

# REVELATION CHAPTER 15

## THE OUTPOURING OF THE SEVEN BOWLS CONTAINING THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

### PART 1. Revelation 15:1-4. THE SONG OF THE LAMB.

#### **(1) Explanation of symbols.**

The position of the song of the Lamb (15:2-4) is proleptic: representing an event as existing before it actually does. It is put at the beginning of this section for emphasis. The emphasis here is that God's judgements are completely holy (righteous) and just (fair)!

Before God's final judgements are poured out over the godless and wicked world, John sees a vision of an event that would take place after these final judgements have been poured out in order to show how the saved (Christians) would judge these harsh judgements of God. The saints sing a song of praise, admiring God for his judgements, which by the time they sing, have already been revealed (made manifest) (15:4). Otherwise they would not have been able to sing about them! Even in his judgements, God will reveal himself as great, just, true and holy. However terrible his judgements may be, they are not unfair or too harsh. God's greatness is in no way tarnished by his judgements, but is rather enhanced by all the nations worshipping before him. Therefore these judgements may be released over the godless and wicked world.

**15:1 And I (John) saw (Greek: horao, opsomai, eidon, heoraka)(aorist) in heaven another great and marvellous (Greek: thaumastos) sign (Greek: seimaion).** The words point to something very important that would be announced. The expression "a great and marvellous sign" is used three times in the book of Revelation:

- The first sign introduces a vision of Christ's birth (12:1-2,5). The purpose of Christ's first coming was to destroy the devil's work (1 John 3:8).
- The second sign introduces a vision of the dragon's opposition. The purpose of the dragon's opposition was to devour Christ (12:3-4).
- The third sign introduces the final outcome of the conflict: God's judgement on the impenitent (15:1). The purpose of God's final judgement will be to reveal and to establish justice and righteousness in the universe.

**Seven (Greek: hepta) angels having (present) the seven last (Greek: eschatos) plagues (Greek: plege).** 'Seven' is the number of divine perfection and completeness. In the Old Testament, when people hardened their hearts and persisted in not listening to God, he punished them for their sins seven times over (Leviticus 26:14-35).

In the New Testament, God still punishes the hardening of hearts and the persistence in doing evil. God first warns people with his seven initial plagues: the seven trumpet judgements (9:20). But when people refuse to repent, God withdraws his patience and his grace and punishes them with his seven last plagues: the seven bowls of God's wrath (15:1; 16:1).

The seven bowls with the seven last (final) plagues that are poured out are a symbol of God's final and eventually his complete wrath in his judgements. God uses every department of the universe to punish the wicked and impenitent and persecutors of his people. Whoever refuses to be warned by God's initial and partial trumpet judgements (chapters 8 to 11) receive the full execution of God's final and complete bowl judgements (chapters 15 to 16). For one individual in the course of history a certain calamity may be God's trumpet judgement (a warning to repent); while for someone else that same event may be God's bowl judgement (his final judgement).

**because with them the wrath (Greek: thumos) of God is once for all completed (Greek: teleo)(aorist).** The seven plagues are called the last plagues, because by pouring them out, God's wrath is completed (15:1). By pouring out the seven last plagues, God's burning wrath against sin is brought to its goal, namely, the final judgement. While the trumpet judgements symbolically represent *God's initial and partial judgements*, the bowl judgements represent *God's final and complete judgements*. By pouring out the seventh bowl, the final judgement day has arrived. "The cities of the nations collapsed, ... every island fled away and the mountains could not be found" (16:17-21). These events show that the end of this present earth had arrived.

From the New Testament we learn that all the dead will be resurrected at the same time (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). First the believers will be caught up into the clouds to meet and to welcome Christ at his second coming (Matthew 24:30-31, 40a,41a; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:10). And later on that same last day the unbelievers will also be taken by angels to be judged before Christ's throne of judgement (Matthew 24:40b,41b; 25:31-46; Revelation 20:11-15). This will be the end of history on this present earth. On that last judgement day also this present earth will be renewed by fire (2 Peter 3:10-13), that is, restored to perfection (Acts 3:21).

The apostle Peter teaches that "the last days" (Greek: ep schaton ton hemeron)(2 Peter 3:3) ends with the second "coming" (Greek: parousia) of Christ (2 Peter 3:4). The second coming of Christ will at the same time be "the day of the Lord" (Greek: hemera kuriou) (2 Pet 3:10) and "the day of judgement and (consequent) destruction (eternal death)

of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10). On that day the heavens will disappear (pass away) with a roar and the elements will be destroyed (not annihilated, but their structure will disintegrate) by fire. On that day the earth and everything in it (man’s achievements) will be laid bare (found out, discovered, exposed to divine judgement)(2 Peter 3:10,12), that is, all the concealed deeds of humankind will become disclosed (Mt 10:26). Peter thus teaches that the day of Christ’s second coming is at the same time the day of the final judgement of people and the day on which the present universe will be destroyed (not annihilated, but its structure will be changed).

With these seven bowl judgements the wrath of God against the godless and wicked world (Romans 1:18) reaches its climax and is completely spent. After this, God’s wrath rests eternally on the enemies of Christ and the enemies of Christ’s people (Matthew 25:46).

But before John tells us about the outpouring of the seven bowls of God’s wrath, he tells us about the Triumphant Church after the final judgement day.

**15:2 And I saw (aorist) what looked like (Greek: hos) a sea of glass (crystal)(Greek: hualinos) mixed (Greek: meignumi, emeixa, memigmena)(perfect) with fire.**

In the Old Testament Moses and the Israelites stood at the Red Sea after God had destroyed Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. The angel of God (the LORD), who had been travelling with Israel and had stood between the Egyptian army and the Israelites, had been visible in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night (Ex 13:21-22; 14:19,24). He had thrown the Egyptian army into confusion and had swept them into the sea. The water of the sea had crashed back (like a tsunami) and had covered these enemies. Not one of them had survived.

The Israelites then stood at the shore of the Red Sea and saw their enemies lying dead on the shore (Ex 14:24-31). Then they sang the song of Moses, a song of praise concerning the Lord’s victory. “The Lord is a warrior. He had hurled Pharaoh’s chariots and army into the surging waters of the sea. In the greatness of his majesty he threw down those who opposed him. He is majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders, unfailing in love, and reigns forever. The nations will hear and tremble” (Exodus 15:1-21).

Thus, 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.

In the New Testament, John likewise saw what looked like a transparent ‘sea of glass’ mixed with fire stretched out before God’s throne. It symbolises the place where God will execute his final judgement on all the followers of the beast that persecuted God’s New Testament people. They will forever perish and sink away into God’s sea of glass. After God’s final judgement on the godless and wicked people of the world, the sea will be crystal clear as glass.

‘Fire’ is a symbol of God’s holy and righteous indignation by which he had executed his final judgements against sin. ‘Glass’ is a symbol that his holy and righteous indignation executed was completely transparent and clear. After God has executed the final judgement of the godless and wicked people on earth, his holiness and righteousness in judgement remains untainted and becomes manifest for everyone. Nothing would be hidden or questionable. “His righteous acts have been revealed, are made manifest” (15:4) and are seen by all and must be acknowledged by all.

**And those who had been victorious (literally: the conquerors)(Greek: nikao)(present) over the beast (Greek: therion) and over his image (Greek: eikon) and over the number (Greek: arithmos) of his name.** The victorious stood beside the sea. They are those who by God’s grace had become the conquerors. They had not given in to the persecution and oppression of the beast. They had held onto Christ and his gospel throughout the whole New Testament period (cf. 2:7; 12:11; 17:14; Rom 8:37) and not simply during the great tribulation. They represent the Triumphant Church in heaven.

**were standing (Greek: histemi, steso, estesa, esteka)(perfect) beside (literally: at)(Greek: epi) the glassy sea (Greek: thalassa hualine).** (cf. at the door, 3:20: and at the 4 corners, 7:1). The picture is similar to the Israelites standing at the shore of the Red Sea.

**having (holding)(Greek: echo)(present) harps (Greek: kithara) of (given them by) God.** A harp is a symbol of praising God with music (Psalm 33:2). The harps are given by God to be used in his service, to praise him. They praise *God’s* deeds, ways and name. Everything the victorious are and have has been the work of God and his grace (Romans 11:36).

**15:3 They sang (Greek: ado)(present) the song (Greek: ode) of Moses the servant (Greek: doulos) of God and the song of the Lamb (Greek: arnion).** The song refers to Moses’ victory song in Exodus 15 and not in Deuteronomy 32. It is a victory song that is sung to God’s glory by God’s people after God’s enemies had been destroyed. The song in Revelation 15 is called the song of Moses, because it has the character of Moses’ victory song. Moses is called the servant of God in order to make clear that what Moses did was God’s work through him. The song is also called the song of the Lamb, because Christ not only saved his people and made them conquerors, but also in this revelation gave them this song to sing.

**saying (present): Great (Greek: megalos) and marvellous (Greek: thaumastos) (are) your works (deeds), Lord God Almighty (Greek: pantokrator).** God’s *deeds* are his works of salvation and of judgement. God revealed himself

as the Almighty. In Isaiah 10:20-23 the Almighty God is called 'Mighty God', just as Jesus Christ is called 'Mighty God' in Isaiah 9:6 (cf. Isaiah 7:14).

**Just (Greek: *dikaios*) and true (Greek: *alethinos*) (are) your ways (Greek: *hodos*), King of the nations (Greek: *ethne*).** God's *ways* are the various ways in which God accomplishes these deeds. Some Greek texts say "King of the ages", but the best texts say "King of the nations" (cf. 1:5). All people of all the nations belong to God and must be subject to him. They must serve him, even if they do not want to know (acknowledge) him (Philippians 2:9-11).

God's deeds and ways of judgement are just, righteous, fair in the highest sense. Again and again, the godless and wicked people are warned by God's trumpet judgements. But when they continue to harden their hearts and refuse to repent, the fault is entirely theirs (Luke 12:47-48).

God's deeds and ways of judgement are also true, dependable. They are judgements by which the truth about God and about the deeds of the wicked are brought to light (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Job 34:21; Hebrews 4:13). And they are judgements by which the absolute faithfulness of God's threats is revealed. Compare Revelation 19:2: "True and just are his judgements".

**15:4 Who (Greek: *tis*) in no way (Greek *ou me*) will fear (Greek: *phobeomai*)(subjunctive, aorist) (you), O Lord, and bring glory (Greek: *doxazo*)(future) to your name.** God's *name* represents how God reveals his being in his works (cf. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17).

**For you alone (Greek: *monos*) (are) holy (undefiled by sin)(Greek: *hosios*).** God is holy in behaviour. That is, all his works are done in a perfect manner and in accordance with his perfect divine being that is perfectly separated from all evil and perfectly dedicated to all good.

**because all nations will come (Greek: *heko*)(future) and worship (Greek: *proskuneo*)(future) before (Greek: *enopion*) you.** Moved by God's righteous deeds throughout history, but especially by his final and complete judgement at the end of history, whereby he will finally and completely deliver his people and destroy his enemies, the righteous people (Christians) of all the nations in history will come before him and worship him (cf. Isaiah 66:22-23). That is, they will fall down and worship him, do obeisance to him, prostrate themselves before him, show reverence to him, welcome him respectfully (cf. 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 11:1,16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:4). The word 'worship' was used to designate the custom of prostrating oneself before a person and kissing his feet or the hem of his garment or the ground. The Persians did this in the presence of their deified king, the Greeks did this before a divinity or something holy, and the righteous will do this before the Living God.

**for your righteous acts (Greek: *dikaion*) have once for all been revealed (Greek: *phaneroo*)(aorist).** After the final judgement, God's righteous acts will have been finally and completely revealed, made manifest. They will be fully transparent and clear. That is why the Triumphant Church sings!

Now that Christ has revealed God's perfect justice in his final judgements, he reveals to everyone who reads the words of the book of Revelation (1:1-4) what effect God's bowl judgements will have when they are poured out over the godless and wicked world.

## **(2) Different views about the sea of glass (15:2)**

The futurist view. The sea of glass mixed with fire symbolise the fiery trials of those who came out of *the future tribulation period*. (Larkin)<sup>1</sup>.

Second view. The sea of glass mixed with fire symbolises God's majesty that reflects his transparent holy and righteous character (Bavinck)<sup>2</sup>. It is mixed with fire as a symbol that God's wrath has been kindled and that the end is very near.

The correct explanation. The sea of glass mixed with fire (15:2) symbolises *God's judgement* (Greijdanus)<sup>3</sup>.

After God has executed the final judgement of the godless and wicked people on earth, his holy and righteous character in judgement remains untainted and becomes manifest for everyone.

## **(3) Different views about the victorious over the beast (15:2)**

The 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 (Larkin)<sup>4</sup>.

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 from the first coming*

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<sup>1</sup> Larkin p. 139

<sup>2</sup> Bavinck p. 264

<sup>3</sup> Greijdanus p. 230; Hendriksen p. 192

<sup>4</sup> Larkin, Revelation p. 139

of Christ to his second coming. They had held onto Christ and his gospel throughout the whole New Testament period (cf. 2:7; 12:11; 17:14; Romans 8:37-39) and not only during the short period of great tribulation just before Christ's second coming. They represent the Triumphant Church in heaven immediately after the final judgement (Greijdanus)<sup>5</sup>.

## **PART 2. Revelation 15:5-8. THE PREPARATION OF THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE SEVEN BOWLS.**

### **(1) Explanation of the symbols.**

First is revealed that all God's judgements (even his most harsh judgements) throughout the whole New Testament period as well as at the end of the history of this world would be completely just and true, so that all the saints would praise him worshipfully. Therefore these judgements may now strike out freely. Seven angels prepare to pour out God's seven last (final) plagues.

**15:5 And after this I (John) looked (Greek: *horao, opsomai, eidon, heoraka*)(aorist) and the temple (Greek: *naos*) (consisting) of the tabernacle (Greek: *skene*) of the Testimony (Greek: *marturion*) in heaven was opened (Greek: *anoigo*)(aorist).** (cf. 11:19). This was the Most Holy Place, the innermost sanctuary of the temple. There stood the Ark of the Covenant. It contained the Testimony, that is, the stone tablets of the covenant with the ten commandments (cf. Exodus 25:16,21; 38:21; Hebrews 9:4).

The opening of the tabernacle of the Testimony (15:5) is a symbol pointing to Christ's first coming to the earth.

- Then heaven opened and the Spirit descended on him (Matthew 3:16).
- Then during his crucifixion the curtain hanging before the tabernacle of the Testimony was torn and opened the way into God's very presence (Matthew 27:51).
- Then Christ entered heaven itself on our behalf (Hebrews 9:24).

From Christ's first coming throughout the whole New Testament period the temple in heaven is open and Christians may confidently enter God's presence (Hebrews 10:19-20; 4:14-16; Ephesians 2:18; 3:12)! At Christ's first coming "the end of the ages" had begun (Hebrews 9:24-26; Acts 2:17).

The opening of the tabernacle of the Testimony indicates three things:

- It indicates that 'the last days', the final period of world history, had begun with Christ's first coming (Hebrews 9:26) and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17).
- It indicates that God had begun to confirm his covenant and carry out his Testimony (the Ten Commandments), namely, to punish sin to the fourth generation and to show love to a thousand generations (Exodus 20:5-6), thereby bringing his covenant of grace to complete fulfilment and realisation.
- And it indicates that the wrath, which is about to be revealed, is God's wrath and not simply natural disasters.

**15:6 And out of the temple came (Greek: *exerchomai, eleusomai, elthon, elelutha*)(aorist) the seven angels having (present) the seven plagues.** Throughout the history of this world, angels are occupied with exercising God's administration over the inhabited universe. In summary, angels have the following responsibilities:

- Angels *obey* God and glorify God (Psalm 103:20; Daniel 7:10; Revelation 5:11-12).
- Angels *serve* God's people on earth (Psalm 34:7; 91:11; Hebrews 1:14; Revelation 7:2-3).
- And angels *execute God's judgements* over the disobedient nations.

In the Old Testament two angels destroyed the godless and wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1,13,24-25,28). The angel of the Lord killed 185 000 soldiers of the Assyrian army in one night, because their commander had insulted the Living God (1 Kings 19:9-19). And the angel of the Lord punished God's people, because their king David had disobeyed God (1 Chronicles 21:14-30).

In the New Testament, throughout the book of Revelation, angels are executing God's terrible judgements on the wicked world (7:1; 8:5,7,etc.; 15:1; 16:1; 19:14; 20:1-3). An angel offers much incense together with the prayers of the saints and thereafter hurls fire from heaven onto the earth. This signifies that not only the imperfect prayers of Christians are made perfect by Christ's completed work of salvation and continuous prayers, but also result in God's judgements upon the godless and wicked world (8:3-5).

At Christ's second coming angels will not only gather all the believers and carry them to Jesus Christ in the sky (Matthew 24:30-31,40-41; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), but also execute God's final and complete judgement of all the wicked and their evil practices (11:15,18; 16:17-21) by gathering them together and throwing them into the fire of hell (Matthew 13:40-42; Matthew 25:31-32; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

**dressed (Greek: *enduo*)(perfect) in clean, shining (Greek: *lampros*) linen (Greek: *linon*) and girded around (Greek: *perizonnumi*)(perfect) around (Greek: *peri*) their chests (breasts)(Greek: *stethos*) golden (Greek: *chrousous*) sashes (Greek: *zone*).** They were dressed in the clothes of the priests, who were the highest servants in God's service during the Old Testament and could draw the closest to him in the inner sanctuary. Because many people had ceased to listen to God's servants on earth, God sent his angel-priests from heaven to punish the godless and wicked people on earth with his final plagues. Clean, shining linen is a symbol of purity and holiness. The golden sashes girded

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<sup>5</sup> Greijdanus pp. 230-231

around their chests is a symbol of their dignity, majesty and authority to judge (cf. 1:13) in contrast to clothes girded around waists, which is a symbol of service (Luke 12:35).

**15:7 And (then) one of the four living creatures (Greek: zoon) gave (Greek: didomi)(aorist) to the seven angels.** The four living creatures (4:6-11) are heavenly beings that *represent God's whole creation before God's throne and that worships God who reigns over all history and especially the history of salvation* (Greijsdanus)<sup>6</sup>. The four living creatures represent the stars, the winds, the seasons, the plants, the animals and man – in short, *all of creation that forms the background of history* with all its bloody wars and glorious discoveries! Thus, the *four living creatures represent God's creation as the backdrop for God's history of salvation*.

In some passages the living creatures are distinguished from the angels (5:11; 7:11) and thus they are not the cherubim of Ezekiel 1:5 ff., nor the seraphim of Isaiah 6:2 ff., but resemble them. Possibly, just as the twenty-four elders are symbolic heavenly beings that represent God's whole Church before God's throne, so the four living creatures are symbolic heavenly beings that represent God's whole creation with all its creatures before God's throne (4:8; 5:14). Both enhance the significance of God's throne in the centre of the universe!

They promote God's glory in his reign on earth and especially in his work of salvation and judgement. The fact that a living creature gave the seven bowls of God's wrath to these seven angels indicates that these angels could not oppose these fearful events and also that these angels acknowledged God's justice in judging the impenitent godless and wicked. There is complete harmony among God's servants in the execution of God's will.

**seven golden bowls (deep saucer)(Greek: phiale) filled (Greek: gemo)(present) with the wrath (Greek: thumos) of God, who lives (Greek: zao)(present) forever and ever.** 'Seven' is the number that symbolises divine perfection and completeness. The seven bowls are filled with God's last plagues, because after they are poured out God's wrath is completed forever (15:1). The seven last plagues are the fulfilment of Revelation 14:9-11. 'Gold' is a symbol of something used in exalted service. The bowls are full to indicate that God's wrath is fierce, impossible to reduce, impossible to alleviate and impossible to appease. The wrath is of God "who lives forever" (cf. 4:9-10; 10:6) and indicates that God's wrath is awful.

**15:8 And the temple was filled (Greek: gemizo)(aorist) with smoke (Greek: kapnos) from the glory of God and from his power (Greek: dunamis) and no one could (Greek: dunamai)(imperfect) enter (Greek: eiserchomai)(aorist) the temple until (Greek: achri) the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed (brought to an end)(Greek: teleo)(subjunctive, aorist).** In the Old Testament period God manifested his glory, that is, his majestic and overwhelming presence with all his attributes, by way of thunder, lightning, a thick cloud, a very loud trumpet blast, smoke and fire (Exodus 19:16-18; cf. Genesis 15:17)! Right from the beginning, God's Old Testament people were not a democracy (a people governed by people chosen by majority vote), but a theocracy (a people directly governed and led by God himself). God led them by a pillar of cloud during the day and by a pillar of fire during the night (Exodus 13:21-22). He decided when they should travel and when they should encamp (Numbers 9:15-21).

When the construction of the tabernacle was completed, the cloud covered it and the glory of God filled it (Exodus 40:34). The presence of God was so majestic and overwhelming, that Moses could not enter the tabernacle (Exodus 40:35). Later, when the building of the temple was completed and the priests had brought the ark into the inner sanctuary, the cloud filled the temple (1 Kings 8:10). The presence of God was so majestic and overwhelming, that the priests could not re-enter the temple anymore (1 Kings 8:11; 2 Chronicles 5:13-14). Throughout the Old Testament period, no one was allowed to enter the inner sanctuary in the temple into the holy presence of God, except the high priest once a year (Hebrews 9:7).

However, in the Messianic Age, that is, during the New Testament period and during its fulfilment on the new earth, God would create over all Mount Zion (a symbol of his Church) and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night and over all the glory will be a canopy (Isaiah 4:5).

'The smoke' is a symbol of God being a consuming fire throughout history (Hebrews 12:29; Isaiah 6:3-7; 30:27-28; 34:2,8-10). It is a symbol of the full and thorough operation of his wrath against godlessness and wickedness, the complete realisation of his holy and righteous indignation against sin the idols of people). God expresses his glory and power not only in the salvation of his people, but also in the judgement of the impenitent. Throughout the New Testament period right up to Christ's second coming, God executes his plan of salvation and judgement (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21).

Throughout the New Testament period, God's people may at all times enter into his holy presence to receive mercy and find grace to help them in their time of need (Heb 4:14-16). And throughout the New Testament period, those who are not his people should seek God while he may be found. They should call upon him while he is near, turn to the Lord and find mercy and pardon (cf. Isaiah 55:6-7; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2). God is very patient (Exodus 34:6-7; 2 Peter 3:9).

However, God's patience has a divine limit and God's Spirit will not contend with man forever (Genesis 6:3). Throughout the New Testament period, there will be times when no one can enter God's presence to plead on behalf of

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<sup>6</sup> cf. Bavinck, pp. 127-131, Greijsdanus pp. 96-97

the godless and the wicked. There will be times when God's grace and mercy for certain people will come to an end (Hebrews 12:15-17) and no one would be able to interfere in the final execution of his holy and righteous wrath. Whenever God exercises his holy indignation against godless and wicked people, no one can come close to his majestic and overwhelming presence. The godless and wicked people themselves can no longer repent and find the grace of God's forgiveness (Romans 1:18-32; 2:5). And the righteous people can no longer intercede for the wicked (Psalm 77:9; Jeremiah 7:16; 14:11-12; 15:1; Ezekiel 14:13-20; 1 Thessalonians 2:16; 1 John 5:16)! Whenever God's patience and kindness towards the godless and wicked reaches its end, he withdraws his patience and his grace and pours out a bowl of his *final* wrath. And "the smoke of their torment will rise for ever and ever" (14:11; 18:9-10; 19:2-3; cf. Matthew 25:46).

## **(2) Different views about the seven bowls of wrath or last plagues (15:1,6-7)**

The futurist view. 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 (Larkin, Tenney)<sup>7</sup>.

Second view. The seven bowls with the seven last plagues are cosmic disasters falling on the impenitent *just before Christ's second coming* (Bavinck)<sup>8</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* (Greijdanus, Hendriksen)<sup>9</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>7</sup> Larkin p. 140; Tenney pp. 80-81

<sup>8</sup> cf. Bavinck pp. 264-265

<sup>9</sup> Greijdanus p. 229; Hendriksen p. 190-191