is slightly in excess of one thousand years; however, it is not possible to give a precise figure since the length of the interval between the release of Satan and the end of the period is not known.

While many of the more general features of the Millennium are described in Scripture, very little is known of actual events. In fact, only three events are mentioned: the resurrection of the righteous at the beginning of the period, the release of Satan (and presumably his host) after one-thousand years, and the final rebellion which marks the conclusion of the period. The judgment of the nations (Matt. 25:31-46, cf. 7:21-23; Lk. 13:22-28), though not strictly a millennial event, will take place during the short interval between the second coming and the beginning of the Millennium. At this judgment, Christ will determine who, by virtue of redemption, will be allowed to enter his kingdom.

### The Judgment of the Nations

The judgment of the nations apparently occurs during the forty-five (or seventy-five) day interlude between the Tribulation and the Millennium (cf. Dan. 12:11-12; Matt. 25:31-46). Since only the redeemed may enter the kingdom, the purpose of this judgment is to exclude the unredeemed, who will be consigned to Hades, until their final judgment. How Christ will judge so many in so short a period is not known. Since the righteous and the unrighteous will be separated from one another by the angels at the second coming (Matt. 13:29 cf. v. 40, 47-49; 24:31), it is possible that this is a summary judgment wherein the righteous and unrighteous are dealt with as groups. If this is the case, and there is strong reason to believe it is, then it stands in contrast to the final judgment of the lost, after the Millennium, in which everyone's works will be examined individually. In any case, only the righteous will be allowed to enter the kingdom.

### The Resurrection of the Righteous

Daniel 12:11-12 indicates that those who survive forty-five days after the close of the Tribulation period are "blessed." It is possible that the reason for this statement is that the resurrection occurs on the forty-fifth day and thus those survivors will have escaped physical death forever. (An alternate explanation for the statement in Daniel is that if one survives to the forty-fifth day beyond the close of the Tribulation, he has successfully passed through the judgment of the nations and is thus assured of a place in the kingdom.) Whether the resurrection occurs precisely on the forty-fifth day from the second coming or merely close

thereto, the occasion seems to signal the beginning of the millennial reign (Rev. 20:4).

### Satan's Release and Deception of the Nations

After the resurrection of the righteous dead, we have no mention of specific events until the release of Satan after his one thousand years of confinement. We know only that the saints will rule with Christ during this period (Rev. 20:4-5), and we know the general characteristics of the age, which have already been noted. The release of Satan marks a turning point in the Millennium. Satan will quickly exploit, consolidate, and organize any disaffection present on the part of those confirmed in their unbelief. They will likely view him as some sort of deliverer ("messiah"). How long it will take this rebellion to become organized and sufficiently confident to proceed is not certain; it could be a matter of months, or years. The immediate effects of Satan's release on the millennial environment is not stated in Scripture; but it would seem likely that as the rebellion grows, conditions within the Millennium will be affected, at least at the spiritual, social, and political levels. The rebellion will ultimately turn to overt conflict. Scripture seems to present the rebellious as vastly outnumbering the saints. John relates this prophetic picture:

[Rev. 20:7-9] "When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them."

### Summary

The Millennium is but the first phase of the visible kingdom of God on earth. The Abrahamic Covenant, along with the Palestinian, Davidic, and New Covenants provide the biblical framework for our concept of the visible kingdom of God. Although Israel has been unfaithful, their unfaithfulness has not, indeed cannot, invalidate the promises God has made. God has sworn, and will bring his promises

to pass. There is an elect generation, known to God, who will, by faith, enter into the blessings of the covenant that their ancestors have forsaken. It is to that generation, as well as the righteous dead of Israel who will be raised, that God will fulfill his promise of an eternal kingdom—of which the Millennium is but the beginning of a very long story!