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1 THE TITLE of SECTION IV

THE VICTORY OF CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH OVER THE DRAGON AND HIS HELPERS

***"I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN YOU AND THE WOMAN; AND BETWEEN YOUR OFFSPRING AND
HERS; HE WILL CRUSH YOUR HEAD, AND YOU WILL STRIKE HIS HEAL" (GENESIS 3:15)***

Again and again throughout the whole New Testament period the struggle between the Militant Church and the godless and wicked world is in reality a struggle between Christ and Satan. Christ and his Church will conquer!

2 THE DIVISION of SECTION IV

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 4 of the book of Revelation consists of chapters 12 to 14 and covers the whole New Testament period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming.

a. The beginning of the New Testament period (12:1-10)

Christ's first coming was expected throughout the Old Testament period. 'The woman' is first a symbol of God's Old Testament people, Israel (12:1-2). The promised Messiah would be born from Israel (Genesis 49:10; Isaiah 9:6-7). But throughout the Old Testament period, from God's promise of salvation in Genesis 3:15 to the murder of the children of Bethlehem (Matthew 2:16-18), "the dragon" (Satan) tried to hinder the birth of the Messiah, because the Messiah would crush his head (12:3-4).

The New Testament period begins with the first coming of Christ, his birth, his ascension and his enthronement in heaven (12:5). Thereafter 'the woman' is a symbol of God's New Testament people, the Church (12:6).

The results of Christ's enthronement in heaven at his first coming mean three things: the hurling down of the dragon from heaven (12:7-9); the beginning of Christ's kingdom on earth (12:10); and the reality of salvation for Christians (12:10). By his death, resurrection, ascension and enthronement, Christ expelled Satan as the accuser of God's people in heaven and hurled him onto the earth (12:7-12; cf. Job chapter 1-2).

b. The long main period (12:6,11-17; 13:1-6,11-14)

From Christ's first coming onwards God's people (the Church) are still symbolised by the woman. The long main period is characterised by the protection of the woman and her struggle against Satan and his helpers, the beast out of the sea, the beast out of the earth and the great prostitute (Babylon the Great). The beast out of the sea (13:1-10) symbolises all the godless, wicked, antichristian governments of the world and their persecutions throughout history. The beast out of the earth (13:11-18) symbolises all the antichristian religions, philosophies, ideologies, sciences, cultures and their delusions throughout history. The great prostitute (Babylon the Great) (14:8) symbolises all the antichristian seductions expressed in moral and spiritual immoralities throughout history. Thus the real character of the struggle between the Militant Church on earth and the godless and wicked world throughout the New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming is the struggle between Christ and Satan.

The New Testament period is symbolically 1260 days or a time, times and half a time or 42 months long (12:6,14; 13:5). This symbolic period begins at Christ's first coming (12:5) and ends just before Christ's second coming (11:7-19).

c. The short period (13:7-10,15-18; 14:6-13)

The short period is characterised by severe trials (oppression and persecution) and temptations (moral and religious seductions). The two beasts are given power to overcome the Militant Church on earth, to have authority over the whole non-Christian world (13:7-10) and to exercise an enormous political, religious and economic oppression (13:15-18). This is the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21-29a).

Three angels warn everyone on earth that the end with the final judgement is about to happen (14:6-13).

d. The end of the New Testament period (14:14-20)

The New Testament period ends at Christ's second coming, when he reaps the wheat harvest (all true Christians)(14:14-16) and an angel reaps the vine harvest (all unbelievers) on whom God's severe wrath is exercised (14:17-20).

e. The eternal state (14:1-5)

The eternal state is pictured as the Triumphant Church in heaven (the 144 000) immediately after the final judgement. The 144 000 is a symbol for the full number of elected Jews and elected Gentiles throughout history. They sing the song of those who have been redeemed from the earth. At the beginning of the New Testament period they were sealed as a sign of protection (7:4). At the end of the New Testament period they enter the final phase of God's kingdom (cf. Matthew 24:31; Romans 11:12,25-26). God in Christ has taken them safely through all their tribulations in world history. He has indeed protected his Church. Not a single born-again Christian will perish (John 10:28; 17:3,12)!

Conclusion

The long period of protecting the Militant Church in the desert is followed by a short period of severe persecution in which the Church as an institute of proclaiming the gospel is destroyed (13:7). The end comes with the double harvest of believers and unbelievers.

The fourth section of the book of Revelation consists of Revelation chapters 12 to 14 and covers the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. It gives insight into the eternal state beyond Christ's second coming.

3 THE STRUCTURE of SECTION IV

a. The two main parts of the book of Revelation

The first part consists of Revelation chapters 1 to 11 and describes the Militant Church persecuted and oppressed by the godless and wicked kingdom of the world. The Christians are sealed and the Church is protected in the desert. The final judgement brings an end to all injustice and Christians appear as the victorious together with Christ. Revelation chapters 1 to 11 depicts the outward visible struggle between the Church and the world.

The second part consists of Revelation chapters 12 to 22 and describes the deeper underlying cause for this visible struggle. The struggle between the Church and the world is in reality a struggle between Christ and Satan. Finally, Christ and his Church conquer.

b. The rise and of the Church's opponents and their fall in almost the reversed order

The rise of the Church's opponents are depicted in the following order in the book of Revelation: the dragon (12:1-3), the beast out of the sea or antichrists (13:1-10; 1 John 2:18), the beast out of the earth or false prophets (13:11-18; Matthew 24:24), the great prostitute, Babylon (17:1-7,18; 1 Peter 4:3), the kings of the earth (17:12-17; Matthew 20:25), the nations in the four corners of the earth (11:9-10; 12:9) and the people who bear the mark of the beast (13:16-18).

The fall of the Church's opponents are depicted in almost the reverse order in the book of Revelation: the people who bear the mark of the beast (16:2), the nations in the four corners of the earth (19:18-20; 20:8-9), the kings of the earth (19:19-21), the great prostitute, Babylon (17:16; 18:1-24), the beast out of the sea and the false prophet (19:19-20) and finally the dragon (20:10).

4 THE MESSAGE OF SECTION IV

a. The message of the struggle between Christ and the dragon (12:4-5)

Revelation chapter 12 describes the deeper underlying reason for the struggle between the Militant Church and the inimical world. This struggle is really a struggle between Christ and Satan. The struggle continues throughout the whole New Testament period. The struggle between Christ and the dragon is the real reason why there is so much opposition against the Church and Christians. Satan brings the powers of hell (the two beasts and later also the prostitute) and the evil powers on earth (the heathen nations and unbelievers) together to make war against Christ, the Church and individual Christians. His purpose is to destroy them all. Though the Militant Church on earth is protected, Christians dwell on earth as in a desert.

Revelation chapter 13 describes the two helpers of the dragon in their conflict against the Church. The beast out of the sea is Satan's antichristian political powers together with their persecutions (13:1-10). The beast out of the earth is Satan's antichristian religions, philosophies, sciences, cultures and their deceptions (13:11-18). During the last days of the history of this world, the final beast (the final antichrist) and the final false prophet will destroy the Church as an institution proclaiming the gospel and make the lives of individual Christians miserable.

Revelation chapter 14 describes the final outcome of this conflict between Christ and Satan. There are three warnings, the double harvest at Christ's second coming and a description of the Triumphant Church in heaven immediately after the victory of Christ.

b. The message of Satan's short time (12:12)

The present Church is not yet what it really is in its deepest essence: the completely perfect and flawless Body of Christ dwelling on the new earth. And also the present world is not yet what it really is in its deepest essence: completely godless and wicked. Both the Church and the world live in the great 'not yet'.

The three factors that delay or slow down the movement of the apocalyptic events towards their fulfilment in the end in the book of Revelation are:

The Church must first fulfil her missionary task to all the nations (chapters 2 and 3; cf. Matthew 24:14).

The Church must first become a praying Church in which her prayers harmonise with the prayers of Christ in heaven (chapter 8:3-5; cf. Matthew 18:19; 1 John 5:14).

The world must ripen for the final judgement (chapter 11:7-10). The 'world' is not yet what it really is in its deepest essence. Their sins have not yet reached its full measure (Genesis 15:16)!

The end can only come when the world has become the godless, wicked, opposing and lost world in the most radical sense. Sin must be manifested what it always has been. Everything must become what it is: the non-Christians must manifest themselves as godless, wicked and anti-Christian and the Christians must manifest themselves as godly, righteous and completely submitted to Christ. Jesus Christ urges the world and the Church to become what they really are in essence by saying: "Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile. Let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy (22:11b)!" 'The children of light' (Luke 16:8) are often not worthy of the title Jesus gives to them. They must become more and more the children of light (cf. Matthew 5:16). The mist of insincerity and pretence in which everything seems to be different than it really is must first disappear. The devil has disguised himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14) and his disguise must first be destroyed. Nothing is transparent yet. Everything is still camouflaged. Nothing is completely real yet.

The history of the world from a human point of view is looking backwards and describes events that have taken place in the past. But that is not real history; it is the history of events that have been camouflaged by the world. *The history of the world from God's point of view* is that all things become more and more what they always have been! Camouflaged evil will become manifested evil and the invisible heavenly reality will become the visible reality on the new earth! The veil covering the camouflaged insincerity, deception, and lies of the world will be removed and the world will be revealed in its deepest essence as godless, wicked and anti-Christian.

The history of the world from God's point of view is that through the events happening in the world: through peace and wars, through prosperity and misfortunes, through the increase of science and its misapplication, through human culture and its corruption all things are becoming what they always have been! That is why the kingdom of God in its final phase can only come after the kingdom of the beast in its final phase has taken control of the whole world!

c. The message of the beast out of the sea (13:1-10)

Jesus opens the eyes of John and Christians to see the reality of the beast out of the sea (representing all antichristian governments throughout history). The vision is already past tense in heaven, yet still future on this present earth. Our sense of time is limited. What for us is still future is for God already past. The beast will think that he is doing something original when he rises out of the sea, but he will have no idea that centuries before God through his prophet had already predicted and described what would happen! John had seen these events centuries before they actually happen. The beast does not realise that he fits into God's eternal plan with respect to the last things. The beast will arise from the unruly sea of nations and world events, but it is God who allows him to arise at the exact moment written in the scroll in heaven (5:1).

Although natural man may seem human and civilized, in reality he is indifferent and arrogant, hard and a cruel murderer. That is also why the kingdom of man (the kingdom of the world) can only be depicted by a beast. His description is very similar to that of the dragon (Satan). This beast is a summary description of the four beasts in the book of Daniel (chapter 7) and all of them represent empires or kingdoms of the world (Daniel 7:17). These empires or kingdoms originate from the recklessness and over-confidence of their rulers, who first destroy God's kingdom and then proceed to set up their own kingdom. This tendency is ineradicable from the history of this world and will finally issue in the final kingdom of the beast and the final antichrist. The crowned horns represent kings that follow one another in succession, or royal dynasties, or point to the fact that every empire comprises many separate kingdoms or provinces.

The beast derives its power and authority from a supernatural source: Satan. That is why it has occult, demonic, corrupt and violent tendencies. Its fortune-telling (future predictions), prophetic insights and unflinching intuition impress people. The blasphemous names on its heads refer to its hatred towards God and his Christ. Modern man has knowledge of nuclear physics and the stock market, but no knowledge of God, no knowledge of what is right and wrong in God's eyes and no knowledge of life after death. The resemblance of the beast to a leopard, bear and lion shows that it has tremendous ruling power and subjects vast countries. He persecutes Christians who have their real citizenship in heaven (13:6; Ephesians 2:6; Philippians 3:20) and finally will destroy the Church as an institute proclaiming the gospel. But note: the beast out of the sea can only do these things because God permits him to do these things (13:5,7)! His ministry of propaganda consists of the beast out of the earth (his false prophets). The beast out of the earth erects statues, altars and temples to glorify the beast out of the sea and organise mass meetings with flags, slogans and noise to draft support for the kingdom of man. Wandering Christians dissociate themselves from all this and remain standing firm only because their names have been written in the book of life (13:8).

Christians go into captivity and are being killed because Jesus Christ was also rejected and crucified. His trials and crucifixion seem to be timeless, because Jesus Christ "was slain from the creation of the world" (13:8). Throughout the history of the world the kingdom of natural man (the kingdom of the inimical world) has been occupied with crucifying Jesus Christ and is in our modern time still occupied with crucifying Jesus Christ (cf. Hebrews 6:6). Those who persecute Christians are in reality persecuting Jesus Christ (Acts 26:14-15)! That is why Paul says, "I fill up in my flesh (body) what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body, which is the Church" (Colossians 1:24; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:5; 1 Peter 4:13).¹

d. The message of the prophet of the kingdom of man (13:11-18)

Jesus opens the eyes of John and Christians to see the reality of the beast *out of the earth* (representing all false prophets throughout history). His origin is not in heaven, but from the earth. He arises from mother earth, the created nature and the historic events on this earth. He seems to be harmless like a lamb (Christ), but speaks like a dragon (Satan). He represents all false prophets and all propaganda ministers of the beast out of the sea (the antichrists) throughout history. He performs miracles for the sake of sensation and to mislead people. His propaganda slogans poison people's minds and whip them into ecstasy.

The kingdom of natural man (the kingdom of the inimical world) has as its centre hatred against God and his Christ (Psalm 2:1-2).

Its confession of faith consists of an unlimited confidence in the abilities of natural man. Its only hope for this life on earth is the desire to get drunk with pleasure. Its moral foundation proclaims that no one may think of himself as an individual that has a personal task, a personal responsibility and a personal accountability to God. Man's only purpose is to extinguish every spark of personal life, personal joy and personal relationship with God (cf. some eastern religions). Thus, the kingdom of the world and its culture tends towards religions that become fanatic and demonic and tend towards communities that become nationalistic and *nihilistic*. There is no longer any personal individuality, personal responsibility and personal accountability. Everyone is drowned in the collective of the kingdom of man. No one dares to have a personal opinion, because the kingdom of man has all the answers. All personal ideals, expectations and awareness of personal guilt are unnecessary and dangerous. There are no longer any moral and spiritual absolutes. Only the propaganda minister knows and determines what is right, wrong and useful.

Christians know what that means: a nihilistic person loses his identity as an individual and becomes a great zero. He is no longer allowed to think, because the leader will think for him. He is not allowed to decide or choose, because the leader will decide and choose for him. By day everyone must plod on in the treadmill of the super industry of the world. By night everyone is completely occupied by the TV, video games or clubs. No one comes to a standstill. No one gets a moment of self reflection. Already from early childhood he is stuffed full with all the superficiality and insignificance of modern life. What he hears, reads and sees in the mass media affects the root of his being. He is overwhelmed by the noise of the never-ending voices of the world. He does not learn to think and make decisions for himself, because everything is spoon-fed to him. He does not learn to think from the centre of reality (the God of the Bible) and he does not learn to reckon with

¹ cf. Bavinck pp. 234-247

the eternal realities of God. Nobody knows what it means to be human in the biblical sense of the word anymore.

The family with a father, mother and children has no longer any meaning. Only the kingdom of man is great and only its president is wise and powerful. There are only people that look the same, talk the same and do the same. They are moved about as pawns on the chessboard of the kingdom of man. There is peace, but it is the peace that results from everyone thinking and saying the same thing. There is wealth everywhere, but only for those who comply. There are endless opportunities for games, excursions, travelling and fun. But all who do not believe in the kingdom of man and resist it are eventually locked up in large concentration camps.

The false prophet forces people to bear the mark of the beast on their right hand or forehead as a sign of their party membership. This symbolises that all work and all thinking is controlled by the beast and should be for the glory of the beast. All commerce, industry and agriculture are controlled by the kingdom of the world. The press, universities and television follow suite and glorify the kingdom of man.

The culture of the kingdom of natural man is built on the colossal lie and denial of the reality as God intended it. It is a repression culture which actively excludes the reality as God intended it to be. It is a culture in which man is forbidden to think, a culture that flees from everything that makes man truly human and a culture that flees from the Living God. This kingdom of man and its culture must collapse and will collapse!

There will be Christians until Christ's second coming. Those that escape the concentration camps must remain in hiding or move about from place to place. The only way they can persevere as Christians is the knowledge that there will be a definite end to this game and fun and that only the kingdom of Christ will conquer!²

e. The message of 144 000 standing on Mount Zion (14:1-5)

Christians are divinely protected. In Revelation 7:1-8 God's people (here still the Militant Church on earth) are sealed before God sounds his trumpet judgements against the godless and wicked kingdom of the world.

In Revelation 14:1-5 God's people (now the Triumphant Church in heaven) are seen in their eternal state in heaven after the final judgement day. Throughout the whole New Testament period God has protected the Militant Church from being damned together with the rest of the world. On the final judgement day not one single Christian will be lost (John 10:28; 17:3,12)! God's plan of salvation cannot fail and will not fail!

f. The message of the three angels blowing trumpets (14:6-13)

The picture of the three angels blowing their trumpets is God's final call to a world that is doomed to be destroyed. When the first angel sounds his trumpet people are gripped with fear and tremble. They awake from their intoxication and infatuation and realise that the foolish game of human pride is doomed to perish. In glaring light they know that the God they buried and fled from really exists. "Fear God and give him glory" is a call to quit the meaningless worship of the greatness of man and acknowledge that only God is great!

It is also God's exhortation to Christians to constantly tear themselves loose from the tyranny of the beast and the intoxication of the false prophet and to persevere in God's way. God knows that Christians are persecuted, discriminated in society, dragged to jail or concentration camps and even killed (2 Timothy 3:12). But in God's perspective Christians are blessed, because their deeds will follow them (14:13).³

² cf. Bavick pp. 247-259

³ cf. Bavick pp. 260-263

g. The message of the two harvests (14:14-20)

On the last day of the history of this world, at Christ's second coming, Christians will be resurrected and caught up to meet and welcome Christ in the air. But a little later on that same last day non-Christians will be driven in front of Christ's throne of heavenly glory to be judged. While the Christians will be with Christ forever in heaven and on the new earth, the non-Christians will be cast into hell forever.

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which they must be saved" (Acts 4:12)!