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### 1 THE TITLE of SECTION V

#### ***GOD'S FINAL WRATH IS Poured OUT OVER THE UNREPENTANT IN THE WORLD***

***"BUT BECAUSE OF YOUR STUBBORNNESS AND YOUR UNREPENTANT HEART,  
YOU ARE STORING UP WRATH AGAINST YOURSELF FOR THE DAY OF GOD'S WRATH  
WHEN HIS RIGHTEOUS JUDGEMENT WILL BE REVEALED."*** (ROMANS 2:5)

Again and again throughout the whole New Testament period God pours his final wrath out over those who harden their hearts and refuse to repent in spite of God's warning judgements (9:20-21; 16:9,11,21). Even before they die, they cross the boundary between God's merciful patience and his righteous anger (Matthew 12:32; Romans 1:18-32; 1 John 5:16). When they cross that line they have no more opportunity to repent and be saved (Luke 13:1-5)! While the trumpet judgements warn and punish, the bowl judgements complete God's final wrath (15:1) against those who bear the mark of the beast (16:2).

### 2 THE DIVISION of SECTION V

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 5 of the book of Revelation consists of chapters 15 and 16 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 (15:1a,5)**

The period begins like section 4 with "a great sign in heaven" (15:1a; cf. 12:1), which carried us back to the first coming of Christ (12:5).

"The opening of the tabernacle of Testimony" (15:5) also points to the first coming of Christ, when the curtain hanging before the tabernacle of Testimony was torn in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). This points to the time when Christ went into the sanctuary of heaven with his own blood to open for all believers the way (Hebrews 9:10,12) so that all believers may approach God's throne of grace with confidence to receive mercy and grace to help in their time of need (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19-20; cf. 1 Peter 3:18a). That was when "the end, close or completion of the ages" began (Hebrews 9:24-26; cf. Acts 2:17).

### **b. The long main period (15:1a,6-8; 16:1-11)**

The long main period is characterised by the outpouring of the first five bowls of God's wrath upon people who have the mark of the beast (16:2; cf. John 3:36). That characterisation is very general and applies to all people who worship the dragon throughout the history of the world, particularly through the whole New Testament period. But because this spirit of independence from God in man reveals itself more and more clearly as we approach the end of history, the vision of the outpouring of bowls, though covering the entire period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming, is especially applicable to the final judgement day and to conditions that will immediately precede it, when God pours out his final wrath (15:1b,6-8; 16:1-11).

### **c. The short period (16:12-16)**

The short period of violence is characterised by the outpouring of the sixth bowl of God's wrath, which issues in the final battle on the great day of God Almighty (16:14; cf. 6:17), called the battle of Armageddon (16:12-16). This will take place at the beginning of Christ's second coming (16:15; cf. 19:11-21)!

### **d. The end of the New Testament period (16:17-21)**

The period ends with the outpouring of the seventh bowl of God's wrath, which causes the collapse of the kingdom of the world. The collapse of the evil and antichristian world is symbolised by the fall of the great city Babylon (the symbol of Satan's antichristian seductive culture) and all the similar cities of the nations (16:17-19) and issues in the collapse of this present earth (16:20-21). Thus, it ends with the final judgement day at Christ's second coming.

### **e. The eternal state (15:2-4)**

The eternal state is pictured as the Triumphant Church immediately after the final judgement praising God's holiness and righteousness in the final judgement.

## **Conclusion**

When the godless and unrighteous people living during the long period of the history of the world do not give heed to God's trumpet judgements (warning judgement), then God's bowl judgements (final and irrevocable judgements) come on the day they die or on the final judgement day. In an ascending line this applies especially to the conditions that precede the final judgement day and the final judgement day itself, when God pours out his final wrath.

The fifth section of the book of Revelation consists of Revelation chapters 15 to 16 and covers the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. It also gives insight into the eternal state beyond Christ's second coming (15:2-4).

## **3 THE STRUCTURE of SECTION V**

Revelation 15 and 16 (section 5) is parallel to Revelation 8 to 11 (section 3) and to Revelation 12 to 14 (section 4). Like all the other sections in the book of Revelation, section 5 has a distinct beginning, a long main period, a short period and a distinct end.

Four observations point to the conclusion that section 5 is parallel to section 4 and to section 3.

### **a. Section 5 is parallel to section 4. They have the same beginning**

The period of section 5 has an introduction: "a great and wondrous sign" (15:1) that is almost identical to the introduction of section 4 (12:1), which carries us back to the first coming of Christ (12:5). Therefore it is not unreasonable to assume that the introduction of section 5 carries us back to the first coming of Christ.

### **b. Section 5 is parallel to section 4, 3 and 2. They have the same end**

The period of section 5 ends like the previous sections with the final judgement. In section 2 the breaking of the sixth seal effects the final judgement day of God and the Lamb (6:12-17). In section 3 the sounding of the seventh trumpet introduces the judgment of the dead, the rewarding of God's servants and the kingdom of God and his Christ in its final phase (11:15-19). In section 4 the grape harvest symbolises the great winepress of God's wrath on the final judgement day (14:17-20). And in section 5 the outpouring of seventh bowl completes God's final wrath on the final judgement day (16:17-21; cf. 15:1). Therefore at least the first five bowls refer to events that precede the final judgement day.

### **c. Section 5 is parallel to section 4. The same forces of evil operate**

The same forces of evil that operate in section 5 just before Christ's second coming (16:12-16) also operate in section 4 (12:3; 14:1,11), namely, the dragon (12:3-4; 16:13), the beast out of the sea (13:1-4; 16:13) and the beast out of the earth or false prophet (13:11-13; 16:13). Therefore it is not unreasonable to assume that section 5 is parallel to section 4.

### **d. Section 5 is parallel to section 3. The same areas are affected**

The seven bowls of section 5 (16:1-21) affect the same areas as the seven trumpets of section 3 (8:7 to 11:19) do. The first trumpet and bowl affect the land (8:7-8; 16:2), the second trumpet and bowl affect the sea (8:8-9; 16:3), the third trumpet and bowl affect the water-sources (8:10-11; 16:4), the fourth trumpet and bowl affect the sun (8:12; 16:8-9), the fifth trumpet and bowl affect the beast (9:1-12; 16:10-11), the sixth trumpet and bowl affect the river Euphrates (9:13-21; 16:12-16) and the seventh trumpet and bowl introduces the final judgement day (11:15-19; 16:17-21). Thus the period of section 5 is evidently parallel to the period of section 3.

## **4 THE MESSAGE of SECTION V**

### **a. God's judgements are just (15:3)**

When God has completed his final and complete judgement on the impenitent world, all those who have been victorious over the beast and the kingdom of the world will praise God's judgments as being just. The holy and righteous God of the Bible will be perfectly just and fair in his final judgement. God does not show favouritism and will give each person according to what he has done: over those who were self-seeking, who rejected the truth (of Christ and the Bible) and who followed evil he will pour out his wrath and anger; and to those who persisted in doing what is good in God's eyes (which includes believing in Christ, John 6:28-29) he will give glory, honour and immortality (Romans 2:5-11). The person who knew God's will and did not do it will be beaten with many blows ; but the person who did not know God's will, but does what deserves punishment, will be beaten with few blows (Luke 12:47-48). God's final and complete judgement will be so just and fair that even the knees of the unrighteous people will bend before his sovereign majesty and their tongues will acknowledge his holy and just judgement (Philippians 2:9-11)! They will have no argument to justify themselves, because God's holy and righteous laws had been written on their hearts and their consciences spoke constantly to them (Romans 2:12-16). They will be held accountable to God, but they will have no excuse at all (Romans 3:19-20).

### **b. Failure to repent brings God's final and complete wrath (16:9)**

The book of Revelation reveals a progressing message. In the history of the world a definite and ever-recurring order of events is clearly evident:

(1) The establishment of the Church (Revelation chapters 1 to 3).

Again and again through the preaching of God's Word and its application to the heart by the Holy Spirit, new congregations are planted and established throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. The congregations are lampstands or light bearers in the midst of a world that lies in moral and spiritual darkness (Matthew 5:14-16). The congregations are blessed with the constant spiritual presence of Christ.

(2) The persecution of the Church by the world (Revelation chapters 4 to 7).

Again and again Christians are persecuted by the world and are subjected to persecution, oppression and trials.

(3) The judgements of God on the persecuting world (Revelation chapters 8 to 11).

Again and again the judgements of God are visited upon the persecuting world. They intend to punish and to warn people. However, many people in the world continue to harden their hearts against God and refuse to repent (9:20-21).

(4) The real reason for the struggle between the Church and the world (Revelation chapters 12 to 14).

The continual conflict between the Church and the world points to a more fundamental warfare between Christ and Satan.

(5) The final wrath of God on the impenitent (Revelation chapters 15 to 16).

Again and again the godless and wicked, who continue to harden their hearts against God and his warnings, are finally plunged into the hands of an indignant God. These impenitent (cf. 9:20-21; 16:9,11,21) are people who have received the mark of the beast and have worshipped his image (16:2). Even before such people die on earth, they have crossed the line between God's merciful patience and his just wrath (Matthew 12:32; Romans 1:18-32; 1 John 5:16).

*Whenever in history the godless and wicked people fail to repent in answer to God's initial and partial judgements (the trumpet judgements), the final and complete effusion of God's wrath (the bowl judgements) follows.*

There is an important link between the trumpet judgements and the bowl judgements of God. 'Trumpets' punish and warn by executing initial and partial judgement. But 'bowls' bring God's final and complete judgement (15:1). These are symbols that the impenitent are damned and are cast body and soul into hell (21:8; cf. Matthew 10:28).

### **c. Christ's second coming will be sudden and unexpected (16:15)**

When these events occur, it will be a fearful time for Christians. When the final antichrist gathers the kings of the nations for the final battle, then Christ's second coming is very near. Yet, no one can predict that day. Christ will still come like a thief in the night (3:3; cf. Matthew 24:42-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10), that is, *suddenly and unexpectedly* for both believers and unbelievers! While the wicked world continues as always, completely unprepared for what is coming (Matthew 24:36-39) and believers are being persecuted and oppressed, Christ will suddenly and unexpectedly appear and overthrow his enemies (cf. Habakkuk 3:11-13; Matthew 24:29-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2:8).

Therefore, Christ urges Christians to remain faithful. They are urged to stay awake continually and constantly be alert (watchful) (Matthew 24:42). They must keep expecting Christ's second coming and be ready when he comes. The non-Christians do not reckon with his coming at all – instead, they think that they have already gained the complete victory over Christ's Church and therefore over Christ himself. They could have known about his coming from the Bible, yet they refused to listen to the Bible.

### **d. The end of this present created earth and the end of the history of the world has arrived (16:17)**

With the outpouring of this bowl judgement, *the end of this present created earth and the end of history in the world has arrived*. The loud voice from the throne is of God. God says: "It is done, it has happened, it has taken place".

At his first coming, on the cross, Jesus Christ said: "It is finished!"<sup>1</sup> (John 19:30). Jesus Christ had completed forever everything that was needed for *salvation*! At Christ's second coming God will say: "It is done!"<sup>2</sup> (Revelation 16:17). Then Jesus Christ will have completed forever everything that will be needed for *the final judgement*! Just as Christ with one word completed his work of salvation, so God with one word

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<sup>1</sup> Τετελεσται > τελειω (vīrp)

<sup>2</sup> Γεγονεν > γινομαι (vīra)

will complete his work of judgement! The final and complete exposure of God's wrath, so long restrained, has come. The final judgement day has arrived. Everything that had to happen within world history has gone into fulfilment. God's eternal plan with regard to this present world has been accomplished. The eternal state is about to begin.