

The futurist view includes the views of the historic premillennialists and dispensational premillennialists.

## CHAPTER 1

### **1:1 The futurist view about the word ‘revelation’.**

The revelation is the unveiling of (only) those events that shall precede and accompany Christ’s so-called future second return. It is a prediction of events in the future end-time.

The futurists argue that in Mark 13:32 Christ did not know the day and hour when things he had prophesied against Jerusalem should come to pass. They think that after his ascension Christ received from the Father the information that his disciples had asked for and unveiled that information in the book of Revelation to John.

They moreover argue that the book of Revelation only records the fulfilment of all unfulfilled prophecies in the Old and New Testaments. They say that because Revelation is *the last prophecy* (1:3), one should naturally expect the book to sum up all previous prophecy concerned with the Church, Israel and the nations.<sup>1</sup>

#### Critique.

The book of Revelation nowhere refers to being the fulfilment of all so-called unfulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament period or the New Testament period.

The book of Revelation is *not* concerned with the nation of Israel, but with Jesus Christ and his New Testament people, which include the believers from every nation in the world.

#### The correct explanation.

The revelation is the unveiling of God’s plan (decree, decision) for Church history within world history throughout the whole New Testament period, from Christ’s first coming to Christ’s second coming. The book of Revelation is the proclamation (prophecy)(1:3) of God’s plan with regard to the past, present and future of God’s Church within world history.

### **1:3 The futurist view about the word ‘soon’.**

The events described in the book of Revelation are for the greater part future and only begin to be realised after the Church has been removed from the earth (after the so-called rapture).

The futurist view translates the Greek word ‘soon’<sup>2</sup> as ‘quickly, swiftly’. Because the events are to follow one another in rapid succession the futurist view concludes that these events must all be future events just before and after the future second return of Christ!<sup>3</sup>

#### Critique.

In spite of the fact that most translations of the Bible translate the word as ‘soon’, the futurist view regards the book of Revelation chapter 4 to 22 as ‘not soon’, but future; even future for people living today, 2000 years after this revelation was given to John! The book of Revelation thus had no message for the Christians that lived the past 2000 years and still has no message for Christians living today!

The futurist view regards the book of Revelation as a book that predicts future history. And because that history is mostly taken literally, it scares them to death. And because the futurist view believes that the contents of the book for its greater part (chapter 4:1 to 19:6) has nothing to do with the Church but with Israel, they believe it has no message for the Church in the present! Many Christians all over the world are afraid to read the book or to dwell on its message.

<sup>1</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> εν ταχει

<sup>3</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 6

#### The correct explanation.

The events described in the book of Revelation begin to be realised from the time they were revealed in the first century A.D. – thus throughout the whole New Testament period.

The translation ‘soon’, ‘shortly’, ‘not a very distant future’ is correct, because the immediate context says that ‘the time is near’, ‘the time is at hand’ (1:3). The symbols began to be realised when they were revealed. This is confirmed by Revelation 22:10, which says that the words of the prophecy of this book “must *not* be sealed up”, because the time is near. God’s plan had already begun to be realised!

#### **1:4 The futurist view about the seven congregations (churches).**

The seven congregations represent seven consecutive Church periods clearly defined in Church history between Christ’s first coming and the rapture of the Church.<sup>4</sup>

#### Critique.

If these seven letters each represented a prophecy about a seventh part of Church history, each letter would only be a message for the Church in that part of history. Then Christ’s words: “Hear what the Spirit says to the churches (in the other six parts of Church history)” (2:7, etc.) would be completely without purpose!

#### The correct explanation.

The seven congregations were seven historical congregations during the first century A.D., but their conditions and characteristics represent conditions and characteristics that can be found in all congregations in the world at one time or another between Christ’s first coming and Christ’s second coming.

#### **1:5-6 The futurist view about ‘the ruler of the kings of the world’ and ‘the kingdom’.**

Christ will only become the ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5) when he takes the throne in the future millennial kingdom at his future second return.<sup>5</sup>

The futurist view believes only in the present kingdom of heaven, which is in heaven, and in the future millennial kingdom, which will be on earth. They believe that in the present the whole world is under the control of Satan (1 John 5:19).

#### Critique.

The futurist view does not explain the fact that Christians have been made a kingdom (1:6).

It is only *the evil world* that is under the control of Satan (1 John 5:19). Satan can only harm people who keep on sinning. He cannot harm born again Christians on earth (1 John 5:18).

Satan has this limited power on earth only because God permits him (cf. Job 1:6-12). Christ has been given authority and power over everything in the universe and on the earth from his first coming onwards (Matthew 28:18; cf. 8:31-32; 12:28-29).

#### The correct explanation.

Christ is already the ruler of the kings of the earth at his first coming.

His enthronement is symbolised in Revelation chapter 5. He has made Christians a kingdom from his first coming (1:6; Matthew 12:28; Mark 1:15). And John cannot be ‘a companion in the suffering and the kingdom’ if suffering and the kingdom do not exist on earth (1:9)!

#### **1:7 The futurist view about the second coming.**

There will be two second comings, called ‘the first return’ and ‘the second return’ in order to distinguish them from the one and only second coming taught in the Bible. The first return would take place at the removal of the Church from the earth (the rapture) and would be invisible and inaudible (secret). The second return would take place at the end of the future seven year long tribulation period and before the establishment of the future millennial kingdom on earth. The second return would be visible and audible. In Revelation 1:7 the second return of Jesus is mentioned. Only every eye of people coming out of the great

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<sup>4</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 13

<sup>5</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 6

tribulation would see Jesus coming on the clouds. Then the Jews would mourn because they had crucified Jesus and the Gentile nations would mourn because Jesus had returned to judge them.<sup>6</sup>

### Critique.

It is remarkable that futurists believe in Christ's so-called future first return or the removal of the Church from the earth (the rapture) even when they admit that the book of Revelation does not mention it and even when they cannot prove it from the rest of the Bible!

Futurists differ among themselves about the time of the so-called first return of Jesus. The pre-tribulation pre-millennialists believe this would take place 7 years before the so-called second return of Jesus. The mid-tribulation pre-millennialists believe this would take place 3½ years before the so-called second return of Jesus. And the post-tribulation pre-millennialists believe this would take place immediately before the so-called second return of Jesus.

Because the futurist view believes that the book of Revelation is a chronological account of future events, Revelation chapters 2 and 3 cannot refer to the so-called Church period, because chronologically it must come before and not after the so-called second return of Christ (1:7).

### The correct explanation.

There will be only one second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the history of this present world and it will be very visible and very audible. Because everyone will be resurrected at that time, everyone who ever lived will see him coming on the clouds (John 5:28-29; 6:40). Especially all non-believers (Jews and Gentiles) will mourn, because the time of grace had passed and their final judgement had arrived.

### **1:10 The futurist view about 'the Lord's day'.**

The Lord's day is 'the day of the Lord', the final 'day' in this present age, which lasts a very long period of time (at least 1000 years, cf. 2 Peter 3:8). The day of the Lord would include the future tribulation period of 7 years, the future second return of Christ, the future millennial kingdom of 1000 years and the events that lead up to the new heaven and new earth<sup>7</sup>.

The futurists argue that John was projected by the Spirit across the centuries into 'the day of the Lord', the eschatological last day, which according to them lasts 1007 years! The Spirit had visualised to him the things that shall come to pass during that whole period of time.

### Critique.

Only a confirmed futurist, unschooled in the original languages, will attempt to equate the Lord's day<sup>8</sup>, the first day of the week (the Sunday), with the day of the Lord, the eschatological last day of this present universe. These words simply cannot be translated to mean that John was transported into the future into the day of the Lord in the end time. Moreover, such a translation would not agree with the contents of the book of Revelation, because John receives insight not only in the events of the last day, but also insight in the course of world history throughout the ages until the last day.

The day of the Lord in the Old and the New Testaments refers to a time *after* Elijah has turned the hearts of people (Malachi 4:4-5; Matthew 17:10-13) and *after* the distress of the great tribulation under the final antichrist (Matthew 24:29-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). It refers to the one and only second coming of Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:2,4; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2), to the day of the final battle *after* the symbolic 1000 years and before the new heaven and new earth (Ezekiel 30:3; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Zechariah 14:1-21; Revelation 16:14-16; 20:7-9), to the day of the resurrection of the dead (John 6:39; 11:24), to the day of the final judgement (Zephaniah 1:18; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 5:5) and to the day of the final renewal of the earth and universe (Joel 2:31, Matthew 24:29-31; 2 Peter 3:7,10)! The day of the Lord is nicely summarised in 2 Peter 3:7-13!

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<sup>6</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 6

<sup>7</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 8-9

<sup>8</sup> The Lord's day (εν τη κυριακη ημερα) and the day of the Lord (ημερα κυριου)

The expression ‘with the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day’ in 2 Peter 3:8 refers to the long period before the day of the Lord, during which people have to wait patiently for the second coming that was promised (2 Peter 3:3-13).

#### The correct explanation.

The Lord’s day is the first day of the week (the Sunday), the day on which Christians come together to celebrate the resurrection of their Lord Jesus Christ and the completion of his work of salvation (cf. Acts 20:7).

#### **1:13 The futurist view about the Son of Man.**

The Son of Man is Jesus Christ as Judge at the beginning of the tribulation period.

The futurist or dispensational view separates the offices of Jesus Christ. According to them, Jesus was *the Prophet* when he was on earth between his first coming and his ascension to heaven. He will be *the Priest* during the Church period up to the removal of the Church from the earth (the rapture). He will be *the Judge* during the tribulation period between Christ’s so-called future first return (the coming, the rapture) and Christ’s so-called future second return (the revelation). He will be *the King* only during the future millennial kingdom from his future second return up to the renewal of the earth.

Futurists argue that although Jesus was clothed in a high priestly robe, there was no mitre on his head. Therefore John does not see Jesus as a Priest, but more as a Judge. This proves that John’s vision is of Christ as he shall appear *after* his high priestly work is finished and *before* he assumes his kingly office. The high priest was girded around the waist, but Jesus is girded around shoulder and breast, the insignia of the magisterial office.

Jesus speaks of lampstands and stars, which belong to the night. Thus we are living in the night of this dispensation.

The sharp double-edged sword is not the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) or the Word of God (Hebrews 4:12), but the sword of justice used at judgement (19:11-15). This is further proof that this vision is of Christ as he will appear in the day of the Lord.<sup>9</sup>

#### Critique.

The offices of Jesus cannot be separated and are not separated in the Bible. He is the Prophet for ever that keeps on speaking the last word (Hebrews 1:1-2) and to whom people must listen as a Prophet even after he has ascended to heaven (Acts 3:22-24). He is the High Priest for ever on the basis of his resurrection and indestructible life and he prays for Christians throughout the whole New Testament period, including during periods of tribulation (Hebrews 7:15-25; Revelation 8:3-5). He is the Judge throughout the whole New Testament period that judges slander and grumbling (James 4:12; 5:9) and that sounds his trumpets of warning judgement (chapter 8 and 9). He is the King for ever from his enthronement at his first coming and for ever (1:5; 17:14; 19:16; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44; 1 Chronicles 7:14; 2 Peter 1:11).

The priests in the Old Testament wore a tunic with a sash tied around their chest and not their waist. In Revelation chapter 1 Jesus wears the symbols of the High Priest-Judge-King. He never stops being the Prophet, Priest and King!

Already during the Old Testament the lampstand was a symbol of God’s people as the light of the world (cf. Matthew 5:14-16). Only when it stops to give light will it be removed (2:5).

If Revelation chapter 1 refers to Christ as Judge after the so-called removal of the Church from the earth, then either Revelation chapter 2 and 3 do NOT represent the Church in the present time or the chronological scheme of the futurist view is completely inconsistent! Moreover Jesus is acting as the Judge of his Church when he rebukes them for their sin, warns them to repent and threatens to remove their lampstand if they refuse to repent in his letters to all the congregations.

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<sup>9</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 9-11

### The correct explanation.

The Son of Man is Jesus Christ as the Prophet, the High priest, the King and the Judge throughout the whole New Testament period. He is present to purge the congregations on earth and to punish all those who are persecuting his people. He has come to fight against false teachers and preachers in the Church (2:16) and against the wicked and persecuting powers in the world (19:15; cf. 8:5f).

### **1:19 The futurist view about ‘the things that will take place later’.**

Revelation 1:19 suggest a division of the book of Revelation into three chronological sections.<sup>10</sup>

- the things that happened *in the past* (1:10-20)
- and the things that happen *in the present* (2:1 – 3:22)
- and the things that will happen *in the future* (4:1 – 22:5).

The futurist view regards the greatest part of the book of Revelation to be predictions about future history.

### Critique.

The following is the correct translation: “Write, therefore, what you have seen, (literally) *that is*, the things that are and the things that are about to happen after these things”.

The first sentence: “Write, therefore, what you have seen” does not speak about events that have happened in the past, but of the things that have just been revealed to John! This includes two categories: things that are already a present reality and things that are about to happen from John’s lifetime onwards. Jesus only completed his revelation to John in chapter 22. John must record and in fact recorded all 22 chapters of the book of Revelation. The last chapter repeated the statements of the first chapter: that these things must soon take place (1:1; 22:6), the time is near (1:3; 22:10).

The first connective word: “and” in the original language can have two meanings: Here it does not mean ‘and’ (addition), but rather ‘that is’ (explicative). “The things that are” is a reference to things that are already a reality like the presence of Christ amidst the congregations and the conditions of the seven historical congregations in Asia Minor. Revelation 2:7 points out that the conditions of these historical congregations would recur again and again. The Spirit continues to speak to the congregations and their recurring conditions throughout the whole New Testament period.

The second sentence: “and the things that are about to happen after these things” does not refer to things that can be pushed back to a distant future and that have no relevance to the seven historical congregations and all subsequent congregations in history. Since the time of the apostle John these things are happening and they will happen again and again until Christ’s second coming.

What has been revealed in Revelation 4:1 to 22:5 is clearly not chronological, because it speaks several times about the Christ’s first coming, the long New Testament period, the short period of tribulation just before Christ’s second coming and the final judgement at Christ’s second coming.

### The correct explanation.

Revelation 1:19 speaks of the things which Christ had just revealed to John and which includes two categories:

- (that is:) the things that are already a present reality (like Christ amidst the congregations and the condition of the seven historical congregations)
- (and that is:) the things that are about to happen ‘soon’ (like the proclamation of the gospel in the whole world, the slaughtering and oppressing of Christians, the onslaught of demons on the world, the destruction caused by wars in the world, the warning judgements of God and eventually the great tribulation and the final judgement).

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<sup>10</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 13-16

## CHAPTER 2

### **2:1 The historicist-futurist view about the congregation of Ephesus.**<sup>11</sup>

This view regards the congregation of Ephesus as a future prophecy about the backslidden Church in Church history (A.D. 70 – 170). This view argues as follows:

The Nicolaitans (2:6) were not a sect, but a party inside the Church who were trying to establish a priestly order modelling the Church after the Old Testament order of priests, Levites and common people. The word ‘Nicolaitan’ is derived from nico (to conquer, overthrow) and laos (the *lay* people). They conclude that a holy order of men consisting of the clergy: the bishops, archbishops, cardinals and the pope (the Roman Catholic Church) had come into existence and that this separation of clergy and laity is something God hates.

#### Critique.

The Nicolaitans are described not in terms of the meaning of the word ‘Nicolaus’, but in terms of their beliefs and behaviour!

There is absolute no allusion to a hierarchical Church system which displaced the priesthood of the believer in the New Testament or in the book of Revelation! The hierarchical church system only began to appear during the second and third centuries A.D. This dispensational view is not an explanation of the Bible, but pure speculation and must be rejected as unbiblical.

### **2:8 The historicist-futurist view about the congregation of Smyrna.**<sup>12</sup>

This view regards the congregation of Smyrna as a future prophecy about the persecuted Church in Church history (A.D. 170 - 312). Caesar Constantine turns the Church into the State Church. The Church lost its first love (2:4) and now the Lord is about to chastise it in order to cause it to return to him. According to them the suffering of 10 days (2:10) is doubtless a prophetic reference to the Ten Great Persecutions under the Roman Emperors, beginning with Nero in A.D. 64 and ending with Diocletian in A.D. 312. Seven of these persecutions occurred in this ‘Smyrna Period’ of Church history. Or it may refer to the 10 years of the last and fiercest persecution under Diocletian.

#### Critique.

The ninth Christian persecution was under Decius (A.D. 250-251 and the tenth Christian persecution was under Diocletian between A.D. 303-305, when Christians were persecuted throughout the whole Roman Empire. There have been persecutions of Christians throughout the New Testament period up till today. It is therefore completely arbitrary to regard the ‘ten days’ as referring to the ten Christian persecutions during the Roman Empire. Such kind of so-called ‘literal interpretation’ is completely opposed to Christ’s literal reference to the historic congregation of Smyrna that existed during the first century A.D. and not during the fourth century A.D.!

### **2:12 The historicist-futurist view about the congregation of Pergamum.**<sup>13</sup>

This view regards the congregation of Pergamum as a future prophecy about the licentious Church in Church history (A.D. 312 - 606). Larkin says that Boniface III was crowned Universal Bishop (pope).

Where Satan has his throne (2:13). Larkin maintains that when Attalus III, the priest-king of the Chaldean Hierarchy, fled before the conquering Persians to Pergamum and settled there, Satan shifted his capital from Babylon to Pergamum. At first he persecuted the followers of Christ and Antipas was one of the martyrs. But soon he changed his tactics and began to exalt the Church. Through the emperor Constantine Satan united the Church and the State and offered all kinds of inducements for worldly people to come into the Church. Constantine’s motive was more political than religious, wishing to unite his Christian and pagan subjects into one people and so consolidate his empire. This resulted in two false doctrines creeping into the Church:

The teaching of Balaam (2:14). In Numbers chapter 22 to 25, the Lord did not permit Balaam to curse Israel. Balaam then suggested to Balak to invite the Israelites to the licentious feasts of Baal-Peor, and thus cause

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<sup>11</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 20

<sup>12</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 21

<sup>13</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 22-23

Israel to fall into a snare of sexual immorality with the daughters of Moab. Larkin interprets: Pergamum means ‘marriage’ (intensive particle + marriage) and when the Church entered into ‘a marriage with the State’ it was guilty of spiritual immorality or the teaching of Balaam. The Balaam method of Constantine was to give to the bishops of the Church a number of imposing buildings called Basilicas to change into church buildings and he gave lavish gifts to decorate them. He also supplied superb vestments for the clergy, and soon the bishop found himself clad in costly vestments, seated on a lofty throne in the apse of the Basilica, with a marble altar on a lower level than himself. A sensuous form of worship was introduced, the character of preaching was changed, the great pagan festivals were adopted in order to attract pagans into the Church (Christmas was originally the Winter Solstice festival on 21<sup>st</sup> December – the shortest day of year – but as the days began to lengthen on 25<sup>th</sup> December, it was regarded as the birthday of the Sun-god, celebrated with the great games of circus in Rome (cf. Malachi 4:2).

The teaching of the Nicolaitans (2:15). During the First Great Council of the Church at Nicea in A.D. 325, the laymen still outnumbered the bishops 5 to 1. Nevertheless, it was a stormy council, full of intrigue and political methods. The clergy was supreme over the laity and thus the doctrine of the Nicolaitans had secured a permanent foothold.

#### Critique.

The teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans was to conquer believers by inviting them to make compromises with the heathen. The above interpretations are not explanations of the Bible, but pure speculation and moreover a loveless criticism of a great part of the Christian Church in history, including some of the Christian Counsels. This view must be rejected as unbiblical!

#### **2:18 The historicist-futurist view about the congregation of Thyatira.**<sup>14</sup>

This view regards the congregation of Thyatira as a future prophecy about the lax Church in Church history (A.D. 606 – 1520).

Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess (2:20). According to this view Jezebel *typified* the Papal System, whether she was a real person (cf. 1 Kings 16:29-33) or not. When the Papal Church introduced images and pictures into its congregations for the people to bow down to, it became idolatrous. And when it set up its claim that the teaching of the Church was superior to the Bible, it assumed the role of prophetess. A careful study of the Papal System from A.D. 606 to 1520, with its institution of the sacrifice of the mass and other pagan rites, reveals in it the sway of Jezebelism. This period is also called Jezebelistic Persecution as seen in the wars of the Crusades and the rise of the Inquisition.

The overcomers will rule the nations with an iron sceptre (2:26-27). According to this view this promise is *not to the Church as a whole*, but only to the overcomers of the Thyatiran Church Period. They shall hold some prominent ruling power with Christ in the future millennial kingdom.

#### Critique.

The historicist-futurist or dispensational doctrine is that the characteristics of each Church Period continues in the subsequent Church Periods and consequently the Church becomes worse and worse. But why should only the bad characteristics of the Church continue and accumulate? Why not also the good characteristics, like standing firm in persecution, fighting heresy and entering open doors (cf. Revelation 22:11)? This view makes all kinds of arbitrary and contradictory statements that violate the teachings of the Bible. It is moreover a loveless criticism of a great part of the Christian Church in history. This view must be rejected as unbiblical!

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## CHAPTER 3

### **3:1 The historicist-futurist view about the congregation of Sardis.**<sup>15</sup>

This view regards the congregation of Sardis as a future prophecy about the dead Church in Church history (A.D. 1520 - 1750).

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<sup>14</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 24

<sup>15</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 25

A reputation of being alive, but being dead (3:1). According to this view it was a formalistic Church, given over to formal and ritualistic worship. ‘Sardis’ means the escaping one or those who come out. Therefore according to this view Sardis is an excellent *type* of the Reformation (!). This period begins about A.D. 1500, when the conditions in the Church dominated by the Pope became intolerable. Luther nailed his 95 Thesis on the door of the church in Wittenberg on 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1517 and the Reformation set in. But according to this view the Reformation was more a struggle for political liberty than a purely Christian or religious movement. The advantages were the spread of the Bible in one’s own language, the doctrine of justification by faith and more simple modes of worship. However, the negative side was the multiplication of sects and the bitter controversial contentions that followed. According to this view the spiritual state of the Church of the Reformation could be depicted as: “She had a reputation to live but was dead.” This view says that the reformers failed to recover the promise of the second coming of Christ and thus did not wait for his Son from heaven.

### Critique.

The meaning of the name ‘Sardis’ is not evident.

It is completely arbitrary to assign this congregation as a type of the Reformation! It is even an arrogant and loveless statement to describe the Reformation as mainly a political movement and a misleading lie to describe the Reformation as in fact ‘a Dead Church’. Scofield does not even give the Reformation a place in Church history!

The historicist-futurist or dispensational view minimises the effect of the Reformation in the history of Christianity, because dispensationalism is opposed to some of the main teachings in the Bible which the reformers revived!

Despite the evaluation of dispensationalists, the Reformation was anything but ‘dead’! The Reformation was the beginning of a great movement that put God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, grace, faith and good works done out of gratitude back into the centre of Christianity! It was a great movement that led to genuine biblical theology instead of modern denominational theology. It translated the Bible into many languages. It led to the priesthood of the ordinary believers. It was a great missionary movement that planted congregations in many nations of the world. And it re-introduced the view that every aspect of life should be brought under the lordship or kingdom of Christ! The Reformers certainly taught the second coming of Christ and the reality of the new heaven and new earth! The Reformation movement is still continuing today.

### **3:7 The historicist-futurist view about the congregation of Philadelphia.**<sup>16</sup>

This view regards the congregation of Philadelphia as a future prophecy about the favoured Church in Church history (A.D. 1750 to A.D. 1900).

Philadelphia (3:7) means brotherly love and according to this view characterises the charity and brotherly fellowship that dissipated the bitter personal animosities that characterised the theological disputants of the Sardis Period, and made possible the evangelistic and missionary labours of the past 150 years (until 1919).

The “little strength” (3:8) refers to the revivals of the dead Sardis Church, which began with the revivals of George Whitefield in A.D. 1739, followed by John Wesley, Charles Finney and Dwight Moody.

The words, “Placed before you an open door” (3:8), refer to the door which was opened when William Carey sailed in 1793 for India, where he found an open door for the proclamation of the gospel. Thereafter the Lord opened doors in all places on earth.

The Church will “be kept from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth” (3:10). According to this view this hour of trial must still be future and refers doubtless to the great tribulation just before the future second return of the Lord to set up his future millennial kingdom. This is additional proof for futurists in general to believe that the Church shall be caught out before the future tribulation period. This view emphasises that the characteristics of all these Church Periods continue on in the Church down to the end.

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<sup>16</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 26-27

### Critique.

By studying books on the history of Christianity<sup>17</sup> and the history of Christian missions<sup>18</sup> you will have facts that prove that there have been revivals towards the growth of new congregations in new countries and open doors for new missions from Christ's first coming up to the present time! To limit Church revivals and the missionary movement to the eighteenth and nineteenth century (the evangelical movement) is completely unwarranted!

The historicist-futurist or dispensational view creates a so-called future first return of Christ (the parousia, the rapture or the removal of the Church from the earth) in order 'to prove' the doctrine that the Church would *not* go through the tribulation period or at least the great tribulation, in which great persecution is expected. However, when their doctrine of 'the two second comings' (returns) of Christ fails the test of the Bible, then also their doctrine that the Church will not go through the great tribulation fails the test of the Bible!

The historicist-futurist or dispensational view maintains the following three things:

- Church History is divided into seven distinct Church Periods (dispensations), each with its distinct characteristics.
- The evil characteristics of each Church Period continue and thus cause the Church to grow from bad to worse.
- The promises to each Church Period also continue, otherwise the promise to the congregation of Philadelphia that she would *not* pass through the future tribulation period would not and could not become true. Thus, the historicist-futurist or dispensational view contradicts itself!

Nevertheless, Revelation 3:10 does not say that Christ will keep the Church *away from* the great tribulation (as the futurist view interprets), but that Christ would *keep (protect)* the Church throughout the great tribulation and finally *save* the Church from it! The Church will certainly go through the great tribulation (cf. Matthew 24:21-25; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12).

### **3:14 The historicist-futurist view about the congregation of Laodicea.**<sup>19</sup>

This view regards the congregation of Laodicea as a future prophecy about the lukewarm Church in Church history (A.D. 1900 to the rapture).

The congregations are neither cold nor hot (3:15). According to this view, the Christian congregations today are largely in this lukewarm condition. There is very little of warm-hearted spirituality. There is much going on in them, but it is largely mechanical and of a social character. Committees, societies, clubs are multiplied, but an absence of spiritual heat. Revival meetings are held, but in stead of waiting on the Lord for power, evangelists and paid singers are hired and soul winning is made a business.

According to this view the Church in the present period is self-deceived and burdened with wealth. Christ has been excluded from the Church and stands outside the Church. It is possible for the Christian Church to be outwardly prosperous and yet be totally unaware that Christ is not in its midst.

### Critique.

The statement that the present day congregations are largely like the congregation of Laodicea is a loveless judgement. If some modern writer believes that it is nevertheless true in his own country, it certainly is not true in other countries of the world. Even in the first century it was not true that all the congregations were lukewarm!

### **Rejection of the historicist-futurist or dispensational view about the seven congregations.**

The historicist-futurist or dispensational view of the Church is that it must be prophetic.

It first maintains that the Old Testament prophets knew nothing about the Church Period. Then it maintain that "the things which are" (which includes chapters two and three about the seven congregations) "*must be* a description or prophetic outline of the spiritual history of the Church from A.D. 96 down to the taking out of

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<sup>17</sup> A history of Christianity, Kenneth Scott Latourette, 1954

<sup>18</sup> A history of Christian Missions, Stephen Neill, 1964

<sup>19</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 27-29

the Church (the rapture), or else we have no prophetic view of the Church during that period, for she disappears from the earth at the close of chapter three, and is not seen again until she reappears with her Lord in chapter nineteen.”<sup>20</sup>

#### Critique.

Christians do not need a prophetic fore-view of Church history. The Church already existed during the Old Testament (Judges 20:2; Psalm 22:22; 2 Chronicles 29:28). It is the Community of God’s people and exists in every age!

The historicist-futurist or dispensational view of the history of the Church is divided into seven parts:<sup>21</sup>

- Ephesus period: the backslidden Church (A.D. 100 to about A.D. 170).
- Smyrna period: the persecuted Church (to about A.D. 300, to Caesar Constantine, A.D. 312).
- Pergamum period: the licentious Church (to about A.D. 600, to Boniface III, 606).
- Thyatira period: the lax Church – Catholicism, papacy, dark ages (to about A.D. 1500, to Reformation, A.D. 1520).
- Sardis period: the dead Church – Protestant denominations (to about A.D. 1750).
- Philadelphia period: the favoured Church – Evangelical denominations (to about A.D. 1900).
- Laodicea period: the modern lukewarm Church (to the Rapture)

#### Critique.

By assigning Revelation chapter 1 to 3 to the Church and chapter 4 to 19 to Israel (Jews) this view destroys *the unity* of the book of Revelation and divides *the book of Revelation* into ‘a book of the Church’ and ‘a book of the Kingdom (Israel)’. This view is based on their view of dividing the whole Bible into a book of the Kingdom (Israel)(consisting of the whole Old Testament, the four Gospels and Revelation chapters 4 to 22) and a book of the Church (consisting of the book of Acts and all the letters in the New Testament). The historicist-futurist or dispensational view goes even further and divides the whole Bible in seven so-called dispensations.

Even the futurist Tenney rejects the historicist-futurist view dividing Church History in seven consecutive periods: He says: “Many futurists interpret Revelation 1:9 to 3:22 as the historicists do the rest of the book. For the futurists the letters to the churches (congregations) represent successive periods of Church history. The seven successive periods of Church history is defined as follows:

- Ephesus is an apostolic congregation and represents the Church in the apostolic era.
- Smyrna is a martyr congregation and represents the Church in the period of persecutions.
- Pergamum is a worldly congregation and represents the Church in the period of State-Christianity since Constantine.
- Thyatira is an apostate congregation and represents the Roman Catholic Church of the popes.
- Sardis is a congregation of the Reformation and represents the Church in the 16-18<sup>th</sup> century.
- Philadelphia is a live congregation and represents the Church in the 18-19<sup>th</sup> century, during the spiritual awakening under pietism, the missionary movement and the rise of sectarian groups.
- Laodicea is a lukewarm congregation and represents the Church of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the last days.”

Tenney continues to say, “Although certain broad parallels with the successive epochs of Church History may be drawn, the letters to the seven churches (congregations) do not call for such an alignment of periods, but seem to depict naturally *seven contemporaneous churches (congregations)* of Asia Minor whose internal affairs were singularly well known to the writer. Their significance did not cease with the end of the apostolic age, for they are seven different types of churches (congregations) that may be found in any period of the world’s history since Pentecost. If they are understood as trends that divide the Church Age horizontally (trends in seven *parallel* Church histories) rather than as eras that divide it vertically (trends in seven *consecutive* Church histories), fewer difficulties will be encountered in interpreting them.”<sup>22</sup>

There is not a single scrap of evidence in the Bible that corroborates this thoroughly arbitrary method of cutting up the history of the Church and assigning the resulting pieces to the respective letters of Revelation chapter 2 and 3. The historicist-futurist or dispensational view of cutting up Revelation chapter 2 and 3 into

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<sup>20</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 18

<sup>21</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 19

<sup>22</sup> Tenney p. 141

seven historical periods is based on their view of cutting up the whole Bible into seven historical periods, called 'dispensations'. Larkin himself criticises the view that assigns the seven bowl judgements to specific historical events in the past by saying, "This is supposition and not exposition".<sup>23</sup> But Larkin is doing the same thing with the seven lampstands!

The historicist-futurist or dispensational view of the messages to the congregations is that it was hidden.

"The messages to the seven churches (congregations) were hidden to the early Church, because time was required for Church history to develop and be written, so a comparison could be made to reveal the correspondence." This view poses that only at the end of Church history could the Church discern the fact that the seven congregations represented seven Church Periods (dispensations) and that the time for the imminent coming of Christ (the rapture) has arrived! "If it had been clearly revealed that the seven churches (congregations) stood for seven Church Periods that would have to elapse before Christ could come back, the incentive to watch would have been absent."<sup>24</sup>

Critique.

There is also no evidence in the Bible that the messages contained in the seven letters in the book of Revelation were 'hidden' to the congregations in the first century. If Christ accurately described the conditions of seven simultaneous historical congregations within the first century, why could these same or similar characteristics not recur simultaneously in any later century?

By assigning the modern Church history to the seventh Laodicean Period of Church history, futurists in general want to heighten the expectation of 'the imminent rapture of the Church'. This causes many Christians rather to be occupied with the rapture instead of doing the Master's will and spread the gospel to the nations (Matthew 24:14,42-50).

The historicist-futurist or dispensational view of history is that history increasingly becomes worse.

The distinctive characteristics of each Church period "does not disappear with that period but continues on down through the next period, and so on until the end, thus increasing the imperfections of the visible Church, until it ends" in the great apostasy.<sup>25</sup> The messages to the seven congregations describe Church history in seven periods (dispensations) and prove the continual decline and degeneration of the Church. Instead of increasing in spiritual and world converting power, it becomes lukewarm, faithless, and Christless.

Critique.

Dispensationalists and most futurists have a *pessimistic view* of the Church! They maintain that the Church is in continual decline and degeneration. They believe that every so-called 'dispensation' ends in a great failure! Thus, also 'the Church-dispensation' must end in a great failure in the so-called apostate Church!

In contrast to this view, the New Testament and the book of Revelation have an *optimistic view* of the Church! The gates of hell cannot and will not overcome the Church that Jesus Christ himself is building (Matthew 16:18)! The Church will make disciples in all the nations (Matthew 28:19). The Church will proclaim the gospel to all the nations and then only will the end come (Matthew 24:14)! Christ closes every one of the seven letters with a promise to all Christians who conquer together with him! Christ goes out as Conqueror and to conquer (6:1-2). In the spiritual wars Christ and his chosen, called and faithful followers will conquer all antichrists, all false prophets and all prostitutes (Babylons) in world history (17:14). Christians are more than conquerors through Christ (Romans 8:37). And finally Christ will return as Conqueror (19:11-21).

The historicist-futurist or dispensational view of history is that Israel is not replaced by the Church.

Larkin misuses Romans 11:15-27 to teach a false teaching. He says that Paul shows how the natural branches of the Good Olive Tree (Israel) were broken off because of *unbelief*, so that the branches of the Wild Olive Tree (the Church) might be grafted in. In turn, the Wild Olive branches (the Church) would be displaced because of *unbelief*, so that the natural branches of the Good Olive Tree (Israel) might be grafted back again. Thus he maintains that Paul shows that the Church does not take the place of Israel permanently, but simply

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<sup>23</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 140

<sup>24</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 18

<sup>25</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 18

fills the 'Gap' between Israel's casting off and Israel's restoration to divine favour. As the Laodicean Period closes the Church Age, the Church disappears at the end of Revelation chapter three, and Israel comes again into view (between Revelation chapter 4:1 and 19:7)."<sup>26</sup>

### Critique.

Romans 11:15-27 certainly does not prove, teach or even allude to the Church being an interim phenomenon (a prophetic 'gap') in God's plan with Israel! No where does the Bible teach or even allude to the (secret) removal (the so-called rapture) of the Church from the earth!

The real purpose of the historicist-futurist or dispensational view by making the seven congregations represent the so-called interim Church period is to assign Revelation chapter 4 to 19 exclusively to Israel and the Jews! It wants to get the Church out of the way, in order to find a framework in which to hang all the alleged unfulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament period allegedly made only to the nation of Israel. The historicist-futurist or dispensational view maintains that the Old Testament knows nothing of the Church Age and calls this 'the prophetic gap'. This view that divides God's salvation history into a salvation plan for Gentiles at the present time and another salvation plan for Jews in the future only divides the Bible into unrelated pieces and divides Christians among one another! Futurists in general accuse other Christians of *replacing* Israel with the Church (which they don't). But the futurist view certainly *replaces* the Church with Israel!

The prophecies in the Old Testament have been fulfilled during Christ's first coming (Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:27,44-45; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1), are presently being fulfilled in God's New Testament people (Romans 9:24-29; 10:16-21; 11:1-10) and will be completely fulfilled when the full number of saved Gentiles and Jews will simultaneously have come in (Romans 11:25-26). All God's promises, including God's promises in the Old Testament, are 'Yes' and 'Amen' to all Christians, whether they are Jews or Gentiles (2 Corinthians 1:20)!

The Bible knows only one revelation of God (Hebrews 1:1-2), one Bible (2 Timothy 3:16), one salvation plan for both Jew and Gentile (Romans 1:16; 10:12-13), one period of grace and salvation for both Jew and Gentile and that is now (Luke 19:10; John 1:17; Romans 11:30-32; 2 Corinthians 6:2), one God, one faith, and one people of God (John 10:16; Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6; 4:4-5; 1 Peter 2:9-10)!

### The correct explanation.

The messages to the seven congregations are Christ's messages to all the congregations in the world and in world history. They teach recurring positive conditions in congregations, which Christ commends, and recurring negative conditions in congregations, which Christ condemns. All the conditions described in the seven letters actually existed simultaneously in the time just after Christ's first coming. All these conditions have existed simultaneously in different combinations and at different times in all congregations throughout the centuries and will continue to exist simultaneously up to Christ's second coming. Christ's purpose is to continually call the congregations to be lampstands, the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

The seven letters do not represent Seven Periods (dispensations) of Church history, nor are we living in the so-called last period of Church history as if the second coming is therefore 'imminent'. No one can predict whether Christ's second coming will take place at any moment or whether it is still a long time away. Each individual has just one lifetime to live before Christ's second coming and therefore must make most of the given opportunities! For every human being, the end is very close by, because the end of his life on this earth is very close by!

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## **CHAPTER 4**

### **4:1 The futurist view about the open door.**

The open door is literally an open door into heaven through which John and the whole Church is taken up into heaven. The rapture of John is *a type* of the so-called rapture of the Church (the removal of the Church from the earth).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 29

The futurist pre-tribulation pre-millennial view<sup>28</sup> believes that the so-called removal of the Church from the earth (the rapture) would take place *before* the beginning of the future tribulation period. This view uses the following arguments to prove their point:

- In Revelation 4:1 John was told to come up into heaven. This so-called rapture of John is a *type* of the so-called rapture of the Church.
  - The transfiguration of Christ (Matthew 17:1-9) is a *type* of Christ's future first return, in which Moses is a *type* of the resurrected saints (Christians that have died) and Elijah is a *type* of the translated saints (Christians who will still be alive at Christ's future first return).
  - 'Seeing' the Son of Man coming into his kingdom (Matthew 16:28) is literally fulfilled when John 'saw' this heavenly vision in Revelation 4:1.
  - 'Remaining alive' until Christ returns (John 21:22) is literally fulfilled in John's heavenly vision here.
  - The fact that the sevenfold Spirit is present in heaven before the throne (4:5) *proves* that the whole Church has been removed from the earth (raptured) at this point in the book of Revelation. When the Holy Spirit returns to heaven he will take the whole Church with him. Therefore the Church will not pass through the future tribulation period.
- See also Revelation 7:14, the great multitude coming out of 'the great tribulation'.

### Critique.

*The futurist view.* The supporters of the futurist view are divided about the issue when the Church would be removed (when the rapture would take place).

*The futurist pre-tribulation pre-millennial view* believes that the so-called removal of the Church (the rapture) would take place before the beginning of the future tribulation period (at Revelation 4:1).

*The futurist mid-tribulation pre-millennial view*<sup>29</sup> differs and believes that the so-called removal of the Church would take place in the middle of the future tribulation period (between Revelation 6:11 and 6:12).

*And the futurist post-tribulation pre-millennial view*<sup>30</sup> believes that the so-called removal of the Church would take place at the end of the future tribulation period just before the beginning of the so-called future millennial kingdom (14:14-16).

All three futurist views are mere opinions or assumptions that cannot be proved from Scripture!

*The Biblical view.* What the Bible teaches about Christians being caught up into the clouds to meet Christ at his second coming in the air<sup>31</sup> (1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:2) is the following: At the resurrection of all the dead (John 5:28-29), only the Christians (Matthew 24:40a,41a) will be caught up into the clouds to meet and welcome Christ before they return with him to the new earth. The word 'meet' is used in Matthew and Acts of a party or delegation that goes out of the city to meet an important guest and then return with him to the city (Matthew 25:6,10; Acts 28:15). At the meeting place they will welcome him and marvel at him (2 Thessalonians 1:10). On the same last day, after this great welcome, the unbelievers and wicked people would be driven before Christ's judgement throne and all Christians and non-Christians will be judged in the final judgement (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-15). After the final judgement Christ and all those who believed in him (the New Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb) will return to the earth that has been renewed at the same time as the final judgement (Revelation 21:1-2,9-10).

*The Bible has no types for the rapture.* When the futurist view regards Revelation 4:1 as a *type* (a symbol) it deviates from its *literal* exegesis. In Revelation 4:1 John is not literally caught up to heaven never to return to the earth, but is shown a vision about heaven.

Also the transfiguration of Jesus did not function as a *type*. It was a preparation for Jesus to face his coming suffering and death by means of the glory that would follow (Hebrews 12:2) and was an encouragement for the disciples, confirming their faith in Christ as the Messiah (Matthew 16:16; 2 Peter 1:16-18). Moses and Elijah represented the Law and Prophets, both of which Jesus had come to fulfil (Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:27,44). They are definitely not *types* of the rapture!

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<sup>27</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 33-34

<sup>28</sup> Feinberg, The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation? 1984. Also Scofield, Larkin, Walfoord and many others.

<sup>29</sup> Archer, The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation? 1984. Also Tenney.

<sup>30</sup> Moo, The Rapture: Pre-, Mid-, or Post-Tribulation? 1984

<sup>31</sup> ἀρπαγησόμεθα > ἀρπάζω (vifp) ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπαντήσιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς αέρα καὶ οὕτω πάντοτε σὺν κυρίῳ ἐσομεθα (vifm)

*Matthew 16:27-28 refers to the whole New Testament period from Christ's resurrection to Christ's second coming as a unit.* In verse 27 he refers to the end of this period and in verse 28 to the beginning of this period. Some of his listeners would be witnesses of his resurrection and ascension and of his reign as King in the hearts and lives of people by the outpouring of his Spirit!

*Realised eschatology and future eschatology.* In John 21:22-23 Jesus emphasises that it is not for Peter or John to know how long they would live and when they would die. Jesus had already introduced *realised eschatology* (his presence with them through the Spirit, John 14:18-23; Matthew 28:20) as well as *future eschatology* (his coming to take them to be with him when they die, John 14:3). However, a rumour had spread that John would not die before Jesus returned. Jesus made no statement about when he would return, but said that his return is not a matter for people to know (Acts 1:6-7).

*The Bible does not teach the removal of the Holy Spirit from the earth.* This includes 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7. 'That which restrains' and 'he who restrains' the lawless one (the antichrist) is *law-and-order* and *those who enforce law and order* on earth. Moreover the sevenfold Spirit is already seen before the throne when Christ wrote his letters to the congregations (1:4; 3:1)! God's Spirit is present everywhere, in heaven and on earth (Psalm 139:7-10; John 14:16-17).

*The reason why many Christians hold to the futurist view.* Probably the most important reason why the futurist view is so popular among some Christians is that it believes that Christians would not pass through the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21-25)! Many people want salvation without suffering; they want the crown without the cross (Luke 9:23)! They believe in cheap grace: salvation without cost!

#### The correct explanation.

The open door is *a symbol* of God authorising John to see the revelation of the realities in heaven and to hear the revelation of God's plan for salvation and judgement!

#### **4:1 The futurist view about the words 'what must take place after this' (4:1).**

'What must take place afterwards' refers to events after the removal of the Church (the rapture). These events only start at the rapture of the Church after a very long delay.

The futurist view maintains that all the so-called unfulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament must be fulfilled somewhere in the chronology of the book of Revelation, because according to the futurist view they are not fulfilled anywhere else in the Bible! Examples of such prophecies are: all the Jews will return to Israel, the land of Israel will be restored to biblical proportions, the physical renewal of the land, the political renewal of the kingdom, the spiritual renewal of rebuilding the temple and restoring the temple worship and living in peace, etc. So futurists conclude that because the Church is not mentioned between Revelation 3:22 and 19:7 (the bride), Revelation chapters 4 to 19 must deal with *Jewish* Israel and not with the *Christian* Church. According to the futurist view the book of Revelation is a prophetic Book and reveals the future. It is the summing up and consummation of all prophecy. In it all unfulfilled prophecy in the Bible is fulfilled.<sup>32</sup>

#### Critique.

*Things that soon must take place.* When Jesus Christ revealed the book of Revelation to John in the 1<sup>st</sup> century A.D. the congregations already existed and the Christians read the book of Revelation! When they read in the beginning of the book, 'what must soon take place' (1:1) and 'take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near' (1:3), and when they read in the end of the book 'the things that soon must take place' (22:6), they could only understand the words: 'what must take place after this' to mean after this revelation had been given to John and NOT after a so-called very distant event as 'the removal of the Church'!

The readers of the book of Revelation throughout all the centuries would be involved in the events symbolised in the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation is a book with a message for all Christians in all generations!

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<sup>32</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 2

The futurist view admits that ‘what must take place after this’ cannot be postponed indefinitely, because then that future would never come!<sup>33</sup> Therefore the futurist view announces without any Scriptural warrant that that future would arrive at ‘the removal of the Church’!

*Not a postponement, but a continuance and enlargement.* Jesus taught at his first coming that he came, not to postpone the Law (for example about the temple) and the prophecies (for example about Israel), but to fulfil the Law and prophecies of the Prophets (Matthew 5:17; Luke 24:26-27,44-45). The apostle Paul taught that from Christ’s first coming onwards all God’s promises and prophecies made in the Bible (including those made to Israel during the Old Testament period) are meant for all God’s people, whether they are Jews or non-Jews (2 Corinthians 1:20; cf. Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6). Christ’s first coming did not bring a postponement in God’s dealings with his Old Testament people. He rather continued his dealings with them on a higher plane (cf. the first disciples and first congregations in Judea, Galilee and Samaria consisted mainly of Jewish believers, Acts 9:31) and enlarged his Old Testament people to include his New Testament people coming from all the nations in the world (Matthew 21:42-44; John 10:16; Matthew 28:19; Romans 1:16; 10:12; 11:25-26; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11; 1 Peter 2:9-10; Revelation 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 7:9; 21:3)!

*The Church in the book of Revelation.* After Revelation chapter 3 the Church is certainly referred to (Revelation 5:9-10, 6:10; 7:9; 8:3; 11:1,3; 12:6,10-17; 14:1,12; 15:3; 17:14; 18:4,20; 19:7-10; 20:4,6,9, 12,15; 21:2,9-10,12,23. Even the futurist Tenney acknowledges: “While it is undoubtedly true that the word ‘church’ does not occur in Revelation after 3:22, there is no sure proof that the Church is not to be identified with any of the groups mentioned in the context. There is no convincing reason why the seer’s being ‘in the Spirit’ and being called into heaven typifies the rapture of the Church any more than his being taken into the wilderness to view Babylon indicates that the Church is there in exile.”<sup>34</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

‘What must take place afterwards’ refers to events between Christ’s first coming and Christ’s second coming. These events start immediately after Christ’s revelation given to John (1:1,3; 4:1).

The message of the whole book of Revelation is meant for all Christians living in all the centuries between Christ’s first coming and Christ’s second coming.

#### **4:2 The futurist view about the throne.**

The throne is the throne of judgement and not the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16)<sup>35</sup>, because out of it proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices, that remind us of Mt. Sinai. “The throne is the source of judgement”<sup>36</sup>.

#### Critique.

*The futurist view* believes in several different final judgements taking place on different thrones at different places and different times. The futurist view concludes that because different words are used to describe the thrones, there must be different final judgements.<sup>37</sup>

- The judgement seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15) is according to futurists in heaven. The Christians would be judged there immediately after the *first* return of Jesus to remove the Church from the earth (the rapture). Christ would judge the Christians for the good and bad things they did in the body on earth. It is called ‘the judgement of reward’.

- Christ’s throne of heavenly glory (Matthew 25:31) is according to futurists on the earth. All the nations (with the exception of Israel) would be judged there immediately after the future second return of Jesus on the Mount of Olives. Christ would judge the nations for how they treated the Jews. It is called ‘the judgement of the nations’.

- The great white throne (Revelation 20:11) is according to futurists not on the earth. All the unbelievers and wicked people would be judged there at the end of the future millennial kingdom. It is called ‘the judgement of the wicked dead’.

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<sup>33</sup> Tenney, p. 72

<sup>34</sup> Tenney p. 141

<sup>35</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 35

<sup>36</sup> Tenney p. 171

<sup>37</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 38-39, 178, 194

*The Bible* believes only in one final judgement. Christ (Matthew 25:31-46, John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15) and the apostles (cf. 2 Peter 3:3-13) teach only *one* final judgement! The Judge will be Christ (John 5:22,27). The place of the judgement throne is not specified, probably in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17), when this present old earth and sky flee from Christ's presence (20:11), when the universe disappears with a roar and the elements of the earth are laid bare by fire (2 Peter 3:10). Thereafter the righteous will inherit the kingdom in its final phase (the new earth) and the wicked will be thrown into hell for everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:34,46).

#### The correct explanation.

The throne is God's one and only throne, from which he reigns, saves and judges. It is the centre of the universe at all times. God's throne is always where God is. And God is present everywhere (Psalm 139:6-12).

#### **4:4 The futurist view about the twenty-four elders.**

The twenty-four elders figuratively represent redeemed mankind, all the saints from both the Old Testament period and the New Testament period. Only they have been promised thrones (3:21; 20:4; cf. Matthew 19:28) and crowns (2:10; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:25-27; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 Peter 5:2-4). The futurist view uses three arguments.

- Because the unoccupied thrones in Daniel 7:9-10 are now occupied, the first physical resurrection (consisting of the Old Testament saints and the New Testament Church) must already have taken place.
- The futurist view chooses for the following translation of Revelation 5:9-10. The twenty-four elders sing about themselves, 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased us for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and we will reign on the earth.' The futurists argue that the twenty-four elders are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9) and part of their priestly duty in heaven is to present the prayers of the Jewish tribulation saints to God (5:8).
- "While the twenty-four elders are representatives of the Old and New Testament saints, they do not, as a whole, represent the Church, for the Church (the Bride) is composed only of the New Testament Saints. The Old Testament saints are merely 'the Friends of the Bridegroom'. The fact that John does not merely see twelve, but twenty-four elders is additional proof that the rapture of the Church must take place before the Tribulation."

#### Critique.

*Futurists and the number 24.* When the futurist view abandons the literal number 24 and adopts the figurative number 24, representing the uncountable number of the redeemed on earth, they depart from their literal method of interpretation.

If the futurist view maintains that the number 24 is the total number of redeemed saints after the removal of the Church, then no more Jews or Gentiles could be saved after Christ's so-called first return and this would contradict the belief of futurists! If the futurist view limits the number 24 to only the saints before the removal of the Church, the view is completely arbitrary.

*Relationship between the Old Testament believers and the New Testament believers.* Maintaining that the Old Testament believers are not a part of the New Testament Church is biblically unwarranted. The Old Testament community is called 'church' (ekklesia)<sup>38</sup> in Judges 20:2, Psalm 22:22 and 2 Chronicles 29:28. The gospel was preached to the Old Testament people and they were also saved by faith only (Galatians 2:6-9). The Old Testament prophets occupied themselves with understanding God's plan of salvation in the New Testament (1 Peter 1:10-12). Abraham is the father of Old Testament and New Testament believers (Romans 4:9-17). The Old Testament believers are together with New Testament believers with God in heaven (Matthew 22:29-32; Luke 16:22; Hebrews 11:10,16). The Old Testament believers will only be made perfect together with the New Testament believers (Hebrews 11:39-40)!

*The original text of Revelation 5:9-10.* In order to 'prove' that the elders are identical to the Church, the futurist view is forced to make use of the weakest text in the original Greek: 'made us', instead of the

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<sup>38</sup> ἐκκλησία

strongest support for the reading, ‘made them’.<sup>39</sup> In Revelation 5:8-10 the elders sing about the redeemed and not about themselves!

#### The correct explanation.

The twenty-four elders are not a symbol of the Church, but are heavenly beings that represent the Church of the Old and the New Testaments in heaven.<sup>40</sup> They are probably heavenly beings (cf. Hebrews 1:14) who represent the Church directly before God’s throne. Their function is to enhance the glory of God’s throne and his work as Creator (4:9-11) and Redeemer (5:9-10). The message of the twenty-four elders is that the whole Church (the result of God’s history of salvation) worships God as the God of creation and nature.

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## CHAPTER 5

### **5:1 The futurist view about the scroll sealed with seven seals.**

First futurist view. The scroll with seven seals is the title deed to the throne of David, to the land of Palestine and to the inheritance of the whole earth. This title deed is given to Christ only *after* the Church has been removed from the earth (the rapture).<sup>41</sup>

A title deed is the legal document that gives evidence of someone’s just claim on something and that recognises his right to that claim. According to the futurist view, by the fall, Adam (and his descendants, all humans) had lost the inheritance of the earth. The earth passed out of Adam’s hands into the possession of Satan. Satan became the possessor of this earth and the forfeited title deed passed into the hands of God. From the fall into sin (Genesis chapter 3) until the removal of the Church (the so-called rapture, Revelation 4:1) the throne of David, the land of Palestine and the whole earth are waiting to be redeemed, that is, they are waiting to be re-possessed by their rightful owner.

The kinsman redeemer (cf. Leviticus 25:23-28) is Jesus Christ. As Son of David he has the title to the throne of David. As Son of Abraham he has the title to the land of Palestine. As Son of Man he has the title to the earth and world. As Son of God he is the heir of all things. Jesus Christ receives the scroll and thus is given the right to redeem what had been lost. Through his seal judgements (chapter 6), trumpet judgements (chapters 8 and 9) and bowl judgements (chapters 15 and 16) (note: not through his atonement sacrifice) Christ would redeem the throne, the land and the earth. He would redeem everything that Adam had lost.

#### Critique.

*This earth has never been lost to Satan.* There is not a single reference or allusion in the Bible to the idea that Adam lost the earth, that Abraham or the Israelites lost the land of Palestine or that David lost the throne. There is no reference in the Bible that God lost the earth to Satan. There is no reference in the Bible about the title deed to this inheritance. The futurist view that Christ would reclaim the title deed of this earth only at his future first return grossly underestimates Christ’s accomplished work of salvation through his death and resurrection at his first coming! This futurist view is completely unbiblical and must be rejected!

God in Christ has always been the Creator, the Sustainer, the Possessor and the Controller of this earth. God is the Sovereign King from eternity to eternity (Psalm 9:7; 145:13; 146:10). As reward for his accomplished work of salvation by his death and resurrection at his first coming, Christ is crowned and enthroned at God’s right hand, is invested with all authority as the Ruler or King over the whole universe and as the Mediator through whom God governs the universe in the interest of his Church (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22; Hebrews 12:3)!

*Satan is not the inheritor and king of this earth.* The futurist view claims that this earth with all its kingdoms has been given to Satan (they refer to Luke 4:5-6); that Satan is the prince of the world (John 12:31; cf.

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<sup>39</sup> Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graeca, 1983

<sup>40</sup> Greijdanus p. 94; Hendriksen pp. 104-105; Groenewald p. 76

<sup>41</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 44-45. Originally J.A. Seiss, Lectures on the Apocalypse, Tenth Edition, Three volumes, New York, Charles C. Cook, 1909. He wrote that the scroll is the title deed of creation which had been forfeited because of sin and had reverted to its original giver. Christ as the redeemer of the human race has the authority to take over the charter of creation, which Adam and his descendants lost. Seiss holds that this act of redeeming the earth’s forfeited title is still future. This was a popular premillennial futurist commentary on the book of Revelation and perhaps the most influential.

Ephesians 2:2); and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). They claim that Satan is still the king of this present world until the end of the future tribulation period when Christ would come to bind Satan and establish the so-called future millennial kingdom.

But the Bible teaches that the LORD reigns forever (Psalm 93:1-2; 145:13; 146:10; 1 Timothy 6:15); he is the King of all the earth and reigns over the nations (Psalm 47:7-8). Jesus Christ teaches that Satan is a liar (John 8:44) and that Satan's claim in Luke 4:5-6 is false. Christ saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven and Satan is thus defeated, curtailed in his power (Luke 10:18). Matthew teaches that Jesus Christ bound Satan and is robbing Satan of his possessions (Matthew 12:28-30). Jesus claims that all power in the universe and on the earth has been given to him (Matthew 28:18). John teaches that Jesus Christ has driven the prince of the world out of his power that was able to keep the nations away from Christ and that Christ is now drawing people from all the nations to himself (John 12:31-32). He teaches that Christ came at his first coming with the purpose to destroy the evil work of Satan (1 John 3:8; cf. Hebrews 2:14-15). Paul teaches that the death and resurrection of Christ disarmed all evil powers and made a public spectacle of them (Colossians 2:15) and that God is now rescuing people from all nations from the dominion of darkness (Satan) and is bringing them into the kingdom of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:13)!

Satan still exercises a very powerful influence for evil over the lives of all those wicked people and spirits that acknowledge him as their master (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:18). But the Bible certainly does not prove that Satan is the ultimate owner and ruler of the nations, with the right and might to dispose of them and of their wealth as he pleases, so that Christ himself in this present period of time has to take a back seat to Satan and has to wait till the rapture of the Church before he can redeem the lost world! The contrary is true: During the Old Testament period, God and his Anointed are in control of the earth (Genesis 3:15; Psalm 2; Daniel 2:21; 4:17). During the New Testament period, God has given all authority and power to rule the earth to Christ (Matthew 11:27; 28:18; John 3:35; Ephesians 1:20-23; Revelation 1:5). If it is argued that some of these passages refer to the power given to Christ in his exaltation, the answer is that even during his humiliation Satan was able to do no more than Christ permitted him to do (Matthew 4:11; 12:28-29). Although Satan pictures himself as the rightful owner and ruler of the whole earth, he is a liar! Satan has NEVER been the possessor of this earth.

The seals are not merely preliminary judgements during the future tribulation period. When the seals are broken one by one, not simply judgements happen, but the most important events in human history happens! The events that happen are not simply preliminary judgements during the so-called future tribulation period in order that Christ can take possession of the lost inheritance and establish his so-called future millennial kingdom. They are crucial events used by Christ as King of his present kingdom on earth to conquer his people by salvation and to conquer his enemies by judgement. Moreover they are not simply events limited to the very short period of the great tribulation, but are events that span the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming! That is why the scroll is so full of writing!

The second futurist view. This is a contradictory view that has taken one element from the futurists and one element from the correct view.

Like the first view: The scroll with seven seals is God's will or testament that could only be opened by the heir and executor of the estate. In breaking the seals he avowed his rightful claim as heir and asserted his authority over the property. The opening of the sealed scroll would thus show that Christ was the heir of God, worthy to assume the rule over the universe by right of redemption and ready to exercise the authority necessary to reclaim for God the inheritance that had been usurped by Satan and his minions.

But also like the correct view: The scroll with seven seals represents the mystery of God's purpose for the world. In the beginning God had made the world and man for a purpose, and sin had blighted both. The world thus posed a problem: if sin were ignored, God's righteousness could be challenged; and if sin were summarily punished, man would be utterly doomed. In dealing with the situation God must have had a plan by which the world process could be brought to a consummation in which sin is removed while man is preserved. The breaking of the seals discloses the final execution of the redemptive purpose.<sup>42</sup>

The scroll with seven seals expresses the historical principles or trends that bring judgement upon the world. The trumpets are the judgements that introduce and cause the acute distress of people at the end. The bowls

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<sup>42</sup> Tenney, p. 126

are the intense climatic judgements that close that period. The reception of the scroll is the Lord's assumption of the prerogatives of dominion and judgement over the earth (5:5-14) down to the end of earth's story. But Tenney wrongly limits this to the future tribulation period.

The futurist view interprets the book of Revelation chapter 4 to 22 by beginning with the removal of the Church from the earth (the rapture), then the future tribulation period (seven years), followed by the future millennial kingdom period (one thousand years) and finally the new earth.

### Critique.

*There is no biblical evidence for the following futurist theories:*

- The theories about the scroll being a title deed.
- The theory of the rapture (the secret removal of the Church from the earth) and thus the conclusion that the contents of the book of Revelation occur *after* the so-called rapture.
- The theory that the great tribulation will last literally seven years.

The number "3½" in the book of Daniel and in the book of Revelation is symbolical of a period of tribulation that is suddenly and unexpectedly broken off.

- The theory of the future millennial kingdom on earth and that it would last a literal thousand years.

The number "1000" in the book of Revelation is symbolical of the whole New Testament period.

*Literal events or historical trends.* The earlier futurist view (Larkin) is based on the assumption (premise) that the book of Revelation is 'a prophecy in the sense of a prediction of future history'. Therefore all symbols have to refer to literal identifiable historic people and events. The later futurist view is fragmented. Some still believe in literal identifiable historic people and events. But others (Tenney) believe that the book of Revelation refers to historical principles and trends rather than historical people and events.

### The best explanation.

The scroll with seven seals and its contents is a symbol for God's sovereign rule over the universe and history and contains God's eternal and all-comprehensive plan or decree concerning everything that must happen, not only during the end-time, but during all future time from the Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming in world history and in the eternal state that follows world history.<sup>43</sup> It contains everything revealed in the book of Revelation from chapter 6 onwards. It is God's plan for the Church and the government of the world and the principle events in the history of salvation and judgement within the history of the world. It reveals God's purpose with respect to the entire universe throughout world history, and concerning all creatures in all ages and into all eternity. Hence it is full of writing on both sides!

### **5:6 The futurist view about the Lamb.**

The Lamb with the seven horns standing before the throne is Jesus Christ who in the future immediately after the removal of the Church from the earth (the rapture) would get up from sitting at the right hand of God on the throne and receive from God the authority to dispossess Satan and reclaim the lost inheritance of the earth, the land of Israel and the throne of David during the future tribulation period.

John had not seen the Lamb before, because it had been seated on the throne with the Father and advanced out of the glory of the throne as the elder spoke. When the Lamb leaves the throne to take the scroll, his mediatory work would cease and his redemptive work would begin, that is, he would begin to redeem the lost possessions consisting of the lost earth of Adam, the lost land of Abraham and Israel and the lost throne of David. Then his work as Priest would cease and his work as Judge would begin. He has the right to break the seals and claim the inheritance and dispossess the present claimant, Satan. However, Satan is not evicted at once, because he contests the claim. Only after a prolonged conflict, lasting at least seven years of the future tribulation period and a thousand years of the future millennial kingdom, Satan is finally dispossessed and cast into the lake of fire (20:10).<sup>44</sup>

### Critique.

This view must be rejected as unbiblical!

*Christ's functions as Prophet, Priest, Judge and King cannot be separated.* The supporters of the futurist view literally and chronologically separate the four functions of Jesus Christ and *divide* them over different

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<sup>43</sup> Greijdanus pp.104-105, Hendriksen pp. 108-110

<sup>44</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 45-46

dispensations (periods of time). According to the futurist view, Christ is only the Prophet during his first coming (he reveals God's revelation); the Priest during the Church dispensation (he mediates God's salvation), the Judge during the future tribulation period after the rapture of the Church (he Judges Israel and the Gentile nations and he redeems his lost property), and the King during the future millennial kingdom dispensation after the future tribulation period (he reigns for a thousand years).

There is absolutely no biblical warrant to separate the functions of Jesus Christ or to divide them into different dispensations! Jesus Christ is the Prophet *forever* (Acts 3:22-23; cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12). He is the Priest *forever* (Hebrews 7:17,24). He is *always* the Judge (John 5:22,27). And he is the King *forever* (1:5; 17:14; 19:16; cf. John 18:36-37)!

*Christ's inheritance is not contested by Satan.* There is absolutely no biblical warrant to assume that Christ would make a claim to the lost inheritance or property and that Satan would contests that claim. Christ never has to make such a claim, because he is the Creator of the earth (John 1:1-3), the Sustainer of the earth (Hebrews 1:2-3) and the Heir and King of the earth (Psalm 2:8; Matthew 11:27; 21:38,43; Hebrews 1:2). What was lost was never the earth; but innocence, righteousness, holiness and eternal life! After his completed work of salvation through his death and resurrection all who believe in Christ would become co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). The claim that Satan makes in Luke 4:5-6 is arrogant and false. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus claims that all authority and power has been given to him at his first coming! During the whole New Testament period Jesus is the King of kings and Satan's power is bound, curbed, curtailed, restrained or limited.

*Christ does not need a prolonged future battle of minimal seven plus one thousand years to dispossess Satan.* The reason Christ appeared during his first coming was to destroy the devil's work (1 John 3:8). By his loving and merciful work during his first coming, Christ already bound the strong man and drove out his demons (Matthew 12:28-29). By his death and resurrection during his first coming, Christ drove out the prince of this world, disarmed the powers and authorities, and began to draw all men to himself (John 12:31-32; Colossians 2:15). At his one and only second coming he will complete what he began at his first coming: he will weed out of his kingdom (which existed throughout the whole New Testament period!) everything that causes sin and all people who do evil (Matthew 13:41). He will vanquish all his opponents in the final battle and throw them in hell (19:11-21; 20:7-10). He will do this, not during a very long battle, but in a flash of a moment (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 13:19; 20:9; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:52).

#### The correct explanation.

The Lamb with the seven horns standing before the throne is a symbol of Jesus Christ immediately *after his completed work of salvation on earth* (his death, resurrection and ascension) and receiving from God the authority to rule as King over the universe and the earth, revealing and executing God's eternal decree for everything that should happen.

#### **5:10 The futurist view about the kingdom and priests.**

The elders are identical to God's redeemed people (the Church). The elders will only be made a kingdom and priests after the Church has been removed from the earth (the rapture). The elders belong to the heavenly kingdom. On earth there is no kingdom, until the future millennial kingdom would be established.

Because the twenty-four thrones in this vision are occupied, the futurist view concludes that these elders (representing the Church) must have already passed the fiery test of the Judgement of Reward (2 Corinthians 5:10) and have already received their crowns. They now reign with Christ in his heavenly kingdom, which is not the same as the future millennial kingdom on earth.

Therefore futurists deliberately choose the weakest text support in Nestle Greek Text and translate Revelation 5:10 as follows, "You have made us to be a kingdom and priests" in order to serve as priests on earth now during the tribulation period and in order to reign as kings later in the future millennial kingdom on earth. Because the elders are not yet pictured as kings, but as priests, it is clear that the time for them to reign in the future millennial kingdom has not yet come! Thus, the raptured Church during the future tribulation period have priestly duties of singing praises with harps and of holding the bowls containing the prayers of the Jewish saints on earth. The prayers of these Jewish saints have been beautifully pre-written in the Psalms!

### Critique.

The correct text of Revelation 5:10 is: “and he has made them to be a kingdom and priests”. The twenty-four elders are not saying this of themselves *in heaven*, but of all genuine Christians who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and who have ever lived and still live *on the earth*! Thus, God’s kingdom and priesthood is now *on the earth*!

Moreover, the text says, ‘*kingdom and priests*’ and not just ‘*royal priesthood*’ (as in 1 Peter 2:9)! Revelation 1:5-6 confirms this, “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father”.<sup>45</sup> Christ, who already is the Ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5a), has already made us, the Christian readers of the book of Revelation, to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father (1:5b-6)! Christians already now on earth are an active part of God’s present kingdom breaking in everywhere on this present earth. Christians reign together with Christ already now on this present earth and later on the new earth. They reign in the sense that they obey God’s cultural commission in Genesis 1:28 and God’s missionary commission in Matthew 28:1-20. And Christians will certainly be an active part of God’s final kingdom on the new earth (22:5).

### The correct explanation.

The elders are heavenly beings that represent the Church directly in heaven with God throughout the whole New Testament period. The elders proclaim that God’s redeemed people (the Church) have already been made a kingdom and priests at Christ’s first coming. Christians on earth belong to this kingdom, which is already a present reality on earth from Christ’s first coming to Christ’s second coming!

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## CHAPTER 6

### **6:1-2 The futurist view about the rider on the white horse.**

The first futurist view. The rider on the white horse represents the antichrist during the future tribulation period. The many false Christs in Matthew 24:5 is regarded as parallel to the antichrist in Revelation 6:2.<sup>46</sup> The futurist view interprets the rider on the white horse as the antichrist, because he is the great impostor, trying to emulate Christ. This is the picture of a brilliant, strategical, and irresistible conqueror, whose victories will dazzle the world, and elevate him to a leadership that will place him at the Head of the Ten Federated Kingdoms of the Revived Roman Empire. The objection of W. Bousset<sup>47</sup>, namely that Christ cannot at the same time be ‘the one who opens the seals’ (6:1) and ‘the contents of the first seal’ (6:2), is often advanced as proof.

### Critique.

*Many false Christs and one antichrist.* Matthew 24:5 speaks of many false Christs (messiahs) and is therefore NOT parallel to Revelation 6:1-2 which speaks of one rider.

*While seeming irregularities are impossible in literal representation, they are possible within symbolic representation.* The hermeneutic of the futurist view is to interpret the book of Revelation in a literalistic way. Thus in their view irregularities must mean different persons. However, in Revelation 1:16-17 Christ holds seven stars in his right hand and at the same time can lay his right hand on John. In Revelation 5:6-7 John is told to look at the Lion, but he sees a Lamb. A literal lamb has no hands, but Christ is able to take the scroll out of the hand of God. In Revelation 9:1 a star is able to receive a key. In Revelation 14:4 Christ is at the same time the One who redeems (purchases) the first fruits and the One to whom these first fruits are offered! In Revelation 21:9-10 John is told to look at the Bride, but he sees a city. A bride cannot literally be a city at the same time, but the Christian Church, to whom both symbols refer, can and is both at the same time. What may be impossible as far as the symbol is concerned, is entirely reasonable and true with respect to the reality to which the symbol refers. Likewise, in Revelation 6:1-2 Christ is at the same time the One who opens the seals and the Contents of the first seal – the Conqueror.

The second futurist view. The rider on the white horse represents wars and rumours of war during the future tribulation period. The wars in Mark 13:7 (Matthew 24:6) is regarded as parallel to Revelation 6:2. R. H.

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<sup>45</sup> και εποησεν (viaa) ημας βασιλειαν, ιερεις τω θεω και πατρι αυτου

<sup>46</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 53-54

<sup>47</sup> W. Bousset, Die Offenbarung Johannis, in Kritisch-Exegetischer Kommentar über da Neue Testament, p. 265

Charles has made the popular comparison between Mark 13 (Matthew 24) and Revelation 6. He interprets the symbolism of the four horses of the book of Revelation by placing them in parallel columns with Mark 13. Mark 13 is then viewed as a complete commentary on Revelation 6.

#### Mark 13

- war (vs. 7)
- international conflicts (vs. 8a)
- earthquakes (vs. 8b)
- hunger (vs. 8c)
- persecution (vs. 9-23)
- disruption of the forces of nature (vs. 24-25)

#### Revelation 6

- war (vs. 1-2)
- international conflicts (vs. 3-4)
- hunger (vs. 5-6)
- pestilence (vs. 7-8)
- persecution (vs. 9-11)
- disruption of the forces of nature (vs. 12-17)<sup>48</sup>

The four horses form a unity and all of them bring calamity. He maintains that the first seal cannot represent Christ, because Christ already appeared as the Lamb in this vision (5:6) and would only appear as the Victor at the end of the judgements (19:11). He also maintains that the first seal cannot represent the antichrist, because the antichrist only appears later in Revelation chapter 13. And the first seal cannot represent the gospel of grace, because it would not fit into the context of tribulation. He concludes that the first seal must represent 'wars'.

#### Critique.

*Striking dissimilarities between Matthew 24 (Mark 13) and Revelation 6.* Matthew chapter 24 mentions several signs that are not mentioned in Revelation chapter 6: many will come in my name claiming to be Christ and will deceive many (Matthew 24:4-5); earthquakes in various places (Matthew 24:7); many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other (Matthew 24:10); many false prophets will appear and deceive many people (Matthew 24:11); because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold (Matthew 24:12); but he who stand firm to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13); the abomination that causes desolation standing in the holy place (Matthew 24:15); the great tribulation, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now and never to be equalled again (Matthew 24:21); false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect (Matthew 24:24); and the heedlessness of people (as in the days of Noah)(Matthew 24:37-39).

*The great difference between Matthew 24 and Revelation 6.* While Revelation 6 describes what shall follow the first coming of Christ throughout the whole New Testament period, Matthew 24 describes what shall precede the second coming of Christ towards the end of the New Testament period. The point of departure as well as the whole setting in Matthew 24 is different than that of Revelation 6.

Christ's teaching on the events of the end time in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 speak about signs that have reference to all mankind, the 'many' (Matthew 24:4-8,10-12). They are signs which Christians will experience along with the rest of mankind. But they also speak of other signs which more directly concern Christians (the 'you')(Matthew 24:9,13-14). They are signs which have special significance for Christians. Likewise, the second and third seals describe particularly what happens to Christians because they remain faithful to Christ, while the fourth seal discloses what Christians experience along with the rest of the world.

#### The correct explanation.

The rider on the white horse represents the Lord Jesus Christ that goes out conquering throughout the whole New Testament period.<sup>49</sup> By means of the Word (gospel) and the Spirit, the testimonies and the tears of the disciples, his own intercession and their prayers, the angels in heaven and the armies on earth, the trumpets of judgement and the bowls of wrath, the Lord Jesus Christ is riding forth victoriously, conquering all the time and with the purpose to conquer (cf. 12:10-11; 17:14; cf. Matthew 28:18-20)!

#### **6:3-4 The futurist view about the rider on the red horse.**

The rider on the red horse represents international conflicts, nation rising against another nation during the future tribulation period (Matthew 24:6-7a)<sup>50</sup>. The great leaders would cause civil wars in the Revived Roman Empire of the antichrist. There would be violence, terrorism, bloodshed, civil war, crime and cruelty towards humanity.

<sup>48</sup> R.H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, Vol. 1, p. 158

<sup>49</sup> Hendriksen pp.113-119

<sup>50</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 45

### Critique.

Wars and rumours of wars, and nations rising against one another have always happened in human history. There is no biblical warrant to limit Matthew 24:6-7a to the future tribulation period. The futurist view are very eager to prove that the rider on the white horse must be the antichrist, because then they can maintain that all subsequent events in Revelation chapters 6 to 20 must be future and can only happen after the appearance of the future antichrist!

The futurist view does not regard the rider on the red horse as an ally of the antichrist, but rather as an enemy of the antichrist that frustrates the plans of antichrist. The majority of followers of the futurist view believe that the seven year future tribulation period would be the worst time of slaughtering thinkable in history. It is therefore no wonder that such followers staunchly defend the removal of the Church (the rapture) before the future tribulation period, because this would enable them to be absent from this great tribulation on earth! This futurist view represents cheap grace: salvation without the cross (suffering).

### The correct explanation.

The rider on the fiery red horse represents in general the outbreak of terrible wars all over the world as a consequence of people not knowing the prince of Peace. And it represents in particular the bloody religious persecutions (holy wars) especially against Christians as a consequence of people reacting against the gospel of peace throughout the whole New Testament period. Nevertheless, God uses the slaughtering in wars in general and the slaughtering of Christians in particular as a means to further the cause of the gospel.

### **6:5-6 The futurist view about the rider on the black horse.**

The rider on the black horse represents famine during the future tribulation period (Matthew 24:7b)<sup>51</sup>.

The black horse signifies famine and the rider signifies the conserver of food. When all able bodied men have been drafted into antichrist's army to wage war, no one is left to sow and harvest the crops. This would lead to famine.

### The correct explanation.

The rider on the black horse represents injustice and oppression causing economic hardship throughout the whole New Testament period, especially for Christians as a consequence of living according to the gospel<sup>52</sup>. The unjust oppressions of the poor in the world are nevertheless God's means to further the cause of the gospel (Acts 20:24).

### **6:7-8 The futurist view about the rider on the pale horse (6:7-8).**

The rider on the pale green horse represents pestilence and death which follows famine during the future tribulation period (Matthew 24:7b). Some great pestilence must follow famine, because the dead are left unburied. The fourth part of the earth over which the pestilence will sweep will probably be that part of the Eastern Hemisphere covered by the Revived Roman Empire.

### Critique.

Note that the futurist view cannot point to a direct parallel with Matthew chapter 24. They can only assume that pestilence generally follows famine! There is no allusion in the Bible that particularly Eastern Europe and the Middle East would be particularly affected. This is pure assumption!

### The correct explanation.

The rider on the pale green horse represents the universal calamities which Christians suffer along with the rest of the world throughout the whole New Testament period for the simple reason that all these people live in the world. The universal calamities are: war between the nations, famine (poverty), the plague or pestilence (any other sickness causing certain death) and wild animals.

These calamities are nevertheless God's means to further the cause of the gospel (of grace through faith). God uses calamities to sanctify and revive the Church. And God uses calamities to extend his kingdom among non-Christians. Calamities are God's instruments to make Christians grow and to open countries, cities, other closed places and closed hearts for the gospel.

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<sup>51</sup> Larkin p. 56

<sup>52</sup> Hendriksen pp. 122-125

### **6:9-11 The futurist view about the souls under the altar**

The souls under the altar represent Jews martyred for their preaching of the gospel of the future millennial kingdom during the future tribulation period (Matthew 24:9-14). While 'the gospel of grace' (Acts 20:24) had been preached by the Church during the Church age up to the rapture, 'the gospel of the kingdom' would be preached by the 144 000 Jews during the future tribulation period up to the future millennial kingdom. The gospel of the kingdom would be the gospel which John the Baptist and Jesus preached (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:23) and which Moses and Elijah would preach when they return (Malachi 4:5-6; Revelation 11:3). This gospel of the kingdom would be the announcement that "Christ is coming back to set up his future earthly millennial kingdom and he will rule over the affairs of man" (for a 1000 years). It will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations (Matthew 24:14) and then the end of the sixth dispensation (the dispensation of the Church including the future tribulation period) will come. The seventh dispensation will be the future millennial kingdom. The gospel of the kingdom will be preached by Jews to all the nations, because Israel has never been numbered among the nations (Numbers 23:9).

The futurist view also maintains that the preaching of the kingdom will be utterly distasteful to the antichrist and the kings of the Revived Roman Empire. There would be many Jewish martyrs during the future tribulation period and their souls would wait under the altar. Their bodies would be resurrected at the end of the future tribulation period. The resurrection of the bodies of the Christians at the future first return of Christ and the resurrection of the bodies of the Jewish martyrs seven years later at the future second return of Christ would together constitute 'the first resurrection', which the futurist view regards as a physical resurrection. They would rule together with Christ over the future millennial kingdom on earth (20:4-6).

#### Critique.

The futurist view believes that all Christians (the Church) would be removed from the earth at Christ's future first return and that Jews would preach the coming of Christ's future millennial (1000 years) kingdom during the period of the future tribulation period (7 years). The futurist view believes that the future millennial kingdom would be set up at Christ's future second return and that Jews would play the major role in it. But according to the Bible 'the kingdom' is the sovereign kingship or rule of God through Christ, which he earned by his completed work of salvation and which he graciously applies by the outpoured Holy Spirit in the hearts and lives of all his people. The kingdom is expressed in the salvation of believers from beginning to end, in the establishment of believers in the Church, in the influence of believers in society and finally in the new earth (See the parables about the kingdom).

In the Bible there is absolutely no difference between 'the gospel of grace' and 'the gospel of the kingdom' (Matthew 4:23; Acts 8:12; 19:8-10; 20:24-25; 28:23,31). The gospel in both the Old Testament and New Testament concerns justification by faith (Romans 4:1-8; Galatians 2:7-9). There is absolutely no biblical warrant to assume two different gospels in the Bible. It is absolutely contrary to the history of revelation that a reversal to the Old Testament conditions (including the absence of the Church and the absence of the Holy Spirit) should be more effective than the preaching of the gospel of God's grace in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit! The gospel must certainly be preached to Jews today, otherwise they will be lost for eternity (Matthew 10:6; Romans 1:16).

Numbers 23:9 only states that certain Jews did not regard themselves as belonging to 'the nations', because 'the nations' often symbolise the enemies of God (Isaiah 34:2) just as 'Israel' often symbolises the people of God (Isaiah 34:8; 1 Peter 2:9-10). But at times also the nation of Israel became 'not God's people' (Hosea 1:9).

The futurist view is not clear about the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles in the so-called future millennial kingdom. According to the futurist interpretation of Daniel, the future millennial kingdom would be given to 'the people of the Most High', that is, in their view to Israel (Daniel 7:18,22,27) and not to the Gentile nations. According to Ezekiel, the nation of Israel would consist of all the Jewish tribes and not merely the Jewish martyrs of the future tribulation period (Ezekiel 48).

It seems that the futurist picture is that in the future millennial kingdom, Christ would rule together with the Church saints (raptured during his future first return) and together with the Jewish tribulation saints (resurrected during his future second return) over the yet unconverted Gentile nations on earth. The Jews would not need to be ruled over, because they will have all converted! The futurist view does not state how

Christians and Jews with resurrected bodies will relate to Gentiles with bodies that have not yet been resurrected in the future millennial kingdom.

#### The correct explanation.

The souls under the altar represent Christians killed for possessing the Word of God (the Bible) and the Testimony of Jesus (Jesus and the gospel message in their heart) throughout the whole New Testament period, but especially during the great tribulation.<sup>53</sup>

#### **6:12-17 The futurist view about the crashing phenomena.**

The phenomena represent only the changing of the natural phenomena during the end of the future tribulation period, at Christ's future second return just before the future millennial kingdom is established on this present earth (Matthew 24:29-30)<sup>54</sup>. It does not describe the absolute dissolution of the present universe, but only great physical changes in nature (Exodus 10:21-23; Isaiah 13:9-10; 34:3-4; Joel 2:30-31; Zechariah 14:1-7; Matthew 27:45) in order to create the new land of Israel (Ezekiel chapters 47-48).

#### Critique.

Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48 is not a prophecy of the physical creation of the new Israel during a so-called future millennium, but a prophecy about the necessary spiritual reformation of Israel so that there would be a complete agreement between the inner renewal and the outer forms of their life as God's people. Ezekiel is still speaking about Israel as God's people before Christ's first coming and therefore speaks symbolically of these new outer forms as 'the new temple', 'the new city' and 'the new land' of Israel.

Matthew 24:29 and Revelation 6:12-17 (as Joel 2:30-31; Zechariah 14:1-9) definitely refer to the final destruction of this present earth, as Luke 21:25-28; 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Revelation 20:11 also clearly teach.

#### The correct explanation.

The phenomena represent the crashing universe and the thoroughly frightened human race at the one and only final judgement day at the one and only second coming of Christ just before the new heaven and new earth<sup>55</sup>.

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## **CHAPTER 7**

### **7:4 The futurist view about the sealing of the 144 000.**

The first futurist view. The sealing of the 144 000 signifies the protection of a literal number of Jews that wait for the coming Messiah (Malachi 4:2; Luke 2:25). They are sealed so that they do not have to pass through the great tribulation (the second half of the future tribulation period). They are visibly sealed on their foreheads at the beginning of the first half of the future tribulation period after the removal of the Church (the rapture) in order to protect them from the harm and torture of the antichrist. They probably become believers in the Messiah through the sudden disappearance of the Church (the rapture). This is the pre-tribulation millennial kingdom view.

These sealed Jews would constitute the elected remnant of Israel (Romans 11:4-6; cf. Matthew 24:31), elected for protection, not for salvation (Ephesians 1:13-14). They would constitute the first class of people that would be saved out of future tribulation during the first half of the future tribulation period. They would be saved by being sealed.

The second class of people that would be saved out of future tribulation during the first half of the future tribulation period is the great multitude of Gentiles (7:9). (Note: in the futurist view these Gentiles are not sealed, but are nevertheless saved!) They would be saved by hearing the preaching by the 144 000 Jews of the gospel about the coming millennial kingdom (Matthew 24:14). The other Jews that are not sealed, like the tribes of Dan and Ephraim, and the others in the Gentile nations would have to pass through the great tribulation during the second half of the future tribulation period. All these other Jews would suffer, but they would all be saved (Romans 11:16) and they would all occupy the Holy Land during the future millennial

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<sup>53</sup> cf. Bavinck, pp. 177-180

<sup>54</sup> Larkin pp. 60-61

<sup>55</sup> Greijdanus pp. 121-123, Hendriksen pp. 129-132, Groenewald pp. 91-93

kingdom (Ezekiel 48:1-7,23-29). Although the twelve tribes of Israel and their genealogical records have been lost long ago, God would pick them (their still living descendants) out of the nations where they have been lost. They are the same 144 000 that later stand with the Lamb on the heavenly Mount Zion (14:1-7). They are the first fruits of the restored nation and state of Israel in the end-time (in the future millennial kingdom)(Isaiah 49:5-6).

#### Critique.

There is absolutely no biblical warrant to assume that the so-called rapture takes place at Revelation 4:1.

There is no biblical warrant to assume that these 144 000 Jews would become Christians (believers in Jesus Christ) by the sudden disappearance of the Church. The Bible teaches that people only become believers by hearing the proclamation of the gospel about Jesus Christ (Romans 10:12-17).

The election in Romans 11:1-10 clearly means eternal salvation by grace (Romans 8:29-30), because the opposite means hardening and rejection forever. The word 'election' in Matthew 24:31 can only mean election unto eternal salvation. The word may not be limited to mean only protection.

The not being sealed in Ezekiel 9:4,8 means remaining unrepentant of all the detestable things they have done and being destroyed by the outpouring of God's wrath. Whoever is not sealed does not simply suffer physically, but is doomed forever and perishes forever!

The not being sealed in Revelation 7 means not repenting of worshipping demons, of murder, of magic arts, of sexual immorality and of theft (9:20-21) in spite of the fact that they will be "harmed and tortured for five months" (9:4)! They consequently suffer 'the second death', that is eternal damnation (21:8). Thus 'sealing' means salvation from eternal doom (Ephesians 1:13-14) in spite of earthly disasters and not simply salvation from earthly disasters! And thus 'not being sealed' means eternal damnation. And that is why the symbolical number 144 000 sealed refers to ALL Jews and Gentiles that have received eternal life (cf. 14:1)! And that is why the great multitude in Revelation 7:9 is exactly the same people as the 144 000 in Revelation 7:4! Both symbols represent the total number of God's elect (Romans 11:15-16).

The second futurist view. The sealing of the 144 000 signifies the protection of a literal number of Jews that constitute the remnant of Israel. They are sealed at the beginning of the second half of the future tribulation period after the rapture of the Church in order to protect them during 'the great tribulation' during the second half of the future tribulation period (7:14; Matthew 24:21) from the harm and torture of the antichrist. This is the mid-tribulation pre-millennial kingdom view<sup>56</sup>. If the 144 000 in Revelation 14:1-7 is identical with the 144 000 in Revelation 7:1-8, then they may represent Jewish believers who have kept their purity of (Jewish) worship and who have come to know the Messiah through great suffering. Then they would not simply be Jews (Israel), but Messianic Jews.

#### Critique.

There is absolutely no biblical warrant to assume that the so-called rapture takes place between Revelation 6:11 and 6:12.

#### The correct explanation.

The sealing of the 144 000 signifies the protection of the entire Church (all genuine Christians) from eternal damnation. They are not protected from the seals of persecution or trumpets of judgement or from the onslaughts of the antichrists. They are sealed throughout the whole New Testament period as a sign that they belong forever to God (Christ) and are saved forever! They are exactly the same as the uncountable multitude in Revelation 7:9<sup>57</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> Tenney pp. 74,78

<sup>57</sup> Hendriksen pp. 132-135, Groenewald pp. 93-96

### **7:4-8 The futurist view about the twelve tribes of Israel.**

The twelve tribes of Israel are literally the twelve tribes of the Old Testament Israel (Romans 9:6a)<sup>58</sup>.

According to this futurist view, they are God's people, the physical Israel, Christ's elect whom he will seal at his future first return after the so-called removal of the Church from the earth. They consist of literally 144 000 people of Israel. Being sealed visibly on their foreheads with the names of God the Father and the Lamb (14:1), they will be preserved during the so-called future tribulation period between the two future returns of Christ. They will not bow before the antichrist (1 Kings 19:18) or give in to his followers. The followers of the antichrist will also be sealed visibly on their foreheads with the name and number of the beast (13:16-18).

The remarkable difference in the names of the twelve tribes, in which Dan and Ephraim are missing and Joseph and Levi are added, is due to the fact that Dan and Ephraim had introduced idolatry into Israel. Thus God had their names blotted out from under heaven and singled them out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster (Deuteronomy 29:18-21; 1 Kings 12:25-30).

However, because the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are present in the list of the twelve tribes that shall occupy the Holy Land during the future millennial kingdom (Ezekiel 48:1-7,23-29), the sealing only means heavenly protection during the tribulation and not salvation. Thus the tribes Dan and Ephraim will pass through the future tribulation period unprotected by heaven, but thereafter they will inherit the future millennial kingdom together with the other tribes of Israel.

#### Critique.

If the term 'twelve tribes of Israel' is intended to be interpreted literally, then why are 'the names' and 'the order' of the twelve tribes NOT stated literally? In 721 B.C., the ten tribes of the northern kingdom of Israel were deported to Assyria and lost there. In A.D. 70, the two tribes of the southern kingdom of Judah, who returned from the Babylonian exile, lost their identity when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. In what sense can 'the twelve tribes of Israel' still be understood literally in the future? If these are not literal, why should the number 144 000 be literal?

Ezekiel chapter 40 to 48 is not a prophecy of the physical creation of the new land and state of Israel during a so-called future millennial kingdom. It is rather a prophecy about the necessary spiritual reformation of Israel so that there would be a complete agreement between the inner renewal and the outer forms of their life as God's people during the Old Testament period. Ezekiel is still speaking about Israel as God's people *before* Christ's first coming and therefore speaks of these new outer forms in terms of the old outer forms. He speaks symbolically of these new outer forms as 'the new temple', 'the new city' and 'the new land' of Israel.

#### The correct explanation.

The twelve tribes of Israel are spiritually the New Testament Israel (Romans 9:6b; 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; Galatians 6:14-16; Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6; James 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1)<sup>59</sup>. They are God's people, the spiritual Israel, the elect whom God through Christ will gather from both the Jews and the Gentiles throughout world history. They consist of the absolute complete number of God's people, God's elect during the Old and New Testament periods of time, from the creation to the re-creation of the earth (Romans 11:25-26).

### **7:9 The futurist view about the great multitude**

The first futurist view. The great multitude from every nation is literally the great mass of Gentiles that will become believers in the Messiah through the preaching of the gospel (concerning the future millennial kingdom) by the 144 000 Jews during the first half of the future tribulation period.

According to this futurist view, at the rapture of the Church the Holy Spirit went back with the Church to escort 'the Bride to be' home. But it does not follow that the Holy Spirit remained in heaven. The Holy Spirit was active during the Old Testament period and during the earthly ministry of Jesus in the conversion of people. Likewise the great multitude converted during the future tribulation period will be converted by the Holy Spirit.

The great multitude come out of the great tribulation of the first half of the future tribulation period (7:14) and stand in heaven before the throne of Christ. How and when they are removed from the earth before the middle of the future tribulation period is not stated. This is the pre-tribulation millennial kingdom view.

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<sup>58</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 65-66, Tenney pp. 74,78, all futurists

<sup>59</sup> Greijdanus pp. 130-131, Hendriksen p. 134, Groenewald pp 95-96

*The saved before the rapture.* The followers of the futurist view generally interpret Romans 11:25-26 to mean that the full number of believers from the Gentile nations would be saved before the so-called future first return of Christ (the rapture or the removal of the Church from this earth) and all Israel would be saved only after the so-called future first return of Christ. According to popular futurist view, while the Church is celebrating the wedding of the Lamb in heaven, Israel and the Gentile nations would face terrible tribulations under the antichrist on earth!

*The saved after the rapture.* The futurist view maintains that the great multitude in Revelation 7:9 refers to the great number of Gentiles that would become Messianic believers through the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom by the 144 000 Jewish Messianic believers during the first half of the future tribulation period (7:14). Messianic believers are people that have become ‘Christians’ after the rapture (the removal of the Church from the earth). While ‘the great tribulation’ in Revelation 7:14 refers to the first half of the future tribulation period, ‘the great tribulation’ in Matthew 24:21 refers to the second half of the future tribulation period. This great multitude does not stand in the future millennial temple, because that would be a Jewish temple. It also does not stand in the New Jerusalem, because the New Jerusalem has no temple (21:22). It stands before the throne and in front of the Lamb in the heavenly temple, where it serves God day and night (7:15). The futurist view does not say whether this great multitude of saved Gentiles (Messianic Christians) joins the Church in heaven or not.

### Critique.

Romans 11:25-26 does not teach that Israel experiences a hardening “temporarily” until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, “and then” all Israel will be saved. It also does not teach that “the Deliverer will come (out of heaven at his so-called future first return, 1 Thessalonians 4:16) to Zion” to turn the godlessness of Israel away.

Instead, it teaches that Israel experiences a hardening “partly”<sup>60</sup> until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, “and in this way”<sup>61</sup> all Israel will be saved. It teaches that “the Deliverer will come out of Zion” (at his first coming) to turn the godlessness of Israel away (John 1:11).

Romans 11:26b-27 is not simply a quotation from this or that Old Testament verse, but a skilful symposium of several Old Testament verses: Out of Zion (Micah 5:2) will come the Deliverer (Isaiah 59:20); he will turn godlessness away from Jacob (Isaiah 27:9a). And this is my covenant with them (Isaiah 59:21) whenever I shall take away their sins (Isaiah 27:9b; Jeremiah 31:31-34)!

“The mystery” of Romans 11:25, is not that the whole of physical Israel would once in the future be saved, but has reference to the marvellous chain of events that results in Israel’s salvation. In God’s sovereign and loving plan, he uses seemingly contradictory factors to effect the salvation of “all Israel”, that is, of the sum total of all Israel’s remnants throughout world history. The real contrast is between the single remnant of Jews saved in Paul’s time (Romans 11:5) and all the remnants of Jews saved throughout the whole New Testament period (Romans 11:26).

If “the full number of Gentiles have already come in” *before* the removal of the Church from the earth, then “the multitude of Gentiles” saved *after* the removal of the Church cannot be regarded as belonging to the Church, the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:22-23)! They also do not belong to Israel, because they are not literally Jews. To what do they then belong? This futurist view does not clarify the difference between “the full number of Gentiles” saved *before* the removal of the Church and ‘the great multitude of Gentiles’ saved *after* the removal of the Church. Generally the futurist view believes that God has two ‘peoples of God’. Israel is ‘God’s *earthly* people’ and the Church is ‘God’s *heavenly* people’ (Darby). But where does ‘the great multitude from every nation’ then belong? The futurist view does not answer this question.

The second futurist view. The great multitude from every nation is literally the universal removal of believers (Christians) or the so-called rapture of the Church in the middle of the future tribulation period before the horrors of the second half of the future tribulation period close in upon humanity. This is the mid-tribulation millennial kingdom view<sup>62</sup>. In this way there is no discrepancy in the number of Gentiles saved. In the first futurist view there is a discrepancy between “the full number of Gentiles saved” *before* the removal of the Church and “the great multitude of Gentiles saved” *after* the removal of the Church. In the

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<sup>60</sup> πωρωσις απο μερους

<sup>61</sup> και ουτως

<sup>62</sup> Tenney p. 74

first futurist view they are two different groups of Gentiles saved, but in the second futurist view they are one and the same group.

#### Critique.

There is no biblical warrant to assume that there would be a sudden and secret removal of the Church (the rapture)! The different futurist views must assume this, because otherwise they have no framework to press their view of the future nation of Israel into.

There is no biblical warrant to assume that Christians (the Church) would NOT go through the great tribulation! Many Christians who hold to the doctrine of the rapture are motivated by their fear for suffering. Their Christianity should be one of comfort: in their view, Christians are always healed from all sicknesses; Christians always prosper; and Christians never suffer.

#### The correct explanation.

The great multitude from every nation is figuratively the Triumphant Church, that is, all the saved throughout all of history, another description of the 144 000 of Revelation 14:1-7<sup>63</sup>. They come out of the great tribulation throughout the whole New Testament period (Matthew 5:10-12; 10:16-31; John 15:18-25; 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12).

### **7:14 The futurist view about the great tribulation**

The great tribulation is the first half (the first 3½ years) of the so-called future tribulation period. The futurist view believes that the future tribulation period or the so-called 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel is divided into two parts by the incarnation of Satan into the beast (Revelation chapters 12 and 13). The futurist view believes that the Church will not pass through ‘the great tribulation’ (Matthew 24:21), because it will be removed from the earth at Christ’s so-called future first return (the rapture). The futurist view also believes that this great multitude of saved Gentiles will not pass through ‘the great tribulation’ (Matthew 24:14). They cry ‘Salvation’ (7:10), because they have been saved from the martyrdom and death of the future tribulation period. Therefore the futurist view must put this vision of the great multitude at least in the middle of the future tribulation period! The futurist view maintains that this great multitude must have come out of the first half of the future tribulation period due to the preaching of the gospel of the coming millennial kingdom by the Jews. The futurist view maintains that the great tribulation in Revelation 7:14 refers to the first half of the future tribulation period, while the great tribulation in Matthew 24:21 refers to the second half of the future tribulation period.

#### Critique.

By giving two different meanings to the words ‘the great tribulation’ (7:14 and Matthew 24:21) the futuristic view departs from their literalistic principle of interpretation!

#### The correct explanation.

The great tribulation (7:14) is the whole period between Christ’s first coming and Christ’s second coming.

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## **CHAPTER 8**

### **8:1 The futurist view about the seventh seal of silence.**

The seventh seal of silence in heaven is the period of silence for the awful judgements that were to burst forth on the earth under the seven trumpets, the even more awful judgements of the seven bowls under the seventh trumpet and the judgements up to the beginning of the future millennial kingdom. All are judgements during the end of the future tribulation period.<sup>64</sup>

#### Critique.

The bowl judgements are not simply more awful judgements, but God’s final judgements through which his wrath is completed (15:1).

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<sup>63</sup> Hendriksen pp. 135-136, Groenewald pp. 97-100

<sup>64</sup> Larkin, Revelation p.68

### The correct explanation.

The seventh seal of silence in heaven is connected to the riddle of the delay or slowing down of the movement of the apocalyptic events in the history of the world towards the final end.<sup>65</sup>

### **8:3-5 The futurist view about the saints and their prayers.**

The saints are the saints of the future tribulation period. Their prayers concern their deliverance from their enemies and their cry for vengeance on their enemies<sup>66</sup>. They are not Christians, but Jews and Gentiles who believe in the message of the Jews about the (Jewish) millennial kingdom. The judgements on earth that follows the sounding of the seven trumpets and the outpouring of the seven bowls are answers to their prayers.

### Critique.

There is no biblical warrant to limit these saints to a specific period (the future tribulation period).

There is no biblical warrant to describe these prayers as 'imprecatory prayers' that call down God's curse and judgement on their enemies (cf. Psalm 109:6-15). In the light of the New Testament revelation, Christians do not cry for vengeance on their enemies and also do not avenge themselves on their enemies (Romans 12:17-21).

### The correct explanation.

The saints are Christians throughout the whole New Testament period and their prayers certainly include the following: entrusting themselves to God who judges justly about their difficult situation of persecution and oppression (1 Peter 2:21-23), asking forgiveness for their enemies (Luke 6:27-28; 23:34), interceding for the salvation of people on earth (1 Timothy 2:1-6) and praying for open doors and open hearts to proclaim the gospel (Colossians 4:2-4)!

### **8:7 The futurist view about the first trumpet judgement.**

The first trumpet judgement is literally hail, fire and blood, which the Jews will suffer during the second half of the future tribulation period. This is in fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2:20-31 of things that will happen in the latter days. While the Israelites escaped the first and the seventh plague in Egypt (Exodus 7:20-21;9:23-25), in the latter days the Jews will suffer these plagues! Previously God's judgement was directed against the Egyptian Pharaoh, but in the future God's judgement would be directed against the Jews (naturally Larkin means with the exception of the 144 000 sealed Jews)! The fire that ran along the ground was clearly an electrical storm, lightning.<sup>67</sup> The Jews will be punished for rejecting the kingdom at Christ's first coming.

### Critique.

Joel 2:30-31 does not speak of hail, only of blood and fire. It does not speak of *a* third of the sun, moon and stars being turned into darkness, but of the whole sun and moon. The biblical fulfilment of Joel is rather at Christ's second coming (Matthew 24:29).

Nothing in the text says that the trumpet judgements are directed especially against the Jews.

### The correct explanation.

The first trumpet judgement represents disasters that will take place on earth, that is, on the land throughout the whole New Testament period as a warning of the coming final judgement. These calamities, of whatever nature they may be, are controlled by God in heaven!<sup>68</sup>

### **8:8-9 The futurist view about the second trumpet judgement.**

The second trumpet judgement is literally an immense meteoric mass ablaze with fire that will be hurled in the Mediterranean Sea during the second half of the future tribulation period. This burning mountain would

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<sup>65</sup> cf. Bavinck, pp. 210-214

<sup>66</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 69

<sup>67</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 70-71

<sup>68</sup> Hendriksen p.143

turn a third of the living creatures in that Sea into blood. Probably a tidal wave (tsunami) would sink a third of all the ships.<sup>69</sup>

#### Critique.

The text does not limit the destruction to the Mediterranean Sea.

#### The correct explanation.

The second trumpet judgement represents disasters that will take place on and in the sea throughout the whole New Testament period as a warning of the coming final judgement. A great part of life in and on the seas will be destroyed. God employs the sea as his instrument of judgement.<sup>70</sup>

#### **8:10-11 The futurist view about the third trumpet judgement.**

The third trumpet judgement is doubtless another meteor during the second half of the future tribulation period. The meteor would blaze its path through the sky and then explode. Its poisonous gases would be absorbed by a third of all water sources, killing many.<sup>71</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

The third trumpet judgement represents disasters through unpredictable and ominous events that will take place on a great part of the water sources on earth throughout the whole New Testament period as a warning of the coming final judgement.<sup>72</sup>

#### **8:12 The futurist view about the fourth trumpet judgement.**

The fourth trumpet judgement is similar to what happened under the sixth seal. They are not final events, but great physical convulsions (darkness and an earthquake) that would shake the earth during the second half of the future tribulation period.<sup>73</sup>

#### Critique.

The sixth seal affects the whole sun, moon and stars, while the fourth trumpet affects only a third of these! The sixth seal is definitely the destruction of the present earth at Christ's second coming (cf. 2 Peter 3:10-13). But the fourth trumpet symbolizes judgements throughout the whole New Testament period.

#### The correct explanation.

The fourth trumpet judgement represents disasters through ominous events that will take place in the universe, affecting the light of the sun, moon and stars on earth throughout the whole New Testament period as a warning of the coming final judgement.<sup>74</sup>

#### **8:6-12 The futurist view about the trumpet judgements.**

The first futurist view. The trumpet judgements are more concentrated judgements than the seal judgements, are directed against the Jews and only during the second half of the future tribulation period. The futurist view includes all seven trumpet judgements under only the seventh seal judgement and it includes all seven bowl judgements under only the seventh trumpet judgement.<sup>75</sup> Thus the judgments become more and more concentrated towards the end of the future tribulation period and they extend to the beginning of the millennium. As the same four things happen during the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) and the seventh bowl (16:17-21) (lightning, thunder, earthquake and hailstorm), it is clear that the end of the seventh trumpet and seventh bowl synchronise with the end of the seventh seal. They all end at the same time at the end of the 70<sup>th</sup> week, thus at the so-called future second return of Christ just before he establishes the future millennial kingdom. Because the events under the sixth seal happen shortly before the future second return of Christ, the seven trumpet judgements must all take place at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period.

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<sup>69</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 71

<sup>70</sup> Greijdanus p. 143, Hendriksen p. 143, Groenewald p. 104

<sup>71</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 72

<sup>72</sup> Greijdanus p. 144, Hendriksen pp. 143-144, Groenewald pp. 104-105

<sup>73</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 72

<sup>74</sup> Greijdanus pp. 144-145, Hendriksen p. 144, Groenewald p.105

<sup>75</sup> Larkin, Revelation p.68, cf. his 6<sup>th</sup> seal on p. 60

### Critique.

The futurist view rightly sees that the seven seals, the seven trumpets and the seven bowls all end at the same time! However the futurist view wrongly assumes that the seals, trumpets and bowls end at the end of the future tribulation period just before the establishment of the so-called future millennial kingdom. The Bible makes it very clear that they end on the final judgement day. But because the futurist view wants to maintain their view that the book of Revelation is linear chronological, they have to arrange all seven trumpet judgements under only the seventh seal judgement and all seven bowl judgements under only the seventh trumpet judgement.

But they fail to acknowledge that the sixth seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl all describe the one and same event, namely, the final judgement. The end of the seals, the trumpets and the bowls are therefore not linear chronological, but parallel! At this point the futurist view abandons the linear chronological explanation and adopts the parallel progressive explanation of the inaugurated or realised millennium view!

The second futurist view. The trumpet judgements are all drastic physical judgements only during the second half of the future tribulation period. While the seals are general judgements, the trumpets are more specific, drastic and final judgements. The symbolic interpretation of ‘grass’ as representing the masses of people (Isaiah 40:6-8) and ‘trees’ as representing the great and important people (Judges 9:8; Ezekiel 31:3; Daniel 4:20-22) in these passages are undeniable. Although one could argue that if they are symbolic in the first four trumpets (the judgements that affect the world of nature are then in reality judgements on the world of people), they must also be symbolic in the last three trumpets. But Tenney does not think that this kind of symbolism must be used in the book of Revelation. For him the trumpet judgements are physical judgements, which after the atomic bomb, makes such judgements less improbable.<sup>76</sup>

### The correct explanation.

The trumpet judgements are God’s initial judgements that punish the unrepentant and warn all other people to repent throughout the whole New Testament period. They are God’s response to the seals of persecution and the prayers of Christians. The wicked people on earth are struck by disasters that affect the various parts of the universe: the land (earth), the sea, the land-waters and even the heavens (universe). Nowhere is there safety for the wicked!<sup>77</sup>

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## **CHAPTER 9**

### **9:1 The futurist view about the star.**

The star falling (descending) from the sky to the earth is the good angel that first opens the Abyss to let the evil spirits out during the second half of the future tribulation period and later at the beginning of the millennium binds Satan and locks him in the Abyss.<sup>78</sup> Although ‘stars’ symbolise angels (Job 38:7), ‘falling’ from the sky does not necessarily signify a fallen angel or Satan. This star is the same star angel which in Revelation 20:1-3 comes down from heaven with the key of the shaft of the Abyss to bind Satan. God would not entrust this key to Satan!

### Critique.

The word ‘fall’ is never used in the Bible in the sense of ‘descend’.

The angel in Revelation 20:1-3 is not called ‘a star’.

In God’s permissive will, he does entrust certain power into Satan’s hands (Job 1:12; 2:6; Proverbs 16:4; Matthew 4:1; 2 Corinthians 12:7). But Jesus Christ always maintains absolute authority over ‘the key’ (3:7) and remains sovereign over everything that ever happens in history (Matthew 28:18; John 13:3). His enemies can only do what he permits them to do!

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<sup>76</sup> Tenney pp.74-75

<sup>77</sup> Greijdanus pp. 141-142, Hendriksen pp. 140-141

<sup>78</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 74

### The correct explanation.

The star lying fallen from heaven on the earth is the evil angel (the evil one), Satan, who is bound at the first coming of Christ, but nevertheless has received authority and power to torture non-Christians throughout the whole New Testament period.<sup>79</sup> Satan was bound at Christ's first coming (Matthew 12:28-29; John 12:31; 16:11; Revelation 12:9; 20:2-3a) so that he could not keep the gospel away from the nations in the world (Matthew 12:30; 28:19; John 12:32; 16:8; Revelation 12:10-11; 20:3b). Satan received permission only to attack *Christians*, but not to torture them (Matthew 13:19; Luke 22:31; John 17:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; Ephesians 6:16; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 2:13-14: 5:18). Satan nevertheless received permission from God to unleash his demons onto *non-Christians* in order to torture them (cf. Matthew 6:13; 13:38-39,42; Romans 8:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:4,13-15; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:12; 5:19). This is a punishment and a warning for non-Christians to repent between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming.

### **9:1 The futurist view about the Abyss.**

The Abyss is not Hades. In the view of futurists, different words must always refer to different realities. Thus the word Hades only refers to the dwelling place of the spirits or souls of the wicked dead until the so-called resurrection of the wicked at the end of the millennium (Luke 16:23-26; Revelation 20:10-15). And the word Abyss refers only to the place of confinement of demons, which are not Satan's angels, but a class of disembodied spirits.<sup>80</sup>

### The correct explanation.

The Abyss is another word for Hades. The word Hades<sup>81</sup> has three possible meanings in the Bible, depending on the context of the word. It may refer to the state of death (Job 7:9-10), or the grave for the body (Job 17:13-16) and certainly also hell (Job 10:21-22; 26:5-6), the dwelling place of the spirits or souls of the wicked dead.

The word Abyss also has these different meanings. It is generally contrasted with the sky and earth and refers to the deep of the sea (Psalm 33:7; 107:26). In Psalm 107:26 the ship with its crew in a storm is lifted up on the waves to the heavens and sinks to the depths (Abyss) below the waves of the sea. They are afraid to sink into the Abyss, that is, to drown in the depths of the sea where they (body and spirit) would remain confined. In this sense Abyss refers to the abode of the dead (Romans 10:7). But it also refers to hell (Hades) as the place of destruction (Abaddon)(Job 26:6), which is the abode of the devil and his demons.<sup>82</sup>

### **9:1-12 The futurist view about the fifth trumpet judgement.**

The first futurist view. The fifth trumpet judgement causes disembodied spirits of the pre-Adamite races to try and re-embody themselves in people during the second half of the future tribulation period. There is a literal eruption of demonic beings from the Abyss. But these demonic beings are not Satan's demons, but the disembodied spirits of the pre-Adamite races on earth. This futurist view explains Matthew 12:22; 15:22,43-45; Luke 4:35; 8:26-36; 9:42 and 1 Timothy 4:1 not as demons, but as disembodied spirits who had the liberty and opportunity in the days of Christ to take over the bodies of people. These disembodied spirits would take over the bodies of all the Gentiles and especially all the Jews that have received the mark of the beast (9:4) (except the bodies of 144 000 sealed Jews) and torture them terribly during the second half of the future tribulation period. Daniel 9:27 is used to explain that this would be a punishment for 'this wicked generation' of Jews for making a covenant with the antichrist.<sup>83</sup> This interpretation must be rejected.

### Critique.

The passages Matthew 12:22-29; 15:22; Luke 4:35; 8:26-36; 9:42 and 1 Timothy 4:1 speak of Satan and his demons and not of disembodied spirits of pre-Adamite inhabitants of the earth. Genesis 6:1-3 does not speak of 'disembodied spirits' as a result of angels marrying humans. 'The sons of God' rather refers to the believers (Seth's line)(Genesis 5) and 'the daughters of men' to unbelievers (Cain's line)(Genesis 4). God refers to their offspring as '*men*' and limited their lifespan henceforth to 120 years (Genesis 6:3). Also the giants (Nephilim), the heroes of ancient days, were *men*. They already existed and were probably mentioned because they had a long lifespan (Genesis 6:4).

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<sup>79</sup> Hendriksen pp. 145-147

<sup>80</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 74

<sup>81</sup> Sheol in Hebrew Old Testament and Hades in Greek New Testament

<sup>82</sup> Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich p. 2

<sup>83</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 74

Nowhere does Scripture speak of demonic power being increased over the Jews in particular.

The true-to-life elements of the parable in Matthew 12:43-45 are that demons can literally possess a person that does not have the Holy Spirit in his heart. However, the central point of emphasis of the parable is that God's kingdom is characterised by a positive religion instead of a negative religion. It is characterised by outgoing love instead of negative rules (laws). The kingdom of God is characterised by the outgoing love of Jesus towards people who need healing and deliverance, instead of the legalistic passiveness of the Pharisees.

The second futurist view. The fifth trumpet judgement brings a literal eruption of embodied demonic beings from the Abyss during the second half of the future tribulation period. They are literal malicious embodied spirits whose mission is destruction. They are loathsome creatures with bodies, limitless in number and apparently invulnerable to any attack. This judgement must follow the sealing of the servants of God (7:3).<sup>84</sup> This interpretation must be rejected.

#### Critique.

Tenney sticks to his premise that the trumpets are to be interpreted literally. He maintains that the first four trumpets are judgements produced by literal physical forces, while the last three trumpets are judgements produced by literal spiritual forces. Nevertheless, this view must be rejected, because this passage does *not* speak of disembodied or embodied spirits!

#### The correct explanation.

The fifth trumpet judgement causes Satan and his demons to torture and destroy people that are not sealed with the seal of God for a considerable time throughout the whole New Testament period. Satan opening the shaft means that he fills the world with demons and with their wicked influences and operations. The demons strike terror in the hearts of the wicked people.<sup>85</sup>

### **9:13-19 The futurist view about the sixth trumpet judgement.**

The first futurist view. The sixth trumpet brings about the gathering of invisible demonic forces for the purpose of weeding out the worst people on earth during the second half of the future tribulation period. This is brought about by God. According to the futurist view the ancient city of Babylon will again be rebuilt at the Euphrates and from there Satan (who is still not bound) will travel to do his diabolical work in the world. Satan's army of 200 000 000 will be a supernatural army, invisible to the eyes so that they cannot be resisted with carnal weapons. The four angels will be their commanders. A third of mankind will be killed, probably only from the Revived Roman Empire. The awful destructive judgements of the trumpets and bowls that are to come on earth are doubtless for the purpose of weeding out the worst of the human race, so that only the better class of people will be saved for the future millennial kingdom.<sup>86</sup> This interpretation must be rejected.

#### Critique.

This futurist view presumes a so-called future earthly millennial kingdom that would be populated only by the best classes of the human race, in spite of the fact that they would still be heathen! The presumption that the people living in the Revived Roman Empire, that is, in Europe and the Middle East, contain the worst of the human race is a very arrogant statement by a writer who does not live there!

The view that the antichrist would set up his future world empire in the Revived Roman Empire, that is in Europe and Middle East, is very popular with people who live outside Europe and the Middle East and would like to keep suffering and persecution as far as possible from their own country!

The second futurist view. The sixth trumpet brings about the literal gathering of Oriental peoples (kings of the East) against the people of God and the rule of Christ during the second half of the future tribulation period. This is brought about by demonic powers (16:12-16). The language seems to mingle the elements of the human and the demonic, the natural and the supernatural, in such a way as to make them almost indistinguishable. Perhaps the basic concept came from the Parthians, who lived east and north of the

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<sup>84</sup> Tenney p. 75

<sup>85</sup> Hendriksen p. 145

<sup>86</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 78-79

Euphrates, and who were a potential threat to the peace of Rome during the second half of the first century A.D.<sup>87</sup>

#### Critique.

The reference to Oriental peoples, often regarded as coming from China and Eastern Russia, must be rejected.

#### The correct explanation.

The sixth trumpet judgment represents the evil and destructive work of wars of the evil world empires that oppose Christ and his people and the terror of the war-machines they invent throughout the whole New Testament period. It especially refers to those most frightful wars that shall be waged toward the close of the New Testament period.<sup>88</sup>

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## CHAPTER 10

### **10:1 The futurist view about the angel.**

The mighty angel is Christ. In the Old Testament Christ is spoken of as the Angel of the Lord (Exodus 3:2-18), and because we are in that part of the book of Revelation that deals mainly with Israel, we should expect that Christ is spoken of as a mighty angel. His description is like that of Christ in Revelation 1:12-16. He is described as giving a loud shout like the roar of a lion, which points to Christ (5:5). He speaks of the two witnesses as “my two witnesses” (11:3), which proves that this angel must refer to Christ himself.<sup>89</sup>

#### Critique.

What Scriptural evidence is there to assume that the book of Revelation chapter 4 to 19 deals only with the future and with Jews?

Does similarity between the mighty angel and Christ necessarily mean identity? In Revelation 5:2 John saw a mighty angel and in Revelation 10:1 he sees another mighty angel!

What evidence is there to assume that the speaker in Revelation 11:3 is the same as the angel speaking in Revelation 10:6-7?

Note “the voice from heaven” (10:4,8) is clearly another than that of “the mighty angel” (10:1).

#### The correct explanation.

The mighty angel is an angel closely associated with Christ’s rule of the world, which consists of judgement and salvation.<sup>90</sup>

### **10:2 The futurist view about the little scroll.**

The little scroll contains things that were not to be revealed until the time of the end, during the second half of the future tribulation period: about the future great tribulation and about the future millennial kingdom. The little book is small in relationship to the seven-sealed scroll, which took considerable time to open and affect history. It contained matter connected with John’s work as a prophet (10:11). This little book is probably the book which Daniel was told to seal up (Daniel 12:4,9), which contained things that were not to be revealed until “the time of the end”.

The futurist view maintains that ‘the time of the end’ (the future tribulation period) is not ‘the end of time’ (the final judgement and the renewal of all things). The time of the end is ‘the times of the Gentiles’, which synchronises with the last half of the future tribulation period (Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, or the Great Tribulation). The little book was a prophetic fore-view of the things which would happen to Daniel’s people (the Jews) in the last half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week. As John read of the deliverances that were to come to his people (the Jews), of the final victory of the Lamb, and the setting up of the (millennial) kingdom, the book was as sweet

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<sup>87</sup> Tenney p.75-76

<sup>88</sup> Hendriksen p. 147

<sup>89</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 81

<sup>90</sup> Hendriksen p.149

as honey. But as he meditated on the awful sufferings that would come on the world and upon the Jews under the reign of the beast (antichrist) and during the outpouring of the seven bowls of God's wrath, the book was bitterness to his soul.<sup>91</sup>

### Critique.

What Scriptural evidence does the futurist view have to assume that the little book contains what Daniel had to seal up? Does the open book not convey the idea that its contents should not be sealed up, but should be made known?

What Scriptural evidence does the futurist view have to assume that the message of the book of Revelation is the same as the message of the book of Daniel? The message of the book of Daniel is a biblical (divine) view about all the kingdoms of the nations in world history, their arrogant claims and contemptible actions in world history; their sudden and unexpected end and the eternal kingship of the God of the Bible, which he expresses through his faithful people (the believers) on earth.<sup>92</sup>

What Scriptural evidence does the futurist view have to assume identity between the 'the time of the end' in Daniel 12:4 and the so-called 70<sup>th</sup> week in the book of Daniel? What Scriptural evidence does the futurist view have to identify these two again with the so-called 'great tribulation' in Matthew 24:21 and 'the times of the Gentiles' in Revelation 11:2?

What Scriptural evidence does the futurist view have to assume that Revelation chapter 4 to 19 deals only with the future and not with the present? Or that the book of Revelation is about Jews and not about Christians?

### The correct explanation.

The little scroll symbolises the message in which God's mystery of salvation and judgement of all nations is revealed; its working in the world; and about which John must again prophesy. The little scroll does *not* contain a sealed up message for the distant future or an exclusive message about Jews. It lies open in the hand of the angel from the time of John. It is intended to be read and its contents to be made known (to be prophesied, proclaimed). It contains a revealed message for the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming and is a universal message for all people in the world living in this period. It is a message that brings good news (the gospel) for those who repent, but it is also a message that warns about the coming judgement for those who do not repent. The proclamation of the gospel gives great joy (sweet), but the experience of opposition and persecution for the sake of the gospel is difficult (bitter).<sup>93</sup>

### **10:7 The futurist view about the mystery of God.**

The mystery of God is the mystery why God permitted Satan to cause the fall of man and thus bring sin and misery and death into the world. It is the reason why sin was permitted to wreck this world. It includes the message that Christ would dispossess the false claimant, Satan, and formally take possession of the earth when he sets up his future millennial kingdom.<sup>94</sup> This mystery will be completed when the seventh trumpet sounds (11:15).

According to the futurist view the seventh trumpet includes everything that happens between Revelation 11:15 to 20:3. The sounding of its blast or blasts extends for "days" (10:7) over the whole second half of the future tribulation period. Revelation 11:15 is merely an announcement of the coming millennial kingdom, which would only come 3½ years later.<sup>95</sup>

The futurist view claims that the mystery of God cannot refer to the mystery of the Church (Ephesians 3:6), because that mystery was completely unknown to the Old Testament prophets and by the time of Revelation chapter 10 the Church would already have been removed from the earth. At the sounding of the seventh trumpet 'the mystery of lawlessness' (2 Thessalonians 2:7) (the antichrist) will be revealed as the one in

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<sup>91</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 81-82

<sup>92</sup> Goldingay

<sup>93</sup> Hendriksen p. 151

<sup>94</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 81-82

<sup>95</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 88

whom Satan had incarnated himself<sup>96</sup> after he was cast out of heaven. According to the futurist view this will happen in the middle of the so-called seven year future tribulation period.

According to the futurist view the words: “There will be no more delay - The mystery of God will be accomplished” refer to Christ taking formal possession of the earth and the sea and declaring that there will be no more delay in dispossessing the false claimant, Satan. Then Satan will be bound, the millennial (1000 year) kingdom will be set up, and thus will the promises to the Old Testament prophets be fulfilled, namely that peace will reign on the earth. The futurist view regards the future millennial kingdom as the final fulfilment of all the promises God made to Israel during the Old Testament period. After the 1000 years the earth will be renovated by fire and the redeemed human race will take up its abode on the redeemed and restored earth and sin and rebellion will forever be destroyed.

### Critique.

What Scriptural evidence is there to assume that the Old Testament prophets knew nothing about the Church? The word ‘Church’<sup>97</sup> is used for the Old Testament people of God (Judges 20:2; Psalm 22:22; 2 Chronicles 29:28), just as the word ‘Israel’ is used for the New Testament people of God (Galatians 6:14-16; cf. James 1:1). The Old Testament prophets prophesied with a view to the New Testament realities (Romans 4:23-24; the whole book of Hebrews and 1 Peter 1:9-12).

What Scriptural evidence is there to assume that the Church will be removed from the earth at Christ’s so-called future first return and not go through the great tribulation? Jesus said that Christians (“you”, not “they”) will go through tribulation<sup>98</sup> (John 15:18-21; 16:33) and the great tribulation<sup>99</sup> just before Christ’s one and only second coming (Matthew 24:21-32).

What Scriptural evidence is there to assume that Satan is the so-called possessor of the earth? Satan’s claim in Luke 4:6 is a lie (Psalm 145:13; 146:10; cf. John 8:44).

What Scriptural evidence is there to assume that Satan will be so-called ‘dispossessed of the earth’ at Christ’s future second return? Satan has *never* been the possessor of the earth during the Old Testament period, because God reigns forever (Psalm 9:7-8; 29:10). Satan has *never* been the possessor of the earth during the New Testament period, because all power on earth has been given to Christ (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22). The words “the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19) and the words “the prince of the world” (John 12:31) only refer to the ‘world’ where Christ is not acknowledged, the world that opposes Christ and Christians (cf. 1 John 3:8; 5:18; John 3:19; 7:7; 8:23; 14:17,30,31; 15:18; 17:9,14-16,25). Christ saves believers *out* of that world or dominion of Satan (Colossians 1:13). Jesus Christ is the King of this present earth, the Ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5; 17:14; 19:16; cf. Matthew 28:18; John 13:3; Ephesians 1:20-22). And at his second coming Christ will weed out of his present existing kingdom on earth everyone and everything that causes sin (Matthew 13:41)! Then his kingdom will reach its final perfect phase (11:15; cf. Matthew 25:34).

What Scriptural evidence is there to assume that ‘the mystery of God’ is the hidden reason why God permitted evil? That reason is part of God’s secret things which has NOT been revealed in the Bible (Deuteronomy 29:29; Isaiah 55:8-9; cf. God’s unsearchable judgements and untraceable paths in Romans 11:33 and God’s inexpressible things in 2 Corinthians 12:4)! The words ‘the mystery of God’ clearly refer to God’s plan of salvation and judgement that not only has been revealed at Christ’s first coming (Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:2-6), but is executed throughout the whole New Testament period and will be completely carried out or brought to completion at Christ’s second coming (10:7)!

What Scriptural evidence is there to assume that Satan will so-called incarnate himself in the antichrist? The futurist view believes that Revelation 13:2 and 16:13 refer to the period of Satan’s incarnation in the antichrist. However Satan and the antichrist remain clearly distinguished in these Bible passages.

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<sup>96</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 91

<sup>97</sup> εκκλησια

<sup>98</sup> θλιψις

<sup>99</sup> θλιψις μεγαλη

What Scriptural evidence is there to assume that Satan will only be bound in the future, in the beginning of the so-called future millennial kingdom? The New Testament clearly teaches that Satan has already been bound at Christ's first coming (Matthew 12:28-30; John 12:31-32; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:5-11).

What Scriptural evidence is there to assume that the 'peace' promised in the Old Testament refers to the political and military peace of a so-called future millennial kingdom on earth and not to:

- the political peace after the return from exile that includes spiritual peace through forgiveness of sins (Jeremiah 33:6-7)?
- the spiritual peace with God through Christ now in the present time on earth (Isaiah 9:6; Zechariah 9:9-10; Romans 5:1) and
- the eternal peace in physical, political, social and spiritual sense on the new earth (Isaiah 9:7)?

#### The correct explanation.

The mystery of God refers to God's eternal plan concerning salvation for believers and judgement for unbelievers, the eternal decree (plan) that determines all world history. It is especially made known through the preaching of the gospel (of grace and kingship) of Christ.<sup>100</sup> Christians proclaim Christ crucified and resurrected (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 15:1-4), Christ the Great Divider of people that saves believers and judges unbelievers (Luke 2:34; John 3:16-18; Matthew 12:30) and Christ the King of all kings (1:5; 17:14; 19:16).

#### **10:9-10 The futurist view about eating the little scroll.**

The eating of the little scroll is a symbolic action and refers to John meditating on the revelation of the future sufferings of the Jews during the second half of the future tribulation period and the future blessing for Jews when the future (Jewish) millennial kingdom is set up. As John read of the deliverances that were to come to his people (the Jews), of the final victory of the Lamb, and the setting up of the (Jewish millennial) kingdom, the book was as sweet as honey. But as he meditated on the awful sufferings that would come on the world and upon the Jews under the reign of the beast (antichrist) and during the outpouring of the seven bowls of God's wrath, the book was bitterness to his soul.<sup>101</sup>

#### Critique.

The futurist view here departs from its literal hermeneutic.

The futurist view makes Jesus say one thing about the Jews in the Gospel of John (John 2:19-22) and another thing in the book of Revelation (10:9-11). In John 2:19-22 Jesus said that although the Jews would break down the temple of his body (crucify him) it (his body) would be resurrected within three days. And although by crucifying Jesus the Jews would break down their temple of stone in Jerusalem together with its old religious system (the ceremonial law), Jesus would raise up a complete new temple together with a complete new system of worship. Jesus was referring to the erection of the Christian Church that would worship God the Father in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22; 2 Thessalonians 2:4)! Therefore in the book of Revelation Jesus could never revert to the old temple of stone and the old religious system of animal sacrifices, etc. in a so-called future millennial kingdom.

#### The correct explanation.

The eating of the little scroll is a symbolic action and refers to John understanding and proclaiming the gospel about salvation and judgement to the nations of his lifetime and experiencing the cross of Jesus. The apostle John must not merely understand and digest the message of the gospel: he must also proclaim it (prophesy) and experience its sweetness of salvation and its bitterness of suffering (Luke 9:23).

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<sup>100</sup> Hendriksen p. 150

<sup>101</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 81-82

## CHAPTER 11

### **11:1 The futurist view about the temple.**

The temple is the tribulation temple that will be built in Jerusalem during the reign of the antichrist-beast only during the future tribulation period. This temple cannot be the Old Testament temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed in A.D. 70 by Titus. This temple can also not be the millennial temple of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 4:1; 42:20), which will be built at Shiloh in the midst of the sacred portion of the new land (Ezekiel 48:8,21) and will only be built after the physical changes will have changed the surface of the 'land of Palestine' (Zechariah 14:4) after Christ's so-called future second return. By deduction this temple can only be the future tribulation temple that will be built in Jerusalem when the Jews return to Israel somewhere around the beginning of the future tribulation period and during the reign of the antichrist-beast. It must refer to the future tribulation temple, because in the middle of the future tribulation period, the antichrist will set himself up in God's temple (this temple) and proclaim himself as God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). This is meant by the ruler who will come in the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, put an end to the sacrifices and set up an abomination that cause desolation on a wing of the temple (Daniel 9:27). The futurist view believes that this will be a literal image of the beast in the literal future tribulation temple of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15). The future tribulation temple will probably be destroyed by the earthquake that destroys one tenth of Jerusalem (11:13), that is, the earthquake that synchronises with the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl (8:5; 11:19; 16:18).<sup>102</sup>

#### Critique.

Daniel refers to the existing temple in Jerusalem at the time of the readers of the book of Daniel (2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.), that is, the temple that was desecrated by Antiochus IV in 167 B.C. (2 Maccabees 6:1-11).

Paul's words in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 reflects Isaiah 14:12-14 and Ezekiel 28:2, in which the goal of Satan, the antichrist and the kings who serve their purposes, is to elevate themselves to the position of 'God' within God's genuine community. God's genuine community does not consist of the Jewish community that rejects Christ, but of the genuine Church that believes in Christ.

The temple of God is a spiritual temple, that is, God's genuine community, God's people (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21-22).

After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in the first century A.D. there is no longer room for a literal earthly temple in God's salvation history (Acts 7:47-50; 17:24-25; Hebrews 8:1-2; 9:1,8-10,11-15,24-26).

There has never been a time in Israel's history that the whole city of Jerusalem and the temple courts were literally in the possession of Gentiles, while only the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Exodus 26:33) were in the possession of the Jews.

#### The correct explanation.

The temple of God, the altar and those worshipping there represent the Militant Church (all true Christians) throughout the whole New Testament period as set apart and protected by God (measured) amidst the non-Christians. The Militant Church is set apart and protected from the pseudo forces of nominal Christians (symbolised by 'the outer court') and also from the trampling and persecuting forces of the anti-Christians (symbolised by 'the Gentiles' that occupy Jerusalem).<sup>103</sup>

### **11:2 The futurist view about the number 42 months.**

The 42 months is a literal period of 3½ years, the last half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week or the last half of the seven year future tribulation period called 'the Great Tribulation'. After the Church has been removed from the earth (the so-called rapture), the antichrist would arise and make a covenant with the Jews (Daniel 9:27a). The Jews would probably finance the antichrist in his political projects and the antichrist would allow the Jews to build the tribulation temple and worship there.

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<sup>102</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 83-84

<sup>103</sup> Greijdanus p. 173, Hendriksen pp. 153-154, Groenewald p.117

But after 3½ years Satan would be incarnated into the antichrist and he would become the beast of Revelation 13. The antichrist-beast would break his covenant with the Jews (Daniel 9:27b) and desecrate the temple (Daniel 9:27c). So during the second half of the seven year future tribulation period the great tribulation under the antichrist-beast would burst loose. For a literal period of 3½ years the Gentiles would literally trample down the outer court of the literal tribulation temple and the literal holy city of Jerusalem. And for that same literal period of 1260 days the literal Elijah and Moses would witness. Their witnessing would be during the last half of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week and therefore they only appear at the middle of the future tribulation period. The future tribulation period will end when "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24) is fulfilled at the battle of Armageddon at the end of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week.<sup>104</sup>

### Critique.

What evidence is there that the book Daniel and the book of Revelation are referring to the same events? Revelation 11:3 does not speak of the book of Daniel, nor of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, nor of the second half of that week. It makes no equation between the book of Revelation and the book of Daniel. Both books are 'apocalyptic literature' and use similar language and pictures and refer to similar but not necessarily the same events!

Read 1 Maccabees 1:1-61 and 2 Maccabees 4:7 to 6:11. According to these Jewish books Daniel had prophesied in Daniel 9:24-27 about the persecution of Jews and the desecration of the (second) temple during the reign of Antiochus IV (175–164/3 B.C.). The persecution began in 171 B.C. and 3½ years later in 167 B.C. Antiochus had an abomination built on the altar. Another 3½ years later in 164 B.C. the temple was re-consecrated.

Read Matthew 24:15-20. Jesus re-applied the prophecy of Daniel to a similar persecution of the Jews and Christians in Jerusalem and a similar desecration of the temple during the time of the Roman invasion in A.D. 70. Jesus urged the Jews and Christians to flee from Jerusalem. When the Romans came they set their idolatrous standards (an abomination) up in the temple and finally burned the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Read Matthew 24:21-31. Jesus once more re-applied the persecution under the Syrian Antiochus and under the Roman Titus to the final persecution of Christians in the short period just before Christ's second coming. During the days of the final antichrist there will be a final attack on 'the temple of God', that is, on the Christian Church. The antichrist and his followers will invade and destroy the Church as an institution that proclaims the gospel (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). The Christians ("you") are not urged to flee hastily, but are even urged not to go out to the desert, but to stay among these false Christs (messiahs) and false prophets and to do Christ's work as a faithful and wise servant until he suddenly and unexpectedly returns (Matthew 24:45-46).

According to the futurist view, what meaning can the "measuring of the temple and the counting of the worshippers" have when the image of the antichrist is already erected inside the temple since the middle of the future tribulation period? And what meaning can "the trampling of the outer court and the holy city" have that would be different from "the measuring of the temple"?

In what sense would the Gentiles literally trample Jerusalem and the outer court of the temple and its people, while leaving the temple and its Jews literally unharmed?

### The correct explanation.

The 42 months is symbolic for the long period of time between Christ's first coming (12:5-6) and Christ's second coming (11:2-3,11-12,15). The period of 42 (3½ x 12) months (11:2; 13:5) equals 1260 (42 x 30) days (11:3; 12:6) or 3½ years (12:14; cf. Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7). The period *begins* with Christ's first coming (Christ was born on earth and ascended to heaven)(12:5) and *ends* with Christ's second coming (with the final judgement)(11:2-3,11-12,15).<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 84

<sup>105</sup> Greijdanus p. 171, Hendriksen pp. 155-156, Groenewald p. 118

The number 3½ appears the first time in the Bible in 1 Kings 17:1 (cf. Luke 4:25; James 5:17) when a very severe drought struck Israel. The number became a symbol in the Bible for a period of affliction that is nevertheless limited by God. As in the book of Daniel (Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7), the number 3½ symbolises a period of affliction that will not extend endlessly, but will unexpectedly and abruptly be broken off. The ½ symbolises an unexpected and abrupt breaking off. Although the godless and wicked people will aspire to lengthen this period of 3½ years (to 4, 5, 6 and even 7 years, that is, to ‘eternity’), it will unexpectedly and abruptly be broken off. In Revelation 11:2-3 the number 3½ is a symbol of the whole New Testament period in which Christians go through tribulation (7:14). In Revelation 11:9,11 the number 3½ days is a symbol of the great tribulation just before Christ’s second coming.

### **11:3 The futurist view about the two witnesses.**

The first futurist view. The two witnesses are literally Elijah and Moses of the Old Testament period who will proclaim that the time has come to rebuild Jerusalem and re-establish the Jewish temple worship, because the future millennial kingdom is at hand. They will witness during the second half of the future tribulation period.<sup>106</sup>

The futurist view maintains that the two witnesses are literally two men that are easy to identify. Their abilities show that they must be Elijah and Moses. Elijah prayed and there was a literal famine of 3½ years long (1 Kings 17:1; Luke 4:25; James 5:17). He could exterminate his opponents with fire (2 Kings 1:10). And Moses had the power to turn the literal waters into blood (Exodus 7:17-19). This is strengthened by the fact that Elijah ascended to heaven alive (2 Kings 2:11) and Jewish tradition believes that also Moses ascended to heaven alive, because no one knows where his grave is (cf. Deuteronomy 34:4-6).

The futurist view maintains that these two witnesses would return to this world before the great and dreadful day of the Lord, interpreted to mean Christ’s future second return (Malachi 4:4-6). And they maintain that they would be immune from death and would have great power to do miracles for a period of literally 3½ years.

The futurist view regards the two olive trees and two lamp stands as referring to Zerubbabel and Joshua, but then say that Zerubbabel and Joshua are just ‘types’ (thus ‘symbols’) of the literal Elijah and Moses!

The futurist view claims that Elijah and Moses would proclaim that the time has come to rebuild Jerusalem and to re-establish the Old Testament temple worship with its animal sacrifices, because the future millennial kingdom is at hand.<sup>107</sup>

The futurist view denies that John the Baptist is the one who fulfilled the prophecy about Elijah in Malachi 4:5-6. They argue that John the Baptist denied that he fulfilled that prophecy (John 1:21). And they argue that the angel only said that John worked in the spirit and power of Elijah, but not that he was literally Elijah (Luke 1:17). They argue that the great and dreadful day of the Lord (Malachi 4:5) had not yet come and that John the Baptist had not restored all things, as Jesus said that Elijah would do (Matthew 17:11).

The futurist view interprets Matthew 11:14 in the following way: Jesus said, “If the Jews were willing to accept *it*, that is, to accept the kingdom offered to them, then John, instead of being literally John, would have been literally Elijah come back. But because God foresaw that the Jews would reject the kingdom, he could not send Elijah at that time, but had to send a substitute, John, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Matthew 11:11-14). The futurist view maintains that whatever Matthew 17:10-13 may mean, it cannot contradict John’s own denial (namely, that he did not fulfil the prophecy in Malachi 4:5) and it could not contradict Jesus’ own words (namely, that Elijah would restore all things). Therefore the futurist view concludes that John the Baptist could not be Elijah! And they conclude that the literal Elijah must still come in the future as one of the two witnesses.

### Critique.

Revelation 11:3-6 does not mention the names of the two witnesses. The similarity of the two witnesses with Elijah and Moses (in their abilities towards the world) and with Zerubbabel and Joshua (in their service with respect to the temple) does not automatically mean identity with these historic persons.

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<sup>106</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 84-85

<sup>107</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 87

By maintaining that Elijah and Moses are 'literal', but Zerubbabel and Joshua are merely 'figurative' (types, symbols), the futurist view contradicts their own premise of literalism! If Zerubbabel and Joshua were figurative symbols, why can the two witnesses not be figurative symbols?

The futurist view assumes that the two witnesses would proclaim the rebuilding of the Old Testament temple and restore the Old Testament ceremonial law with its sacrifices as Zerubbabel and Joshua did. But the re-establishment of the Old Testament temple worship would contradict and violate the clear teaching that God had already fulfilled, cancelled and abolished the Old Testament temple with its ceremonial sacrifices and laws (Matthew 5:17; Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:14-15; Matthew 27:51; John 4:21-24; Acts 7:48-51; Hebrews 10:1-10)!

The number 3½ in the Bible is the symbol for a period of affliction. In the historic literature of the Bible the number 3½ refers to a literal period of literal affliction (drought) that is suddenly and unexpectedly ended (1 Kings 17:1). But in the apocalyptic literature of the Bible the same number 3½ refers to a symbolic period of literal affliction (the great tribulation, 7:14) that is also suddenly and unexpectedly ended.

The futurist view twists the words of John the Baptist in John 1:21. John denied that he was literally the prophet Elijah, but he did not deny that he fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 4:5!

The futurist view twists the words of Jesus in Matthew 11:14. Jesus did not offer the kingdom to the Jews, but the truth! Jesus did not say, "If you Jews would be willing to accept the kingdom", but said, "If you Jews would be willing to accept the truth, namely, that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 4:5, they would not have rejected Jesus as the Messiah! But because the Jews reject the truth, they reject Jesus as the Messiah and continue to maintain that the Messiah must still come. Jesus did not mean to say that the historic Elijah would restore all things with regard to the future of the nation of Israel, but that the one Jesus called Elijah (Jesus was referring to John the Baptist) 'must' come to prepare the way for Jesus Christ (cf. Isaiah 40:3; Mark 1:1-3) and to restore the hearts of many Israelites to receive Jesus Christ as the true Messiah (Malachi 3:1-2; 4:6; Luke 1:17). Jesus says that this forerunner is John the Baptist. Jesus maintains that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy of Malachi 4:5! And Jesus always speaks the last word (Hebrews 1:1-2)!

The second futurist view. The two witnesses are literally Elijah and Enoch. The second witness cannot be Moses, because Moses had died and was resurrected before the transfiguration (Matthew 17:3). Moreover Moses cannot die again, but the two witnesses must still die. Because both Enoch and Elijah were caught up in their bodies without dying, they only qualify to return as the two witnesses and then die after they have completed their future witnessing.

However, the majority of futurists argue that there is no Scriptural ground for saying that Moses cannot die for a second time, because Lazarus died two times.<sup>108</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

The two witnesses of Christ are a symbol and represent the Militant Church as an institute that proclaims God's revelation (including the gospel) throughout the whole New Testament period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. It is a picture of the Church as a mighty organisation and missionary movement, functioning through its faithful servants (the elders as ministers and the missionaries).<sup>109</sup>

### **11:8 The futurist view about the great city.**

The great city is literally Jerusalem in Palestine during the second half of the future tribulation period. It is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, because during the future tribulation period the character of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will resemble that of Sodom (immorality) and Egypt (prostitution, Ezekiel 23:3-4,8,19).<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> cf. Larkin, Revelation p. 85

<sup>109</sup> Hendriksen pp. 155-156

<sup>110</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 87

### Critique.

Revelation 11:8 does not speak figuratively of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but figuratively of the great city Jerusalem itself.

### The correct explanation.

The great city symbolises the immoral and antichristian world.<sup>111</sup> It symbolises every city in the world, every organised community of civilized man (Morris), every dwelling place of man on earth that opposes Christ and his Church throughout the whole New Testament period and especially at the end time.

### **11:15 The futurist view about the seventh trumpet.**

The seventh trumpet includes everything that happens between Revelation 11:15 and 20:3. The sounding of its blast or blasts extends for “days” (10:7), actually for 3½ years of the second half of the future tribulation period (the second half of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week). It includes the seven personages, the seven bowls and the four dooms and is followed by the future millennial kingdom on this present earth (11:15 - 20:10)<sup>112</sup>. Revelation 11:15 is merely an *announcement* of the coming millennial kingdom, which in reality would only come 3½ years later.

The seventh trumpet includes the following events: the beginning of the second half of the future tribulation period with the eviction of Satan out of heaven (12:7-12); the incarnation of Satan in the antichrist results in the beast (13:1-10)<sup>113</sup>; the false prophet (13:11-18); the seven bowls (16:1-21); the fall of the great prostitute (ecclesiastical Babylon)(17:1-18); the fall of the city (commercial Babylon)(18:1-24); the battle of Armageddon 19:17-19); the doom of the beast and the false prophet and the antichristian nations (19:20-21), the binding of Satan (21:1-3) and the establishment of the millennial kingdom.

The premise of the futurist view is that “the seventh seal includes all that happens during the sounding of the seven trumpets and the that the seventh trumpet includes all that happens during the outpouring of the seven bowls of wrath, therefore extending down to the ushering in of the future millennial kingdom. They argue that because the same four things happen during the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) and the seventh bowl (16:17-21), namely, lightning, thunder, earthquake and hailstorm, it must be clear that the end of the seventh trumpet and the end of the seventh bowl synchronise with the end of the seventh seal. They all end at the same time at the end of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week, thus at Christ’s future second return just before he establishes the future millennial kingdom.

### Critique.

For its interpretation of the period of the seventh trumpet it assumes a linear-chronological interpretation. But how can it then explain the repetitions of the same event within that period?

- The same word ‘the battle’<sup>114</sup> occurs three times in consecutive passages (16:14; 19:19 and 20:8).
- The same phrase describing the fall of ‘Babylon, the great’ occurs three times in consecutive passages (14:8; 16:19; chapter 18, esp. 18:21).
- ‘The final judgement and end of this present world’ occurs five times in consecutive passages (11:18-19; 14:10-11,14-20; 16:1,17-21; 19:11-16; 20:11-15).

Do these facts not point to a parallel-progressive division of the whole book of Revelation? They do!

The futurist view is based on the assumption that the book of Revelation should be interpreted in a linear-chronological way. But for its explanation of the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl the futurist view reverts to the premise of a non-linear-chronological interpretation, namely the parallel-progressive interpretation of the inaugurated or realised millennium view. The futurist view is thus inconsistent!

### The correct explanation.

The seventh trumpet introduces the one and only final judgement day, which brings the history of the world once more in its description in the book of Revelation to its conclusion. It is followed by the eternal kingdom on the new earth.

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<sup>111</sup> Hendriksen p. 158

<sup>112</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 88, Tenney p. 76

<sup>113</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 91

<sup>114</sup> τον πολέμιον

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## CHAPTER 12

### **12:1-2,6 The futurist view about the woman.**

The first futurist view. The woman (the first personage) in Revelation 12:1-2 is Israel during the Old Testament period AND the woman in Revelation 12:6 is Israel during the first half of the future tribulation period.<sup>115</sup> The woman is thus neither the individual Virgin Mary nor the representative symbol of the New Testament Church. The sun, moon and twelve stars refer to Jacob, Rachel and their twelve sons (Genesis 37:9). According to the futurist view Israel in the Old Testament is a married, barren woman (Isaiah 54:1); a widow in the period of her rejection (Isaiah 47:7-9); a widow (Luke 18:1-8); or an adulterous wife (Jeremiah 3:1-25; Hosea 2:1-23). In contrast the New Testament the Church is a virgin (2 Corinthians 11:2)<sup>116</sup>; a virgin given in marriage (Ephesians 5:25-27)<sup>117</sup>.

According to the futurist view the so-called Old Testament ‘prophetic gap’ or New Testament Church period between Daniel’s 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> week lies between Revelation 12:5 (the first coming of Christ) and 12:6 (Israel after the first return of Christ)! Thus, the woman in Revelation 12:6 is Israel during the first half of the future tribulation period after the long New Testament Church period and the rapture of the Church. In verse 6 the apostle John jumps over the ‘gap’ and describes the flight of the woman (Israel) into the wilderness to escape from the antichrist, the beast, after the war in heaven. Verse 6 is mentioned in anticipation and is therefore not chronological.

#### Critique.

The futurist view teaches that God has two ‘peoples’ (two women): ‘a married woman’ (Israel) in the Old Testament and ‘a virgin’ (the Church) in the New Testament. But their distinction between ‘a married woman’ and ‘an unmarried virgin’ for these two peoples of God does not stand the test of the Bible!

The futurist view interprets ‘the two witnesses’ in chapter 11 literally, but ‘the woman’ in chapter 12 figuratively! This is inconsistent. The woman is rightfully explained as a figurative symbol!

The futurist view departs from their linear-chronological method of interpretation. First it maintains correctly that the sun-clothed woman in Revelation 12:1-2 represents Israel during the Old Testament period, but then falls into inconsistency and maintains that this woman in Revelation 12:6 represents Israel during the future tribulation period!

The ‘widow’ in the period of her rejection (Isaiah 47:7-9) actually refers to Babylon and not to Israel!

The futurist view interprets the parable in Luke 18:1-8 allegorically saying that ‘the widow’ refers to Israel. Parables should never be interpreted allegorically. The message of this parable is that as the widow persisted in asking for justice, Christians should persist in prayer and never give up praying.

The futurist view tries to harmonize the New Testament book of Revelation with the Old Testament book of Daniel. They maintain that the so-called ‘prophetic gap’ between the 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, during which the present New Testament Church period is found, comes between Revelation 12:5 and 12:6! Thus, according to the futurist view John jumps over the gap of already more than 2000 years in order to take up again God’s dealing with Israel during the future tribulation period.

However, the 70 times 7 years in Daniel cannot be separated from one another as the futurist view does. It is a symbolic number with theological significance. It refers to the about 70 years Israel had neglected to keep the Sabbath Years during the about 490 years of the kings of Judah. So God punished Israel with 70 years of exile, abandonment and foreign domination (Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10). But after the return from exile things had not changed. God revealed that only after he had punished Israel 7 times 70 years (Leviticus 25:3-4; 26:31-35,43; 2 Chronicles 36:20-23) he would rededicate the temple in Jerusalem (Daniel 9:24). That rededication of the temple actually happened in 164 B.C.

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<sup>115</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 89-90

<sup>116</sup> παρθενος

<sup>117</sup> γυνή

The second futurist view. The woman in Revelation chapter 12 is either Israel during the Old Testament period until the first coming of Christ OR is Israel during the second half of the future tribulation period until the future second return of Christ.<sup>118</sup> The continuity of the text in Revelation chapter 12 to 16 shows that it is a detailed presentation of the period generally elaborated under the trumpets (thus the future tribulation period). Tenney is an adherent of the futurist or mid-tribulation pre-millennialism view. His preference is that the woman refers to Israel during the future tribulation period.

The correct explanation.

The woman is a symbol for God's true covenant people from both the Old Testament period and the New Testament period.<sup>119</sup> The symbol does not change from a merely outward nation, Israel, to a merely outward institution, the Church. The outward nationalistic nation of Israel often worshipped idols and God did not regard them as 'his people' (Hosea 1:9). And the outward congregation of Ephesus could stop to exist as a 'lampstand' (2:5) and in later history actually stopped being a congregation. What Jesus is referring to in this vision is 'his true covenant people' that consist of genuine believers in the Messiah during the Old Testament period and genuine believers in Christ during the New Testament period. Thus the woman represents the Church (the genuine believers during the Old and the New Testament) that is persecuted by the dragon.

**12:3-4 The futurist view about the dragon and the stars (12:3-4).**

The dragon (the second personage) is Satan who dragged a great number of angels down in his fall. Up to the present time (in the Church period) he has universal dominion over everyone on the present earth. His seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns on his heads are emblems of the universality of his earthly kingdom; the sevenfold perfection of his power. The futurist view interprets the word 'world' in 'the prince of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and in 'he leads the whole world astray' (12:9) as if Satan is the king of the whole present world. It also interprets Luke 4:4-7 as if Satan spoke the truth and as if Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim when Satan offered Jesus the kingdoms of this world and their glory.

When Christ rose from the dead, Satan's rage knew no bounds. In all probability Satan and his angels contested the ascension of Christ, for only thus can we account for the necessity of Christ ascending ten days before Pentecost, that he might have ample time, convoyed by twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53) for any battle in the clouds that Satan might attempt<sup>120</sup>.

Critique.

The futurist view is that the only kingdom in the world is that of Satan (1 John 5:19b). They say that, not Christ, but Satan is the king of this present world. However in 1 John 5:18-19a only the evil, antichristian and persecuting *world* is in the power of Satan and not 'the children of God'. There has never been a time in the history of this world in which God in Christ was not the sovereign King of the whole earth (Psalm 9:7; 145:13; 146:10; Hebrews 1:8)! Christ is the King of all the kings on earth (1:5). All power on earth has been given to Christ (Matthew 28:18). Christ is robbing uncountable people from Satan's dominion and they are transferred into Christ's kingdom (John 12:31-32; 17:15; Colossians 1:13).

The futurist view does not see Christ's first coming as a victory over Satan at all. According to them, the victory over Satan will happen only in the future in two stages: preliminary in the battle of Armageddon at Christ's future second return, when he binds Satan, and finally 1000 years later at the end of the future millennial kingdom in the battle of Gog and Magog, when he conquers Satan and throws him into the lake of fire. However, the clear teaching of the New Testament is that the purpose of Christ at his first coming was to destroy the work of Satan and to establish his kingdom visibly on earth (Matthew 12:28-29; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:18; 17:20-21; John 12:31-32; Colossians 1:13; 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Revelation 12:10)! In Luke 4:5-7 Satan arrogantly claims to be the sovereign power on earth, but Jesus calls Satan a liar (John 8:44). Jesus teaches that he came 'to bind' Satan (Matthew 12:28-29), to drive him out (John 12:30) and that he, Jesus Christ, is the sovereign ruler of the earth (12:10)!

The futurist view pictures Christ's ascension to heaven accompanied by twelve legions of angels as a narrow escape from the pursuing Satan and his demons. However, the Bible pictures Christ's ascension as a

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<sup>118</sup> Tenney pp. 76, 114

<sup>119</sup> Greijdanus p. 188, Hendriksen p. 164; Groenewald pp. 128-129

<sup>120</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 90-93

triumphant procession just as a Roman general triumphantly entered Rome after one of his victories. In his triumphant procession to heaven, Christ on the one hand is followed by uncountable Christians whom he conquered by his love and grace (2 Corinthians 2:14-16; Ephesians 4:8) and on the other hand is followed by uncountable disarmed and imprisoned enemies which he conquered by his power and justice (Colossians 2:15; cf. 1 Peter 3:19).

#### The correct explanation.

The dragon is a symbol representing Satan and his arrogant, yet false claim to universal world dominion. He has limited dominion over non-Christians in the present world.

#### **12:5 The futurist view about the male child.**

The first futurist view. The male child (the third personage) is Christ at his first coming. In the future he will autocratically rule the nations with a rod of iron during the period of the future millennial kingdom.<sup>121</sup> In the future millennial kingdom the will of Christ will be supreme. Politics will have no place in his government. The masses will not be oppressed by those in power. Equal rights will be accorded to everyone. And every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree.

#### Critique.

The futurist view departs here from their linear-chronological method of interpretation. While they regard Revelation chapters 4 to 22 as still in the future, they view the male child in chapter 12 as Christ during his first coming and NOT as Christ during the future tribulation period. This makes their interpretation inconsistent and non-chronological.

The futurist view regards the expression: ‘rule them with an iron sceptre’ in Psalm 2:9 as a long period of reign, but fails to explain this expression with its parallel expression: ‘dash them to pieces’, which refers to destruction on the final judgement day. By this the futurist view tries to find proof that will help them create the long period of 1000 years of the rule or reign of Christ over the nations.

The second futurist view. The man-child represents either Jesus Christ that is snatched into heaven at his first coming, or the Church that is snatched into heaven in the middle of the future tribulation period<sup>122</sup>.

The birth of the man-child is the climax for which the people of God (Israel during the Old Testament period) have existed and for which they (Israel during the New Testament period) are presently in acute travail. Viewing the book of Revelation from the standpoint of the total conflict between God and Satan the birth until the rapture of the man-child *may* symbolise the appearance of Christ from a suffering people (Israel of the Old Testament period) and the triumph of the Incarnation (the first coming of Christ)(This is the inaugurated or realised millennium view).

Or the birth of the man-child is a symbol of the coming into existence of a select body of believers (the Christian Church). Viewing the book of Revelation as predictive of the future (he means ‘our’ future, not only John’s future), it *may* prefigure the removal of the Church to the throne of God (the rapture) in the middle of the future tribulation period. This happens while the Jewish group from which they sprang (Israel) historically remain under persecution during the second half of the future tribulation period until Christ’s future second return to bring full deliverance to Israel (This is the mid-tribulation pre-millennium view).

If the 144 000 in Revelation 14:1 can be identified with the male child (12:5), the 144 000 are a select group of Jewish believers snatched into heaven together with the Church in the middle of the future tribulation period. Here they stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion in heaven.<sup>123</sup>

#### Critique.

Tenney is a futurist or mid-tribulation pre-millennialist and believes that the rapture of the Church will take place between the fifth seal (Revelation 6:11) and sixth seal (Revelation 6:12). He regards the first six trumpets as belonging to the first half of the future tribulation period.

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<sup>121</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 94

<sup>122</sup> Tenney p. 115

<sup>123</sup> Tenney p. 78

Tenney also believes that the Jews are presently persecuted, because they brought forth Christ and the Christian Church. And the Jews will continue to be persecuted after the removal of the Church during the second half of the future tribulation period. Like most supporters of the futurist view, he is occupied with Israel, their suffering and with future chronology.

By making ‘the male child’ a symbol of the 144 000 in Revelation 14:1 the futurist view again departs from its usual literal method of interpretation!

#### The correct explanation.

The male child represents Jesus Christ at his first coming. He will dash all his opponents to pieces in the final judgement at his second coming.<sup>124</sup>

#### **12:7-9 The futurist view about the dragon defeated.**

Satan will only be defeated and cast out of heaven in the future, in the middle of the future tribulation period. Then Satan would incarnate himself in the antichrist<sup>125</sup>. Satan has a kingdom (Matthew 12:24-30) that consists of rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world and spiritual forces in ‘the heavenly realms’ (the area between the earth’s atmosphere and the heaven of God) (Ephesians 6:12). Such rulers are the prince of Persia and the prince of Greece (Daniel 10:10-14). Because Jesus at his first coming did not dispute Satan’s claim that all the kingdoms on earth and their glory belongs to him, Satan must in the present time still be the sovereign ruler on earth (Luke 4:5-7)!

According to this futurist view, Satan and his demons were not defeated at their fall after the creation and also not at the death and resurrection of Christ (A.D. 30). The reference of Jesus seeing Satan fall from heaven like lightning (Luke 10:18) was not a reference to some past fall of Satan, but a prophetic utterance by the way of anticipation of his future fall described in Revelation 12. Because John writes of ‘things to come’ (1:19) which are still future in A.D. 96, Satan is still in the heavenly realms in A.D. 96 and has not yet been cast out of heaven.

Satan and his demons will only be defeated and cast out of heaven in our future, in the middle of the so-called seven year tribulation period. Then he will incarnate himself in the antichrist and the antichrist will become ‘the beast’. The beast will break his covenant with Israel, persecute the Jews and desecrate the (tribulation) temple. Michael is the prince of Daniel’s people, the Jews (Daniel 10:21). The appearance of Michael (the fourth personage) in Revelation 12:7 is a confirmation that this part of the book of Revelation is Jewish and a continuation or supplement to the book of Daniel.

Satan and his demons will only be cast out of ‘the second heaven’ (the area between the earth’s atmosphere and the heaven of God), but they will not yet be defeated on the earth!

#### Critique.

The futurist view ignores the fact that the claims of Satan in Luke 4:5-7 are lies (John 8:44). Satan’s kingdom is limited to the evil world and is completely subject to Christ’s kingdom over everything and everyone, including Satan and his demons (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22)! Satan still has limited (curbed, curtailed, restrained) power, but only because of God’s permissive will. The futurist view ignores the clear teaching of the Bible concerning Satan being bound during Christ’s first coming (Matthew 12:28-29; Luke 10:17-18; John 12:31-32; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:18; 19:13-16; Romans 8:38-39; Ephesians 1:20-21; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15; 1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 9:1; 12:9-12; 20:1-3)! The reason why the futurist view *cannot* acknowledge this is that it would destroy their very important doctrine of a literal future millennial (1000 year) kingdom on earth in which all the so-called promises to Israel would be realised!

If the futurist view regards ‘the things to come’ (1:19; 4:1) as referring to Satan’s future casting out of heaven, then they should be consistent and also regard the pregnancy of the sun-clothed woman and the birth of the male child as still future events! The futurist view is inconsistent.

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<sup>124</sup> Greijdanus p. 190, Hendriksen pp. 164-165

<sup>125</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 91,96-98

Because Revelation 12:1-5 describes the conflict between Satan and Christ throughout the Old Testament period up to Christ's first coming and his enthronement at the beginning of the New Testament period, this war between God's angels and Satan's angels in heaven takes place at the beginning of the New Testament period and not in the middle of the future tribulation period in the future. There is no biblical evidence to insert a gap of thousands of years (the so-called Church period) between Revelation 12:5 and 12:6!

#### The correct explanation.

Satan has already been defeated in heaven and on earth in the past at Christ's first coming in the sense that he has lost every semblance of justice for his accusations against Christians.<sup>126</sup> The final triumph of God through Christ at his first coming is secure. What remains is that this triumph must be worked out throughout the New Testament history. Satan and the powers in this world can no longer hinder the triumphant march of the gospel throughout history (12:11).

#### **12:10 The futurist view about the brothers.**

The brothers are literally the Jewish remnant who are persecuted and die as martyrs during the first half of the future tribulation period.<sup>127</sup> It is their souls that are under the altar in heaven (6:9-11). Compare Revelation 12:17.

#### The correct explanation.

The brothers are Christians throughout the whole New Testament period.<sup>128</sup> Because the angels and believers may call one and the same God 'their God', they may also call one another 'brothers'.

#### **12:13-17 The futurist view about the woman in Revelation 12:13-17.**

The woman fleeing into the desert is Israel kept hidden in Petra (in Jordan) during the second half of the future tribulation period.<sup>129</sup> The two wings of an eagle (Exodus 19:4) speak of the rapid and safe flight of the Jews or Israel into the desert. According to the futurist view this will happen in the middle of the future tribulation period and is the beginning of 'the great tribulation' (Matthew 24:15-22).

Just like God prepared cities of refuge in the Old Testament (Numbers chapter 35), so God will prepare a literal place of refuge for Israel in the desert, where he will take care of her for the duration of the second 3½ years of the future tribulation period (12:6). 'The man-slayer' (murderer) of Jesus is the Jews (Matthew 27:25; 1 Corinthians 2:8) and the Jews have been running around in the world looking for a city of refuge for almost 2000 years and have not yet reached it. 'The avenger of blood' is the antichrist-beast and he has been hounding the Jews from nation to nation, causing them to be wandering Jews (Deuteronomy 28:64-67).

'The city of refuge' is Petra in the territory of Edom, which will escape the persecution of the antichrist (Daniel 11:41). Petra was a great commercial centre in the days of king Solomon and in A.D. 105 the Romans conquered the country and called the province Arabia Petra. When the power of Rome waned, Petra gradually fell into the hands of the Arabs and became completely lost to the civilised world in the seventh century A.D. and remained so until discovered by Burckhardt in 1812. The rocky vastness of the ancient city of Petra will be this place prepared for Israel in the desert. The Jews must stay there not "till the death of the Old Testament high priest" (Numbers 35:25), but till the future second return of the New Testament High Priest, Christ.

'The water torrent' is literally the army of the antichrist-beast pursuing the fleeing Jews to Petra. 'The earth swallowing up the water torrent' is probably a sandstorm in the desert causing the Jews to reach Petra safely.

#### Critique.

Interpreting Israel as the 'the man-slayer' and the antichrist-beast as 'the avenger of blood' and Petra as 'the place prepared for her in the desert' is allegorising the Bible. It is preposterous to suggest that the antichrist would pursue the Jews for killing Christ! The antichrist wants to kill everything belonging to Christ.

The futurist view looks at the second half of the future tribulation period as a time during which the antichrist persecutes the Jews for killing Jesus Christ! There is absolutely no evidence for such an interpretation in the

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<sup>126</sup> Greijdanus p. 192, Hendriksen p. 171

<sup>127</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 98

<sup>128</sup> Greijdanus p. 193, Hendriksen p. 171

<sup>129</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 100-102

Bible! There is no biblical evidence that only the Jews killed Jesus Christ. Jesus prophesied, “They (the Jewish religious leaders) will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will ... kill him.” (Marc 10:33-34). And Luke writes, “The Jews with the help of the Gentiles put Jesus to death” (Acts 2:22-23). There is no biblical evidence that the antichrist will persecute especially the Jews and that for killing Jesus! Soon after Christ’s first coming there were already many antichrists (1 John 2:18). They oppose Christ and all Christians, deny that Christ is God and deny that Christ took on the human nature (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7). Later they even denied that he was crucified.

Interpreting Petra as ‘the place prepared for Israel in the desert’ is allegorising the Bible. There is no biblical evidence that Petra will be the place God has prepared for the Jews or any other in the future!

#### The correct explanation.

The woman fleeing into the desert is the Church kept save from destruction by Satan wherever in the world and throughout the whole New Testament period. ‘The place prepared for her’ is nothing more than the place God assigned each person to live on earth throughout the New Testament period (Acts 17:26). Remember: the Church is kept out of Satan’s reach (12:14) and Satan is divinely confined to the shore of the nations on earth (12:18 or 13:1).

#### **12:6,14 The futurist view about the period of 1260 days.**

The 1260 days is the literal second 3½ years of the 7 year future tribulation period. The futurist view calls this ‘the great tribulation’ and it covers the last organised conflict between the forces of antichrist and the people of God. It is the period in which the two witnesses, literally Elijah and Moses, witness in Jerusalem (Revelation chapter 11).<sup>130</sup> It is the period in which the woman, Israel, is persecuted by the dragon (Revelation chapter 12) and the beast out of the sea maintains his authority over the earth (Revelation chapter 13). “There is nothing to indicate that the period must be taken figuratively”.<sup>131</sup>

#### Critique.

Also here the futurist view departs from their linear-chronological method of interpretation. It views the sun-clothed woman (12:1-5) first as Israel during the Old Testament period. Then it jumps over the whole New Testament period consisting of more than 2000 years and views her as Israel during the so-called second half of the future tribulation period. That is why the futurist view has to maintain that Revelation chapter 11 and 12 are NOT linear-chronological, but merely ‘an interval’. Otherwise the sun-clothed woman in chapter 12 would have to be placed after the appearance, ministry, death and resurrection of the two witnesses in chapter 11. Everything that does not fit into the futurist’s literal linear chronological scheme is called ‘an interval’ in which future events are merely ‘announced’.

The futurist view teaches that the Old Testament deals only with God’s people ‘Israel’ and knows nothing about the New Testament people of God ‘the Church’. God’s history with the Church falls in a massive chronological gap between Daniel’s 69<sup>th</sup> and 70<sup>th</sup> week.

However, the Old Testament prophecies very clearly speak about God’s New Testament people (Genesis 12:3; 22:17-18; Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6; 53:10-12; 54:1-3; 55:4-7; 56:3-8; 61:1-2). The rebuilding of Jerusalem after the return from exile is a figurative expression for the New Testament community (Isaiah 60:10-23; cf. Revelation 21:1-27). The Old Testament prophet Daniel does NOT refer to any ‘chronological gap’ and there is NO biblical evidence that the Church period fills such a gap in God’s salvation history of Jews! The New Testament clearly teaches that the Old Testament prophets knew about the New Testament Church (1 Peter 1:9-12).

Everything in the book of Revelation is revealed by means of symbols (1:1) and should be taken figuratively (cf. 1:20; 5:6; 11:8; 12:9,17; etc).

#### The correct explanation.

The 1260 days is a figurative symbol representing a period of affliction that seems to extend itself endlessly, yet abruptly and unexpectedly comes to an end! It signifies the apocalyptic period of time between Christ’s

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<sup>130</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 94

<sup>131</sup> Tenney p. 77

first coming and Christ's second coming during which Satan in the spiritual world and antichrist in the human world persecute the Church while the Church proclaims the gospel.

### **12:17 The futurist view about the rest of the seed of the woman.**

The rest of the seed of the woman (the fifth personage) is literally the Jewish remnant left behind in Palestine or among the Gentile nations during the second half of the future tribulation period.<sup>132</sup> Those who obey God's commands are Orthodox Jews who observe the Old Testament Law. Those who hold to the testimony of Jesus are Messianic Jews, who have been converted by the preaching of the gospel of the (millennial) kingdom by the two witnesses, Elijah and Moses.

The dragon that was enraged and made war refers to the very trying times for those Israelites who are not kept safe at Petra. The Jews, who will not commit spiritual adultery by bowing the knee to the image of the beast, will be persecuted relentlessly by the antichrist-beast during the second half of the future tribulation period and thousands of Jews will die a martyr's death.

At the end of the great tribulation at Christ's future second return, 'the judgement before Christ's throne in heavenly glory' (Matthew 25:31) will take place and all the Gentile nations will be judged according to how they have treated 'Christ's brothers', which the futurist view interprets as the Jews (Matthew 25:40).

#### Critique.

The woman and her offspring cannot refer only to Jews, but must refer to Christians, both Jewish and Gentile Christians, because they are saved and are a part of God's kingdom in Christ" (12:10). They overcome Satan by the power of the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (12:11). They obey God's commandments (cf. Mark 12:28-31; John 15:14; Romans 13:8-10) and they hold to the testimony of Jesus (12:17; cf. John 15:26-27; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:1), that is, they hold to Jesus Christ himself as God's Truth and to Christ's teachings.

'The offspring' are certainly NOT Orthodox Jews, because Orthodox Jews do not believe in Jesus Christ and are therefore already condemned (John 3:18) and are still under God's wrath (John 3:36). Every person that rejects Jesus Christ rejects the God of the Bible (Luke 10:16; cf. John 5:23; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 John 2:22-23).

The 'brothers' of Jesus Christ are not the Jews, but the true Christians, people who are Christ's disciples and do the will of God (Matthew 12:50; 25:40; 28:10; John 20:17; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:11-13,17).

#### The correct explanation.

The rest of the seed of the woman is symbolically individual Christians in contrast to the Church as an institute who faithfully continue to obey his commandments and continue to hold on to the testimony, which consists of Jesus Christ and his teachings, throughout the whole New Testament period.<sup>133</sup>

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## **CHAPTER 13**

### **13:1 The futurist view about the beast out of the sea.**

The first futurist view. The beast out of the sea (the sixth personage) is Satan that incarnates himself into the antichrist in the middle of the future tribulation period and reigns during the second half of the future tribulation period.<sup>134</sup> In the vision, the sea is probably the Mediterranean Sea. But in the prophecy the sea signifies the nations.

In the Old Testament the antichrist is pictured as a specific demonstrable and identifiable person. He is pictured as the Assyrian (Isaiah 10:5-6), the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4), Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12), the little horn (Daniel 7:8; 8:9-12), a stern-faced king (Daniel 8:23), the ruler or prince who will come (Daniel 9:26) and the king who does as he pleases (Daniel 11:36). Isaiah 14:13-14 evidently refers to Satan before his fall out of heaven onto the earth, which happens in the middle of the future tribulation period when a war in heaven casts Satan out onto the earth (cf. Isaiah 14:12; Revelation 12:7-9). At that time, Satan would

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<sup>132</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 102

<sup>133</sup> Greijdanus p. 196, Hendriksen p. 172

<sup>134</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 120-124

incarnate himself in ‘the’ antichrist and he would become the future king of the future Babylon that would be rebuilt.

In the New Testament the antichrist is also pictured as a specific demonstrable and identifiable person. He is pictured as the man of lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8), the man doomed to destruction (2 Thessalonians 2:3), the lawless one (2 Thessalonians 2:8), the antichrist (1 John 2:18) and the beast (Revelation 13:1-10).

The beast in Revelation chapter 17 represents the beast at *the beginning* of the future tribulation period. The beast out of the Abyss (cf. 11:7) has seven heads and ten horns that are not yet crowned (17:3).

The beast in Revelation chapter 13 represents the beast *in the middle* of the future tribulation period. The beast coming out of the sea of the nations has seven heads and ten horns that are now crowned (13:1). It is then that Satan incarnates himself into the antichrist and the antichrist becomes ‘the beast’ (13:2). It is then that the beast appears at the height of his power, that is, when he possesses all seven of his heads and when his ten horns are crowned.

The ten horns of the beast represent the ten nations within the geographical limits of the Old Roman Empire that will form the Revived Roman Empire, an alliance for mutual protection.

The seven heads of the beast out of the sea has a dual meaning: With its seven hills (17:9) it represents the Revived Roman Empire. With its seven heads (17:10) it represents the one and only antichrist that has finally arrived at the height of his power.

#### Critique.

By interpreting ‘the sea’ as literal, namely, the Mediterranean Sea’, and simultaneously as a symbol of ‘the nations’ the futurist view departs from its usual literal interpretation.

When the beast in Revelation chapter 13 appears in the middle of the future tribulation period and the beast in Revelation chapter 17 appears before that at the beginning of the future tribulation period, then the futurist view is no longer literal or linear chronological, but inconsistent.

‘The Assyrian’ in Isaiah 10:5-6 is literally the Assyrian empire and its king Sargon, about 715 B.C.<sup>135</sup>.

‘The king of Babylon’ in Isaiah 14:4 is literally the Babylonian empire and its kings that fell when Cyrus sacked it in 539 B.C.<sup>136</sup> Isaiah 14:12-14 describes the fall of the king of Babylon in terms of the fall of Satan (somewhere between the completion of the creation and the fall of man into sin, Genesis chapter 1 to 3). In this futurist view, Satan is still active in heaven until he is cast out in the middle of the future tribulation period. It seems that in the futurist view Christ’s death and resurrection at his first coming had no effect on Satan! Nowhere does the Bible speak of Satan incarnating himself in the antichrist. The futurist teaching is unbiblical and false.

‘Lucifer’ in Isaiah 14:12 is literally ‘the Morningstar’. It rises as a king early in the morning, a symbol of the Babylonian empire and its kings that have fallen. The Babylonian empire and its kings follow Satan in his fall. The Church fathers Jerome and Tertullian interpreted Lucifer as the devil.<sup>137</sup>

‘The little horn’ and ‘the stern-faced king’ (Daniel 7:8,20-21,24-25; 8:9-14,23-25) literally alludes to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.).<sup>138</sup>

‘The ruler to come’ in Daniel 9:26 is literally Jason, a member of the high priest class who deviously usurped the high priesthood from Onias and then slaughtered many in Jerusalem (2 Maccabees chapter 4 and 5). The verb ‘to come’ (Hebrew: haba) is frequently used of an aggressive ‘coming’, also in Daniel 11:10. There the word ‘to come’ is used together with the word ‘flood’ (Hebrew: shataf). His ‘end’ and ‘the end’ (of this episode of anti-God persecution) are closely related. While Onias was still in Antioch, Jason made his

<sup>135</sup> Ridderbos, Jesaja, Korte Verklaring der Heilige Schrift, 1952, pp. 89-90

<sup>136</sup> Ridderbos p. 116

<sup>137</sup> Ridderbos p. 117

<sup>138</sup> Goldingay pp. 179-181, 209

appearance there. He gained the ear of Antiochus IV, and assured him, that if he was made high priest in his brother's place, he would promote the cause of Greek culture in Jerusalem, and would pay a handsome sum into the royal treasury. Antiochus listened to him, and appointed him high priest in stead of his brother Onias. Jason accordingly instituted a gymnasium at Jerusalem, and enrolled several of the young men of noble family in an order of 'epheboi', an athletic corporation such as was common in Greek cities. It shocked the pious party in Jerusalem to see these young men walking through the streets of Jerusalem wearing the broad-brimmed hat or 'petasos', the hallmark of the epheboi. It also shocked them to see these same young men engage in athletic exercises in the gymnasium - wrestling and discus-throwing - completely unclothed. Worse still, some of them took steps to obscure the fact that they were circumcised. Even among priestly families, this ardour for Greek ways was spreading. Some of the priests hurried through their sacrificial duties in the temple so as to attend the sports in the gymnasium as quickly as possible. Further offence was given to the pious Jews (the hasidim) in 174 B.C. when Jason sent a deputation of 'Antiochenes of Jerusalem' as sacred envoys to the quinquennial games held at Tyre in honour of the city and its tutelary deity Heracles.<sup>139</sup>

'The king (who) will act as he pleases' in Daniel 11:36 literally alludes to Antiochus IV Epiphanes.<sup>140</sup> He does not refer to the antichrist, because there is no hint that the subject might be different from that in Daniel 11:21-35, namely, Antiochus IV! Daniel 11:36 continues to say: "He will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will say unheard-of things against the God of gods. He will be successful until the time of wrath is completed, for what has been determined must take place." There may be an allusion to Antiochus's title 'God manifest' (Theos Epiphanes), to his use of coins with the title 'God' (theos), and to his plundering of temples and suppressing of other religions. But none of this was peculiar to Antiochus. It was characteristic of Hellenistic kings to associate themselves closely with religion in various ways, to support their position. They thus stood under the protection of particular deities, sometimes assimilated themselves to them, and sometimes encouraged worship of themselves. But other kings did not come into such sharp conflict with the 'God of gods' concerning whom Antiochus uttered his 'awesome statements' (unheard-of things) - presumably the edicts that suppressed the worship of the LORD (Yahweh, the God of the Bible) (1 Maccabees 1:41-61). If Antiochus seems to have taken his own divinity more seriously than most, the reason may again be political: it helped to bind his empire together and to him. For him, as for other kings, religion was the servant of his political position. He regarded himself as more important than any god. Such claims for divinity or such acts as if they are the absolute sovereigns in the universe, have subsequently been made by many others in history!

The Old Testament does not refer to 'one specific demonstrable and identifiable person' in the end of history that would be 'the one and only antichrist', but to different historic persons, who each are in a way a type of the anti-God (anti-Christ) kingdom and its rulers.

The New Testament does not only refer to 'one literal antichrist', but to 'many (literal) antichrists' (1 John 2:18). Likewise 'the beast out of the sea' with its seven heads is a symbol referring to many antichristian empires and their kings.

The seven heads do not represent one antichrist at the height of his power, but represent seven historical kings or kingdoms, of which five had already fallen, the sixth still existed and the seventh had not yet come and would remain for a little while. After that an eighth king or kingdom would arise, belonging to these seven and then go to its destruction (17:9-10).

The second futurist view. The beast out of the sea will be a political and military leader and his kingdom will be a frightening military and totalitarian government whose sole objective is the destruction of the people of God during the second half of the future tribulation period. Both beasts will only be overthrown at Christ's future second return. The continuity of the career of these beasts shows that the content of chapters 13 to 19 is a unit. All the events take place during the second half of the future tribulation period.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Goldingay p. 262

<sup>140</sup> Goldingay p 304

<sup>141</sup> Tenney p. 176

### Critique.

Throughout history there have been frightening totalitarian regimes. Thus the beast with its seven heads could be symbols of all the totalitarian regimes throughout history.

The content of Revelation chapters 13 to 19 are NOT continuous, but ARE parallel!

- Chapter 13:1-18, chapter 16:10-16 and chapter 17:1-18 are parallel descriptions of the activities of the beasts.
- Chapter 13:7, chapter 16:14,16 and chapter 19:17-19 are parallel descriptions of the final war.
- Chapter 14:14-20, chapter 16:17-21 and chapter 19:11-21 are parallel descriptions of the final judgement at the one and only second coming of Christ.

### The correct explanation.

The beast out of the sea represents Satan's antichristian political persecution and oppression throughout the New Testament period.<sup>142</sup>

### **13:2 The futurist view about the ten horns.**

The ten horns of the beast represent the ten nations within the geographical limits of the Old Roman Empire that will form the Revived Roman Empire, an alliance for mutual protection.<sup>143</sup>

### Critique.

The view that the antichrist would set up his future world empire in the Revived Roman Empire, that is in (Eastern) Europe and the Middle East, is very popular with people who live outside Europe and the Middle East and would like to keep suffering and persecution as far as possible from their own country! This is a very arrogant, loveless and false assumption.

### The correct explanation.

The ten horns are a symbol of aggressive attack, violent pushing and destruction.<sup>144</sup> The ten horns with diadems represent mighty men or rulers of the world with their arrogant claim to authority (Psalm 2:1-3; Isaiah 14:3-20; Ezekiel 28:1-19; Daniel 7:24; Ephesians 6:12; Revelation 17:12). The ten horns of the dragon (12:3), of the beast out of the sea (13:1) and of the beast out of the Abyss (17:3) symbolise their complete destructive power on earth. Satan exercises his destructive power (not absolute sovereign power) through the antichristian governments of the world and finally through the government of the final antichrist in history (17:12).

### **13:3-4 The futurist view about the fatal wound of the beast.**

The fatal wound of the beast and its healing refer to the death and resurrection of the antichrist in the middle of the future tribulation period. The one head of the beast that had received a fatal wound must refer to the seventh king (17:9-10), the antichrist. He will probably be assassinated and while he lies in state prepared for burial, he will rise from the dead (13:14). The death and resurrection of the antichrist is an imitation of the death and resurrection of Christ and will take place in the middle of the future tribulation period. Then Satan is cast out of heaven (12:7-9) and incarnates himself in the antichrist. Thus he becomes 'the beast'. And thus the antichrist imitates the death and resurrection of Christ in order to draw the whole world behind him (13:3).<sup>145</sup>

During the first half of the future tribulation period the antichrist will be sweet and loveable, but during the second half of the future tribulation period he will be devilish, because Satan has incarnated himself in the antichrist. At this time the antichrist breaks his covenant with the Jews and desecrates the temple by setting up the abomination of desolation, which is an idol image of himself. Just as the small horn appears after the ten horns (Daniel), the antichrist will not inaugurate the Ten Federated Kingdoms, but will be an outgrowth of it.

The antichrist will be a composite man. He will be one who embraces in his character the abilities and powers of Nebuchadnezzar, Xerxes, Alexander the Great and Caesar Augustus. He will have the marvellous gift of attracting unregenerate men, and the irresistible fascination of his personality, his versatile

<sup>142</sup> Greijdanus p. 201, Hendriksen 175-177

<sup>143</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 120-124

<sup>144</sup> Bavinck p. 20

<sup>145</sup> Larkin pp. 120-124

attainments, superhuman wisdom, great administrative and executive ability, along with his powers as a consummate flatterer, a brilliant diplomatist, a superb strategist, will make him the most conspicuous and prominent of men. All these gifts will be conferred on him by Satan, whose tool he will be, and who will thus make him the superman. He will pose as a great humanitarian, the friend of men, and the special friend of the Jewish race. He will persuade the Jews that he has come to usher in the Golden Age as pictured by the prophets. And the Jews will receive him as their Messiah. He will intoxicate men with a strong delusion and his never varying success. And when he shall be slain and rise again he will have lost none of these powers, but will be in addition the embodiment of all kinds of wickedness and blasphemy (Daniel 7:25; 8:25; 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-9). There has never as yet appeared on this earth a person who answers the description given in the above Scriptures.<sup>146</sup>

#### Critique.

The Bible does not say that Satan incarnates himself into the beast, but rather that Satan gives his great authority to the beast. He gives this not to a dead beast, but to the living beast (13:2). Satan as it were possesses and controls the beast.

The Bible does not speak of 'Ten Federated Kingdoms' and also does not allude that this could be a reference to the European Union.

The Bible does not take the characteristics of all the wicked rulers in history and confer them onto the antichrist, as Larkin does. Larkin created his own picture of the antichrist.

#### The correct explanation.

The fatal wound of the beast and its healing refers to the mystery that throughout the whole New Testament period the beast seems to rise again after it has been destroyed up to its final embodiment in the final antichristian empire and the final antichrist (cf. 17:7-11).

### **13:11 The futurist view about the beast out of the earth.**

The first futurist view. The beast out of the earth (the seventh personage) is *the* false prophet, who is a resurrection of a person in the past during the middle of the future tribulation period.<sup>147</sup> Jesus prophesied about other false Christs and false prophets (Matthew 24:24), but here speaks of *the* antichrist and *the* false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). The fact that he arises out of the earth may signify that the false prophet is also a resurrected person of the past, just as the hint that the antichrist was Judas resurrected. Moses and Elijah will come back from heaven to earth as the two witnesses. Likewise two personalities will come back from the underworld to counter their work. The two beasts are the anti-Christ and the anti-Spirit. Therefore the dragon and two beasts form a kind of Satanic Trinity. Christ claimed that he is God (Matthew 26:63-64; John 14:9-10). Likewise the antichrist falsely claims that he is 'God' (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The Holy Spirit exalts not himself but Christ (John 16:13). Likewise the false prophet does not exalt himself, but the antichrist. Nebuchadnezzar erected an image and forced people to worship it (Daniel 3). Likewise the false prophet will erect an image of the antichrist and force people to worship it. God anointed Christ with the Holy Spirit and power and he went around doing good and healing people (Acts 10:38). Likewise the dragon will give the antichrist his power and his throne and great authority (13:2) and the false prophet will exercise all this authority on the behalf of the antichrist (13:12). The Holy Spirit seals Christians for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). Likewise the false prophet will seal the followers of the antichrist with the mark of the beast, which is the name of the beast and the number of the beast.

#### Critique.

The futurist view takes the book of Revelation literal: only one antichrist and one false prophet and both would be identifiable historic persons. But Jesus speaks of false Christs (messiahs) and false prophets in the plural (Matthew 24:24)! Should the futurist view not rather take the words of Jesus Christ literal? Also the apostle John speaks of antichrists in the plural (1 John 2:18) and of false prophets in the plural (1 John 4:1).

The futurist view compares Satan, antichrist and the false prophet (the unholy trinity) with God the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit (the Holy Trinity). The Trinity in the Bible is never three different personalities,

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<sup>146</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 122-124

<sup>147</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 125-129

but one God (Mark 12:29; John 10:30; Romans 8:9-10)! While the Bible speaks of God the Father and of God the Son and of God the Holy Spirit as one name (Matthew 28:19), the Bible also speaks of Satan, the beast and the false prophet as three entities from which three evil spirits proceed (16:13). Moreover, the Trinity does not merely function during the future tribulation period, but throughout all eternity (John 1:1)!

The Bible does not allude to the beast being the resurrected Judas or the false prophet being the resurrection of another person in the past.

The second futurist view. The beast out of the earth is a religious leader during the second half of the future tribulation period. His power is religious and economic. Supported by the political power of the first beast, he enforces a false worship on the world.<sup>148</sup>

The correct explanation.

The beast out of the earth represents Satan's antichristian knowledge and its misleading, especially in the religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences of the world with their advocates throughout the New Testament period.<sup>149</sup>

### **13:11 The futurist view about the mark of the beast.**

The number of the beast is a specific visible name on the back of the right hand or on the forehead only during the future tribulation period.<sup>150</sup> Throughout chapter 13 the reference is only to a specific person, a specific name and a specific number. The right hand indicates the hand of fellowship, relationships, traffic and work and the forehead indicates that it can be seen by everyone. The visible marking on the right hand or forehead indicates the control of the whole workforce, agriculture, commerce, transport, etc. through the false worship of the antichrist. It symbolises that the whole public life will be characterised by this idolatrous worship of the one and only antichrist (cf. 11:8). The absence of this mark, that is, the refusal to comply with this idolatry will be immediately known and punished. If they cannot buy or sell unless they have the mark, they must beg, or starve or be killed. The instrument of death will be the guillotine (cf. 20:4), and the daily papers will contain a list of the names of those who were beheaded the day before so as to frighten the people into obedience to the law.

Critique.

When the futurist view regards the hand and the forehead as symbolically representing something else, but the branding with the mark as a literal visible mark on the hand and forehead, it is inconsistent.

The Bible does not describe the guillotine or the list of names in the newspapers. Larkin allows his imagination to take over.

The correct explanation.

The mark of the beast is his name or his number. It is a man's number and is 666. While the number 7 is the number of divine perfection, the number 6 always falls short and can never become the number 7. It symbolises missing the mark and failure. It symbolises the absolute highest development of man and creation without attaining to fellowship with God. *The number 666 is a symbol of divinely determined (the number 3) imperfection and failure (the number 6) of the beast.*

The number of the beast does not represent a particular identifiable historical person, but all the beasts throughout the whole New Testament period. It refers to the arrogantly claimed perfections of all the beasts (governments and their leaders), which always falls short of the genuine perfections of God. It symbolizes the absolute failure of all Satan's antichristian politics, religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences to attain the goals and perfections of God *throughout the New Testament period.*<sup>151</sup>

The *number 666* symbolises divinely determined imperfection, the absolute highest development and accomplishments the beast and his allies can attain during their reign throughout the whole New Testament

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<sup>148</sup> Tenney p. 176

<sup>149</sup> Greijdanus p. 207, Hendriksen pp. 179-181

<sup>150</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 130

<sup>151</sup> Hendriksen pp. 181-182

period. The beast and his allies attempt to simulate Christ, but always fail to reach 777, which represents God's perfection.

The *number 666* symbolises divinely determined failure, the absolute and continual failure (failure upon failure) of the goals and accomplishments of the beast and his allies (including natural man) during their reign! The plots and attacks of the beast and his antichristian allies will ultimately fail! Because the beast and his followers seek their glory in man (Jeremiah 17:5-8; cf. Psalm 108:12-13; 146:3; Isaiah 2:22; 30:1-5), they are doomed to fail! Because the beasts throughout history have always tried to be like God, they have always failed miserably! Compare the kings and kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon in the book of Isaiah and the kings and kingdoms in the book of Daniel. It is Christ and his followers that will conquer (Revelation 17:14).

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## CHAPTER 14

### **14:1 The futurist view of Revelation chapter 14.**

According to the futurist view the events depicted in Revelation 14 do not fit chronologically between Revelation 12 and 13 and Revelation 15 and 16. Revelation 12 follows the middle of the future tribulation period, Revelation 12 to 13 predicts the so-called seven personages: the sun-clothed woman, the dragon, the male child, the archangel, the Jewish remnant, the beast out of the sea and the beast out of the earth. Revelation 15 to 16 predicts the victorious standing at the sea of glass and the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues. The futurist view regards Revelation chapter 14 rather as material in parenthesis that describe events that are anticipated in the future within their chronological scheme. These events will take place towards the end of the second half of the future tribulation period just before the future second return of Christ. One pre-tribulation pre-millennial view calls Revelation chapter 14 'an interval' between Revelation 12 to 13 and Revelation 15 to 16.<sup>152</sup>

And a mid-tribulation pre-millennial view calls it "a couple of commentaries on the various aspects of the main action of the book, not intended to describe a series of actions in chronological order, but rather glimpses of various phases of the conflict."<sup>153</sup>

#### Critique.

Because the futurist view regards the book of Revelation as a linear-chronological history of future events (a record of future history), the parenthetical intervals or commentaries or warnings in the book of Revelation are convenient methods of explaining away all the facts that do NOT fit into this linear-chronological scheme! Thus the futurist view is NOT consistent chronological and NOT consistent literal!

### **14:1 The futurist view about the number 144 000.**

The first futurist view. The 144 000 refers literally to a select group during the future tribulation period, the beginning of the restored nation of Israel. They are identical with the 144 000 from all the tribes of Israel in Revelation 7:3-8 and therefore must be Jews. The Church has already been raptured into heaven at the beginning of the future tribulation period and is represented by the twenty-four elders in heaven. The number of these Jews is literally 144 000 and they are only the first fruits of God's people during the future tribulation period and thus not yet the whole of the restored nation of Israel. They "did not defile themselves with woman, but kept themselves pure" either refers to men like the apostle Paul, who did not marry, or it refers symbolically to all men and women who did not participate in the sexual immorality of the future tribulation period (9:21; 14:8). These 144 000 came out of the first half of the future tribulation period on earth and are pictured as being in heaven with Christ at the beginning of the second half of the future tribulation period. They were either martyred or translated into heaven (cf. 12:5).<sup>154</sup>

#### Critique.

Revelation 14 does not say that the 144 000 are Jews. But it does say that they are redeemed and follow the Lamb (Christ). Thus, they are not Jews, but Christians from both the Jewish and non-Jewish nations!

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<sup>152</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 15

<sup>153</sup> Tenney p. 78

<sup>154</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 131

The second futurist view. If the 144 000 in Revelation 14:1 can be identified with the male child (12:5), they are a select group of Jewish believers snatched into heaven together with the Church in the middle of the future tribulation period (between 6:11 and 6:12). Here they stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion in heaven.<sup>155</sup>

Critique.

They cannot represent a select group of believers, because the word ‘first fruits’ does not refer to a part of the whole, but to the whole of God’s people!

By making the male child a symbol of the 144 000 the futurist view again departs from its usual literal method of interpretation!

By hook or by crook the futurist view (dispensationalism) forces the separation of Israel and the Church. This is the main presupposition of dispensationalism!

The correct explanation.

The 144 000 refer symbolically to the total number of believers throughout salvation history.<sup>156</sup>

**14:6 The futurist view about the eternal gospel.**

The eternal gospel is the message about grace and salvation during the future tribulation period. Even within the future tribulation period between Christ’s future first return (for the Church) and Christ’s future second return (for especially the Jews), until the very last hour, the door of faith is still open.<sup>157</sup>

Critique.

The futurist view that God is in the present time before Christ’s first return especially reaching out to the non-Jews and that he will especially reach out to the Jews after the Church has been removed from the earth leads to the sad fact that Christians are not proclaiming the gospel to the Jews and other related faiths. Christians are commanded to proclaim the gospel to the Jews and other related faiths NOW (Matthew 28:19; cf. Romans 1:16; 10:9-13; 11:28-32; 16:25-27).

The correct explanation.

The eternal gospel is the message about the final judgement that is about to happen just before Christ’s second coming. It is not the message about salvation (Acts 20:24; Matthew 24:14), but a message about judgement. The angel announces that the final judgement day is about to happen (14:7).

**14:8 The futurist view about Babylon.**

The first futurist view. Babylon is a literal city that would be rebuilt in the future in Iraq, which would fall in the end of the second half of the future tribulation period and be supplanted by the future millennial kingdom of Christ. Its literal fall is a proof that the literal city of Babylon would be rebuilt in the future. The proclamation of her fall in Revelation chapter 14 is an anticipation of her fall that would happen later and is described in Revelation 18:1-24. Therefore this passage belongs to an interval in the chronological order of the book of Revelation.<sup>158</sup>

Critique.

Because the futurist view regards the book of Revelation as a linear-chronological history of future events (a record of future history), the parenthetical intervals in the book of Revelation are convenient methods of explaining away all the facts that do NOT fit into this linear-chronological scheme! Thus the futurist view is NOT consistent chronological and NOT consistent literal!

The second futurist view. Babylon is a symbol for the entire godless world system of man’s culture, which would fall in the end of the second half of the future tribulation period and be supplanted by the future millennial kingdom of Christ.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Tenney p. 78

<sup>156</sup> Hendriksen p. 183-185

<sup>157</sup> Tenney p. 78

<sup>158</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 134-135

<sup>159</sup> Tenney p. 78-79

### Critique.

By calling Babylon a symbol, also the futurist Tenney is NOT consistent literal.

### The correct explanation.

Babylon is a symbol of Satan's antichristian culture connected to the world empires throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming and will fall at Christ's second coming. By means of all her seductions the great prostitute (Babylon) seeks to entice and seduce people, to infatuate and blind people in order to turn them away from God (19:2). Babylon represents the world viewed as the centre of luxury, glamour and vice, as the embodiment of "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of the eyes and the boasting of what he has and does". Babylon is "the world and its desires that pass away" (1 John 2:16-17).

### **14:13 The futurist view about the blessed dead.**

The blessed dead are a special class of people who die in the Lord during the second half of the future tribulation period. According to this futurist interpretation the rapture had already taken place and the events after Revelation 11:7 take place during the so-called second half of the future tribulation period. "From now on" must refer to the middle of the future tribulation period onwards. Therefore, the dead must refer to a special class of people who die in the Lord after the false prophet enforced worship of the beast from the middle of the future tribulation period onwards.<sup>160</sup>

### Critique.

For the futurist (premillennial) view the following three presuppositions are extremely important:

- The strict separation between Israel and the Church
- The parenthesis theory (the gap theory) consisting of the Church period
- The literal hermeneutic of the Bible – especially the literal future millennial kingdom of Christ.

Therefore the futurist view must try to prove that the book of Revelation is a prophecy of future events in chronological order. The futurist view assumes that the Church has been removed from the earth either in Revelation 4:1 (the pre-tribulation pre-millennial view) or between Revelation 6:11 and 6:12 (the mid-tribulation pre-millennial view) and it assumes that the antichrist will only be manifested as the beast in the middle of the future tribulation period. Therefore it concludes that those who "die in the Lord from now on" could only refer to people who die during the second half of the future tribulation period. Such reasoning must lead to the conclusion that the book of Revelation chapters 4 to 19 has no relevant message for Christians living between Christ's first coming and the so-called rapture of the Church. Before the future rapture the book of Revelation chapters 4 to 19 is meaningless today.

### The correct explanation.

The blessed dead are all people who die as believers in Jesus Christ throughout the whole New Testament period. The whole book of Revelation is a message of encouragement for all believers in every century from the time of the apostle John in the first century until Christ's second coming (1:3).

### **14:14-20 The futurist view about the wheat harvest and the wine harvest.**

The first futurist view. The wheat and wine harvest is the judgement of the Gentile nations before Christ's throne of heavenly glory at the end of the future tribulation period (Matthew 25:31).

The harvest does not refer to the harvest of the Church, the so-called rapture, which took place in Revelation 4:1, symbolised by John's going up through a door standing open in heaven and is executed by angels (Matthew 13:39). The harvest refers to the harvest of the Gentile nations (Joel 3:9-17), with the purpose of judging them with a view to their treatment of God's people, Israel. According to this futurist view, this harvest is thus the same as the judgement of the nations described in Matthew 25:31-46. The wine harvest is not distinguished from the wheat harvest, but refers especially to the harvest of the vine of the earth, which refers to antichrist and all who belong to his pernicious system. These two judgements continue until they become one.

This futurist view maintains that the wheat and wine harvest takes considerable time. The futurist view struggles to describe the so-called chronological order of events in the book of Revelation. According to them the wheat and wine harvest begins with the outpouring of the seven bowls of God's wrath on

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<sup>160</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 136

unbelievers (Revelation chapter 16:1-11), is followed by the fall of Babylon (Revelation chapter 18) and is finally followed by the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:12-16; 19:17-19).<sup>161</sup>

The second futurist view. The wheat harvest is the judgement of believers that lived during the future tribulation period and the wine harvest is the judgement of unbelievers that lived during the future tribulation period. These two judgements are parallel and refer to the final harvest of the earth. Christ reaps the harvest that belongs to him and the angel reaps the vine of the earth, the final fruition of evil.<sup>162</sup>

#### Critique.

The futurist view distinguishes between at least three different final judgements, separated by seven and thousand years respectively:

- The judgement of Christians belonging to the Church will take place before the judgement seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10) at the so-called rapture, the first phase of the second coming of Christ (at Christ's so-called future first return).
- The judgement of the nations will take place before Christ's throne in heavenly glory (Matthew 25:31) at the so-called revelation of Christ, the second phase of the second coming of Christ (at Christ's so-called future second return).
- The judgement of the unbelievers will take place before the great white throne (Revelation 20:11) at the end of the so-called future millennial kingdom of Christ.

Some adherents of the dispensational or futurist view tend to take these three separate judgements together as one extended judgement! They argue on the basis of 2 Peter 3:8 that '*the day* of the Lord' is at least one thousand literal years long! Thus the futurist view proves once again that it is not consistent in their principles of interpretation! While they conclude that *the day* of the Lord is *not literally* a day, but at least one thousand years long (stretching from the judgement of Christians at the rapture to the judgement of non-Christians at the end of the millennium), they emphatically demand that the future millennial kingdom must be *literally* one thousand years long!

However, this kind of argumentation could be turned against the dispensational or futurist view by saying that the number 1000 years in Revelation 20:1-7 is not a literal period of a thousand years, but literally one day: namely, the day of the Lord!!!

#### The correct explanation.

The wheat harvest is a symbol of the final judgement of the righteous and the wine harvest is a symbol of the final judgement of the wicked and both will happen at Christ's second coming. The wheat harvest describes the same event as the believers being resurrected and caught up to meet and welcome Christ in the air at his second coming on the last day (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; Matthew 24:40-41; cf. 25:6-12). The wine harvest describes the same event as the unbelievers being resurrected and driven in front of Christ's throne of heavenly glory later on that same last day (Matthew 25:31-32; 13:37-43; 3:10-12; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:11-15).

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## **CHAPTER 15**

### **15:2 The futurist view about the sea of glass.**

The sea of glass mixed with fire symbolise the fiery trials of those who came out of the tribulation period.<sup>163</sup>

#### Critique.

Once again this futurist view calls this a symbol in violation of its literal hermeneutic.

#### The correct explanation.

The sea of glass mixed with fire (15:2) symbolises God's judgement.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 137

<sup>162</sup> Tenney p. 79

<sup>163</sup> Larkin p.139

<sup>164</sup> Greijdanus p. 230; Hendriksen p. 192

In the Old Testament the Red Sea was the place where God executed his final judgement on the Egyptians that persecuted God's Old Testament people. The sea covered all the enemies and not one of them survived (Genesis 14:26-28).

### **15:3 The futurist view about the victorious over the beast.**

The first futurist view. The victorious are those who come out of the great tribulation in the second half of the future tribulation period, but are removed from the earth before the outpouring of the seven last bowls. The fact that they could sing the song of Moses implies that they were all or in part Jews. They sang the song of the Lamb because as Jews they had been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. They are identified with the 144 000 sealed ones (7:4; 14:1) that sing and play harps.<sup>165</sup>

#### Critique.

In Revelation 7:4 the futurist view argues that the 144 000 are *all* Jews. In Revelation 15:2 the futurist view argues that the victorious are the 144 000, but that they may be *in part* Jews. This is inconsistent!

The second futurist view. Whether the victorious are the martyred dead whose spirits live before God, or whether they are a translated (raptured with bodies) group is not stated. Noticeable is that the concluding retribution does not fall until they have been removed from the earthly scene. They may experience the wrath of the devil (12:12-17) and the persecution of the beast (13:5-18), but they do not experience the wrath of God expressed in the seven last bowls (16:1-21). They will have been removed from the earth before this judgement.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, the other Jews and Gentiles will have to go through the great tribulation including these seven bowls of wrath right to the end!

#### Critique.

The futurist view therefore teaches not only a rapture of Church saints at the so-called future first return of Christ chronologically before the future tribulation period, but also a possible rapture of Jewish saints before the so-called future second return of Christ and chronologically before the outpouring of God's seven bowls of wrath on the impenitent. The escape of the Church saints and the Jewish saints from terrible suffering remains a very important motive to adhere to the futurist view!

#### The correct explanation.

The victorious are those who have not given in to the persecution and oppression of the antichristian governments and their rulers (the beast) throughout the whole New Testament period.<sup>167</sup>

### **15:1,6-7 The futurist view about the seven bowls of wrath or last plagues.**

The seven bowls with the last plagues are God's literal judgements reserved only for the followers of the beast during the second half of the future tribulation period. It does not describe the final judgement day. The seven bowl judgements are yet future and will be literally fulfilled. Although the seven bowls parallel the seven trumpets in their spheres of action, they are more intense. They are not the consummation or climax of God's judgement, but only a part of God's process of judgement.<sup>168</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

The seven bowls with the seven last plagues are symbols of real disasters falling on the impenitent throughout the whole New Testament period, especially shortly before Christ's second coming and on the final judgement day.<sup>169</sup> They represent God's final and complete judgements on those who disregard God's warning judgements throughout history, but especially at Christ's second coming. When people ignore God's trumpet judgements, refuse to repent and continue to harden their hearts, God's bowl judgements strike the unrepentant. For such people God's bowl judgements are God's final judgements.

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<sup>165</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 139

<sup>166</sup> Tenney p.80

<sup>167</sup> Greijdanus pp. 230-231

<sup>168</sup> Larkin p. 140; Tenney pp. 80-81

<sup>169</sup> Greijdanus p. 229; Hendriksen p. 190-191

## CHAPTER 16

### **16:2 The futurist view about the first bowl.**

The first bowl judgement is a repetition of the sixth Egyptian plague (festering boils on men and animals) at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period (Exodus 9:8-12).<sup>170</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

The first bowl judgement smites all non-believers on the whole earth with ugly and painful sores (incurable diseases) throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time.<sup>171</sup>

### **16:3 The futurist view about the second bowl.**

The second bowl judgement does not affect all the oceans of the earth, but may affect only the Sea of Galilee or the Mediterranean Sea at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period.<sup>172</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

The second bowl judgement affects all the oceans on earth causing maritime calamities throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time.<sup>173</sup> While the Egyptian plagues were local, and the trumpet judgements affected a third of the earth, sea, rivers, etc., the bowl judgements will affect the whole earth, seas, rivers, just as the sun in Revelation 16:8-9 will affect the whole earth and not just the Mediterranean world.

### **16:4-7 The futurist view about the third bowl.**

The third bowl judgement is a repetition of the first Egyptian plague (blood) at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period (Exodus 7:19-24).<sup>174</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

The third bowl judgement affects the water sources on earth throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time.

### **16:8-9 The futurist view about the fourth bowl.**

The fourth bowl judgement is the scorching heat of the sun at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period.<sup>175</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

The fourth bowl judgement is the scorching heat of the sun as judgements throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time.

### **16:10-11 The futurist view about the fifth bowl.**

The fifth bowl judgement is a repetition of the ninth Egyptian plague (darkness) at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period (Exodus 10:21-23).<sup>176</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

The fifth bowl judgement is much more than merely physical darkness. It plunges the antichristian governments in the world together with their politics and economics in intellectual, moral and spiritual darkness, even demonical darkness as judgements throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time.

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<sup>170</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 140

<sup>171</sup> Hendriksen p. 194

<sup>172</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 142

<sup>173</sup> Hendriksen p. 194

<sup>174</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 142

<sup>175</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 143

<sup>176</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 143

### **16:12-16 The futurist view about the sixth bowl.**

The sixth bowl judgement is the literal drying up of the river Euphrates at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period, which serves three purposes:

- It will permit the remnant of Israel to return from Assyria (cf. Isaiah 11:15-16).
- It will enable the kings of the East and their armies to cross over to assemble for the battle of Armageddon. The three spirits of demons gather the nations to the battle of Armageddon in order to crush the effort to establish the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth.
- It will allow the nations of the East to gather for the judgement of the nations, in which they will be judged for how they treated the Jews (Matthew 25:31-46).<sup>177</sup>

#### Critique.

Matthew 25:31-46 is NOT a provisional judgement of the nations, but is THE final judgement (Matthew 25:46)! It is also not a judgement of how the Gentiles have treated the Jews, but a judgement of the works of people done to Christ and Christians (his brothers)!

#### The best explanation.

The sixth bowl of judgement represents the evil plots, methods and battles of Satan, the antichrists, the false prophets and the wicked kings of the earth against God's people (the Church) throughout the whole New Testament period that culminate in the final battle of Armageddon at Christ's second coming.

### **16:17-21 The futurist view about the seventh bowl.**

The seventh bowl judgement symbolises the end of the future tribulation period. The great hailstones destroy the enemies in the battle of Armageddon and the great earthquake destroys the wicked cities and reshapes the land of Israel to fit Zachariah 14:4-5 and Ezekiel 47:1-12. But the present earth is not yet destroyed. The future second return of Christ and the judgement of the nations take place and then the future millennial kingdom on earth is inaugurated.

Larkin says that the great earthquake would literally be caused by the touch of Christ's feet on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4-5). It would cause mountains and islands to be moved, change the shape of the land of Palestine and raise the Dead Sea so that its waters would again flow into the Red Sea (Ezekiel 47:1-12). It would divide the great city (Jerusalem) into three parts, destroy the cities of the nations (which he regards as the 'Ten Federated Nations of the Revived Roman Empire' or 'Europe and the Middle East') and the Great Babylon in Iraq.<sup>178</sup>

#### Critique.

Zechariah only speaks of the splitting of the Mount of Olives, but Revelation of the disappearance of every island and mountain!

Larkin speaks of the waters of the Dead Sea flowing into the Red Sea, but Ezekiel speaks only of the waters coming from under the temple flowing towards the West into the Mediterranean Sea and towards the East towards the Jordan Valley.

Larkin says that the great city is Jerusalem, but the book of Revelation is referring to Babylon.

What evidence is there to suppose that the collapsing cities of the nations are only to be found in Europe and the Middle East? Why not also in America, Africa and the Far East? This is a popular theory with futurists like Larkin who do not live in Europe!

#### The correct explanation.

The seventh bowl judgement symbolises the signs of Christ's second coming, the collapse of the kingdom of the world, the destruction of this present earth and the final judgement day.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 144-145

<sup>178</sup> Larkin, Revelation p.146-147

<sup>179</sup> Greijdanus p. 242-244; Hendriksen p. 198

## CHAPTER 17

### **17:5 The futurist view about the mystery.**

The mystery is the prostitute herself, namely the fact that the final antichrist during the first half of the future tribulation period will have a bride. This futurist view makes a distinction between a spiritual bride (the Church) and a literal city (the New Jerusalem). It maintains that Paul called the Church a mystery (Ephesians 3:1-21) because the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets allegedly did not know that there would ever be a Church in the future. According to this view the mystery is the Church itself - the fact that Christ has a bride (Ephesians 5:23-32). The name of the bride of Christ is also 'the New Jerusalem' (21:9-10). The literal city of the New Jerusalem is called a bride, because its inhabitants and not the city itself are the bride.

The futurist view also makes the same distinction between a spiritual bride (the prostitute) and a literal city (Babylon). It maintains that John called the prostitute a mystery (17:5) because the New Testament Church allegedly did not know that there would be a prostitute in the future. According to this view the mystery is the prostitute herself - the fact that the Antichrist would also have a bride. The name of the bride of the Antichrist would also be 'Babylon the Great' (17:5). The literal rebuilt city of Babylon would be called a prostitute, because its inhabitants and not the city itself are the prostitute.

Thus the name of the prostitute, 'Babylon the Great' (17:5) does not refer to the literal city of rebuilt Babylon, but to a religious and apostate system of the papal Church (the Roman Catholic Church). The prostitute is not a literal woman, but a composite of all the followers of all false religions.<sup>180</sup>

### Critique.

The mystery revealed in Ephesians 3:2-6 is not the Church itself, but the fact that non-Jewish and Jewish believers in Christ are on completely equal terms the inheritors of everything God promised to Israel and on completely equal terms members of the one Body (the Church). The Old Testament prophets knew that God had planned to make the believers of the Gentile nations a part of his people (Psalm 2:8; Isaiah 49:6; 56:1-8). They also knew that their service to God's Old Testament people was in fact a service to God's New Testament people (1 Peter 1:9-12).

Larkin switches arbitrarily between literal and non-literal interpretations. Also here he deviates from his literal hermeneutic.

### The best explanation.

The mystery revealed is the fact that the scarlet beast together with the prostitute riding on it seem to possess indestructibility, eternity and thus divinity. Every time they are destroyed in history, they reappear again in another form. The mystery is an indication of the essence of the prostitute (the antichristian seductive world) and the beast she rides (17:7): they have something mysterious and inexplicable. The prostitute and the beast on which she rides seem to possess indestructibility.

### **17:5 The futurist view about Babylon.**

The first futurist view. Babylon, the great prostitute, is a symbol of the Universal (Catholic) Church in Rome (religious Babylon) during the first half of the future tribulation period.<sup>181</sup>

In Revelation 17 Babylon is described as a prostitute, but in Revelation 18 Babylon is described as a city. According to this view they do *not* symbolise the same thing! The prostitute 'Babylon' is hated and destroyed by the ten kings - the first doom - (17:16), while the city 'Babylon' is destroyed by the great earthquake and fire - the second doom - (16:18-19) and bewailed (18:9). The city is destroyed "after this" (cf. 18:1), that is, 3½ years after the destruction of the prostitute. The prostitute is 'ecclesiastical or religious Babylon', the Roman Catholic Church and is destroyed in the middle of the future tribulation period. The city is 'commercial Babylon', the rebuilt city of Babylon and is destroyed at the end of the future tribulation period.

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<sup>180</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 151

<sup>181</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 149-153

On the one hand the beast and the ten kings will hate the prostitute and destroy her (17:16). On the other hand the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury will weep and mourn over her (18:9). This paradox can be explained by differentiating between 'religious Babylon' (chapter 17) and 'commercial Babylon' (chapter 18). The secular spirit rebels against the corruption of even a decadent religious authority, while it mourns the loss of commercial and social advantages.<sup>182</sup> This futurist view comes with the following arguments:

*The origin of Babylon and the Babylonian cult.* The River Euphrates, on which Babylon was built, also flowed through the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:14) and Satan doubtless chose the site of Babylon as his headquarters from which to tempt Adam and Eve. It was doubtless from Babylon that the Antediluvian Apostasy (Genesis 6:5) had its source that ended in the flood. To this centre the forces of evil gravitated after the flood and Babel was built (Genesis 10:8-10). Babel was the origin of the nations (Genesis 11:9).

According to this view, before the nations were scattered over the earth, Satan had implanted the virus of a false doctrine, the Babylonian cult, in the hearts of people. The Babylonian cult was a system claiming to possess the highest wisdom and to reveal the most divine secrets. Before a member could be initiated into the cult, he had to confess to the priest and then the priest had him in his power. Once admitted into the cult, a person was no longer a Babylonian, Assyrian, Egyptian, but a member of a mystical brotherhood over which the Pontiff or High Priest was placed. His word was law.

*The Babylonian cult moves to Rome.* According to this view, the Babylonian cult continued to have its headquarters in Babylon until king Attalus III, the priest-king of the Chaldean Hierarchy, fled before the conquering Persians to Pergamum and settled there. Satan thus shifted his capital from Babylon to Pergamum in Asia Minor. Thus Pergamum was the place where Satan had his throne (2:13). Attalus III, the Pontiff and King of Pergamum died in 133 B.C. and bequeathed the headship of the Babylonian cult to Rome. Thus when the Etruscans from Lydia (the region of Pergamum) came to Italy, they brought with them the Babylonian religion and rites. They set up a Pontiff who was head of the priesthood.

Later the Romans accepted this Pontiff as their civil ruler. Julius Caesar was made 'Pontiff of the Etruscan Order' in 74 B.C. and 'Supreme Pontiff of the Babylonian Order' in 63 B.C. Thus he became the heir to the rights and titles of Attalus III, the Pontiff of Pergamum, who had made Rome his heir by will. Thus the first Roman Emperor also became the Head of the Babylonian Priesthood and Rome became the successor of Babylon. The emperors of Rome continued to exercise the office of 'Supreme Pontiff' until A.D. 376 when emperor Gratianus refused it for Christian reasons.

*The Babylonian cult becomes the papal Church of Rome.* According to this view, Damasus had been made bishop of Rome in A.D. 366 through the influence of the monks of Mount Carmel, a college of Babylonian religion originally founded by the priests of Jezebel. Damasus was elected to the office of Supreme Pontiff in A.D. 378. Thus Satan united Babylon with Rome into one religious system and made the Head of the Babylonian Order also the Ruler of the Roman Church.

Soon after Damasus was made Supreme Pontiff, the rites of Babylon began to emerge: the worship of the Virgin Mary was set up in A.D. 381. All outstanding festivals of the Roman Catholic Church are of Babylonian origin. Easter is not a Christian name, but is derived from Ishtar, the title of the Babylonian Queen of heaven and the decree to observe Easter and Lent was given in A.D. 519. The rosary is of pagan origin. The sign of the cross had its origin in the Tau of the Chaldeans and Egyptians, coming from the letter "T", the initial standing for the name Tammuz the name used to describe the Babylonian mysteries for the same reason the Roman Catholic Church employs it now (in making the sign of the cross). Celibacy and Tonsure, and the Order of the Monks and Nuns have no warrant or authority from Scripture. The Nuns are nothing more than an imitation of the Vestal Virgins of Pagan Rome.

The Roman Catholic Church always shrouded itself in mystery. The mystery of baptismal regeneration; the mystery of transubstantiation of the elements of the Lord's Supper into the literal body and blood of Christ; the mystery of holy water; the mystery of lights on the altar; the mystery of mystery plays; and other superstitious rites and ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church.

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<sup>182</sup> Larkin p. 149,154; Tenney, p. 85,

In the time of the apostle John the mystery of iniquity was already at work (2 Thessalonians 2:7). In the present time it is no longer a mystery, because it is easy to identify the prostitute as being the papal Church of Rome. The popes today wear the purple and scarlet coloured robes of the prostitute. The glittering of gold, precious stones and pearls fill the mitres of popes. The prostitute was “drunk with the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus”, which happened during the inquisition in papal lands, but will more particularly happen to the martyrs during the time of the antichrist.

*The papal Church of Rome in the present time will become the Universal Church during the great tribulation.* According to this futurist view, after Christ’s future first return at the beginning of the first half of the future tribulation period, the true Church will be removed from the world (the rapture) and the papal Church of Rome will become the Universal Church centred in Rome. As prostitute she will sit on the scarlet beast (17:3). This means that the papal Church will first be supported by the antichrist in her ecclesiastical pretensions to become the state church that controls and rules the state. As prostitute she will also sit on many waters (17:2), that is, on peoples, multitudes, nations and languages (17:15). This means that the papal Church will have worldwide ecclesiastical supremacy. Her long dream of worldwide ecclesiastical supremacy will at last be realised.

However, in the middle of the future tribulation period, when the worship of the beast is set up and Antichrist in his jealousy will not permit any worship that does not centre on himself, the papal or Universal Church will also be destroyed. The ten kings of the Federated Kingdom and the Antichrist will find their power curtailed by the papal Church and will destroy her (17:16).

### Critique.

The futurist view is inconsistent, because in Revelation 17:5 it departs from its premise of literal interpretation and interprets “Babylon the Great” figuratively as the Roman Catholic Church. But in Revelation 18:2 it maintains its premise of literal interpretation and interprets ‘Babylon the Great’ literally as the future godless city! In Revelation 18:1 it also maintains its premise of linear chronological interpretation and teaches that the literal city of chapter 18 comes after the figurative prostitute of chapter 17.

However, the prostitute and the city are the same, because the prostitute is called “Babylon the great” (17:5) and is identified with the great city (17:18). Both made the kings drunk with the wine of their adulteries (17:2; 18:3; 14:8), both are dressed in purple and scarlet and jewels (17:4; 18:16), both shed the blood of Christians (17:6; 18:24) and both are destroyed by burning (17:16; 18:8-9,18; 19:2-3). Revelation 17:1, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute” is described in Revelation 18:1-24. Revelation 17:7-18 is an interim explanation of the mystery concerning the relationship between the prostitute and the beast she rides.

This view describing the Babylonian cult, its origin, its move to Rome, its development into the Roman Catholic Church and its development into the Universal Church during the first half of the future tribulation period, must be rejected as pure speculation! Babylon is above all a symbol for Satan’s antichristian world and its seductions manifested in more areas than just the religious: it is also manifested in industry and commerce, business and finance, education and justice, luxuries and pleasures, art and sports.

The second futurist view. Babylon, the great prostitute, is a symbol of pagan culture throughout all history.<sup>183</sup>

In Revelation chapter 17 the futurist Tenney adopts the inaugurated millennial view. He says: “The great prostitute represents more than one city or civilisation and more than one era of history. It conveys the sum total of pagan culture, social, intellectual, and commercial, that had opposed and oppressed the people of God from time immemorial. Already during the Old Testament period Babylon was the proud city with its tower that defied the command of God to spread abroad and fill the earth (Genesis 11). Babylon was the display of the human self-sufficiency and pride of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 4:30). Babylon became the chief enemy and oppressor of Judah during the exile. To the Israelites Babylon was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty, the foe of God’s people, and the lasting type of sin, carnality, lust and greed. Babylon is called ‘a prostitute’, because of its idolatry, the predominance of lust and sensual pleasure, the willingness to barter righteousness for commercial advantages and the love of luxury irrespective of its moral cost.”

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<sup>183</sup> Tenney pp. 82-84

### The correct explanation.

Babylon, the great prostitute, is a symbol for Satan's antichristian world and its seductions, especially in industry and commerce, business and finance, education and justice, luxuries and pleasures, art and sports, and certainly also in every kind of worldly religion. It is a symbol of Satan's antichristian culture connected to the world empires throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. The prostitute called 'Babylon' always opposes the bride of Christ, called 'the New Jerusalem' (21:9-10).<sup>184</sup>

### **17:5 The futurist view about the beast.**

The scarlet beast (17:5) is identical with the beast out of the sea (13:1) who rules during the future tribulation period. The beast in Revelation chapter 17 represents the beast at the beginning of the future tribulation period, because he has seven heads and ten horns that are not yet crowned (17:3). The prostitute riding on the beast represents the papal Church as the universal state Church which will dominate the beast during the first half of the future tribulation period.

The beast in Revelation chapter 13 represents the beast in the middle of the future tribulation period, because he has seven heads and ten horns that are now crowned (13:2). In the middle of the future tribulation period Satan incarnates himself into the antichrist and the antichrist becomes 'the beast' at the height of his power (13:2).

The beast represents godless authority, supported by diabolical supernaturalism. Its seven heads representing seven successive rulers, of whom one will ultimately reappear as the final beast (antichrist). The scarlet beast is associated with the ten kings that have not yet appeared on the stage of history. Therefore the scarlet beast with its seven heads must refer to a future fulfilment. The scarlet beast is the dominating figure of earth's last empire, in which man-made evil rises to its greatest ascendancy and then collapses under the judgement of God.<sup>185</sup>

### Critique.

Placing the beast of chapter 13 3½ years later than the beast of chapter 17 destroys the chronological hermeneutic principle of the futurist view. The futurist view becomes inconsistent.

### The correct explanation.

The scarlet beast refers to the antichristian empires with their governments throughout the history of the world.

### **17:10 The futurist view about the seven kings.**

The seven kings cannot be clearly identified, but the seventh and eighth king is the one and only antichrist-beast at the height of his power in the middle of the future tribulation period. This is a symbolic-futurist view.

The seven heads of the beast out of the sea has a dual meaning: With its seven hills (17:9) the beast represents the Revived Roman Empire. With its seven heads (17:10) the beast represents the one and only antichrist that has finally arrived at the height of his power. This futurist view does not know what is meant by the five kings that had already fallen. The sixth king on the throne during John's day was Domitian. The seventh king is undoubtedly the antichrist who is yet to come. The one head of the beast that had received a fatal wound must refer to this seventh king, the antichrist. He will probably be assassinated and while he lies in state prepared for burial, he will rise from the dead (13:14). The death and resurrection of the antichrist is an imitation of the death and resurrection of Christ and will take place in the middle of the future tribulation period. Then he becomes the incarnation of Satan. The ten kings of the ten nations of the revived Roman Empire will help the antichrist destroy the papal Church, because it stood in the way of the antichristian empire.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Hendriksen pp. 200-202

<sup>185</sup> Tenney p. 84-85

<sup>186</sup> Larkin pp. 120-124

### Critique.

The beast with seven heads on the one hand and the seventh and eighth head of the beast cannot at the same time represent the one and only antichrist!

The futurist view cannot explain the first five kings.

The view that the prostitute represents the Roman Catholic Church is speculation.

The view that the seven hills represent the Revived Roman Empire and that this Revived Roman Empire will be in Europe and the Middle East is pure speculation from somebody who lives in comfort free from persecution outside Europe or the Middle East!

### The correct explanation.

The seven kings are a symbol that represents all the world empires, past, present and future right up to the final antichristian empire before Christ's second coming. This is the inaugurated or realised millennial view. The seven kings represent all the world empires taken together. The word 'kings' is not taken in its literal and usual meaning, but rather in its apocalyptic meaning as kingdoms or empires as they are represented by their kings (Daniel 7:2-8,17). These world empires are nevertheless very literal and real in history! Although the seven hills refer to one manifestation of the beast in John's time, the seven heads refer to much more than all the emperors of the Roman Empire. The head that had been fatally wounded (13:3) represents the mystery that the beast always seems to rise again after it has been destroyed up to its final embodiment in the final antichristian empire and the final antichrist (cf. 17:7-11).

### **17:12-13 The futurist view about the ten kings that give their power to the beast.**

The ten horns represent ten future historical kings that would aid the future antichrist during the future tribulation period. The word 'kings' is taken in its literal and usual meaning and refers to actual historical kings. The ten horns are ten kings or rulers over dominions or countries (cf. Daniel 7:24). They did not yet exist in John's time, but after the appearance of the antichrist during the future tribulation period they will aid the final antichrist in his purpose, but only for a very short time.<sup>187</sup>

### The best explanation.

The number 10 symbolises completeness on earth. The ten horns represent the symbolic totality of mighty people in every realm on earth that aid the various antichristian governments throughout the whole New Testament period. They are the mighty ones or rulers in every realm on earth: government, industry, commerce, military, finance, education, mass-communication, art, sports and even religion insofar they serve the central political authority.<sup>188</sup>

### **17:16-17 The futurist view about the prostitute who is initially carried and afterwards destroyed.**

The prostitute symbolises the end-time Universal Papal Church. It is destroyed in the middle of the future tribulation period. After the removal of the true Church at the future first return of Christ, the false Church (the Universal Church, the papacy) comes to power and even dominates the antichristian government of the antichrist. But only after 3½ years, in the middle of the future tribulation period, Satan is incarnated into the antichrist and Satan becomes the beast. The beast together with his ten federated kingdoms will destroy the false Church, because it hindered them in their plans. This punishment is executed in the middle of the future tribulation period.<sup>189</sup>

### The correct explanation.

The prostitute symbolises the antichristian world and its seductive culture throughout the whole New Testament period. It is repeatedly destroyed until its final destruction at Christ's second coming.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Greijdanus p. 257

<sup>188</sup> Hendriksen p. 205

<sup>189</sup> Larkin p. 122

<sup>190</sup> Hendriksen pp. 206-207

## CHAPTER 18

### **18:2 The futurist view about the fall of Babylon.**

Babylon is the literal ancient city of Babylon that would be rebuilt somewhere in the future and that would be destroyed at the end of the future tribulation period (before the future millennial kingdom). Babylon would be rebuilt by the great wealth of capitalists in the last days and they would make it the great commercial centre of the world. This view maintains that there is not a word in Scripture that says that Christ's future first return (the rapture) cannot take place until Babylon is rebuilt. Therefore, the Church may be taken out of the world 25 or even 50 years before the rebuilding of Babylon.<sup>191</sup>

This view also maintains that Isaiah chapter 13 and Jeremiah chapters 50 and 51 contain much that has not as yet been fulfilled. Babylon would be destroyed on "the day of the Lord" (Isaiah 13:9) and the day of the Lord is interpreted as the inauguration of the future millennial kingdom. Babylon will be destroyed during the events that issue in the millennium.<sup>192</sup> Babylon will be destroyed by the great earthquake attended by incessant lightning and awful thunder (16:17-19).

#### Critique.

Isaiah does not merely prophesy the fall of Babylon, an event long before the final judgement day, but rather prophesies the final judgement day in terms of the fall of Babylon! The fall of ancient Babylon becomes an Old Testament symbol for the final judgement day, the end of the history of this world! Then the sun, moon and stars will stop to function. Then God will not only punish the city Babylon, but the whole world for its evil (Isaiah 13:9-11).

#### The correct explanation.

Babylon is the symbol of Satan's antichristian world and its seductions throughout history. It will fall at Christ's second coming (cf. 16:17-21).

### **18:2 The futurist view about Babylon being the haunt for every evil spirit.**

The rebuilt city of Babylon during the second half of the tribulation period will be the seat of all occultism and spiritism. Demons from the atmosphere and disembodied souls from the Abyss will find in Babylon the opportunity to materialise themselves in human bodies. They will come in countless legions until Babylon will be full of demon-possessed people at the height of its glory. Babylon will be ruled by Satan himself incarnated in the antichrist-beast.<sup>193</sup>

#### Critique.

Evil spirits are fallen angels. The Bible never speaks of evil spirits that incarnate or materialise themselves in human bodies. This is pure speculation. Christ teaches that evil spirits can possess human bodies of non-believers (cf. Matthew 12:43-45), but never the bodies of believers (cf. 1 John 4:4).

#### The correct explanation.

Babylon as symbol of Satan's antichristian world and its seductions will turn into hell at Christ's second coming. Previously Babylon had much evil influence on earth (17:18). But when Babylon falls at Christ's second coming her evil influence on earth is terminated and she is turned into the prison of hell for every evil spirit and for all the godless and wicked people that had lived on earth. They will be subjected to the terrors of hell (cf. 21:8; Matthew 25:41).

### **18:4 The futurist view about coming out of Babylon.**

God will mercifully deliver his own people from the literal city of Babylon just before he destroys it at the end of the future tribulation period. Just as Sodom and Gomorra could not be destroyed until the righteous Lot had escaped, likewise Babylon cannot be destroyed until all its righteous people have fled.

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<sup>191</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 161-162

<sup>192</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 158

<sup>193</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 163

### Critique.

Why would the righteous people (according to the futurist view: the Jews) like to continue to live in a literal sense in the literal evil city of Babylon? Why wait until God delivers you when God already commanded you to leave? 'Babylon' is not simply one evil city in the future, but a symbol of every evil place with its evil activities: antichristian occupations in industry and commerce, business and finance, education and justice, luxuries and pleasures, art, sports and certainly also in every kind of worldly religion. If you are still involved in an antichristian religion or business or pleasure, then get out of it immediately!

### The correct explanation.

Jesus exhorts Christians to immediately leave the kingdom of this world with its antichristian culture, sins and seductions in every place in the world throughout the whole New Testament period.

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## **CHAPTER 19**

### **19:7a The futurist view about the wedding of the Lamb.**

The first futurist view. The wedding of the Lamb is the ultimate union of Christ with his Church and will take place in heaven simultaneously with the future tribulation period (Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week) on earth. The wedding of the Lamb comes *after* the so-called rapture at Christ's future first return and the so-called judgement of rewards (Matthew 25:31-46) and *before* the appearance of Christ with his saints at Christ's future second return. Whether this wedding would take seven years or would be delayed to take place at the end of the future tribulation period after the doom of commercial Babylon is not stated. The wedding would be followed by the wedding trip to the future millennial kingdom on earth.<sup>194</sup>

### Critique.

*Time.* The adherents of the futurist (dispensational, pre-millennial) view have great difficulty to harmonise the wedding of the Lamb (19:7-10) with their future tribulation period (chapter 17 and 18). According to the futurist view the first half of their future tribulation period ends with the destruction of religious Babylon and the second half of the future tribulation period ends with the destruction of commercial Babylon. If according to the futurist view the book of Revelation is a linear-chronological revelation, then the wedding of the Lamb is NOT simultaneously with the future tribulation period, but *follows* after the future tribulation period (chapter 19 comes after chapter 17 and 18)!

In order to maintain their view that the wedding of the Lamb in heaven is simultaneous with their future tribulation period on earth, they regard Revelation 19:1-10 not as a part of the linear-chronological history, but as an interval (a parenthesis or insertion, which does not fit into the linear-chronological scheme of the book of Revelation!

Nevertheless, according to the Bible there will only be one second coming of Christ in the air. Immediately after Christ's second coming the wedding of the Lamb commences on the new earth!

*Place.* The adherents of the futurist view believe that the wedding of the Lamb will take place in heaven after the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

However, the text of Revelation 19:7,9 does not say that the wedding of the Lamb actually takes place, nor that it takes place in heaven. It only says that the time for the wedding of the Lamb has arrived, that the bride has made herself ready. Those called to the wedding supper (the Bride) are blessed!

The second futurist view. The wedding of the Lamb is the ultimate union of Christ with his Church and will take place in heaven after the fall of Babylon at the end of the future tribulation period.<sup>195</sup>

### Critique.

Tenney says nothing about what happens to the Church (the bride) between its rapture in the middle of the future tribulation period and its wedding at the end of the future tribulation period. His chronology suffers.

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<sup>194</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 167,170

<sup>195</sup> Tenney p. 87

### The correct explanation.

The wedding of the Lamb (and the wedding supper) is figuratively the ultimate union of Christ with his Church and will take place *after* the one and only second coming of Christ, which includes: the one final battle, the one resurrection from the dead, the one final judgement in the air, the one final destruction and renovation of this present world and the one descent of (still) “the bride” (the New Jerusalem) out of heaven onto the new earth. The one and only second coming of Christ, which culminates in the descent of the New Jerusalem onto the new earth, marks the beginning of the wedding of the Lamb on the new earth. Only then ‘the bride’ is also called ‘the wife’ of the Lamb (21:9-10). The work of salvation of Christ is completed when the last enemy (death) has been destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26) and when the final phase of the kingdom (the new heaven and the new earth) has arrived (1 Corinthians 15:24).

### **19:7b The futurist view about the bride of the Lamb.**

The bride of the Lamb is limited to the New Testament Church between Pentecost and Christ’s future first return – it excludes Israel. According to the futurist view God has two women: one wife (Israel in the Old Testament) and one bride (the Church in the New Testament).

During the Old Testament God is called Israel’s husband (Isaiah 54:5-8) and Israel is thus regarded as God’s wife. Because of her sins, Israel became a rejected wife – sold into slavery in Babylon (Isaiah 50:1). But God promised to take Israel back when she ceases her idolatry (Jeremiah 3:1-18; Ezekiel 16:1-63; Hosea 2:1-23; 3:1-5). During the future millennial kingdom Israel would reside as God’s bride (in the old Jerusalem) on earth.

In the New Testament the Church is called the bride of Christ and is thus not yet the wife of Christ. The Church did not exist before the day of Pentecost and therefore only believers between Pentecost and the Christ’s future first return constitutes the bride. The marriage of the Church would take place at Christ’s future first return (the rapture). Then Christ would descend in mid-air to meet her on her way to the bridal halls of heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). The wedding would take place in heaven. During the future millennial kingdom the Church would reside in the New Jerusalem in heaven (the Heavenly Jerusalem), while Israel would reside in the earthly Jerusalem on earth.

According to the futurist view the differences above make it quite clear that Israel can never be the bride.<sup>196</sup>

### Critique.

Revelation 19:7 literally uses the word ‘woman’, which refers to any adult female. The text implies that she is the bride, a woman made ready to be married, a woman pledged to be married. In the Bible a betrothed woman or a woman promised in marriage to a man is regarded as already being ‘the wife’ (Genesis 29:21; Deuteronomy 22:24; Matthew 1:18,20,24; Revelation 19:7; 21:9 and perhaps John 8:3).

Revelation 21:2,9a uses the word ‘bride’<sup>197</sup> and Revelation 21:9b uses the word ‘woman’ or ‘wife’<sup>198</sup> as symbols that Christ and his Body are indivisible. Therefore the idea that Christ has two ‘wives’, one in heaven (the Church) and another on earth (Israel), is pure speculation!

The context clearly teaches that Christ has only one bride (21:2), the woman made ready to be married (19:7; 21:9). And she is without doubt the community that believes in the Messiah or Christ (the Church).

The ‘Church’<sup>199</sup> already existed in the Old Testament and consisted of God’s Old Testament people, Israel (Judges 20:2; Psalm 22:22; 2 Chronicles 29:28)!

The wedding does not take place at the so-called rapture of the futurist view, but rather when the Church descends as the New Jerusalem onto the new earth (21:1-2,9-10).

### The correct explanation.

The bride of the Lamb is God’s Old Testament people *and* God’s New Testament people from the creation to Christ’s second coming. In the Bible, the relationship between God and his people are pictured as a marriage.

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<sup>196</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 167-168

<sup>197</sup> ἡ νύμφη

<sup>198</sup> ἡ γυνή

<sup>199</sup> ἡ ἐκκλησία

In the Old Testament the true believers are called the bride<sup>200</sup> of God (Isaiah 62:5) or even the wife<sup>201</sup> of God (Isaiah 54:5). And in the New Testament, Christ is called the bridegroom<sup>202</sup> (John 3:29; Matthew 9:15) and the true believers the betrothed virgin<sup>203</sup> of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2) or the ‘bride’ of Christ (cf. 21:2,9; Ephesians 5:23ff). The correct view regards God’s New Testament people as the continuation and extension of God’s Old Testament people as the bride (cf. John 10:16; Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6).

### **19:8 The futurist view about the wedding clothes of the believers.**

The wedding clothes of the believers are the righteous works of the Christians themselves. The bride does not put on her wedding clothes until after she has been tried at the judgement seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10), where all her false works will have been consumed by fire (1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 1 Peter 1:7). All her own righteous acts that remain after the fire judgement will constitute her wedding dress.<sup>204</sup>

#### Critique.

The wedding clothes can never be “the righteous acts or good works” of Christians, because these are never good enough (Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:8-9).

#### The correct explanation.

The wedding clothes of the believers are the righteousness that Christ earned by his death on the cross and credited to believers (1 Peter 3:18; Romans 13:14). The wedding clothes are not brought along by participants, but provided by King Jesus (Matthew 22:12). God credits righteousness only apart from human works (Romans 4:3,6). Christ’s perfect righteousness is received by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). Christians have nothing that they have not received (1 Corinthians 4:7).

### **19:9 The futurist view about the people called to the wedding supper.**

The people called to the wedding supper are all the righteous people not included in the Church. They are the Old Testament saints (Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, Moses, David, the prophets), John the Baptist as “friend of the bridegroom”, “the blood-washed multitude” that will come out of the great tribulation (second half of the future tribulation period) and all the righteous people of all past ages who are not included in the Church (the bride). These guests cannot be the bride (the Church), because the bride is not invited to her own wedding. The guests can also not be the virgins in the parable of the Ten Virgins, because they are simply bridesmaids and the wise virgins also represent the Church. The angels will only be spectators.<sup>205</sup>

What happens after the wedding supper? Usually the guests make merry among themselves with music and dancing. Then the groom and bride steal away on their wedding trip. Generally this is to some pleasure resort or place they have never seen. Sometimes it is a visit to the old home of the groom or bride. So after ‘the wedding of the Lamb’ (in heaven) the heavenly bridegroom will take his bride on a wedding trip back to earth. This constitutes the future second return of Christ! There he will set up his future earthly millennial kingdom, God will give him the throne of David, and the bride (Church) will reign with him for a thousand years on earth. What a sweet and lovely honeymoon that will be!<sup>206</sup>

#### Critique.

The original word ‘called’ cannot be translated by the word ‘invited’. The people that are called are called by God in a sovereign and effective way to be his Bride (Church) for ever. Those called consist only of the Bride.

The futurist (dispensational) view demands the existence of so-called wedding guests, otherwise the righteous of the Old Testament period and the righteous of the period after the removal of the Church cannot be accounted for! However, the text does not mention or even imply that there will be “invited guests” besides the groom and bride at the wedding supper!

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<sup>200</sup>

νυμφη

<sup>201</sup> γυνη (adult female in 1 Corinthians 14:34f and 1 Timothy 2:11f or wife in Ephesians 5:22f)

<sup>202</sup> νυμφιος

<sup>203</sup> παρθενος

<sup>204</sup> Larkin, Revelation, pp. 168-169

<sup>205</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 169-170

<sup>206</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 170

Revelation 19:7-10 does not even allude to such events as a dancing party in heaven, a honeymoon trip to the earth, a setting up house in the future millennial kingdom on earth, etc! The above explanation is pure speculation! Revelation 21:1-3,9-10 clearly reveals that the futurist view of the wedding of the Lamb is flawed. The wedding of the Lamb will NOT take place in heaven while the future tribulation period rages on earth! The wedding of the Lamb will NOT take place 1000 years before the bride would arrive on the new earth. The descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven to earth, prepared as a bride, and the wedding of the Lamb are simultaneous with the beginning of the new heaven on the new earth!

#### The correct explanation.

The people called to the wedding supper are exactly the same as the bride! The bride consists of all the Old Testament believers and all the New Testament believers right up to the one and only second coming of Christ.

#### **19:17-21 The futurist view about the final battle.**

The final battle in Revelation 19:17-21 is only the final battle in the future tribulation period, not the final battle in the history of the world. In this so-called third doom the beast (antichrist) and the false prophet (19:17-20) will be destroyed, but Satan will be bound and only be destroyed 1000 years later! And in the so-called fourth doom the antichristian nations will be destroyed (19:21).

#### Critique.

There is no biblical warrant to make a separation between the destruction of the beast and the false prophet in the so-called third doom (19:19-20) and the destruction of the kings of the earth and their wicked followers in the so-called fourth doom (19:18,21).

There is also no biblical warrant to make a distinction between the battle *depicted* as the battle of Gog and Magog in Revelation chapter 19 (19:17-21; cf. Ezekiel 38:2; 39:4,17-20) and the battle *called* the battle of Gog and Magog in Revelation chapter 20 (20:7-10).

#### The correct explanation.

The final battle in Revelation 19:17-21 is really the final battle in the history of the world. In Revelation 16:14,16 this one and only final battle is called the battle of Armageddon. In Revelation 19:17-21 it is depicted in the same way as the battle of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel chapter 38 and 39. And in Revelation 20:7-10 it is called the battle of Gog and Magog. These are three parallel descriptions of *the* final battle.

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## **CHAPTER 20**

#### **20:2-3 The futurist view about Satan bound.**

Satan is at present not bound, but will be bound at Christ's future second return at the beginning of the future millennial kingdom.<sup>207</sup> During the whole New Testament period Satan is the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Ephesians 2:2) and the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan claims that all authority and splendour of all the kingdoms of the world has been given to him (Luke 4:5-6). And the apostle John says that the whole world is under the control of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

While Revelation 20:1-3 does not say that Satan's angels (the evil spirits) are bound and cast into the bottomless pit, the inference is that they are, because they do not appear to be present on the future millennial earth.<sup>208</sup>

#### Critique.

Satan is a liar (John 8:44) and his claim in Luke 4:5-6 is a lie. Jesus clearly taught that he bound Satan (Matthew 12:29). The purpose of Christ's first coming was to destroy the devil's work (1 John 3:8). Every born again Christian cannot be harmed by Satan (1 John 5:18).

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<sup>207</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 175-176; Tenney, p. 89

<sup>208</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 91

### The correct explanation.

Satan has been bound at Christ's first coming at the beginning of the New Testament period in the sense that he cannot deceive the nations. His binding does not suggest that he can do no evil, but that his purpose to deceive the nations and keep them away from Christ has been curtailed (curbed, restrained, limited).<sup>209</sup> Only this explanation is in harmony with everything the New Testament teaches about Satan!

### **20:5-6 The futurist view about the first resurrection and the second death.**

The first resurrection is the physical resurrection of Christians and the second death is the physical plunge into hell of non-Christians.<sup>210</sup> The first resurrection is the final stage for Christians and the second death is the final stage for non-Christians. The second resurrection implied is the physical resurrection of the non-Christians 1000 years later.<sup>211</sup>

The premillennial view teaches that different groups of people are being resurrected in three different stages.

The first stage is called the first-fruits. Only one group besides Christ is physically resurrected.

At Christ's resurrection not only Christ (1 Corinthians 15:23), but also all the Old Testament believers are physically resurrected (Matthew 27:52-53; Ephesians 4:8).

The second stage is called the first resurrection. Four groups are physically resurrected, respectively 7 and 1000 years apart!

At Christ's first return the Christians (Church) are physically resurrected (called the harvest or ingathering) (14:14-16; John 5:28-29a; Acts 24:15a; 1 Corinthians 15:23,51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

At Christ's second return, 7 years later, the Jews and the great multitude of Gentiles coming out of the tribulation period are physically resurrected (7:9,14; 20:4).

At the second resurrection, 1000 years later, very few people that were saved during the millennial kingdom will be physically resurrected.

The third stage is called the second resurrection. Only one group will be physically resurrected.

At the second resurrection all the unbelievers or wicked in history will be physically resurrected (20:12-13; Matthew 13:28-30; John 5:29b; Acts 24:15b)

### Critique.

The adherents of the futurist (premillennial and dispensational) view are forced to defend the doctrine of several different physical resurrections in order to maintain their main doctrine of the literal millennial kingdom!

1 Corinthians 15:20 teaches that only Christ is the first-fruits. Matthew 27:52-53 rather refers to a temporary resurrection (resuscitation) like that of Lazarus and the widow's son. Ephesians 4:8 does not refer to a physical resurrection, but to Christ's triumphant ascension having figuratively captured many people for his kingdom.

There is no biblical warrant to separate John 5:28-29a by 1000 years from John 5:29b. Jesus literally says, "A time is coming" (singular: not two different times) when all (inclusive: not some) who are in their graves will hear Christ's voice and come out (thus together at the same time) - those who have done good will rise to life, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

John 6:40 teaches that believers will be raised "at the last day" (not to be followed by another last day 1000 years later)!

There is also no biblical warrant to separate Acts 24:15a by 1000 years from Acts 24:15b. There will be "a resurrection" (singular, not two separate resurrections) of both the righteous and the wicked.

Revelation 20:12-13 teaches that all the dead, great and small, will be resurrected and that Death and Hades will give up the dead that is in them at the time of the final judgement (not at two final judgements separated by 1000 years).

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<sup>209</sup> Greijdanus, p 294; Hendriksen pp. 226-227

<sup>210</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp 176-180

<sup>211</sup> John F. Walvoord, "The Rapture Question", 1979, p 208

Matthew 3:12 and 13:28-29 speaks of wheat and weeds growing together until the harvest (singular). At the one harvest in Matthew 3:12 the Christians (wheat) will be gathered first and then the unbelievers (chaff) will be burned. At the one harvest in Matthew 13:38-43 all who do evil and cause sin (the weeds) will be gathered out of the kingdom in its present phase in order to be burned and all the righteous will shine in the kingdom in its final phase. The harvest of Christians and the harvest of non-Christians will thus be simultaneous. There are no 1000 years in between the two harvests!

Revelation 7:14 speaking about those coming out of the great tribulation does not speak of a physical resurrection at that time.

While premillennialists conclude that Revelation 20:15 implies that only a very few people will be saved at the end of the millennial kingdom, the postmillennialists say that Revelation 20:15 implies that only a very few will NOT be saved at the end of the millennial kingdom! Nevertheless, Revelation 20:11-15 is parallel to Matthew 25:31-46 and John 5:28-29. At the one and only resurrection from the dead and the one and only final judgement all people will either belong to the saved or belong to the condemned.

Matthew 16:27 teaches at his second coming Christ will pay back in a good or a bad sense each person according to what he has done<sup>212</sup> The same is taught in Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 25:31-46; Romans 2:5-8 and 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Conclusion. The Bible clearly teaches that there is only one general physical resurrection from the dead. This destroys the futurist doctrine of a physical millennial kingdom between the so-called resurrection of believers and the so-called resurrection of non-believers!

#### The correct explanation.

The first resurrection is the spiritual translation (conveyance) of the souls of departed Christians into Christ's presence as a consequence of their initial spiritual regeneration during their lives. They enter the intermediate stage between physical death and physical resurrection. And the second death is the descent of the bodies and souls of non-Christians into hell as a consequence of their remaining spiritually dead and unrepentant.

#### **20:1-7 The futurist view about the 1000 years.**

There are three futurist views about the millennial kingdom: dispensational premillennialism, historic premillennialism and postmillennialism.

See supplement 5, millennial eschatology.

#### The correct explanation. Inaugurated or realised millennialism.

The 1000 years is a symbol signifying the present messianic age (the gospel age or the whole New Testament period including the intermediate state between death and resurrection) before Christ's second coming. This period has already begun and stretches from Christ's first coming (12:5) to Christ's second coming (14:14-20)! The millennial kingdom (symbolic 1000 years period) has already begun at Christ's first coming (12:10) and will end with Christ's second coming (11:15)! We are presently living in this symbolic 1000 year period!

#### **20:7-10 The futurist view about the final battle.**

The final battle in Revelation 20:7-10 will take place a 1000 literal years after Christ's future second return. This last war of the Gog and Magog nations shows the failure of man during the seventh dispensation (the millennium).<sup>213</sup> "The release of Satan and the war with Gog and Magog reveal that even the rule of absolute righteousness is not sufficient to change men's hearts."<sup>214</sup>

#### Critique.

The dispensational view is inconsistent, because while the Gog and Magog battle in the Old Testament (Ezekiel chapters 38-39) takes place *before* the restoration of the temple (Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48), the

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<sup>212</sup> ἀποδοιδωμι

<sup>213</sup> Larkin, Revelation, p.192

<sup>214</sup> Tenney, p 90

dispensational view places this battle *after* the so-called millennial kingdom with its so-called millennial temple!

“Dispensational premillennialists see in Christ’s contest in the historical ring a one-two punch landing on the chin of the wicked. For them the first hit is at his second coming (second return) when Christ initiates the millennium. During the millennium round (indeed a record round of one thousand years!) Christ beats up on Satan’s supporters who enter the ring from the stands. Then at the end of the millennium, POW – Christ wallops all the wicked and Satan in one final blow.”<sup>215</sup>

The correct explanation.

The final battle in Revelation 20:7-10 will take place at the end of the symbolic New Testament period (the symbolic 1000 years) just *before* the one and only second coming of Christ. This final battle is a parallel description of the final battle in Revelation 16:14,16 and 19:17-21. It is one single knockout blow!

### **20:12-14 The futurist view about the physical resurrection.**

This physical resurrection is limited to all the unbelievers after the millennial kingdom.

See Revelation 20:5-6, the first view, the premillennial view. This physical resurrection is the so-called third stage in which only the unbelievers and the wicked will be physically resurrected.

The correct explanation.

The physical resurrection is the one general physical resurrection of believers and unbelievers at Christ’s one and only second coming.

### **20:11-12,15 The futurist view about the final judgement.**

The wicked would not be destroyed or judged at Christ’s first return. At Christ’s so-called future second return he would judge the Gentile nations for their treatment of the Jews and he would establish the future millennial kingdom. The wicked would also not be destroyed or judged at Christ’s second return. The wicked would only be judged 1000 years later at the end of the millennial kingdom.

This final judgement is limited to the wicked only and takes place before the great white throne at the end of the future millennium.

The dispensational premillennial view teaches that there are seven dooms of judgement: four before the millennial kingdom and three after the millennial kingdom. The four dooms of judgements during the second half of the future tribulation period before the millennial kingdom are: of religious or ecclesiastical Babylon (the false Church) (17:1-18); of commercial Babylon (18:1-24); of the beast and the false prophet (19:20) and of the antichristian nations (19:21). The three dooms of judgements after the future millennial kingdom are: of Gog and Magog (20:8-9); of Satan (20:10) and of the wicked dead (20:11-15).<sup>216</sup>

The dispensational premillennial view teaches that there would be four final judgements in four stages.<sup>217</sup>

*The first stage is the future final judgement of believers.* They would be judged for their works before the judgement seat of Christ in heaven at Christ’s future first return (the rapture)(2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

*The second stage is the future final judgement of the Jews.* They would be judged for their rejection of the Messiah during the seven year future tribulation period on earth (Revelation chapters 4-19; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10). It is called ‘a time of trouble for Jacob’ (Jeremiah 30:4-8) and ‘a time of distress for Daniel’s people’ (Daniel 12:1). The time has been “shortened for the sake of the elect” (Matthew 24:22). It is not stated where this judgement throne must be. Their judgement ends when the future tribulation saints are resurrected (7:14).

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<sup>215</sup> John Gilmore, Probing Heaven, 1989, p. 368

<sup>216</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 16

<sup>217</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 178

*The third stage is the future final judgement of the Gentile nations.* They would be judged for the way they treated the Jews (regarded as Christ's 'brothers') before Christ's throne in heavenly glory at Christ's future second return (Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10). Dispensationalists think that this throne must be one earth (cf. Zechariah 14:4).

*The fourth stage is the future final judgement of the wicked dead.* They would be judged for their unbelief and wicked works before the great white throne at the end of the future millennial kingdom (20:11-15). While it is not stated where this throne is, it is probably not on the earth, because the earth would be renewed by fire. Dispensationalists think that because books are opened and the book of life is only mentioned in Revelation 20:11-15, this future final judgement must be different than the other three future final judgements. This future final judgement would be 1000 literal years after the first three future final judgements. That is not a problem for dispensationalists, because 1000 years for people is like one day for God (2 Peter 3:7-8). According to them 'the day of the Lord' covers all these future final judgements.

Revelation 20:15 implies that there would be "some, probably very few in comparison, righteous at the second resurrection". They would probably be translated away from the renovation of the earth by fire. The wicked would lose their resurrection bodies in the flames that would consume the earth's atmosphere and exterior surface and become disembodied spirits again. They would spend eternity as disembodied spirits in hell.<sup>218</sup>

#### Critique.

There is no biblical warrant to believe that all the Jews would be saved and that no Jew would be damned (Matthew 8:11-12; 21:43-44; 25:31-46; Luke 13:1-5; Romans 2:5-6,9-11).

The fact that the books are only mentioned in Revelation 20:11-15 does not mean that they are not present in the Matthew or Corinthian passages. Compare the similar language: "The dead were judged according to what they had done" (Revelation 20:12) with "The Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels (the second coming), and then he will reward each person according to what he has done" (Matthew 16:27).

The dispensational premillennialists are inconsequential when they acknowledge *the translation of souls* into heaven in Revelation 6:9-11, but deny it in Revelation 20:4.

The Bible teaches that God will destroy (not annihilate) both the souls and the bodies of the unbelievers in hell (Matthew 10:28).

The teaching that the souls or spirits of the unbelievers would become disembodied spirits is pure fantasy and a gross false teaching!

#### The correct explanation.

The final judgement includes everyone that ever lived, both the believers and the wicked at the one and only second coming of Christ. It will take place in the sky, that is, where Christ is at that moment (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), because the old universe and old earth will be simultaneously judged (20:11; cf. Romans 8:19-21). The Bible teaches that all the wicked people will be destroyed in the sense of punished together at Christ's one and only second coming (Matthew 13:39-43; 25:46; John 5:28-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10) and not 1000 years after his second coming. Revelation 20:7-10 is parallel to Revelation 19:17-21.

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## CHAPTER 21

### **21:1 The futurist view about the new heaven and new earth.**

The new heaven would be limited to only a new atmosphere for the new earth. It would not be a new universe. The new earth would be the fourth earth since creation.<sup>219</sup>

*The first earth* (the original earth) was the earth which God originally created (Genesis 1:1). God had filled that earth with large dinosaurs and a pre-Adamite race. The first earth must have been inhabited, because

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<sup>218</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 194

<sup>219</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 199-203

God commanded man to replenish (fill again) the earth (Genesis 1:28). Satan was still a good angel and was placed in charge of the earth. Then Satan fell, led the pre-Adamite race astray and they became demons that were permitted to seek to re-embodiment themselves in present human beings so that they may again dwell on this earth. The pre-Adamite earth was destroyed by a flood (Genesis 1:2) that was not the flood of Noah (2 Peter 3:6).

*The second earth* (the present earth) is the earth which God created in six age long days (Genesis 1:3-31). This creation probably happened during the glacial period. After the glacial period, plants and trees were not a new creation, but grew by itself again as it did before their destruction by the flood of Peter (Genesis 1:11-12 says, "The seed was in itself in the earth"). On the sixth day all animals were re-created, because the original animals (dinosaurs) had been destroyed so that we only have fossils remaining. The present human race was created on the sixth creation day.

*The third earth* (the millennial earth) would be the result of the changes at Christ's future second return. Then the effects of the flood of Noah would be reversed, the life-sustaining power of the atmosphere would be restored and human life would be prolonged (Isaiah 65:20). Then the millennial kingdom would be inaugurated.

*The fourth earth* (the new earth) would come after the millennium. The earth would be renovated, cleansed by fire. There would be no more great oceans, but only large bodies of water into which the river of life can flow. The fourth earth would inaugurate the perfect kingdom, a period of time between the renewal by fire and eternity (1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:10; Philippians 2:9-11). This is called 'the dispensation of the fullness of time' or 'the perfect age'. In contrast to all the other dispensations that were cut short on account of sin, this dispensation would probably last 33 000 years (based on the length of a generation – 33 years – and Deuteronomy 7:9 – 1000 generations). Israel would still have a large place in this dispensation (Isaiah 66:22). Christ would rule on the throne during the millennial age (1000 years) and the perfect age (33 000 years) and then abdicate the throne to God (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)!

### Critique.

*Against the so-called first earth.* The Bible teaches that everything in creation will be renewed and the universe will not be excluded (Acts 3:21; Romans 8:19; 2 Peter 3:7-13). There is no biblical warrant to assume the theory of four different earths! In the beginning God created this present universe and this present earth (Genesis 1:1). The original created earth did not become a waste, but was still a waste in Genesis 1:2. It was still a formless fluid mass, empty of any trees, animals or people, and dark. Then God proceeded to complete this creation in 6 creation days (Genesis 1:3-31). God did not command man to fill the earth again as if it was previously full of pre-Adamite people and dinosaurs. God commanded man to fill the earth for the first time<sup>220</sup>, subdue it and rule over it (Genesis 1:28)! When the creation was completed Satan had not yet fallen, because whatever God had created was very good (Genesis 1:31). There was only one creation of the earth (2 Peter 3:5) and only one flood (2 Peter 3:6) and that was the flood of Noah (2 Peter 2:5; Genesis chapter 6-8).

*Against the so-called second earth.* God does not say how long a creation day took. It could have taken a long time or a fraction of a second, depending on the speed with which God created. God does not reveal to us how he created or how long creation took. He reveals to us what, for whom and why he created! Genesis chapter 1 does not speak of a glacial age or other ages for the formation of this present earth. The Bible teaches that everything was created out of nothing at God's command (Hebrews 11:3)! And God's first command to the earth concerning vegetation was to bring forth (to sprout) vegetation<sup>221</sup> (Genesis 1:11). Likewise the animals and man were created for the first time! Fossils of dinosaurs do not point to another earth, because in every modern century several created species go into extinction, because man does not care for God's creation!

*Against the so-called third earth.* At his one and only second coming Christ will send his angels to weed out of his kingdom on this present earth everything that causes sin and all people who do evil (Matthew 13:41) and he will renew (not re-create) the present universe and present earth by fire (2 Peter 3:3-13). There will be

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<sup>220</sup> Hebrew: milu, Pi to fill, to make full. The word 'again' is absolutely absent!

<sup>221</sup> Hebrew: Let the earth bring forth or sprout (tadshe) grass (dêshê). It was not there before!

no two returns of Christ and also no millennial kingdom on a so-called millennial earth after Christ's so-called second return.

*Against the so-called fourth earth.* The suggestion that the so-called third millennial earth needed to be cleansed by fire suggests that dispensationalists believe that the millennial earth would be evil or become evil in spite of the presence and rule of Christ in that so-called millennial earth.

Dispensational theology is NOT biblical! After Christ's first coming Israel has no more a privileged position (Romans 10:12-13). The sea is not a literal body of water, but a symbol for the chaotic nations (cf. 21:2).

There is no biblical warrant to believe in a millennial age of 1000 years or a perfect age of 33 000 years after the millennial age in which Christ would rule for another 33 000 years as in the millennial kingdom and the Jews would still play an important role! All such teaching is false teaching (cf. 22:18-19)!

The Bible clearly teaches that after Christ has put his enemies under his feet at his second coming, his work as Mediator will be complete and he will subject himself to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). In 1 Corinthians 15:28 Paul does not imply that God the Son would be subjected to God the Father. What Christ will lay down is not his divine nature or his eternal kingship (2 Peter 1:11), but his office as Mediator of the creation, salvation and judgement when he has conquered all his enemies and protected his people. The goal of the subjection of Jesus Christ (the God-Man Mediator) is that "God may be all in all" in the sense that God (the Triune God) is with all, ruling everything and possessing everything directly. All the pious people and all the ungodly people and all devils will be compelled by the completed salvation work of Christ to recognize God as the One and Only. God's dominion will be universal and universally accepted. There will be no opposition any more!

#### The correct explanation.

The new heaven and new earth will not be another recreated heaven and earth, but a renewed and transformed heaven and earth. It will still be the same universe, but renewed! Everything will not be destroyed and recreated, but everything will be restored (Acts 3:21)! The present old universe in which the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and the prostitute are carrying out their programme of iniquity will vanish completely!

#### **21:2 The futurist view about the city.**

The New Jerusalem and the bride are identical (21:9-10) in the sense that the New Jerusalem is the (literal) home and residence of the bride. The city would be literally 1500x1500x1500 miles<sup>222</sup> in size and literally in the form of a pyramid. The light will only be in the city and not in the outlying parts of the new earth, because there it will be day and night. The city is made of gold, thus, the redeemed will live in palaces of transparent gold!<sup>223</sup>

#### Critique.

It is a contradiction to say that the city and the bride are identical and then to say that the city is the literal home of the bride, which is obviously not identical to the bride.

There is no biblical warrant to involve the theory of Egyptian pyramids into the revelation of the Bible.<sup>224</sup> Because the city is not a literal limited place, but the community of God with God dwelling in its midst everywhere on the new earth, the light shines for ever everywhere on the new earth!

#### The correct explanation.

The New Jerusalem is not a literal city, but another symbol for the bride, the community of God's people. The dimensions are not literal, but symbolic of God dwelling in their midst (the cube, 1 Kings 6:20). The visible presence of God is not limited to a literal city somewhere on the new earth, but is everywhere on the new earth where the community of God dwells. The visible presence of God thus makes the light of the sun, moon and stars obsolete on the whole new earth (21:23; Matthew 24:29,35).

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<sup>222</sup> 2200 x 2200 x 2200 kilometres

<sup>223</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 203-205

<sup>224</sup> Larkin, The Greatest Book on Dispensational Truth pp. 164-170

### **21:24-27 The futurist view about the nations.**

The nations are the Gentiles excluding the Jews. The Gentiles will live outside the walls of the literal city, while the Jews will live inside the city. People will increase and multiply on the new earth and repopulate the new earth. If this were not God's plan, then we have one type in the Scriptures (Noah's ark) that would have no anti-type. After this new earth becomes full, God will begin to repopulate the other planets. The people on the new earth are only "the first fruits" of his creatures (James 1:18). The present human race is only at the beginning of things that would happen in the universe (Isaiah 9:7).<sup>225</sup>

#### Critique.

There will be NO repopulation of the new earth or any planet. This arrogant human speculation must be rejected. It is adding to God's revelation (22:18)! Jesus clearly taught that there will be NO marriage, sexual relations and increase of people in the eternal state (Matthew 22:29-30)!

The salvation through water in the time of Noah is a symbol of New Testament baptism, which is also a symbol of regeneration by the baptism of the Spirit (1 Peter 3:20-21). And the time of Noah foreshadows the time of the end just before Christ's second coming (Matthew 24:37-41).

The first fruits of all God has created (James 1:18) are only the Christians (14:4). The word never suggests a part of a whole or a second generation of people!

Isaiah 9:7 rather speaks of the increase of Christ's government between his first and second coming until Christ has put all his enemies under his feet (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28).

#### The correct explanation.

The nations are believers in Jesus Christ from every nation, language and tribe (including the Jews) (5:9-10; cf. Matthew 28:19). They will live with God within the community of God's saved people (symbolised by the New Jerusalem) on the new earth. And they will bring into that community on the new earth everything that stood God's test of fire (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

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## **CHAPTER 22**

### **22:1 The futurist view about the throne.**

The throne is literal and will probably rest on the summit of the pyramid shape of the literal city.<sup>226</sup>

#### The correct explanation.

The throne is symbolic of God's visible glorious presence and majestic sovereign reign in the midst of the community of his saved people everywhere on the new earth. God's throne is symbolically the centre of the present universe (4:2) and will still be symbolically the centre of the new universe (22:3,5; cf. 2 Peter 1:11). God does not need a literal physical place to be worshipped (Acts 17:24-25).

### **22:2 The futurist view about the leaves of the tree.**

The leaves will prevent sickness and preserve people in health on the new earth, just as Adam would have been preserved in health if he had eaten of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-24).<sup>227</sup>

#### Critique.

The text says that the leaves *are* for the healing of *sickness*, thus implying the reality of sickness and the healing of that sickness. The text does not imply the mere prevention of sickness. Moreover, only preserving Adam in health would still have left the possibility to sin and death. On the new earth it will not be possible to sin anymore and there will also be no more death (21:4)!

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<sup>225</sup> Larkin, Revelation pp. 206-207

<sup>226</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 207

<sup>227</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 208

The correct explanation.

The leaves are for the healing of the nations on this present earth before Christ's second coming, thus pointing to that aspect of the New Jerusalem that is coming down from heaven throughout the whole New Testament period. On the new earth after Christ's second coming there will not even be the possibility of sickness (21:4).

**22:5 The futurist view about the kingdom in eternity.**

After the 1000 year millennial kingdom on this present earth will follow the 33 000 year perfect kingdom on the new earth. At the close of this 'dispensation of the Fullness of Times', Christ will surrender this perfect kingdom to God (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). This is based on the 1000 generations (Deuteronomy 7:9) and Jesus' 33 years as the length of a generation. Then time will cease and 'the eternal ages' called 'the ages of ages' or 'ages to come' (Ephesians 2:7) will begin.<sup>228</sup>

Critique.

There is no biblical warrant to believe in a millennial age of 1000 years or a perfect age of 33 000 years after the millennial age. There is no biblical warrant to believe that the Jews would still play an important role in the so-called millennial age or the so-called perfect age. All such teaching is false teaching!

The correct explanation.

The present kingdom of God was inaugurated at Christ's first coming (12:10; Matthew 12:28; 21:43; Mark 4:26-32; Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17) and continues until Christ's second coming.

The kingdom of God in its perfect final phase will be inaugurated at Christ's second coming (11:15; Matthew 25:34). Then the Son of God in human nature will have completed his commission as Mediator of the creation, salvation and judgement. But he will not lay down his divine nature or his eternal kingship (2 Peter 1:11).

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<sup>228</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 202,208-209