

Charts: Chart #21: Christ's Kingdom: Beginnings

PREFACE

John's account of the Millennium is a drastically abridged version. As I have said before, in John's Revelation the *seven-year* Tribulation takes up fifteen chapters, while the *thousand-year* Millennium takes up four or five *verses*. We learn precious little about the thousand-year rule of Christ on earth from the Revelation; happily, however, there is much we can learn from other portions of God's word—and especially from the OT prophets.

Walvoord: Though Revelation as a whole is not strictly in chronological order, as some chapters are parenthetical or summary in character, chapters 19 and 20 constitute a unit and form one continued prophetic strain.

Note: While that is true, the “prophetic strain” of Chapter Twenty leaves out a *lot* of details—details we discover elsewhere. My goal in this session will be to present the material in a chronological sequence—as best we can. Because there will be so many passages from both OT and NT, for the sake of time I will not be asking you to read from these, or even turn to them, unless you wish. I *do* recommend, *if you will not be acquiring my notes*, that you at least jot down the references as we proceed. For this period in the Eschaton—the opening days of the Millennium—is best chronicled elsewhere in God's word. (Most, but not all, references will be listed on Chart #21.)

One more note: For most premillennialists, Ezekiel's temple (Chapters 40-48) is a *millennial* temple, but there are very real problems that come with that—not least, the bloody sacrifices that will be taking place in that temple. Were I to include this discussion in class it could easily take up an entire session. I have decided, instead, to issue a printed handout that discusses this problematic temple and its practices—probably on March 19, our next session.

THE DAVIDIC KINGDOM

One can easily spiritualize Christ's kingdom to represent the church during this current dispensation—and there is something to be said for that. But we must wait for His return, and the subsequent Millennium to see the literal, ultimate fulfillment of that prophecy. If you ever begin to question the cohesive, narrative integrity of the Bible, here is a tip: The end-times Millennium is foreshadowed all the way back in the first book of God's word.

Genesis 49:10

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes [or, *until he comes to whom it belongs*],
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”

To paraphrase those last two lines, *The Seed will one day show up, and he will rule over all the peoples of earth.* When King David vowed to build a “house” for Yahweh, the Lord pulled him aside and said, no, but I’ll build a “house” for you. In a prophecy that co-mingles David’s son, Solomon, with David’s son, Jesus—along with a description of a time of peace for Israel—he was told that this “house” would be “established forever.”

2 Samuel 7:10-12

“I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.”

Then, after a couple of verses specific to Solomon, the prophecy returns to Christ.

2 Samuel 7:16

“Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.”

Perhaps the most full-throated prophecy of the Millennial Kingdom is found in the astonishing second Psalm.

Psalm 2:6-12

“But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.
I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron,
You shall shatter them like earthenware.’”
Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;
Take warning, O judges of the earth.
Worship the LORD with reverence
And rejoice with trembling.
Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled.
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

Like the passage in 2 Samuel, many if not most of the prophecies about the kingdom mention the return of the Jews to Israel at the beginning of the Millennium.

Jeremiah 23:3-6

“Then I Myself will gather the remnant of My flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and bring them back to their pasture, and they will be fruitful and multiply. I will also raise up shepherds over them and they will tend them; and they will not be afraid any longer, nor be terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD.

“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD,
“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;
And He will reign as king and act wisely
And do justice and righteousness in the land.
In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell securely;
And this is His name by which He will be called,
‘The LORD our righteousness.’”

Finally, let’s recall the words the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary.

Luke 1:32–33

“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.”

By the way, some are of the opinion that this will literally be *David’s* eternal kingdom, when a resurrected David returns to his throne. Well, David will indeed be resurrected, along with the rest of the OT saints. And we know that the reign of Christ will indeed be shared with others—including you and me. And it does not fracture Scripture to imagine that the resurrected David may be something of a “prince” in the kingdom. But replacing Christ on the throne? No, as William R. Newell has written, “David is not the son of David. Christ, as Son of David, will be King; and David, His father after the flesh, will be [I would say, *may be*] prince, during the Millennium.” John Walvoord adds, “In the light of many prophecies which promise saints the privilege of reigning with Christ, it would seem most logical that David the king raised from the dead should be given a place of prominence in the Davidic kingdom of the millennial reign of Christ. As indicated in Revelation 19:16, Christ is ‘King of kings and Lord of lords.’ This would certainly imply other rulers.”

THINNING THE FLOCK

The Millennium, at the start, will be peopled only by the righteous in Christ. Even though there will be millions of the unrighteous just killed at Armageddon, many still remain upon the earth. And these will need to be weeded out; the flock called humanity must be thinned; the unrighteous must be removed.

To that end, all people from all nations will be brought before Christ the Lord; a preponderance of the eschatological prophecies speak of Israel as a nation returning to its own land, and they will be first.

Ezekiel 20:33–38

“As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. 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. “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am the LORD.”

Though the remnant of Israel will pass through this time of judgment like everyone else, the apostle Paul warns Gentile Christians not to think they are the new “chosen people.”

Romans 11:25-29

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, “THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.” From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

The ungodliness within Israel must be “removed,” but God wants us to know that they remain His Chosen People. Finally, Jesus spoke of both groups, Jews and Gentiles, when He spoke of this judgment. First the sheep:

Matthew 25:31–34

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world...’”

Then the goats:

Matthew 25:41, 46

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels...’” “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

How long this judgment will take—a few seconds, a few years—no one can say; God's word is silent on that. Before we proceed into the next thousand years, let's consider some of the qualities of this kingdom of Christ on earth.

- First, it will include the entire earth—world wide. And there is a delicious irony to this situation: For the last seven years the world was apparently “ruled” by someone exalting himself as “god”—Antichrist. But we have seen evidence that that was not literally true; many, even those in his own neighborhood, rebelled against his “kingship.” Now, however, the *true* Christ has arrived, and He will indeed be King over the entire earth.

- Second, Christ Jesus will hold and exert absolute authority and power; He will judge fairly, but destroy any and all that oppose Him:

Isaiah 11:4

But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

- Third, as Isaiah voices in that passage, Christ’s rule will be marked by righteousness and justice. Just as there has never been a God like the true God, there has never been a king like the true King Jesus: no subterfuge, no conniving, no unjust laws, no kingly paranoia, no duplicity.

THE RESURRECTED POPULACE

After this judgment, conducted personally by Messiah, there will remain on earth only those righteous in Christ: Gentile believers and Messianic Jews. But who else is on earth at this time? We begin with those who just arrived with the Messiah, as we saw in our previous session:

- the church, the bride of the Lamb (19:8);
- the OT saints, resurrected at the end of the Tribulation (Daniel 12:1-2);
- and, of course, the “holy angels” from heaven (Matthew 25:31), but it’s hard to say whether these remain, or return to heaven to serve Father God ([cf. 1 Corinthians 6:3](#)).

We can now add to these the just-resurrected martyrs from the Tribulation.

Read Revelation 20:4.

At this moment in time only the righteous populate the earth:

- those once in human flesh, but now in resurrected, glorified bodies;
- and living humans (still in flesh) followers of Christ who survived the Tribulation.

John MacArthur says that all these—including the still-living Tribulation survivors—will reign with Christ, but I question this. I think the next two verses in Chapter Twenty seem to eliminate them as co-rulers—indeed, it would seem that the still-living righteous will be those who are being *ruled over*, not the ones doing the ruling.

Read Revelation 20:5-6.

It is the *martyred* saints from the Tribulation, those who gave their mortal lives for the testimony of Christ, who will reign with Him—not those still living. So I conclude that only those inhabiting glorified, post-resurrection bodies will be the ones who “reign with Him.”

Sidebar: The number of resurrections, with their titles, can be confusing. (In fact, I will be re-issuing Chart #5: The Resurrections, because of a mistake in the timeline. But it would seem there are more than one “first” resurrections. Christ, in His resurrection, is called the “first fruits” (1 Corinthians 15:23), and that is followed by the resurrection of the church at the Rapture. Yet here, in Revelation 20, the resurrection of the Tribulation martyrs is called the “first resurrection.” One explanation for this could be that “first resurrection,” as implied in v6, refers to the bodily resurrection of *all* believers, no matter when, with the “second resurrection” being of the unrighteous dead (vv5, 12).

CHRIST’S ABSOLUTE RULE

Let’s expand on this for a moment. One thing we learn from this study is that more than a few of our favorite Christmas passages of Scripture have more to do with Christ’s *second* coming than His first. For example,

Isaiah 9:6–7

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;

Right there, after that first line, is where Christmas ends and the Eschaton begins.

And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,

Peace? Only in the Millennium and after—certainly not in *our* world, nor even in the time He was born.

On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

The government, the rule, of the Millennium will be on Christ’s shoulders alone. Believers will be His representatives around the globe, but He will be calling all the shots.

The seat of Messiah's "government" will be in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 2:2-4

Now it will come about that
In the last days
The mountain of the house of the LORD
Will be established as the chief of the mountains,
And will be raised above the hills; (remember how the earth will be reshaped...)
And all the nations will stream to it.
And many peoples will come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
That He may teach us concerning His ways
And that we may walk in His paths."
For the law will go forth from Zion
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
And He will judge between the nations,
And will render decisions for many peoples;
And they will hammer their swords into plowshares their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,
And never again will they learn war.

The prophet Zechariah says it flat-out: "And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one" (Zechariah 14:9). Kenneth Barker writes, "There will be no more idolatry, polytheism, or even henotheism, but only high, ethical monotheism." [Henotheism is the belief in the supremacy of one god without denying the existence of others.] At last the apostles' prayer will be answered and fulfilled:

Our Father who is in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.

CO-RULERS

Here is another curious aspect of God's economy: Christ, being God, is certainly capable of managing the affairs of this earth on His own. So why does He enlist the help of those who "reign with Him" (Revelation 20:6)? We can certainly *imagine* some answers to this; for example, could this be part of the rewards system? our "crowns"? We wear them for the duration, a thousand years, then give them back to Him as an act of devotion and praise at the beginning of the eternal state? That's a pleasant thought, but let's deal with what we know, beginning, again, with the Jews. Daniel 7, in v26, says that "the court will sit for judgment, and [the beast's] dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever."

Verse 27 speaks of those that will take over in his place: “Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.” Gentile Christians will be granted the same honor; way back when the Lamb broke open the seals of the scroll, those around the throne sang,

Revelation 5:9–10

“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were certainly qualified to adjudicate disputes within the church, for “do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?” (1 Corinthians 6:2)

THE IRON ROD

In our last session, discussing Christ’s immediate and brutal consignment of the two beasts to the lake of fire, I said that

the dispensation of “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44) is at an end; now comes the dispensation of vengeance and wrath. No mercy will be shown to the wicked.

Whether it may be deemed another dispensation or not, once the wicked are removed from the earth and the Millennium begins, we might say that the time of vengeance and wrath is over, but now will be the time of immediate and—in comparison to the Jesus of the gospels—harsh justice. Time and again in God’s word we hear the phrase, as we did in Psalm 2, “a rod of iron.” This represents the manner in which Christ will rule during the Millennium; it is worth repeating Isaiah 11:4.

Isaiah 11:4

But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

Even so, I believe we can assume that the details of salvation in Christ included in the NT, during the dispensation of grace, will hold true during the Millennium. That is, that true followers of Christ in earthly flesh will persevere until the end, and that Christ will not instantly reject them for every fleshly sin in their lives. So when God’s word describes His rule as “slay[ing] the wicked,” and “purg[ing] from you...those who transgress against Me,” it presumably refers to those who have *rejected* His salvation.

IN CONCLUSION

Because the apostle John was not granted visions of the Millennium, as he was for the Tribulation, we have had to glean information from, mostly, the OT prophets. But even what they tell us has more to do with the *establishing* of the Millennium, than its progress through the thousand years. Thus we must include in our analysis some educated assumptions.

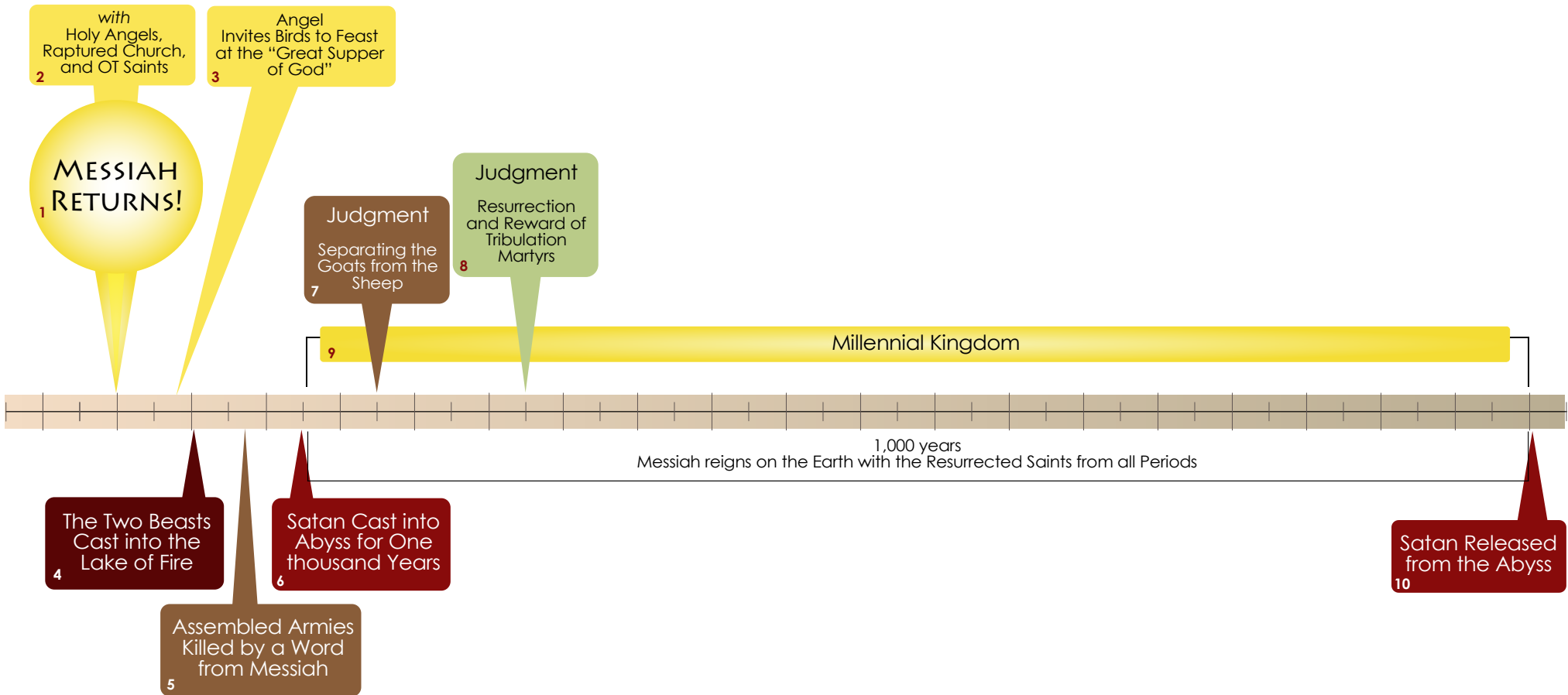
- The Lord's Davidic Kingdom on earth will open with judgments intended to remove all who are in rebellion against the Messiah. This means that in its earliest days the Millennium's general populace consists of followers of Christ alone—all still in earthly (non-glorified) flesh.
- They will be ruled over by Christ Jesus, enthroned in Jerusalem, and resurrected saints from the OT and church age, as well as the recently resurrected, martyred saints from the Tribulation—all in glorified bodies.
- For the next thousand years, Satan will remain chained and powerless in the abyss.
- Along with the earth being repopulated over the next thousand years, much of it will assuredly be rebuilt after the destruction of the Tribulation with its series of "plagues." We might also allow for Messiah to work some "miracles" to clean up some of the damage, rendering the earth more livable. He could, for example, with a word of command cleanse the oceans and fresh water of the life-killing blood from the bowls of wrath.
- Over the next thousand years, the initial believing generation will have children and grandchildren, continuing for many generations. Though this will indeed be a spiritually rich period, not all of these descendants will be believers, so that by the end of the Millennium Satan will have no problem forming a new army from the repopulated earth with which to war against Christ (Revelation 20:7-10).
- When God's word speaks of an expanding kingdom of peace, it does not speak of the church age, *before* Christ's return, but the Millennium, *after* His return.
- Even so, during this time of peace, with Messiah on His earthly throne, human flesh, as well as the earth itself will still be fallen, with inherent sin. It will still be necessary, after the thousand years, for the Godhead to create a new earth, new heavens, and supply them with a new earthly throne for not just the Son, but the Father as well.

Revelation 21:1-3

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them..."

THE MILLENNIUM

Christ's Kingdom: Beginnings



Footnotes

1
Revelation 19:11-16
Matthew 24:27-31
Mark 13:24-29
Luke 21:25-28

2
Revelation 19:8, 14
Daniel 12:1-2
Matthew 25:31

3
Revelation 19:17-18
Revelation 19:21
1 Samuel 17:44

4
Revelation 19:19-20
Revelation 20:10

5
Revelation 19:21
Revelation 19:15

6
Revelation 20:1-3
Revelation 20:7-10

7
Ezekiel 20:33-38
Romans 11:25-29
Matthew 25:31-34
Matthew 25:41, 46
Isaiah 11:4

8
Revelation 20:4
Revelation 13:15
Revelation 7:9-17
Revelation 6:9-11

9: The Davidic (Millennial) Kingdom
Genesis 49:10 Psalm 2 Daniel 2:44
2 Samuel 7:10-13, 16 Jeremiah 23:3-6 Luke 1:32-33
Psalm 89:34-37 Micah 5:2-5a Revelation 20:1-10

10
Revelation 20:7-10

