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1 THE TITLE of SECTION VII

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IN THE PRESENT AND IN ETERNITY

***“IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS
THROUGH HIM WHO LOVED US.” (ROMANS 8:37)***

At Christ's first coming Satan was bound (curbed, curtailed, restrained, limited) *on earth* (20:1-3) and the present phase of God's kingdom was inaugurated (Matthew 12:28-30). Throughout the whole New Testament period Satan remains bound and departed Christians reign with Christ *in heaven* (20:4-6). Just before Christ's second coming Satan will be released in order to gather the nations to destroy Christians (20:7-9a).

At Christ's second coming Satan and all his allies will be permanently destroyed in the final battle (20:9b-10), the physical resurrection will take place (20:13-14), this present earth and universe will collapse (20:11), the final judgement day will take place (20:12,15) and the final perfect phase of God's kingdom (the new heaven and new earth) will begin (21:1 – 22:5).

2 THE DIVISION of SECTION VII

The visions in the book of Revelation depict what happens between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming in seven parallel sections. Each of the seven sections *begins* with Christ's first coming, is characterised by *a long main period*, is followed by *a short period* of violent persecution and *ends* with the final judgement day (Christ's second coming).

Section 7 of the book of Revelation consists of chapters 20 to 22 and covers the whole New Testament period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming and the eternal state thereafter. Compare section 7 with sections 3 and 4.

a. The beginning of the New Testament period (20:1,3)

In section 3 Revelation chapter 9 shows that the star was cast out of heaven and lay on the earth (9:1). The star was a symbol of Satan the Destroyer. Thus, Satan had been cast out of heaven.

Revelation chapter 11 begins the New Testament period with measuring the temple of God and its worshippers, while the outer court of the temple and the holy city is being trampled by the Gentiles (11:1-2). This represents the protection of true Christians amidst nominal Christians and the other religions of the world. The two witnesses prophecy while the godless and wicked world tries to harm them (11:3-4). This means that the Christian Church proclaims the gospel with authority.

In section 4 Revelation chapter 12 to 14 begins the New Testament period with the death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement of Christ (12:5), which results in Satan and his evil spirits being defeated and hurled out of heaven onto the earth (12:7-9; cf. 9:1). In heaven the abusive mouth of the accuser of Christians is silenced (12:10-12). And on earth his power is curbed, so that he cannot destroy the Church (the woman), because she is taken care of “out of the serpent’s reach” (12:13-17). Satan stands “on the shore of the sea” (the nations) (13:1a; cf. 17:15). This means that he had been sidelined by God’s decree and his evil plan and influence with regard to the nations is presently curbed (curtailed, restrained, limited, bound)!

In section 7 Revelation chapter 20 begins the New Testament period with the binding of Satan (the dragon). According to the teachings of the New Testament Satan had been bound during Christ’s first coming (Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31-32; Colossians 1:13; 2:14; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8). The word ‘bound’ means curbed, curtailed, restrained or limited.

Satan’s evil plan and influence with regard to the nations is presently clearly curbed. He cannot deceive the nations anymore (20:3), that is, he cannot keep the nations from hearing the gospel! The gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed until all the nations have heard it (Matthew 24:14)! The gospel of the kingdom is the same as the gospel of grace (Luke 16:16; Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23,31).

Christ as the Mediator began to exercise his absolute sovereign power in heaven and on earth from his first coming onwards (Matthew 28:18; John 13:3; Ephesians 1:20-23; 1 Peter 3:22). However, the fact that Satan as a result of Christ’s first coming had been driven out of heaven (John 12:31), that he had been smacked onto the earth (Luke 10:18) and that he and his army of demons had been disarmed (Colossians 2:14) did not remove Satan from the earthly scene. His evil influence has been curtailed, but not removed yet. Compare 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 with 4:4; compare Ephesians 6:16 with 6:11; compare 1 Thessalonians 2:18 with 3:1-5; compare 1 Peter 5:8 with 5:9; compare 1 John 3:8 with 5:19; compare Revelation 20:3 with 13:2 and compare Revelation 12:9 with 12:12. He still has very much evil influence, but he cannot keep the gospel from being proclaimed as a testimony to all the nations (Matthew 24:14). He cannot keep the people in this world from being rescued out of his dominion (Colossians 1:13; Matthew 12:29)!

b. The long main period (20:4-6)

In section 3 (chapter 11) the long main period is characterised by the protection of the Church against trampling by the godless and wicked nations (11:1-2) and by the Church prophesying, that is, proclaiming the gospel in the sphere of spiritual warfare (11:3-6). The period is symbolically represented by the number 42 months or 1260 days (3½ years) (11:2-3). During the whole New Testament period in which the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed (Matthew 24:14) Satan lies as a fallen one on the earth (9:1). His power is curbed! Revelation chapter 11 pictures the Militant Church on earth as an institute that proclaims the gospel (11:1-6) before Christ’s second coming (11:15-18).

The symbolic period of 3½ years clearly begins with Christ’s first coming (12:5) and ends with the end of the proclamation of the gospel (11:1-6) and the great tribulation (11:7-10) before Christ’s second coming (11:2-3,11-18). What is clear is that the 3½ years period does not follow, but precedes Christ’s second coming for the final judgement day.

In section 4 (chapters 12 to 14) the long period is characterised by Christians proclaiming the gospel in the sphere of spiritual warfare (12:11,17)! Christians overcome Satan and his evil spirits by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony! The Church (the woman) is kept out of reach of Satan (12:14). The period is symbolically represented by the number 1260 days or a time, times and half a time (3½ years) (12:6,14)! Although Satan’s power is clearly curbed, he nevertheless exercises his evil influence through his antichristian governments (the beast out of the sea) and his antichristian religions, philosophy, science and culture (the beast out of the earth)(13:1-6,11-17). Revelation chapter 12 to 13 pictures the Militant Church on earth as an institute that proclaims the gospel in the sphere of antichristian politics and antichristian religions before Christ’s second coming (14:14-20).

The symbolic period of 3½ years clearly begins with Christ’s first coming (12:5) and ends before Christ’s second coming (14:14-20). What is clear is that the 3½ years period does not follow, but precedes Christ’s second coming for the final judgement day.

In section 7 (chapter 20) the long main period is characterised by Satan being bound (curbed, curtailed, restrained, limited) *on earth* so that he cannot keep the nations away from Christ and the gospel (20:1-3; Matthew 24:14). The period is symbolically represented by the number 1000 years (20:2-3). Satan still has

very evil influence, because Christians are persecuted or martyred (cf. Hebrews 2:14) for refusing to receive the mark of the beast (20:4). Revelation 20:1-3 pictures the Militant Church on earth throughout the whole New Testament period before Christ's second coming (20:11-15).

The long main period is also characterised by the souls of Christians, who have completed their witness bearing on earth and have died for Christ, living and reigning with Christ *in heaven* (20:4-6; cf. 3:21; Philippians 1:23) until Christ has put all his enemies, including death, under his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25-26)! The period is symbolically represented by the number 1000 years (20:4-6). Revelation 20:4-6 pictures the Triumphant Church in heaven throughout the whole New Testament period before Christ's second coming (20:11-15).

The symbolic period of 1000 years clearly begins with Christ's first coming when he bound Satan (20:1-3) and ends with Christ's second coming when he will destroy all his enemies in the final battle (20:7-10), resurrect the dead, judge all human beings and renew the universe (20:11-15). What is clear is that the 1000 years period does not follow, but precedes Christ's second coming for the final judgement day.

The fact that Satan has been bound and that his evil power and influence has been curbed and curtailed so that the Church is able to proclaim the gospel to every nation *on earth* is a great encouragement for the Militant Church on earth! And the fact that the souls of Christians that have completed their task on earth and have died, already now live and reign with Christ *in heaven* is a great encouragement for the Militant Church on earth! This glorious reality begins, not after Christ's second coming, but immediately after death!

c. The short period (20:7-10)

In section 3 (chapter 11), the short period is characterised by severe persecution. The beast (the final antichrist) makes war against the Church (the two witnesses), overpowers and kills her. He destroys the Church as an institute proclaiming the gospel for a symbolic period of 3½ days (11:7-10).

In section 4 (chapter 12 to 14), the short period is characterized by severe persecution. Satan exercises his power through the beast (the final antichrist)(13:2) and the final false prophet (13:12). They make war against Christians (the saints) and conquer them. Then the final antichrist will become the world leader, controlling world politics, religion and economics (13:7-10,15-18).

In section 7 (chapter 20), the short period is characterized by severe persecution. Satan is released "for a short while" (20:3) from his curtailment in prison. He deceives the non-Christian nations and gathers them to make war in the final battle against the Militant Church (the camp of God's people, the city Jerusalem he loves)(20:7-9). In this final battle Satan and all his godless and wicked allies are destroyed (20:7-10; cf. 13:7; 16:14,16; 19:19; cf. Matthew 24:21-26).

d. The end of the New Testament period (20:11-15)

In section 3 (chapter 11), the New Testament period ends with the physical resurrection, the collapse of this present earth and the final judgement day (at Christ's second coming)(11:11-18). "The time has come for judging the dead and for rewarding your servants ... and for destroying the destroyers of the earth" (11:18).

In section 4 (chapter 12 to 14), the New Testament period ends with the final judgement day (at Christ's second coming)(14:14-20). The harvest of believers is reaped and the harvest of unbelievers is treaded in the winepress of God's wrath (14:14-20; cf. 19:15). "The time to reap has come for the harvest of the earth is ripe" (14:15).

In section 7 (chapter 20), the New Testament period ends with the physical resurrection of all the dead, the final judgement day and the collapse of this present earth and universe (20:11-15). Immediately after this the universe and earth is renewed (21:1 – 22:5). And Jesus Christ says, "It is done" (21:6). His work of salvation and judgement as the Mediator has been completed.

e. The eternal state (21:1 to 22:5)

In section 3 Revelation 7:9-17 describes the Triumphant Church in heaven immediately after Christ's second coming. And Revelation 11:15 describes the kingdom of God and his Christ in its final perfect phase after Christ's second coming.

In section 4 Revelation 14:1-5 describes the Triumphant Church in heaven immediately after Christ's second coming.

In section 7 Revelation 21:1 to 22:5 describes not only *the ideal Church during the New Testament period before Christ's second coming*, but also *the final perfect Church after Christ's second coming* (the eternal state).

Conclusion

The New Testament period begins with the binding of Satan (20:1-3), which happened at Christ's first coming.

The long main period of the New Testament is characterised by Satan bound and unable to deceive the nations. It is also characterised by the proclamation of the gospel to all the nations.

The short final period of the New Testament is characterised by Satan released to deceive the non-Christian nations (20:7-9a). During this short final period there will still be Christians on earth, because genuine Christians cannot be deceived (Matthew 24:21-25)! Nevertheless, the Militant Church as an institute proclaiming the gospel is destroyed.

The end of the New Testament period is characterised by Satan and all his allies being conquered in the final battle (20:9b-10), the resurrection of the dead, the final judgement (20:11-15) and the renewal of all things (chapter 21-22), which will happen at Christ's second coming.

Revelation chapter 20 thus spans the whole New Testament period!

Section 7 of the book of Revelation consists of chapters 20 to 22. Revelation chapter 20 covers the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. Revelation chapter 21 and 22 give extended insight into the eternal state (21:1 to 22:5).

The last three sections of the book of Revelation picture in different visions the one and only judgement of God: the judgement of all unrepentant people living in the cities of the world (16:2,19)(section 5), the judgement of Satan's three helpers, the great prostitute called Babylon, the beast and the false prophet (section 6), and the judgement of Satan and of all people according to what they had done as recorded in the books (20:10-15)(section 7). This again clearly shows that the last three parts of the book of Revelation are parallel!

Therefore the view, that the book of Revelation describes history from beginning to end in a chronological consecutive order, is in conflict with what the book of Revelation itself says. The book of Revelation itself shows that it covers several times the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. According to chapter 1:19, the book of Revelation contains:

- what was already a fact since the Christ's first coming till the time of its writing;
- what would happen throughout the following centuries between the writing of the book and Christ's second coming. Just before Christ's second coming these things will happen in a more intensive manner.

The book of Revelation was a book of encouragement for Christians in the first century and throughout all centuries thereafter, is still an encouragement for Christians living today and will be an encouragement for Christians until Christ's second coming! That is why chapter 1:3 says that throughout the centuries everyone who reads or hears the book of Revelation and takes to heart what is written in it, is blessed (1:3)!

3 THE STRUCTURE of SECTION VII

a. The 1000 years precede Christ's second coming

The symbolic period of 1000 years begins with the binding of Satan at Christ's first coming (20:1-3; Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31-32; Colossians 1:13; 2:14; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8) and ends with the final war (20:7-10), the resurrection of the dead (20:13), the final judgement day (20:12), the collapse of the universe and earth (20:11:11) and the renewal of the universe and earth (21:1 – 22:5), which are all events at Christ's second coming.

Thus, the 1000 years symbolise the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. What is clear is that the 1000 years period does not follow, but precedes Christ's second coming for the final judgement day.

b. The relationship between section 6 and 7 is the same as the relationship between section 3 and 4

The best expositor of the Bible is the Bible itself (1 Corinthians 4:6; Revelation 22:18-19)! The relationship between section 3 and 4 (Revelation chapters 19 and 20) is exactly like the relationship between section 6 and 7 (Revelation chapters 11 and 12).

Revelation 11:18,15 inaugurates the final judgement day at Christ's second coming and the perfect final phase of the kingdom of God and the Lamb which will last for ever and ever. The sounding of the seventh trumpet *ends* the New Testament period! But the next chapter, Revelation 12:5, is a symbol of Christ's first coming and *begins* the New Testament period.

Thus with regard to the structure of the book of Revelation, Christ's second coming in section 3 is *followed* by Christ's first coming in section 4!

Revelation 19:11-21 pictures Christ's second coming and *ends* the New Testament period. But the next chapter, Revelation 20:1-3, is a symbol of Christ's first coming and *begins* the New Testament period. Thus with regard to the structure of the book of Revelation, Christ's second coming in section 6 is *followed* by Christ's first coming in section 7!

Conclusion: The book of Revelation is NOT a linear-chronological account of mainly future events, but is a symbolic revelation of the whole New Testament period divided into seven parallel sections.

c. The final war shows that section 5, 6 and 7 are parallel to one another

Section 5 (Revelation chapters 15 to 16) ends with the final war (16:12-16) and the collapse of this present earth (16:17-21).

Section 6 (Revelation chapters 17 to 19) ends with the final war (19:17-21) and Christ's second coming (19:11-16).

Section 7 (Revelation chapters 20 to 22) ends with the final war (20:7-10), the physical resurrection (20:13-14), the final judgement day (20:12,15), the collapse of this present universe and earth (20:11) and the renewal of the universe and earth (21:1 to 22:5).

Conclusion: The periods described in section 5, 6 and 7 are parallel to one another!

d. The contents show that sections 3, 4 and 7 are parallel

The contents of the five periods in each section (the beginning of the New Testament period, the long main period, the short period, the end of the New Testament period and the eternal state) show that sections 3, 4 and 7 are parallel to one another.

See the division of section 7 above.

4 THE MESSAGE of SECTION VII

a. The 1000 years (20:2)

The book of Revelation is full of symbols. The 1000 years is also a symbol and signifies a long, absolutely complete, but nevertheless divinely limited period. Because the period begins with the binding of Satan at Christ's first coming and ends with Christ's second coming, it symbolizes the whole New Testament period.

b. Satan is bound (20:2-3)

The book of Revelation must be explained in the light of the whole Bible. Because the New Testament clearly teaches that Satan is bound at Christ's first coming (Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:18; John 12:31-32; Colossians 1:13; 2:14; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8), the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed throughout the New Testament period to all the nations in the world (20:3; cf. Matthew 24:14) and people are continually robbed out of Satan's dominion and brought into Christ's kingdom (Colossians 1:13).

c. The spiritual resurrection and the physical resurrection (20:5-6)

See the meaning of the word 'lived' in the explanation of chapter 20.

Before Christ's second coming, *the physical bodies* of Christians and non-Christians will *die physically* (Genesis 3:19; Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:50; Hebrews 9:27). This implies 'the first death'.

Before Christ's second coming, *only the souls* (spirits) of Christians that have died will be *spiritually resurrected* or translated into heaven into the direct presence of Christ (cf. Matthew 10:28a; John 11:25; 2 Corinthians 5:1,8; Philippians 1:23). This is symbolically called 'the first resurrection' in the book of Revelation (20:5). The souls (spirits) of non-Christians that have died, however, will descend immediately into hell (cf. Luke 16:22-23).

At Christ's second coming, *the physical bodies* of Christians and non-Christians will be *physically resurrected* at the same time. This implies 'the second resurrection' (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:25; 1 Corinthians 15:52; Revelation 20:13).

At Christ's second coming (after the final judgement), *only the bodies and souls* of non-Christians will *die eternally* (be thrown into hell). This is symbolically called 'the second death' in the book of Revelation (2:11; 21:8; cf. Matthew 10:28b; John 11:26). The physical bodies and souls of Christians will descend with Christ as the New Jerusalem onto the new earth and they will be with the Lord forever (21:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

The first death and the second resurrection are *physical events*. The first resurrection and second death are *eternal spiritual events*.

d. The New Jerusalem is the present ideal reality and the future perfect reality of the Church

The description of the New Jerusalem (21:1 to 22:5) is both the *present ideal* reality for the Church on this present earth *before* Christ's second coming (cf. Galatians 4:26; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 3:1-2; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:22-24; 13:14) as well as the *future perfect* reality of the Church *after* Christ's second coming!

That is why *already now* tears are wiped away (21:4; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4); *now* all things are being made new (21:5; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17); *now* the thirsty are given to drink from the spring of the water of life (21:6; cf. John 4:14); *now* all Christians are urged to overcome (21:7; cf. 1 John 5:4-5); *now* the Lord himself is the temple and light of Christians (21:22-24; cf. John 12:46); *now* the nations bring their splendour, honour and glory into the Church (21:24,26; cf. Revelation 5:9-10); *now* the water of the river of life is flowing from God's presence to believers (22:1; cf. John 7:37-39); *now* the tree of life bears fruit for believers (22:2; cf. Isaiah 55:1-2; Galatians 5:22-23); and *now* the leaves of the tree of life serve to heal the nations (22:2; cf. Matthew 8:16-17). The present ideal reality of the Church is summarised with the words: "The New Jerusalem is (*now at the present time*) coming down out of heaven from God" (21:2,10; cf. Galatians 4:26-

27)! All these present tenses teach that these things are happening *now at the present time*, before Christ's second coming!

The description of the New Jerusalem on the new earth also describes the future perfect reality of the Church after Christ's second coming.

That is why on the new earth there will be no more enemies of the Church (21:1); God will visibly dwell among his people (21:3); there will be no more sickness, pain or death (21:4); everything will be completely and perfectly renewed (21:5); the marriage feast of the Lamb will last forever (21:9); the absolute complete and perfect number of the elect during the Old Testament period (21:12; cf. Romans 11:12,26) and the New Testament period (21:14; cf. Romans 11:25) will constitute the Church; the Old Testament shadows of Israel will be perfectly fulfilled in the New Testament realities of the Church (21:16; cf. Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5; 10:1); there will be no more threats or fear or any kind of darkness (evil) (21:25); there will not be anyone who is impure and does what is shameful or deceitful (21:27); the throne (kingship, kingdom) is ruled by God and the Lamb for all eternity (22:3; cf. 2 Peter 1:11); Christians will serve him, see his face in Christ, bear his name (his divine character) forever (22:4; cf. 2 Peter 1:3-4) and reign with him forever (22:5).