

**MORE THAN CONQUERORS: THE CONQUEROR (ΝΙΚΑΨ)**  
**MOTIF IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

by

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*I dedicate this dissertation to my late father Reverend Young-Kweon Shin.*

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## SUMMARY

**Title: More Than Conquerors: The Conqueror (Νικάω) Motif in the Book of Revelation**

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**Degree: Doctor of Philosophy**

This dissertation intends to reveal the theme of the conqueror, which is spread throughout the book of Revelation. I try to determine the identity and function of the conquerors who were faced with various problems in their present situations. Various present situations such as the political, economical, social, and religious phenomena that the first Christians confronted must be considered. Thus, the main aim of Revelation is to persuade compromising Christians to disengage from pagan idolatry and to sustain those who resist. One must remember the fact that the designated conquerors were absolutely embedded in their historical and sociological situation. We should recognize why John wanted to send his prophetic message through various symbolic references and universes, providing a different heavenly perspective in contrast with an earthly point of view.

In general, the conquest can be linked with both a military and political meaning, such as Messiah and the son of David in Jewish literature and the Old Testament. But the conqueror figure in Revelation can be understood from a different angle. The characteristic of the conqueror is explained through the symbolic transformation of redemptive death and victory. It means that the idea of conquering has been changed. Conquering doesn't depend on a military or political power that is the interpretation of the traditional messianic expectation, but self-sacrifice of the Lamb on the cross. The characteristic of the Lamb as conqueror is closely linked with the image of an atoning, sacrificial victim.

The theme of suffering and death in Revelation is linked with the victory of the conquerors. That is, the conquerors can be defined as those who endure suffering, slander, poverty and tribulation unto death as Jesus has done. From a worldly

perspective, Satan looks like the almighty figure as the conqueror that persecuted the people of God, but in terms of the heavenly perspective, he is defeated and conquered by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of God in 12:11. Therefore, conquering is provided from the heavenly perspective to encourage the conquerors as seeing the present reality. Just as the Lamb has conquered the evil ones by his blood, the conquerors should conquer the evil ones by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Thus, the victory of the conquerors can be attained by means of witness and death. The idea that the conquerors are the victims might provide the people of God with a powerful symbolic transformation as a marginalized group in a hostile world.

The conquerors are provided with a heavenly perspective, implying an eschatological fulfillment and God's presence in the New Jerusalem. The image of the New Jerusalem provides a rhetorical effect that the people of God as conquerors will experience salvation in the future. Whereas the city of Babylon was drunk with the blood of the conquerors, the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven will dwell with God as the completion of the fulfillment God promised (cf. 21:1-22:5).

## KEY WORDS

- The Conquerors
- The promise statement given to the conquerors
- The fulfillment statement given to the conquerors
- The One like a Son of man
- The Lamb
- The Divine Warrior
- The people of God as the conquerors
- The word of God and the testimony of Christ
- The heavenly and the earthly perspectives
- The symbolic transformation

## ABBREVIATIONS

### A. General abbreviations

AD.	Anno Domini
Ant.	Antiquities
J.W	Wars of the Jews
BD.	Before Christ
Cf.	Compare, confer
Ch (s).	Chapter (s)
Ed (s).	Editor (s), edited by
E.g.	For example
Etc.	Et cetera
I.e.	That is
LXX.	Septuagint
N.d.	No date
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Trans.	Translator, translated, translation
V (s)	Verse (s)
Vol.	Volume

### B. Abbreviations for books of the Bible

#### ► OLD TESTAMENT (OT)

Genesis	Ge.	Ecclesiastes	Ecc.
Exodus	Ex.	Song of Songs	SS.
Leviticus	Lev.	Isaiah	Isa.
Numbers	Nu.	Jeremiah	Jer.
Deuteronomy	Dt.	Lamentations	La.
Joshua	Jos.	Ezekiel	Ezk.
Judges	Jdg.	Daniel	Da.

Ruth	Ru.	Hosea	Hos.
1 Samuel	1 Sa.	Joel	Joel.
2 Samuel	2 Sa.	Amos	Am.
1 King	1 Ki.	Obadiah	Ob.
2 King	2 Ki.	Jonah	Jnh.
1 Chronicles	1 Ch.	Micah	Mic.
2 Chronicles	2 Ch.	Nahum	Na.
Ezra	Ezr.	Habakkuk	Hab.
Nehemiah	Ne.	Zephaniah	Zep.
Esther	Est.	Haggai	Hag.
Job	Job.	Zechariah	Zec.
Psalms	Ps.	Malachi	Mal.
Proverb	Pr.		

► **NEW TESTAMENT (NT)**

Matthew	Mt.	1 Timothy	1 Ti.
Mark	Mk.	2 Timothy	2 Ti.
Luke	Lk.	Titus	Tit.
John	Jn.	Philemon	Phm.
Acts	Acts.	Hebrews	Heb.
Romans	Ro.	James	Jas.
1 Corinthians	1 Co.	1 Peter	1 Pe.
2 Corinthians	2 Co.	2 Peter	2 Pe.
Galatians	Gal.	1 John	1Jn.
Ephesians	Eph.	2 John	2 Jn.
Philippians	Php.	3 John	3 Jn.
Colossians	Col.	Jude	Jude.
1 Thessalonians	1 Th.	Revelation	Rev.
2 Thessalonians	2 Th.		

### C. Abbreviations with regard to books and series used:

AUSS	Andrews University Seminary Studies
Bib	Biblica
BibSac	Bibliotheca Sacra
BT	The Bible Translator
BTB	Biblical Theology Bulletin
CBQ	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CR	Currents in Research
CTJ	Calvin Theological Journal
EvQ	Evangelical Quarterly
GTJ	Grace Theological Journal
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
Int	Interpretation
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Studies
JRL	The John Rylands Library
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JTS	Journal for Theological Studies
Neotest	Neotestamentica
NIC	New International Commentary
NIDNTT	New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	Novem Testamentum
NTS	New Testament Study
QR	Quarterly Review
SA	Sociological Analysis
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
VoxEv	Vox Evangelica
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
WTJ	Westminster Theological Journal
WW	Word and World

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## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation should be recognized and understood in a historical context, not as “timeless symbols” (Bauckham, 1993b:19). It is impossible to understand and interpret the book of Revelation correctly without considering the proper historical context. Nevertheless, Revelation has suffered various problems, for example, the extreme eschatology movement. Even though various problems in Revelation are based on the mysterious apocalyptic visions and highly symbolic language (cf. Du Rand, 1993a:243-249), De Smidt (1994:229) commented, “the Book of Revelation should be read in the same manner as all the other writings of the Bible.” It means that the Revelation should be understood in connection with contemporary relevance.

The primary message of the book of Revelation can be linked with the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christians who lived in Asia Minor. And this message has been sent to convey a message of encouragement and comfort (Kistemaker, 2001:53). This book should not be abused or ignored. Through the book of Revelation, the seven churches hear the voice of encouragement and comfort about the promised victory in their liturgical context (Decock, 1999:377). The intent of this dissertation is to describe the ‘conqueror (νικᾶω) motif’ in the face of possible persecution, suffering, and conflict. By sharing the promised victory to the conquerors by an exalted Christ, John intended to keep their faith as the conquerors unto the death (Beasley-Murray, 1992:20). Therefore, through words of encouragement and comfort, John strengthens the conquerors through promise and fulfillment.<sup>1</sup>

### I.1. The reason for this Research

The conqueror motif is difficult to understand because people ask questions as to where

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<sup>1</sup> In order to understand this argument, I want to suggest a chart in the following way: the promise statements given to the conquerors (chapters 2-3) and the fulfillment statements given to the conquerors (chapters 19-22). For example, 1. tree of life in paradise of God (2:7) and tree of life (22:2, 14, 19), 2. second death (2:11) and second death (20:6, 14; 21:4, 8), 3. hidden manna, white stone, new name (2:17) and new name (22:4), 4. authority over the nation (2:26), rod of iron (2:27), morning star (2:28) and rule with rod of iron (19:15) and morning star (22:16), 5. white garments, the book of life(3:5) and dressed in white(19:8), and names in the book of life (20:12, 15, 21:27), 6. pillar in the temple (3:12), divine names written (3:12) and divine names written (22:14), 7. divine throne (3:21) and divine throne (20:4), White throne (20:11).

God is and why we are suffering in the present time. Concerning this conqueror motif, this question is central as to how we should understand the victory of Christianity when it seems as if God is not present. Those kinds of arguments indicate that this motif of conquering within the Christian framework should be investigated.

The Revelation was composed during a time when severe suffering and conflict of the Christian church were occurring. John had been exiled to Patmos for preaching the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:9). The church in Smyrna expected persecution (2:10). Antipas had been martyred in the church in Pergamum (2:13). John recognized himself as writing in a time of extreme conflict and crisis (Reddish, 1982:3). As a pastor to the persecuted Christians, John is asking for a choice of allegiance: Christ or Rome (cf. Hendriksen, 2000:29-32). Who is in control? Who is, in a real sense, the conqueror in this world? In these questions, this peculiar term ‘the conqueror’ in Revelation refers not only to the martyrs (Caird, 1966:229), but also all Christians (Beasley-Murray, 1992:76-79). Therefore, the conqueror motif in Revelation will reveal who the conquerors are from a new perspective.

The ‘conqueror motif’ arises as a prominent element in Revelation (e.g. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 15:2; 21:7). Most scholars didn’t focus on the theme of the conqueror motif. Even though some scholars focus on the conquerors in Revelation, their focusing on this theme is not enough. According to Caird (1966:229), the conquerors are the martyrs, because the martyrs are special people of God and the martyrs will have special privileges as the conquerors. The weak point of his analysis is to limit the conquerors to the martyrs. The Revelation doesn’t limit the conquerors to the martyrs.

Rosscup (1982:261-286) argues that all of the genuinely saved will turn out to be conquerors and receive the reward Christ promises them. This explanation is not enough to describe who the conquerors are, because it is not clear who all of the genuinely saved are. Therefore, to limit the conquerors to the martyrs (Caird, 1966:229) and all of the genuinely saved (Rosscup, 1982:261-286) is to simplify the conqueror motif in Revelation. Unlike them, Wilson (1996:182-185) recognizes the conquerors as an

integral title that indicates all the people of God, including the saints, slaves, witnesses and so on. Various titles about the conquerors in Revelation will expand our horizon to understand the message of Revelation. This kind of research has not been done among the scholars through detailed exegesis, which is why I would pursue this research of the conqueror motif thematically.

## **I.2. Purpose of the Dissertation**

The purpose of this dissertation is to search for understanding and to give a new perspective of the contents of the conqueror motif in the book of Revelation. For this purpose, individual passages that are connected with the conqueror motif are examined with the ultimate intention of understanding as a whole. This research will provide a new approach to the conqueror motif in terms of historical and heavenly perspectives (Strand, 1990:241). As Stevenson (2001:283) commented, the book of Revelation provides a new and transcendent vision of reality to the conquerors by offering God's victory over all who stand in opposition.<sup>2</sup>

A subsidiary purpose of this dissertation is to provide the background materials related to the conqueror motif in Revelation. How was the conqueror motif implied in Jewish literature? How did the New Testament relate to the conqueror motif? How did John use these concepts to interpret the conqueror motif? These kinds of analyses will reveal how the individual passages are related to the conqueror motif and how they expand the understanding of the message in Revelation.

## **I.3. Methodology of the Dissertation**

The methodology of this dissertation employs an exegetical, literary,<sup>3</sup> and theological

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<sup>2</sup> As the conquerors are the main theme of this section, it must be their confession, "Now have come the salvation and power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death" (Rev. 12:10-11).

<sup>3</sup> Powell (1993:85-91) describes the benefits of narrative criticism as follows: 1. Narrative criticism focuses on the text of Scripture itself. 2. Narrative criticism provides some insight into biblical texts for which the historical background is uncertain. 3. Narrative criticism provides for checks and balances on

approach as well as the historical method. In interpreting the book of Revelation, the research about the historical, social, and religious contexts is an important task in order to understand the meaning of text (see Botha, 1988:87-102; DeSilva, 1992a:273-302; Kraybill, 1996). This dissertation seriously considers the historical, social, and religious contexts.<sup>4</sup> The book of Revelation was intended to be written for Christians who lived at a particular time in history (Beasley-Murray, 1992:13). Therefore, the historical, social and religious contexts of the Revelation should be considered (Thompson, 1998:30-35) because the book of Revelation is embedded in a social framework. The social framework will help one understand the imagery. Bauckham (1993b:19) is of the opinion that “John’s images echo and play on the facts, the fears, the hopes, the imaginings and the myths of his contemporaries.”

In addition, this dissertation will deal with the literary context in which the word conqueror is used. It will focus on the linguistic-syntactic analysis. This includes not only the linguistic and syntactic approach, but also the context in which the word conqueror ( $\nu\kappa\acute{\alpha}\omega$ ) is used in Revelation. That is, the use of the word  $\nu\kappa\acute{\alpha}\omega$  will be examined for a proper understanding in terms of linguistic, syntactical and structural analysis and for the contexts in which the word  $\nu\kappa\acute{\alpha}\omega$  is used in the book of Revelation. These kinds of linguistic, syntactical and structural analyses for the word  $\nu\kappa\acute{\alpha}\omega$  might provide clearer textual implications about the conqueror motif used in the book of Revelation. That is why these passages are regarded not in an isolated context, but as part of a larger context. This kind of research can decode the apocalyptic power to provide consolation, hope, and ethical exhortation for the concrete situation that the seven churches faced (cf. Carey, 1999:77-92). As a thematic study, I want all the information that I can get on this word or this theme. Therefore, I am going to use the

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traditional methods. 4. Narrative criticism tends to bring scholars and nonprofessional Bible readers closer together. 5. Narrative criticism stands in a close relationship with the believing community. 6. Narrative criticism offers the potential for bringing the believing community together. 7. Narrative criticism offers fresh interpretations of biblical material. 8. Narrative criticism unleashes the power of biblical stories for personal and social transformation. The weak point of narrative criticism can be explained in that it bypasses extrinsic, historical, social, cultural, and religious factors in the task of literary interpretation. It is also a report in story-form of past history. One cannot ignore the question of the historical audience or the historical Jesus of John’s story without reducing and restricting the functions of narrative.

<sup>4</sup> These kinds of researches investigate the New Testament texts according to the diachronic method of biblical interpretation. That is, they focus on the origin and the development of the texts as well as their theological emphasis and life context (Egger, 1996:155).

methods that best suit the analysis of that particular text. As Egger (1996:10) commented,

Methods are not means to be applied mechanically to grasp the sense of the text. Methods should be understood as indicating the direction we should take in collecting observations about the text and as showing how we can most appropriately draw conclusions as to the meaning of the text.<sup>5</sup>

#### **I.4. Main Hypothesis**

The hypothesis for this dissertation is that the conqueror motif in Revelation is a central theological theme in conveying the message of victory, encouragement, and comfort. The message of the victory, encouragement, and comfort to the conquerors is based on the victory of Christ through death (Mounce, 1977:144). In other words, this theological theme is, on the one hand, closely connected with God's sovereignty, the victory of the Lamb, and the endurance of the conquerors as the people of God. On the other hand, this is linked with the witnessing of the word of God and testimony of Jesus (Aune, 1996:279-283).

These two theological themes will be investigated to reveal the real identity of the conquerors in Revelation. The theological theme of the victory through death and the witnessing of the word of God and testimony of Jesus is primarily a message of encouragement and hope to the conquerors. The climax of the victory to the conquerors is ultimately fulfilled in the section of the New Jerusalem (Bauckham, 1993b:140-143). That must be an eschatological victory to give encouragement and hope to the conquerors that suffered in this world.

#### **I.5. Investigative Procedure**

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<sup>5</sup> In terms of historical criticism that rebuilt the life and teaching of Jesus and the tradition of early Christianity, literary criticism is not an appropriate method to rebuild historical origin or situation. But one must keep in mind that literary criticism is to emphasize other literary perspectives to reveal the texts, which were given (cf. Stamps, 1997:221), if historical criticism is to reveal the historical perspective. Thus, one must regard both the historical and literary perspective in the Bible together in order to understand text itself and to communicate (cf. Egger, 1996:113-120) more with text itself. Otherwise, one will miss important meanings of the text (cf. Bailey, 1995:211).

This dissertation will focus on an investigation of the conqueror motif. In chapter 1, I will deal with the introductory matter of the dissertation, including the reason for this research; the purpose and methodology of the dissertation; and the main hypothesis as a method of revealing the conqueror motif in the book of Revelation.

For chapter 2, I present the general background to better understand the meaning of the book of Revelation in terms of the social, cultural and religious circumstance in the first century. This survey will focus on the Old Testament, the Greco-Rome world, Jewish literature, and the book of Revelation (cf. Michaels, 1992: 21-33).<sup>6</sup> Throughout chapter 2, I will prove that the book of Revelation was not only written to console and encourage in the time of persecution, but also to give various pastoral exhortations and to maintain their identity in a gentile environment (see Slater, 1999:13-63).

For chapter 3, I will investigate the linguistic, literary, and structural analyses of the promise saying given to the conquerors in terms of the social-scientific approach (see Wilson, 1996). It is based on the fact that the promise saying given to the conquerors of the seven churches is deeply rooted in their distinctive situations and problems (cf. Maier, 1997:140-152). Bauckham (1993b:19) is quite correct to say that John transmutes his message into elements of his peculiar Christian context.

For chapter 4, I will deal with the conqueror motif from the christological perspective. For the christological analysis of the conqueror motif, I will focus on the title “one like a Son of Man” (cf. Rev. 1:12-16 and 14:14-16), “the Lamb Christology” (cf. Rev. 5:6), and “the Divine Warrior Christology” (cf. Rev. 19:11-16). These three christological titles are frequently used as proper symbolic images to encourage and to give hope to those who lived under the pressure of Rome. Through these three christological figures,

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<sup>6</sup> Even though Michaels (21-33) regards the book of Revelation as an Apocalypse, Prophecy and Letter, he doesn't distinguish sharply between Apocalypse and prophecy. He regards these two as almost interchangeable. But, when we consider chapter 1:1 as an Apocalypse and chapter 1:3 as a prophecy, the demarcation between the two terms is clearly distinguished. For more information about this demarcation, see ‘the theology of the book of Revelation’ written by Bauckham (1993b:2-17). At this moment, the definition of Collins (1979:9) about genre will be helpful in understanding the book of Revelation. It can be defined as follows: “Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”

the book of Revelation reveals its alternative world of visions and symbolic universe in a socio-economic situation (Fiorenza, 2001:9).

For chapter 5, I concern myself with some of the passages in chapters 12-13 in which I focus on the conqueror motif. This chapter shows who the real conquerors are in terms of a worldly and heavenly perspectives. The conquerors and defeated in terms of earthly or heavenly aspects distinguish the people of God from the people of Satan. As Collins (1976:185) points out, the purpose of the book of Revelation is to provide the contemporary situation as a dualistic struggle in which the people of God must decide to take the heavenly perspective and firmly resist the power of chaos.

For chapter 6, as fulfillment statements of promise statements, I examine the New Jerusalem as included in chapters 19-22 and link them to the promise statements in chapters 2-3. These fulfillment statements are given to the conquerors as the message of victory and encouragement. For this, I will search not only the Old Testament and the New Testament sources, but also Greco-Roman materials, which are related to this topic.

I conclude chapter 7 by asking why John sent this letter to the readers who were facing persecution or were in crisis. What is his intention as apostolic pastor and a theologian? Why does he suggest various christological titles, especially one like a son of man, the Lamb, and the Divine Warrior?

As Colclasure (1981:14) points out well, John's intention to send his letter was to urge God's people to overcome the world as Christ did. That is, the people of God must be conquerors, just as Jesus Christ was a conqueror through his death and resurrection. The idea of the victory and conquering that John wanted to deliver to his suffering people can be expressed through various dimensions, namely in terms of ecclegiological, christological and martyrological perspectives. John's intention, noted above, would have made sense to the people of God who suffered various problems. Thus, John provides two perspectives: from below and above, and claims to make a decision as an ethical dimension (see Carey, 1999:45-92) between Christ and Caesar. That is my potential conclusion. For this argument, I will develop my thesis in the following

chapters.

## CHAPTER II. THE VICTORY MOTIF AS BACKGROUND FOR UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

### II.1. Dating as background for understanding the book of Revelation

Most people who are interested in this book struggle to truly understand its meaning. Even though it is not an easy book, the thing one should remember is that it was given by God to show us something- that has already taken place. The book of Revelation therefore begins like this, “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John: Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἣν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δεῖξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἀγγέλου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννῃ.”

By considering this verse one can determine the meaning of this passage through which God gave his revelation, not to be concealed, but indeed to reveal his heavenly will to his people. The most important thing is that it was given by God and influenced by the social, cultural, and historical background in which the book of Revelation was written (cf. Childs, 1984:503). As Bauckham (1993b:19) insists, the book of Revelation would not be understood as a timeless symbol. That is why one can't ignore the background of this book, that is, when it was written<sup>7</sup> and under what circumstances. What were the situations of the seven churches? Under what circumstances were the Christians of the seven churches living? Who is the enemy in the book of Revelation?<sup>8</sup>

In order to solve these kinds of problems, one must consider when the book of Revelation was written. It is also to reveal who the emperor was and what his policy was. And on the

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<sup>7</sup> During the 19th century, Nero was focused on as the written time of the Revelation, but nowadays, most commentators agree that the book of Revelation was written during the reign of Domitian (A.D.95-96). The supporters of the Nero date are J.A.T. Robinson and Kenneth L. Gentry. Jr ... . I will discuss this topic later.

<sup>8</sup> In his book ‘The Sitz im Leben of the Apocalypse’, Beagley (1987) regards the enemy of the church in the Apocalypse as just Judaism. He says “This study will provide background material against which to examine the *Sitz im Leben* of the book of Revelation, particularly in relation to the conflicts between the Church and Judaism” (:3). I think that it is partly correct. Even though there were a lot of conflicts with Judaism in Revelation, he overlooks other parts of Revelation and does not see the content of Revelation as a whole. In Revelation, there were a lot of conflicts with Rome, which was personified as a Satanic agent, as well as certain conflict with Judaism. The latter will be discussed later.

other hand, it is to reveal what the social and political situations of the seven churches were through the internal and external evidence of Revelation. Therefore, the dating as a background for understanding of the book of Revelation should be regarded as a prerequisite condition before one start discussing any major issues. Du Rand (1997a: 228) points out that the answer to the question of the dating of Revelation would be helpful to us to understand its meaning contextually. The survey over the dating of Revelation will provide the conflict situation of the Christians and the real meaning of the victory and conquest motif as Christians who lived under the hostile social situation (cf. Kraybill, 1996:33-40, 52-56). Even though these kinds of background information are not my concern in this thesis, it would be very helpful to understand the message of the book of Revelation.

One should first of all keep in mind that the book of Revelation was sent to the seven churches, which were situated in Asia Minor. The communities of the seven churches were suffering under Roman or Jewish pressure in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Summers (1951:93) says of the purpose of Revelation that it was formulated by way of considering the background of all that had been said to the Christians, their conditions, as well as their needs. Du Rand (1997a:285-290) also emphasizes the real socio-historical context, reflecting the present pressing situation of the seven churches in Asia Minor. Therefore, one must remember its historical interrelation with the book of Revelation, that is, when it was written.

According to internal evidence, John was on the island of Patmos, because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (1:9: διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ).<sup>9</sup> Whenever John sent his letters to the seven churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, he used and borrowed the images (e.g. the crown of life, manna, burnished bronze, pillar, temple) of that time which were historically understood, and which were familiar to the people. On the basis of this statement, Hemer (1986:19-20) points out that some genuine and valuable local materials in the letters can be connected with the existence of local features, which were well known to his readership in Asia Minor. With particular emphasis on the ‘dating of Revelation’, I will research the historical background of the text itself, in order to better understand and more exactly

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<sup>9</sup> For more information about Patmos, see Hemer (1986:27-34), Ramsay (1994:59-66).

clarify the research theme as conqueror motif at hand.

### II.1.1. Dating

Like other New Testament books, it is, in the case of Revelation, indeed necessary to know the date of the writing, in order to understand ‘the situation’ of the book. There were many attempts by various scholars to settle the question about the dating of Revelation among various scholars. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the divisions fall into two general dates, a ‘late’ dating (A.D. 95-96) and an ‘early’ (A.D. 64)’ dating based on persecution.<sup>10</sup> In response to this problem, I take a ‘late’ dating (A.D. 95-96) as that it was written in Domitian’s reign. It means that the book of Revelation was written in a situation where different problems existed (see Beale, 1999:4-20) such as persecution (e.g. 2:13), cooling down of the faith (e.g. 2:4-5) and serious external harassment (e.g. 2:9, 2:20). What I want to do is not merely to indicate and determine a specific date, but to reveal a real meaning by which the message of Revelation can be understood. According to Du Rand (1997a:228-234; see Aune, 1997:lvi-lxx), the strongest external and internal witnesses support the argument that Revelation was written at the end of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 95-96). I will now examine the evidence, both internal and external.

#### II.1.1.1. External Evidence

In early Christian tradition, the dating of Revelation comes from Irenaeus who was the earliest witness. In his treatise ‘Against Heresies’ (5.30.3), he writes as following: “It was seen not long ago, but nearly in our generation, toward the end of the reign of Domitian.”<sup>11</sup> On the basis of Irenaeus’ testimony, most of the early church fathers (Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Victorinus, and Jerome) believed that the book of Revelation was

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<sup>10</sup> Most scholars, who are interested in this theme, namely dating, don’t agree with this division. Sometimes Galba, Claudius, and Trajan have also been proposed. In the case of Smalley (1994:40-50), he favours the dating of Revelation as written in the period of Vespasian. Rissi (1966:81) also insists that it was written at the time of Vespasian’s reign. On the basis of the interpretation of Chapter 17:10-11, Farrer (1964:32-37) suggests that the book of Revelation was written at the time of Trajan’s reign.

<sup>11</sup> For an English translation of that passage, I used the book of ‘Irenaeus of Lyons’ written by Robert M Grant (1997:178). Against Irenaeus’ testimony, many questions have been raised. In particular, Robinson (1976:222) suggests the question in the following way: (i) that the author of the Apocalypse and of the fourth gospel is one and the same person, (ii) that this person is the apostle John, (iii) that the Apocalypse was seen at the end of Domitian’s reign. Also see, for criticism against Irenaeus’ testimony, Gentry (1989:45-67).

written in the last year of the reign of Domitian, who ruled in A.D. 81-96. Eusebius, along with other early church fathers, also follows Irenaeus in claiming a Domitianic dating for the book of Revelation. In connection with this perspective, the church historian Schaff (1960:1.834s) mentions that the traditional dating of composition at the end of Domitian's rule (95-96) depends on the clear and weighty testimony of Irenaeus that is confirmed by Eusebius and Jerome, and still has its learned defenders.

Whereas the majority of commentators agree with the testimony of Irenaeus, Robinson (1976:221-253) in his book "Redating the New Testament", and Gentry (1989:41-109) in his book "before Jerusalem fell" argue that it was written between Nero's death in A.D. 68 and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Robinson (1976:223) argues that even though Victorinus (Apoc. 10:11) suggests that Caesar Domitian exiled John to the Patmos where he saw his Apocalypse, which he published after the death of the emperor, "Yet the identification is by no means solid." One doesn't actually have any reason to disagree with Victorinus (cf. Du Rand, 1997a:228-229). According to Terry (1974:237-238), it seems quite clear that the witnessing of Irenaeus concerning the Domitianic date of the book of Revelation could not be safely depended upon, because it is only based on a single statement by Irenaeus. In the case of Guthrie (1970:17), even though he considers that Irenaeus is uncritical in his approach, it cannot be dismissed when discussing the introductory question.

Gentry (1989:41-109; cf. Newman, 1963:133-139; Moberly, 1992:376-393) is one of the major advocates of early dating. According to him, the reference of *ἐωράθη* (was seen: "against heresies": 5.30.3), which is a crucial statement by Irenaeus for the late dating, could be interpreted differently according to what the subject of this verb is. Gentry (Ibid, 46-67) takes the subject of this verb *ἐωράθη* not as Revelation, but John. In contrast to Robinson and Gentry, Peake (1919:73) states:

Those who accept the earlier date have either to interpret the language differently or to discard the statement as untrustworthy. Some recent scholars have accepted another translation of the passage which goes back to Wetstein (vol. II. p. 746). Instead of "it was seen" they render "he was seen."... This, however, while a

legitimate, is a most improbable rendering. In the preceding clause the object of sight is the revelation.

The statement of Clement of Alexandria (A. D. 150-215), “who is the rich man that is saved” is very useful evidence for the late dating of the book of Revelation. In there (“who is the rich man that is saved”:42:2), one can find some evidence for the late dating:

After the death of the tyrant, the [Apostle John] came back again to Ephesus from the Island of Patmos; and, upon being invited, he went even to the neighboring cities of the pagans, here to appoint bishops, there to set in order whole Churches, and there to ordain to the clerical estate such as were designated by the Spirit.

The problem lies with who this tyrant was. In the book of Revelation, the tyrant executes emperor worship and imperial cult (e.g. 13:4-8, 15-16; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4) and the persecution of Christians (e.g. 1:9; 2:13; 3:8; 13:1-18; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2). Kraybill (1996:57-64) suggests that John of Patmos condemned the imperial cult, emperor worship and the danger of persecution against Christians. For this argument, the prominent candidates are Nero and Domitian. As a matter of fact, even though Nero meets with the qualifications of “tyrant” as the emperor of “savage temper” (Tacitus, History, 4:8), the conditions and situations that generally occurred in Revelation are more likely to have happened in the reign of Domitian rather than earlier (Carson, Moo, & Morris, 1992:476; cf. Beale, 1999:13).

Nero’s cruelty to the Christians can’t be denied. Late dating as external evidence makes sense, not only in terms of the situation of those addressed in the Apocalypse, but also in terms of the statements of the earliest Church Fathers like Irenaeus, Clement, and Eusebius, and so on (cf. Satre, 1984:63; Achtemeier, Green, & Thompson, 2001:572-573). Beale (1999:9) also agrees that “a date during the time of Nero is possible for Revelation, but the later setting under Domitian is more probable in the light of the evidence” in terms of emperor worship and programmatic legal persecution.

The argument for those who insist on Nero's dating can’t be ignored. But, in spite of their

devotion to this problem, the weight of a Domitian dating based on external evidence is much stronger than a Nero dating. First of all, the most important thing is that the text itself speaks to those who were listening to the word of God in the context of their own environment in the first century. From this, I will examine the text itself to better understand the information from the receiver's point of view, also known as internal evidence.

### II.1.1.2. Internal Evidence

For the advocates of the 'early' dating (Nero's time), the most important issues of dating are as follows: when was the book of Revelation written and what kind of suffering did the Christians experience? Was it a real persecution? Or was it a perceived crisis?<sup>12</sup> Concerning a perceived crisis, Collins (1984:84-107) suggests that there is no systematic persecution derived from Rome against Christians. It was the conflict between the Christian faith and the social situation, as he perceived it. Thus, one should interpret chapter 11:1-2 and chapter 17:10-11 to find out the real time framework in which the book was written, in terms of internal evidence. Is it a real event as a literal temple and literal kings, or is it a symbolic event to be interpreted as a symbol?

For the advocates of the 'late dating' (Domitian's time), these kinds of issues are very important because, through these issues, they are also insisting that the book of Revelation was written at the time of Domitian. For me, the most important thing is to find out what the texts themselves, like 11:1-2 and 17:10-11 say and what their historical context is in which the book of Revelation was written as 'late dating' to understand the message of the book of Revelation.

#### *II.1.1.2.1. The Temple measuring (11:1-2) and the seven kings (17:10-11)*

Until now, one has looked at the book of Revelation as crisis or persecution literature. But whether it is a "perceived crisis" (Collins, 1984: 84-107) or a "relative deprivation" (Collins, 1984:106) or a "therapy in crisis" (Gager, 1975:51) or not, it is my presupposition

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<sup>12</sup> For more discussion of 'perceived Crisis', see Collins (1984:84-110). For the social analysis of the first Christians who were deeply involved in the Roman and pagan society, see Thompson (1990:171-197).

that the book of Revelation was written under the situation of persecution or crisis or conflict. In order to support the late dating of Revelation, the evidence of Revelation itself should be carefully evaluated. This is especially important because the references to the temple (e.g. 11:1-2) and the seven kings (e.g. 17:10-11) are very important texts to support late dating. Their careful scrutiny will prove late dating. Then, one can recognize that the crisis and conflict facing the communities of the seven churches in Asia Minor can be defined as a social, economic, historical, political, and religious conflicts (Duff, 2001:14). In response to these kinds of conflicts, John encourages his congregation to stand firmly as the conquerors through patience and suffering (cf. Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:126-131).

#### II.1.1.2.1.1. The temple measuring (11:1-2)

Most commentators agree that this part is one of the most difficult sections (Beale, 1999:557; Mounce, 1977:218). One of the reasons for this, being part of a mysterious text, is that the problem persists as to which way one should interpret this section, literally or symbolically (cf. Mounce, 1977:218-219). For example, whereas Seiss (1974:233-241) interprets this text literally, Beasley-Murray (1992:182) gives this text symbolic meaning, indicating the church of Christ. Aune (1998a:598) also regards this text as symbolic of people of God who are protected by God. However, this section (11:1-2) is also one of the most important parts regarding the dating of Revelation, whether it should be considered as an 'early dating' (according to Nero's time) or a 'late dating' (according to Domitian's dating).

If one interprets the measurement of the temple literally, one could propose that it must have been written during Nero's time, due to the presence of the temple (before A.D.70). If one considers the temple measurement to carry a symbolic meaning, one could propose that it must have been written during Domitian's time, or possibly at a completely different time. Taking the text into consideration, the advocates of an early dating think that the book of Revelation was written prior to the fall of Jerusalem. They think that at the time Revelation was written, the Jerusalem temple was standing. Gentry (1989:174), who is an 'early dating' advocate, states the following: "John reveals both the prophetic certainty of

the material Temple's destruction and the fact of the preservation of His true Temple, His Church, His New Covenant people, His new priesthood.”<sup>13</sup> The weak point of this argument is that if one agrees with this argument, one must accept the destruction of the temple as a literal fact. In order to effectively do this, one must consider the text itself in terms of both its macro structure, and its microstructure<sup>14</sup> as one correspondingly considers the particular kind of language John used.

After the sixth angel sounded his trumpet (9:13-21), the scene was suddenly changed. The new scene with “Καὶ εἶδον” is begun (10:1). Due to the sudden break between the sixth and the seventh trumpet, one may refer to this as an interlude (Johnson, 2001:157). Regarding the structural aspect, it does have the same structural function as the interlude of chapter 7. That is, after the opening of the sixth seal (6:12-17), the scene was suddenly changed to the 144,000 sealed ones as an interlude (7:1-17). Following this, the scene returns to the seventh seal (8:1). In this text, the 144,000 sealed ones as interlude give us the answer to the question "For the great day of their wrath has come, who can stand against it?" According to Beale (1999:405-406), chapter 7 does not suggest a new series of future events during a final tribulation period following that of chapter 6. Rather, chapter 7

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<sup>13</sup> Even though he connects this section (11:1-2) with literal-historical Jerusalem temple, he doesn't ignore the figurative-symbolic understanding of the passage. But as an 'early dating' advocate, he doesn't give up historical relevance of that section as a prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction. For that argument, he connects this section with Luke 21: 24 (cf. Mt 24, Mk. 13). In Luke 21:24, we read: "They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." He argues that the prophecy of Jerusalem in Luke 21:24 refers to the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. For that reason, he says that "Here the correspondence are so strong, they bespeak historical identity rather than mere accidental similarity" (Gentry 1989:176).

<sup>14</sup> For the structure, recently the focus of Revelation has changed from individual symbols and passages to the structure of Revelation as a whole. Even though most commentators (cf. Collins, 1984:111-112; Fiorenza, 1985:170-177; Poythress, 2000:57-66) agree that the structure of Revelation is the key to the interpretation of Revelation, among them there are no consensuses in the structure of Revelation. To begin with, one must consider the book of Revelation as a whole in terms of structure perspective. It couldn't be separate as an individual episode and in this book one should not look for a historical relevance to the book of Revelation, because it was not written as a historical puzzle game, or a historical information collection. In the case of Gager (1975:50-51), he combines both structure and myth in relation to the concrete situation (persecution and martyrdom) and purpose (consolation) of the book as a whole. In his case, "one basic function of myth is to overcome unwelcome contradictions between hope and reality, between what ought to be and what is, between an ideal past or future and a flawed present" (:51). Fiorenza (1985:170-177) divides the book of Revelation into seven patterns as a concentric theory. She divides the structure in the following way; A 1:1-8, B 1:9-3:22, C 4:1-9:21; 11:15-19, D 10:1-15:4, C' 15:1, 5-19:10, B' 19:11-22:9, A' 22:10-22:21. Collins (1976:19) also suggests the structure of Revelation according to sevenfold series of visions in the following way: 1. Prologue: 1:1-8, 2. The seven messages: 1:9-3:22, 3. The seven seals: 4:1-8:5, 4. The seven trumpets: 8:2-11:19, 5. Seven unnumbered visions: 12:1-15: 4, 6. The seven bowls: 15:1-16:20: Babylon appendix: 17:1-19:10, 7. Seven unnumbered visions 19:11-21:8: Jerusalem appendix 21:9-22:5, 8. The Epilogue 22:6-21.

is an extension of chapter 6 explaining the vision of chapter 6 in a more detailed way and providing a larger background. Following a similar pattern of chapter 7 as an interlude, chapters 10-11:14 are a very important section to investigate in order to understand the relationship between the sixth trumpet and the seventh trumpet. Because this topic is beyond my field of expertise, I will not focus on it as much.

To begin with, chapter 11 having a structural function as interlude in which the text 11:1-2 is involved, can respectively be divided into two parts: 11:1-2 and 11:3-13. In the first part, one is informed regarding the measurement of the temple, while in the second part, one may look at the function of the two witnesses. In the first part, this section opens with the seer being given a measuring rod to measure the temple of God, together with the altar, as well as to count the worshippers there (11:1-2). Charles (1975:1.270) connects this section with the Zealots movement prior to the capture of Jerusalem.<sup>15</sup> Whether it is related to the Zealots' movement or any historical event, one should strongly consider the text's witness of that section.

In conjunction with the function of the temple measurement, the reason for the measurement was to protect God's people or Church in terms of spiritual meaning (Witherington III, 2003:157; cf. Aune, 1998a:598). This scene is in line with chapter 10. This scene also occurs in the vision. How can one measure the temple with a physical measuring rod? Even though one accepts the measuring of the temple of God, together with the altar, with a physical measuring rod, one should strongly consider whether at all it would be possible to measure the worshipper with a physical measuring rod (cf. Lenski, 1943:326-333). If one accepts the "forty-two months" as a symbolic number (cf. Court, 2000:236-237), in which way can one explain a co-existence between the temple measuring with a literal meaning and the forty-two months with a symbolic meaning within the same section? In the case of some of the Old Testament passages, the measuring line (cf. 2 Ki. 21:13; Job. 38:5; Isa. 28:17; 34:11; Jer. 31:39; Ezk. 40:3-4; 47:3; Zec. 1:16; 2:1-2) implies the boundaries of the future city. It points out the fact that Jerusalem will no

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<sup>15</sup> Even though Charles (1975:1.270-274) regards this section with a fragment of the Zealots' prophecy movement as having a historical relevance, he reinterprets this section in terms of a protection from spiritual danger. While he denies a possibility of a literal interpretation, he doesn't miss the relationship between the contemporary history and eschatological forecasts.

longer be subject to destruction, which implies a spiritual meaning-rather than a literal meaning (Sharkey, 1986:26).<sup>16</sup>

In spite of the argument regarding this problem, it implies some spiritual meaning pertaining to the heavenly Jerusalem temple, rather than a literal meaning similar to that of the earthly Jerusalem temple. But, Robinson (1976:240-241) mentions that this passage must be referred to with some reference from a pre-70 situation. Even Adams (1966:68) says that Revelation was written before 70 A.D. They do not regard the book of Revelation as apocalyptic or crisis literature, and as symbolic literature, in order to create some “symbolic universal” (Fiorenza, 1985:24)<sup>17</sup> or “symbolic-poetic imagery” (Du Rand, 1997a:285). As mentioned above, John didn't want to give information about historical events in this book. He rather wanted to give some theological meaning to the people who were being persecuted or were in crisis in terms of the heavenly reality in contrast with the earthly reality. Even though this section seems to relate to the earthly Jerusalem, John didn't want to relate this one to the historical Jerusalem temple. On evaluating this argument, it should seem clear that chapter 11:1-2 was written with a symbolic meaning under the theme of the protection of the church or eschatological consideration, the people of God (Wall, 1991:141-143). This topic will be dealt with at a later stage.

In contrast with ‘early dating’ advocates, ‘late dating’ advocates insist that this section doesn't indicate the historical earthly Jerusalem temple. It indicates the symbolic Jerusalem temple as a heavenly Jerusalem temple in terms of the protection of the church (cf. Rudolph, 2005:179). Regarding this point of view, the dating of Revelation couldn't be prior to A.D. 70 as ‘early dating’ advocates insist. It should, accordingly, seem clear that Revelation was written at a later date. Beale (1999:21) points out that:

The literal reading should be questioned in the light of the symbolism throughout the book and in ch. 11 in particular (e.g., vv3-7). Furthermore the depiction and

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<sup>16</sup> In Ezk 40-48, within the context of a visionary experience, he describes several aspects of Ezk's temple measurement in the following way: 1) the temple expressed in chapters 40-48 as being of divine and not human origin, 2) the temple is regarded as future oriented, 3) the temple of the future will be an ideal one, 4) the temple is not only described as a structure, but also as a community, the locus of God's presence. Through this statement, one can see that to him, the temple measurement is intended to suggest the ideal quality of the temple and to symbolize the perfection of the structure (Sharkey, 1986:34-35).

<sup>17</sup> For more information, see Fiorenza (1985:21-26).

measurements of the temple are based literarily and architecturally not on the Herodian temple but on the eschatological temple of Ezekiel 40-48.<sup>18</sup>

When one considers the influence of the Old Testament on John's theological purpose, it couldn't have been written during A.D. 70, prior to the fall of Jerusalem. On the contrary, it must have been written during A.D. 95-96, while Domitian reigned, following the fall of Jerusalem. Therefore, I accept that the book of Revelation was written in the latter part of the first century in which the church was confronted with persecution, compromise, cooling down of the faith or a crisis at the hand of the Romans or the Jews (probably false Jews). Through these vehicles, John wanted to strengthen and to encourage the faith of the people of God (Beasley-Murray, 1997:1035). It does not reveal an exact historical fact, but an event containing a particular theological meaning, reflecting the conqueror motif in terms of a heavenly perspective. As Rudolph (2005:202) argues, it is the message of hope and life, which was given to the conquerors through the blood of Christ.

The theological meaning of this section particularly indicates the protection of the eschatological people of God from persecution, conflict, tension, or crisis. Therefore, the temple measurement implies, embedded in a symbolic-metaphorical language, a certain eschatological protection for the people of God (Beale, 1999:559-560). It happened in the later part of the first century rather than an earlier date. Fiorenza (1991:77) also points out that the measuring symbolizes the eschatological protection and strengthening of the people of God who lived in Asia Minor.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The interesting application of the Old Testament's use in Revelation is currently increasing, even though the issue of the use of the Old Testament in Revelation was not paid any attention up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Beale (1998:13) says, "In comparison with the rest of the New Testament, the use of the Old Testament in the Apocalypse of John had not been given a proportionate amount of attention up through the late nineteen-seventies." Even though the use of the Old Testament is now more broadly accepted among the scholars, the main focal point to interpret Revelation's overall structure and Revelation's overall key in terms of the Old Testament use differs among various scholars. In the case of the Old Testament's use of chapter 11:1-2, the use of the Old Testament is also accepted from a broader consensus. John especially used the Old Testament in the following way: Ezekiel 40-48, Zechariah 2, Jeremiah 31. In Revelation 11:1-2, in order to explain the meaning of the temple from his theological purpose, John used the Old Testament not as a direct allusion, but as an indirect allusion in terms of the restoration of the eschatological temple. One should, thus, keep in mind that on behalf of the Old Testament prophets, the theme of the temple was the restoration of the ruined Jerusalem.

<sup>19</sup> In order to compare various opinions about this interpretation among the scholars, I will suggest some of the scholars' opinions. Kiddle (1940:189) regards the measuring of the temple as "preservation." Summers

Taking into consideration our arguments up to the present, one is probably able to confirm that the book of Revelation was written during the time of Domitian (A.D. 95-96). In order to confirm the result from the argument regarding this problem, one has suggested that chapter 11:1-2 is consulted as a proof text confirming the choice of some ‘late dating’. Through this argument, one can recognize that the first century Christians who lived in Asia Minor faced various problems and crises as a result of social and political pressures and conflicts between them and Jews (Boring, 1989:8-21). In the midst of various pressures from a conflict and crisis situation in the latter part of the first century, the demand of ‘conquering’ provides “a poetic-rhetoric construction of an alternative symbolic universal (world) on the basis of its own historical-rhetorical situation” (Du Rand, 1997a:257). Apart from these facts, I would like to argue from another text, chapter 17:10-11, to prove ‘late dating’.

#### II.1.1.2.1.2. The seven kings (17:10-11)

Chapters 17-18 describe fornication and the destruction of Rome. One of the most important issues in chapter 17 is the indication as to which way we should interpret the seven kings, in order to determine the exact date for understanding the message of the book of Revelation.

For this reason, this text has become a ‘battle field’. After having mentioned that the seven heads of the beasts actually resemble seven mountains, one of the seven angels who have the seven bowls continues: “They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one yet remains, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for a while. The beast who once was and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction” (οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν, ὁ εἷς ἔστιν, ὁ ἄλλος οὐπω ἦλθεν, καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μείναι. καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ αὐτὸς ὄγδοός ἐστιν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστιν, καὶ εἰς ἀπώλειαν ὑπάγει).

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(1951:162) regards this one as a “special care and preservation.” Concerning this interpretation, Charles (1975:1.274-275) gives us good insight. He explains the measuring in terms of “the preservation of the faithful” (:274) according to its own context. After some careful research, he concludes that “In its present context the measuring does not mean preservation from physical, but from *spiritual* danger” (:275) Owing to this analysis, one can state that the temple measuring does not imply a historical temple, but indeed a symbolic temple.

Before one proceeds to verse 10 and 11, one should first check the meaning of verse 9, that is, “the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.” The question of this verse is who are the seven heads? It was usually recognized that Rome was portrayed as a physical threat to the church, which was then symbolized by the seven hills, known as the geographical site of Rome (cf. Newman, 1963:133; Charles, 1976:2.54-55; Boring, 1989:179; Rossing, 1999:6; 61-62; 70; Achtemeier, Green, & Thomson, 2001:566; Johnson, 2001:243-253; Kistemaker, 2001:460-461; contra Henshaw, 1963:414-416; Beagley, 1987:91). Suetonius (*The Lives, Domitian, IV*) states that “at the festival of the Seven Hills, he distributed large hampers of provisions to the senatorian and equestrian order, and small baskets to the common people, after which he encouraged them to eat by setting them the example.”

It seems clear that the ‘Seven Hills’ indicates Rome, which was known as the city of seven hills.<sup>20</sup> Gentry (1989:151) as a preterist, also stresses the fact that “Everywhere throughout the empire Rome was known as the city on seven hills. When John wrote Revelation (whether in the A.D. 60s or in A.D. 95-96) there was no other city conceivable that was so universally noted for its seven hills.”

Ford (1975:282-293) insists that Ezekiel 16, which reflects a prophetic attack on Jerusalem, influences the author of Revelation. Therefore, the harlot in Revelation 17 is Jerusalem, not Rome. She doesn’t carefully regard the political and socio-religious contexts under which Revelation was written. The persecution, accommodation, complacency and other forms of problems indicate conflict between Rome and Christians over participating in the imperial cult (cf. Du Rand, 1997a: 231-233; Slater, 1999:18-26).

On the basis of this analysis, one can determine the meaning of verses 10 and 11. The problems of these verses remain: who are the five that have fallen, who is the one remaining and who is the other that has not yet come?<sup>21</sup> If one wants to determine the date

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<sup>20</sup> For more information, see Kiddle (1940:348), Beckwith (1967:698), Mounce (1977:313-314), Wall (1991:207), Michaels (1997:196), Beale (1999:868), Hendriksen (2000:170).

<sup>21</sup> The order of the emperors into the first century is as follows: 1. Julius Caesar (49-44 B.C.), 2. Augustus (31 B.C.-A.D. 14), 3. Tiberius (A.D. 14-37), 4. Gaius or Caligula (A.D. 37-41), 5. Claudius (A.D. 41-54), 6. Nero (A.D. 54-68), 7. Galba (A.D. 68-69), 8. Otho (A.D. 69), 9. Vitellius (A.D. 69), 10. Vespasian (A.D. 69-79), 11. Titus (A.D. 79-81), 12. Domitian (A.D. 81-96).

of writing of Revelation, one must decide with whom one is going to count as the first emperor. If chapter 17:10-11 is to be understood literally, one can thus decide which emperor one should start counting. For this, if one can identify who the sixth king is, it could be helpful to determine the dating of Revelation.

Nero redivivus legend: Another problem is whether all emperors should be counted in this list or whether any of the Caesars should be omitted from this list? Some scholars (Ford, 1975:289-291; Gentry, 1989:154-159) start the counting of emperors with Julius Caesar.<sup>22</sup> If one starts with the first emperor as Julius Caesar, the sixth king ‘the one who is’ may be ‘Nero’. As an advocate of the late dating, I will reject this theory in the light of the witness of Irenaeus (against heresies, 5.30:3) and the ‘*Nero redivivus*’. The expectation of Nero’s return was probably a well-known phenomenon in Asia Minor at the time in which Revelation was written (Beale, 1999:17-18; contra Barr, 1998:127-128). After his death there were rumours circulating that Nero would return to wreak his vengeance on Rome. This idea, that Nero was not dead but still alive and hiding somewhere was widespread among the people at that time (Rev. 13:1-18; 17:12-17).

Sibylline Oracles 4:115-124 mentions that Nero fled from Rome to Parthia and would return to wreak his vengeance on Rome. Also in Sibylline Oracles 5:93-110, Nero’s return from Persia is explained: “he will destroy your land and evil-devising men with blood and corpse, by terrible altars, a savage-minded mighty man, much-bloodied, raving nonsense, with a full host numerous as sand, bring destruction on you.” Tacitus in his book ‘History (2.8)’ describes Nero’s death, “various rumors were current about his death; so there were many who pretended and believed that he was still alive.” In his book, ‘The lives of the twelve Caesars’, Suetonius (Nero, LVII: 381) also mentions the following: “he died in the third-second year of his age... they published proclamations in his name, as if he were still

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<sup>22</sup> Gentry (1989:154-159) insists that the emperor count in that era began with Julius. In order to insist that Julius was the first emperor to be counted, he regards Julius Caesar as the first of the Roman emperors and in terms of historical records he regards the emperor worship system as started in the time of Julius Caesar (contra Kümmel, 1975:466-469). Owing to this reason, he mentions that “To exclude him from the enumeration of a list of pagan emperors in a work such as Revelation would be highly questionable - especially when his name was given to the line of the emperors: the Caesars” (:159). Malina and Pilch (2000:212) relate these verses to the Mesopotamian tradition and the seven kings to the planets in the sky. I think that it is probably not right. Through the text, one couldn’t imagine that the first receivers were familiar with astrology or astronomy. For this reason, it must be rejected. In contrast to the one who looks for historical relevance to this text, Wilcock (1989:164) considers the real meaning of the seven kings as a political power.

alive, and would shortly return to Rome and take vengeance on all his enemies.”

If Nero was the sixth king, this kind of rumour or legend couldn't have taken place. Owing to this, Revelation must have been written after Nero's death (A.D. 68). This is why one can't accept Julius Caesar as having been the first emperor<sup>23</sup> and therefore, I can't accept 'the early dating', stating that the book of Revelation was written during the time of 'Nero' (cf. Kümmel, 1975:466-469).

The other suggestion is that Augustus should be regarded as the first emperor regarding the dating of Revelation ("The history of Tacitus", Tacitus (1.1); Rissi (1966:81), Swete (1977:220). If one begins with the first emperor as Augustus, the sixth king should be Galba (A.D. 68-69; cf. Bell, 1979:98-99). Some commentators, who agree that the first emperor was Augustus, do not accept Galba as the sixth king. They prefer to omit him, owing to the fact that he ruled only briefly and was not regarded as an important emperor in Christian history. The problem is based on the fact that even though Galba, Otho, Vitellius ruled only briefly, Suetonius accepted them in the 'The lives of the twelve Caesars' as having been part of the emperors' line of descent. That is, one doesn't have enough reasons to deny their inclusion as emperors in the Roman history.

If one accepts the omission of the three rulers (Galba, Otho, Vitellius), one should find clarity for oneself pertaining to the issue. Who would the sixth king then be? It is seen to be Vespasian, who is the sixth in the sequence. The weak point of this theory is that Vespasian is seen as the image of 'the Beast'. But the image of the Beast is not suitable for him. The internal evidence, as well as the external evidence for Vespasian dating does not support Vespasian as the sixth emperor. He didn't persecute the Christian church during his rule and didn't promote the emperor cult. (Ladd 1979:229). Suetonius (The Lives, Vespasian, XV-XVI, 456) mentions, "He never rejoiced at the violent death of any man; nay he would shed tears, and sigh, at the just punishment of the guilty. The only thing deservedly blamable in his character was his love of money." Through the statement above, one can suppose that Vespasian is not a proper emperor to be counted as the sixth emperor

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<sup>23</sup> In spite of Gentry's insistence (1989:151-159), according to which the first emperor begins with Julius Caesar, what he said cannot easily be confirmed. In order to regard a contrasting opinion, see Collins (1984:58-64).

of Revelation.<sup>24</sup>

World Empires: On the basis of Daniel 7: 3-7, the other suggestion is that the seven kings may be associated with particular respective world empires (Colclasure, 1981:149-150; Hendriksen, 2000:170-173). The advocates of this theory regard these heads, not as representing individual rulers, but representing world empires. That is, they avoid the problem of counting the heads of the 'Beast' as a historical figure or as a historical ruler. They recognize the seven heads, not as a succession of individual emperors, but as a succession of kingdoms. With this, the five kingdoms are seen as Ancient-Babylonia, Assyria, New-Babylonia, Medo-Persia and Greco-Macedonia. One is Rome. The seventh is not yet come. They insist that this seventh head will be an anti-Christian power or empire, which will be in opposition to God's people prior to Christ's second coming (Ladd, 1979:229; Hendrikson, 2000:171).<sup>25</sup>

Even though their theory is very interesting and persuasive, I cannot accept this theory for the following reasons: 1) In chapter 17:9, the Greek word 'βασιλεις' can't be understood as a 'βασιλεία'. This word 'βασιλεία' indicates 'kingdom' as an area or district, which is ruled by a king (Louw and Nida, 1993:1.16).<sup>26</sup> 2) While this interpretation shows good insight, the problem is with its relevance within the Old Testament, through which the book of Revelation was deeply influenced. Even though Daniel interprets chapter 7:3-7 and verse 17 to contain the theme regarding the four kingdoms, the book of Revelation must not be

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<sup>24</sup> For more information about scholars regarding Augustus as first emperor, see Rissi (1966:81), Swete (1977:220), Barclay (1983:146-147). In his book "The history of Tacitus", Tacitus (1.1) regards Augustus to have been the first emperor – in the following way: "I begin my work with the time when Servius Galba was consul for the second time with Tius Vinius for his colleague. Of the former period, the 820 years dating from the founding of the city, many authors have been treated; and while they had to record the transactions of the Roman people, they wrote with equal eloquence and freedom. After the conflict at Actium, and when it became essential to peace, that all power should be centered in one man, these great intellects passed away." Even though Tacitus also regards Augustus as the first emperor in terms of the book of Revelation, one couldn't accept this point of view - emphasizing only the historical perspective. This point of view ignores the intention of the author as a theologian. About this problem, Beasley-Murray (1992:257) points out well that apocalyptic traditions can not only be applied to history, if apocalyptic traditions are only applied to history, precision is not to be looked for.

<sup>25</sup> For the advocates of this theory, see Seiss (1974:392-394), Ladd (1979:228-231). Even though they regard these seven heads as a succession of secular empires, the detailed explanation is something different among them.

<sup>26</sup> According to Louw and Nida (1993:1.480), 'βασιλεύς' means "one who has absolute authority within a particular area and is able to convey this power and authority to a successor (though in NT times, certain kings ruled only with the approval of Roman authorities and had no power to pass on their prerogatives)-king."

applied directly to the Old Testament. It is a fact, that Revelation is full of the Old Testament quotations and allusions. John, however, didn't quote the Old Testament directly to his sources, but rather reinterpreted his source to deliver his new message to his receiver's particular situation (Pauline, 2001:113-121). Charles (1975:1.lxvi) points out that John does not definitely make a direct quotation from the Old Testament, even though he continually incorporates his sources from the Old Testament.<sup>27</sup>

Even though John was in the midst of the Old Testament tradition as a prophet, he didn't follow the Old Testament literally. As a revealer of the New Revelation, he looked for a new understanding or new interpretation of the Old Testament (cf. Bauckham, 1993b:18-22). For this reason, I can't accept this theory, regarding the seven kings (Rev. 17:10-11) particularly with respective world empires as a legitimate interpretation. 3) The historical relevance of such a literal interpretation, counting the seven heads as world empires, may be in contrast with Revelation's symbolic use of numbers.

John, as a historian, didn't want to give historical information to his suffering community. Neither did the suffering community, which was in Asia Minor, want to receive historical information from John (cf. Fiorenza, 1985:192-199; Thompson, 1986:147-171; 1990:171-197). Perhaps, they didn't want to be bothered with the endeavour of determining who the first emperor was, or whom they should count as the sixth emperor. The first century Christians would not follow the exact succession of Roman emperors without any problem (cf. Beckwith 1967:708). This is not a matter of historical information, but a matter of theological or symbolic meaning to give a "prophetic exhortation and interpretation" (Fiorenza, 2001:8). Chapter 17 is filled with symbolic characters and numbers to reveal the false and violent oppression of Rome to the people of God (Bauckham, 1993b:35-39). I would finally like to proceed to the 'symbolic interpretation' (Mounce, 1977:315; Wall,

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<sup>27</sup> Beale (1998:62-63) divides the criteria of Old Testament allusions in the following way: 1) Clear allusion - these passages or words are almost identical to the Old Testament, therefore it shares some common meaning with the Old Testament. 2) Probable allusion - even though it doesn't share a common meaning with the Old Testament, it does have some idea or wording, which can be traceable to the Old Testament. 3) Possible allusion- it reflects the wording or concept of Old Testament passages. Fiorenza (1985:135-140) admits the Old Testament allusions and quotations in the book of Revelation. She doesn't miss its own historical-theological situation, that is, as a function of strengthening and consoling the Christian community in Asia Minor, which has experienced persecution and suffering 'because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus' (Rev. 1:9). Bauckham (1993b:4-5) also recognizes allusions of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation, but he considers that it is not a formal quotation, but a reinterpreted quotation or re-examined allusions.

1991:208), as applicable to this section.

Pertaining to this section (chap. 17:10-11), the most satisfactory theory will regard the seven kings as resembling a symbolic meaning (Johnson, 2001:249-253). Owing to this reason, the number seven represents a symbolic or spiritual number, as a number of completeness (cf. Beckwith, 1967:708). In Revelation, wherever the number seven is used (e.g. chaps. 2-3: seven churches; 6-8: seven seals; 8-11: seven trumpets; 16: seven bowls; 17: seven kings), it must be interpreted as a symbolic meaning<sup>28</sup>, that is, having a complete number. For this Mounce (1977:316) mentions that

The single purpose of the apocalyptists in all such number schemes is to declare the imminent end of the age. In Revelation the seven kings represent the entire period of the Roman domination regardless of the exact number of emperors. The important point is that the end is drawing near.

John wanted to give a prophetic message to his communities who were under the pressures of conflict, crisis, persecution, and compromise (Boring, 1989:9). What John wanted to give to his faithful community was the ‘news of victory’, which is given to the conquerors. They were persecuted and differentiated at the hand of Rome or Domitian or ultimately, Satan. That is why John wrote to console his faithful community and to encourage them as the conquerors, by describing that Rome would be receiving the judgment as a harlot (e.g. 17:1). According to Bauckham (1993b:17), Revelation gives Christians a prophetic counter-image which provides its readers with a different symbolic universe. Even though they suffered and were persecuted at the hand of the enemies, the reason for ‘victory’ which would be given to the faithful Christians was in the fact that the Lamb overcame his enemies on the cross and through his resurrection (Rudolph, 2005:131-133). That is our guarantee. That is the promise of Christ to obtain materially the ‘victory’ as the conquerors.

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<sup>28</sup> For the advocates of symbolic interpretation of this section (17:10-11), see Kiddle (1940:349-351); Lenski (1943:504-506); Caird (1966:217-219); Beckwith (1967:704-708); Barnes (1976:388-389); Mounce (1977:314-317); Sweet (1979:256-258); Beagley (1987:92); Wall (1991:207-208); Beale (1999:870-878). Even though these scholars regard the seven kings as having a symbolic meaning and agree to consider the number seven (the seven kings) as the Roman rulers or Roman power from the beginning to the end, one should keep in mind that it was deeply embedded in the real concrete world of history in which the first century Christian lived.

### II.1.1.3. Summary

Until now, I have considered the external and internal evidences according to the dating of Domitian. According to the testimony of Irenaeus in Asia Minor, this research has revealed the dating in which Revelation was written to be in the period of the reign of Domitian. In terms of the external and internal evidences, the book of Revelation does not indicate proof of a systematic and general persecution in the period of Nero. Rather, it reveals various problems such as conflict with Jews (e.g. 2:9; 3:9), persecution (e.g. 1:9; 2:13), and self-satisfaction (e.g. 3:17; 17:3-4; 18:7) under Domitian's rule (Keresztes, 1989:1.99; contra Moberly, 1992:376-393). Reddish (1982:104) divides the persecution under Domitian rule into three categories: persecution by the Jews, persecution by pagan neighbours, and official persecution by the government.

As Du Rand (1997a:234; contra Wilson, 1993:587-605) points out, a dating of Revelation (95-96 CE) provides a suitable situation within which the message of Revelation can be read and understood. A dating of Revelation (95-96 CE) provides the social situation between the seven churches and the larger social communities (cf. DeSilva, 1992a:273-302) and what the seven churches faced. As one searched for the evidences stated above, one found that the 'late dating' seemed more suitable, owing to the 'temple measuring (11:1-2)' and 'the counting of the seven kings (17:10-11)' in terms of internal evidence.

One can't accept the fact that as 'early dating' scholars insisted, the temple measurement (11:1-2) seems suitable for the earthly Jerusalem temple (contra Du Rand, 1997a:229). And the book of Revelation was written during the reign of Nero, as the sixth emperor, if one begins with Julius Caesar. Kümmel (1975:469) regards the book of Revelation as being written toward the end of the reign of Domitian A.D. 90-95 in Asia Minor. In order to encourage the Christians who were in fact threatened by Rome's destructive persecution, John delivers a confident message of the imminent victory of Christ over the powers of the Antichrist who were against God and his people. That is why the book of Revelation encourages the Christians to be conquerors under serious conflict, crisis, and fighting.

The aim of this section is to clarify the dating of Revelation in order to understand the

prophetic message of this book. Therefore, the message of Revelation in the light of dating was not written against a historical background of recent persecution (cf. Wilson, 1993:605), but in various social, cultural, and political situations (cf. Satre, 1984:63-64). In the oppressed and compromised situations, the request for victory or conquest is a proper message to the Christians who are to be conquerors.

Then, to whom has the promise of ‘victory’ been given and why? What was the situation of the people who received this ‘news of victory’? I would, furthermore, especially like to deal with the ‘literary and social situation or ‘Sitz im Leben’ in the book of Revelation.

## **II.2. Literary genre and social situation of Revelation**

As noted above, Revelation was written under pressure from opponents as crisis literature. Differences in details exist among scholars who regard Revelation as crisis literature. Then, what is the literary genre of Revelation? What exactly was the social situation of the first century Christian who lived in the Asia Minor (cf. Thompson, 1990:11-34)? What situations faced the seven churches to which John sent his letters? If the seven churches were in crisis, by what kind of crisis were they confronted? As Collins (1984:84-107) asked, is it a relative deprivation or perceived crisis? If they suffered some crisis under the opponent, is this crisis a very serious crisis or a sporadic one? This is my question about this section.

### **II.2.1. Apocalypse as crisis literature**

It is certain that the apocalypse is crisis literature, even though there are various opinions regarding this. In spite of various opinions concerning the apocalypse as a genre and its life context, one couldn't deny that the apocalypse, as a literary form, was written under the pressure of the enemy, whether it was Roman or Jewish.<sup>29</sup> Mounce (1977:24) regards the

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<sup>29</sup> Collins (1984:84-107) suggests the following list of enemies in the social situation: (1) conflict with Jews, (2) mutual antipathy toward neighboring gentiles, (3) conflict over wealth, which has taken the form of resistance to Rome in the east, Jewish polemic against Rome and social unrest in Asia Minor, (4) precarious relations with Rome, (5) experiences of trauma - see Fiorenza (1985:115-117). Sweet (1979:27-34) distinguishes this social situation as two main factors (1) Jewish-Christian relations (2) compromise with pagan society. Even though he tries to find out the social situation of Revelation, he does miss points in some parts, which try to find out the meaning of persecution or opposition in Revelation. For example, the

book of Revelation as being written to comfort and encourage the people of God in the midst of severe persecution. Du Rand (1997a:235) regards the book of Revelation as being written in the midst of crisis situation owing to various problems. Slater (1999:16, 35) also regards Revelation as crisis and oppression literature (cf. Richards, 1967:16).

What one should ask is that when it began, what the exact meaning and definition of the apocalypse is, and what the similarity and difference is with other apocalyptic literature and so on.<sup>30</sup> Roloff (1993:3-4) regards Daniel as the first apocalyptic book in the Old Testament. Daniel was written at the time of oppression by the Seleucid king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C, contra Hasel, 1981:37-49; Shea, 1986:31-36). The essential function of the Jewish apocalypse, such as the book of Daniel, is to provide consolation and to give encouragement and to make perseverance possible in the perilous present. In other words, the book of Daniel was deeply embedded in its historical and political religious circumstances of that time. When one considers the Jewish apocalyptic literature, the most important things are the religious, political, social, cultural and economical circumstances (Russell, 1964:16).

The writings of the Jewish apocalyptic literature are accepted as having been written the dangers of the time in which the people of God lived. That is, one can suppose that the written time of the apocalyptic literature in conjunction with the historical, sociological, political and religious perspectives was a very hard and difficult time for the Jew or Christian (see Collins, 1985:131-143). The message of apocalyptic literature is to exhort and console for a present conflict with the enemies of God's people (Kistemaker, 2001:53). For example, the defilement of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes of 168 A.D and the defilement of the temple by emperor Caligula (39/40 A.D.), and the consequent syncretism created a sense of disillusionment and even despair within Jewish circles (cf. Lombard, 1981:33). That one must regard this kind of crisis or persecution in context is not to simplify that situation which the first Christians confronted. Hurtgen (1993:26) points out that various tribulations and sufferings in the Apocalypse of John appear as a result of

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problems of the Laodicean church have included self-complacency or self-satisfaction, as well as Jewish-Christian relation and compromise with pagan society. According to this point of view, he is to simplify the social situation of Revelation.

<sup>30</sup> For more information about this topic, see Russell (1964:15-69); Lombard (1981:20-39); Rowland (1982:9-72); Aune (1986:65-96); Hellholm (1986:13-64).

several social, political, economic and religious factors.

Among the Inter-testamental literature, the prominent themes of crisis, martyrdom, and victory appear in Maccabees, because they fought against Seleucid hellenization. Through Maccabees, one discovers symbols of martyrdom and victory for the Jews. In 2 Maccabees 10:1-8, after Maccabaeus recovered the temple and demolished the altars erected by the heathen, the Jews celebrated their victory for eight days and carried garlands and palm-branches as symbols of victory (cf. Wilson, 1996:187). And, also after the victory of Maccabaeus over Nicanor in 2 Maccabees 15:1-37, the Jews praised the Lord who gave them victory.

2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees deal with a central motivation for martyrs to endure their situation in the face of death (Van Henten, 1997:132). In the case of Maccabees, martyrdom can also be considered as the behaviour of the righteous and faithful people as in Revelation (cf. Rev. 6:9-11; 20:4-6). That is why it can also be called crisis literature, because of the martyrdom. In 4 Maccabees 17:10, the people of God, namely martyrs, remain faithful to the Lord unto death and are closely linked with the theme of conquerors in Revelation. In 4 Maccabees, the theme of suffering and victory is one of the prominent features. 4 Maccabees 6:1-35 explains the death of Eleazar who endured the torment and conquered the pains (6:9-10) because of his piety to keep the divine Law. His piety (εὐσέβεια) is closely linked with the faithfulness (πίστις) to the Lord that is one of the major characteristics in Revelation (Van Henten, 1997:131; Rev. 1:5; 2:13). Eleazar can be called a conqueror because he kept his faith in God's Law, even though from an earthly perspective he was defeated through suffering and death. That is the way of victory, through suffering in 4 Maccabees (cf. 4 Macc. 9:1-9). By suffering and endurance, the conquerors can obtain the prize of virtue and be with God (4 Macc. 9:8). In terms of victory through suffering, Maccabees is intimately connected with the book of Revelation that consistently portrays victory by means of suffering by the conquerors. As Wilson (1996:193-194) pointed out, 4 Maccabees emphasizes the conqueror motif through the suffering of Jewish martyrs.

#### II.2.1.1. Apocalyptic literature

The book of Revelation deals with the context of the seven churches, which were deeply influenced by the cultural and historical situations of the first-century Asia Minor. When John wrote his letters to his receivers as a form of Ἀποκάλυψις, he sent his letters to his readers who lived in the complicated context of their own situation. Summers (1951:97) is of the opinion that the book is a message of encouragement for those who suffered persecution, and it provides hope from sorrow and pain in God's own time. It is a book peculiarly adapted to any age of great trouble and perplexity. Even though the context of the apocalyptic literature is to comfort those who were in sorrow, in the context of the seven churches, a number of elements such as comfort, blame, extolment, encouragement are involved.

The term-Ἀποκάλυψις is very important so it is necessary to have some information about its context. Ἀποκάλυψις means to reveal, to disclose, to make fully known, a revelation.<sup>31</sup> The apocalyptic literature was written between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D. The root of emergence of the apocalyptic literature lies in the background of the Jewish post-exilic era (cf. Lombard, 1981:29-36). In this specific situation, religious syncretism or religious accommodation, the coercion of the emperor-worship and imperial cult and the conflict with pagan neighbourhood is spread out. It was the function of apocalyptic literature to console and to give hope to those who were under various conflict situations (Collins, 1984:84-107).

According to Russell (1964:16), the apocalyptic literature should be understood in terms of the religious, political, as well as economical situations of the time in the response of faith. In the case of Brown (1997:774-780), the apocalyptic literature was written for those who lived in the time of suffering and persecution. For him, the apocalyptic literature can be expressed through the intervention of an otherworldly being and the vision of the supernatural world to interpret present situations on earth (:775). Apocalyptic literature is used for the interpretation of the present situation. This kind of apocalyptic language may offer hope and consolation in the midst of conflict and persecution. Du Rand (1997a:286) also defines the apocalyptic function as the “present pressing situation.”

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<sup>31</sup> Louw and Nida, (1993:1.339).

In connection with these conflict and crisis circumstances, John wanted to reveal the heavenly perspective to his readers who were persecuted. If one regards the Apocalypse as crisis literature, one can assume that the receivers were at the time confronted by a very difficult situation and with some serious events and problems within and without. As Murphy (1994a:153) mentioned, apocalyptic literature was written in a hostile situation. For Murphy (:171), apocalyptic literature delivers the concrete historical circumstance and its real meaning in terms of a cosmological and eschatological perspective. Therefore, the function of apocalyptic literature is “to console those in crisis” (Murphy, 1994a:171). For example, when one turns to the church in Pergamum, one realizes that Antipas (2:13) was killed because of his faith. Even though one doesn’t know exactly who killed Antipas, when one considers the historical and social contexts of the church, there is no doubt that Pergamum was a place of emperor worship and a centre of Hellenistic culture. Here Christians were confronted by the actual threat of Roman persecution (cf. DeSilva, 1992a:277-278). This suggests that many Christians who refused to worship the emperor as “our Lord and God” (Suetonius, Domitian. 13) experienced much suffering and conflict, because of the name Christ and the title Christian.

To the Romans, Christians were regarded as absolute strangers, outsiders and law-breakers. Consequently, in this situation gradual and intensifying tensions between Rome and the Christians occurred (Kistemaker, 2001:35-37). Through the writings of the apocalyptic literature and the idea of an apocalyptic world-view, they (the Christians) criticized the concrete historical situation they faced. And they revealed emperor worship and the imperial cult as false from a cosmological and eschatological perspective. Therefore, one can say that the Apocalypse was written in response to Romans and Jews within a particular historical background. Pippin (1987:64) expresses the social context of Apocalypse by saying that the social reality of Apocalypse was not only internal but also external. It is the forces of oppression that came from within (the power structure of the indigenous population) and without (the force of Rome and its neighbouring powers). If one wants to belong to the people of God, one had to follow Jesus who was the ‘ethical model’.<sup>32</sup> This event is an example of how to live in the face of persecution or crisis and

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<sup>32</sup> In Revelation, the theme of martyrdom is conspicuous. According to Bauckham (1993b:77), martyrs are those who “have triumphed by participating, through their own deaths, in the sacrificial death of the Lamb.” Even though the theme of martyrdom is used more with military or political issues than with religious matters,

how to live in this world a life of witness as a Christian disciple. From this point of view, Aune (1996:270) explains:

John of Patmos, the author-editor of the Apocalypse, was centrally concerned with Christian discipleship... It was his view, given the existing or imminent social and political situation of the Christian of Anatolia, that death was the almost inevitable consequence for those who remained faithful to the demands of the word of God and were faithful to Jesus.

The victory achieved by Jesus through suffering and death becomes a central paradigm for discipleship in the midst of conflict and persecution (cf. Aune, 1996:278). Therefore, the function of apocalyptic literature is built on the basis of the specific situations such as political, religious, and theological factors experienced as a result of what the people of God faced in a hostile world (Lombard, 1981:36).

#### II.2.1.2. Victory through death

Martyrdom, in other words death, is a central motif in Revelation (Reddish, 1982:123; Bauckham, 1993b:76-80). John expected the call for endurance and faithfulness to the communities unto death. The central point is on those who shed and keep to the end the blood of martyrdom in order to achieve a victory. According to Bauckham (1993b:79), martyrdom is connected with the victory of the Lamb's followers.

It could especially be related to ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός (Rev, 1:5) concerning Jesus. Jesus was called 'the faithful witness' through his work, which was concluded on the cross. It means that Jesus was the One who bore witness to the truth derived from God.<sup>33</sup> That is why

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one can't separate this theme from religious matters. As time went on, this theme was much closer to the religious matters than to the military or political matters. As indicated above by Bauckham, in the book of Revelation, it is related to Jesus' suffering, death, and witness. In his dissertation, Reddish (1982:126) relates ὁ μάρτυς to the concept of martyrdom.

<sup>33</sup> According to Mounce (1977:70), this title assigned to Jesus as a mediator is not limited to his function. He connects this word, namely the faithful witness or witnesses, with the penalty of death, which results from a firm and constant witness. To the Asian Christians about to enter into a time of persecution, Jesus is presented as the faithful witness. He is the 'model' of how to stand firm and never compromise the truth of God. His argument that Jesus is a 'model', which we should follow, is quite correct, but I think it is necessary to expand this theme more. Wall (1991:57-58) regards the mediating function of Jesus as a faithful witness in

Jesus can be called ‘conqueror’ through his suffering and martyrdom (Reddish, 1982:124-125). In Revelation it seems especially true that one can find that any faithful witness, as a follower of Jesus, will endure suffering and persecution. The distinctive mention of faithful witness (e.g. 1:5; 2:13; 3:14) indicates the specific situation of the seven churches. The mention of the faithful witness is linked with the death of Christ and the Christians (Beale, 1999:190). Mounce (1977:71) regards the ‘faithful witness’ as a title to encourage and console believer’s suffering in severe persecution and death. For this reason, John encouraged the churches as a ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός. Within chapters 2-3, it is very interesting to find the word 'endurance' (for example, 2:2: τὴν ὑπομονήν σου, 2:3: ὑπομονήν, 2:19: τὴν ὑπομονήν σου, 3:10: τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου).

The request for endurance implies that within the seven churches, something happened that was crisis to the congregation (Morris, 1999:37). But one does not have any reason to limit these problems merely to persecution or a crisis. The argument that the function of the apocalypse is to console those in crisis is not a satisfactory explanation for the seven churches, which experienced various problems. Tigghelaar (1996:263-265; cf. Collins, 1998:9, 37-42) argues that to regard only the crisis situation in Revelation is to have only a limited value. At best it identifies one of many factors that had an apocalyptic influence.

Antipas, the faithful witness (μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου), is the only person who died as a martyr in Revelation. The verb ἀποκτείνω means that “a person was deprived of physical life” (Rudolph, 2005:208) for his or her faith. The fact that Antipas was killed is based on his being a faithful witness. Antipas expected martyrdom for faith and eschatological victory as conqueror. Reddish (1982:136) argues that faithful believers would participate in the victory as well as the suffering as the conquerors. This is the conqueror motif given to the faithful believers of the seven churches (Bauckham, 1993b:76).

For John, the symbolic and cosmological language as the expression of apocalypse was the communicative instrument to reveal the crisis situation. This resembled hidden dimensions of the world, implying the destruction of evil and the blessing of eternal life to the conquerors (Sappington, 1991:112-137). For the Christians, day to day life was tough.

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terms of the restoration of the covenant between God and the community of faith.

Whether the crisis was “relative deprivation” (Cook, 1995:2; contra Meeks, 1983:172) or “perceived crisis” (Collins, 1984:84-107) or not, it can’t be denied that the book of Revelation was written in the midst of polarization between God’s promise to his faithful people and the harsh reality of history. With regard to the crisis, Collins (1984:113) points out that in most cases the social situation in Revelation reflects not a general characteristic of the life of faith, but the stance to be taken in the context of persecution and suffering, which is seen as the tribulation of the last days.

The intention of John in giving his word of endurance was not limited just to the word endurance, but even beyond it. It is also a proclamation of victory within the suffering (Song, 2003:172). It is a shouting of victory to the world, Rome and Satan. It is a proclamation that “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, as well as that he will reign for ever and ever (Rev. 11:15).” It has the function of proclaiming the victory of Jesus, as well as our victory in and through him. In John 16:33, Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” It implies that the suffering of Jesus should be our suffering and the victory of Jesus should be our victory. The suggestion of Trites (1992:1049) is quite correct in that just as Christ had conquered suffering and death on the cross, so the Christians that faced the situation of suffering and death would conquer and share his victory over the forces of evil too. Just as their Lord had witnessed faithfully even unto death, they also must bear an unflinching testimony.

Revelation must be seen as crisis literature or persecution literature. In spite of this fact, one must keep in mind that it proclaims victory (cf. Russell, 1986:44-45). I don't intend to deal with all the persecution references and crisis passages, but some of them will be dealt with later.

### II.2.2. Persecution or Compromise

To begin with, I argued that Revelation was written in Domitian’s time. For this, one must look at the social, political and cultural situations of Asia Minor at that time. Otherwise, one won’t be able to understand the exact meaning of the message that John wanted to

present to his audiences. Because John was a man conditioned by social, cultural, and political situations in the first century, it is necessary to see Revelation in the light of a framework in Asia Minor. Malina (1993:67-68) mentions as follows:

Instead of individualism, what we find in the first-century Mediterranean world is what might be called a strong group orientation. Persons always considered themselves in terms of the group(s) in which they experienced themselves as inextricably embedded. ... our first-century person would perceive himself or herself as a distinctive whole set in relation to other such wholes and set within a given social and natural background.

In Revelation, one finds various verses that indicate persecution throughout the text (e.g. 1:9; 2:3, 9, 10, 13; 3:10; 6:9; 13:10; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4). Why were Christians being persecuted at the hand of their opponents? Why did Christians have to suffer – was it due to their commitment to the word of God and their testimony regarding Jesus? Some of these verses indicate that Christians had to endure severe suffering and even persecution. The reason that these Christians suffered was not due to criminal activities, but to the fact that they were Christians, following Christ (Reddish, 1982:120). Among the reasons, one should consider their situations such as the emperor worship and imperial cult, which were widespread in Revelation.

#### II.2.2.1. Emperor worship and Imperial cult

In contrast to the fact that the most important church leaders were killed (e.g. the death of Peter and Paul at the hands of Nero as emperor)<sup>34</sup>, persecution against Christians, in the

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<sup>34</sup> As most commentators agree, the death of Peter and Paul could be have happened at the time of Nero. Especially, on the basis of I Clement, V. 4-7, it was known too that Peter and Paul were killed as victims of the Neronic persecution (Goppelt, 1970:102-107). In spite of consensus about the persecution situation, there are some hot debates as to when Peter and Paul were killed. Generally the three emperors' times were considered as suitable dating, that is, Nero, Domitian and Trajan's time. According to tradition, Domitian and Trajan's time was rejected by most commentators. In the case of Peter, one can suppose that the civil persecution could not have happened, because of the positive attitude toward the state (e.g. I Pe. 2:13). If one compares this text with Revelation, one can easily find some disharmony. As the advocates of 'early dating' insist, if Revelation was written at the time of Nero, in contrast with Peter, John doesn't show a positive attitude toward the state. That is why one can't accept Nero's time as a written time of Revelation (although one can't deny hostility between Christians and Romans in Nero's time). There are lots of conflicts, persecutions, crises, compromising and terrible events, which one can't properly understand in Revelation. If

days that John wrote to the seven churches, was most probably not systematic, but a sporadic phenomenon with limited persecution (Sweet, 1979:26). The persecution of Christians was limited and only a few people were persecuted and suffered at the time of Domitian. Even though he was called the “second Nero” (Beale, 1999:18), he had done some good work as emperor. He rebuilt many buildings that had been destroyed by fire (Suetonius, Domitian:V). He served the people with shows, races, and games (Suetonius, Domitian:IV). Domitian tried to deal with legal affairs diligently and tried to suppress corruption.

Whenever one thinks about Domitian, one must consider him as having both good and bad traits. In spite of certain good traits he had, one can’t deny that he could be recognized as a bad emperor in the light of Christian history (Thompson, 1990:16). The ancient historians divide a boundary between the ‘good emperors’ and the ‘bad emperors’. The good emperors were Titus, Nerva, and Trajan as the saviours of Rome, but the bad emperors like Nero and Domitian were regarded as the destroyers of Rome (Pippin, 1987:23).<sup>35</sup> One of the reasons for Domitian’s persecution of Christians was that of ‘emperor worship’.

For the Roman Empire, the emperor and imperial cult was the “complex web of symbols that constituted the imperial cultural order” (Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:102). In those days, the emperor worship and imperial cult were a social phenomenon that influenced all areas of life (Price, 1984:15-16). The book of Revelation was not written in a vacuum. The emperor worship and imperial cult of Rome combined the people of the cities in the broader situation of the empire. As Bauckham (1993b:17) insists, Revelation’s readers in Asia Minor were constantly faced with powerful images of the Roman vision at emperor worship and the imperial cult. In Revelation, that is why one can see many objects participating in professional and civic life. For example, in the Pergamum and Thyatira churches, John was in conflict with local church leaders who were eating food sacrificed to

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one considers these two writings as a same dating (Nero’ time), how can one harmonize and overcome this irony?

<sup>35</sup> Pippin (1987:1-60) looks at Revelation as ‘resistance literature’. As the hermeneutical key for the Apocalypse, she uses the Marxist literary hermeneutic method as a major method. Rather than ‘a view from above’, in order to reveal the relevance of the social situation of Domitian’s time, she uses ‘a view from below’. I think that this is a good insight to reveal the social situation of Domitian’s time. For this reason, she regards the holy book of Christianity as the stories and struggles of the oppressed. She divides the aspects of Domitian’s rule threefold: ‘the relation to the senate’, ‘the policy in the East’, ‘the ruler-cult’ (1987:24).

idols (e.g. 2:14, 20). Eating food sacrificed to idols means “an act of idolatry, a bowing down to their gods” (Thompson, 1990:122). That is, eating food sacrificed to idols can closely be connected with emperor worship and the imperial cult that John rejected. One will now focus on this issue of ‘emperor worship’.

#### *II.2.2.1.1. Emperor worship*

Since Julius Caesar, emperor worship appeared in Rome and the emperor himself was the descendant of divine ancestors. Julius Caesar himself was “the major object of the worship” (Taylor, 1931:181). As the Roman elite participated in the emperor-worship, recognizing both Augustus and Julius Caesar as divine (Thompson, 1990:104), the senate decided to include Caesar in the line of their gods. After his death, the deification of Caesar became a model to be followed (cf. Schowalter, 1993:62). As a matter of fact, the divinity, which Caesar tried to establish during his life, was the essential feature in the Roman Empire. Therefore, the cult of emperor-worship in the Roman Empire appeared not instantaneously by decree at the time of Domitian, but was a “prolonged process beginning with Julius Caesar” (Reddish, 1982:90; cf. Thompson, 1990:104-107).

One is certain that Domitian insisted on his claim to divinity more than any other emperors prior to him. That’s why Domitian promoted the cult of emperor-worship and his divinity to the people who were under his rule. One should especially keep in mind that religion is either a political phenomenon or a political matter (Price, 1984:15-16). In contrast with the modern era, in ancient times politics and religion couldn’t be separated from each other. The policy of imperial cult was a good political field in order to maintain the power of Rome. In Rome, power was connected with emperor-worship (cf. Botha, 1988:90). Price (1984:242, 247) mentions:

Power was not a possession of the emperor, wielded over his subjects and supported ultimately by force; power is a term for analyzing complex strategic situations... Religion just as much as politics is concerned with power..., both are

ways of systematically constructing power.<sup>36</sup>

Domitian enforced his claim as emperor and as a god unto his people. When Domitian sent out a letter to his procurators, he wrote: “Our lord and our god” (*Dominus et deus noster*) (Suetonius, Domitian, xiii). He called himself a lord and god. Concerning his personality, Suetonius (Domitian, xi) mentions his cruelties as “not only excessive, but also subtle and unexpected.” To be sure, Domitian presented himself as a god during his lifetime,<sup>37</sup> and thereby executed his power through the use of improper symbols (Schowalter, 1993:69; cf. Keresztes, 1989:1.83-101).<sup>38</sup> When one considers these kinds of social and political situations, he must have been a terrible emperor who demanded emperor worship during his rule.

In Revelation, persecution and conflict occurred because Christians rejected worshipping the worldly king (Beale, 1999:5; e.g. 2:13, 24; 6:9; 11:7; 13:7, 15). If Christians didn’t participate in the emperor worship, they experienced an intolerance of society because “the worship of emperors played an increasingly important role in society at many levels” (Kistemaker, 2001:37). Chapters 2-3 suggest that Christians were tempted to avoid persecution and conflict by participating in emperor worship (e.g. Pergamum, Thyatira, and Philadelphia). In Revelation chapter 13 provides an example of emperor worship personalized as the beast (cf. Barclay, 1979:76-97). The characteristics of the beast in chapter 13 explain their power as evil, which is specified as imperial images (Botha,

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<sup>36</sup> In order to avoid a range of problems when dealing with the imperial cult, Price (1984:1-22) suggests the following: 1) the problem of the imperial cult or imperial ritual ⇒ the emphasizing the evocative power of ritual and symbolism as a cognitive system; 2) christianizing assumptions and categories must avoid as a major stumbling block in interpretations of the imperial cult ⇒ in terms of Christianity perspective, to apply other religious phenomenon is to avoid in the analysis of the imperial cult; 3) the fact that politics and religion should be separated ⇒ politics and religion are both sides of the same coin, therefore they can’t be separated from each other; 4) the problem of the ethnocentric prejudice, through statement above Price wants to give a correct understanding concerning cultic ritual and doesn’t miss the power structure behind them.

<sup>37</sup> The custom of the Romans was usually to deify their emperors who died (Ferguson, 1970:96). While the early emperors were very careful to accept direct worship or divine cult in Rome during their lifetime, later emperors like Domitian accepted their emperors-worship or divine honours without any problem. For more information about this topic, see Taylor (1931:142-180); Ferguson (1970:88-98). The emperors who demanded emperor-worship in their lifetime were Caligula, Nero, Domitian and Commodus. In the case of Claudius, he did not accept any divine honour. After his death (A.D. 14), Augustus was accepted by the senate as one of the gods of the state (Ferguson, 1970:91).

<sup>38</sup> In order to understand Pliny’s discussion of the relationship between the emperor and the gods, Schowalter (1993:55-61) involves these three elements in the ritual activity as quoting Pliny’s comments; 1) prayer 2) sacrifice 3) priesthods.

1988:94-96). If Christians worship the beast, they should engage in intimate relationship with Rome. But if Christians do not worship the beast, they should engage in intimate relationship with God. That is why Revelation 13:10 demands that Christians should stay faithful as the conquerors in the midst of emperor worship (cf. Rudolph, 2005:227).

#### *II.2.2.1.2. Imperial cult*

In Rome, power was “a network of relations” (Pippin, 1987:58) in all areas of life including the social, cultural, political, and religious fields. For a tyrant like Domitian, the imperial cult was a very important strategy to maintain imperial policies like the ‘Pax Romana’. At the time, the execution of the ‘Pax Romana’ was a widespread social policy in Rome’s provinces as well as in Rome itself (Wengst, 1987:8-9). One must keep in mind that the ‘Pax Romana’ was a political goal of the Roman emperor and senate who wanted to maintain peace through the provinces. Through this kind of imperial policy or emperor-worship, the emperor constructed power for himself and offered “*imperium Romanum*” (Wengst, 1987:10) to his people by a deification of himself. Therefore, one should recognize that the cult of emperor worship played a significant political role in ensuring power for the rulers of the empire.

In terms of the imperial cult and emperor-worship ensuring an intimate relationship with Rome, Price (1984:248) mentions that the imperial cult in the light of its power structure was like the cults of the traditional gods that formed a relationship of power structure between the subjects and their rulers. The imperial cult was a major part of the web of power that enhanced the fabric of society. The imperial cult was expressed in the worship of personified powers, virtues, and vital religious phenomena under the Republic (Ferguson, 1993:198).

As Ferguson (1970:93) argued, at the time, the imperial cult was vigorously widespread in Asia Minor. Biguzzi (1998:280-290) also suggests that the Asian cities were the centre of imperial cult and the major cities [Pergamum (B.C. 29), Smyrna (A.D. 21), and Ephesus (A.D. 89-90)] vied for the privilege of erecting a temple. This implies that persecution or discrimination caused a crisis within the churches of Asia Minor. They wanted to escape

their present situation. That's why John sent his prophetic message to his suffering people to encourage them and to console them. His prophetic message gave them a heavenly perspective of what was wrong and why and how their lives as Christians in a pagan environment should be organized. This was the social and political situation that the first Christians were confronted with at the time.

In the midst of the background of the emperor-worship, imperial cult and the social-political situations, Revelation appeared. According to DeSilva (1992a:273-281), there is little evidence of widespread persecution. But the relation between the state and Roman religious life enforced tremendous pressure on all citizens because the imperial cult was an important tool to maintain the imperial system towards the citizen. The first century Christians who received John's letter were confronted with a 'life-death' conflict between the Church and Rome. The Christians had to decide to choose between "Christ and Caesar" (Pippin, 1987:49). To make a decision between 'Christ and Caesar' was the dilemma for the first century Christians who lived in difficult conditions. If they confessed 'Christ' as their Saviour, they might have been persecuted at the hand of the Roman authorities. But if they denied 'Christ' as their Saviour, the Roman authority would have saved them as followers of the Roman doctrines (Boring, 1989:18-21).

Revelation didn't allow for a neutral stance. If Christians wanted to follow Jesus as John had done, Christians should be ready even to die for him. That is the perspective 'from above, from heaven', which John wanted to communicate to his community (cf. Pippin, 1987:45-52). John provided a prophetic criticism of the system of Roman power (Bauckham, 1993b:38).<sup>39</sup> John suggested a perspective 'from above' so that his people may be 'conquerors' in Christ, even though they lived in terrible times.

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<sup>39</sup> Bauckham (1993b:35-39) portrays the Roman Empire as a system of violent oppression built on conquest and oppression. He divides this system of violent oppression into two categories: 1) political tyranny, 2) economic exploitation. He furthermore explains these two major symbols as a sea-monster (e.g. Rev, 13,17) and the harlot of Babylon (e.g. Rev, 17-18). He also explains that the Beast represents the military and political power of the Roman Empire and the harlot of Babylon the economic exploitation of the Empire. The perspective of Bauckham that the beast represents the political aspect and the harlot of Babylon the economic aspect is quite correct, but as noted above, during the ancient times, it was not really possible to separate those fields from each other. When one considers chapter 13, as Bauckham said, it is true that chapter 13 mainly emphasizes the political aspect. But when one considers chapter 13:16-18, it seems clear that it is connected to an economic problem. In the case of chapters 17-18, ostensibly these chapters mainly emphasize an economic problem. But it seems quite clear that this was also connected with a political problem. Both sides of these should be emphasized accordingly.

The book of Revelation provides a ‘New Perspective’ towards the worldly power through the emperor worship and imperial cult. The imperial cult in those days existed everywhere (Friesen, 2005:363). *Neokoros* (temple warden) was an official centre for the imperial cult in Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira. All citizens must participate in the official religion, implying temple worship and the idolatrous guild banquets that were at the centre of daily life (Kraybill, 1996:130-132). Roman rule is based on the military victory, shedding the blood of people, but John provided an ‘alternative vision’ towards the society, emperor and imperial cult through the book of Revelation (Friesen, 2004:309; cf. Bauckham, 1993b:10; e.g. 13:4). John criticized the economic, social, and religious situations of the Roman Empire in the cities and portrayed it as “a system of violent oppression” (Bauckham, 1993b:35). According to Harland (2000:117), “honoring Roman emperors or representatives in any form is utterly opposed to honouring and worshipping God and the Lamb: the former is idolatry or ‘fornication’.” Therefore, the Christians who lived in Asia Minor were encouraged to stay firm in the word of God and the testimony of Christ in order to obtain an eschatological blessing in the New Jerusalem as the conquerors.

Thus far, I have mainly argued about the relationship between Rome and the Christians in the light of a literary genre and social and political conflict situations (e.g. 13:4, 14-17; 14:9; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). I would, henceforth, like to deal with the seven churches, which are present in Revelation, chapters 2-3.

### II.2.3. Summary

Until now I have endeavoured to explain the background of the book of Revelation in terms of the dating, literary genre and social and political situations in order to illuminate the major theme of this dissertation, which will be discussed later. I believe that the work rendered above forms the groundwork for an analysis of Revelation, prior to endeavouring on some research on the main parts of Revelation, because, without a proper understanding of the background, it is not possible to understand the text as it is.

First of all, the book of Revelation was written as crisis literature for those who were in a very difficult situation in a hostile world. But the crisis that the first Christians faced

consisted of various elements such as political, economical, and religious factors (Hurtgen, 1993:26). When one defines the book of Revelation as crisis literature, one doesn't need to define the crisis only in terms of persecution. That is, the crisis situation reflects one of many crisis situations that were revealed in the apocalyptic text.

Among many crisis situations, such as leaving their first love (2:4), conflict with Jews (2:9), compromise (2:14, 20), and self-satisfaction (3:17), emperor-worship and imperial cult were prominent motifs, reflecting the crisis situation for the first Christians. Emperor worship and imperial cult revealed the violent oppression of the Roman Empire in order to rule the whole world in the light of the earthly perspective. The Emperor was called a god and the imperial cult was enforced. For example, Domitian was called "Our lord and our god" (*Dominus et deus noster*; Suetonius, Domitian, xiii). The fact that emperor worship and the imperial cult were vigorously enforced in Asia Minor reflected the life situation of Christians in a hostile world (Friesen, 2005:352-356). In contrast with an earthly perspective wherein the Roman Empire had been regarded as the object of worship to the whole world, the book of Revelation provided a new understanding for the present reality – a heavenly perspective. Christians must choose the right way: whether to worship God or to worship Satan (cf. Pippin, 1987:49). According to Guthrie (1992:70-83), God is the centre of Christian worship.

### **II.3. Conclusion**

The dating of and situation under which Revelation was written were very important elements in revealing the meaning of Revelation. The advocates who insist on the 'early dating of Nero' (cf. Gentry, 1989:17-120) and the persecution situation of Revelation (cf. Morris, 1999:35-41; contra Bell, 1979:102) suggest that Revelation through internal and external evidences was written at the early date, and then in response to the persecution situation. But, because these kinds of arguments simplify the content of Revelation, one could not see the dynamic power of Revelation within the text. That is, in the book of Revelation, one couldn't find any mention of systematic persecution, but only a sporadic phenomenon with limited persecution against Christians (Harland, 2000:103). In contrast with the statement noted above, John was aware of and engaged with the various social,

cultural, political, and religious forces, which the conquerors had to face. I accept Domitian dating as the time of writing of Revelation as a result of the internal and external evidence. But, one is not able to accept that Revelation was only written in a response to a situation of persecution (cf. Kraybill, 1996:24-40). It means that Christians in Asia Minor have been surrounded by many problems through persecution, crisis, compromising, self-satisfaction, sloth, and social conflict (DeSilva, 1992a:286-298).

The rhetorical situation of John's prophetic message to the seven churches was based on the crisis and conflict situations. That is why Christians were expected to conquer their life situations in terms of an eschatological war (Bauckham, 1993b:88). According to Duff (2001:14), the crisis situation of Revelation came from a social conflict within the churches (contra Friesen, 2005:352-356) and because of this kind of conflict John sent his prophetic message rhetorically to strengthen his community. As Duff argued, Revelation was sent to solve some problems the seven churches had to confront. But the categories of conflict should be expanded to other dimensions like emperor-worship and the imperial cult. Therefore, one should recognize that the crisis situations were derived from various social, historical, economical, and religious elements without and within the churches.

In terms of the rhetorical situation, John's purpose was to provide a true but hidden understanding of the present reality (Gilbertson, 2003:56). That is why John used to provide various symbolic images, such as the tree of life and the golden crown, to deliver the message of salvation and judgment, and to give a new understanding of the present reality. Their rhetorical situations were based on the urgency of the churches as a marginalized group in a hostile world. According to Wilson (1996:45), the rhetorical situations of the churches were as follows: first, present or imminent persecution by the Roman Empire; secondly, pressure by social and religious forces from Jewish and pagan societies; finally the mind that was unprepared for the coming, and the eschatological kingdom of God. The different rhetorical situations of the seven churches were well matched with the promise statements that were given to the conquerors. It means that to be conquerors in their own contexts they needed to conquer their own difficult contexts. Thus, the whole church can be described as belonging to the conquerors (Lee, 2001:263).

This hermeneutic understanding of the rhetorical situations (cf. Kirby, 1988:197-204; Du Rand, 1997a:258-259) might be helpful in interpreting the book of Revelation. This does not actually form part of the major focus of this dissertation. To focus on this current topic in this section, I will consider the promise statements regarding the ‘conqueror’, focusing on chapters 2-3. In the promise statements, John delivered the prophetic message through which he exhorted the Christians to endure and conquer in the present time of distress (Vanderkam, 1998:306; cf. Rogers, 1990:69-78). Why then were these promise statements given to each of the churches? It should also be determined who the ‘conquerors’ were in this situation. Whom will God reward in the end? What is the framework of these promise statements? These kinds of questions could be dealt with by evaluating the conquerors’ hostile circumstances and their task to conquer it. In chapter 3, in attempting to reveal the identity of the conquerors, I try to deal with the promise statements that were given to the conquerors such as the tree of life (2:7), the crown of life (2:10), the white stone (2:17), the morning star (2:28), the white robe (3:5), the pillars (3:12), and the throne (3:21) against the background of the seven churches.

## CHAPTER III. THE PROMISE STATEMENT GIVEN TO THE CONQUERORS OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

### III.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine the promise statements in Revelation chapters 2-3, which constitute the main part of this dissertation. The content of the previous chapter would be helpful in understanding the current discussion that one is dealing with. The letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor (chaps. 2-3) form a distinct unit in the book of Revelation. They are closely related to the visions in chapter 1<sup>40</sup> and 4-22.<sup>41</sup> Owing to the connection of chapter 1 and chapters 4-22 with chapters 2-3, most commentators nowadays (Wall, 1991:66-69; Beasley-Murray, 1992:70-72) try to show that the letters are inseparable from the rest of the work. Thus, more attention has been drawn to connect many thematic and linguistic links by ways of words and ideas (cf. Court, 1979:20-28). One should keep in mind that the seven letters were written within a specific historical and sociological time period and should, therefore, be studied alongside it. In addition, Ulfgard (1989:1) points out that in order to understand a part of Revelation one must consider its place within the context of the whole book.

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<sup>40</sup> To the Ephesus church (2:1; cf. 1:12,16), to the Smyrna church (2:8; cf. 1:17-18), to the Pergamum church (2:12; cf. 1:16), to the Thyatira church (2:18; cf. 1:14-15), to the Sardis church (3:1; cf. 1:16), to the Philadelphia church (3:7; cf. 1:18), to the Laodicea church (3:14; cf. 1:5). See Michaels (1997:66-68).

<sup>41</sup> For more information regarding this argument, see Farrer (1964:70-86). Through this argument, chapters 2-3 became closely related to chapter 1 and chapters 4-22 as a whole. It becomes possible to determine that Revelation is an Apocalypse that is to be broadly understood as an 'epistle' owing to the presence of an introduction (1:4) as well as a conclusion (22:21). It is not easy to consider the development of the letter, owing to the antiquity of the origin of the form of the letter. If one starts with the Hellenistic empire, which was built by Alexander the Great, it is very helpful, owing to the fact that during this time, the epistolary communication reached a high point of progress (Doty, 1973:1). He insists that this development could be derived from a wide range of reasons and ties between distant geographical parts of the empire. In contrast to the characteristic features of the Greek letter, which was constructed with an introduction, a body or text and a conclusion (cf. Doty, 1973:11-15), the Pauline letters generally consist of five sections: 1. Opening (sender, addressee, greeting) 2. Thanksgiving or Blessing (often with intercession and/or eschatological climax) 3. Body (introductory formulae; often having an eschatological conclusion and/ or an indication of future plans) 4. Paraenesis 5. Closing (formulaic benedictions and greeting; sometimes mention of the writing process) (Doty, 1973:27). Michaels (1997:64) regards these seven letters as "oracles of a prophet." It was thus called as a prophetic message to each church. (cf. Bauckham, 1993b:2; Beale, 1999:225). Beale (1999:225) suggests that each letter can typically be divided into seven sections: "1. command to write to an angel of a church, 2. Christ's self-description derived from the description in ch. 1 and introduced by the formula "these things" (τὰ ὅσα λέγει), 3. commendation of the church's good works, 4. accusation because of some sin, 5. exhortation to repent with a warning of judgment or an encouragement, 6. exhortation to discern the truth of the preceding message ("he who has an ear..."), and 7. promise to the conquerors."

If one regards this letter as a prophetic message or oracles of a prophet, what kinds of images did they ponder when John's audience heard it? Upon the initial reading of this prophetic message, what was the response of the audience to these promises? Who were the 'conquerors' (e.g. Rev. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26-27; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21) in every letter? What was the audience's understanding of John's statements? In order to understand these kinds of questions, one must consider various elements with which one will deal more thoroughly later.

These various elements would be based on a number of literary, cultural, and socio-historical elements<sup>42</sup> (cf. Wilson, 1996:195). An adequate model for the interpretation of the NT shows a text's genre, rhetoric, structure and function. The symbols and social structures of the NT differ greatly from our own.<sup>43</sup> The writings are framed linguistically by the socio-historical setting in which they were written (Johnson, 1986:6). Therefore, in this section I intend to locate and define the situation of the seven churches. I deem that the

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<sup>42</sup> It is very helpful to examine the historical background in Asia Minor and Palestine in order to understand the context of this section. One must go back to Alexander the Great. His dream was to change the whole world to become a Hellenized world. In order to achieve his dream, he intended more than revenge in order to have a priority of cultural hegemony (Johnson, 1986:24). In an endeavour to execute his dream, he started three policies of Hellenization as follows: 1. The city-state, the *polis*, was itself the first method of Hellenization because it was the climax of the Greek culture that can express a Hellenization and that religious activity can organize. Alexander used the *polis* as a means of disseminating the Greek culture. 2. A second method used as part of the process of Hellenization was language. This was the most powerful method to disseminate the Greek culture. 3. The third method of Hellenization was that of religious syncretism. Local gods, such as Baal ha Shemaim, the high god of the ancient Canaanite mythology, were systematically identified with their Greek counterparts, such as Zeus Olympus. Alongside the Hellenistic culture, Hellenization took place outside of Palestine, while within Palestine three factors in particular accounted for the diversity within the first-century Palestinian Judaism. First was the pervasive presence, and persuasive forces of the Hellenistic culture. Second was the reality of the Greek, then the Roman and the political hegemony. Third was a traditional interconnection drawn between religious and socio-political realities (Johnson, 1986:24-26, 43, cf. Cary & Haarhoff, 1966:306-348, Klauck, 2000:12-80). One should, therefore, keep in mind that the New Testament writing, especially Revelation, must be understood first of all within their first-century Mediterranean setting and in particular within the matrix of first-century Judaism.

<sup>43</sup> According to Johnson (1986:12-18), a symbolic world is based on the every-day life, and it is the system of meanings that defines the behaviours of individuals and communities in the real world. He absolutely regards symbolism as an element, which forms a basis for historical facts. Thus, Johnson (1986:13) states that symbolism, in terms of its historical, cultural and linguistic insight, may provide a valuable contribution in the following: "The symbols pervade every level of the group's life. They affect spatial and temporal arrangements and the rituals that mark them. They are built into that special language the group shares." Du Rand (1993a:243) explains symbolism as follows: "Symbolism is the figurative form and content through which the message of Revelation as divine communication may be intelligibly illustrated and conveyed. In Revelation symbolism does not merely exhibit meaning (Dulles); it also elicits meaning. .. Symbolism simply guides the reader to references and knowledge, enticing him to become involved in establishing the meaning." He also divides symbols largely into three categories as follows: 1. allegorical symbols, 2. hyperbolic symbols, 3. numerical symbols (:244). For more information about a symbol, see Prevost (1991:25-41); Ramsay (1994:41-52); Beale (1999:50-69).

social-cultural angle is most important to present the situation of each church. In conjunction with the local situations, it is important to explore the characteristics and images of each city given by the author as these were well known to his audiences (Scobie, 1993:606). Accordingly, one should accept the likelihood that local references were the direct context for the promise statements in chapters 2-3. Ramsay (1994:28-29) who is known as the father of the local references is quite correct in stating the following:

The letters was written by one who was familiar with the situation, the character, the past history, the possibilities of future development, of those seven cities. ... He assumes always that the church is, in a sense, the city. The local church does not live apart from the locality and the population amid which it has a mere temporary abode. The church is all that is real in the city: the rest of the city has failed to reach its true self, and has been arrested in its development.

In conjunction with the background of the promise statements given to the conquerors, the promise statements (e.g. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21) focus on the communication between the audiences and the author. It is how the author harmonizes the various elements, in order to establish effective communication between himself and the audiences through local references and the situations of the audiences and other literary sources. That is, their relationship can be regarded as situational as well as literary (Hemer, 1986:18). Through this analysis one understands why the promise statements were given to the conquerors, that is the prominent theme of Revelation (Bauckham, 1993b:67-73). They were given to each of the churches respectively, in order to encourage and console his community under the conflict situation with the wicked ones (cf. Sweet, 1979:77). John is deeply concerned here with the specific needs of his audiences in order to solve the problems they faced regarding their eternal destinies.

In conjunction with the text itself, it is necessary to examine the language as the instrument through which the author intentionally wanted to deliver his message to his audiences. As Black (1988:5) pointed out, "The analysis of a language system is possible only by examining and comparing actual manifestations of language as represented by samples of speech or writing." One should know what the language in the text is saying, in order to

understand the nature and intention of the language. The reason for the importance of a language is based on the fact that “the most rudimentary forms of social organization depend on language” (Traugott & Pratt, 1980:2). The linguists, Traugott & Pratt (1980:2) explain ‘language’ in the following:

It is chiefly through language that human communities control and change their structures, and create institutions which embody community aspirations and shape community life. Without language, the accumulation of shared knowledge and customs which we call culture would be impossible.

In the case of Gadamer (1977:62), the use of language presupposes a consciousness of a language. Caird (1980:7)<sup>44</sup> classifies word use as follows: “(1) to talk about people, things and ideas (Informative); (2) to think (Cognitive); (3) to do things and to get things done (Performative and Causative); (4) to display or elicit attitudes and feelings (Expressive and Evocative); (5) to provide a means of communal solidarity (Cohesive).” Even though he recognizes the defects of this analysis, it offers us the crucial key to the interpretation of the language of the Bible. When one talks about language, the language that was used was intended to be a means of communication. It is true that the understanding of the language of Revelation would imply the understanding of the intention or framework of the author. In order to discuss the meaning of conqueror motif in the seven churches, let’s research the meaning of the word ‘conqueror’.

### **III.2. The Conqueror**

The word *νικᾶω* appears twenty-eight times in the New Testament (cf. Moulton and Geden, 1978:665-666);<sup>45</sup> seventeen in the book of Revelation. Almost half of them are introduced in the seven letters commonly referred to as the conqueror statement. But, when one deals

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<sup>44</sup> Caird (1980:56-57) insists that the intention affects meaning in the following three ways: 1. Words have the meaning the speaker wants to speak to the reader. The most important corollary of this is that the speaker’s intention determines whether his words are to be taken literally or figuratively. 2. The speaker’s intention delivers the style of language use. What one has to decide is whether the prophecy was intended as a prediction or as a warning. 3. A word has the referent a speaker intends it to have. When one says, one uses a language that indicates a language as a means of communication. For more information about language use, see Liles (1975:3-37); Gadamer (1977:59-68); Caird (1980:144-171; 201-271); Wendland (1985:44-82).

<sup>45</sup> The use of *νικᾶω* in the New Testament as follows: Lk. 11:22; Jn. 16:33; Ro. 3:4; 12:21 (x2); 1 Jn. 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4 (x2), 5; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21 (x2); 5:5; 6:2 (x2); 11:7; 12:11; 13:7; 15:2; 17:14; 21:7.

with the use of conqueror (νικάω), it is necessary to investigate the meaning of conqueror in terms of its biblical, socio-historical, and cultural situations because the demand over conquest is closely linked with these situations.

In the New Testament, one can find out the νικ- word group like νίκη (1 Jn. 5:4) and νικος (Mt. 12:20; 1 Co. 15:54, 55, 57). In these verses, the use of νίκη (1 Jn. 5:4) and νικος (Mt. 12:20; 1 Co. 15:54, 55, 57) has the same meaning as νικάω. The word group noted above implies “victory” or “superiority,” whether in the physical, legal or metaphorical sense, whether in moral conflict or peaceful competition (Bauernfeind, 1967:4.942). Louw & Nida (1993:1.501) are of the opinion that “the closest equivalent of ‘to be victorious over’ is to defeat.”

Νικάω in the New Testament can be used for different objects. According to Vine (1966:3.151), νικάω can be used 1) of God (e.g. Ro. 3:4), 2) of Christ (e.g. Jn. 16:33; Rev. 3:21; 5:5; 17:14), 3) of his followers (e.g. Ro. 12:21b; 1 Jn. 2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4-5; Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 12:11; 15:2; 21:7), 4) of faith (e.g. 1 Jn. 5:4), 5) of evil (e.g. Ro. 12:21), 6) of predicted human potentates (e.g. 6:2; 11:7; 13:7). The different uses of conqueror through Revelation imply that when one regards the conqueror motif, it must be understood in its own contexts. That is why the promise statement and fulfillment statement given to the conquerors through the texts are introduced with different perspectives.

Of the seventeen, seven (e.g. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21) are closely related to exhortations and promises given to the conquerors of the churches conquering their own situations. In these situations, the use of ὁ νικῶν (τῷ νικῶντι) as the substantival participle implies a continuing characteristic of the conquerors (Beale, 1999:271) struggling for victory because the participle in Greek emphasizes the continuous characteristic. Thus, the exhortations and promises given to the conquerors through chapters 2-3 are provided to those who really were conquerors as the people of God.

An interesting thing that occurs in the seven letters is the change between the final two sayings of the letters. In the first three, the call to hear (Ὁ ἔχων... τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει; e.g.

2:2:7, 11, 17) precedes the promise statement given to the conquerors (Τῷ νικῶντι or Ὁ νικῶν; e.g. 2:7, 11, 17). And, in the last four letters, the promise statement given to the conquerors (Ὁ νικῶν; e.g. 2:26; 3:5, 12, 21) precedes the call to hear (Ὁ ἔχων... τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει; e.g. 2:29; 3:6, 13, 22). According to Bauckham (1993a:10), it may be that the author's intention to divide the letters into three and four patterns is simply to differentiate these three and four patterns as distinct from the three series of seven judgments. Kistemaker (2001:118; cf. Duff, 2001:31-35) is also of the opinion that "The first part of this sentence is an idiomatic expression and refers to the capability of a person to hear and an accompanying willingness to listen. The second part is a command to listen attentively and obediently to the words of the Holy Spirit."

Roloff (1993:46) also divides the hearing formula into two parts: first three and then the other four. He regards the first three as paying attention to the statements of conqueror, and the other four as paying attention to the main section of the book, which begins with 4:1. But, it must be situated within the congregation that the seven churches faced. One can connect the situation of the seven churches with the hearing formula (HF) and the statement to the conquerors. Enroth (1990:602) is correct to say that the hearing formula in its present context expects the exhortation to be victorious and that it emphasizes the rewards that follow from being faithful. It means that the irony of Christ's victory and reward through his death and resurrection becomes the pattern of the church's victory and reward through suffering and endurance (White, 2000:161-176). Therefore, the conquerors in the seven churches were those who overcome the problems they faced, just as Jesus Christ became conqueror through his death and resurrection.

Two references in 5:5 and 17:14 are connected with the conqueror, Christ. Here, the victory of Christ is ironically based on the blood of the Lamb, accomplished through his death on the cross. In the case of 17:14, the victory of Christ will be in the future. The reason for victory is also based on the blood of the Lamb (cf. Reddish, 1982:133-136). Just as the theme of conqueror applied to the people of God by keeping the word of God and enduring unto death, Christ is the conqueror par excellence through his death (Strand, 1990:237-254).

According to Aune (1987:244), τηρέω and ὑπομονή are the same words as νικάω. But these words are “a passive experience” expressed by νικάω (Aune, 1987:244). Νικάω in the motif of conqueror can be interchanged with other words that imply the meaning of victory. Of these, τηρέω and ὑπομονή are the prominent words that are closely connected with the word νικάω. Τηρέω in Revelation appears eleven times (e.g. 1:3; 2:26; 3:3, 8, 10 (x2); 12:17; 14:12; 16:15; 22:7, 9). The contexts in which they are used are closely related to the conquerors as the people of God. One of the prominent examples is 2:26. Christ promises to give authority over the nation (ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν). Here, ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν, which are linked with a coordinating conjunction καί are used together to do the work of Christ (Gilbertson, 2003:112-113). Another example of τηρέω that is closely linked with ὁ νικῶν is introduced in 14:12. The saints, the other expression for conqueror, are those who kept (τηρέω) God’s commandments and faith in Jesus (Kistemaker, 2001:344-345).

Ὑπομονη (endurance) also has the passive meaning of the word νικάω. Ὑπομονη appears seven times in Revelation (e.g. 1:9; 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12). In these contexts, the ὑπομονη provides the expression of behaviour of the Christians, namely conquerors who suffered at the hands of the wicked ones. That is why ὑπομονη is connected with other words that show the meaning of conquest or victory, such as keeping the name of Christ, faith, the word of God, tribulation (Boring, 1989:96). In the seven messages, endurance (ὑπομονή) is a repeated word expressing the virtue of the conquerors (Hauck, 1967:4.588). It will also be the “final and supreme test of faith” (Hauck, 1967:4.588). One of the prominent examples is 13:10 in which Christ demands ὑπομονή καὶ ἡ πίστις τῶν ἁγίων in the midst of the persecution by the beast. Here, ὑπομονή καὶ ἡ πίστις are introduced with the lists of the saints as the conquerors.

In 4 Maccabees 17:4, 7, 11-12, ὑπομονη is closely related to the faithful people of God who keep his commandments. The word ὑπομονη is given to the people of God who suffered under the persecution to maintain their faith and relationship with God (cf. Louw & Nida, 1993:1.308). That is why the people who kept God’s commandments and endured persecution can be called conquerors. Thus, the use of νικάω, τηρέω and ὑπομονη is one of the prominent examples that show the theme of victory in terms of the conqueror motif in

Revelation (cf. Aune, 1997:75-76).

### III.3. Structure of the seven letters

Whenever one discusses the seven letters, it is very important to remember that they have the same pattern, even though there is a small change in the pattern (cf. Roberts, 1988:17-35). Structurally, the letters have a strong internal similarity and are stereotyped in terms of formula and content (Fiorenza, 1985:51-52; Enroth, 1990:599). The stereotyped formula in the seven letters can be described as follows: Τῷ ἀγγέλω... γράψον, Τάδε λέγει..., οἶδα..., ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ..., μετανοέω..., Ὁ ἔχων... τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει..., Τῷ νικῶντι or Ὁ νικῶν. Even though there are small changes in these patterns that are built into the various situations of the seven churches, one can see structural unity in the letters of seven churches (contra Grove, 2000:193-210).

By and large, the letter can be divided into four parts: 1) christological implication, 2) body of the letters as judgment or encouragement, 3) Holy Spirit, 4) Conqueror (cf. Prévost, 1991:69-77). Aune (1990:182-204) suggests that the form of the seven letters is linked with an ancient royal and imperial edict as follows: 1) the *adscriptio*, 2) the command to write, 3) the *τάδε λέγει* formula, 4) the christological predications, 5) the *οἶδα*-clause, 6) the proclamation formula (*Dispositio*), 7) the promise of victory.

In the case of Shea (1983:71-84), the seven letters are related to the Old Testament and the ancient Near East as follows: 1) preamble, 2) historical prologue, 3) stipulations, 4) witnesses, 5) blessing and curse. Even though both Aune and Shea have their own distinctive ideas on analyzing the structure of the seven letters, one must avoid the forced framework that the text itself does not speak. Therefore, Grove (2000:193) is quite correct to say that if one applies the same interpretative method to the structure of the seven messages, it would be very dangerous by reason that one artificially applies the seven messages into a certain pattern.

Through this kind of argument one can recognize that although the section of the seven letters has certain formal similarities, these similarities do not bind on a rigid and

stereotyped form that reflects the various social, cultural and political situations of the seven churches. The structure of the seven churches is shown in the following table:

	Ephesus church (2:1-7)	Smyrna church (2:8-11)	Pergamum church (2:12-17)
1. Addressee	Address to the angel in Ephesus	Address to the angel in Smyrna	Address to the angel in Pergamum
2. Τάδε λέγει formula, christological title	Hold the seven stars and walk among the seven golden lampstands	The First and the Last, died and came to life again	Sharp double-edged sword
3. οἶδα formula-body	Hard work, endurance, but lost first love	Afflictions, poverty, and the slander	Keep my name and faith but follow the teaching of Balaam
4. Πνεῦμα-formula	Hear what the Spirit says	Hear what the Spirit says	Hear what the Spirit says
5. Promise-statements to Conquerors	The tree of life	The crown of life, not be hurt by the second death	Hidden manna, white stone

	Thyatira church (2:18-29)	Sardis church (3:1-6)	Philadelphia church (3:7-13)	Laodicea church (3:14-22)
1. Addressee	Address to the angel in Thyatira	Address to the angel in Sardis	Address to the angel in Philadel- phia	Address to the angel in Laodicea
2. Τάδε λέγει formula, christological title	Eyes like blazing, feet like burnish- ed bronze as the Son of God	Hold the seven spirits and the seven stars of God	Hold the key of David	Amen, faithful and true witness, and the ruler of God's creation
3. οἶδα formula- body	Love, faith servi- ce and endurance but accept the false teaching of Jezebel	Dead, repent but a few people who have not soiled their robes	Little strength but keep the word of Christ and have not denied Christ's name	Neither cold nor hot, wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked
4. Πνεῦμα-formula	Hear what the Spirit says	Hear what the Spirit says	Hear what the Spirit says	Hear what the Spirit says
5. Promise statements to the conquerors	Authority over the nations, the Morning star	White robe, the book of life	A pillar in the temple of God	Right to sit with Christ on his throne

The tables above show us that the situations and exhortations of the seven churches are

very different, even if there are similarities. Of these five sections, I will deal with the christological implication, the body, the Spirit, and the promise statements given to the conquerors because these sections are closely connected with the theme of conqueror that is the theme of this dissertation.

### III.3.1. Τάδε λέγει formula- Christological implication

Chapters 2-3 suggest the structural unity by a series of varied titles and characterizations noted above, which provide literary links with the vision explained in 1:9-20 (Duff, 2001:32). The introductory christological titles that appear in 1:9-20 reflect the specific problems and situations the seven churches faced according to their own situations. It is necessary to consider the christological implications that appeared in 1:9-20 in order to understand the seven prophetic messages of chapters 2-3. As Hartman (1997:137-138) observes, the explanation of the one like a Son of man is closely linked with the content behind that which follows. Its importance is stressed by the fact that features from the vision reappear in the seven messages of chapters 2-3. It is true that the christological titles in each letter are drawn from the chapter 1:9-20 and the christological titles in 1:9-20 are fully developed in chapters 2-3 (Filho, 2002:215-218). In conjunction with the social, cultural, and political situations, the seven churches reflect christological implications, which show various life situations of the Christians.

The church of Ephesus: In the case of the church of Ephesus, Jesus appears holding the seven stars in his right hand and walking among the seven golden lampstands (Rev. 2:1). The presentation of Christ in 2:1 is drawn from 1:13, 16, and 20 (Aune, 1997:142). This feature of Christ can be connected with the problem of the church of Ephesus. Jesus' feature implies the light of the divine presence in this church (Mounce, 1977:77) or the presence of Christ in all Christians (Aune, 1997:142). Falling from the divine presence (2:5), the life as the conquerors will be lost. But if Christians are grasped in the hands of Christ, they can be called conquerors because they regain their former love. According to Beasley-Murray (1992:73), this church is supported by Christ and subject to his almighty power and his scrutiny. Even though the church of Ephesus has a problem, this christological introduction, implying Christ's lordship over the church (cf. Wall, 1991:66-

69), would give them encouragement and confidence that they are in hands of Christ, and God is in control. Christ knows everything of this church (Bauckham, 1993b:123).

The church of Smyrna: Christ is introduced with a description of 2:8 as the First and the Last, who died and came to life again (ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ὃς ἐγένετο νεκρὸς καὶ ἔζησεν). The presentation of Christ is drawn from 1:17 (ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος) and 1:18 (ὁ ζῶν, καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς). These titles provide Christ's eternal life and divine status (Rudolph, 2005:152). According to Slater (1999:102), Christ is on the same level with God. The christological title of 2:8 explains the situation of this church and provides a meaningful message for this community. The church of Smyrna that was in an antagonistic environment must face internal and external oppression from Jews and the suffering of persecution, and poverty (Michaels, 1997:72-75). The use of the christological title in which Christ has the "divine sovereign over history" (Beale, 1999:239) as the First and the Last (ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος) might be a proper message to the community who faced severe trials, imprisonment, and possibly death (cf. Homcy, 1995:193-201). That is why Christ can be called the conqueror who died and came to life again (ὁ ζῶν, καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς; cf. Wilson, 1996:47). The believers who endure their situation to the point of death (2:10) can be called conquerors like Christ.

The church of Pergamum: In this church, Christ appears as having the sharp, double-edged sword (ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν: 2:18). The presentation of Christ is derived from 1:16 in that a sharp double-edged sword comes out of Christ's mouth. The sharp double-edged sword coming from Christ's mouth can be linked with Isaiah 11:4 and 49:2 in that with the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked and the earth. In contrast with the physical sword as the instrument of destruction of the wicked in the Old Testament, the sharp double-edged sword in the church of Pergamum was the image of Christ's justice (Beasley-Murray, 1992:84), indicating the predominance of God's word against the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of Nicolaitans. John regards these teachings to be a significant danger to the conquerors that were against the teaching of Balaam and the teaching of Nicolaitans. He provides the argument between the conquerors and those holding the false teaching. The image of the sharp double-edged sword reflecting God's justice to the conquerors could be encouraging and consoling to

those who suffered under the hostile world because of the name of Christ. The ultimate power over life and death lies in the hands of Christ (Kistemaker, 2001:128).

The church of Thyatira: Christ is introduced as Son of God whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze (2:18). This verse (2:18) can be connected with 2:26, indicating the destructive judgment (Beasley-Murray, 1992:90) to the Jezebel and her children. The image of Christ is drawn from 1:13-15 even though a son of man in 1:13 is changed into the Son of God in 2:18. This change is based on the church's situation in the light of author. As Wall (1991:77) suggests, the figure of Christ reinterprets the earlier a 'son of man' title from Daniel with the more definitive the 'Son of God' title in order to give new perspective to the Thyatira Christian. The Christ's feature here is suitable for the church's situation. When one looks into the social, cultural, and religious situations of Thyatira, it was famous as the worship place of Apollo Tyrimnaeus.

The conquerors in Thyatira are those who are not affected by the presence of Jezebel and by compromise. Christ can see the internal identity of Jezebel (Aune, 1997:203-206). Therefore, one can consider that the christological presentation as Son of God (cf. Ps. 2:7; Da. 10:6) reflects the characteristic of Christ, implying the judgment of Jezebel and her children and the salvation of the conquering Christian (Rudolph, 2005:314; cf. Duff, 1997:116-133). In other words, it reveals that the conquerors are those who are not involved and compromised in work of Jezebel.

The church of Sardis: Christ appears as holding the seven spirits of God and the seven stars (3:1). It is derived from 1:4 in that it mentions the seven spirits and 1:16 in that mentions the seven stars. Like other churches mentioned above, the introduction over Christ provides a proper meaning for the situation of the church of Sardis. The church is described as spiritually dead, even though it is regarded as physically alive (Rudolph, 2005:315). 'Alive and dead' explain the characteristic of the life style of this church. Christ is introduced as holding the seven spirits of God, implying the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the seven stars, indicating the messenger of the church. It would give new life and spiritual revival to the church that was spiritually dead before, because Christ holds the seven spirits and the seven stars as mediator to give life and to proclaim the word of God

(Kistemaker, 2001:150). According to Thompson (1998:79), in this church, the conquerors are those who participated in the transformation of the righteous from the death to life.

The church of Philadelphia: As Gilbertson (2003:57) insists, the purpose of the book of Revelation was to deal with the present experience of the communities to whom the letters were delivered. In the church of Philadelphia, it reflects also the present experience of the church. Christ who holds the key of David (3:7) is described as holy and true. It is drawn from 1:18. Holy and true (ὁ ἅγιος, ὁ ἀληθινός) in 3:7 (cf. Rev. 6:10: ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός; 19:11: πιστός καὶ ἀληθινός] indicate divine attributes and authority (cf. Kistemaker, 2001:157). These designations suit the church of Philadelphia that is blameless in the sight of God. On the one hand, Christ as holy and true promised to become a pillar in the temple of my God (3:12), implying security of the faithful church. On the other hand, Christ who holds the key of David revealed the absolute control over the people who lie by claiming to be Jews even though they are not (3:9). In the midst of a conflict between Christians and Jews, the Christians as the conquerors kept Christ's word of endurance (ἐτήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου). The endurance can be linked with martyrdom, which is one of the characteristics of conqueror (Collins, 1996:207-212). In this situation, Christ's features as holy and true, and the key image of his absolute control or authority can give encouragement and confidence to the Philadelphia Christians under their given situations. Stevenson (2001:241) is of the opinion that christological titles in this letter show the divine authority to grant access to God and his kingdom.

The church of Laodicea: The presentations of Christ as Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation are not as much a verbatim development in 1:9-20 but connected with 1:5 as faithful witness (ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός). The self-description of the Amen, the faithful and true witness in 3:14a can be an expansion of the faithful witness in 1:5 (Beale, 1998:273-294), on the basis of Christ's ministry, death, and resurrection. As Slater (1999:149) insists, 'witnessing' is a central theme and a key word to maintain the sacred universe by linking Christ and Christian. In the second part of 3:14, the ruler of God's creation is related not to the original creation, but to his new creation through his ministry, death, and resurrection. The problems that the church of Laodicea had were self-satisfaction or self-sufficiency and compromising of the church with its environment. As

Beasley-Murray (1992:104) explained, this figure as the characteristic of Christ contrasts strongly with the self-satisfaction and spiritual tepidity of the church of Laodicea. As the Lord of church, Christ expected them like himself to be faithful and true witnesses to the hostile world and to be a new creation through Christ's ministry, death, and resurrection.

### III.3.2. Οἶδα formula – the body

The body of the seven letters begins with the οἶδα-clause (e.g. 2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). That is, usually the οἶδα formula begins with οἶδα τὰ ἔργα σου or οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα (I know your works). In the church of Smyrna, one finds the change of the οἶδα formula as follows: 'οἶδά σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν' and in the church of Pergamum, 'οἶδα ποῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ'. The so-called οἶδα formula describes the situation of seven churches which they faced (cf. Boring, 1989:85-97). In the case of four churches (e.g. Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Sardis), the οἶδα formula has two responses from Christ: positive and negative, namely praise and blame. In these letters, the call for repentance (μετανοήσον: e.g. 2:5, 16, 21; 3:3) is followed by a threat from Christ (e.g. 2:5, 16, 22-23; 3:3). But in the case of the church of Laodicea, the οἶδα formula only has a negative response from Christ, namely blame. As with the four churches mentioned above, to the church of Laodicea, the call for repentance (μετανοήσον: 3:19) is given for their being lukewarm and for their attitude to wealth (Duff, 2001:32-35).

In the case of both the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia, the οἶδα formula only has a positive response from Christ. There are no calls for repentance and threats to the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia. While to the conquerors in the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia, exhortation, encouragement, and endurance are given, to the evil forces, the eschatological threats are given (cf. Duff, 2001:43-47). Even though the οἶδα formula begins with the body parts of the seven churches as positive and negative elements, the interesting thing is the location of the οἶδα formula in the seven letters. According to the five churches, that is Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, and Philadelphia, the οἶδα formula begins with a word of praise, whereas the churches of Sardis and Laodicea begin with a word of blame. It means that the churches of Sardis and Laodicea are the worst of the other churches that begin with blame. These various forms of the letters reflect that

they would not be regarded as stereotypical (cf. Wilson, 1996:143-170) but would be considered as the product of the situation of the seven churches (cf. Corsini, 1983:114-115; Shea, 1983:81-84). When one describes the body part of the seven churches, it can't be separated from the situation of the seven churches like the christological title of the previous section. Therefore, Aune (1990:191) is quite correct to say that the οἶδα-clause makes it clear that Christ is aware of the conduct and factions of seven churches.

### III.3.3. The Spirit in the seven churches

The references to the Spirit of God in Revelation can be categorized into three parts: ἐν πνεύματι (e.g. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), ἐπὶ πνεύματα (e.g. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), and τὸ πνεῦμα (e.g. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 19:10; 22:17; cf. Bauckham. 1993a:150-173). But in this section, I will try to limit the use of the Spirit of God to the seven churches.

The use of τὸ πνεῦμα as the singular form in chapters 2-3 is compared with ἐπὶ πνεύματα as the plural form. The form of τὸ πνεῦμα is connected with the christological title that speaks to each church through the christological implications and the body sections. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10), implying the words and works of the Spirit. Thus, “the purpose of prophecy is to confirm Christ’s own witness and to testify to Christian faith through the saints” (Lampe, 1984:1.246). It means that the words and works of Christ to be sent to the seven churches are linked with the words and works of the Spirit (Mazaferri, 1989:300-303). Just as the christological titles that appear in the introductory parts are closely connected with the situations of the seven churches, the words and works of the Spirit also connect with the real problems that surrounded them (cf. Smalley, 1994:152-154) and guarantee what Christ said in the beginning of the seven churches. According to Bauckham (1993b:118), the Spirit provides the prophetic words of Christ to his people in order to become conqueror. Therefore, the word of the Spirit (e.g. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) at the end of the seven churches guarantees the divine message about Christ’s words that proclaim the salvation and judgment (cf. Jeske, 1985:452-466). The prophetic ministry of the Spirit is to ensure the truth on this earth and to reveal the eschatological blessing in terms of a heavenly perspective (Bauckham, 1993b:125). Aune

(1990:195; contra Beasley-Murray, 1992:76) links the Spirit with the exalted Christ talking to the seven churches. However, the statement of the Spirit guarantees the promise statements given to the conquerors and the judgment statement to the defeated.

#### III.3.4. Summary

From the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9) John sent his letter to the seven churches in order to solve various problems they faced. First of all, one should remember that the structure of the seven letters, consisting of the parts of the christological implication, the body, the Spirit, and the conqueror, indicates the close relationship between chapter 1:9-20 and chapters 2-3 which were based on their own situations (Slater, 1999:108-116). It means that the description of Christ at the beginning of the seven churches can be connected with the social, political, and religious situations of the seven churches. As Duff (2001:32) stated, these letters give us our best picture of the situation of the various Christian churches. Thus, the christological description, the body, the Spirit, and the conqueror must be regarded within the common rhetorical situations of the seven churches as a whole. In order to reveal the meaning of the conqueror motif, it is necessary to consider the background of the seven cities, the reward given to the conquerors, and the conquerors as the faithful people of God who were in parts of Asia Minor. This will make the theme of conqueror easier to understand according to the intention of John.

#### **III.4. The promise statement given to the conquerors of the church of Ephesus**

The church of Ephesus is the one of the five churches blamed by Christ. The reason for the blame is that they have forsaken their first love amongst one other. For this, Christ who walks among the seven golden lampstands in 2:1 threatens to remove the lampstands from their place if they do not repent (2:5). If they repent, they would be called as the conquerors who will receive the tree of life, implying the eternal life as reward. Thus, the hearing formula (e.g. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22) that the Spirit says to the church of Ephesus confirms that the conquerors would receive the tree of life as the promise of salvation, and the rest of the people, who are not conquerors, would be judged. As a prophetic message, the form of the Ephesus letter should be regarded as written within the

situation of Ephesus (cf. Hartman, 1997:138-140).

### III.4.1 The city of Ephesus

Under Augustus, Ephesus was made capital of the province of Asia as the new centre of the Roman city.<sup>46</sup> Through the passage of time, Ephesus was regarded as the place that had experienced more change than any other city of Asia. It was accordingly called “the city of change” (Ramsay, 1994:151; cf. Wood, 1975:4; Knibbe, 1995:145; Kistemaker, 2001:109-111; contra White, 1995:27-65). The city of Ephesus itself underwent several changes of site and orientation as well as physical geography (Hemer, 1986:35).<sup>47</sup> If one accepts the statement of Ramsay and Hemer that Ephesus was the city of change, the statement of Revelation 2:5 (“Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lamp-stand from its place”) would be easily understood by the audiences who listened as a message to the Ephesus church. The message sent to the Ephesus church was familiar to the people who lived in the city of change. At that time, Ephesus was famous, at the apex of its wealth and influence in the Hellenistic and Roman periods and became a popular and privileged city in Asia Minor.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> According to Barclay (1957:11-19; cf. White, 1995:40-41): 1. Ephesus was a city which was the greatest commercial centre. In commerce and in wealth there were few cities to surpass it, 2. Ephesus was the greatest political centre. She enjoyed the title ‘Supreme Metropolis of Asia’, 3. Ephesus was the greatest religious centre. Its greatest glory was the Temple of Diana, 4. The character of the people of Ephesus was notoriously bad. As the important social, political, and religious centre, Ephesus remained “the first and greatest metropolis of Asia” (White, 1995:34).

<sup>47</sup> In accordance with Ramsay, Hemer also connects many local and contemporary references to the situation of the church. According to Hemer (1986:16), a whole context in seven churches reveals correspondences with a city and its letter in which verbal and situational parallels have appeared to each other. In contrast to Ramsay and Hemer, Beckwith (1967:451) insists that the connection of the local reference of the church should be rejected: “This promise, like the epithet of Christ in v.1, does not have specific reference to the circumstances of the Ephesians, it is applicable to all alike; and it is placed appropriately in this introductory epistle as fundamental to the promises in all the others.” Even though it is true that the Bible as canon does have permanent truth to all the people who lived before and all people who are living at present, it could not be underestimated that the Bible sent to the first-century Christian community is deeply rooted to their original “*Sitz im Leben*.”

<sup>48</sup> Since Seleucid’s times, a Jewish community had possessed its citizenship and special and guaranteed status in the city (Hemer, 1986:37-38). The reason that the Jews who lived in the city of Ephesus were granted by the Roman authority is because the Romans supported the Judaism as “a *religio licita*.” Reasons for this support are that firstly, the Hellenistic monarchies generally supported the Jews in their Empires. Secondly they are part of an exchange of *beneficia* and often result from gratitude or mutual esteem between two leaders. Thirdly, toleration was an important principle for the Roman administration. As long as the

Another important characteristic of this city is its significance as a religious centre. The religious characteristic of Ephesus was heightened as the place for the leading divinity of Asia Minor – Artemis of Ephesus (Arnold, 1989:14). The fact that images of Artemis Ephesus are widespread in the Roman world has great bearing on the issue of the general knowledge of the iconographic peculiarity of Artemis of Ephesus. Artemis of Ephesus is considered as the champion of mercy, not so much in a ritual context as in an everyday action and life (Thomas, 1995:96). About the spread and the effect of the Artemis cult, not only in Ephesus but throughout all of Asia (cf. Ramsay, 1994:167), Arnold (1989:20-21) points out the following:

The influence of the Ephesus Artemis extended beyond the religious sphere into a domination of Asia life and culture. The temple wielded tremendous power through its function as a banking and financial center. Large amounts of money were deposited and borrowed from the Artemision. The cult also obtained a sizeable income from the large amount of property owned in the environs of Ephesus.<sup>49</sup>

The city of Ephesus was also a place in which Artemis and many other major or minor

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Jewish communities and their religion were thought to be politically innocuous and morally unobjectionable, they could be treated with tolerance. Fourthly, the political fidelity and support of the Jews in strategic Palestine and beyond was important (Trebilco, 1991:10-11). These strong Jewish influences in Asia Minor would be attractive to outsiders and even had a significant influence on the local Christians. In conjunction with Revelation, one can see that the life style of the Jews that appeared in the seven churches might influence Christians surrounded by Jewish practices or involved in synagogue life. Thus, the problems of the assimilation and compromise in the seven churches, which were influenced by a pagan environment in Asia Minor, are without any doubt the result of a local situation.

<sup>49</sup> The influence of Artemis in Ephesus is also illustrated in Acts 19:23-40. One can regard the cities of the Mediterranean world as the leading cities of the great political, cultural, and social changes that occurred during the six and a half centuries from Alexander to Constantine (Meek, 1983:11). As a strategic missionary it is not surprising that Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus city, which was the strategic location of the city, both in terms of the land routes as well as the most important city Paul sought to evangelize (Witherington III, 1998:563). These facts show that Ephesus had been the centre for Paul's evangelistic work as a missionary. Witherington III (1998:583) explains the importance of the position of this episode in Acts 19: "In the first place, from a rhetorical point of view, it prepares the reader or hearer for the troubles Paul is to encounter in the following chapters (cf. the riot in Jerusalem in Acts 21) by already arousing and appealing to the deeper emotion (*pathos*). In the second place, this narrative provides us with the final confrontation between Paul as a free man and pagan religion and shows how God continues to work his plan, even in the face of stiff opposition from one of the most powerful and widespread of pagan cults." In Acts 19:11-40, four stories of Paul's ministry are explained. The first (Acts 19:11-12) is Paul's miraculous performance, the second (Acts 19:13-17) rivaling magicians and exorcism, third (Acts 19:18-20) the newly won believers and burnt magical books, fourth (Acts 19:23-40) the story of the riot of the silversmiths. This story (Acts 19:23-40) reflects the milieu of Ephesus and attests to Luck's knowledge of the Ephesian political and religious situation.

deities were worshipped and praised (Aurenhammer, 1995:252). As I mentioned above, since the conquest of Alexander the Great, it is not surprising that the Greco-Roman world adopted religious syncretism as their policy to maintain their state power, because the one tool of Hellenization was religious syncretism. There was no exception for this in the Greco-Roman time.

They were also interested in divine power or supernatural power about which this emphasis was typical of the entire Hellenistic world. They thought that the supreme powers would intervene in the affairs of men without limit. The Greeks and Romans asked the gods for “positive gifts, increase of crops and flocks, victory over enemies, recovery from illness, wise advice on the difficult problems of life” (Cary & Haarhoff, 1966: 309). On the basis of this framework, in which their patron gods would protect them from their opponents and from evil powers, they longed for access to supernatural power. Therefore, a keen interest in supernatural power was especially characteristic of the adherents of Artemis and those who practiced magic in the Hellenistic world. The worshippers of Artemis in particular extolled their goodness as supreme in power, a ‘cosmic’ power they believed to be superior to that of any other deity, astrological fate, and evil spirits. Also, in many respects, characteristics of the nature of her power are very similar to Hellenistic magic<sup>50</sup> (Arnold, 1989:34-39). Thus, it could not be ignored in Ephesus city that some local gods and supernatural powers were thought of as the supreme rulers of the universe (Trebilco, 1991:127-144). As a result of this research, the influence of the city of Ephesus on the rest of Asia Minor should not be underestimated.

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<sup>50</sup> Under the influence of religious syncretism, in Greco-Roman times one can find the influence of magic and astrology in the life of people who lived in Asia Minor. In ancient times, it was not possible to separate the relationship between religion and supernatural power such as magic, astrology, exorcism, because they were intermingled. Without doubt, the Ephesus city, which was the centre of the Artemis cult also had a direct link with the magical practices of that time. Witherington III (1998:578) lists a variety of regular features in ancient magic in the following: 1. complicated rituals, 2. magic spells and recipes, 3. the reciting of various names for various gods or even nonsense syllables in hopes of landing on a combination of sounds or names that will force a god to do one’s bidding, 4. the reliance on a professional technician who demands payment and relies on secrecy, 5. syncretism, 6. coercion and manipulation as opposed to personal relating and supplication. Even though many people suggest the influence of magic and astrology in Greco-Roman times, as far as the activities of Paul are concerned, Paul rejected the influences of these features in Acts 19. Klauck (2000:209-249) properly explains the difference between magic and religion (cf. Arnold, 1989:14-40).

### III.4.2. The social situation of the church of Ephesus

One mainly discussed the social and political situations of the first Christians in the light of persecution, but what one should avoid is to simplify the meaning of Revelation, by merely regarding it in terms of persecution (Friesen, 2005:351-356). That is why I have researched the ‘dating and the social and political situations’ in order to demonstrate various contexts in which Revelation was written. In this section, I intend to address this problem briefly.<sup>51</sup>

In the church of Ephesus, one could not find any evidence of persecution, but they were blamed for having forsaken their first love amongst one another. In the midst of such a pagan social and cultural situation, the church of Ephesus was praised for its work, toil and endurance. They didn’t accept wicked men and false apostles (Rev. 2:2-3) and hated the practices of the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6). Their problem did not come from external sources, but from within. The problem from within is ‘ὅτι τὴν ἀγάπην σου τὴν πρώτην ἀφῆκες: You have forsaken your first love’ (Rev. 2:4). Here, conquering and judgment are divided according to their works, toil, endurance (τὰ ἔργα σου καὶ τὸν κόπον καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν; 2:2) and forsaking their first love (Slater, 1999:116-117).

### III.4.3. Tree of life (ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς)

Even though the promise statements given in the seven letters are different in every case, it should be accepted that the general tone and character of the letter were adapted to suit the need of the city (cf. Hemer, 1986:37; Ramsay, 1994:179). The expression ‘the tree of life’, which is in the garden of God, is symbolic and couldn’t be described according to its visible meaning. But it might be a more hopeful task to inquire as to what meaning the Asian Christians would take from the phrase in a sort of syncretism of Jewish and native Asian thought (Ramsay, 1994:179). One should ask why the promise of the symbol of the tree of life, which was given to the conquerors, was applied to the church of Ephesus.

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<sup>51</sup> Minear (1967:47-51) regards the Revelation as not mainly concerned with persecution, but mainly concerned with derelictions, self-deception and false-teachings. When one considers only chapters 2-3, one can easily find derelictions, self-deception and false-teaching, but here, one can also locate the proof of persecution. Whenever one reads the book of Revelation, one needs the balance of both sides. Fiorenza (1985:192-199) also mentions the rhetorical situation as characterized by exigency and urgency. On the basis of this fact, she doesn’t miss the element of possible harassment, persecution and suffering of individual Christians.

### III.4.3.1. Artemis cult as the tree of life

In Ephesus as a religious centre in the first century, Artemis, or Diana (her Roman name) was eagerly worshipped by many people. People called upon Artemis as “Savior, Lord, Queen of the Cosmos” (Arnold, 1989:21, cf. Hemer, 1986:48). In ancient literature, there is some evidence of the holy place of Artemis as a tree-shrine. In the Artemis cult, the tree with its image was closely identified with the presence of the goodness within her *naos* (cf. Court, 1979:25, Knibb, 1995:143)<sup>52</sup>. In Tacitus (Annals, 3.61), this tree was connected to the sacred tree of Ortygia where it was adhered to as the mythical birthplace of Artemis (Knibb, 1995:144; Wilson, 1996:34, 199). The Ephesus city as the mythical birthplace of Artemis offered a fixed focal point of religious interest. “This fixed focal point ‘was a place of salvation for the suppliant’ of Artemis, ‘surrounded by an asylum a bow-shot or more in radius, enclosed by a boundary wall’ (Court, 1979:25; cf. Hemer, 1986: 48)<sup>53</sup>.

When one thinks of Sacred trees and animals to be connected with the deities (cf. Cary & Haarhoff, 1966:312-319), it is not surprising that the Artemis-shrine of Ephesus, which was made of a tree, was extolled by the people as a supreme god, or a tree goddess and a timeless symbol of fertility (Knibb, 1995:143). She was the “σωτηρία” or “σωτεία” for the salvation of people.<sup>54</sup> For this reason, the Ephesian Artemis was considered, even in the

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<sup>52</sup> Hemer (1986:41-50) suggests the date of the palm or tree as the characteristic symbol of Artemis on the basis of the coinage and the numismatic evidence in the Anatolian periods of the city. This was however rejected because his evidence regarding the use of the tree on a coin was all according to pre-Roman dating from 400-350 B.C. In contrast with Hemer, Wilson (1996:199) states “It is doubtful whether John’s audience would be familiar with the symbolism of pre-Roman coinage because it was no longer in circulation.”

<sup>53</sup> One aspect of the temple captured the imagination of Roman-period writers more than any other: “the inviolability of the sanctuary” (Thomas, 1995:98, cf. Witherington III, 1998:587). As the place of security, it was refuge to the people who perpetrated serious crimes. Thus, the safety which it afforded the suppliant was “σωτηρία” (Hemer, 1986:48). If asylum provides a security and salvation to the people who looked for their own refuge, the tree of life, which was in the garden of God, would provide a complete contrast with the asylum of Artemis, which provided visible security and salvation in this world (cf. Court, 1979:25). This matter will be dealt with in more detail at some later stage.

<sup>54</sup> One of the characteristics of Artemis is the cosmic power that she has. She has authority and control over the cosmos world (Arnold, 1989:22). She deeply involves the demonic realm, the spirits of nature, and the fate of people – death, disease, pain, birth, health and so on. Thus, when they say salvation from what, it doesn’t relate to the point of view of Christianity to get eternal life or be saved. When one considers the frame-work of ancient times, the salvation in the Artemis cult as well as the pagan religion means salvation from disease, disaster, or death in this life. Thus to them, Saviour or salvation had to do with health or other matters of this earth in contrast with the concept of Bible about salvation. Salvation in the Bible connects with “God’s gracious act of forgiving sins through Jesus which causes the moral, mental, emotional, spiritual,

first century after Christ, to be in some sense a deity of the whole province of Asia. Ephesus was, according to the estimation of the world, a very famous city, due to her goddess Artemis. The imperial or Asklepios worship in the city of Ephesus should also not be underestimated (Ramsay, 1994:151-171). In the Ephesus city, having some religious background, depended on various religious syncretism, to live as a Christian at that time seemed like a big adventure or gamble. Tacitus (Annals, 15:44) describes this tragic fact about having been a Christian during this period:

And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus... Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind.

In these circumstances, to be a Christian being branded a *superstitio*, could and would have significant social, as well as religious repercussions for the individuals involved, inclusive of their family members (cf. Witherington III, 1998:824).

In conjunction with the Ephesus city in the dominant polytheistic or imperialistic religious culture, Artemis built as a tree-shrine provided the contrasted image with ‘the tree of life’, which was in the garden of God for the conquerors’ salvation. The “wooden statue” of Artemis (Knibb, 1995:153) would not guarantee people’s life. It is “dead wood” (Hemer, 1986:43).<sup>55</sup> Such a promise between the tree of life and the tree of Artemis in its historical,

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and sometimes even physical transformation of an individual” (Witherington III, 1998:837).

<sup>55</sup> By and large, the word for tree can be related back to two Greek-words; on the one hand is “δένδρον”, on the other hand is “ξύρον”. Δένδρον and ξύρον indicate these kinds of characters as follows: 1. to denote idolatrous worship (e.g. Isa. 57:5; Jer. 2:27; Ezk. 6:13); 2. to denote promises of God’s blessing, God’s wrath and God’s providence (e.g. Ezk. 47:12; LXX, 1Ch. 16:33; LXX); 3. to denote the expression of the tree of life (Embry, 1986:3.865-866). Generally, while δένδρον indicates a living or growing tree, ξύρον indicates

social, and cultural situations provided a complete contrast with the threat of the Ephesus church. Thus, the image of the tree of life through the contrasting picture might give the Christians of Ephesus encouragement and victory as the conquerors.

### III.4.3.2. Tree of life in the Old Testament

The statement of the ‘tree of life’ originally stemmed from Ge. 2:9 and 3:22 (cf. Ps. 1:3; Pr. 3:18; 11:30; 13:12; 15:4; Jer. 17:8; Ezk. 28:13; 31:8-9). Among the so-called ‘wisdom literature’ – Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes, wisdom is also expressed as a ‘tree of life’ (e.g. Pr. 3:18). In a vivid turn of metaphor, wisdom can be linked with the tree of life and expressed with a personified woman and the life-death situation is described positively in the image of ‘the tree of life’ (Murphy, 1996:ix). Owing to this explanation, it is possible to determine the emphasis of creation and life in wisdom theology, which seeks to describe their faith in some coherent and meaningful way. One can thus state, “wisdom theology is creation theology”<sup>56</sup> (Murphy, 1996:118) that gives us life unlike the Artemis cult.

In the paradise of God, the original condition of man at creation prior to the fall will be restored because in the Bible, trees are seen as “symbolic of the life of God” (Wenham, 1987:62) and an “organic correlation in life” (Nielson, 1989:71). The tree was also regarded as a symbol of life-giving divine power to the Asian Greeks as well as to the Jews, though in a different way (Ramsay, 1994:179). The secret Torah of the tree of life is

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dead wood or wood, a piece of wood, anything made of wood (Vine, 1966:4.153). Sometimes ξύρον can be interchangeable with σταυρός (see Vine, 1966:4.153, Schneider, 1967:5.39-41). The tree of life can be connected with the cross on which Jesus died. Schneider (1967:5.40-41) is quite correct to say that early Christian art explains a relationship between the tree of life and the cross. The cross of Christ, the wood of suffering and death, is for Christians a tree of life. It is thus for the first time depicted as the symbol of victory over death.

<sup>56</sup> In Proverbs, wisdom is regarded as one of the highest goals of the faithful people of God (Wenham, 1987:63), because wisdom could be identified with Jesus in terms of the New Testament. Sometimes wisdom could be connected with the “divine word or a theology of creation” (Murphy, 1996:118). Sawyer (1992:105) connects the old creation with the new creation as follows: creation theology, based on the story of Adam, is a key element to evaluate Paul’s theology and his understanding of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. To have wisdom could thus be explained as a complete fellowship with God. In order to understand the concept of the New Creation, New Adam, and New Age of Paul, he suggests: 1. Paul was a first-century Jew who believed he was living in the Messianic age, which had cosmological implications; 2. By exploring creation imagery in his theology, Paul was not simply discovering a proof-text for his new convictions; he was also expecting a common image, which would appeal as much to the Gentile as to the Jews; 3. Paul’s recourse to the image of creation depends on his personal experience (:105-106).

identified with the first two tablets of Moses<sup>57</sup> (Morris, 1992:136). It is not surprising that the ideas that the tree of life is sacred and provides life-giving fruits (O' Reilly, 1992:178), were important to the Asia Minor audiences who needed God's power, consolation and encouragement through this image. Citing the tree in Isaiah as a metaphor, Nielsen (1989:79) explains the concept of the tree as follows:

Concepts of the tree as holy are a universal feature of almost all 'primitive' religions. If we consider the climatic conditions in the Palestinian region, it can come as no surprise that here also the tree was considered a *symbol of life*. Where trees can grow there is water and where there is water, there is the possibility of life. Thus, here also are the fundamental day-to-day experiences, that underlie the idea of the tree.

Based on the argument thus far, one can certify that the image of the 'tree of life' symbolizes the life-giving presence of God, and the tree refers to the redemptive effects of the 'cross' (Schneider, 1967:5.40-41; O'Reilly, 1992:170). It brings about the restoration of God's presence to the people of God (cf. Beale, 1999:235).

Giblin (1991:54) associates the tree of life with the cross, expressed as giving his promise to the conquerors in a banquet-image, namely, eating from the tree of life. Ultimately, the tree of life signifies the cross as being the fruit of salvation that will be given to the conquerors. The problems of the church of Ephesus are that they have forsaken their first love, as well as that, they have faced the works of the Nicolaitans who encouraged a compromise with the pagan society and worship of the pagan gods, namely Artemis or Asklepios, including of an imperial cult. Because Ephesus was known as the 'temple warden' (νεωκόρος) of the pagan goddess Artemis, it is not surprising that the city's life was dominated by the temple's life. To those who conquer the situation of life, the promise

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<sup>57</sup> When one considers the tree of life in the light of restored creation, the tree of life is considered a key characteristic of a perfect garden where God dwells (Wenham, 1987:62). The ancient Near Eastern image of the tree of life can be compared with a cosmological tree that is closely rooted in the underworld, offering healing and immortality as its fruit and in Jewish cosmology (O' Reilly, 1992:170). Under the influence of the tree of life, they feel that the safety and security of the state or individual was assured. During the early Christian centuries, this tree of life was readily linked with the cross. In connection with this concept, the cross, erected on Golgotha in the historical city of Jerusalem at a particular moment in time, can be here regarded as the eternal cosmic tree of life, revealing the perfect ideal world in the heavenly paradise of the New Jerusalem (O'Reilly, 1992:170-171).

statement is a good symbolic image for the reward of eternal life and conqueror (Mounce, 1977:90).

#### *III.4.3.2.1. Paradise of God*

One must now turn to the ‘paradise of God’ (ὁ παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ). Παράδεισος is a loan-word from an old Persian form denoting an enclosure, park, or garden, which existed for the parks of the Persian king and nobility (Jeremias, 1967:5.765; cf. Bauer, 1979:614; Liddell & Scott, 1996:1308). The origin of this word ‘ὁ παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ’ in Revelation 2:7 could be derived from the Septuagint reading of Genesis 13:10 (ὁ παράδεισος τοῦ θεοῦ) and Ezekiel 28:13 (ἐν τῇ τρυφῇ τοῦ παραδείσου τοῦ θεοῦ), 31:8 (ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ). The meaning of the paradise of God, which is differentiated from a secular ‘park’ or ‘garden’, has a change in meaning here; from the profane sphere to the religious sphere. The paradise of the first age, in which the condition of the bliss was lost due to sin, would be restored through an eschatological paradise, having the hope of a future time of bliss.

In terms of the New Testament, Jesus is presented as the Messiah, who will open the gate of paradise and allow the conquerors to eat of the tree of life<sup>58</sup> (Jeremias, 1967:5.772). According to Jewish thought, they expected that the paradise and the tree of life would reappear at the time of the Messiah (Ford, 1975:388)<sup>59</sup>. If one compares the paradise of God where the tree of life was standing with the sacred precinct (τέμενος) where the statue of Artemis was, one can easily understand what kind of message this word indicates.

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<sup>58</sup> With Revelation 2:7 in the New Testament, only two passages mention paradise: Lk. 23:43 and 2 Co. 12:4. In Lk. 23:43, Jesus promised the criminal that ‘today you will be with me in paradise (ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ)’. Following the contemporary Jewish conception, paradise here refers to the intermediate abode of the righteous (cf. Wilson, 1996:201) or eschatological fellowship. Paradise as now concealed, points beyond itself to its eschatological return (Jeremias, 1967:5.769-771). The promise that “today you will be with me in paradise” must have been a great comfort to the Christian. To the oriental mind it expressed the perfect condition of blessedness (Vine, 1966:3.158). In 2 Co. 12:4, Paul spoke of a visionary experience in which he was caught up to paradise (εἰς τὸν παράδεισον). Therefore, in these texts, paradise is focused on a heavenly rather than an earthly perspective.

<sup>59</sup> According to the rabbinical teaching, there was a threefold paradise; the paradise of the Adam where the tree of life stood, the paradise of the souls in heaven, which was the abode of the redeemed between death and resurrection, as well as the eschatological paradise where the souls of the righteous would be (see Ford, 1975:388, Lk. 23:43).

As a matter of fact, the whole sacred precinct (τέμενος) was recognized as a refuge for criminals. The character of this τέμενος was a sacred enclosure, unchangeably centred upon the spot originally marked by the sacred tree. Above all, it was generally known as “a place of asylum” (Hemer, 1986:49). That is why τέμενος as a place of asylum offers a place of safety to the criminals who committed sins. The criminals who ran away to this place might have been thinking of this τέμενος as the place of salvation. That is, in the criminals’ mind, τέμενος must have been a παραδείσος (Kistemaker, 2001:110). However, τέμενος couldn’t offer eternal life to the supplicant. This created a certain illusion of lies, as it couldn’t provide any salvation to the people who were on its side, nor security in terms of a Christian perspective.

In contrast to this concept noted above, the Christians could, within their framework, have understood what it referred to, namely the tree of life in the paradise of God. Although there are many arguments, related to the tree of life among scholars, the salvation through the cross (the tree of life) was in marked contrast with what Artemis gave (Beale, 1999:235). To the conquerors that need to have the promise of encouragement and consolation, the promise of the tree of life does provide some present picture, as well as an eschatological picture in conjunction with the local reference (Aune, 1997:152). The tree of life can only symbolize the cross on which Jesus died to save us (cf. Beale, 1999:235). It can bring salvation to the people who try to experience a picture of refuge in the presence of Christ. Thus, the image of the tree of life can be connected with the promise statement given to the conquerors in the light of an eschatological perspective.

In this paradise of God, which is the dwelling of God, only those who endure, love and conquer would have eternal life. This would enable followers of Christ to live the life of everlasting communion with and in the presence of God, as symbolized through the paradise. This is the message sent to the conquerors at Ephesus.

The explanation of the tree of life and the paradise of God appears within the Inter-Testamental literature. In 1 Enoch 25:3-5, Michael says to Enoch that the tree of life will be given to the righteous and the pious, and the elect will also be presented with its fruit for life (cf. 1 Enoch 24:3-5). In 2 Enoch 8:1-4, Enoch was caught up to the third heaven and

there he saw paradise, which was inconceivably the place for pleasant living. In the midst of the trees, which are in the paradise, the tree of life is indescribable for its pleasantness and fine fragrance. And it is also more beautiful than any other (8:3), considering that there is no unfruitful tree in paradise, while every tree is well fruited, with every place being blessed (8:7). In 4 Ezra, 2:12, it is mentioned that the tree of life should provide them with some fragrant perfume (cf. 4 Ezra. 7:123). In 4 Ezra, 8:52, the angel who revealed the secrets of the end of time to Ezra reassures him in the following way: it is on your behalf that Paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed (cf. 2 Baruch. 4:3, 6; 2 Enoch. 65:10; Odes of Solomon. 20:7).

In the Testament of Levi 18:9-11, one determines a picture of paradise during the Messianic age as follows: he shall open the gates of paradise and shall remove the threatening sword against Adam. He shall give to the saints to eat from the tree of life and the spirit of holiness shall be on them. Through the survey of the Inter-Testamental literature in conjunction with the tree of life and paradise, one can determine some particular creation imagery, cosmological implications, as well as a messianic age to come in terms of an eschatological aspect. It must be returned to the restoration of paradise including the concept of an eschaton, as well as a messianic age.

#### III.4.4 The Conquerors in the church of Ephesus

Some brief and preliminary remarks by Kiddle (1940:61) might be helpful in understanding this section. The promise statement given to the seven churches must have had considerable meaning to the Christians of John's day. The use of the word conqueror ( $\nuικάω$ ) as an appropriate concluding refrain might not be used as a timeless symbol, but as an embodiment of the social and political situations confronting them. It is true that when they heard about the promise statement regarding the conquerors, they might immediately have understood what the implications of this were, pertaining to their social and political circumstances.

The promise statement given to the conquerors in the church of Ephesus is given together

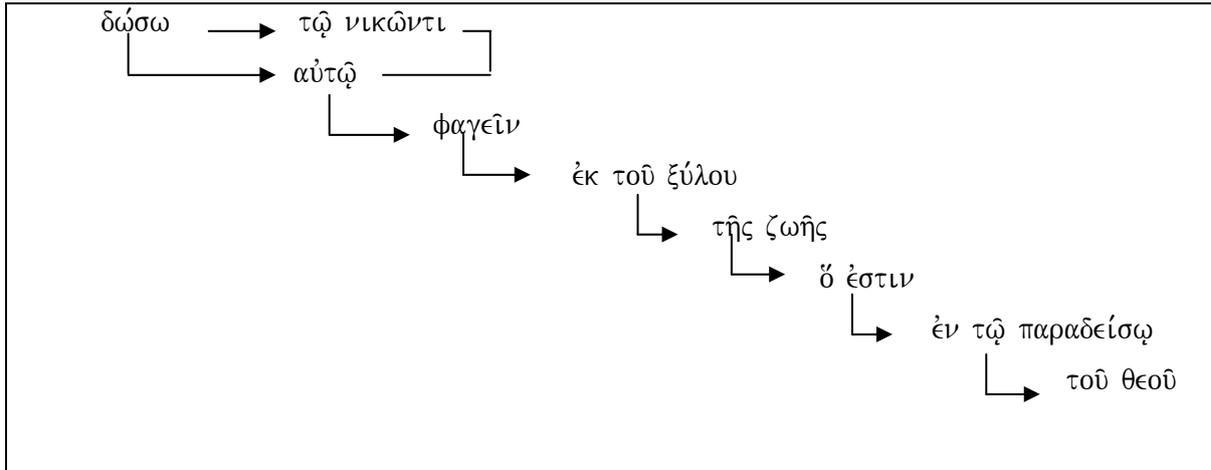
with the bestowing of the tree of life in Rev. 2:7: Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ φαγεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ. The most important statement of this sentence is the use of νικᾶω. In Revelation νικᾶω is a key word (Bauckham, 1993b:88) and the term νικᾶω was used in two different ways: of “physical, military victory and of moral, religious victory” (Leivestad, 1954:212; cf. Swete, 1977:29; Bauckham, 1993b:66-73; Aune, 1997:151-152). In spite of his insight concerning the physical, military victory and of the moral, religious victory, Sweet (1979:80-83) explains these categories as related to the theme of spiritual victory over Satan (cf. Jn 16:33), victory won by faithful witness and the word of God unto the death (12:11; cf. Jn 18:37). These categories contrast with Satan who looks like the conqueror (11:7; 13:7).

Charles (1975:1.53) prescribes the use of the word ‘νικᾶν’ as “characteristic of our author, and is used of the faithful Christian warrior.” He does limit the word ‘νικᾶν’ only to the martyrs but not to all the Christians.<sup>60</sup> In contrast with Charles (1975:1.54) and Kiddle (1940:62-63), as Leivestad (1954:214) noted, ὁ νικῶν is not limited exclusively to the literal martyr, but it reflects a rather extraordinary impression of the bloody martyrdom in the letters to the seven churches. Thus, one doesn’t have any reason to limit the conqueror-concept only to the martyr. As Bauckham (1993b:88) insists, the call to conquer is open to all the people of God participating in the divine war. To eat the tree of life in the paradise of God is only allowed to the conquerors who were faithful Christians within the church.

When one analyzes the text of 2:7, it can be structured as follows:

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<sup>60</sup> Kiddle (1940:61-65) explains the word conqueror as having two-fold significance. First, the conqueror must overcome the temptations of this life and second, represent in action his bearing of the Christian virtues. Kiddle connects the conquering principle with certain martyrdom, but he doesn’t connect all seven promises to the conquerors, being martyrs. Five of these promises (2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 3:5, 3:12) are not limited only to the martyrs, but to all the people who were saved. In two (2:26, 3:21) of the promises - those towards Laodicea and Thyatira - the conqueror-principle could apply only to the martyrs. One has no legitimate reason to consider only these two promises as having pertained to the martyrs. Rosscup (1982:261-276) suggests the main views regarding the conquerors as follows: 1) a saved person who retains salvation, which forfeited some, 2) a saved person who continually conquers and is accordingly distinguished from a defeated Christian, 3) every saved person. Rosscup supports the view 3) that every saved person is a conqueror. In order to support this conviction of 3), one should give some careful attention to this view exegetically.



In 2:7, the use of the dative form of the present active participle τῷ νικῶντι implies “continuous victory” (Robertson, 1933:6.300) or at least “the victorious member of the Church” (Swete, 1977:29). As Charles (1975:1.54) noted, the participle τῷ νικῶντι might be influenced by the use of the Hebrew participle, which can have a perfect or an imperfect sense as the context may require. If possible, it might denote the “*continuance of completed action*” (Blass & Debrunner, 1961:175). It does accordingly imply that even the struggle for victory is yet continuing. One should thus emphasize the continual nature of those obtaining the victory, because the present participle in Revelation 2-3 grants the dynamic sense of a continual victory over and against the forces opposing God and his church (Homcy, 1995:195). Based on this analysis, one would recognize that the meaning of each letter intended to encourage its audience to a course of action (Kirby, 1988:200), even though they were confronted with a harsh reality.

Beckwith (1967:451) does not accept this promise as a specific reference to the circumstances of the Ephesians, but this promise as a final victory over all spiritual foes without specification of a particular object of conflict. But, it must be rejected because the author had an informed knowledge regarding the character and fortunes the church of Ephesus faced. He knew what the Ephesians did and experienced. It might, therefore, be written in a language that the audiences could understand.

The seven letters of Revelation 2-3 were written for troubled Christians suffering under persecution, social and political discrimination and inner conflict of the churches in Asia Minor. The conflict, the persecution and the inner problem of this present life in the world

were not for them a final destination. To conclude, the main purpose was to confirm and verify that God, Jesus and the conquerors will ultimately gain the victory in this conflict. Paradoxically, this decisive victory over Satan and death was achieved by the death of Christ on the cross. He conquered through “an act of total self-sacrifice” (Mounce, 1977:144; cf. Kiddle, 1940:62; Barnes, 1976:68<sup>61</sup>; Sweet, 1979:82-83; Rosscup, 1982:263-276, Beasley-Murray, 1992:77-79; Homcy, 1995:193). The message that John delivered to his community focused on the conditions within their particular situations. The statement of Caird (1966:33-34) regarding this topic is quite correct:

He is not an armchair theologian working out a philosophy of history, nor a fantastic visionary losing all touch with reality in dreams of the future; he is a pastor deeply absorbed in the task of preparing his friends for an imminent ordeal and helping them to see, by the light of the Cross, that this ordeal is in fact the victory which is both theirs and God's.

Consequently, the promise statement given to the conquerors must be related to the previous context, which the church of Ephesus had to face. They must overcome their first love that they had forsaken, and respond to Jesus' call to repentance. The false apostles and Nicolaitans should also be overcome. Only those who overcame the situation of the church of Ephesus, in that the Christian experienced a harsh reality, could be called conquerors before Jesus and God. Beale (1999:235) limits this problem, apart from persecution and tribulation only, to the church's own sin of not testifying about Christ to the world outside of the church itself. I think that this is quite correct, but it is too narrow to explain the problem of the church of Ephesus. The conquerors who overcame the problem will receive the blessing of God's salvific presence (cf. Garratt, 1897:34-36; Mounce, 1977:90; Aune, 1997:151-154; Beale, 1999:235; Morris, 1999:62; Hendrikson, 2000:63; Johnson, 2001:73) like receiving the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. The reason that the Christian as a believer can live as a conqueror in this world is because Christ conquered sin and

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<sup>61</sup> He regards victory as having a moral character as follows: 1) pertaining to his own easily-besetting sins, 2) pertaining to the world and its temptation; 3) pertaining to prevalent error, 4) pertaining to the ills and trials of life (1976:68). In this dissertation, ethical motif is a very important theme. The emphasis of the moral motif of Barnes is quite a good insight, but he misses the christological aspect regarding the slain lamb. Thus, one should keep in mind that the foundation of the victory of Jesus depends on the total self-sacrifice as well as the motif of moral characteristic. See Wall (1991:101-102).

death and the forces of evil on the cross, forever. The victory of Christ is thus in another way paradigmatic towards his followers who wanted to follow the way of Christ (Reddish, 1982:134).

The future verb δώσω of verb δίδωμι in this verse (Rev. 2:7) is closely connected with the promise statement given to the conquerors. The future verb δώσω can be interpreted as to “give permission to” (Charles, 1975:1.280) the conquerors. That is, the conquerors will be given permission to eat the tree of life from the Lord. When one considers that the future verb δώσω is linked with the conquerors and the tree of life, the future verb δώσω implies the victory of the conquerors. According to Swete (1977:30), that can be expressed as a personal victory against the evil ones. Thus, the mentioning of the conquerors, the tree of life, and the garden of God indicate and guarantee the victory of the people of God as the conquerors. This is the message of the promise-statement given to the conquerors in the church of Ephesus.

#### III.4.5. Summary

In the midst of the city of change and religious centre, the church of Ephesus experienced various problems in a pagan environment. The Artemis cult of Ephesus was a very prominent phenomenon and the Artemis was regarded as “Savior, Lord, Queen of the Cosmos” (Arnord, 1989:21). Christianity was treated as a *superstitio* in the dominant polytheistic or imperialistic religious, social and culture. For this, Christianity would have faced social, cultural, and religious conflicts. Artemis is not a real Saviour and a real Lord. Christ, who holds the seven stars and the seven golden lampstands, is a real Saviour and Lord. Regarding the relevance of the local situation of the church of Ephesus, it might have made sense to the Ephesus Christian that the Artemis built up with a tree-shrine is contrasted with the ‘tree of life’ which is the guarantee of God’s salvation given to the conquerors.

The conquerors in the church of Ephesus can be expressed as those who bear ἔργα καὶ κόπον καὶ ὑπομονήν and restore their first love which they had forsaken (2:2-5). These were the characteristics over the conquerors of the church in Ephesus. That is, the

conquerors were those who did the work commanded by Christ and who overcame the hardship by maintaining the endurance in their situations they faced (Beasley-Murray, 1992:78). Christ's figure thus expressed as holding church and its members is properly matched with the promise statement that would be given to the conquerors to encourage and to confirm a victory.

### **III.5. The promise statement given to the Conquerors of the church of Smyrna**

The church of Smyrna is called a faithful church with the Philadelphia church, but the members of the church suffered with *θλιψις, πτωχεία, καὶ βλασφημία*. The terms *θλιψις, πτωχεία, καὶ βλασφημία* reflect the external persecution or harassment, actual poverty, and the slander that the church's members faced. In the midst of crisis and conflict with Roman authority and Jews (see Gill, 1997:389-403), the church's members need to receive encouragement and victory from a heavenly perspective. John sent his letter to the church of Smyrna to console and encourage so that their suffering will be limited for ten days (2:10) and they would become conquerors who will receive the crown of life and from a heavenly perspective, will not be hurt by the second death.

#### **III.5.1. The city of Smyrna**

It is correct to state that the historical horizon is the same horizon as with human life and behaviour and no interpretation can transcend it (Long, 1994:397). In order to understand the context of life of the church of Smyrna, one must go to the context of life, which the church of Smyrna had to face.

The Aeolians, who were the first Greeks in that area, occupied the first settlement of Smyrna in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Ionian Greeks, who developed a powerful state, replaced them. They gradually gave way, however, and were besieged and destroyed in 627 B.C. by Alyattes, king of Lydia (Grant, 1963:926). Its importance was due not only to its port facilities (cf. Filson, 1962a:4.393; Grant, 1963:927), but also because it was a suitable starting-point for the land trade route to the east. Through its maritime connection, Smyrna came into contact with the Romans and made an alliance with them against the Seleucid

power. Therefore, Smyrna was the first city in Asia Minor to erect a temple to the goddess Roma (Potter, 1992b:6.74; cf. Filson, 1962a:4.393; Ramsay, 1994:184; Hartog, 2002:45). Smyrna was given permission to build a temple to the Emperor Tiberius, because of its long loyalty and many services to Rome<sup>62</sup> (Tacitus, Annals. IV. 55-56).

Smyrna had many things to be proud of in itself. It was the birthplace of Homer (Filson, 1962a:4.393; Grant, 1963:927; Hemer, 1986:57; Potter, 1992b:6.74; Ramsay, 1994:190; Hartog, 2002:44) and the most beautiful city of all. The Romans consequently regarded Smyrna as one of the most important cities in the province (along with Ephesus, Sardis, and Pergamus). The religious life of Smyrna included a variety of cults. The city took pride in the imperial cult and Cybele-worship as the centre of religion (cf. Filson, 1962a:4.393; Barclay, 1957:31-37; Hemer, 1986:71). The tutelary deity of Smyrna was their mother-godness, Cybele (cf. Ramsay, 1994:188). For the Greeks, Cybele was called the ‘Mother of the Gods’ and for the Latins, she was called the ‘Great Mother’ (cf. Ferguson, 1993:264).

As with any other mystery cults, the myth of Cybele implies the annual dying in the autumn and its coming to life again in the spring. This cult was also very meaningful for the local Smyrna Christians, because at the church of Smyrna, Jesus was introduced as the One who ‘is the First and the Last, who died and came to life (Rev. 2:8)’. It could accordingly not be ignored that in the church of Smyrna, the imperial and provincial cults had influenced every aspect of the Christian life when the book of Revelation was written. One should keep in mind that the religious influence permeated every aspect of city and village life and the complete Christian community (cf. Beale, 1999:240-241). Owing to this kind of religious influence in the city of Smyrna, Smyrna was also designated as the ‘*νεωκόρος*’, or custodian, of the temples of the entire province (Hartog, 2002:46). A special devotion to Rome and the imperial or provincial cult of the Smyrna-city was enough to have favour from Rome. One can inevitably suppose that the pagan culture of the Greek-Roman world may have influenced the Jews and the Christians who lived within the pagan environment (cf. Stambaugh & Balch, 1986:46-52).

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<sup>62</sup> As one of the major cities of the province, Smyrna possessed three temples: one under Tiberius (A.D. 14-37), one under Hadrian (A.D. 117-138), and the third under Caracalla (A.D. 211-217). When one considers possessing three temples in Smyrna city, one can suppose that Smyrna was a centre for the imperial and provincial cults.

According to Josephus (Antiquities, XII.3.1), it is written that the Jews obtained honours from the kings of Asia, and Seleucus Nicator made them citizens in those cities, which he built in Asia (cf. Antiquities, XII.3.2). One can accordingly suppose that the Jews in the Diaspora provided some accommodation and prepared certain arrangements, in order to have some privileges through their accommodation. In contrast to this favour from their neighbours, in the Sibylline Oracles (V.122-123), the conflict between the Jews and their pagan world was explained through the statement: “Smyrna will one day weep, having rolled down the cliffs. She who was once revered and famous, will perish and Smyrna will also come, bewailing its musician, to the gates of Ephesus, while she herself will truly perish” (Sibylline Oracles, V.306-307). Through these statements, one can imagine what the situation of life within the church of Smyrna was amidst the conflict between the Christians and the hostile world.

### III.5.2. The social situation of the church of Smyrna

In the church of Smyrna, Christians were confronted by suffering and a problem of another kind. Smyrna was a great trade city, as well as one of the great centres of emperor worship (Beale, 1999:239-245; Kistemaker, 2001:122-126). Here the Christians were in conflict with the Jews. The conflicts between Christians and Jews were severe, especially during the first century. When one looks at Acts 6:8-7:60, it seems quite clear that Stephen was one of the earliest martyrs. The problem that the church of Smyrna faced was one of conflict with the Jews, poverty (spiritual poverty over and against real spiritual richness) and slander (Rev. 2:9; cf. Frankfurter, 2001:403-425)).

The text states the following: ‘οἶδά σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν, ἀλλὰ πλούσιος εἶ, καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτοὺς καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ συναγωγὴ τοῦ Σατανᾶ: I know your afflictions and your poverty - yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan’ (Rev. 2:9). In fact, the Jews who say they are Jews are not Jews, but a synagogue of Satan. Therefore, it reflects the conflict and discrimination with the Jews (DeSilva, 1992a:287-289). From an earthly point of view, in contrast with a heavenly point of view, to be a Christian meant real self-sacrifice (Hendriksen, 2000:65), but from a heavenly point of

view, Christians are ‘real conquerors’.

### III.5.3. The second death

The church of Smyrna seemed to have faced some internal vitality with the Philadelphia-church, since only the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia hadn’t received any formal blame from the Lord. The church of Smyrna seemed to have experienced tribulation amidst circumstance of severe poverty. The situation of the church is explained in 2:9: ‘οἶδά σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν, ἀλλὰ πλούσιος εἶ, καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτοὺς καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανα’. The church of Smyrna was not outwardly wealthy and suffered from tribulation (οἶδά σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν) for ten days, indicating a limited period of intense persecution, imprisonment and the slanders of the Jews (Aune, 1997:166). Filson (1962a:4.393) connects this passage with aspects of the life of the city of Smyrna. The description of Christ who was the First and the Last, who died and came to life<sup>63</sup> again (Rev. 2:8; cf. 1:17, 22:13) was not at haphazard, but can be connected with the past history of the city of Smyrna because John was very familiar with its history.

The promise statement given to the conquerors of the church of Smyrna is that “he will not be hurt at all by the second death” (Rev. 2:11). Rosscup (1982:278) suggests that the promise statement given to the conquerors is a privilege of all the saved, whether or not they become martyrs. When one looks into the text of the Smyrna church, as argued by Rosscup one can’t exactly distinguish between the saved person who is an overcomer and a saved person who is not. The emphasis seems not to be derived from the text itself because the text itself doesn’t divide believers into two parts: one the saved person, the other not a saved person. There was only one congregation that was in trouble in the church of Smyrna. The letter of Smyrna was sent to the people who were under persecution. Through the statement “οἶδά σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν” (Rev. 2:9), one can verify that John

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<sup>63</sup> One defined the church of Ephesus as a city of change in terms of its historical and geographical background. Thus, as in the Ephesus letter, the church of Smyrna could be also connected with the city of life in terms of its historical and geographical background. Ramsay (1994:195-204) connects this statement in the following way: all Smyranean readers would at once recognize the striking similarity to the early history of their own city. The suggestion of Ramsay is quite persuasive, but theologically weak. For this argument, see Kiddle (1940:26); Barclay (1957:38-40); Caird (1966:34-35); Beale (1999: 213-215, 239); Johnson (2001:73).

spoke to the Christians who lived under the suffering of persecution and poverty (Kiddle, 1940:26; Bredin, 1998-99:162).

In an antagonistic and pagan environment, it would be difficult to make a living as a Christian, with the result that many would be economically destitute (Mounce, 1977:92). Believers at Smyrna were to have ten days of tribulation.<sup>64</sup> They must confront ‘τὴν θλίψιν’, which indicates some internal and external oppression from the Jews (cf. Ford, 1975:392) and could be connected with economic poverty. This is a tribulation, which all the conquerors must face and endure, for the sake of their faith. They should also face ‘τὴν πτωχείαν’<sup>65</sup>, which indicates material poverty, but is also used in a spiritual poverty (Ford, 1975:392; cf. Mounce, 1977:92; Morris, 1999:63-64).

Just as the seven cities were prosperous communities through the participation in the business and social life of these cities, Christians must also participate in idolatrous religion, trade guilds, as well as the Roman state religion in order to survive and in order to be materially successful in a pagan environment (Bauckham, 1993a:377). The synagogue of Satan in Revelation 2:9 particularly echoed an internal conflict between two groups: the synagogue and church. The blasphemy by those who say they are true Jews, but are not, but are a synagogue of Satan revealed what the essential problem in the church of Smyrna was. This blasphemy (βλασφημία) was not directed as blasphemy against God, but a

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<sup>64</sup> The argument whether it should be accepted as a symbolic number indicating a limited time or not is a continuing issue. But most commentators agree that the ten days indicate a limited time. It may be derived from Daniel 1:12,14, where Daniel and his three friends were put to the test for exactly that length of time. In Revelation, the testing of tribulation for ten days would distinguish whether they were really conquerors or not. It is possible that this might have been literally ten days in Revelation, but it is much more in accordance with the general character of this book to suppose that the number ten here is used to denote “a few” (Barnes, 1976:72), or “an indefinite, but short time” (Beasley-Murray, 1992:82; cf. Lenski, 1943:100; Charles, 1975:1.58; Swete, 1977:32; Sweet, 1979:86; Aune, 1997:166). For the objection to this opinion, see Hemer (1986:67, 69).

<sup>65</sup> According to Hemer (1986:68), such poverty could have been present for several reasons: 1) It may have been at least partly due to the despoliation of their property by mobs (cf. Caird, 1966:35; Charles, 1975:1.56), 2) The converts to the Christianity were most often found among the poorer classes (cf. Henry, 1979:190; 1 Co. 1:26; James. 2:5), 3) The devoted Christians on occasion reduced themselves to penury by the liberality of their own giving (2 Co. 2:8), 4) It was difficult for an uncompromising Christian to make a living in a pagan city (cf. Mounce, 1977:92). The first and third suggestions are improbable. The second suggestion is problematic, since it is now recognized that early Christianity could not be restricted to the lower classes (Aune, 1997:161). The prevailing viewpoint has been that the constituency of early Christianity consisted of the poor and dispossessed of the Roman provinces (Meeks, 1983:52), but one must understand that it encompassed the social spectrum as a whole (Aune, 1997:161; cf. Meeks, 1983:51-73; Stambaugh & Balch, 1986:110-116). The fourth suggestion has, according to many commentators, been the appointed reason as a basis for the Smyrnaean poverty (Aune, 1997:161).

blasphemy directed to the people of God who were in the church of Smyrna (Plumptre, 1884:93-94). To the Christians who faced various tribulations, poverty, and conflict between Jews and Christians, the word that the conquerors will not be hurt at all by the second death, may have given a hope and certainty to the victory.<sup>66</sup> That is, John provided a heavenly perspective that endurance, suffering, and martyrdom is not defeat, but conquering (Reddish, 1995:222).

According to Mounce (1977:94; cf. Robertson, 1933:6.303; Charles, 1975:1.59-60; Sweet, 1979:86; Wilson, 1996:209-210; Aune, 1997:168) the second death is a rabbinic terminology for the death of the unbelievers in the next world (Tg. Jer. on Dt. 33:6). Philo (Praem, 70) describes two kinds of death: “the one that of being dead, which is either good or else a matter of indifference; the other that of dying, which is in every respect an evil.” The second death must be reserved as punishment for unrepentant sinners. It was called in Revelation 20:14 (cf. 20:6) and 21:8 as the lake of fire, which mentions the punishment of eternal suffering or exclusion from the eternal life or everlasting communion with God in paradise (Rudolph, 2005:403-405).

In conjunction with the situation of the church of Smyrna, which suffered various troubles, the promise that the conqueror will not be hurt at all by the second death might be meaningful to the community of the Smyrna church. They were in danger of the first death, but after the first death, in the negative form (Ὁ νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῆ ἔκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου), the second death can have no power to harm them. In the positive form (δώσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς), the eternal life will be given to the conquerors. In connection with this topic, Ramsay (1994:200) is quite correct to say:

It is this triumph over death that constitutes the guiding thought of the whole letter, just as change was the guiding thought of the Ephesian letter. He that persists to the end, he that is steadfast and overcomes, shall triumph over death. ... Here

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<sup>66</sup> In the church of Smyrna, one can find out the contrast between death and life (cf. Benedict, 1966:12) that Smyrna was dead and yet lived. The contrast between apparent destruction and real vitality was expressed in several forms through this letter. The church seemed poor, but was rich. It showed apparent tribulation and suffering but was really triumphant and crowned with the crown of life (Ramsay, 1994:197). According to Seiss (1974:70), the church of Smyrna was ironically the church of Myrrh or bitterness, but agreeable and precious unto the Lord, holy in the midst of its conflicts, sufferings, and of blessed expectations for the world to which the resurrection is to lead the people of God.

again the final promise is seen to be peculiarly appropriate to the character and needs of the persons addressed.

Consequently, one can recognize that the second death (τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου) is related to eternal death in conjunction with the first death in terms of physical death (Beasley-Murray; 1992:83; Hendriksen, 2000:66; cf. Plumptre, 1884:98-102; Garratt, 1897:37; Lensky, 1943:103; Beckwith, 1967:455; Ford, 1975:396; Ladd, 1979:45; Wall, 1991:74). The second death can be linked with the crown of life as the positive and negative statement given to the conquerors pointing out victory. Therefore, the statement that the second death will not be hurt can be interpreted with another expression of victory given to the conquerors. To endure suffering as conqueror indicates participation in the first death from an earthly perspective, but to participate in the first death is to escape the second death and to have the promised rule of God's grace and peace from a heavenly perspective (Wall, 1991:74).

#### III.5.4. The crown of life

The promise over the crown of life given to the conquerors could be approached from various points of view. In terms of topographical reference, Ramsay (1994:186) links the reference to the crown of life with the appearance of the hill, Pagus. Hemer (1986:60) connects the familiar symbol of the life of crown with the topographical appearance of the city rising symmetrically to its crown of battlements. But it is not right to simplify the message of Revelation only in topographical terms. The construction of the social world, and subsequently the maintenance of that world, involve culture, language, ritual, institutions, custom, doctrines, indeed everything that one considers as forces of human life (Henry, 1979:182). Gager (1975:10) insists that the social aspect of world-construction derives from a basic conviction, which is always based on the concrete *Sitz im Leben* of a believer.

The 'στέφανος', in fact, played its part in many ancient customs and diverse implications such as victory, honour, kingship or royal visitation (Stevenson, 1995:257-268).<sup>67</sup> This is

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<sup>67</sup> The crown of life has been much discussed by many commentators. Among them, I think that the

accordingly a very familiar image in Asia Minor to which Revelation was sent. The crown is provided as a common prize given to the victor at the athletic and musical competition (Stevenson, 1995:258-259; cf. Beckwith, 1967:455; Meyers, 1992:6.998; Aune, 1997:166-167; 173-176; Morris, 1999:64-65; Johnson, 2001:75). Charles (1975:1.58) insists that the crown is awarded to the victor in the games. A victor's crown in the games was considered to have been some supreme earthly honour (Grundmann, 1971:7.620). Because Smyrna was famous for its games, it is possible to suppose that the image of the crown of life in the church of Smyrna may have borrowed from this image of the victor that achieved a victory in the game at that time (cf. Ladd, 1979:44-45).

Sometimes in terms of ritual, the crown could be connected with the deity who gave his favour to the recipient. In the Greco-Roman world, it was a common practice that the crown was dedicated to the deity to honour and to express gratitude for what was given by the deity (Grundmann, 1971:7.620).<sup>68</sup> The crown also became a symbol of military victory. The wreath was given as a symbol of honour within the context of military awards and benefactor relationships (Stevenson, 1995:265). After a war victory, victorious generals were honoured with some triumphal crown (Josephus, J.W. 7.105, 124). The main meaning of the crown given to the benefactors was the expression of honour to benefactors such as kings, emperors, individuals and cities (Josephus, Ant. 14.35, 304; 16.296).<sup>69</sup> In Philo's works (Leg. 1.80; Agr. 171), one also finds some particular use of a crown (Στεφανῶν). Millar (1977:140-141) is therefore quite correct to say that

The most regular and extensive gifts of this type which an emperor received were

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suggestion of Hemer (1986:72-73) is most suitable for us to have the information over the crown of life. He suggests seven possibilities: 1) allusion to the athlete's crown of victory, 2) allusion to the crown given to the presiding priest at the Mysteries of Dionysus, 3) allusion to the crown given as a symbol of an earthly honour, 4) allusion to the crowns given by pagan priests, 5) allusion to the eponymous priestly magistrates of the city known as *stephanephoroi*, 6) the festal crown reflecting the Christian's joy, 7) allusion to the topographical appearance of Smyrna. He emphasizes 1, 3, 7 as plausible suggestions. These suggestions are not in contrast with one another. Rather they should complement each other for a clearer interpretation in terms of its geographical, cultural, and social contexts.

<sup>68</sup> The social function of the victory wreath or crown echoes various social aspects. The fact that the victor's crown and the deity's crown can be connected with each other explains that athletic games go together with Greek religious festivals.

<sup>69</sup> For example, Aristobulus sent a crown valued at four thousand pieces of gold as a present to Pompey after he came to Damascus, and marched over Celesyria (Josephus, Ant. 14.35). When Antony came to Ephesus, Hyrcanus, the high priest, together with some Jews, sent a deputation to him, which carried a crown of gold with them (Josephus, Ant. 14.304).

the gold crowns which were offered on a variety of occasions, notably on his accession and after victories. This custom was inherited from the Hellenistic kings, and had established itself in Rome as soon as major victories were won by Roman generals in the Greek east; for the Greek cities naturally made for these victors the same offerings which they were accustomed to make to their victorious kings.

The true significance of these crowns at that time would be categorized as follows: thankfulness/gratitude (εύχαριστάι), honour (τιμῆ), and worthiness (ἄξιος) (Stevenson, 1995:267). Through the survey regarding the meaning of the crown, one can suppose that the primary meaning of the crown in a given context can closely be linked with victory, honour and divine glory. However, when one thinks about these meanings of a crown, they don't operate exclusively of each other, but are inclusive of one other.

In the N.T, 'στέφανος' occurs 18 times. Many references to crown are explained according to the terminology of the prize for an athletic victory and the eternal reward of the faithful from an eschatological point of view. Paul metaphorically recommends strict training to the Corinthians to gain a crown (e.g. 1 Co. 9:25). In 1 Ti. 4:8 with an athletic image, Paul describes a victor in an athletic's game getting a crown, having reached his final destination. In this verse, Paul uses an eschatological aspect to explain a crown, which will be given by the Lord.<sup>70</sup>

In the Inter-Testamental literature, the image of a crown could also be found. The crown as a metaphor for the eschatological reward of the righteous was used in the Testament of Job 43:3. In 4 Maccabees 17:15, as the reward of the martyr, a crown will also be given. The Lord is portrayed with a crown on the head (Odes of Solomon 1:1; cf. 5:12, 9:8-11, 17:1).

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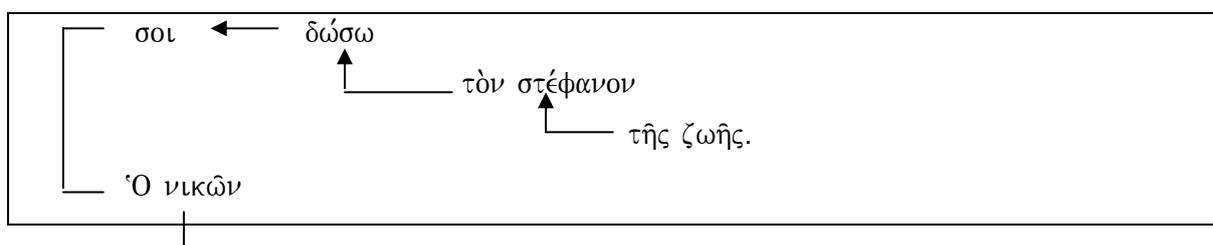
<sup>70</sup> Vos (1965:192-193) compares three texts (Jas. 1:12; 2 Ti. 4:8; Rev. 2:10) and finds the following analogous features among these three texts: in James 1:12; 'λήμψεται τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς ὃν ἐπηγγέιλαι τοῖς ἀγαπῶσιν αὐτόν'; 2 Ti. 4:8; 'ἀπόκειται μοι ὁ τῆς δικαιοσύνης στέφανος, .. καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς ἠγαπηκόσι τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν αὐτοῦ'; Rev. 2:10; 'γίνου πιστὸς ἄχρι θανάτου, καὶ δώσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς'. This makes the promise an analogous feature, which he found through the comparison of these three texts: 1) A promise is given to those who endure temptations, sufferings, poverty, harassment, and persecution, 2) A crown of life/righteousness is given, 3) The Lord is also the One who apparently bestows the crown. He supposes that these three texts were derived from the common statement of Jesus. This seems to be quite correct, even though he doesn't regard the context of the three texts in which these three principles were laid up.

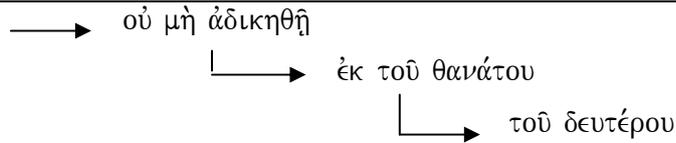
According to Wall (1991:73), the crown as an eschatological symbol will be given as the reward of eternal life to those who keep faithful witness of Christ even unto death. The genitive ‘τῆς ζωῆς’ has been interpreted in various ways. The phrase τῆς ζωῆς (of life) could be interpreted as “an appositive or epexegetical genitive” (Aune, 1997:167; cf. Plumptre, 1884:97-98; Robertson, 1933:6.303; Lenski, 1943:101; Swete, 1977:33; Beale, 1999:244). Through the contrast between life and death in this letter, the image of the crown of life may easily be understood as having a symbolic meaning of attaining the eternal life, if they are conquerors in this earth (cf. Plumptre, 1884:97-98; Benedict, 1966:13; Beckwith, 1967:454-455; Grundmann, 1971:7.630-631; Ladd, 1979:45; Reddish, 1982:139).

According to Benedict (1966:13), the crown of life is more than the eternal life. It should be to enjoy and to experience ever more deeply the divine life. Martin (1988:33) argues that after στέφανος, the genitive τῆς ζωῆς should be regarded as genitive of content, indicating a life of victory achieved by those who endure and win their conflict with temptation, suffering, and death to appear as conqueror. Therefore, the image of the crown of life might give encouragement and hope to the conquerors as a guarantee of their eternal life.

### III.5.5. The Conquerors in the church of Smyrna

The promise statement given to the conquerors of the church of Smyrna can be divided into two parts (2:10,11), consisting of a positive (δώσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς) and a negative form (Ὁ νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῆ ἕκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου). As argued by Hemer (1986:59), the themes of suffering, death, as well as resurrection are closely linked with the victory motif. It can be analyzed as follows:





In a positive form (δώσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς), the crown of life as the symbol of victory that will be given to the conqueror in the future indicates eternal life, just as in a race, the victors receive their victory wreath on winning. The conquerors of the church of Smyrna have laid down their physical lives or endured suffering even up to the point of death. That is why the promise statement that they will be exalted to the point of the triumph of eternal or spiritual life (Rosscup, 1982:278), might give them consolation and encouragement. If they do not have a promise statement given to them, they couldn't endure the sufferings or problems confronting them. As noted by Du Rand (1990:354), “the language of the Apocalypse of John represents a poetic-rhetorical construction of an alternative symbolic universe as a response to a specific historical-rhetorical situation.” Upon the basis of a response to a specific historical-rhetorical situation, the conquerors of the church of Smyrna who listened to these alternative symbolic messages might have had some great power of their own, through which they could have endured the suffering.

In the negative form (Ὁ νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῆ ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου), they have received the promise that the conquerors will not be hurt through the second death. The meaning of ἀδικέω can be translated as to hurt or to do wrong (Vine, 1966:2.260-261).<sup>71</sup> According to Smyth (1974:429), “οὐ μὴ with any person of the future indicative occasionally denotes an emphatic future denial.”<sup>72</sup> If they were not conquerors in terms of their heavenly aspect, they will be hurt by the second death in the future. But, if they are

<sup>71</sup> On the basis of the semantic domain, Louw & Nida (1993:1.231, 745, 757) interpret the word ἀδικέω according to three meanings: 1) To hurt or to harm, with the implication of doing something which is wrong and undeserved (cf. Lk 10:19), 2) To do that which is unjust or unrighteous- ‘to act unjustly, to do what is wrong’, 3) To mistreat by acting unjustly toward someone- ‘to act unjustly toward, to mistreat’. When John used ἀδικέω it means that it always refers to inflicting direct, positive injury on some object (Rosscup, 1982:279).

<sup>72</sup> The future with οὐ is used in an imperative sense to explain urgency, warning, or irony, while μὴ with the future is used to express a prohibitive sense (Smyth, 1974:429). According to Blass, Debrunner, and Funk (1961:184), οὐ μὴ with the aorist subjunctive or future indicative is the expression of negation regarding the future.

conquerors, they will not be hurt by the second death.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the conquerors that were in the church of Smyrna must have overcome such circumstances, in the midst of which they faced problems, consisting of θλίψιν, πτωχείαν, βλασφημίαν, πάσχω (Michael, 1997:74-75). If they had overcome these various problems, they were called conquerors in terms of the heavenly aspect. As a result, they would receive the crown of life as eternal life in the positive form and would not be hurt by the second death, as eternal death, in the negative form. That is why John promised the Christians at Smyrna, not the crown in which the city took pride, but the ‘crown of life’, which only God could give to the conquerors (Scobie, 1993:609). The christological title that died and came to life again is thus closely connected with the promise statement given to the conquerors. It gave them confidence of victory and life in terms of a positive aspect expressed as the crown of life and a negative aspect expressed as the second death.

#### III.5.6. Summary

In the Smyrna church, Christians confronted the problem of suffering and death against Rome and the Jews. As the centre of religion, such as the imperial cult and Cybele-worship and the place of conflict with the Jews, they faced persecution and death as Christians. Christ is thus introduced as the one who died and came to life again (2:8) in order to give encouragement and confidence that they were already conquerors in terms of a heavenly aspect. The guarantee of victory is expressed as that the conquerors would receive the crown of life, implying victory, honour, and divine glory from Christ who became a real conqueror through suffering and death (Poythress, 2000:86-87). In those days, the meaning of the crown was one of the expressions given for memorizing the victory or honour to benefactors such as kings, emperors, famous individuals, and cities. Thus, the crown of life is given to the conquerors who were worthy to receive the victory and honour from Christ because of their works and what they have done in the midst of tribulation and suffering.

If the crown of life is the positive expression given to the conquerors, the promise that the

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<sup>73</sup> On the basis of the interpretation over ἀδικέω (to hurt or to injure) in its weaker or narrower sense, Benedict (1966:14-15) insists that the Christians and the conquerors can be divided from one another. In the case of the former, they would forfeit the crown of life and be in that sense, injured, hurt, or affected by the second death, even though they are Christians (contra Rosscup, 1982:278-279).

conquerors will not be hurt at all by the second death (2:11) is the negative expression. One can recognize that the crown of life and the second death are the same promise statements given to the conquerors to give encouragement and victory. The church of Smyrna faced suffering from the trade guild community, from the idolatrous religion, and from the conflicts with Jews. The conquerors must confront physical death for faithfully keeping the word of God (Beckwith, 1967:455; Hendricksen, 2000:66). Thus, the rhetorical situation was to conquer the situations that they faced, such as afflictions, poverty, and even death. It means that the promise statement given to the conquerors was closely connected with the church in the particular social and historical situations (cf. Scobie, 1993:606-624). That is why Christ was introduced as the one who died and came to life again (2:8), reflecting the *Sitz im Leben* of life and death in the church of Smyrna.

### **III.6. The promise statement given to the Conquerors of the church of Pergamum**

In the church of Pergamum, the christological designation as the one who has the sharp, double-edged sword was properly matched with the  $\omega\iota\delta\acute{\alpha}$  formula (2:13-15), explaining the death of the faithful witness Antipas and the false teaching of Balaam and Nicolaitans. The reference to Christ's spiritual sword represented his fight for his people to give encouragement and hope of victory in spite of the death of Antipas (2:13). The figure of Christ who fought for the Pergamum Christians suggested with the eschatological victory's guarantee to those who were called as conquerors and with the eschatological warning to those who would not repent.

#### **III.6.1. The city of Pergamum**

Pergamum appeared in history at the end of the fifth century B.C. At that stage, the city of Pergamum hadn't yet emerged as a very important place, but after Alexander the Great's conquest of Asia (334-323 B.C.), Pergamum appeared as a major military centre and major political centre (Potter, 1992a:5.229).<sup>74</sup> Phileterus, the first Pergamene king, tried to start building his own kingdom (283-263 B.C.). The great period of Pergamum did begin

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<sup>74</sup> As part of the Hellenistic history of Pergamum, three great events could be provided: the struggle against the Galatians, dangerous invaders of Asia Minor since 278 B.C, the friendship with Rome, and above all, the cultural interests of the kings who made their city into a renowned centre of art and learning (Mellink, 1962:4.733; cf. Potter, 1992a:5.229).

with Attalus I (241-197 B.C.), who had achieved considerable success amidst both military and political crises during the time of the ruler, Seleucid (Hemer, 1986:80; North, 1986:3.768). Eumenes II (214-153 B.C.), who made the greatest contribution to the splendour of the city, remained Rome's most important ally in the east Mediterranean. This situation did come to an end in 133 B.C. when Attalus III (138-133 B.C.), who bequeathed his kingdom to Rome, died (Mellink, 1962:4.734; Blaiklock, 1975:4.701; Pippin, 1987:65; Potter, 1992a:5.229). As mentioned by Mellink (1962:4.734), the result of this bequeathment was far from profitable for Pergamum.

In the period of the Roman Empire, Pergamum regained its prominence as a prosperous city with a glorious past.<sup>75</sup> In Pergamum, the imperial cult, the pagan religion and civil life were very important elements in which all of these could not have been separated from each other. It means that citizens would have faced their involvement in the life of their city - purchasing goods and food sacrificed to some idols (cf. Acts. 15:20, 29; 1 Co. 8:1-13), as well as in the imperial cult, worshipping gods, attending certain races. The Christians' daily life in a pagan environment could not have been easy. Attendance of pagan rituals was the test of political loyalty to Rome (Hemer, 1986:84). Therefore, the relationship between pagan cults and a certain political phenomenon couldn't have been separated from each other, in an effort to verify their status within the Roman state.

Pergamum was also the centre of religious worship (see Friesen, 2005:351-373). The four patron deities of Pergamum were Zeus, Athena, Dionysus, and Asklepios (Mounce, 1977:95).<sup>76</sup> These were regarded as true protectors of their people in their daily life. In fact, the Greek and Romans solicited the gods in order to obtain positive gifts in return, such as the increase of crops and flocks, victory over enemies, recovery from illness, wise advice

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<sup>75</sup> According to Pippin (1987:68), the city of Pergamum was regarded as a centre of the Hellenistic culture; of worship (Athena, Zeus); of healing (Asclepion); of education (the library and gymnasia); of the arts (the 10,000 seat theatre); of government (the seat of the Attalid kingdom). Owing to these principles, there can be no further doubt that Pergamum was not only one of the great artistic and intellectual centres, but also one of the religious centres of that time.

<sup>76</sup> These four deities had their own personal characteristics for the Pergamum people. Zeus, the saviour or the king of the gods, and Athena, the virgin goddess under the influence of the Greek spirit, were represented as having given glorious victories over the enemies. It is highly probable that John who mentioned Satan's throne in Revelation 2:13 might have identified Satan's throne with an altar of Zeus, which was famous in Pergamum. In the influence of the Anatolian spirit, Dionysus, a god of wine, was a god of the royal family (cf. Ramsay, 1994:208) and Asclepius, the god of healing or the serpent, offered a species of personal salvation (Hemer, 1986:85). For more information about the cult of Pergamum, see Hansen (1971: 434-470).

regarding difficult problems of life.

According to Hansen (1971:440), Zeus had more dedications at Pergamum than any other gods. While the great altar of Zeus ‘*Soter*’ dominated the city from the centre of the acropolis, another crucial issue in Pergamum was the worship of Asclepius who was considered as a god of healing. This god was also designated ‘*Soter*’ and was closely identified with the serpent (Aune, 1997:183). Through this survey of the Pergamum city, the proper meaning of the text addressed to the church of Pergamum will be understood because the majority of references indicated a framework of contemporary life in the city (cf. Scobie, 1993:606-610).

### III.6.2. The social situation of the church of Pergamum

First of all, Pergamum was famous for being the official cult centre of emperor-worship (Mounce, 1977:96). Antipas, a faithful witness, was killed ‘*ποῦ κατοικεῖς ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ Σατανᾶ*: where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name’ (Rev. 2:13). When John talked about ‘*ὁ θρόνος τοῦ Σατανᾶ*’,<sup>77</sup> he meant a seat of special power and authority and the place where Satan executed a special authority (Beale, 1999:245-248). It must have been a place in which the practices of emperor-worship, or the imperial cult had been enforced (Aune, 1997:194). One could, therefore, suppose that to be a faithful witness would have meant to have accepted a certain measure of suffering for Christ.

Another problem was eating food that had been offered to idols, according to the teachings of Balaam<sup>78</sup> and the Nicolaitans.<sup>79</sup> Collins (1984:88) mentions that eating meat sacrificed

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<sup>77</sup> There are various opinions on what the throne of Satan indicates. Hemer (1986:84-85) suggests: 1) allusion to Pergamum as a centre of pagan religion generally, 2) the fact that the acropolis itself looks like a great throne, 3) allusion to the throne-like altar of Zeus Soter, 4) allusion to the Asklepius cult called Soter and also identified with the serpent, 5) allusion to the centre of emperor worship. Although he divides the meaning of the throne of Satan into five possibilities, one can’t exactly choose one possibility from them, because it is not mutually exclusive in the light of the historical and contextual situation.

<sup>78</sup> In order to understand the teaching of Balaam, one should go to the Old Testament Numbers 25:1-3, 31:16. Here Israel was described as having “begun to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women” (Nu. 25:1) and “they were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice” (Nu. 31:16). One can characterize Balaam as a false teacher or false prophet, leading to corruption. In the Bible, Balaam became a prototype of all the false teachers who led believers to corruption or who taught them to compromise through unfaithfulness. For more information about Balaam, see Hemer (1986:87-94).

<sup>79</sup> Irenaeus (book I, 26.3) supposes that the Nicolaitans have been derived from Nicolas of Antioch (Acts.

to idols indicates compromise with the surrounding Greco-Roman environment, an openness that Revelation's author regarded as syncretistic and idolatrous. Through this argument, one can suppose that the issue with the social and political situations of the church of Pergamum was the problem of compromise with pagan society and religion (Rev. 2:14-15), together with persecution (Mounce, 1977:97-100; Rev. 2:13).

### III.6.3. The hidden manna

In the Old Testament, manna was miraculous food, which was given to Israel as their daily food during the journey through the wilderness (Ex. 16:31, 33, 35; Nu. 11:6-9; Dt. 8:3, 16; Jos. 5:12; Ne. 9:20; Ps. 78:24). This was sometimes also named 'bread from heaven' (Ex. 16:4), and 'heavenly food' (Ps. 105:40). According to Numbers 11:7, it was like coriander seed and looked like resin and tasted like something made with olive oil (Nu. 11:8) or honey (Ex. 16:31). There is no doubt that God sent this miraculous food to his people for their physical life in the Old Testament. In Revelation the meaning of manna should be altered to fit a new spiritual point of view (Kistemaker, 2001:133). As Swete (1977:39) correctly suggests, manna should within this context be understood as the life-sustaining power of the sacred humanity now hidden with Christ in God.

According to the Hebrew tradition, it was believed that after the temple and Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C., Jeremiah hid the ark and the pot of manna in a cave on Mount Nebo. They should be preserved (Ex. 16:32-34; Heb. 9:4) up to the time of the Messiah, or until Israel was restored (Beasley-Murray, 1992:87-88). In 2 Baruch 6:8, an angel took the sacred temple objects and guarded them until the last times. Also in 2 Baruch 29:8, the treasure of manna will come down from on high and be fed by the elect at the messianic time (cf. Sib. Or. 7:148-149). Whereas manna was offered as food to Israel in the desert

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6:5), who was one of the seven deacons. In Revelation, if one supposes that John possibly blamed the Nicolaitans, it might have been owing to their attitude towards a pagan society and religion (Caird, 1966:38). It may be possible to connect the Nicolaitans with Balaam's group (Beale, 1999:248-251). Charles (1975:1.52-53) identifies the Nicolaitans with Balaamites on the basis of the text, as well as etymological equivalents. Lenski (1943:90) and Beasley-Murray (1992:85-87) regard the Nicolaitans as agnostics that the spiritual things or spiritual freedom are more predominant than material things. It is, however, not easy to reveal whether they were Gnostics. Lenski (1943:90) regards the 'Nicolaitans' as another term for Balaam. For Fiorenza (1985:115-117), the Nicolaitans could be regarded as a Christian libertine group within these churches of Asia Minor. Thus, one can confirm that sects such as Balaam and Nicolaitan had the predisposition of the libertarian or antinomian movement of the Gnostics.

(Ex. 16:4), in the age of eschatological salvation, men will enjoy the same miraculous food and drink that were given to the people of God (Mounce, 1977:99; Ladd, 1979:49; Roloff, 1993:52). That is, manna is yet given as a symbol of the eschatological fulfillment that the conquerors will take.

In the New Testament, manna appears first in John 6:31-51. In this text, Jesus said to his audience that “it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven” (Jn. 16:32). Jesus was the bread of life (Jn. 16:35, 48) and he who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never thirst (Jn. 16:35). Jesus didn’t refer to a physical marvel, but a divine-human nature in terms of a spiritual level (Marsh, 1968:298-309). Through this discourse of the true life’s bread, Jesus wanted to tell the people who he himself was. He is the ‘everlasting bread’ involved in the realm of God. As argued by Meyer (1967:4.465), in contrast to the manna<sup>80</sup> of the past, the food of the age of salvation coming from Jesus confers immortality to the conquerors of this world.

As Revelation was a book written out of its time and for its time, the author interpreted the meaning of the history in terms of a “traditional imagery” (Scobie, 1993:612).<sup>81</sup> Thus, the remark of the manna could be connected with the ‘Sitz im Leben’ of the Pergamum city. Through the Nicolaitans and Balaam, the Christians must have endeavoured to some extent to accommodate the surrounding pagan culture. As Balaam in the Old Testament misled the Israelites into idol worship (e.g. Nu. 25:1-2; 31:16; cf. Acts. 15:20, 29), there were some people who followed the teaching of the Balaam the Nicolaitans in the community. They ultimately suggested that eating food sacrificed to idols as being part of the emperor worship and the pagan deities can be accepted without any problem. Their evil behaviour focused on the issue of eating food sacrificed to the idols (cf. 1 Co. 8:1-13; 10:14; 20-21, 25-28) and of immorality (*ἀγείν εἰδωλόθυτα καὶ πορνεῦσαι*). These evil behaviours can’t provide eternal life. But if the conquerors avoid these evil behaviors, they can receive “the eternal life” (Beasley-Murray, 1992:88) as the symbol of manna.

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. 1. Co. 10:3; Heb. 9:4.

<sup>81</sup> Scobie (1993:608) classifies these local references into three parts: 1) in terms of the past historical events of the cities, 2) in terms of the topographical features of the sites, 3) in terms of aspects of contemporary life in the cities. Pippin (1987:133) rejects these on the ground that: “Historical material gives clues to the ancient world but does not disclose authorial intent or reconstruct the function of the narrative as a whole.”

According to Coutsoumpos (1997:25), John's argument with the Balaam and Nicolaitans focused on their lax attitude toward pagan religion and society. If the food sacrificed to the idols was a symbol of worshipping their emperor or pagan deities who provided them with daily food for their life (Aune, 1997:192-194), the hidden manna, being the heavenly food, will provide them eternal life. Thus, the hidden manna as a heavenly food or eternal life given to the conquerors may give encouragement and hope to the Christian community in the church of Pergamum.

#### III.6.4. The white stone (ψῆφος λευκός)

The meaning of the white stone is difficult to define because a lot of suggestions have been offered as to the meaning of these words. According to Louw & Nida (1993:1.24), the context suggests that "this is something to be prized and a type of reward for those who have won the victory." Ψῆφος usually means 'a little stone' or 'pebble' and was used in counting or in voting for acquittal or condemnation (cf. Acts. 26:10, 4 Macc. 15:26; Vine, 1966:4.76).<sup>82</sup> Hemer (1986:96) suggests seven possible meanings for the white stone: 1. a jewel in the Old Testament or Jewish tradition, 2. the judicial *calculus Mineruae*, the casting vote of acquittal, 3. a symbol of admission, membership or recognition, 4. an amulet with a divine name, 5. a symbol of gladiatorial discharge, 6. an allusion to a process of initiation into the service of Asclepius, 7. simply as a writing material whose form or colour was significant. He regards the sixth possible perspective for our passage. When one considers the whole context, addressed within the church of Pergamum, this is not enough to solve the problem as a whole. In order to interpret its meaning in this context, one has to connect the white stone with the social, cultural and historical contexts.

Concerning the white stone, two facts should be noticed. In the first place, the white stone is long-lasting and imperishable, in contrast to temporary and perishable materials. In the second place, the white colour of the stone indicates certain fortunateness, functioning as an important factor in the context (Ramsay, 1994:221-223). One may suggest that a

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<sup>82</sup> In Acts 26:10, in front of King Agrippa, Paul stated that "on the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them" (τε αὐτῶν κατήνεγκα ψῆφον). In 4 Macc. 15:26, the mother holds in her hand two stones for her children; the one brings death and the other deliverance.

contrast between the white stone as a lasting and imperishable material and a parchment as a temporary and perishable material should be considered. It is not easy to come to a conclusion concerning the background of this symbol, owing to various opinions regarding this issue among different scholars.

It is, however, very probable that the white stone was used by jurors to signify an acquittal (Reddish, 1982:141-142).<sup>83</sup> If the hidden manna represented some heavenly food, providing the eternal life to the conquerors, the white stone will be used as a ticket of admission to public festivals or a token for admission to the banquet or to the royal assemblies (Mounce, 1977:99-100; Warren, 1983:97; Wilcock, 1989:48-49). Phillips (1974:66; cf. Poythress, 2000:88) argues that the white stone is “a symbol of changeless purity.” It is true that the colour white<sup>84</sup> was used as a symbol of purity in Revelation. But one should keep in mind that the context is more important than the connotation of its colour, even though the colour white is a very important element.

In the church of Pergamum, the teaching of Balaam and that of Nicolaitans endangered the Christians. These groups such as Balaam and Nicolaitans encouraged participating in the eating of food sacrificed to idols. When one regards these circumstances, it is clear that the white stone indicates the conqueror’s token of admission to the messianic banquet. As Caird (1966:42) argued, the white stone is probably the conqueror’s ticket of admission to the heavenly feast, indicating a very permanent admission ticket to an eternal feast. This symbolism comports with the image of manna and the image of eating food sacrificed to the idols. In contrast to the food sacrificed to the idols, which were perishable and temporary from an earthly point of view, the manna as a heavenly food and the white stone as a ticket of admission to the heavenly banquet would be given to the conquerors who confronted the accommodation and assimilation in their situations (Rudolph, 2005:311). Thus, they can be called the conquerors because of their victory over the *Sitz im Leben* they faced.

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<sup>83</sup> Charles (1975:1.66-67) suggests that the real source of this idea can be connected with the sphere of popular superstition as a magical amulet (cf. Beckwith, 1967:461-463; Roloff, 1993:52; Aune, 1997:190). One can’t accept this when one regards the context of the text.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. 1:14; 3:4, 5, 18; 4:4; 6:2, 11; 7:9,13; 14:14; 19:11,14; 20:11. For more information about the table of colour, which was used in Revelation, see Prévost (1991:28).

### III.6.5. The new name

The name (ὄνομα) for an object, man, or higher being is closely associated with the those who bear it (Bietenhard, 1967:5.243). In the Old Testament, the Israelites were aware of the significance attached to a personal and proper name. In Eve's case (Ge. 3:20; cf. 17:16), she was named as 'the mother of all the living'. A change of name represents the change of one's identification or status (Ge. 17:15). When God made the covenant with the patriarchs, their names were changed to new names (e.g. Ge. 17:5; 32:28). In Isaiah, God promised that Jerusalem would in the future be called by a new name (Isa. 62:2; 65:15). Swete (1977:40) regards this new name (ὄνομα καινόν) as "the symbol of the new life" in connection with the moral victory, which is transported to the conquerors (cf. Isa. 62:2). In the New Testament, the name (ὄνομα) is connected with the name, person and work of Jesus Christ (cf. Mt. 23:39; Mk. 9:38; Lk. 1:49; 24:47; Jn. 2:23; 3:16; 17:12, 26).<sup>85</sup>

The two most common words for 'new' are νέος and καινός. The νέος signifies what was not there before, while the (καινός) signifies "what is new and distinctive", as compared with other issues (Behm, 1965:3.447; cf. Vine, 1966:3.109-110). According to this definition, νέος may refer to that which is new and has never before existed, while καινός refers to what is new in nature or quality. Hence 'new' is a prominent theological term in the apocalyptic promise (Behm, 1965:3.449). In contrast to this opinion that νέος and καινός must be distinguished according to their distinction or nature, Louw & Nida (1993:1.594n9)<sup>86</sup> reject this argument. Then, whose name is written on the white stone? Whether the new name written on the white stone was the name of Christ himself, the name of God, the name of victorious person or magical amulet, or not, it is not easy to decide.

On the basis of a magical amulet that was common in the ancient world, Beckwith (1967:463; cf. Charles, 1975:1.66-67; Sweet, 1979:90-91; Metzger, 1993:36; Aune, 1997:190-191) insists that this prevalence of magical practices reveals the origin of the

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<sup>85</sup> For more detailed information regarding the name, person and work of Jesus Christ, see Bietenhard (1967:5.270-280).

<sup>86</sup> According to them, some people see the use of καινός in contrast with νέος. But it is not possible to find in all occurrences of καινός and νέος this type of distinction (Louw & Nida, 1993:1.594n9).

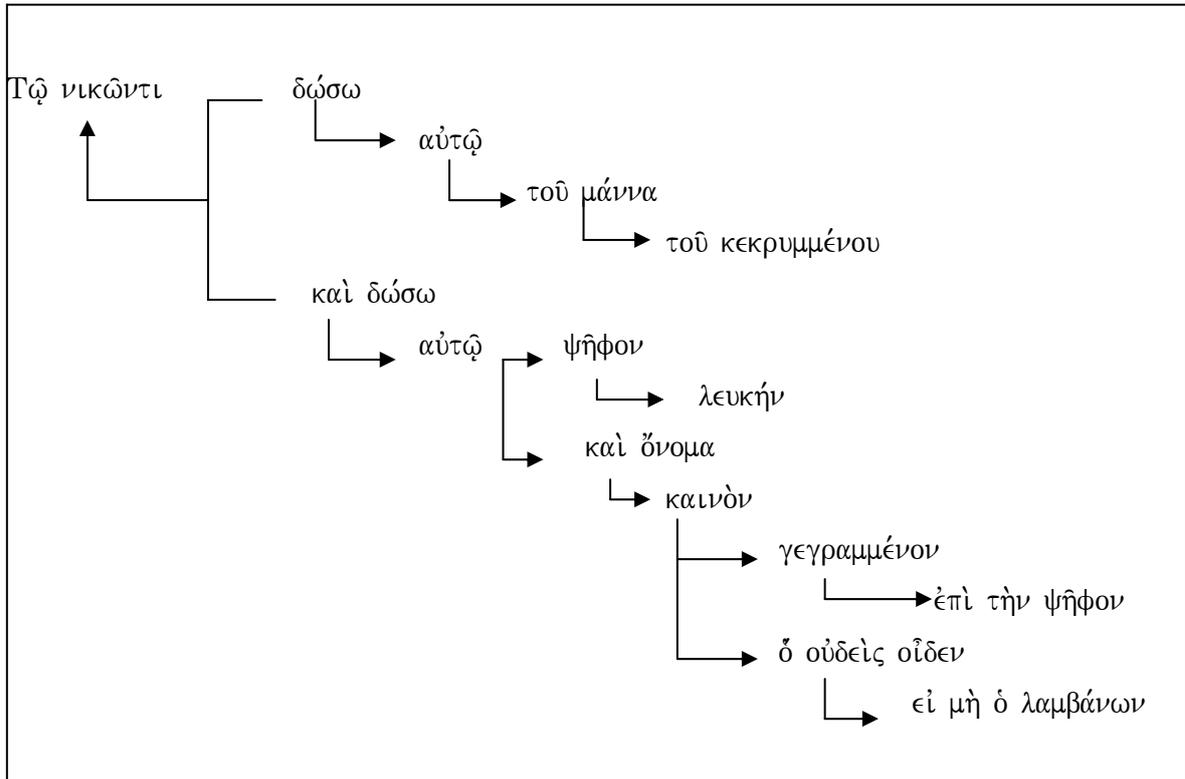
symbol used here. The person dealing with the Apocalypse takes it from a use with which all his readers were familiar. When one considers the context of the promise statement given to the conquerors, and the relationship between the hidden manna and the white stone, one can't accept this suggestion as a proper explanation for communication between the author and certain audiences.

In relationship with the church of Philadelphia (Rev. 3:12), Kiddle (1940:35; cf. Caird, 1966:42; Beasley-Murray, 1992:88-89; Beale, 1999:253-258) suggests this new name as a new name for Christ. Since Christ's new name was as yet unrevealed to men, the possession of a new name by the conquerors must necessarily have been a privilege in which other men were not involved. It is difficult to decide whether to accept or reject such a suggestion. Opposing this suggestion, Hemer (1986:102) argues that the analogy of Rev. 3:12 is not necessarily a factor, for John used similar symbols differently in different situations. Furthermore, if a new name means a change of a new status, a new name written on the white stone couldn't have been given to Christ's new name, because he doesn't need a change for a new status or a new quality of character.

In Revelation, Christ is already the exalted One (Rev. 1:13-16) and he is on the throne with God (Rev. 5:6). Thus, the new name written on the white stone must have been a name for conquering Christians. According to Plumptre (1884:128-129; cf. Phillips, 1974:66; Mounce, 1977:100; Swete, 1977:40-41; Hemer, 1986:102-103; Wall, 1991:66-67; Ramsay, 1994:224; Johnson, 2001:78), the new name had been, to Isaiah and Jeremiah, the image for expressing the new life of blessedness, provided to the people of God. Therefore, the imagery would seem to be the conqueror's name. One can say that the new name written on the white stone is the Christian's name as the conquerors (Morris, 1999:68-69). It is more suitable to the congregation's situation and the relationship between the hidden manna and the white stone. The conquerors' new name in this text proves their transformed identity in Christ and their new or higher status of existence as those who have overcome the circumstances of their harsh realities (Slater, 1999:130). Thus, the name must have been the name of the victorious conquerors, sharing heavenly food for eternal life and the tickets of admission for the heavenly messianic banquet. These images accord well with the context of the Pergamum letter as a whole.

### III.6.6. The Conquerors in the church of Pergamum

The promise statement given to the conquerors appears to have a double promise in 2:17. It can be structured as follows:



The first part of this promise statement given to the conquerors is expressed in the following way: Jesus will give the conqueror the hidden manna. Τοῦ μάννα can be understood as a partitive genitive. The partitive genitive is used only in this New Testament example with ‘δίδωμι’ (Robertson, 1933:6.307; cf. Charles, 1975:1.65). According to Blass *et al* (1961:90), the partitive genitive is being driven out by the use of the preposition ἐκ. The focus of this sentence ‘δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου’ might be found in the concept of ‘some’ of the manna, hidden (Benedict, 1966:16). It implies only a sharing of the hidden manna as an eschatological, eternal food or life of the conquerors.

The second part of this promise statement given to the conquerors is expressed in the following way: Jesus will give the conqueror a white stone with a new name written on it.

The accusative ψῆφον λευκήν is expressed to indicate the whole. That is, if the entire object is affected, the verb in question takes the accusative (Smyth, 1974:320). In a similar way, Christ's words in Revelation 2:17 suggest that the conquerors will be given a share in that manna, which has the distinctive identity of being hidden (Benedict, 1966:16). In the Pergamum city, the Christians who lived in the midst of such pagan circumstances experienced several problems. Their distinctive identity as a minor group was confronted through the demand of their larger social environment. As Desilva (1992b:377) argued, this research regarding the interrelationship of Revelation with its social, cultural, and political situations will show its function as “an identity-forming and boundary-maintaining device.”

The Christians faced the imperial cult as an expression of the religious, social and political loyalty. Pergamum was the centre for the worship of Asclepius, as a healing god, as well as of Zeus, *Soter* (Morris, 1999:65). The Christians also faced the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, who generally offered accommodation. Regarding these problems, only the conquerors can receive the hidden manna and the white stone as an eschatological blessing and eternal life. The promise statements about the hidden manna and the white stone might give the Christians encouragement and confidence of victory as the conquerors in a hostile world.

### III.6.7. Summary

The Christians who lived in the midst of the imperial cult, pagan religion, and civic life faced various problems such as false teaching, conflict, and persecution. Pergamum was also the centre of religious worship of such deities as Zeus, Dionysus, and Asklepios. Zeus was called ‘Saviour’. Thus, the imperial cult, pagan religion, and civil life were important forces that confronted the Christians (Warren, 1983:93-94).

In these situations between life and death (Rudolph, 2005:309), the confidence and encouragement of victory was introduced by the christological designation as the one who has the sharp, double-edged sword. The christological designation as warring warrior Christ for the conquerors would give the image of eschatological victory to the conquerors

even though in this world they suffered and died. This image is derived from Isaiah 11:4 and 49:2 in that with the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked and the earth. But the judgment afflicted on the wicked in the Old Testament is reinterpreted with the sharp double-edged sword coming from Christ's mouth (e.g. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21), indicating the powerful word of Christ and Christ's lordship (Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:140).

The promise statement about hidden manna as a heavenly food is linked with the daily food given during the journey in the Old Testament (e.g. Ex. 16:31; Nu. 11:6-9; Dt. 8:3). Whereas God has given this miraculous food to his people for their physical life, in Revelation the meaning of manna should be reinterpreted with a new spiritual perspective. According to Swete (1977:39), the meaning of manna should be understood as the life-sustaining power that is hidden in Christ. Whereas the false teaching of Balaam and Nicolaitans can give the physical food to the people of the earth, the hidden manna that was a heavenly food for the conquerors can give the eternal food to the people of God, namely the conquerors (Slater, 1999:128).

The white stone has the following two meanings: long-lasting and imperishable and a certain fortunateness as used by jurors to signify an acquittal (Ramsay, 1994:221-223). In conjunction with the context of hidden manna, the white stone can be closely associated with a ticket of admission to public festivals and a token for admission to the banquet or to the royal assemblies (Warren, 1983:97). In contrast with the false teaching of Balaam and Nicolaitans, the white stone as a ticket of admission to the heavenly banquet might give an eschatological heavenly victory's confidence to the conquerors who confronted suffering and death. As Reddish (1982:141) argued, the conquerors are those who reject false teachings, and who would be rewarded with the heavenly manna.

### **III.7. The promise statement given to the Conquerors of the church of Thyatira**

The church of Thyatira was threatened with internal false teaching by a false prophetess named Jezebel who encouraged them to eat food sacrificed to idols and to be sexually immoral (2:20). In the introductory statement, Christ appears as the Son of God whose

eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze (2:19). The interesting thing is that Christ as the Son of God (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) is contrasted with Jezebel's children (τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς). It means that Christ's statement as the Son of God has real authority and power (Beasley-Murray, 1992:90). The promise statement given to the conquerors thus fits with the structure of this letter, on the basis of the church's situation in order to give victory and encouragement.

### III.7.1. The city of Thyatira

Not much is known about the history of the Thyatira city, and it is the smallest and least important of the seven cities appearing in the book of Revelation (Beasley-Murray, 1992:89). The city of Thyatira is situated at the long valley between the Hermus and Caicus rivers. This city was found by Seleucus I (301-281 B.C.), Alexander's general, who inherited the greatest segment of the empire (Blaiklock, 1965:107; Hemer, 1986:106-107).

In contrast to some of the other cities, the city of Thyatira was not a centre of the religious cult, even though the city of Thyatira had its local patron-god, Apollo Tyrimnaeus. Under the Roman Empire, the worship of Apollo Tyrimnaeus was closely connected with the emperor-worship cult (Filson, 1962b:4.638; contra Barclay, 1957:65).<sup>87</sup> The outstanding characteristic, which the Thyatira city possessed, was that more trade-guilds were present locally than in any other cities in Asia Minor (Mounce, 1977:101). As Blaiklock (1984:130) argued, Thyatira's geographical importance derived from a broad and ancient trade, and in the days of the Roman Peace, this city, like Laodicea, was well known as a commercial centre. Thyatira was a trade-guild centre for potters, tailors, dyers, wool-workers, leather-workers, shoemakers, linen-weavers, bakers, smiths, as well as slave-merchants (Blaiklock, 1984:130; Stambaugh & Balch, 1986:153). Trade-guilds took a religious form (Sweet, 1979:92),<sup>88</sup> because the trade-guilds had their own patron gods. The

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<sup>87</sup> Another major religious cult that was in Thyatira city as patron-god was that of the oriental Sibyl called Sambathe. Some scholars insist that Jezebel, who had a respected position in the Thyatira church, may be identified with the local Sibyl Sambathe prophet. This can, however, hardly be true, because Jezebel was called a prophetess by the Christians of the Thyatira church and was tolerated as a member of the church. For this argument, see Charles (1975:1.70), Beckwith (1975:466), Swete (1977:42-43).

<sup>88</sup> In the Greco-Roman period, if the family was a natural group bound through blood, some private groups were eager to organize some clubs in order to achieve social purposes as a common interest - a sacrifice to a god, a common meal, festivals. The characteristic of such a social group was mainly religious, existing for

Christians who lived in these situations had been forced to participate in these trade-guild ceremonies. These environments must have created some problems for the Christians, having been members of the trade-guilds, and must have raised the question as to which way they could participate in such a religious ceremony.

For Christians, these events had been in sharp contrast to the worship of the true God. One should keep in mind that the problems that threatened the Christians of Thyatira came not from outside, but from inside the church. Thus, the conquerors in the church of Thyatira were those who overcame the internal problems.

### III.7.2. The social situation of the church of Thyatira

In the church of Thyatira, there was no religious or political persecution. Their works were praised by the Son of Man: ‘Οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν διακονίαν καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν σου, καὶ τὰ ἔργα σου τὰ ἔσχατα πλείονα τῶν πρώτων: I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance and that you are now doing more than you did at first’ (Rev. 2:19).

When one considers chapter 2:20, the situation seemed to have rapidly changed. They did well, but they accepted the woman Jezebel who called herself a prophetess (Rev. 2:20).<sup>89</sup> It is certain that she misled the church into sexual immorality, compromise and eating food sacrificed to idols in the pagan society. She had to be a prominent woman within the church. The problem that the Thyatira confronted was a situation of life and death (Rudolph, 2005:314). They had two choices: faithfulness or compromise. The threat for the

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the worship of a specific god or hero. Through this religious ceremony, the club or guild may have been unified under the name of religion. They also had a social and economic purpose. As Ferguson (1993:132) correctly indicated, “The purposes of these associations with their characteristic terms were economic (*stationes*), religious (*cultores*) or social (*tenuiorum*).” The religious form was above all an important element, which unified the membership of the club or guild.

<sup>89</sup> To reveal the identification of the woman Jezebel is not easy. One can suppose that Jezebel had a prominent position within the church (Mounce, 1977:103). Regarding the identification of Jezebel, Barclay (1957:64-72) suggests three possibilities: 1) according to this form, ‘τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ’, she was regarded as the wife of the bishop of the church, 2) Jezebel is identified by a famous local oracle called *Sambathe*, 3) the suggestion that this woman Jezebel was Lydia (Acts. 16:14-15). One can’t find who exactly Jezebel was. For this woman Jezebel, one can refer to the Old Testament texts (1 Ki. 16:31, 21:25-26). Here, Jezebel incited King Ahab and Israel to compromise and fornicate by worshipping Baal. As with Balaam, one can suppose that Jezebel was a prototype of the false teacher, who led the church to sexual immorality and compromising of the pagan society.

church of Thyatira did not come from outside. It was not persecution at the hands of Rome. It was not emperor worship. But it came from inside the church (DeSilva, 1992a:292). It was compromise within the church. That is, the problems that threatened the church of Thyatira were internal problems rather than external problems (Charles, 1975:1.69). As Rainbow (1996:212) insists, the struggle of the conquerors is against the idolatry and immorality within the church.

### III.7.3. Authority over the nations

The promise-statement given to the conquerors of the Thyatira church derived from its social and historical background. The images of Thyatira were similar to those of Thyatira Christians. The rod of iron applied to the local situation and considered in the sense of wielding of the shepherd's staff or club to ward off the attacks of marauding beasts (Mounce, 1977:106). The prophet of Revelation intended to emphasize the meaning of the text through the military image. Thus, these verses, 'I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with iron scepter' (δώσω αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ: Rev. 2:26-27, cf. 12:5; 19:15) might have made sense to the audiences familiar with this term.<sup>90</sup>

To rule with an iron sceptre is the symbol of power to destroy those who are captured in the pagan's blasphemous claims of helpless humiliation (Beasley-Murray, 1992:93). The church of Thyatira faced the power of Rome through various situations and was ruled with a rod of iron and was smashed like pottery. As some disenfranchised minor group, she needed some hope and encouragement through the word of Christ. Therefore, this promise-statement given to the conquerors was the guarantee of the eschatological life (cf. Beale, 1999:268-269), even though the present life of the Thyatira-Christian had a lot of problems related to the issues discussed.

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<sup>90</sup> There has been heated debate concerning the use of ποιμανεῖ in Rev. 2:27, which is a quotation of Ps. 2:9 (LXX: ποιμανεῖς). The meaning of this word could be divided into two, indicating 'to rule or shepherd' and 'to break or to destroy'. Charles (1975:1.76) suggests its meaning as to break or to destroy (contra Hemer, 1986:124-125). Louw & Nida (1993:1.479) insist that the meaning of ποιμαίνω should be regarded as meaning "to rule, to govern." When one considers the context of this verse, one cannot completely exclude the possible meaning of 'to break or to destroy.'

According to the Jewish tradition, the messianic kingdom will come by judging their gentile oppressors. But, in contrast with the Jewish tradition, John reinterpreted this tradition whose framework was thoroughly embedded into the Old Testament influence. This Psalm 2 was called a Messianic Psalm,<sup>91</sup> having anticipated the eschatological Lord's day on which the Lord will return to destroy his enemies and to establish his righteous kingdom on earth (Hendriksen, 2000:72). This implies that the new age of the messianic kingdom can only be inaugurated with the destruction of the wicked. As Swete (1977:47) correctly indicated, the new order replaces the old order and the intention of the potter reconstructs and reorganizes the old order.

This prophetic message through a prophet might have changed their world-view, which was not deeply rooted in the true message of God. Jesus, the ultimate conqueror, had an authority over the nations through his death and resurrection (Barr, 1986:242). Thus, the message seemed apparent that the conquerors would have an authority over the nations if they continued the will of Jesus to the end, without any accommodation with religious laxity in their pagan environment.

#### III.7.4. The morning star

Concerning the interpretation of 'morning star', one couldn't find a satisfactory explanation to solve the problem.<sup>92</sup> On the basis of the text, this problem will be dealt with and from its social or historical background.

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<sup>91</sup> As a messianic Psalm, one should keep in mind that Psalm 2 has an important function and various quotations or allusions in the New Testament. Psalm 2:1-2 is cited in Acts 4:25-26 and mentioned the kings of the earth and rulers of the earth against the Lord and his Anointed One. Psalm 2:7 is also quoted in Acts. 13:33 and Heb. 1:5: 5:5. This Psalm citation focuses on the coronation of the king (Witherington III, 1998:412), and emphasizes the relationship between God as Father and Jesus as Son. Through this statement, one can recognize that Jesus as Son of God is superior to human beings and does have authority over the nations and a judgment over the nations (Jer. 19:11). In Odes of Solomon 29:8, it is mentioned that "he gave me the scepter of his power, that I might subdue the thoughts of the gentiles, and humble the strength of the mighty." In a Psalm of Solomon 17:22-24, the Messianic King, who is the son of David, is to destroy the unrighteous rulers, to purge Jerusalem of gentiles, to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar, to shatter all their substance with an iron rod, to destroy the unlawful nations with the word of his mouth. These statements indicate the sovereignty of Christ over the nations.

<sup>92</sup> According to Hemer (1986:125-126), the morning star could be divided into four items: (1) A reference to Christ himself, (2) As emblems of Messianic authority in the prophecy of Balaam in Nu. 24:17, (3) The planet Venus as an emblem of authority since Babylon, (4) As an emblem of the immortality of the righteous. For a more detailed classification, see Mounce (1977:107).

From Babylonian times, the planet Venus was the symbol of authority or rule. In Roman times, it was the symbol of victory and sovereignty (Beasley-Murray, 1992:93). According to Aune (1997:212-213; cf. Barnes, 1976:86; Sweet, 1979:96), in ancient times the morning star, having been identified as the planet Venus, was recognized as the herald of a new day. But in conjunction with Revelation 22:16, indicating Jesus himself as the bright Morning Star, the relationship between the morning star and the planet Venus should be rejected, and one doesn't know exactly whether John engaged in such a discussion from an astrological framework or not. Malina and Pilch (2000:59) insist that the morning star as in 22:16 does not indicate Jesus, but it rather describes the mighty star servant, ready to serve the conquerors. According to them, "to give the victor the morning star is to give that person one of the strongest astral sky servants as his own personal servant, hence to reach and surpass the power of the mightiest of magicians."<sup>93</sup> They go too far to the world of fantasy or conjecture and their insistence is not biblically based. One can, therefore, not accept this theory as a proper explanation concerning the morning star.

The morning star is accepted to be an allusion to Numbers 24:17 (cf. Mt. 2:2), as a symbol of messianic authority or rule in the prophecy of Balaam. Just as Numbers 24:17 (cf. Ge. 49:10; Ps. 2:9; Isa. 11:1-4) was also interpreted to have been of messianic origin in the Jewish writings, the morning star is a symbol associated with the messianic rule (Wall, 1991:79; Bauckham, 1993a: 323-326; Beale, 1999:268-269; contra Hemer, 1986:125). This theory is probable, but their theory that the star symbolizes sovereignty or rule, is somewhat of a weak argument on the basis of Revelation 22:16. On the basis of Daniel 12:3 (cf. Mt. 13:43; 2 Pe. 1:19; Job. 38:7), Beckwith (1967:471; cf. Ladd, 1979:54) suggests that the righteous shall shine like the stars in the messianic kingdom.<sup>94</sup> That is, it reflects the glory, which shall be given to the conquerors. When one considers the context

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<sup>93</sup> As social-scientific and anthropological scholars, they try too hard to interpret the Bible in the field of astrology. Following Dupuis who was concerned with the ultimate sources or origins of religion and believed all religions were rooted in the worship of the sun (see Malina, 1995:12-13), they tried to interpret the Bible with this unusual insight. Malina (1997:84, 96) insists that one find such an astral prophecy in Ezekiel, Zechariah, Daniel, Enoch and Revelation. The chief celestial characteristic about Jesus' astral reference is the Son of Man. Information about a celestial Son of Man would be derived from the sky in the same way the author of Revelation obtained his information. John the Seer noted a number of constellations. But such an interpretation is too fantastic to accept.

<sup>94</sup> In 4 Ezra 7:19, when the righteous shall be separated from their mortal body, they shall have rest in seven orders. In the sixth order, their faces are to shine like the sun and they are to be made like the light of the stars. 1 Enoch 104:2 explains that the righteous shall shine like the lights of heaven.

of the letter in conjunction with Revelation 22:16, it might also not be accepted as a proper explanation concerning the morning star.

In Revelation 2:28, Christ promised the morning star (τὸν ἄστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν) to the conquerors. It is not at all easy to discover what the meaning of this implication is, but there is a good solution in Revelation 22:16. In this reference, Jesus himself is the Morning Star (Sweet, 1979:97; ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός). He would give himself to the conquerors that endure to the end. When Jesus referred to ‘giving’, like that of the morning star, one must realize that this one has a comprehensive or implicit meaning. This meaning implies the work or authority and personality of Jesus as the morning star.

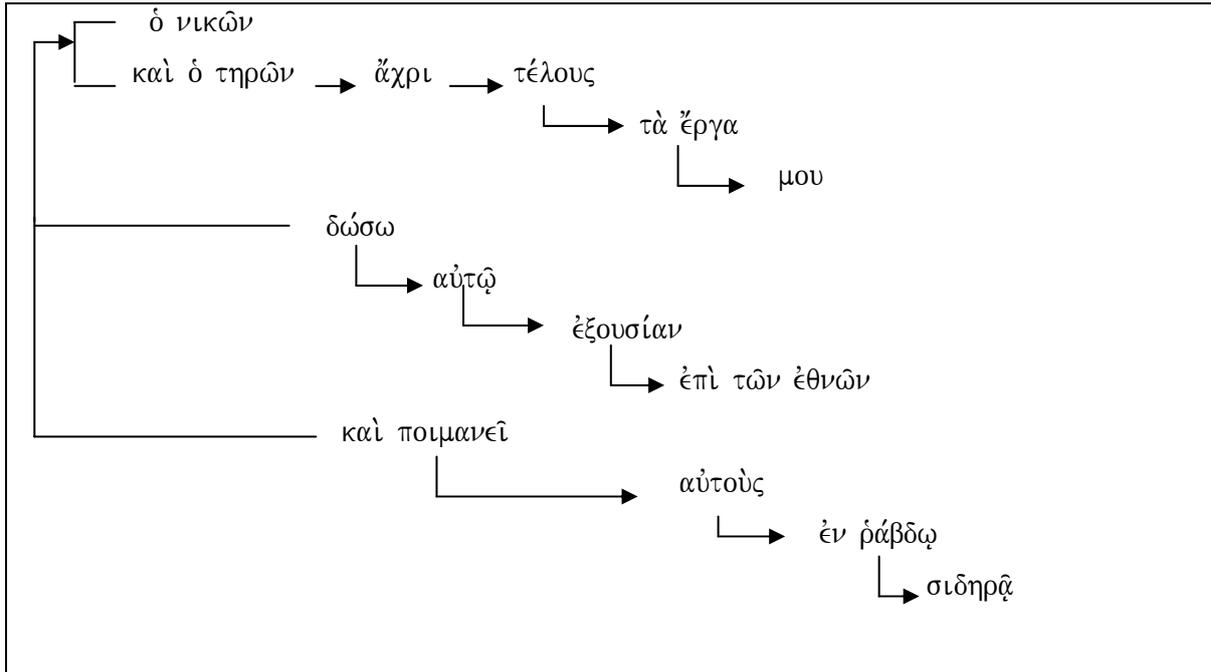
Many scholars have tried to divide this prophetic message into their own framework, emphasizing only one side. Thus, the morning star which the conquerors will receive will probably represent more than Christ himself<sup>95</sup> in connection with authority over the nations (Rev. 2:26) and with Revelation 22:16. Lensky (1943:124-125) indicates correctly that Jesus himself is regarded as the royal star, and he will give to every conqueror the royal star, the morning one. He (Christ) and all these other conquerors will shine together, all being like morning stars in brilliance, being derived from him. It does seem clear that the morning star given to the conquerors is more comprehensive in content, including the authority, works, and personality of Christ himself. Thus, receiving the morning star as Christ himself (Roloff, 1993:56) might provide encouragement and hope to the conquerors in the victory of the kingdom of God (Beasley-Murray, 1992:94).

### III.7.5. The Conquerors in the church of Thyatira

The promise-statement given to the conquerors is found in 2:26-28: “To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery, just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning.” It can be analyzed as follows:

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<sup>95</sup> Most commentators insist that the morning star is Christ himself in conjunction with Rev. 22:16. The advocates of this insistence are the following: Kiddle, 1940:43; Caird, 1966:46; Phillips, 1974:73; Charles, 1975:1.77; Swete, 1977:47; Reddish, 1982:145; Rosscup, 1982:282; Wilcock, 1989:51; Metzger, 1993:37; Morris, 1999:74; Poythress, 2000:90; Johnson, 2001:82.



Two present participles, ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν, are important words indicating who the conquerors are. The two phrases are connected with καὶ, which is a coordinative conjunction, binding two words into one concept. It is perpetually being translated into its most literal equivalent (Moulton, 1906:12). That is, the two phrases are regarded as the same one through repetition of the article (καὶ ὁ, καὶ ὁ) (Charles, 1975:1.74). It could consequently be interpreted like this: they are conquerors who overcome and do my will to the end or keep Christ's works. First of all, the words νικάω and τηρέω can be used to deliver the meaning of victory and conquering in Revelation. Those who conquer their life situations, such as the false teaching of Jezebel and compromising with pagan gods and keeping the word of God, can be called conquerors.

What is the message of this passage: ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου? It refers to doing the same works that Christ did, while he lived in the earth (Leivestad, 1954:214). Through these events, just as Jesus conquered the world, the Thyatira Christians as the followers of Jesus must conquer this material world.

To the conquerors who overcame the world through maintaining the works of Christ, Jesus promised authority over the nations just as Jesus received his authority over the nations from God his Father (Bauckham, 1993b:70). One can observe here the particular contrast

between τὰ ἔργα μου (2:26) and τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς (2:22). Some of the Thyatira Christians followed the false teaching of Jezebel, which led them astray to commit fornication and to eat food sacrificed to idols (2:20). This is a severe warning to the Christians who followed the false teaching of Jezebel, instead of the teaching of Jesus.

The promise-statement given to the conquerors was also a suitable promise having been made towards the community, who listened to the message of the prophet (cf. Georgi, 1986:121-126). They were such a weak and marginalized minor group. They were conquerors under the threat of a trade-guild. As Christians, they could not participate in the common meals and pagan ceremonies enforced through this meeting, together with the false teachings of Jezebel. But they are promised the authoritative rule and victory of Christ (Aune, 1997:214) as the conquerors, if they don't live according to such a prescribed pagan lifestyle. To the conquerors who experienced various threats of injustice, the promise-statement might give them encouragement and victory (Morris, 1999:74).

### III.7.6. Summary

One could not discover any persecution or harassment by external conflict in the church of Thyatira, but did discover serious internal conflict. In this letter, the christological designation could be linked with the promise statement, which the authority over the nations with an iron sceptre would be given. The image of Christ's figure and the promise statement provided the symbol of power to destroy those who participated in the pagan's blasphemy (Bauckham, 1993b:8-9; cf. Witherington III, 2003:77-84). That is, it depicted Christ's authority as redeemer to the conquerors and judge to the wicked. Here, the quotation of Psalm 2:9, which is a messianic Psalm, emphasized the relationship between God as father and Christ as son (cf. Rev. 2:18) and depicted the powerful authority over the nation as judge.

The image of authority over nations given to the conquerors can be derived from its social and historical circumstances. In a military and trade centre, authority over nations is applied as the symbol of power to destroy those who followed the pagan's blasphemous claims of false teaching (Charles, 1975:1.76). To the disenfranchised Christian group,

authority over nations with a rod of iron might give them hope and encouragement and guarantee them eternal life for ‘rhetorical effect’ (see Kirby, 1988:197-204). That is, John suggested ‘alternative universe’, demanding the replacement from old things to new things (Swete, 1977:47).

The morning star as an allusion to Numbers 24:17 was understood as the symbol of victory or sovereignty (Beasley-Murray, 1992:93-94). Even though some scholars understand the morning star as the planet Venus (Aune, 1997:212-213) or as the strongest astral sky servants (Malina & Pilch, 2000:59) or messianic reign (Bauckham, 1993a:323-326), it should be related to the personality and work of Christ in connection with Revelation 22:16. Here, Jesus himself is the Morning Star and he will give himself to the conquerors who persisted in their work to the end.

The use of ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν in verse 2:26 indicated that the conquerors are those who keep the will of Christ to the end. In this context, what is the meaning of the will of Christ? It can be linked with the social and historical situations that the church of Thyatira faced. It is divided into two parts, indicating both positive and negative aspects. In terms of the positive aspect, they kept τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν διακονίαν καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν in the name of Christ (2:19). They confronted the negative false teaching of Jezebel, such as sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols (2:20). The conquerors must overcome these temptations through their circumstances. If as Christians, they keep their faith and do not compromise themselves with false teachings, they can be called conquerors. As Mounce (1977:144) insists, the decisive victory of the conquerors can be achieved “by an act of total self-sacrifice.”

### **III.8. The promise statement given to the Conquerors of the church of Sardis**

The problem of the church of Sardis was not regarded as harassment or persecution by outside forces but as an internal problem within the Christian community. Christ’s figure, which held the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, provided the fullness of Christ to the world (Gilbertson, 2003:85-92). It means that the role of the seven spirits especially emphasizes the perfection of God’s relationship with his people (Painter, 1997:564). Thus,

Christ began his statement with οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα just as the Laodicea church had been heard (οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα; 3:15) and warned that their deeds must be completed in the sight of God.

### III.8.1. The city of Sardis

Sardis, which was the capital of Lydia, was situated on some tiny plateau summit, 1500 feet above the plain and surrounded by precipices, except at one point where it was joined to the mass of Tmolus by a narrow saddle, even this approach was steep and difficult (Hemer, 1986:129). Owing to this topographical position as “an ideal stronghold” (Ramsay, 1994:261), the city of Sardis was, during ancient times, thought to have been an impregnable place. However, throughout the history of the city of Sardis, it was captured twice, i.e. by Cyrus in 549 B.C and by Antiochus the Great in 214 B.C, because of its residents’ carelessness or idleness. In the time of Croesus (560-546 B.C.), who became the most famous Lydian king through his vast wealth and his fabulous gold, Sardis was an example of luxury and prosperity and reached its climax (Blaiklock, 1965:112-113; cf. Pedley, 1968:24). To have been a citizen of Sardis at that time was to be a citizen of the most sophisticated country in the world (Pedley, 1968:4).

Sardis was furthermore very much a centre of political, military and industrial importance (Pedley, 1968:9). Under Roman rule, Sardis continued to be a centre of the textile industry, as well as an important political and economic centre. The art of dyeing wool was supposed to have been invented at Sardis. Sardian dye was famous in all antiquity.

Regarding the wool industry, it seems clear that Revelation 3:4a (“yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes”) had some local reference. The patron deities of Sardis were Cybele and Artemis, and the great temple in Sardis was the one dedicated to Artemis (Yamauchi, 1980:68-69; Hemer, 1986:138-139; Ramsay, 1994:266-268). These deities might have deeply influenced the lives of those people who worshipped them as their patron deities. In contrast to the past prosperity or fame of Sardis city, it was now blamed: you are dead (νεκρὸς εἶ). Accordingly, Ramsay (1994:275) explains that only Sardis city in the whole province of Asia had a more splendid history in the past ages. The

city of Sardis showed such a prominent contrast between the past glory and present misery. Its history was the exact opposite of the history of Smyrna. Smyrna was dead and yet lived, but Sardis lived and was yet dead.

### III.8.2. The social situation of the church of Sardis

Sardis was the capital of the ancient Lydian kingdom, and had a more splendid history than any other city in Asia Minor (Ramsay, 1994:275). Sardis was famous as a commercial centre and was wealthy too. In terms of the geographical position, it was regarded as a nearly impregnable fortress and an ideal stronghold. In contrast with its previous splendid history, the problem was that Christ, as the one who holds the seven spirits, accused them of being spiritually dead (Michael, 1997:81). According to Aune (1997:219), the contrasting message of this church is “life and death.”

In Revelation 3:1, they were blamed like this: ‘Οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς, καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ: I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead’. When one reads this letter, one couldn’t find any persecution, emperor worship, conflict with Jews or internal false teaching, but the problem of the church of Sardis was their spiritual stupor (Hendriksen, 2000:73). Because of their spiritual tepidity and sloth, they were called “a peaceful church for the dead or dead church” (Barclay, 1957:85): ‘γίνου γρηγορῶν καὶ στήρισον τὰ λοιπὰ ἃ ἔμελλον ἀποθανεῖν, οὐ γὰρ εὔρηκά σου τὰ ἔργα πεπληρωμένα ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ μου: Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God” (Rev. 3:2).

### III.8.3. White garments

The colour white was mentioned in the promise-statement given to the conquerors in the church of Pergamum. One has said that even though the colour white usually indicates the symbol of purity in Revelation (Ford, 1975:409), the context is more important than the connotation of the colour. The white garments should also be regarded in the context of the

Sardis letter. In Revelation, four Greek words are used with reference to a garment: ἱματίον (e.g. 3:4, 5, 18; 4:4; 16:15; 19:13, 16), στολή (e.g. 6:11, 7:9, 13, 14; 22:14), βύσσινος (e.g. 19:8, 19:14; cf. 18:12, 16), λίνον (e.g. 15:6). In a comparison of two words, namely, ἱματίον and στολή, ἱματίον usually indicates an outer cloak or mantle, while στολή refers to a long robe (Vine, 1966:1.63, 198-199). The cultural significance of a ‘long robe’ at that time indicates a high social status and signifies some special occupation or activity that used this cloth (Louw & Nida, 1993:1.74).

The statement pertaining to the white garments (ἱματίοις λευκοῖς) reflects the context of the Christian community, which has lost its initial enthusiasm, morality, as well as its spiritual life. As with the church of Ephesus, Jesus stated to the church of Sardis that he knew their deeds (οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα), which were dead. As a city having a memory of a certain splendid past history, they lived with a reputation of being alive, while they were, in fact, dead (ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς, καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ), owing to their deeds. As a centre of the wool industry or of the dye industry, in conjunction with their social and historical contexts, the meaning over those who have not soiled their garments, in contrast with those who have soiled their garments, might be understood without any problem. The contrasting metaphor between soiled garment and unsoiled garment showed who the conquerors were (Ulfgard, 1989:81; cf. Barr, 1998:59)

According to Ramsay (1994:282-283; cf. Blaiklock, 1965:117), the white garments given to the conquerors can be connected with the idea of a triumph, similar to that of a victorious Roman general. Ramsay’s view is certainly attractive, but through this text, one couldn’t see any crucial key to support his view. In the case of Michaelis (1975:4.249), it signifies the gift of eternal life in fellowship with the exalted Lord. It was sometimes used to indicate the gift of eternal life (cf. Krodell, 1989:133). If one accepts this view, it is to generalize the meaning of the text, without any consideration of the applicable context. Although some proper interpretation regarding the white garment might indeed be possible, when one considers the meaning of the context, it couldn’t be accepted as the primary meaning of the text. As Ulfgard (1989:81) argued, the clothing reveals the identity of the people who wear it, because only the people who wear white garments will walk with the Lord and never blot out his name from the book of life.

In this letter, one couldn't find any elements of persecution from the Roman authority or Jewish community or the false teaching of the false prophets or prophetesses. But, here an attitude of spiritual idolatry or spiritual debauchery was indeed apparent (Warren, 1983:109-110). Most Christians at the church of Sardis did not truly engage in morally correct behaviour in the sight of God (e.g. 3:1). This behaviour caused them to be spiritually asleep without any expectation of the return of Christ (e.g. 3:2-3). When one thinks about these statements in connection with the white garment, the mentioning of the white garments might be connected with the life, which the conquerors as Christians must have faced in a pagan environment. The white garments must therefore have been an indication of a pure spiritual life and victory the conqueror would receive, more than the purity of those who have not soiled their garments (Warren, 1983:111).

In supporting this view, Beale (1999:278) is quite correct that white in Revelation describes not mere purity, but a faithful, non-compromising spirit in contrast to those who have stained their garments, that is, those who have assimilated to some extent (cf. Swete, 1977:179).<sup>96</sup> This explanation is a suitable interpretation in connection with its surrounding environment. If they fail to repent of this moral laxity or spiritual laziness, when Jesus comes like a thief in the night, they will face the judgment of Jesus in contrast with the spiritual life and victory the conquerors would receive.

In the New Testament, white is regarded often in an eschatological and apocalyptic way or as the heavenly colour (Michaelis, 1967:4.246-247) except for two passages (Jn. 4:35; Mt. 5:36). Even though the context of each passage differed, when the colour white was used in its own context, one can see white in terms of an eschatological or heavenly perspective. At the transfiguration (e.g. Mk. 9:2-8; Mt. 17:1-8; Lk. 9:28-36), Jesus' garments became dazzling white in terms of an eschatological or heavenly perspective.<sup>97</sup> After the

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<sup>96</sup> Many debates about the white garments have been discussed. According to scholars who try to explain these white garments from their own perspective, one can see that the meaning of white garments varies. Some scholars see a white garment as a victory (Metzger, 1993:40; Ramsay, 1994:283; Talbert, 1994:21), purity (Beckwith, 1967:475; Ford, 1975:409; Michaels, 1997:82; Hendriksen, 2000:74; Johnson, 2001:84;), a victory and purity (Caird, 1966:49; Ladd, 1979:57; Bratcher & Hatton, 1993:69), a justification (Mounce, 1977:113; Sweet, 1979:100).

<sup>97</sup> When one compares these three passages, it becomes clear that each passage emphasizes a particular character in terms of an eschatological or heavenly perspective: τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στίλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν (Mk. 9:3), τὰ δὲ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο λευκὰ ὡς τὸ φῶς (Mt. 17:2), and εἶδον τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ (Lk. 9:32). The use of δόξα φῶς especially reveals the eschatological or heavenly characteristics of these

resurrection of Jesus as conqueror against death, the appearance of an angel who wore a white garment clarified the heavenly character of an angel (Mt. 28:3). It is not surprising that the meaning of a white garment used as a symbol of an eschatological or heavenly perspective like Jesus' or the angel's garment was applied to the conquerors of the church of Sardis as an eschatological expectation.

The characteristics between soiled white garments of the defeated and unsoiled white garments of the faithful conquerors must be regarded as having portrayed a contrasting image. Those who wear unsoiled white garments can be called conquerors because they kept their spiritual life free from the spiritual idolatry and spiritual debauchery in the pagan world (Kistemaker, 2001:152-153).

In 1 Enoch 14:20, Enoch has seen that the Great Glory was sitting upon the throne and his gown was shining more brightly than the sun, it was whiter than any snow. In 1 Enoch 62:15-16, it is said that the righteous and elect shall wear the garments of glory, which shall become the garments of life from the Lord of Spirits. In Josephus (Ant. 11:331), Alexander saw the multitude wearing white garments at a distance, while the priests stood clothed with fine linen and also in Ant. 20:216, many of the Levites and the priests wore linen garments (cf. Ex. 28:2-4; Lev. 16:4). On the grounds of these statements, the use of the white garments could be connected to 'glory, holiness, victory, ritual, moral purity, and righteousness', indicating multivalent meanings of the white garment as depending on their own situations. Therefore, the lists imply that the people of God, namely the conquerors, will receive the eschatological blessing by God (Ulfgard, 1989:84-85).

#### III.8.4. The book of life

The meaning of the book of life (3:5; cf. 20:15) could be derived from Exodus. 32:32-33, where Moses prayed that if God will not forgive the sin of his people, his name will be erased from the book God had written (Ex. 32:32). In terms of God's perspective, to erase the names of his people from the book of life was to remove from such people eternal life or salvation, which God will give to the conquerors (Hughes, 1990:57). In terms of people

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passages.

who were against God, to erase their names out of the book of life was to lose their eternal life or salvation. As Kiddle (1940:47) argued, when a criminal's name was erased from the civic register of an Asiatic town, he was no longer a citizen of his city. Thus, it was the destiny of the faithless to lose the citizenship of heavenly society.

In Psalm 69:28, the Psalmist asks that the wicked may be blotted out of the book of life, not to be listed with the righteous (cf. Ps. 56:8; 139:16). In Daniel 12:1, it is also proclaimed that every one whose name is found written in the book, will be delivered (cf. Da. 7:10; 10:21). One can recognize that to those whose names have been written in the book of life, as opposed to those whose names have not, their respective crucial destinations are their salvation and eternal life. If one accepts that the Greek cities maintained a list of their citizens in a public register (Hemer, 1986:148; Beasley-Murray, 1992:98; Ramsay, 1994:281-282; Wilson, 1996:235), it is not surprising that this citizenship register idea can be applied to the conquerors of the church of Sardis. It indicates the destiny between life as the conquerors and death as the defeated, which was familiar within their framework of reference.

The respective contents of the book of life would guarantee salvation or eternal life (Wall, 1991:82), to those whose names have been contained therein. But a removal from it would be associated with eternal death or punishment. It is to reveal that if their name was written in the book of life, they belong to the kingdom of heaven as the conquerors. If their names were not written in the book of life, they would not belong to the kingdom of heaven (Charles, 1975:84; Ladd, 1979:58; Krodell, 1989:134). This is a symbol of a citizenship register within the kingdom of God in contrast to the Greek-Roman citizenship register in this world. If they want to be citizens of the heavenly kingdom, they should become conquerors, by repenting and keeping the word of God.

There are several passages mentioning the book of life in the New Testament.<sup>98</sup> In Luke 10:20, the return of the seventy who were sent to the village to preach the Gospel of Jesus

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<sup>98</sup> In Revelation, two Greek expressions concerning the book of life were used. The first one is the use of ἡ βίβλος τῆς ζωῆς (e.g. Rev. 3:5; 20:15) and the second one is the use of τὸ βιβλίον τῆς ζωῆς (e.g. Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 21:27). It is impossible to establish any material distinction between these two terms. The author of Revelation did, however, prefer βιβλίον to βίβλος (Schrenk, 1968:1.615, 618).

was rejoiced because Satan had been expelled from heaven. Jesus, however, informed them rather to rejoice because their names were written down in heaven: χαίρετε δὲ ὅτι τὰ ὀνόματα ὑμῶν ἐγγέγραπται ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς. The point that the author wanted to make was not their temporary authority in this world against Satan, but their eternal status, which is in heaven. It is accordingly implied that their citizenship in heaven has been guaranteed, according to which their names are written in the book of life.

According to Schrenk (1968:1.770), the statement, which was explained in Luke 10:20 can be linked with the idea of the book of life. In Philippians 4:3, Paul tells the people at Philippi to assist his fellow workers, whose names were written in the book of life (ὧν τὰ ὀνόματα ἐν βίβλῳ ζωῆς). If one agrees that the book of life reminds us of the citizen registers common to the Jewish and Hellenistic worlds, it is sure that Paul, who was familiar with the culture and custom of that time, used this concept in terms of a heavenly citizenship register in contrast to the registers on earth.

In the Ode of Solomon 9:11-12, it is stated that the names of all of those who have conquered will be inscribed in his book. Jubilees 30:21-22 states that the people who break the covenant or transgress the ordinance, will be recorded in the heavenly tablets as enemies and be blotted out of the book of life (cf. Jub. 5:13). In Joseph & Aseneth 15:4, it is mentioned that your name was written in the book of those living in heaven; in the beginning of the book, your name was written down with my finger, for it never again to be erased. It should accordingly be ascertained that the concept of a book of life, as a heavenly citizen register, is frequently found in ancient Israelite and Jewish literature (Aune, 1997:224). According to whether names of the people have been written in the book of life or not, they can be called the conquerors or the defeated.

### III.8.5. The Conquerors in the church of Sardis

The Lord promises to the conquerors in the church of Sardis: “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels: Ο νικῶν οὕτως περιβαλεῖται ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξαλείψω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς καὶ

ὁμολογήσω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρὸς μου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ.”

The comparative noun οὕτως could be translated ‘likewise’ or ‘thus’ (Aune, 1997:223). For this context, the translation ‘likewise (ὁμοιωῶ)’ will be the simplest solution, even though it is an application not regularly paralleled. One can consider οὕτως to indicate a repetition of the participle νικῶν, i.e. as being a conqueror (Beckwith, 1967:476). It can, therefore, be connected to the previous verse, indicating the conquerors as those who have not soiled their garments, those willing to walk with Christ, dressed in white, for they are worthy (Rev. 3:4). In connection with the local relevance, the promise statement given to the conquerors was not given to all Christians, but only to those who have not yet soiled their Christian lives in the surrounding environment of their pagan society (Benedict, 1966:30; contra Rosscup, 1982:284-286). The promise statement given to the conquerors can be divided into three parts:

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| <p>1 Ὁ νικῶν οὕτως περιβαλεῖται ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς<br/>(He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white)</p> <p>2. καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξαλείψω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς<br/>(I will never blot out his name from the book of life)</p> <p>3. καὶ ὁμολογήσω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρὸς μου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ.<br/>(But will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels).</p> |
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In no 1, the conquerors will be dressed in white by what is revealed in 3:4: ὅτι ἄξιοί εἰσιν. Thus, they would be called conquerors by Christ because of their deeds or acts that are worthy (Beale, 1999:278). In no 2 and 3, through the negative and positive statements in that Jesus is the subject in contrast to no 1, Jesus accepts the name of conquerors according to the people’s status within the heavenly kingdom (Aune, 1997:227). In Revelation 3:4, the past tense (οὐκ ἐμόλυναν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν) points to the completed act, which can be connected to the historical reference to the church of Sardis, but in Revelation 3:5, these three future tenses (περιβαλεῖται, οὐ μὴ ἐξαλείψω, ὁμολογήσω) can be connected with the

eschatological promise statement given to the conquerors in the church of Sardis.

In order to obtain the title of the conqueror, they must have overcome the present circumstances in which it was not easy to ignore the pagan environment. The prominent differences between the conquerors and the defeated depend on whether they truly keep the word of God or not. In front of Christ who held God's churches, the statement of the death and life (Rudolph, 2005:319) through the mentioning of the white garment and the book of life might give the Sardis Christians encouragement and victory or warning.

### III.8.6. Summary

As Gilbertson (2003:81-92) rightly pointed out, to reveal the spatial dimension of the text is a useful instrument for what John uses it to make theological points. In the case of the church of Sardis, it would be a very useful tool to see the horizon of the spatial dimension of text as well as the historical, cultural, and social contexts in order to understand the promise statement. That is, in the case of white clothing it could not be interpreted in the literal sense but rather as a spiritual life that is contrasted with moral laxity or spiritual idleness (Charles, 1975:1.82). On the basis of the image in which a victorious Roman general was celebrated, Ramsay (1994:282-283) argues that the white garment is the symbol of triumph. One should, however, consider the situation in which the text was written. In contrast with the false teaching and worshipping the pagan deities enforced by the trade-guild and the spiritual idolatry or spiritual debauchery, the white garment can be explained with the implication of pure spiritual life and victory (cf. Warren, 1983:111). This is the demand given to those conquerors who lived in a pagan world.

The book of life in contrast with the book of the Greek-Rome's citizen-register must also be regarded as providing the spiritual meaning. The names of the conquerors written in the book of life assure the guarantee of salvation and eternal life of the conquerors (Witherington III, 2003:106). Whereas the defeated would not be written in the book of life as citizens of the heavenly kingdom, the conquerors who repent and keep the word of God would be written in the book of life as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom. John, thus, suggested the 'heavenly perspective' through use of the spatial dimension (Gilbertson,

2003:89-92) to the Christians who were in danger of moral laxity, spiritual indulgence, and spiritual death in order to encourage and guarantee a victory. Thus, the conquerors in the church of Sardis are those who have not soiled their garments and those whose names have been written in the book of life.

### **III.9. The promise statement given to the Conquerors of the church of Philadelphia**

The church of Philadelphia is the other church that received praise from Christ just as he had praised the church of Smyrna. Christ himself describes a door that is connected with an image built up on the basis of the social situation of Philadelphia's Christians who were harassed by Jews (see Edersheim, 1994:228-255). The image of an open door can be understood as entry to the kingdom of God (Wilcock, 1989:55; Stevenson, 2001:242). That is why structurally, the introductory statement about an open door in 3:8 is linked with the image of a pillar, which appeared in the fulfillment statement of 21:2-27.

#### **III.9.1. The city of Philadelphia**

Attalus Philadelphus built the city of Philadelphia whose truth and loyalty towards his brother Eumenes won him the epithet, Philadelphus (Blaklock, 1965:120). It was not a new city, but was historically prominent. When one compares it with the other seven cities that appear in the book of Revelation, Philadelphia became a centre of Greek-Asiatic culture and an important location for the imperial post road (Ford, 1975:416; Ramsay, 1994:286-287). According to Mounce (1977:115), this city was called "gateway to the East." Through this geographical importance, Ramsay (1994:287)<sup>99</sup> called Philadelphia "missionary city." An important event that took place at the city of Philadelphia was a severe earthquake in A.D.17 (Beasley-Murray, 1992:99). The influence which this earthquake had on the city of Philadelphia in A.D. 17, made the city of Philadelphia of

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<sup>99</sup> According to Ramsay (1994:292; cf. Barclay, 1957:95), Philadelphia could be distinguished from the other cities by several characteristics: First, it was called the missionary city; secondly, its people lived always in dread of an earthquake disaster; thirdly, because of that, many people went out of the city to dwell outside; fourthly, it took a new name from the imperial god. His analysis of the characteristics of the city and past history of the church is quite correct, but his insistence that the open door (Rev. 3:8) implies a good opportunity for missionary work couldn't be supported when one considers the context of the text. In order to support this argument, even though he adduces the case of Paul (1 Co. 16:9; 2 Co. 2:12), he didn't properly consider the given context of the text.

particular geographical importance.

Tacitus (Annals. 2.47) wrote that twelve famous cities of Asia fell by an earthquake in the night and the calamity fell most fatally on the inhabitants of Sardis. The memory of this disaster that Philadelphia confronted impacted their reality and remained long after as they had to live in the midst of a threatening danger from a new earthquake disaster. Thus, because of the earthquake disaster, escape to the neighbouring countryside was a common experience and people preferred to live for long periods in tents on the safer ground (Blaiklock, 1965:120).

Philadelphia can be distinguished from the rest of the seven cities in that it gave up its old name and accepted a new name. After the earthquake of A.D. 17, the emperor Tiberius gave many advantages to Philadelphia. Therefore, Philadelphia took the name of Neocaesarea in gratitude to Tiberius for his generous support and assistance (Suetonius, Vespasian: 17). After that, during the reign of Vespasian, Philadelphia was called Flavia after the ruler's family (Blaiklock, 1965:121). Thus, the promise statement given to the conquerors of the church of Philadelphia in Revelation 3:12 might be connected with these local references which have been mentioned above. Theologically, as well as through history and geography, the author of Revelation delivered his message to his audiences, informing them of the issues he intended to share with them.

### III.9.2. The social situation of the church of Philadelphia

In the church of Philadelphia, Christians also faced problems. But they didn't deny the name of Christ or betray the witness of Christ against the Jews. They were the people who lived among those 'ἰδοὺ διδῶ ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ Σατανᾶ τῶν λεγόντων ἑαυτοὺς Ἰουδαίους εἶναι, καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ ψεύδονται: "I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars" (Rev. 3:9). The opponents that the church of Philadelphia faced were the Jews. They were not true Jews, but liars (Kiddle, 1940:50), namely 'ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ Σατανᾶ'. This means that the Jews persecuted the Christians. They looked like the defeated from a worldly point of view. But they were really 'conquerors' overcoming their situation against the Jews in the

sight of God or from the heavenly point of view (Rudolph, 2005:321) because ‘ὅτι ἐτήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου’ (Rev. 3:10). Here, one can’t trace any emperor-worship or imperial cult enforced by Rome, self-indulgence, or sloth as in the church of Sardis. But, one can trace persecution or discrimination and conflicts with Jews. In the midst of these situations, the promise statement that the conquerors will become a pillar in the temple of God might provide an important message to encourage and give a hope.

### III.9.3. A pillar in the temple of my God

According to Kiddle (1940:53-54; cf. Charles, 1975:1.91-92), this pillar is linked with the practice of the priest of the imperial cult, who at the end of his period of service erected his statue in the temple and inscribed his name upon it. This local reference was, however, rejected by Hemer (1986:166), because there is insufficient evidence to support this theory. There are several suggestions as to what the pillars may imply. That is, Farrer (1964:81) insists that the reference regarding the pillar implies Jachin and Boaz (e.g. 1 Ki. 7:21; 2 Ch. 3:17), which Solomon set in front of his temple. Swete (1977:57; cf. Wilson, 1996:243; Aune, 1997:241) rejects this idea as supporting the metaphorical use of that word in Scripture and in Jewish and early Christian literature.

On the way to the desert, the people of Israel were guided by a pillar of cloud by day and by a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21-22; στύλω: LXX; cf. Ex. 14:19, 24; 24:4; Nu. 12:5; 14:14; Dt. 31:15; Ps. 99:7). Through this guidance, the Israeli people recognized the presence of God directly. Through the presence of God, or at least the memory of the presence of God on the way to the desert, the people of Israel could have conquered the land of Canaan, which God promised to give to the Israeli people.

One must remember that the Philadelphia city was a famous centre of heathen worship.<sup>100</sup> There were lots of pagan temples, which were also easily accessible to the people. Even

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<sup>100</sup> As noted above, the city of Philadelphia was struck by an earthquake in A.D.17. Due to serious damage, the inhabitants were afraid to live there. Thus, most of the people lived outside of the city, because of the terror caused by the earthquake. Through this influence of the earthquake, the volcanic soil was very suitable for vine-production. Volcanic soil, even though it is good for vine production, was not in any case necessarily suitable for corn (Hemer, 1986:159). Based on this emphatic influence of wine-production in Philadelphia, they worshipped Dionysius, the god of wine (cf. Barclay, 1957:98).

though the archaeological evidence is limited (Yamauchi, 1980:78), the Philadelphia Christians might have been very familiar with the pillar image (Rev. 3:12). The religious life in the seven cities couldn't have been separated from their daily life, because at that stage in time, religion was life and to live was to be religious. In connection with the life of the ordinary people, the pillar in the temple might have offered security under the guidance of some patronage god, on whom people depended for their security and prosperity (Stevenson, 2001:247-251). It could be transferred to the Philadelphia Christian who had little power (Rev. 3:8) in pagan society.

In this city there was no sign to be found of any persecution or of forced emperor and pagan-god worship. Through 3:9, one can suppose that the main issue in the church of Philadelphia was that of serious conflict between the church and the Jews (Mounce, 1977:118).<sup>101</sup> No matter what the problem was on both sides, the obvious thing was that there was a conflict between these two spheres, and in both of them, the Christian community was a disfranchised minor group. In this situation, when one considers the principle of an 'open door' (Rev. 3:8), it is not necessarily easy to accept this allusion as an opportunity for effective missionary work (Metzger, 1993:41; Ramsay, 1994:296; contra Wilcock, 1989:55; Beale, 1999:285; Stevenson, 2001:242). The explanation regarding a messianic kingdom within the context of the previous verse (Rev. 3:7) might be connected with the eternal kingdom, which may imply an 'open door', to be the appropriate interpretation (Ladd, 1979:59; Michaels, 1997:84).

In the midst of such a conflict situation between Christians who apparently had no power and the Jews who had some power, the pillar image must have given those Christians some stability and security. The conquerors would not be shaken by any disaster, nor would they ever have to take refuge in open country. As disfranchised minor Christians, their conflict situation with the Jews would be rewarded with God's firmness and steadfastness in the temple of God in eschatological terms (Slater, 1999:146). The image of the pillar might, therefore, have been understood as the assured security in the final kingdom of God in

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<sup>101</sup> From a cultural-anthropological perspective, Pilch (1992:126-134) explains lying and deceit in the context of Mediterranean culture. He suggests that lying and deceit must be viewed in their specific cultural perspective in order to give a proper theological interpretation. He insists that lying and deceit that appeared in the seven churches of Revelation must be seen from the point of view of anthropological literature. See Pilch (1992:130-133).

contrast to the earthly temple, which is perishable and temporary (contra Stevenson, 2001:215-221; 241-251).<sup>102</sup>

#### III.9.4. The Conquerors in the church of Philadelphia

The promise statement given to the conqueror of the church of Philadelphia was (Rev. 3:12): “Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name” (Ο νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν στῦλον ἐν τῷ ναῶ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἔτι καὶ γράψω ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου, τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλήμ ἡ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου, καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν).

This promise statement can be divided into three parts. The first part is that the conqueror is promised that he will be made a pillar in the temple of God. The phrase τοῦ θεοῦ μου is used as a “subjective genitive” (Wilson, 1996:239) rather than an objective genitive. Thus, it can be interpreted that God himself is the temple. The phrase ἐν τῷ ναῶ indicates στῦλον. That is, in (ἐν) the place at which God himself is the temple, the Lord will provide the victory through a pillar (Charles, 1975:1.91). It provides the security or firmness of the conquerors who were in conflict with the Jews. Metaphorically, John stated that the conquerors that have kept God’s word and have not denied God’s name would become pillars in the prominent place where God exists.

The second part is that the conquerors will not go out. The use of οὐ μὴ with the aorist subjunctive that is “the most definite form of negation regarding the future” (Blass & Debrunner, 1961:184) can be connected with the previous phrase ἐν τῷ ναῶ. It means that the conqueror will not go out in the temple that is the place of God or God himself. That is,

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<sup>102</sup> In the Inter-Testamental literature, 1 Enoch 90:28-29 explains that all the old pillars and all the old columns were pulled out and transformed into all new pillars and all new columns. In the New Testament, the allusion over pillar appeared in Gal. 2:9 and 1 Ti. 3:15. According to Gal. 2:9, James, Peter, and John who were the main leaders of the church of Jerusalem were called pillars. In the case of 1 Ti. 3:15, the house of God as the church of the living God is called the pillar. Here, the pillar image is mentioned not over church as a building but church as ground of truth in that God exists. The temple pillars of Solomon, that is, Jachin and Boaz are explained in Josephus (Ant. 8.76-78).

as the everlasting people of the kingdom of God, the conquerors who have become pillars will never remove from this place of preeminence in the eternal temple in terms of eschatological blessing or stability (cf. Beale, 1999:294-295). The Christians as genuine people of God, who have to face a certain conflict with the Jews in a pagan environment, should overcome their *Sitz im Leben*, in order to occupy an unshaken place in the temple of God.

The third part is that upon the conquerors, the Lord will write the name of God, the name of the city of God and his own new name. These three names as an accusative indicate γράψω. That is, these three names would be written upon the conquerors, indicating the “divine ownership” (Aune, 1997:242). It is likely that because an inscription or seal of God’s name was put on the forehead of servants of God (Rev. 7:2-5; 9:4; 14:1; 22:4), it might be connected with divine ownership, deciding whether the conquerors belong to God’s side or Satan’s side. With various languages, these three names that were written upon the conquerors expand “the full revelation of his character” (Mounce, 1977:121). To have the name of God means to have heavenly citizenship as those who have the name of God and the name of Jesus. This section can be structured as follows:

→	τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου
→	καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου, τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἡ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου
→	καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν

The promise statement given to the conquerors in Philadelphia in the midst of conflict may thus give them hope and encouragement from a heavenly point of view in contrast to an earthly perspective. If the conquerors overcome the situations they faced in a pagan and a hostile world, the conquerors will be pillars in the temple of God.

### III.9.5. Summary

In terms of the situation of the church of Philadelphia, the christological title as the one who holds the key of David and the promise statement that conqueror will be become a

pillar in the temple of God are structurally paralleled with each other. Through this structural parallelism, John draws his theological meaning to the Philadelphia Christians who were under serious conflict between the church and the Jews (3:9-10). That is, in the midst of the conflict situation, ‘open door and pillar’ can be connected with a future stability and security of God’s people in New Jerusalem (cf. Swete, 1977:57-58). Therefore, the mentioning of ‘open door’ as an opportunity for effective missionary (Charles, 1975:1.87; cf. Metzger, 1993:41) can’t be supported by the context. But, the explanation about ‘open door’ is suitable to regard as the absolute control of Christ within a messianic kingdom.

Stevenson (2001:248) regards the image of a pillar as a permanent and eternal service executed by a priest or priestess. But the context in which the image of a pillar is used supports the stability and security of the conquerors from a heavenly perspective. The inscribing of the three names on a pillar, that is, the name of Christ, the name of God and the name of New Jerusalem, implies a close relationship between the conquerors and Christ. That is, “the victor will belong to God and be part of the heavenly city” (Witherington III, 2003:107). In contrast to an earthly perspective, the promise statement might give encouragement and hope to those concerned. It is correct that Christians will fully participate in the accomplished worship of the New Jerusalem and will hold full citizenship as the perfect people of God (Kraybill, 1996:172).

### **III.10. The promise statement given to the Conquerors in the church of Laodicea**

Christ who is the Amen, the faithful, true witness, and the ruler of God’s creation has accused the church of Laodicea of worshipping wealth, of self-satisfaction, and spiritual tepidity (cf. Poythress, 2000:92-93). Structurally, the warning statement in the body section and promise statement in the conclusion are constructed with the statement of salvation and judgment, which is given the conquerors and the defeated (e.g. 3:16-21).

#### **III.10.1. The city of Laodicea**

The city of Laodicea was built by Antiochus II (B.C. 261-246) and had been called

Laodicea after Antiochus' wife (cf. Hemer, 1986:180). Even though Laodicea didn't have a natural fortress like Thyatira, it did have an important geographical location, which owed its importance to its situation at the crossroads in a later age. Owing to its geographical importance, Laodicea inevitably became a great commercial centre (Morris, 1999:80), especially under Roman rule. The disadvantage that Laodicea had was its lack of a water supply. Water was supplied mainly by a vulnerable aqueduct from springs six miles away to the north in the direction of Hierapolis (Blaklock, 1965:124). Laodicea is closely connected with two cities, namely Hierapolis and Colossae, in the Lycus valley.<sup>103</sup>

Because of its proximity, the people of Laodicea must have drawn Hierapolis' water (which as a hot spring ran through an aqueduct and had a healing effect) in order to supplement Laodicea's water supply. Laodicea was famous as a city and well known for the following: it had a famous school of medicine, it was a centre of the wool industry and it was a wealthy banking city (cf. Ford, 1975:419-422; Hemer, 1986:191-201; Metzger, 1993:43; Ramsay, 1994:307-312).<sup>104</sup> These facts were very familiar to audiences who listened to this prophetic message (contra Aune, 1997:260). Scobie (1993:619) thus suggests that on the basis of this extensive local background, it is true that when John uses the images in vv.17 and 18, the extensive local background could not be ignored.

### III.10.2. The social situation of the church of Laodicea

After it was destroyed by a devastating earthquake in A.D. 60, the city of Laodicea was restored with its own finances without any help from Rome (Caird, 1966:56-58). Tacitus (Annals, xiv:27) mentions this fact: "one of the famous cities of Asia, Laodicea, was that same year overthrown by an earthquake, and, without any relief from us, recovered itself by its own resources."

Being in a wealthy, medical and industrial city, the church of Laodicea was proud of itself.

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<sup>103</sup> In Colossae 4:13, the two cities, that is, Hierapolis and Laodicea, are mentioned. In Colossae 1:2, Colossae is mentioned and in Colossae 2:1; 4:13, 15, 16, Laodicea is mentioned. Through this statement, one can suppose that these three cities had an intimate relationship with each other.

<sup>104</sup> Laodicea as a centre of medicine, wool and banking was well known to people who were interested in its history. The earthquake that occurred in Laodicea city in A.D. 17 and A.D. 60 especially confirmed that Laodicea was a wealthy city because without any assistance from the government, the people of Laodicea rebuilt it after the earthquake.

That was why they were reproached in this manner: ὅτι λέγεις ὅτι Πλούσιός εἰμι καὶ πεπλούτηκα καὶ οὐδὲν χρεῖαν ἔχω, καὶ οὐκ οἶδας ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ταλαίπωρος καὶ ἐλεεινὸς καὶ πτωχὸς καὶ τυφλὸς καὶ γυμνός, 18 συμβουλεύω σοι ἀγοράσαι παρ' ἐμοῦ χρυσίον πεπωρωμένον ἐκ πυρὸς ἵνα πλουτήσης, καὶ ἱμάτια λευκὰ ἵνα περιβάλῃ καὶ μὴ φανερωθῇ ἡ αἰσχύνῃ τῆς γυμνότητός σου, καὶ κολλ[ο]ύριον ἐγγρῖσαι τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς σου ἵνα βλέπῃς' (Rev. 3:17-18). Through this text, one can see that the state of that city was closely connected with the spiritual condition of that church (Wilcock, 1989:57). In this church, one doesn't find any emperor-worship, persecution, and conflict with the Jews or Rome. But the problem of the church of Laodicea was self-satisfaction, self-conceit or self-deception without Christ.

### III.10.3. The Throne

The image of a throne can be connected with the door image in Revelation 3:20, because the promise that has been given to the conquerors in 3:21 was given to those who open the door toward Jesus. Scholars have had many debates about whether it could be regarded as a call to the individual heart for present fellowship with the Lord<sup>105</sup> or an eschatological view<sup>106</sup> or a Eucharistic view (see Wiarda, 1995:203-212).<sup>107</sup>

In contrast to a call to the individual for the present fellowship, when one compares v. 20 with v. 21 (cf. Swete, 1977:63-64), which brings the promise to the conquerors, it is appropriate to consider this issue from an eschatological point of view (Roloff, 1993:65). As Beckwith (1967:491) argued, the image of Christ knocking at the door of men's hearts was not what John delivered here. They were unfortunately mistaken by having disregarded vv. 19-21, while the author intended these verses to be regarded as one unit (cf. Slater, 1999:148). The author had written the one prophetic message to the Christians at Laodicea as a whole. He did not want to divide his prophetic message into pieces. Thus, it must be read as a whole.

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<sup>105</sup> The advocates of this viewpoint are the following: Lenski, 1943:163-164; Charles, 1975:1.101; Mounce, 1977:129; Ladd, 1979:67; Hemer, 1986:206-207; Wall, 1991:87; Talbert, 1994:23; Beale, 1999:308-309; Hendriksen, 2000:78-79.

<sup>106</sup> The advocates of this viewpoint are the following: Kiddle, 1940:60; Farrer, 1964:83; Beckwith, 1967:491; Swete, 1977:63-64; Sweet, 1979:109; Metzger, 1993:46.

<sup>107</sup> The advocates of this viewpoint are the following: Caird, 1966:58; Krodell, 1989:145; Poythress, 2000:95.

The interpretation of these texts (vv. 19-21) needs not to be regarded as mutually exclusive. It is possible to read verse 20 as one prophetic message, including v. 19 and v. 21. In contrast to 3:19, implying a call to the individual heart in the present, 3:21 must be understood as having an eschatological perspective. Thus, the door image should be regarded as having an eschatological perspective, expecting a certain eschatological table-fellowship (Swete, 1977:63) with the Lord, as well as a present view, indicating knocking at the door of “individual believers” (Beasley-Murray, 1992:107).

In ancient times, the throne (θρόνος) usually indicated the power of kings and gods (Schmitz, 1965:3.160-161). As noted above, in Revelation 2:13, the throne of Satan (ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ) revealed the main characteristic of that city, which formed the centre of the religious cult, having served both the emperor cult, as well as the imperial cult (cf. Pilch, 1978:39-40). Coin and inscriptions explain the characteristic of many of the gods and goddesses that were worshipped at Laodicea (Yamauchi, 1980:143).

In general, one should remember that the church of Laodicea was also influenced by a certain pagan culture, politics and economics as well as religion (Beale, 1999:302). In order to bear a strong influence and yet survive in the society in which they lived, they had to participate in certain pagan religious ceremonies, social and political meetings, as well as economic matters. Thus, that “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing (πλούσιός εἰμι καὶ πεπλούτηκα καὶ οὐδὲν χρεῖαν ἔχω)” (Rev. 3:17) indicates the participating degree of the church of Laodicea in pagan society (cf. Swete, 1977:66). The promise statement given to the conquerors in 3:21 seemed meaningful within the setting of their contemporary life. The admonition was that they needed proper fellowship with Christ as the antidote to the self-sufficiency of a Christ-less church. The result of this admonition was that they would enjoy an eschatological fellowship with Christ (v. 21) through the image of sitting on the throne together with Christ in the messianic kingdom (Witherington III, 2003:108).<sup>108</sup> The image of the throne was a symbol of the power and rule of an earthly king (Wilson, 1996:251; cf. Lensky, 1943:165). The throne and the king

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<sup>108</sup> According to Davis (1992:37-39), the ‘throne’ means Yahweh’s dwelling among his people who are the people of the covenant. This term is also closely related to the ‘house’, ‘temple’, and ‘palace’. And these terms can be connected with the ‘temple theology’, which was the physical and theological centre of Israel (Ex. 25:9,40). When one considers ‘house’, ‘palace’ and ‘throne’, one can suppose that these terms indicate the dwelling of God among his people.

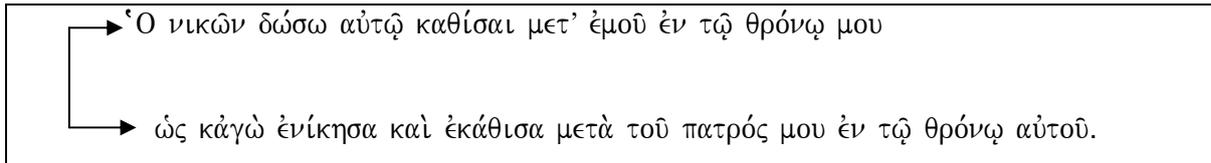
could accordingly be connected with each other. The king sitting on the throne executes his rule and his authority among his people. Even though the image of a throne was used to indicate a certain earthly sovereignty (e.g.. Ge. 41:40; 1 Ki. 2:19; 7:7; 10:18; 22:10), it could also be connected with God who is sitting on the throne in heaven (cf. Ps. 11:4; 103:19; Isa. 66:1; Acts. 7:49). As with an earthly king, the throne upon which God is sitting in heaven is a symbol of judicial power and authority over and against the wicked people who broke the covenant between God and his people (cf. Schmitz, 1965:3.163). The symbol of the throne is that the throne of God functions as an important symbol indicating the kingship or sovereignty of the eschatological kingdom (Aune, 1997:284) to those who participate in the spiritual communion with the Lord.

In conjunction with this allusion noted above, in Luke 22:30 Jesus promised his disciples that they may eat and drink at his table and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Mt. 19:28). In this context, it seems clear that the throne upon which God is sitting in heaven is a place of fellowship with God, as well as of sovereignty. When the Son of Man comes with his angels to judge the nations, he will sit on the throne of glory and divide the wicked and the righteous (Mt. 25:31-33). The throne is also the place of judgment, from which the righteous would receive eternal life, while the wicked will be sent to eternal punishment. One can accordingly recognize that the throne of God is a symbolic expression of God's sovereignty and rule (Mounce, 1977:134; Poythress, 2000:100).

Revelation 3:21 represents the promise of Christ to those conquerors that they would be seated together with Christ on the throne. Their victory and sovereignty follow the pattern of the victory of Christ who is sitting together on the throne with God through the victory of the cross (Caird, 1966:58; Mounce, 1977:130). To the conquerors at Laodicea, the image of sitting on the throne with Christ was a familiar issue. In order to receive victory in the sight of God, they would have to throw away their self-sufficiency to share the victory or power of Christ who is on the throne with God. That might be the message of hope and encouragement to the conquerors because God and Christ control all circumstances (Beale, 1999:320).

#### III.10.4. The Conquerors in the church of Laodicea

The promise-statement given to the conquerors of the church of Laodicea is found in 3:21, “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Ὁ νικῶν δώσω αὐτῷ καθίσαι μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ μου, ὡς κἀγὼ ἐνίκησα καὶ ἐκάθισα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ αὐτοῦ). This promise-statement could be divided into two parts:



These two parts are connected through the particle ὡς and provide us with an analogy between Christ’s conquering and the victory of the Christians (cf. Benedict, 1966:39). The use of καθίσαι and ἐκάθισα connects two conquerors, namely Christ and the people of God into one symbolic image. ἐνίκησα and ἐκάθισα both indicate a historical aorist showing us the meaning of each of the words (Swete, 1977:64). In the case of ἐνίκησα as historical aorist, it means that the conquering of Jesus as one single historical event indicates the event of the cross through which Jesus suffered and died. One can recognize that the death on the cross is the reason for Christ’s conquering (Morris, 1999:84). And in the case of ἐκάθισα, also as a historical aorist, it indicates the enthronement of Christ through his death. These statements tell us that through the victory on the cross and enthronement, Christ conquered the world that hated Christ (cf. Swete, 1977:64-65).

That is the pattern of our life in this secular world as an ethical motif. The conquerors who were in the church of Laodicea, will not inherit the right to salvation automatically by way of their works. The conquerors will not be recompensed with a share in the rights of the salvation or the throne (Bennetch, 1939:363-364). The Christians who were full of self-satisfaction or self-sufficiency had to be warned through their loss of fellowship with Christ, whether it is a call of an individual or eschatological view or not. Only the conquerors that have a fellowship with Christ can have the privilege of sitting with Christ on the throne in heaven just as Christ has sat on the throne with God in heaven (Kistemaker, 2001:176).

In the church of Laodicea, one couldn't find any symptom of persecution by Rome, conflict with the Jews and racial or religious tensions. The problem they had was that of compromise with the church, together with its surrounding. It was a suitable statement for them that, without compromise with a pagan society, the fellowship with Christ attending to the eschatological table-fellowship and sitting on the throne with Christ was greatly necessary for their community. The christological designations (3:14) that provide the heavenly image of Christ structurally are well matched with the promise statement given to the conquerors that they would be given the right to sit with Christ on his throne (3:21). That is, to the conquerors the promise statement provided the heavenly perspective, in contrast with an earthly perspective (Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:126-131). It should be kept in mind that the christological designation as introductory statement (3:14), blame statement as body part (15-20), and the promise statement as conclusion (3:21) continually provide the same idea to the conquerors in terms of heavenly and earthly aspects in order to give encouragement and warning as a whole.

#### III.10.5. Summary

In the letter to the church of Laodicea, the evidence of external harassment and persecution directed against the Laodicean Christians is not found. As the centre of a prosperous city, they are warned about self-sufficiency, self-deception, and spiritual tepidity. Therefore, Christ's warning word to spit Laodicean Christians out of his mouth (3:16), if they do not repent, is contrasted with the table fellowship with Christ (3:20) as eschatological view. This eschatological view expressed as table fellowship provided a heavenly perspective, which will have the right to sit with Christ on Christ's throne. The images of table fellowship as the symbol of God's presence (Osiek and Balch, 1997:193-214) and throne as the symbol of God's power and sovereignty (Sweet, 1979:117) can be contrasted with the worldly view that Laodicean Christians focused on (cf. Goldsworthy, 1984:74-86). Thus, the promise statement given to the conquerors consisted of participating in the rule of Christ, who himself had conquered through the ministry, death, and resurrection (Roberts, 1988:31).

#### III.11. Conclusion

Until now, I have mainly discussed the promise statement given to the conquerors of each of the churches in Revelation chapters 2-3. Through this chapter, I rejected the view of commentators (e.g. Robinson, 1976; Gentry, 1989) that Revelation was only written under the persecution of Rome and for the encouragement of a disfranchised minor group. The situation of the seven churches was very different, with plenty of variations (cf. Friesen, 2005:352-356). They faced their own problems, which they themselves had to conquer. The problems they had to face were not only persecution or conflict with their earthly enemies, but also the restoration of their first love (Rev. 2:4), as well as compromise with their pagan environment (Rev. 2:20; 3:15, 17). It means that the problems of the seven churches must be examined according to their own situations they faced (Scobie, 1993:606; cf. Shea, 1980:158). That is why it could not ignore the use of local references.

When one considers the seven churches in chapters 2-3, the most important thing to consider is the christological designations (see Cullmann, 1963; Dunn, 1980), which are already mentioned in 1:9-20 as an introductory statement. These christological designations in 1:9-20 such as a Son of Man, the First and the Last, the Living One, and dead and alive are closely linked with the christological designations in chapters 2-3 (cf. Hartman, 1997:137-140). As Aune (1990:190) argued, “The cumulative effect of these titles and characterizations is to unify the seven proclamations as pronouncements of the exalted Christ who appeared to John in 1. 9-20.” In these christological titles in 1:9-20, Christ is introduced as conqueror through death and resurrection (Reddish, 1995:220) and as “God’s divine agency” (Slater, 1999:149) who executed his lordship over the whole universe as well as the seven churches. After that, it is applied to the Christians that were in the seven churches as the conquerors like Christ.

Each letter begins with an introductory christological designation, which defines the letter or church’s characteristic. For example, in the case of the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna, Christ who holds the seven stars in his hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands (1:13; 2:1) implies the lordship and power over the seven churches (Kistemaker, 2001:111). It connotes that the conquerors will be safe in the hand of Christ, if they keep their faith within the church as well as in a hostile world. In the case of the church of Smyrna, life and death is a very important theme (cf. Rudolph, 2005:308). Christ appeared as ‘the first

and the last, who dies and came to life again' (1:17-18; 2:8). This letter reflects a local conflict and attempts to encourage the Christians as the conquerors to remain faithful (Beasley-Murray, 1992:81). As Slater (1999:119-120) insisted, this letter is a good example of the link between Christ and the conquerors who won the victory through suffering. These christological titles at the beginning of the seven letters have a theological intention, implying eternal life to the conquerors and warning the defeated (Boring, 1989:88).

The body section which begins with the οἶδα formula describes the praise and blame of the seven churches and the Spirit, and promise statements are introduced. One should keep in mind that the structural characteristics of the seven letters are uniformly structured, even though there are some differences in the seven letters (see Grové, 2000:193-208). The structural characteristics of chapters 2-3 should be regarded as the united prophetic message, which is on the basis of the real situations of the conquerors (cf. Thompson, 1986:147-153). As a prophetic message having a structural unity, the 'I know' formula reveals the real situation of the seven letters. Seven letters give the message of victory, hope, and encouragement to the conquerors that are really connected with their own situations and conquered their situations. That is, the conquerors can expect to suffer conflict, martyrdom, and even death within the church as well as the hostile world because of their faith in God and Christ. Therefore, the purpose of the οἶδα formula is to encourage and to comfort the conquerors in the midst of conflict and persecution.

The major images of the promise-statements, which have been given to the conquerors, were thoroughly rooted in certain local situations as well as in the Old Testament, New Testament, and Inter-Testamental literature. When the author used the image of the promise-statement in chapters 2-3, he didn't miss the relevance of the local situation. In having used the image of local relevance, the author has transferred earthly issues into heavenly sphere in terms of an eschatological perspective (cf. Resseguie, 1998:43). That is, John changed an earthly aspect into "alternative ideology" (DeSilva, 1992b:392). These prophetic messages challenged the conquerors to consider this worldly perspective in terms of a heavenly and an eschatological perspective (Bauckham, 1993b:7).

The major images such as the tree of life, crown of life, hidden manna, white stone, new name, morning star, white garment, book of life, a pillar, and throne would have been understood by the seven churches' members who were very familiar with these images. The most important thing regarding chapters 2-3 is that Jesus Christ is the conqueror that was dead but alive (Aune, 1987:244). Images such as suffering, death, and sacrifice in chapters 2-3 expand from the introductory statement of Christ to the conqueror's final victory (Thompson, 1986:151). As Boring (1986:267) argued, "the act of God in Jesus is extended into the lives of Christians in the church." Images that used to give encouragement and confidence of victory to the conquerors of the seven churches could be regarded as proper instruments to deliver the prophetic messages.

As Homcy (1995:193) mentioned, "the book of Revelation was not written simply to inform believers about the victory of the Lamb. Revelation is not only an apocalyptic portrait of the Lamb's triumph but also a prophetic exhortation for his followers to triumph in him." To the Christians, who within the various contexts faced various problems, Christ demanded of them also to have been conquerors within this secular world. The seven messages can be classified into two structures: salvation to the conquerors and judgment of the defeated (Muse, 1986:155). Becoming a conqueror in itself didn't imply that all the believers were automatically part of and within the church (cf. Rosscup, 1982:261-276). When one does actually realize what the promise-statement entailed, one could easily distinguish between two groups, being those who conquer and those who don't. Even though they were within one church, only those Christians, who remained faithful to the word of Christ and the testimony of Jesus to the end, could be called true conquerors. In other words, on the one hand, becoming a conqueror means to keep the word of Christ and to remain faithful to the testimony of Jesus in order to participate in the eschatological blessing of New Heaven and New Earth in chapters 21-22 (Boring, 1989:89). On the other hand, becoming a conqueror (Rainbow, 1996:212) means not to participate in idolatry (e.g. 2:14, 20), immorality (e.g. 2:21; 3:4), and the imperial cult (e.g. 13:4-8, 15-16; 1:9-11; 20:4). One can conclude that the promise-statements, which had been given to conquerors of the seven churches, were thoroughly rooted in their historical, cultural and social circumstances, which the conquerors had to overcome and endure.

## CHAPTER IV. THE CONQUEROR MOTIF REFLECTED IN THE CHRISTOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

### IV.1. Introduction

The aim of this section is to research the christological perspectives in the book of Revelation because of the christological importance within the book of Revelation that occurs from chapter 1 to chapter 22. As Bauckham (1993b:73) suggested, the christological understanding of Christ as conqueror is a fundamental message to give hope and victory in Revelation. As I dealt with in the promise statement given to the conquerors of the seven churches, the basis of conquering to the Christians was grounded in the suffering and victory of Christ (Barr, 1986:256). That is why the present experience of the Christians is expressed as the tribulation, kingship, and steadfast endurance, characterized as in Christ (Boring, 1986:267).

As one opens the book of Revelation, the first thing one is confronted with is the christological statement dealing with “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 1:1; Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Christ as conqueror is the glorified ruler of church and universe and provides the central characteristic in Revelation (Du Rand, 1997a:303). The prominent characteristic of the christological title in Revelation is that Christ is the one who executes salvation to the conquerors and judgment to the defeated (Du Rand, 1997a:313). That is why the author begins the book of Revelation with the statement of Christology, as this was the main topic he wanted to share with his audiences or readers.

The first emphasis of the book by the author intended to reveal the particular truths to his readers or audiences (cf. Guthrie, 1994:398). Although the book of Revelation consisted of many other themes, for example judgment, anger, repentance, praise and glory, the christological implication throughout the book was a very important topic. This allows us to have a proper grip on the text of Revelation. Without understanding the christological statement, it is not easy to understand what the author’s intention was, as well as what the true content of the text was. If one determines the function and role of the christological

identity or image in the book of Revelation, the message becomes clearer and provides us with a greater understanding.

By way of this christological research, I intend to demonstrate the christological function in the text of Revelation, as connected with the conqueror motif. As it is clear throughout the text of Revelation, the christological focus relates to the “exalted Christ” (Talbert, 1999:171; cf. Charles, 1975:1.cxi) through his death and resurrection. His past redemptive work for his people forms the most important element in order to properly understand the meaning of the prophetic message of John. It is dependant on Christ’s death and resurrection as exerted in the past event, and guarantees the security of the people of God in terms of a symbolic universe. Therefore, this implied story of Christ consists of a past, a present, as well as a future (Matera, 1999:203) and it guarantees the secure life of the people of God. To study the christological statement is a very useful instrument in order to reveal the meaning of the text. It is through this text that I will try to demonstrate a possible heavenly perspective in contrast with the earthly point of view.

In pursuit of this christological perspective, my research will focus on the titles of the ‘Son of Man’ (Rev. 1:12-16 and 14:14), ‘the Lamb’ (5:5-14; 14:1-5; 17:14) and the ‘Divine Warrior’ (19:11-21). These three christological titles in Revelation are enough to reveal what the function/role of Jesus Christ is and what his identification is, having a multi-dimensional aspect as both Saviour and Judge. That is, the Son of Man is associated with God as the ultimate ruler, who has a heavenly origin (Charles, 1975:1.27; cf. Slater, 1999:97). The Lamb refers to the death and resurrection of Christ who has conquered (ἐνίκησεν, cf. 1:5; 5:5) the evil forces in terms of the earthly aspect . The sacrificial image of the Lamb as the conqueror reflects the liberation of the people from sin through death (Bauckham, 1993b:74). The Divine Warrior executes salvation and judgment of cosmic drama as the cosmic ruler (cf. Gilbertson, 2003:109-142).

First of all, one must regard the christological titles throughout the book of Revelation as closely related to the visions in chapters 1-22. In the case of chapters 2-3, the christological titles that appear in the introductory section of the chapters 2-3 are closely linked with the visions in chapters 1-22. For example, the figure of the one who holds seven stars in his

right hand (1:16, 20) can be linked with the church of Ephesus in 2:1 and with the church of Sardis in 3:1 and with 22:16 introduced with the bright Morning Star. Still another example is the sharp double-edged sword in 1:16 that has a connection with 2:12. In 19:15 a sharp sword coming out of the mouth of the divine warrior will strike down the nations. It means that the book of Revelation consists of a structural and thematic unity.

It reveals that structurally and thematically the Revelation has a strong internal unity in terms of form and content and function (cf. Aune, 1986:86-91; Hellholm, 1986:13-54; Ford, 1998:207-229). The research of the various titles and characteristics of chapter 1 about Christology will reveal the specific problems and situations the first Mediterranean Christians confronted according to their own situation (cf. Murphy, 1994b:187-190). The most important message sent to the first Christians, as Reddish (1995:215) noted, is that the Christology of the Revelation must be regarded as the most important theme.

In the book of Revelation, numerous titles are used to describe the characteristics of Christ, and the christological titles are closely connected with the fully developed whole of the book (cf. Cook, 1962:20-58). The christological titles in Revelation are as follows: Jesus (1:1); Christ (1:1); the faithful witness (1:5; 3:14; 19:11); the first born of the dead (1:5); the ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5); the Son of Man (1:13; 14:14); the first and the last (1:17); the living one (1:18; 2:8); the Amen (3:14); the root of David (5:5); the Lamb (5:6-8; 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9-10); the one who has the sharp, two-edged sword (1:16; 2:12; 19:15); King of kings and Lord of lords (17:14; 19:16).

The reason I try to deal with only three christological titles notably the Lamb, the Son of Man, and the Divine Warrior, is based on their christological importance, which is connected with the theme of this dissertation, the 'conqueror motif'. The importance lies especially in that these three titles show us how to regard various theological aspects among christological titles in terms of the heavenly and earthly dimensions. It is necessary to give theological confidence to the community in order to encourage them and to give them hope by providing them with the 'conqueror motif' (cf. Barr, 1986:243-256; Bauckham, 1993b:66-108).

In the case of the title ‘Son of Man’, John has used symbolism from Daniel (cf. Da. 7:13-14) and has elaborated his functional role in the situation of the community. Indeed, John reveals the heavenly origin of the Son of Man and the priestly and kingly office (cf. Rev. 1:5-6) and his present sovereign control to the people who participate in the blessing of the Danielic kingdom (cf. Beale, 1984:154-177; see Rowland, 1997:33-45). It means that the title ‘Son of Man’ focuses on the pastoral care (Slater, 1999:13) as the exalted Christ or Judge (1:13-16; 2:16; 14:14-20), focused on the church that was confronted by various problems such as persecution, suffering, and compromise under Roman authority rule.

The title of the one like a son of Man is an “exalted title of majesty and judgment” (Rudolph, 2005:134). The figure of the ‘Son of Man’ in 1:13-16 demonstrates the function and the role of the one like a son of Man as a heavenly conqueror who cares for his church and who judges the enemies of God. His image as the one like a son of Man is none other than “the Messiah as ruler of this universe” (Kistemaker, 2001:95), executing divine salvation and judgment. That is, the one like a son of Man executes the eschatological salvation to the people of God as the conquerors and the condemnation and punishment to the enemies of God as the defeated (cf. Maddox, 1974:186-204).

In the case of Aune (1997:90-93; 1998a:840-842), the references to the Son of Man in Revelation 1:13; 14:14 (ὄμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου] are closely connected with Daniel 7:13 (כְּבָר אֲנִי), and Ezekiel 1:26 (דְּמוּת כְּמוֹתָא אֲדָם) in that the Son of Man can be identified as the Ancient of Days. Daniel 7:13 (LXX: ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου) and Ezekiel 1:26 (LXX: ὁμοίωμα ὡς εἶδος ἀνθρώπου) with Revelation 1:13 (ὄμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου] and 14:14 (ὄμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου] have very similar lexical meaning. The characteristics of Ezekiel 1:26 and Daniel 7:13 can be identified with the divine being who is sitting on a throne and is coming with the clouds to execute the divine salvation and judgment (Beale, 1999:209). The combination of sitting and coming through Ezekiel 1:26 and Daniel 7:13 might be connected with Revelation 14:14 as “logical textual development” (Aune, 1998a:841). Rudolph (2005:134) is of the opinion that the one like a son of Man “is the revelation of God and of God’s conquering power to the world.” Therefore, one can suppose that the one like a son of Man can be regarded as a divine conqueror that performs the function of salvation to the conquerors and of judgment to the defeated (Aune, 1997:92). Slater

(1999:100) is of the opinion that the one like a son of Man executes God's eschatological salvation and judgment as the heavenly conqueror.

The Lamb Christology among many christological titles is the dominant title in Revelation (e.g. 5:6-8, 12-13; 6:1, 16; 7:9-10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22-23, 27; 22:1, 3). By using the Lamb Christology, John deals with the 'conquering motif' as being a slain lamb (e.g. ἀρνίον ἑστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον:5:6; ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου:7:14; τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου:12:11], indicating the Passover lamb (Beasley-Murray, 1992:125). By the blood of the Passover lamb, just as Israel has been delivered by the hands of its enemies, the Christians are enabled to conquer by the blood of the Lamb (e.g. 1:5-6; 5:9-10; 12:11) through which eschatological salvation would be embodied (cf. LaRondelle, 1989:73).

While the Exodus was the key salvation event of God's people, the image of the Lamb is depicted as the new eschatological Exodus through the blood of the sacrificial lamb (Bauckham, 1993b:70-72). One should keep in mind that the new eschatological Exodus has been done by the blood of the Lamb and that a victory over the enemy has been achieved by the sacrificial death and resurrection of the Lamb (cf. Beasley-Murray, 1992:34). Therefore, the image of the Lamb could be connected with the victory or conquering motif "to communicate the shock, irony, and ethical import of his message that *the Conquering One conquers by being a slain lamb*, not a devouring lion" (Johns, 2003:159). That is why the Lamb as the symbol of conquering in Revelation is linked with the death of the Lamb in terms of irony and ethical meaning that the conquerors must follow (cf. Cook, 1962:124-158; Aune, 1996:269-283).

The divine power of Christ to conquer has already been described in 1:16 and 2:12, 16. The sharp, double-edged sword is not based on the military term, like the lion of the tribe of Judah, (cf. 5:5) but on the image of conquering and judgment through the word of God (cf. Strand, 1990:237-254; Talbert, 1999:169). The same metaphor continues in 17:14 and 19:15 as the Divine-Warrior motif. A victorious Divine-Warrior of conquering and judgment in 17:14 and 19:15 appears as an eschatological judge who vindicated all the faithful conquerors and judged all the wicked people. One should keep in mind that the

victory of the Divine-Warrior is not based on the military, but on the blood of the Lamb (17:14; Beasley-Murray, 1992:259) and his sword (word) coming from his mouth (19:15; Slater, 1999:218). The Divine-Warrior motif might give hope and encouragement to the conquerors that were struggling under Rome. The message of hope, encouragement, and victory for the first Christians is not directed for the future but for the present (cf. Aune, 1997:93). Therefore, it could be said that the image of the Divine-Warrior as conqueror “is the basic principle of composition in the Apocalypse” (Collins, 1984:130) in terms of victory/conquering and judgment. Beale (1985:619) is also of the opinion that the use of divine title κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων in 17:14 like 19:15 describes the absolute deity and the kingship of the messianic Lamb in contrast with Caesar’s title or claim.

On the one hand, the christological titles of the Son of Man and the Lamb as the conquerors, through Christ’s death and resurrection, provide the message of hope and encouragement. On the other hand, however, the image of the Divine-Warrior might give victorious assurance to the conquerors because of Christ’s victory seen in his riding of a white horse and carrying of a sharp sword as Judge/Conqueror (e.g. 19:11-16). This is not explained with a real battle scene, but with a very ironical scene through Christ’s own blood, implying Christ’s death and resurrection (cf. Wall, 1991:226-234). Some scholars understand this scene not as by Christ’s own blood, but the enemy’s blood (see Mounce, 1977:345; Michaels, 1997:216; Johnson, 2001:270).

So far, I have described the christological titles, such as the Son of Man, the Lamb, and the Divine Warrior, which are associated with a victory or conquering. Even though they are used with different titles in order to deliver the message of victory or conquering to the conqueror/church, one should be careful in interpreting these titles in isolation from the rest because of the inter-relationship or unity in Revelation (see Giblin, 1994:81-95; contra Jauhiainen, 2003:543-559). That is, John wanted to give a message of victory (νικῆ) and conquering as a “rhetorical force” (Johns, 2003:176). Cook (1962:57) is quite right that from chapter 1 to chapter 22, the consistent structuring of the christological titles provides evidence of thoughtful planning and a developmental concept from a relatively unexpanded form to John’s full development. It is essential that these christological titles

such as the Son of Man, the Lamb, and the Divine-Warrior, even though they are described in different images and perspectives, are absolutely depicted to give the message of victory to the conqueror or judgment to the defeated (cf. Law, 1988:24-35). In terms of the conquerors, the research of these three christological titles will reveal the identity of the Son of Man (1:13-16; 14:14-20) as the exalted Christ, the sacrificial Lamb (5:6-13; 7:14-17), and the victorious judge as the Divine-Warrior (1:16; 17:14; 19:11-21). These christological titles would be useful to reveal the real characteristics of conqueror rather than other christological titles that are spread throughout Revelation as a whole.

#### **IV.2. The Son of Man Christology**

The christological perspective is a crucial key to interpreting the text itself because of the rhetorical positions within the texts in which the christological titles are used (cf. Prévost, 1991:1-11). Various christological titles such as Jesus Christ (1:1), the faithful witness (1:5), the first-born from the dead (1:5), the ruler of the kings of the earth (1:5), the Son of man (1:13), the first and the last (1:17) and the Living one (1:18), in chapter 1 especially, reveal the central position of Christology throughout the rest of Revelation. As Tenney (1957:117; cf. Coetzee, 1993:288) pointed out, this christological perspective is one of the most important motifs to help understand the meaning of Revelation. In the case of Du Rand (1997a: 313-316), emphasizing the framework of the christological acts in the book of Revelation, Revelation can in the light of its christological aspect be divided into three parts as follows: Act 1 - Christ in the church (Rev. 1-3), Act 2 - Christ in the cosmos (Rev. 4-11) and Act 3 - Christ in history (Rev. 12-22). Even though it is not easy to divide the christological acts into three parts exactly as he did, his emphasis is as a whole correct.

Revelation is heavily indebted to and related to the Old Testament because of the reciprocal interpretative relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament (Beasley-Murray, 1992:36; cf. Swete, 1977:cxl-clviii). Although the Old Testament quotations in Revelation form a very important element in revealing the meaning of the text, the Old Testament must be reinterpreted through the lens of the 'New Perspective' of the New Testament. As Moyise (1995:19) suggested, since the context is an essential element for the meaning of the text, one could not assume that a quotation can represent

the same meaning in a new context as it did in the old. In other words, it means that the Christ-event indicating the death and resurrection of Jesus in Revelation must be an interpretative key that is used to understand the meaning of the Old Testament text. Through this point of view, the Son of Man Christology (Rev. 1:13 and 14:14) must be reinterpreted in the light of the ‘New Perspective’, which is based on the new context.

#### IV.2.1. Daniel 7:13

One of the most important christological titles in Revelation is the vision of the one “like a Son of man” among the lampstands (e.g. Rev. 1:12-16; 14:14). The debate about the Son of man-Christology is still a contentious issue among scholars, as on the synoptic Son of man. Yet, in contrast with the synoptic Son of man, in Revelation the christological title of the Son of man did not attract the attention of the scholars who mainly intended to explore the christological title in the synoptic Gospel. For this problem, I want to demonstrate what kind of nuance the vision of the one “like a Son of man” gave to the audiences who listened to the prophetic message of John in terms of the Old Testament frame of reference.

It is certain that the vision of the one “like a Son of man” in Revelation (Rev. 1:13; 14:14) could be derived from Daniel 7:13. The questions one should ask are the following: (1) What did the vision of the one “like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13 originally mean? (2) To whom does it refer? (3) What is the function of the one “like a Son of man” in this text? (4) What is the relationship between Daniel 7:13 and Revelation 1:13 and 14:14? These four questions are closely interrelated with each other and can’t be separated, and one shall study them together to better understand the issued text.

##### IV.2.1.1. The vision of the one “like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13

Generally speaking, conservative scholars accept that Daniel 7:13 could only be understood properly if interpreted from a messianic perspective. Amongst these scholars there is a mutual agreement that the historical setting for Daniel is the Babylonian exile of the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. In Daniel 7:13, the Son of man is pictured as the Christ Messiah, rather than as an angelic figure (Walvoord, 1971:167). For Walvoord (1971:168), the Son of man

could not be an angel, nor could it be the body of saints, but it is similar to other Scriptures, in terms of the messianic title<sup>109</sup>, that Christ will rule over all nations (e.g. Ps. 72:11; Rev. 19:15-16). Walvoord's suggestion that the Son of man indicates the Messiah Christ needs a more detailed exegesis, because of his weak point that the Old Testament must literally be reinterpreted in terms of the New Testament.

Other scholars, who intend to look for an alternative background to the Jewish one, focus on the ancient Near Eastern parallels. Kvanvig (1988:346) suggests the background of the image of Daniel 7, including the Son of man that is derived from an Akkadian vision of the nether world and closely related traditions. According to him, the most important element to emphasize is the literary-critical or tradition-critical characteristic (see Kvanvig, 1988:349).<sup>110</sup> Collins (1977:101) argues that the image of Daniel 7:9-14 was derived from a Canaanite enthronement scene in which Baal, as the rider of the clouds, approaches El, the white-haired father of years who confers kingship on him (cf. Ps. 2; 110).<sup>111</sup> Day (1985:152) is also one of scholars who support a Canaanite background of the "One like a Son of man" in Daniel 7:13. In terms of the material that was considered earlier, he suggests that the motif of the turbulent sea hostile to God and the imagery of the One like a Son of man enthroned by the Ancient of Days must have a Canaanite origin.<sup>112</sup> In spite of various attempts to connect Daniel 7:13 to some pagan origins, still many commentators,

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<sup>109</sup> In contrast with Walvoord (1971:168), Kim (1983:15) denies the messianic title of the One like a Son of man, because what Daniel saw was not "the Son of man", but one "like a Son of man." He suggests that the figure that Daniel sees has a human form or likeness. Slater (1999:68-69) emphasizes the comparative point of one "like a Son of man", which is not the titular "Son of man". Collins (1977:124) regards the phrase "One like a Son of man" not a title here, but the name of the well-known figure. One should, thus, keep in mind that when one considers this phrase, the one "like a Son of man", such a comparison should be emphasized within its context.

<sup>110</sup> The study method of Kvanvig (1988:353) could be divided into three main parts. The first one is that in order to get a part of the background of Daniel 7, he analyses two Akkadian dream-visions. The second one is that in order to get a similarity, he analyses the comparison between the Akkadian visions and the vision in Daniel 7. The third one is that in order to get a cultural adaptation, the Mesopotamian material is reinterpreted by its Jewish adapters.

<sup>111</sup> According to Collins (1977:105-106), the eruption of chaos with the emergence of the beasts and the conferral of kingship on the "One like a Son of man" are not isolated motifs, but are part of a pattern based on the Canaanite myth. He divides the sequence of events in the Canaanites myth in connection with Daniel 7: (a) the revolt of Yamm, sea, who requests the surrender of Baäl and kingship over the gods; (2) the defeat of Yamm by Baäl; (3) the manifestation of Baäl's kingship. I wonder whether Daniel was indeed influenced by the Canaanite myth.

<sup>112</sup> Colpe (1972:8.419) is one of the scholars insisting that the Canaanite background is related to the "One like a Son of man" in Daniel 7. His argument is that the transfer of dominion from the Ancient of Days to the Son of man could be connected with the wresting of power from an old god by a young one, which was handed down in Canaanite mythology. In spite of his argument, it is not easy to find the similarity between these two texts (contra see Slater, 1999:70).

who are based on the biblical exegesis, try to look to the biblical tradition itself.

In Daniel 7:13, his vision begins with the following: “In my vision at night I looked and there before me was One like a Son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.” The problem remains as to what and who the Hebrew expression **כְּבָר אֲנָשׁ** (LXX: ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, NT: υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) indicates. One can go further to determine the meaning and origin according to the Greek υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου into **בַּר נַשָּׂא** (*barnasha*), which is Aramaic. Here the term *bar*, being Aramaic, means “son”, which is equivalent to *ben* (son) in Hebrew, with *nasha* meaning man (see Casey, 1995:164-182). Cullmann (1963:138) suggests that *barnasha* should simply be translated as a ἄνθρωπος, that is, a man. The weak point in Cullmann’s argument is that he missed some point used to emphasize a heavenly figure by Daniel. The figure that Daniel sees in Daniel 7:13 is not a man, but like a man who has a human form or likeness (cf. Kim, 1983:15). The text of Daniel 7:13 states: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven.” The figure Daniel sees is, therefore, a divine or heavenly figure appearing in “human form or likeness” (Kim, 1983:15). Hooker (1967:11) also argues that the phrase “Son of man” in Daniel 7:13 is used as a comparison for what else he may or may not be, and that he therefore is not a mere “Son of man”.

When one considers the comparative point used within the one “like a Son of man” and the context of Daniel 7:13, it is clear that the phrase the one “like a Son of man” would indicate a heavenly figure expressed in the form or likeness of man. The fact that he is coming with the clouds, the symbol of theophany (cf. Walvoord, 1971:167) in the Old Testament (e.g. Ex. 13:21; 16:10; 19:9, 16; Lev. 16:2; Nu. 9:15-22; 12:5; Dt. 1:33; 2 Sa. 22:12; 23:4; 1 Ki. 8:10-11), indicates that he is a divine figure. It is also implied after the death of the beast (Da. 7:26), where the “One like a Son of man” receives everlasting dominion (Da. 7:27). He that receives everlasting dominion is the divine figure in Daniel 7:13. Therefore, the Son of man is no actual human being, but a figure in human form symbolizing a non-human reality, underscored by the preposition **כְּ** in Daniel 7:13 as a comparison (Caragounis, 1986:61).

#### IV.2.1.2. Who is the “One like a Son of man”?

If the “One like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13 does in fact not actually indicate a human being, but a heavenly figure symbolized as a non-human reality, who is the “One like a Son of man”? Among scholars, there are many arguments to reveal the identity of the “One like a Son of man”. What should be determined is why “One like a Son of man” must be described in a passage like this? What is the intention of the appearance of the “One like a Son of man” in the text? In the case of Hooker (1967:27-29), the Son of man clearly represents in some way the saints of the Most High. That is, the Son of man represents the faithful remnant in Israel to whom dominion and authority belong in the midst of the conflict between the people of Israel and their enemies. Although Hooker’s argument has good insight, he fails to identify the use of comparison between a Son of man and the “One like a Son of man”. Therefore, Caragounis (1986:61) is quite correct in stating the following:

If the symbol of the ‘SM’ stands for human beings then the obvious language to use is to speak of a son of man without the preposition  $\text{כְּ}$ . If, however, the symbol stands for something essentially different, it is readily understood why “like a human being” is used in order to approximate its character.

One can suppose that the “One like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13 is more than the faithful remnant or the saints of the Most High, which is supported by Hooker (1967:27-29).<sup>113</sup> Like Hooker (cf. Charles, 1929:187; Manson, 1950:175-176), Casey (1979:24-25; contra Caragounis, 1986:71-73) argues that in connection with Daniel 7:18, 22, 27, the man-like figure acts as a symbol of the Saints of the Most High. In fact, Casey (1979:25-31) recognizes the meaning of a symbol over the man-like figure. For him, the man-like figure is not a real being but the Jewish people, especially the faithful Jews attacked by Antiochus Epiphanes. Although Casey (1979:27, 28) recognizes the application of  $\text{כְּ}$  as a comparative

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<sup>113</sup> Dunn (1980:69-75) suggests the chief candidates of the “One like a Son of man”: Messiah, the original man (Adam), Wisdom or an angel. He denies that these chief candidates of the “One like a Son of man” have no clear points of contact in Daniel 7:13 and there are no good reasons for the hypothesis that Daniel or his readers would have understood the human figure of his vision as a particular individual. With these reasons, he argues that in Daniel 7:13, the “One like a Son of man” is simply the appropriate symbol for Israel, in contrast to Israel’s savage enemies. His analysis offers good insight, but he also overlooks the comparative point between a Son of man and the One like a Son of man.

point indicating “the like of”, he fails to evaluate the “comparative expressions” (Slater, 1999:69). That is, the “One like a Son of man” is not a human being or representative figure symbolized by the man-like figure, but a description of another being, implying a heavenly being expressed as a human figure (cf. Slater, 1999:72).

On the basis of the Jewish Inter-Testamental works according to the angelic saviour figure, Collins (1977:144-147; 1992:448-451)<sup>114</sup> explains that the figure of the “One like a Son of man” represents the archangel Michael (contra Lindars, 1975:56), who receives the kingdom on behalf of his host of holy ones. His argument depends on the prominence of Michael in Daniel chapters 10-12 in that the figure of Michael stands for the “the One like a Son of man” in chapter 7. The objection to this argument could be explained from the statement of Daniel 12:1 in the following: “at that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people.” That is, the identity of Michael is definitely stated with the great prince, not with the “One like a Son of man”. It might not seem compatible to compare Michael with the “One like a Son of man” in these two texts. Therefore, the argument of Collins could not be accepted. Davies (1985:106) correctly insists that in chapter 7 and chapters 10-12, the argument that “Son of man” and Michael are same ignores the different situational ways in which chapter 7 and chapters 10-12 consider.

Who then is the “One like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13? Could it be indicating an angel or the faithful remnant in Israel, or something else? As mentioned above, the statement that he is coming with clouds, a symbol of theophany, may indicate the characteristic of the “One like a Son of man” as an exclusively divine characteristic or divine being (Charles, 1929:186) who is on the side of the divine category. Thus, in this text the clouds can be expressed as “the bearers of the divine presence” (Caragounis, 1986:74; cf. Carrell, 1997:38) that could distinguish the “One like a Son of man” as a divine figure with human form or likeness.

In Daniel 7:14, the statement that “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all

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<sup>114</sup> For Collins (1977:144-147), there are two possible interpretations concerning the “One like a Son of man”. The “One like a Son of man” may be a symbolic figure, representing the angelic host collectively, or their leader, that is, the archangel Michael. Between these two options, he chooses the “One like a Son of man” as an archangel, Michael, who leads and represents both the heavenly host and their human counterparts, the faithful Jews.

peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed”, portrays the power of a heavenly figure that could be identified with God. This means that in Daniel 7:13-14, the statement that explains the “One like a Son of man” could be marked as a heavenly figure accompanying the theophany-cloud-symbolism (cf. Ferch, 1979:168). Therefore, the “One like a Son of man” is an individual, transcendent, eschatological being, which executes messianic heavenly powers (Ferch, 1979:174).<sup>115</sup> Accordingly, one can consider the “One like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13 as a heavenly, or divine figure in contrast to animal figures in Daniel 7:3-8.

#### IV.2.1.3. The function of the “One like a Son of man”

The “One like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13 could be connected with Daniel 7:18, 27 symbolizing the forthcoming triumph that was achieved by divine intervention (cf. Casey, 1979:40). It could also be connected with Daniel 7:9-10 that mentions the thrones (כְּרִסְיִן), assumed an active role of the judgment over the “One like a Son of man” (Collins, 1992:458). The Ancient of Days (שֶׁתִּיק יוֹמִין) is a unique expression in the Old Testament and clearly refers to God (Ferch, 1979:150; cf. Casey, 1979:23; Carrell, 1997:36-37). It is certain that the statement regarding the flames of fire (שִׁבְיָבִין דִּי-נִיר)<sup>116</sup> derived from a throne that might be explained in terms of the eschatological judgment. The notion of fire surrounding the deity is deeply rooted in the Old Testament, where fire often either precedes or surrounds God when God comes to judge his people (Ferch, 1979:151; cf. Ps. 50:3; 97:1-4; Isa. 30:27-28; Mal. 3:2).

Collins (1993:127-128) is quite right in stating that it is reasonable to assume that he has in some way triumphed over it. The importance of the judgment scene here may be related to

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<sup>115</sup> After a careful exegesis of Daniel 7, Caragounis (1986:80-81) explains that the “One like a Son of man” is portrayed as a heavenly Being with honour and power expected from God and a Messianic figure of God’s viceregent on earth. Kim (1983:18) who uses Daniel 7; 1Enoch 37-41; 4Ezra 13 also insists that the figure in Daniel 7:13 is understood not as a human figure, but rather as a heavenly, divine figure.

<sup>116</sup> In the Bible, especially in the Old Testament, fire can have two images. The first one is an entirely positive image connected with light, protection, and guidance (e.g. Ex. 13:22; 40:38; Dt. 1:33). The second one could be connected with a negative image linked to an awesome, dangerous and destructive element (e.g. Ge. 19:24; 22:6; Nu. 21:6; Ps. 79:5; Jer. 4:4; 38:23). When one studies the context of these texts, one could find that the fire in Daniel 7:9-10 as a negative element of destruction, also correlates with a natural symbol of judgment.

the growing importance of the idea of final judgment in the apocalyptic literature of the Hellenistic period. Hence, the scene in Daniel 7:9-10, in contrast to Daniel 7:3-8, is depicted as pertaining to the elements much in common with other Old Testament scenes of judgment or eschatological battles with the primeval powers of chaos such as the sea (cf. Collins, 1993:126).

From Daniel's perspective in a historical scene, it could be supposed that the struggle between the enemies of the people of God and the people of God might be an embodiment of a universal struggle between the chaotic powers of the sea and the rider of the clouds (cf. Collins, 1993:136). The divine books in Daniel 7:10 indicate the execution of judgment to the world (cf. Ex. 32:32; Ps. 69:28; Isa. 29:11; Rev. 5:1-5), because the execution of judgment begins with the opening of the books (cf. Casey, 1979:23). One can, thus, infer that the text in Daniel 7:9-14 demonstrates the divine judgment over the four beasts (Da. 7:3-8) and the victory of the "One like a Son of man" (cf. Da. 7:18, 27). As Casey (1979:24) correctly stated, it is most likely that the destruction of the fourth beast in Daniel 7:2-8 and 15-27 is the essential element of the judgment scene (cf. Rissi, 1966:57), as well as an essential preliminary to the passing of sovereignty to the man-like figure in verses 13-14.

#### IV.2.1.4. The relationship between Daniel 7:13 and Revelation 1:13 and 14:14

In order to reveal the meaning of Revelation 1:13 and 14:14 concerning "the One like a Son of man" (ὁμοιωσὺς υἱοῦ ἀνθρώπου], one has recognized that the background of Daniel 7:13 regarding כְּבָר אִינִשׁ ("the One like a Son of man") was a very important. The statement of the "One like a Son of man" (ὁμοιωσὺς υἱοῦ ἀνθρώπου] in Revelation 1:13; 14:14 uses a comparison, in contrast to the synoptic (ὁ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), which does not use a comparison.<sup>117</sup> Just as the "One like a Son of man" in Daniel 7:13 executes divine judgment and victory to the hostile world, the word "One like a Son of man"

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<sup>117</sup> Even though in Revelation 1:7, the application of the "One like a Son of man" doesn't literally show us, one can infer that Revelation 1:7 alludes both to Daniel 7:13 and to Zechariah 12:10, implying the "One like a Son of man" as a judge (Da. 7:13) and His coming as a universal event (Zec. 12:10). Mounce (1977:72) explains that these two prophetic texts are closely connected by John, and are explained to describe the impending advent of the victorious Christ and the response of a hostile world to the revelation of his universal ruling. See Collins (1996:159-167).

introduced in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14-20 demonstrates the role of the “One like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13 as ‘Judge and Conqueror’. That is, the “One like a Son of man” executes the divine judgment, although the application of Daniel 7:13 is verbally not the same with Revelation 1:13.

As Slater (1999:99; cf. Moyise, 1995:19) said, John does not simply quote older traditions, but reinterprets them as an instrument to deliver his new prophetic message. The author of Revelation borrowed the concept of this divine figure as the “One like a Son of man” from the Daniel 7:13 and reinterpreted the divine figure as the “One like a Son of man” into his new context in order to give some new meaning. The attire and appearance of the “One like a Son of man” of Revelation 1:13-16 provide many suggestions such as “the long robe of priesthood” (Harrington, 1969:79; cf. Rissi, 1966:57; Beckwith, 1967:438; Johnson, 1983:34; e.g. Ex. 28:4; 29:5) and “the majesty and the terror of the Almighty God” (Michaels, 1997:61).

The author of Revelation wanted to reveal Christ’s appearance as an exalted conqueror, having a divine authority or power to rule over the whole world such as Daniel 7:13. To various primary Christians who faced many a crisis in Revelation, “mythological maintenance strategies” (Slater, 1999:94), as well as “symbolic transformations” (Barr, 1984:41) in their own context might provide the symbolic messages of hope and consolation to encourage the conquerors in their conflict. It is closely connected with a victory and judgment of the “One like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13 (cf. Aune, 1987:240-246). One should, therefore, keep in mind that the quotation of the Daniel 7:13 in Revelation 1:13; 14:14 was inevitably necessary to deliver the author’s prophetic message to the first receivers, having been familiar with the Old Testament. One will at a later stage clarify this argument.

#### IV.2.2. The Son of man in the Mark’s and John’s Gospel

The designation of the “Son of man” in the christological titles is one of the essential points of debate of the synoptic gospels. Even though there have been various attempts among scholars to find the origin and function of the title of the Son of man, it is not clear

who the Son of man is. Its solution must depend on what the text says and implies.

First of all, it is true that the figure of the Son of man in the synoptic gospels is identified with Jesus, and is used only by Jesus, but the figure of the Son of man must be explained beyond the earthly work of Jesus. For example, Hooker (1967:191) argues that the title of the Son of man is limited only during the earthly work of Jesus. Bultmann (1963:150-163) regards Jesus the Son of man as the Messiah and the heavenly judge of the world through his death and resurrection. When one looks at the title of the Son of man in the synoptic gospels, the function of the Son of man should be regarded “as being eschatological judgment” (Ciholas, 1981:18). The function of the Son of man can be linked with a Davidic messianic figure in terms of the eschatological judge. Therefore, one can also suppose that the Son of man statement in the synoptic gospels might be connected with Daniel 7:13, executing the coming salvation and judgment as judge and heavenly exalted conqueror (e.g. Mk. 8:38; 13:26; 14:62) even though the influence of Daniel 7:13 is not obvious (cf. Casey, 1979:157-219).

In terms of the function or role of the Son of man, the Son of man can be described as a divine figure coming with the cloud (ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) and conducting the judgment. The apocalyptic and prophetic discourse in Mark’s gospel (cf. Mk. 1:1-20; 3:20-35; 4:1-34; 13:5-6, 21; 14:62) could be connected with apocalyptic and prophetic text such as Daniel 7, revealing the apocalyptic implication of Mark’s gospel (see Robbins, 2002:11-44). Robbins (2002:44) is quite right that “Markan discourse interweaves apocalyptic, miracle, wisdom, and suffering-death discourse into prophetic discourse.” Mclean (1996:109-233) tries to find out some comparative points to substantiate the parallels between the synoptic and Revelation, as well as between Daniel and the Revelation.

#### IV.2.2.1. The Son of man in Mark's Gospel

The question regarding the authenticity of the ‘Son of man’-statement is an issue of major debate. I currently do not intend to engage in an expanded argument concerning the history pertaining to the authenticity of the ‘Son of man’-statements, because it is beyond the

scope of my research. Therefore, I want to discuss the meaning and the use of the Son of man in the Gospel. The ‘Son of man’-statements understood by the people and used for himself are our main focus in this regard in Mark 14:62.

In Mark's Gospel, the occurrence of the 'Son of man'-statements is found fourteen times (e.g. Mk. 2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21(x 2), 41, 62). In the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus called himself “the Son of man” (Mk. 2:10; ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) and at the end of his public ministry, he also called himself “the Son of man” in front of the Sanhedrin (Mk. 14:62; τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). Jesus used this self-designation throughout his public ministry from the beginning to the end and it became a characteristic of his speaking throughout Mark's Gospel (Lambertson, 1980:15). In order to analyze these ‘Son of man’-statements, one should examine three stages: (1) Jesus' earthly life and ministry (Mk. 2:10, 28) (2) Jesus' suffering and death (Mk. 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21 (x 2), 41) (3) Jesus' exaltation or future coming in glory (Mk. 8:38; 13:26; 14:62; cf. Hooker, 1967:81-173).<sup>118</sup> In this section, I intend to deal with only one of the passages within each section, in order to reveal the meaning and use of the “Son of man” as used by Jesus himself.

#### *IV.2.2.1.1. Mark 2:10 (cf. Mt. 9:6; Lk. 5:24)*

This saying of the “Son of man” is included in the miracle story of the healing of the paralytic (Mk. 2:1-12) within the large boundary of the ‘conflict stories’ (Mk. 2:1-3:6). In the midst of this conflict setting with the scribes, Jesus said to the paralytic; “Son, your sins are forgiven” (Mk. 2:5) and said that the “Son of man” has authority on earth to forgive sins (Mk. 2:10; ἵνα δὲ εἰδῆτε ὅτι ἐξουσίαν ἔχει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀφιέναι ἁμαρτίας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς]. In this text, what one should ask is what ἐξουσίαν (authority) does Jesus have. It was the authority of forgiveness of sins that would be seen as a sin of blasphemy to God in the sight of the scribes, because in the Old Testament, God alone can forgive sins (cf. Kim, 1983:2). Thus, the authority of the forgiveness of sins exerted by Jesus is the point to

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<sup>118</sup> Lindars (1983:101-102) has also divided the synoptic ‘Son of man’- sayings into three groups. These were as follows: (1) sayings concerning the present, earthly position of Jesus (e.g. Mk. 2:10, 28); (2) the passion sayings; (3) the future coming of the Son of man (e.g. Mk. 8:38; 13:26; 14:62). In order to compare these, see Caragounis (1986:145-147).

which one should give attention.

During the earthly ministry of Jesus, he reveals himself to the people as the “Son of man”, who has a divine characteristic or a divine prerogative. One can consider that the act of healing and the forgiveness of sins were the demonstration of a divine act, as the “Son of man” (Caragounis, 1986:188) and a sign of the coming of God’s kingdom. It is a demonstration on the one hand that Jesus himself as the Son of man is the One who can claim the divine prerogative. On the other hand, Jesus himself as the Son of man is the One who could bring an eschatological new era as an eschatological divine figure.

The self-understanding of Jesus regarding the Son of man might be rooted in Daniel 7:13 כְּבֶר אֱנִשׁ (LXX: ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου). Through this text, the self-understanding of Jesus as the Son of man is demonstrated by the identity of the Son of man, being a divine figure, whom Daniel saw in a vision in Daniel 7:13. According to Moule (1977:14), Jesus alludes to “the (well-known Danielic) Son-Man” in this verse. One can, thus, verify that Jesus’ self-understanding or identity as the ‘Son of man’ might be deeply rooted in Daniel 7:13, which executed the divine judgment and conferred the kingdom of God on the saints. This characteristic can be compared with Jesus’ divine characteristic through the demonstration of forgiveness of sins in Mark 2:10<sup>119</sup> (Lindars, 1975:69; contra Hay, 1970:71-73).

#### *IV.2.2.1.2. Mark 8:31 (cf. Mt. 16:21; Lk. 9:22)*

The first major prediction of the passion (cf. 9:31; 10:33) that predicted the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Son of man must be interpreted in the context of the immediate texts. In vv. 27-30, Peter’s confession at Caesarea Phillippi is based on Jesus’ understanding as the Messiah. Jesus did not want to use the word Messiah because of its political implications and revolutionary tone (cf. Jn. 6:15). It is based on 2 Samuel 7:12-16, where Israel expected a political king having an eschatological characteristic (Cullmann, 1963:114-115). Accordingly, the Messiah in Judaism, as the anointed by God, has been

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<sup>119</sup> The important roles of the Son of man in the synoptic gospel that speaks of the future coming or his unique function at the final judgment, the suffering and resurrection, and his present ministry on earth (Hay, 1970:70) could be compared with the message of Revelation. When one compares the relationship between these texts, one must first of all consider the real context, in which they were written.

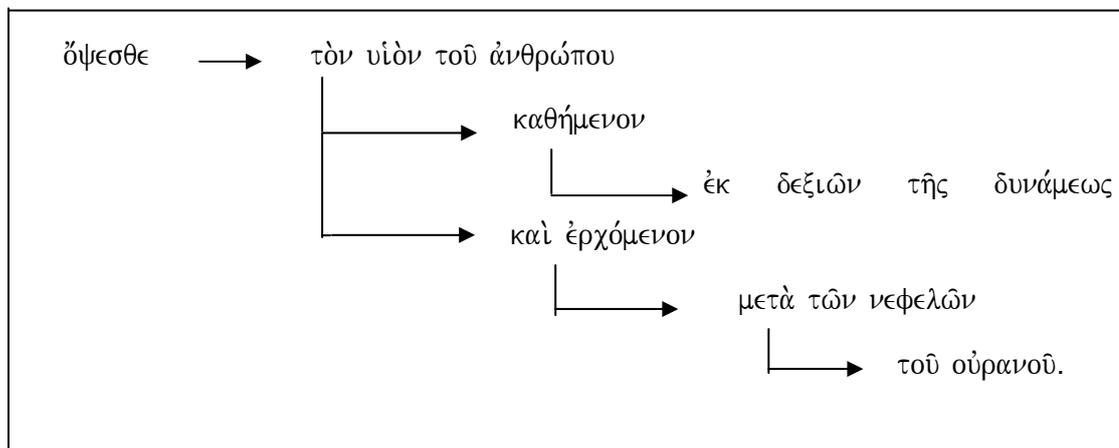
thought of as a military or political Messiah, who was a descendant of David. However, Jesus was not a military or political Messiah who bore a prevalent messianic expectation, but the suffering Messiah - having been the distinctive Messianic title of Jesus (Cullmann, 1963:122, 126). That is why Jesus strictly forbade his disciples from talking about him, (Mk. 8:30) to avoid a messianic misunderstanding (cf. Moule, 1977:32-33).

Instead of the application of the Messianic title referring to a military or political Messiah, Jesus used the statements of the Son of man (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) that related to Daniel 7:13 (cf. Lindars, 1983:107). The “One like a Son of man” in Daniel 7:13 should be interpreted just as “that Man” in Mark (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου; cf. Collins, 1987:406). The destiny of the Son of man is to suffer during and as a consequence of the earthly ministry. The term δει expresses a conviction that his suffering and death are related to the will of God (Hooker, 1967:107) as the victorious event on the cross.

I agree regarding the function of the Son of man who was to experience certain and extreme suffering. It is not enough to limit the function that the Son of man had to fulfill the suffering and death. The most important thing is the exaltation or resurrection of the Son of man through the suffering and death, which can be connected with the book of Revelation from a christological point of view. After his death and resurrection, Jesus will come back as the Judge, after which the kingdom of God will be established (cf. Mk. 9:1). When one connects this function of the suffering of the Son of man with Revelation in the light of the thematic unit, the function and concept of the Son of man seem to be well matched with Revelation 5:6 (ἀρνίον ἑστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον). Only the Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, can open the scroll. The function of the Lamb is only possible through his death, seeming as if he had indeed been slain. The Lamb is the exalted Lord through his death and resurrection (Beasley-Murray, 1992:124), implying his heavenly exaltation status through his earthly ministry as the suffering Son of man, conqueror (cf. Mk. 8:38; cf. Ford, 1968:264-265). One does find here references towards an ethical motif, as to what it entails to truly be a disciple of Jesus. As with Jesus, for the disciples of Jesus the exaltation presupposes the suffering of the disciples, who must suffer in this world, in order to be ultimately exalted. This is the message, which seems clear from the passion narrative contained in Mark. 8:31.

IV.2.2.1.3. Mark 14:62 (cf. Mt. 26:64; Lk 22:69)

This verse portrays the trial of Jesus in front of the high priest (Mk. 14:53-65). This is the answer to the question of the high priest, “are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed one” (σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ;)? Concerning the question regarding the Messiah- (Christ) title of the high priest, Jesus replies with the statement regarding the Son of man in Mark. 14:62: “You will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven”: ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ. This verse can be analyzed as follows:



The diagram above reveals the characteristic of the Son of Man who is sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven. Two participles καθήμενον and ἐρχόμενον indicating τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου imply what the identity of the Son of Man is. Who can be seated with the Mighty One and come on the clouds of heaven? It means that in fact, the Son of Man is none other than a divine being (cf. Aune, 1997:90-94) who can execute divine power of salvation and judgment as only God can do. To sit at the right hand of someone and to come with the clouds of heaven were familiar images, implying the occupation of the place of highest honour and divine authority as conqueror, judge (Kistemaker, 2001:94-95). It is closely related to the book of Revelation in terms of victory and judgment.

As noted above, one can see that Jesus intentionally avoids the Messianic title, having a military or political nuance in that time. But he distinctively uses the title the Son of man

and reinterprets the role of the Son of man with a ‘New Perspective’ on the basis of Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13, indicating the enthronement and parousia or coming. In these two texts, it is explained with that “my lord” (Ps. 110:1) and כְּבֹר אֲנִי (Da. 7:13) exalted to God’s right hand or to a heavenly throne next to God. That means that being seated at the right hand of power claims a share in the authority or dignity of God (cf. Hooker, 1967:173). When Jesus referred to this statement quoted in Psalm. 110:1 and Daniel 7:13, one can recognize that he wanted to reveal his divine dignity or divine authority as well as his highest position as the Son of man. It is appropriate that he has obtained certain divine dignity or divine authority (cf. Php. 2:5-11) or “exaltation” (Hooker, 1967:166), or divine power, which God possesses. The Son of man having a divine dignity or divine power (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως) will come with the clouds (ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), which refers to the glorious coming as a judge for judgment and vindication between the good and the evil.

The meaning of the combination of these two texts between Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13 could be explained by Hooker (1967:171): “the Son of man is God’s agent in judgment and it is only as he is revealed as sharing God’s authority in judgment, (whether this is expressed in terms of sitting on God’s throne or at his right hand) that the Son of man can ‘come with clouds’ or be fully vindicated.” That is, the Son of man is the one who has the divine dignity or authority and executes a judgment as the eschatological figure coming with the clouds. Thus, it can’t be denied that the prophetic and apocalyptic statements in the synoptic Son of man title as a heavenly being and judge are widely spread in order to show the heavenly identity of Jesus as in the case of Revelation as conqueror and judge (Collins, 1987:401-403).

#### IV.2.2.2. The Son of man in the Gospel of John

Among the many christological titles appearing in the Gospel of John, the Son of man Christology is a very distinctive one, as one compares it to the synoptic gospels. It especially adds the Logos (Jn. 1:1, 14) and the pre-existence Christology (Jn. 3:13; 62), which is lacking in the synoptic gospels (Moule, 1977:18). It would be simplistic to say that the ‘Son of man’-statements between the synoptic gospels and John’s gospel are one

and the same, because they have their own context and *Sitz im Leben* (cf. Casey, 1996:60). As Harris (1994:117) correctly stated, the term the Son of man in this gospel should be studied on its own, in its own right and with an open mind. The reason that John prefers to use the Son of man title rather than other titles is that the designation of the Son of man can reveal Jesus' distinctive self-understanding and identity with some creative intention as an earthly and heavenly figure (cf. Kysar, 1993:39).

Moloney (2003:252-259; 257n87) rejects a heavenly characteristic of 'Son of Man', as limiting 'Son of Man' to the earthly career of Jesus and denying the function of the preexistent or postexistent 'Son of Man'. In contrast with Moloney, Brown (2003:252-259) argues that on the basis of verses such as 1:51; 3:14; 6:27, 53; 8:28; 12:34; 13:31-32, the Son of man should be regarded as a heavenly figure that died and rose again. Actually, when one investigates the words of the Son of man through several texts, one can find out the divine or heavenly identity of the Son of man as Brown argues. Throughout Jesus' distinctive self-understanding/identity of the designation of the Son of man, the 'Son of man'-statements that appear thirteen times (e.g. 1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 9:35; 12:23, 34 (x 2); 13:31) will be dealt with as mainly focusing on the identity of the Son of man.

#### *IV.2.2.2.1. The Son of man in John 1:51*

In 1:51, Jesus tells his disciples that they will see the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man. The ascending and descending motif that occurs in three separate contexts (e.g. 1:51; 3:13; 6:62) is clearly of such great importance that 1:51 could be connected with Genesis 28:12 in the Old Testament (Carson, 1991:163). It refers to the dream of Jacob at Bethel: "He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it." The distinctive one, however, between John 1:51 and Genesis 28:12 shows the ascending and descending motif that the image of the ladder set up between earth and heaven in Genesis 28:12 is changed into the image of the Son of man in John 1:51. This

implies a new framework and some new theological construction (Carson, 1991:164).<sup>120</sup>

John 1:51 could be divided into two parts, namely “you shall see heaven open” (1:51a; ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεωγῶτα), and “the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man” (1:51b; τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). In the first part, the application of ἀνεωγῶτα (to open) as a perfect participle need not be limited to a single event of divine revelation. The ascending (ἀναβαίνοντας)/descending (καταβαίνοντας) as a present participle demonstrates a continuous and permanent activity (cf. Harris, 1994:118). It indicates that through the opened heaven, the interrelationship between the divine or heavenly characteristic and an earthly or human characteristic has been made available. Only the Son of man can establish communication between earth and heaven, which is now open (Jn. 1:51).

For Freed (1967:406), the figure of the Son of man in this scene reveals his heavenly and divine origin. In the apocalyptic theme, the characteristic of the opened heaven as in Daniel 7:2-14 and Revelation 4:1 reveals the origin of the Son of man as a heavenly figure associated with other heavenly figures (Painter, 1993:323-328). Through this activity, one can consider that the Son of man title, which could make possible the interrelationship between earth and heaven, shows the identity of Jesus’ heavenly origin and destiny (Dodd, 1960:243; Ashton, 1991:340). According to Painter (1993:187-188), what is demonstrated in 1:51 is a vision of the heavenly Son of man whose exaltation to heaven by way of the cross is the main key in this gospel.<sup>121</sup>

Through the ascending/descending motif of the Son of man that could be connected

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<sup>120</sup> In Genesis 28:12, the interpretation of the Hebrew וְעָלָה (upon; LXX: ἐπ’ αὐτῆς) makes it difficult to decide what this word indicates. It could mean either, ‘on Jacob’ or ‘on the ladder’. Whether it indicates upon the ladder (Barret, 1962:156) or on Jacob (Beasley-Murray, 1987:28), the intention of this statement of John is that the movement of the angels guarantees the contact between the heavenly creatures and earthly figures (cf. Barret, 1962:156).

<sup>121</sup> In contrast to most scholars who insist that the heavenly character or divine origin of the Son of man in the gospel of John seems prevalent, Casey (1996:61) insists that while the title Son of man indicates Jesus’ human nature, in order to refer to Jesus’ divine nature, the title ‘Son of God’ is used. Pamment (1985:59; 62; 64) also emphasizes that by referring to Jesus as the Son of man, the gospel once again draws attention to Jesus’ human nature. However, their arguments could not be supported by many passages, which imply the heavenly characteristic or divine origin of the Son of man (e.g. Jn. 1:51; 3:13-14; 6:62; 13:31-32). Therefore, beyond his public ministry as the Son of man having a human nature, the Son of man ascending / descending between heaven and earth proves his divine or heavenly characteristic.

between heaven and earth as a mediator, one can see Jesus' oneness with God through the exaltation and glorification on the cross (cf. Dodd, 1960:247). Therefore, the Son of man would be called a heavenly figure connecting between heaven and earth, giving the disciples a "new vision of the divine reality" (Van der Watt, 2000:104). As with the synoptic gospels, even though it is not easy to find out the appearance of the Son of man coming with the clouds as judge or divine agent upon the basis of Daniel 7:13, the heavenly conqueror and origin of the Son of man could not be denied in terms of the function or role of the Son of man in this scene.

#### *IV.2.2.2.2. The Son of man in John 3:13-14*

One could find the ascending/descending motif in this section in a similar way with the previous verse. The focus on ascending and descending is upon the Son of man as a heavenly conqueror, connecting heaven and earth with his earthly ministry. These verses are one of three 'Son of man'-statements regarding the act 'to lift up' (ὑψώω): 3:14 (ὑψώσεν], 8:28 (ὑψώσητε), 12:32, 34 (ὑψωθῶ, ὑψωθήναι). In the context of 3:13-14, it is that the main intention of 'lifting up' of the Son of man is to provide eternal life to the conquerors (Carson, 1991:202-203; Jn. 3:15). For the Son of man, 'to lift up' on the cross is the way of salvation for other people and the glorification of Jesus as the Son of man. As Harris (1994:121) argued, to lift up, to hoist up, or to elevate (ὑψοῦν) are distinctive terms in the Fourth Gospel's theological presentation, indicating the death of Jesus on the cross (cf. Dodd, 1960:306-307). Accordingly, when John refers to the 'lifting up' of the Son of man, it immediately intends suffering as lifting up on the cross and glorification as the Son of man (cf. McMahon, 1982:31-34; De Boer, 1996:164). It could be said that 'lifting up' and 'glorification' can be connected with each other. It is a part of John's literary technique to express his intention with one word that has two meanings, both that of a literal and a symbolic meaning. It is to say that John prefers to make word-play with terms containing a double meaning (Kysar, 1993:41). Thus, the hour of Jesus' lifting up on the cross is also the hour of glorification for Jesus – through this dishonour and extreme pain he experienced on the cross (cf. Meeks, 1986:156; Burkett, 1991:120-128; Painter, 1993:325-328).

In conjunction with these concepts of ‘lifting up’ and the ‘glorification’ of Jesus on the cross, these two terms ‘lifting up’ and ‘glorification’ could be connected with the identity of the Son of man, executing his earthly ministry as well as his returning to heaven as a divine figure. With support from the rabbinic exegesis, Dodd (1960:247) supports the quotation of Isaiah 52:13 in John 3:13-14 on the basis of the linguistic connection, indicating ‘to lift up’ between Isaiah 52:13 (LXX: ὑψωθήσεται) and John 3:14 (ὑψωθήναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). For Dodd, it is suggested that the word ὑψωθήναι in John 3:14 was understood in primitive Christianity as the exaltation of Christ sitting at the right hand of God. He also suggests that Isaiah 52:13 is linked with Isaiah 53:7-8 in the light of the suffering Servant.

Dodd’s suggestion is quite correct in terms of the suffering and exaltation of Jesus Christ. But when one considers John 3:18, talking about the ones who are condemned to judgment and the ones who are not condemned to judgment, his argument is not good enough. The reason for this is that in John’s gospel John explains something more than the suffering and exaltation of Jesus Christ. In relation to judgment, who can execute this judgment? It is only God. Only God can execute judgment to those who reject believing in Jesus. Through the gospel of John, it is quite apparent that the unity of God and Jesus is emphasized (cf. 4:34; 5:19; 6:29; 7:16, 29; 8:16; 10:30; 12:44-45; 14:10, 20; 17:2, 3, 7, 10, 23). The role of God is the role of Jesus as the Son of man. An example of the role of God in John 3:18 is a matter of judgment. The Son of man judges on behalf of God as his Father (Kysar, 1993:43). The role of judgment transfers from God to the Son of man, implying his divine characteristic. Therefore, the Son of the man could also be connected with Daniel 7:13 as “the One like a Son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven” (ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου). This implies the role of the judge as one having a divine characteristic that is the identity of the Son of man in John 3:13-14.

As Borgen (1977:253) stressed, it is certain that John 3:13 implies the idea in Daniel 7:13 that the One like a Son of man came, with/on the clouds of heaven to God’s throne, in order to show the heavenly nature/identity and divine origin of the Son of man. Therefore, Son of man in John 3:13-14 is no more than a heavenly figure, executing judgment on those who do not believe in Jesus on the basis of Daniel 7:13. This is also seen in the

exaltation or glorification of the Son of man through the suffering on the cross on the basis of Isaiah 52:13. Carson (1991:165) suggests “no glorification without the cross.” Therefore, John 3:13-14 based on Daniel 7:13 and Isaiah 52:13 emphasizes the role of a judge, having a heavenly origin. It can closely be linked with the book of Revelation in terms of victory through suffering and judgment as the exalted heavenly figure.

#### IV.2.3 The Son of man in Revelation

Most of the research pertaining to the Son of man is mainly limited to the gospels. In contrast to the research of the Son of man in the gospels, the research of the Son of man in Revelation was relatively small and therefore ignored by scholars (cf. Talbert, 1999:166). When one sees Revelation in this christological perspective, from the beginning to the end, one can easily recognize that the book of Revelation is filled with christological titles, especially focusing on the death, resurrection and exaltation or coming of Jesus (Carrell, 1997:129-219; Ford, 1998:207-229; Slater, 1999:66-235).<sup>122</sup> It means that the source of conquering and judgment of Christ is mainly focused on the death, resurrection, and exaltation as the One like a Son of man, the Lamb, and the Divine-Warrior. Therefore, these christological designations as conquerors would reveal the meaning of the message, which was written for the first century Christians of Asia Minor.

##### IV.2.3.1 The Son of man in Revelation 1:13

In Revelation 1:9-20, the calling and commissioning of John to write down the “revelation of Jesus Christ” appears. In verses 9-11, John describes himself and his commission to write. Verses 12-20 can be divided into two parts, namely the explanation of the vision of the “Son of man” (12-17a) and the commission and the explanation by the Son of man, given to John (17b-20). The reason that the Christology of Revelation is one of the most important themes is that the basic christological characteristics given in chapter 1 are set

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<sup>122</sup> For more information regarding the christological motif in Revelation, see Cook (1962:20-158); Holtz (1962:27-54, 109-137, 166-185); Edward (1982:139-154); Laws (1988:24-35, 52-79); Weber (1988:1-55); Bauckham (1993b:54-108); Guthrie (1994:397-409); Reddish (1995:212-222); Stuckenbruck (1995:207-265); Talbert (1999:166-171). Among the christological titles which Tabert suggests, it is strange to miss the Son of man Christology (Rev. 1:13; 14:14-16), because it is a very important christological title in order to realize the function or role of the Son of man as the exalted Lord. As Talbert (1999:171) said, it is clearly that the focus is on the exalted Christ (cf. Guthrie, 1994:406).

forth in connection with a figure or idea in chapters 2-3 or even to whole chapters (Cook, 1962:20-58).<sup>123</sup> The other christological titles, as well as the Son of man Christology, are connected with the churches within chapters 2-3, and with the whole chapters. It indicates that the role or function of the Son of man as well as other christological titles must be interpreted within the relevance of the context of churches (see Aune, 1990:182-204).

In 1:13, the appearance of the “One like a Son of man” (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου] is introduced and explained in verses 14-16, explaining exactly what he looks like. In verses 13b-16, the clothing and the appearance of the One like a Son of man are described to explain the role or function and divine characteristic of the one like a Son of man. The description of the clothing reaching his feet, and the golden girdle,<sup>124</sup> and of hair, eyes, feet, voice, and face<sup>125</sup> are based on the Daniel 7:9 and 10:5-6. It shows us that the divine appearance applied to the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7:9 and to the angelic being in Daniel 10:5-6 transferred to the One like a Son of man as an exalted divine figure (cf. Edwards, 1982:152). As noted above, one has seen that the designation of the One like a Son of man is not a title, but “a comparison” (Slater, 1996:148).

In contrast to the synoptic gospels, which include the definite article (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου), the description of One like a Son of man (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου] in Revelation 1:13 has no definite article. When one considers the One like a Son of man (כְּבָר אֲנִישׁ) in Daniel 7:13, he appeared to have been “a human-like messianic figure who liberates the elect of God” (Slater, 1993:350) not as a title, but as a comparison just as Slater

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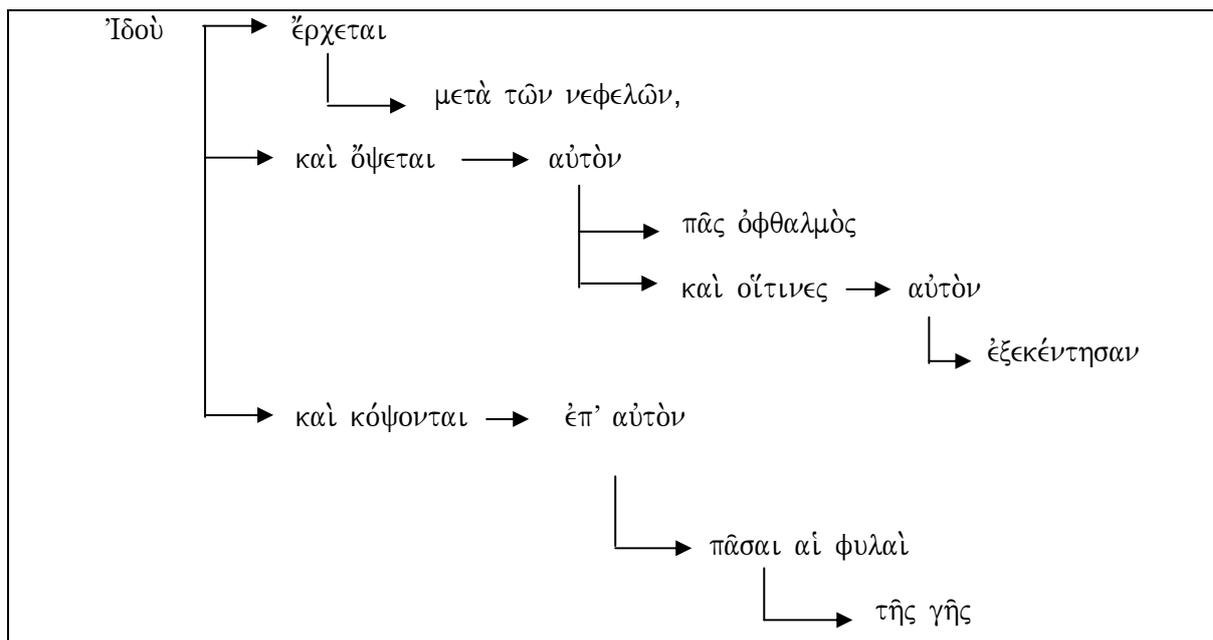
<sup>123</sup> The argument of the unity of Revelation has been argued by a number of scholars. I do not intend to deal with this problem here, even though there are many arguments regarding the unity of Revelation. When one considers the unity of Revelation through an exegetical and structural analysis, it seems evident that one can't deny the literary unity of Revelation (cf. Beckwith, 1967:221).

<sup>124</sup> The description of the attire reaching his feet and the golden girdle is drawn from Daniel 10:5 (cf. Ex. 28:4; Ezk. 9:2). Most commentators recognize that the description of the attire reaching his feet (ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη) is no more than an outward robe of the high priest (cf. Mounce, 1977:78; Josephus, Ant. 3.151-154). One doesn't have any reason to limit this attire to the robe of the high priest. As Fiorenza (1991:52) pointed out, in New Testament times the function of the high priest executed a cultic role as well as a kingly function and honour. This emphasizes the function of both the royal and the cultic of the “one in Human Likeness.”

<sup>125</sup> The description that his white hair was like white wool is an allusion to Daniel 7:9 (cf. 1 Enoch 46:1), in which the statement regarding “the Ancient of Days” is described. The descriptions of the eyes, face and voice are an allusion to Daniel 10:6. The description of the One like a Son of man in Revelation 1:7 and the similar characteristic that is closely connected with the “Ancient of days” in Revelation 1:13-16 indicates the divine characteristic of the One like a Son of man as a unity with the Almighty God. Thus, the change of attributes from the judicial figure of the Ancient of Days (cf. Da. 7:9-12) to Christ also implies his role as divine judge, which is also clear 19:12 (Beale, 1999:209).

emphasized. In contrast to the heavenly origin or divine characteristic of the One like a Son of man, Seiss (1974:37) emphasizes the essential elements and prominence of the human factor of the Saviour's characteristic, because it is in his human characteristic that the redemption work of the one like the Son of man is executed and his victories accomplished. On the basis of Zechariah 1:11 as well as Daniel 7:9 and 10:5-6 and Revelation 1:13-16, Carrell (1997:150, 173-174) suggests a possibility that John recognized a correspondence between Jesus and the angel of the Lord as presented in Zechariah. Collins (1996:175-177) also suggests that on the basis of the similarities between Revelation 1:12-16 and Daniel 10:5-6 as well as the analogies between their respective contexts, the One like a Son of man in Revelation 1:13 must be an angelic figure. For her, the One like a Son of man in Daniel 7:13 was understood to be an angel.

Accordingly, Seiss, Carrell and Collins do not recognize this distinctive descriptive comparison as the One like a Son of man in Revelation 1:13. These comparisons were traditional expressions of depicting "heavenly beings" (Slater, 1999:97) rather than to describe the human being. Then, what is the role or function of the One like a Son of man in Revelation 1:13? The One like a Son of man will come with the clouds (Rev. 1:7; Ἴδου ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν) to execute divine judgment against people who belong to the earth. A characteristic of the judgment is connected with the announcement of the future coming (cf. Rev. 1:7; Mt. 24:30). This verse of Revelation 1:7 can be analyzed as follows:



As a combination of Zechariah 12:10 and Daniel 7:13, the prophetic message of Christ in Revelation 1:7 announces the future coming of the One like a Son of man to execute divine judgment. Through this analysis, one can find out that the purpose of Christ coming with the clouds is to execute divine judgment. The judgment is expanded to the all people who are expressed as the people of earth, implying evil people (Beale, 1999:196-197). In conjunction with this judgment scene, the appearance of the One like a Son of man executing a divine judgment is explained in verses 13-16. The appearance of the One like a Son of man underlines the relationship of the affinity with God. That is, it is clearly said that the One like a Son of man (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου] is like that of the “Ancient of Days” in Daniel 7:9.

As Rissi (1966:57) pointed out, this similarity between God and the Son of man expresses clearly the real homogeneity, and transfers to the Son of man the attributes of the divine judge of the world. “A sound of the trumpet” (Rev. 1:10) was used as the instrument to announce the judgment of God in the Old Testament. A flame of fire (Rev. 1:14) associated with judgment and a sharp double-edged sword (Rev. 1:16) are all appropriate biblical images to announce the coming judgment (cf. Davis, 1992:77-78). The image of the sharp double-edged sword is especially used as a military term, which implies Christ’s authority to judge the world as a conqueror (Kistemaker, 2001:97; cf. Isa. 11:4; 49:2; Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15). Therefore, Christ as the One like a Son of man is the conqueror, achieving victory with his sharp double-edged sword protruding from the mouth against the enemy.

#### IV.2.3.2. The Son of man in Revelation 14:14-16

In Revelation 14:14-16, the statement of the second, One like a Son of man, is described as the image of the final judgment of God, that might borrow from Joel 3:13 (cf. Charles, 1976:2.22; Isa. 63:3). The One like a Son of man (Rev. 14:14) that is seated in the clouds, is the symbolic instrument of *theophany*. On his head, the One like a Son of man who wears a crown of gold implies divine glory, victory, and honour. In his hand, the One like a Son of man carries a sharp sickle, symbolizing judgment (Cook, 1962:120-121; Boring, 1989:170-171). Through this statement, one can recognize that he is a heavenly figure

executing judgment as the conqueror against the world and the enemies. In that case, who is this One like a Son of man? What is the role or function of One like a Son of man in Revelation 14:14-20? Fiorenza (1991:90) suggests that the image of the One like a Son of man sitting on a white cloud alludes to Daniel 7:13. It clearly marks the figure as identical with the figure of the *parousia* Christ in Rev. 1:7 and 19:11. Similarly, Wall (1991:188) states that this identification implied by the additional metaphors of cloud and crown, refers to none other than Christ's exalted status in heaven (cf. Phillips, 1974:194; Beasley-Murray, 1992:229; Buchanan, 1993:379).

In contrast to this statement that the One like a Son of man is none other than the Christ or Messiah himself, Zahn (1986:524) states that “die auf einer weißen Wolke sitzende Gestalt ist nicht Christus, sondern vielmehr ein Engel.” As with scholars who insist that the One like a Son of man is an angel, Morris (1999:178-179; cf. Kiddle, 1940:285; Glasson, 1965:87; Talbert, 1994:66) also states that the Son of man who holds the sickle can be regarded as an angel.<sup>126</sup> On the basis of the exegetical and contextual analysis it is not appropriate to regard the One like a Son of man as an angel. Charles (1976:2.19-20) argues that because in the apocalyptic vision an angel is simply called a man, hence the words ‘like a man’ just as ‘like an angel’ indicate a supernatural character, but not an angel (cf. Cook, 1962:121).<sup>127</sup>

The One like a Son of man is transported on the cloud as a symbol of *theophany* (cf. Ps. 97:2; Isa. 14:14; 19:1; Jer. 4:13; Ezk. 10:4; Mt. 17:5; 24:30; Acts. 1:9) and he comes to execute salvation to the predestined people of God and judgment against the evil people. Those who insist that the One like a Son of man is an angel, overlook the comparison concerning the One like a Son of man. He is not a “son of man but one like a son of man” (Slater, 1999:154; ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου]. One can, therefore, verify that this belongs to

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<sup>126</sup> For them, the one important reason to regard the One like a Son of man as an angel is that the angel commands the figure on the cloud to swing the sickle for the harvest of the earth. When one considers the command of the angel to the One like a Son of man in 14:15, the fact that the angel came out of the temple (ἐξῆλθεν ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ) in heaven, implying most holy place of the presence of God (cf. Kiddle, 1940:289) indicates that the angel is none other than the messenger of God.

<sup>127</sup> Beale (1999:770-771) insists that the One like a Son of man does not correspond with an angel, but none other than the divine Christ with the precise application and same wording as used in Daniel 7:13 (LXX: ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου; Rev. 14:14: ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου]. Therefore, we must distinguish between the characteristic of the One like a Son of man and the angels in Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:1; 1:13-18; 19:11-16).

none other than the messianic function, but not the function of an angel (cf. Knight, 2001:44). The One like a Son of man on the cloud is the Messiah coming to execute both salvation and judgment (cf. Rev. 1:7; 14:14-20; 19:11-16). Then what is the role or function of the One like a Son of man in Revelation 14:14-20?

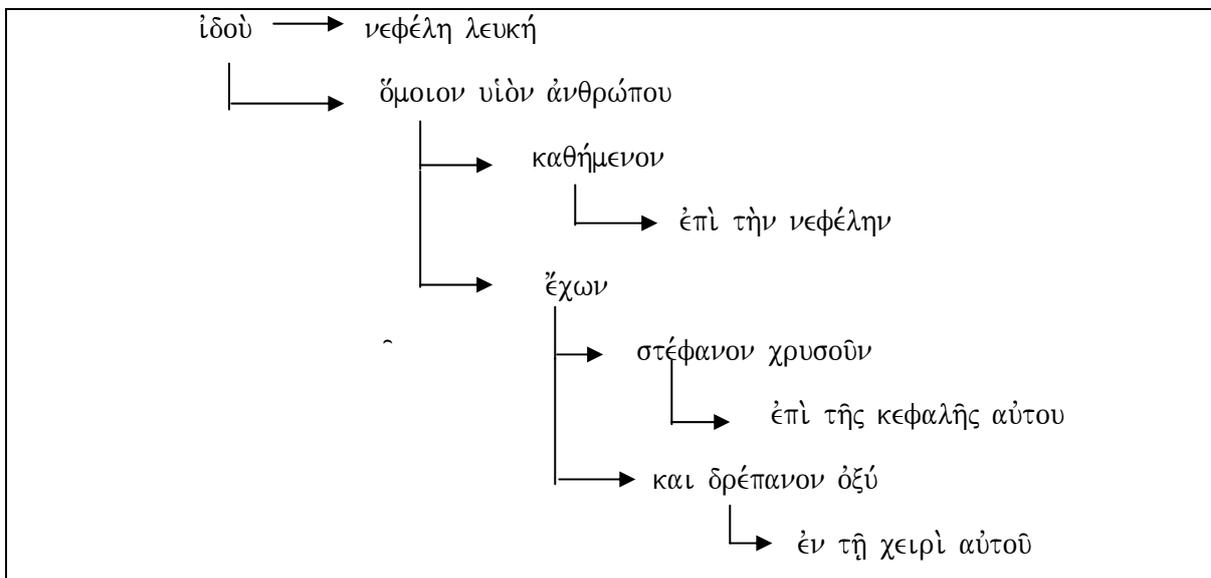
In 14:14-20, the activity of the One like a Son of man could be divided into two parts, namely the grain harvest and the great winepress of God's wrath. This image comes from Joel 3:13 and uses this image to describe two aspects: positive and negative. When one sees verses 14-16, one can't find any implication of judgment. The activity of the One like a Son of man in 14:15-16 appears to reap the grain harvest in only one action (Bauckham, 1993b:96). These verses are connected with previous verses 14:12-13, regarding the exhortation of the saints. Through this connection between the two sections, one could recognize that this grain harvest indicates salvation of the conquerors rather than judgment (cf. Ford, 1975:250; Fiorenza, 1991:90). Thus, the conquerors in this section are those who are characterized with words such as patient endurance (ἡ ὑπομονὴ τῶν ἁγίων) and blessing (μακάριος) and grain harvest (ὁ θερισμὸς). It could be systemized as follows:

- A: 14:1-5: The redeemed people of God: the proclamation of the salvation (Καὶ εἶδον)  
 B: 14:6-11: The impending judgment: the proclamation of the judgment (Καὶ εἶδον)  
 A': 14:12-16: The patience of the saints and the gathering of the saints  
 B': 14:17-20: The judgment of the enemies of God

The original context in Daniel 7:13 that Revelation 14:14 quoted could be divided into two parts of different meaning. The first part is that the saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever, (Da. 7:18, 22) as a positive meaning to the conquerors. The second one is that the enemies of God will be destroyed forever, (Da. 7:26) as a negative meaning. These verses in Daniel 7:13-26 demonstrate the victory or exaltation of the conquerors and the judgment of the enemies of God. One doesn't need to regard these statements (Rev. 14:14-20) as one judgment expressed as two images. That is, whereas reaping is a positive image to gather the people of God into his kingdom (cf. Mt. 3:12; Mk. 13:27; Jn. 4:35-38), the two actions of gathering the grapes into the winepress and treading the winepress are a representation of the image of judgment (cf. Isa. 63:3). As Bauckham

(1993b:98) clearly pointed out, “John depicts the outcome of history in two contrasting images – the positive ‘harvest of the earth’ and the negative ‘vintage of the earth’.”<sup>128</sup>

As from Daniel 7:13, the One like a Son of man in Revelation 14:14 as a divine figure sitting on the cloud is the conqueror executing salvation and judgment to the people upon the position of the exaltation through his suffering (cf. Isa. 53:3-6; Rev. 19:11-16). This theme is very implicit in the text of Revelation 14:14-20. The verse concerning the One like a Son of man in 14:14 can be analyzed as follows:



The diagram above reveals what the role of the One like a Son of man is. Two participles *καθήμενον* and *ἔχων* indicating *ὅμοιον υἷον ἀνθρώπου* provide two images of the One like a Son of man: salvation to the conquerors and judgment to the defeated. According to Charles (1975:1.58), the crown is regarded as something that is offered to the conquerors in the games. Stevenson (1995:257-272) expands the use of the golden crown (cf. 4:4; 9:7;

<sup>128</sup> Most scholars insist that the two visions in Revelation 14:14-20 represent the one message through the two images (Rev. 14:14-20). The one message would be an eschatological judgment message on the world or the wicked people. But in contrast to this argument, here one can find out two contrasting images: that is, 144,000 as the community of God’s people (14:1-5), the destruction of the enemies of God (14:6-11) personified as Babylon, the patience and gathering of the saints (14:12-16), the destruction of the enemies of God (14:17-20). Therefore, it is better to see this image as a positive meaning to the saints and a negative meaning to the enemies of God. For the advocates who see these two images (Rev. 14:14-20) as one judgment relating to the enemies of God, see Mounce (1977:279-283); Collins (1979:105); Johnson (1983:142-144); Morris, (1983:272-279); Boring (1989:171); Wall (1991:187-190); Hendriksen (2000:154-156); Poythress, (2000:152).

14:14) into victory, royalty, Divine glory, and honour. In terms of a positive perspective, the One like a Son of man is described as conqueror or victor in conjunction with Daniel 7:13 and is introduced as the one who executes a divine judgment to the wicked with a sharp sickle from a negative perspective (cf. Hendriksen, 2000:155-156).

#### VI. 2.4. Summary

The purpose of this section is to investigate the christological title, the One like a Son of man, in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14-16 in terms of victory and judgment. In this study, I dealt with Daniel 7:13 and Mark's gospel (Mk. 2:10; 8:31; 14:62), as well as John's gospel (Jn. 1:51; 3:13-14) in order to understand the use of the One like a Son of man in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14-16.

In conjunction with Revelation 1:13 and 14:14-16, Daniel 7:13 is a very important reference in the light of the thematic link. The issue in Daniel 7:13 is how to interpret the Hebrew expression כְּבָר אֲנִי (LXX: ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, NT: υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου). Even though Cullmann (1963:138) interprets כְּבָר אֲנִי (*barnasha*) as a ἄνθρωπος, he misses some points such as כְּ as comparison. Hooker (1967:11, 27-29) recognizes 'Son of man' in Daniel 7:13 as a comparison, but he fails to see the One like a Son of man as a divine or heavenly figure and sees the One like a Son of man as "the saints of the Most High." In contrast with Hooker, Kim (1983:15) is quite right to see כְּבָר אֲנִי as a divine or heavenly figure appearing in "human form or likeness." The One like a Son of man in Daniel 7:13 doesn't indicate a human being but a heavenly figure symbolized as a non-human reality.

Unlike Cullmann (1963:138) who sees the One like a Son of man as a man, and Hooker, (1967:27-29) who sees the One like a Son of man as the faithful remnant in Israel, the One like Son of man in Daniel 7:13 implies a heavenly being expressed with a human figure (Slater, 1999:72). As Charles (1929:186) insists, the One like a Son of man in Daniel 7:13 can be defined as an exclusively divine character or divine being in contrast with animal figures in Daniel 7:3-8. By the mentioning of throne and clouds (Da. 7:9-13), the One like a Son of man indicates a divine being, which is a unique expression referring to God in the Old Testament.

The statement of the flaming fire (שִׁבְיִן דִּי-נִיר) in Daniel 7:10 is described in terms of eschatological judgment. That is, the eschatological judgment image through the images of the throne, clouds, and fire is clearly connected with the theme of the forthcoming triumph and judgment achieved by a divine intervention and authority. The theme of victory and the judgment scene might be linked with Daniel 7:3-8 and Daniel 7:18, 22, 26-27 (cf. Rissi, 1966:57). That is why the One like a Son of man coming with the clouds can be called a conqueror who executes salvation to the people of God and judgment to the wicked, implying a thematic similarity with the book of Revelation.

In Mark's gospel, the Son of man-statement can be divided into three parts: (1) Jesus' earthly life and ministry (Mk. 2:10, 28), (2) Jesus' suffering and death (Mk. 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 14:21 (x 2), 41), (3) Jesus' exaltation or future coming in glory (Mk. 8:38; 13:26; 14:62). These three characteristics have a logical and thematic similarity with the book of Revelation in what reveals the characteristics of the One like a Son of man as a heavenly figure. That is, the One like a Son of man as conqueror comes with the clouds and executes a divine victory to the people of God and judgment to the wicked (Beasley-Murray, 1992:228; cf. Boring, 1989:168-172). As Hay (1970:70) argued, the role of the Son of man through the earthly ministry, suffering, and resurrection in the synoptic gospels can be connected with the book of Revelation.

Unlike the use of Daniel 7:13, in Mark's gospel, the use of the Son of man can be distinguished with the use of the definite article to the Son of man. That is, the Son of man in Mark's gospel is the 'that Man' (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου; cf. Collins, 1987:406) who executes a salvation and judgment which is the demonstration of a divine act. The exaltation or resurrection of the Son of man will occur through his suffering and death. After that, he will come back as conqueror and judge to execute salvation and judgment in conjunction with the thematic similarity to the book of Revelation. The One like a Son of man should be interpreted as 'that Man', as conqueror who executes a divine salvation and judgment through his suffering and death, just as in the case of Revelation.

In John's gospel, Jesus' self-understanding and self-identity have a particular form. The motif of ascending and descending in John 1:51 provides a new theological point of view

concerning the Son of man. Who is the Son of man here? He is the one who is ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας, between the heaven and the earth, indicating the sphere of God and the sphere of earth. The communication between the heaven and the earth through the opened door (cf. Rev. 4:1) is only possible for someone who has a divine or heavenly characteristic. It means that the Son of man is none other than a divine or heavenly figure, having a heavenly origin (Ashton, 1991:340).

As Freed (1967:406) argued, the Son of man in this scene can be regarded as the one who has a divine and heavenly origin. In the case of Painter (1993:187-188), the Son of man in 1:51 is a heavenly Son of man exalted to heaven by the way of the cross. The heavenly origin and being of the Son of man through the cross is revealed in a scene of the divine victory and judgment in John 3:13-14, implying the thematic similarity with the book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:5, 7; 2:8; 5:6, 12; 7:14; 12:11). The lifting up (3:14: ὑψωσεν, 8:28: ὑψώσητε, 12:32, 34: ὑψωθῶ, ὑψωθήναι] of the Son of man on the cross means the way of salvation/victory for the people of God in contrast with judgment for the wicked. In conjunction with Daniel 7:13 as the heavenly conqueror and judge, and Isaiah 52:13 as the suffering servant, the figure of the Son of man in John's gospel has a thematic link with the book of Revelation in terms of victory and conquering through suffering.

The references to the One like a Son of man appear in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14. Both verses introduce who he was and what he did within this situation to give some message to the recipients of Revelation. The explanation of 1:13-16, describing the figure of the One like a Son of man, is based on Daniel 7:9 and 10:5-6 while 14:14-20 is based on Joel 3:13 (cf. Isa. 63:3). Here, the One like a Son of man is introduced as the one who executes a divine salvation and judgment, depicted as the grain harvest (14:14-16) and the great winepress of God's wrath (14:17-20).

In 1:13-16, the One like a Son of man is depicted as a heavenly conqueror coming with the clouds to execute divine judgment against the people who belong to the earth. The images of blazing fire and a sharp double-edged sword are all appropriate biblical images to express a divine judgment against the wicked (cf. Davis, 1992:77-78). The explanation of the judgment scene of the One like a Son of man in 1:13-16 is performed in 14:14-20 with

two images, the grain harvest and the great winepress of God's wrath (14:17-20). That is, the One like a Son of man performs similar divine functions to the ones that God had performed, bringing salvation and judgment to the people (Johnson, 2001:212). He, as conqueror, proclaims a salvation to the people of God (cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 28; 3:5, 12, 21; 7:4, 14-17; 14:1, 4; 15:2; 19:7; 20:4; 21:4) and a judgment to the wicked (cf. 1:7; 2:5, 12, 14, 16, 20-24; 3:1, 16-17; 6:16-17; 9:20-21; 11:13, 18; 14:17-20; 16:19-21; 19: 17-21; 20:7-15). The figure of the One like a Son of man as saviour and judge might provide a "symbolic transformation" (Barr, 1984:41). This symbolic transformation depicts him as the Lord of the universe, who can control the whole universe as conqueror (cf. Slater, 1999:155-160) and provides a symbolic message of hope and encouragement for those who faced various problems. As a result, the One like a Son of man indicates the divine figure coming with the clouds as an eschatological Messiah, namely conqueror.

### **IV.3. The Lamb Christology**

The Lamb Christology in Revelation is the one of the most important christological titles (cf. Barrett, 1954-55:210-218; Hillyer, 1967:228-236; Guthrie, 1981:64-71; Fiorenza, 1985:144-165; Whale, 1987:289:295; Charles, 1991:461-473; Bauckham, 1993b:54-108; Johns, 2003:108-205). This is because the references to the Lamb are the most widely spread throughout this book (cf. Rev. 5:6-13; 6:1,16; 7:9-17; 12:11; 13:8-11; 14:1-10; 15:3, 17:14; 19:7-9). It must thus be sure that through this christological title, John offers the confidence or encouragement and victory to the conquerors who were under pressure from Rome and from their own problems. Only the Lamb can reveal the secret of the world's history (cf. Rev. 5:1-10) and can provide the major "symbolic universe" (Fiorenza, 1985:24) to the people of God as a minor group. Accordingly, the title 'Lamb' is often taken to be the centerpiece of John the seer's Christology (Guthrie, 1981:65; cf. Edwards, 1982:142-146).

In Revelation, the reference to the Lamb (ἀρνίου) appears 29 times (e.g. 5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8, 11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14 (x 2); 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3). Except for one appearance in 13:11, which refers to the beast coming from the

earth,<sup>129</sup> all the other 28 references are the Christ-Lamb Christology. This Christ-Lamb is not a defeated Lamb on the cross in the hands of the enemies, but the redeeming Lamb as conqueror through the power of the cross (Aune, 1997:352; cf. Summers, 1951:98). Through the symbolic language of the Lamb, John attempts to deliver the ironical message of victory and conquest through the image of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, implying the ‘New Perspective’ of the image of the Lamb.

When one especially regards chapters 1-3 and 4-5 in the scheme of these related sections, there is no doubt that the symbolic figure of the Lamb is the most prominent image, as a mediator between God and the people of God. One of these interrelated images in Revelation is the throne image, which appears in 3:21 (θρόνω), 4:2 (θρόνος), and 5:1 (θρόνου), 7 (θρόνου). It, however, means that the importance of the One seated on the throne could be transferred to the Lamb and the saint, especially the Lamb “not so much the Lamb’s nature as the sacrificial role he plays” (Charles, 1991:463).

#### IV.3.1. The Lamb in 5:5-14

To begin with, in order to understand chapter 5:5-14 with reference to the Lamb, chapter 5:5-14 must be related to chapter 4. Whereas chapter 5 describes only the conquering Lamb with the christological implication, chapter 4 describes the enthroned God as Creator surrounded by all living creatures. This means that God must be the focal point of chapter 4 as the One who sits upon the throne.

##### IV.3.1.1. God, Creator

Chapter 4 begins with “μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἶδον”, implying a new vision of special

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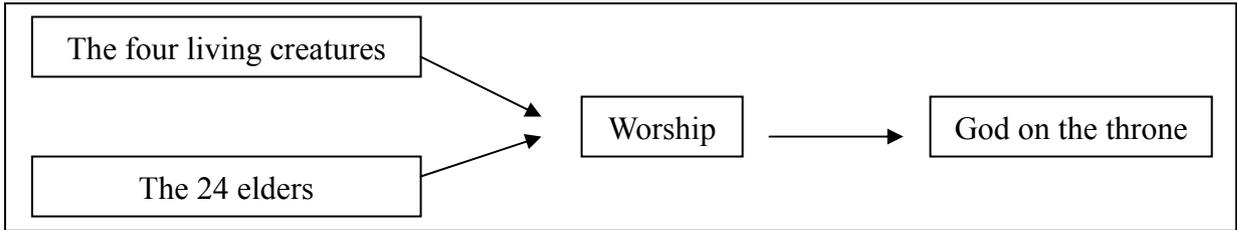
<sup>129</sup> The appearance of the second beast from the earth in 13:11 is very similar to the explanation of the One like a Son of man (cf. Rev. 1:13; 14:14; Da. 7:13). One can suggest that the One like a Son of man indicates the divine figure coming with clouds as an eschatological Messiah who is sitting upon the throne with God (cf. Barrett, 1954-55:215-217). It is very interesting that the One like a Son of man in Revelation 1:13 and 14:14 as well as Daniel 7:13 used a comparison to explain the divine characteristic of the One like a Son of man. The appearance of the second beast coming from the earth is also used as a comparison (ὅμοια ἀρνίῳ, ὡς δράκων] to reveal the Satanic figure as an imitation of the One like a Son of man. Here, one can consider the false-nature of the second beast coming from the earth, implying the Satanic nature in contrast to the divine-nature.

importance (Swete, 1977:66). John saw a throne as a symbol of God's sovereignty. God is worshipped by all creatures (4:11), including the 24 elders and the 4 living creatures because he is God of creation. The four living creatures<sup>130</sup> give some respect to the One who seated upon the throne: "ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος." This response indicates God's eternity and God's sovereignty to the world created by God as Creator. It means that God is in control throughout human history in terms of an earthly perspective as well as a heavenly perspective, which symbolizes God's rule (Bauckham, 1993b:30-35). As Creator, God is worthy and deserves to be worshipped by all creatures (Giblin, 1998:502).

John introduces the 24 elders who were seated on the 24 thrones in chapter 4:4. They are clothed with white garments and have golden crowns upon their heads. They render their praise to the One who is seated upon the throne: "ἄξιός ἐστι, ὁ κύριος καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, λαβεῖν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν, ὅτι σὺ ἔκτισας τὰ πάντα καὶ διὰ τὸ θέλημά σου ἦσαν καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν." They worship God, because He is Creator (Letseli, 2001:152) of the whole world. In this context, the role or function of the 24 elders, including the four living creatures, is to worship God as the One who is and who is to come.

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<sup>130</sup> The identity of four living creatures that are described as being in the midst (ἐν μέσῳ) and around (κύκλῳ) is a debatable issue. The question is who are they and what is their role or function in this context? Malina and Pilch (2000:76-77; 85-86) identify them with constellations called Leo (lion), Taurus (bull), Scorpio (the human face) and Pegasus (the flying eagle). It is not clear whether John had an interest concerning the stars or not. Seiss (1974:106) connects the four living creatures with the insignias of the representative four tribes, which had their own positions on the camp. The insignias for these tribes were presented: a lion for Judah, a young ox for Ephraim, a man for Reuben, as well as an eagle for Dan. Their chief positions in the camp of Israel were situated in the following areas: Judah in the east, Reuben in the south and Ephraim in the west, with Dan in the north (cf. Davis, 1992:133). If it is true, it is very strange to insert the tribe Dan in this list, because in the description of 144,000 as the number of people in 7:5-8, the Dan tribe is omitted by John due to a theological problem. Owing to this reason, to insert the tribe of Dan in this list is not a proper interpretation regarding the four living creatures. Swete (1977:71) suggests that the four living creatures indicate the noblest, strongest, wisest and swiftest in animate Nature (contra Mounce, 1977:138). When one considers a symbolic number in Revelation, number 4 means the universal number implying the whole world (cf. Summers, 1951:22; Rev. 7:1). It would accordingly be a more proper interpretation to state that these living creatures, implying some category of wholeness, will represent the entire animate creation (cf. Beasley-Murray, 1992:117; Beale, 1999:329-330). As the representative of the whole created order of animate life, the living creatures participate in the adoration and praise of the One in chapter 4 who is seated upon the throne, because God is the Ruler and Creator of the whole world.



\* Revelation 4:9,11

The 24 elders<sup>131</sup> as well as the four living creatures worship God in heaven, implying some definite liturgical setting (cf. Ford, 1975:79-80). In connection with 3:21, the statement regarding God's throne (ὁ θρόνος τοῦ θεοῦ)<sup>132</sup> might give the audience a certain contrasting image regarding the throne of the Satan (cf. Rev. 2:13: ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ, see Thomson, 1986:147-170; Coutsoumpos, 1997:23-27).<sup>133</sup> Thus, the throne of the emperor or imperial cult is used for propaganda purposes, as a symbol of authority (cf. Summers, 1951:131; Boring, 1989:103; Fiorenza, 1991:58-59). This is actually an illusion. What John wanted to discuss is who the real God of this world is. Who is worthy of receiving worship from all the people of the world? Who is the real conqueror in this world in terms of the heavenly aspect? He is God who is seated upon the throne, because he is Creator of the world. That is why he is worthy of being worshipped by the four living creatures and the 24 elders. As Summers (1951:134) emphasized, the incomparable sovereign and authority of God as the centre of activity is emphasized in this chapter as the main idea.

#### IV.3.1.2. The Lamb, Conqueror

<sup>131</sup> The identity of the 24 elders is one of the debatable issues in Revelation. Who are they? Krodel (1989:155) is of the opinion that these elders are not human beings who have been exalted to heaven, but certain angelic beings that were the heavenly angelic counterparts of patriarchs and apostles (cf. Beckwith, 1967:498; Charles, 1975:1.130; Mounce, 1977:135-136; Ladd, 1979:75; Boring, 1989:106; Beasley-Murray, 1992:114; Morris, 1999:86-87; Barker, 2000:123). Ford (1975:80-81) understands the 24 elders to be the leaders of Israel who kept the covenant and acknowledged the theocracy of Israel. On the basis of 1 Ch. chapters 23-26, Davis (1992:123) insists that the 24 elders indicate none other than temple priests who executed the priestly ministry in the temple (cf. Josephus. Ant. 7.363-367; Buchanan, 1993:137). Swete (1977:68-69) is quite correct in stating that the 24 Elders represent the church, but the ideal church is therefore seen as already clothed in white, crowned and enthroned in the Divine Presence. When one connects this scene with the promise statement that was given to the Laodicea church, it must be the people of God as the conquerors who conquer the difficulty of their life-setting in terms of an earthly aspect.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Rev. 1:4; 3:21; 4:2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10; 5:1, 6, 7, 11, 13; 6:16; 7:9-11, 15, 17; 8:3, 11:16; 12:5; 14:3; 16:17; 19:4-5; 20:4, 11-12; 21:5; 22:1, 3.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Rev. 2:13; 13:2; 16:10.

When one consults chapter 5, the focus has been altered from the One who is seated upon the throne, to the Lamb, the Redeemer. Chapter 5 starts with καὶ εἶδον in which the logical connection appears with chapter 4. Hurtado (1995:199-200, 207) is thus quite correct to connect 4:1-11 and 5:1-14. Therefore, one must read chapter 5 as a continuation of the scene of chapter 4 (cf. Guthrie, 1981:64; Davis, 1992:134; Letseli, 2001:155). John first wept in 5:4, because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside, but one of the elders said to John that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has triumphed and he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals. What John first saw was the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David. The title, the Lion of Judah, the Root of David must be derived from Genesis 49:9 and Isaiah 11:1. These two terms were conventionally interpreted from a messianic perspective (Laws, 1988:27), implying a military aspect of the Davidic king as an eschatological characteristic, in order to bring peace upon the oppressed Israel.

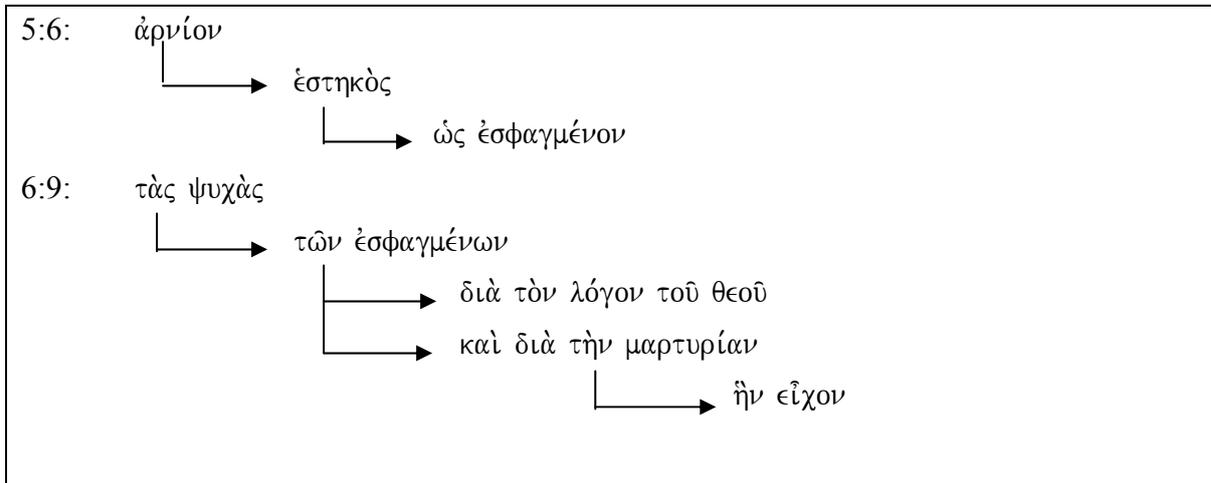
This concept in the Old Testament is applied to the New Testament to deliver a newly transformed symbolic concept. John did not intend to portray Christ as a military Messiah who would liberate them from the hands of the enemies (cf. Guthrie, 1994:400). When John used this imagery to express his intention to the audiences from the Old Testament, he didn't just borrow the imagery of the Lion of Judah, the Root of the David from the Old Testament. John reinterpreted this imagery into a 'New Perspective', from a heavenly point of view. According to Fiorenza (2001:9; cf. Johns, 2003:155-158), it can be expressed as making an "alternative world of vision and symbolic universe."

#### *IV.3.1.2.1. The suffering Lamb*

What John saw, however, was the Lamb looking as if it had been slain. This transition, from hearing to seeing, is a transition from the familiar to the new that is not familiar to the audiences (Laws, 1988:28, 57). In 5:6, the term being slain (ὡς ἐσφαγμένον) implies the death of Jesus and it can be connected with 6:9 in which the souls of those who had been slain (τῶν ἐσφαγμένων) are under the altar. On these two occasions, the same words such as ἐσφαγμένον and ἐσφαγμένων are used. It means that the conquering or victory of the Lamb who died on the cross is closely linked with the death of the conquerors (Pattemore,

2004:79) that is based on their death in connection with the violent acts of the Roman Empire. Therefore in 5:6 and 6:9, the conquerors are linked with martyrs who had been slain (Strand, 1990:243; Bauckham, 1993b:76-80).

It is John's intention that when he describes Christ as the Lamb, a conqueror, he explains the image as a term being familiar within the Christian community (cf. Laws, 1988:30).<sup>134</sup> In this context, the Lamb<sup>135</sup> is understood as a sacrificial symbol (cf. 5:6, 12; 7:14) introduced by the vision of Christ to his final victory. That is, the victory or conquest is revealed through suffering and the crucifixion of Christ (Mounce, 1977:144; Thompson, 1986:151). These two verses of 5:6 and 6:9 describing the death of the Lamb and the conquerors as the saints are compared as follows:



<sup>134</sup> According to Laws (1988:30-31), the Lamb is none other than Christ himself (cf. Dodd, 1960:231). She divides the image of Christ into three dimensions: the traditional imagery of Messiah is connected with the imagery of God, and secondly in terms of the historical Jesus, and thirdly the image of the rider in Revelation 19:11. In contrast to Laws, Edwards (1982:142-146) suggests that in the apocalypse the Lamb is not Jesus and sometimes he represents the true Israel or most frequently he symbolizes the Davidic Messiah of the Jewish eschatological expectation. It is true that the title Lion of Judah, the Root of David, has some Davidic messianic implication of Jewish eschatological expectation. John did not want to remain as they were. He changed this concept into a new concept, one familiar to Christians. That is why after describing the Lion of Judah the Root of David, John introduces the Lamb, looking as if it had been slain.

<sup>135</sup> The New Testament word for Jesus as Lamb is ὁ ἄμνος. This word is used in John 1:29 (ὁ ἄμνος); 1:36 (ὁ ἄμνος); Acts 8:32 (ὡς ἄμνος), and 1 Pe. 1:19 (ὡς ἄμνοῦ). These verses could be connected to a suffering Lamb, who will blot out the sin of the world by the expiatory efficacy of his blood on the cross (cf. Isa. 53:6-7). Thus, the use of the Lamb ὁ ἄμνος in these four verses indicates that the death of Jesus as the Lamb, ὁ ἄμνος, fulfills the role of a suffering servant. In connection with this explanation, Jeremias (1968:1.340) expresses three things in describing Jesus as ἄμνος: 1. the patience of his suffering (Acts. 8:32) 2. his sinlessness (1 Pe. 1:20) and 3. the efficacy of his sacrificial death (Jn. 1:29, 36; 1Pe. 1:19). In contrast with Jn. 1:29, 36; Acts 8:32; 1 Pe. 1:19, in the book of Revelation the word for Lamb is used as ἀρνίον. If ἄμνος is connected with the suffering servant in Jn. 1:29, 36; Acts. 8:32; 1 Pe. 1:19, in Revelation ἀρνίον could be connected with 'the conquering Lamb' through the death and resurrection of Christ.

When one sees the diagram above, even though the reason for the death of the Lamb is not very clear, it is revealed with the expression ἐν τῷ αἵματι σου in 5:9. One can suppose that the reason for the death for the Lamb is based on his death on the cross. This symbolic image provides a ‘New Perspective’ about conquering or victory by the sacrificial death on the cross (Bauckham, 1993a:215). A ‘New Perspective’ by the symbolic transformation might give the audiences and readers a heavenly point of view to resist the reality of the earthly point of view, namely the Roman Empire. Howard-Brook and Gwyther (1999:230) are quite correct to say:

Revelation’s war on the myth of *victoria* involves a radical shift in the cultural understanding of victory. In empire’s myth, military success and the quelling of dissent made for victory. Revelation’s apocalyptic insight unveiled victory as the preparedness to lay down one’s life in resistance to empire, and the willingness to live the way of God for the long haul.

In conjunction with the death of the Lamb, the deaths of the martyrs who had been slain are very clear when one analyzes the above diagram. The death of conquerors is due to the word of God and the testimony they have maintained. In Revelation, what is the meaning of death? The death of the Lamb and the saints makes it possible for them to be conquerors because victory comes through death. According to Pattemore (2004:95), victory can have two kinds of modes. The first mode of victory depends on the blood of the Lamb and the second mode, the saint’s own death-defying witness. In terms of the Lamb and the saints, to be a conqueror is to die.

In the case of John 1:29, 36 (cf. Acts. 8:32; 1 Pe. 1:19), the use of the Lamb ἄμνος could be connected to the suffering servant in conjunction with Isaiah 53:6-7. But the use of the Lamb ἄρνιον in Revelation could be linked with two possible meanings: (a) a Lamb sacrificed for the salvation of his people (cf. 1:5; 5:9; 7:10; ἐσφαγμένον) as well as (b) a conquering Lamb (Aune, 1997:352; cf. 2:26-27; 17:14), making war against the enemies of the people of God and overcoming them with his blood (1:5; 5:9; ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ]. Dodd (1960:232) is quite correct in stating that “The Lamb is the Messiah, and primarily the militant and conquering Messiah; but in the Christian writing, which has in view the

historical crucified Messiah, the bell-wether of God's flock is fused with the lamb of sacrifice." Therefore, the Lamb is the eschatological conqueror of God's people as the conquering Messiah and suffering servant. According to Barrett (1954-1955:215-216), the Lamb is practically linked with the Messiah as a technical term, relating to the supernatural Messiah.

#### *IV.3.1.2.2. The conquering Lamb*

In conjunction with the Lion of Judah, the Root of David has a conquering messianic or military characteristic in 5:5 (cf. Fiorenza, 1991:60), seeming very strange as the Lamb. This implies that the Lamb introduced with the Lion of Judah, the Root of David is indeed the conquering Lamb. This is seen as being the reinterpreted conqueror, not through military conquest or political liberation from the enemies of the people of God, but through his sacrificial conquest with the death of Jesus and through his resurrection from death (cf. Summers, 1951:135; Cook, 1962:128; Guthrie, 1981:65; Weber, 1988:18-21; Wall, 1991:102). One should, however, remember that even though the Lamb seems as if it had been slain (ὡς ἐσφαγμένον), it is not yet dead, but is still alive and standing (ἔστηκός) among the people of God. These words such as ἐσφαγμένον and ἔστηκός in 5:6 imply victory through suffering (Charles, 1991:466-469; Court, 2000:225-227).

Then, from where is this victory of the Lamb derived, and what is the result of that victory? As noted above, it can be connected with God as Creator who in chapter 4 is seated on the throne. Because he is Creator, he is worthy (ἄξιος) enough to conquer everything that he has made, even the devil itself, as well as death which is the last weapon of Satan. It means that "God *himself* is the resource of victory" of the Lamb (Rosscup, 1982:264; cf. 1 Jn. 4:4). The victory of God as Creator in chapter 4 is transferred and reinterpreted into the victory of the Lamb as Saviour in chapter 5. The word ἄξιος in 4:11 and ἄξιος in 5:2 ascribed to God and the Lamb imply the victory of the Lamb, conqueror as well as of God, Creator. Johns (2003:163) is also of the opinion that worthiness (ἄξιος) is therefore connected with νικάω, denoting an important meaning of victory.

The effect of the Lamb conquering through death is that it brings a "new exodus and

redemption” (Ford, 1998:217), reflected through the Exodus event in the Old Testament (cf. Ex. chaps.14-15). This makes the conquerors into a kingdom and priests (βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ: Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10; 11:15). This introductory statement to kingdom and priest reoccurs in 5:10 and 11:15. In 5:10, the expression of ἐποίησας αὐτοὺς τῷ θεῷ ἡμῶν βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς indicating the aorist or past tense can closely be connected with Christ’s redemptive death (Mounce, 1977:71-72, 149). It means that the result of the victory through Christ’s redemptive death as conqueror can make saints to be a kingdom and to be priests. As Johns (2003:169) rightly points out, “Jesus’ death is consistently tied to the language of witness and of victory in the Apocalypse.”

The message of Revelation has a ‘reversal effect’ (Laws, 1988:24-35) in that the death of Jesus and of his follower (e.g. the death of Antipas; 2:13) is not a real death – the real death will be upon the enemies of God (cf. 19:17-21; 20:11-15). This ‘reversal effect’ of Revelation helps his audiences or readers “to see the world differently, to view it through the spectacles of heavenly realities” (Smith, 2002:109) in contrast with earthly realities. It is reasonable to see 5:10 as an “inaugurated eschatology” (Bandstra, 1992:23), the completed victory through self-sacrificial death.

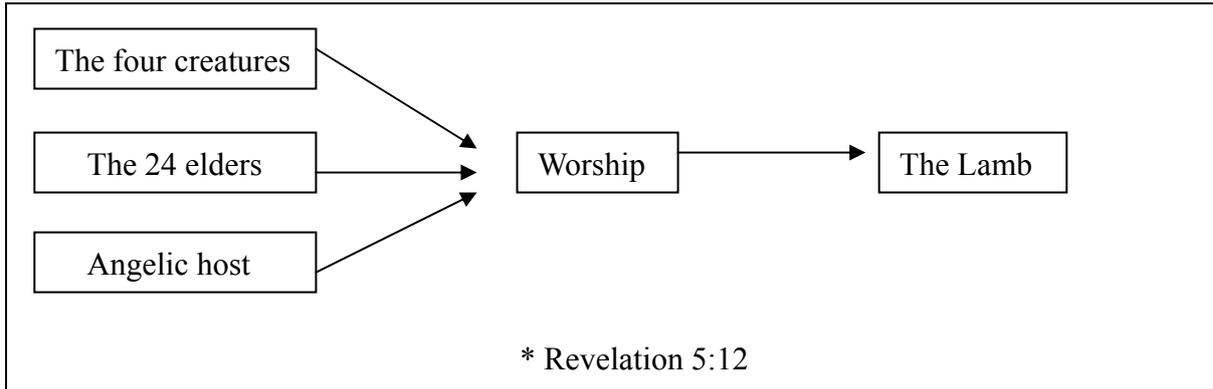
Chapter 11:15 is expressed in two tenses: ἐγένετο ἡ βασιλεία (past tense) and βασιλεύσει (future tense). The use of these two tenses is well balanced with the theological framework of ‘already but not yet’. While the Christians are already under the rule of God through the victory of the Lamb, the ultimate victory over the earth will be absolutely executed in the eschatological future (Fiorenza, 1985:45). The result of the victory in terms of the heavenly perspective lies in that the conquerors will inherit the kingdom of God, and be priests in the kingdom of God. This certainty of victory might therefore be a good message to the people of God who were oppressed, or who were discriminated against as a minority group. This could also evoke the desired ethical motif in the community, because the Lamb is the conqueror of the world through his death. For Maier (2002:196; cf. Morton, 1985:202), the cause of victory for Christ is based not on military might, but on a glorious defeat, both of the Lamb and of his followers. In this way, Barr (1984:41; cf. Cook, 1962:128n6) is quite right to say the following:

John is also making a bold theological assertion: the Lamb is the Lion. Jesus is the Messiah, but he has performed his messianic office in a most extraordinary way, by his death. Yet his death is not defeat, for it is just this that makes him worthy to open the scroll revealing the will of God. ... John asks us to see both that Jesus rejects the role of Lion, refuses to conquer through supernatural power, and that we must now give a radical new valuation to lambs; the sufferer is the conqueror, the victim the victor.

#### *IV.3.1.2.3. The doxology to God and the Lamb*

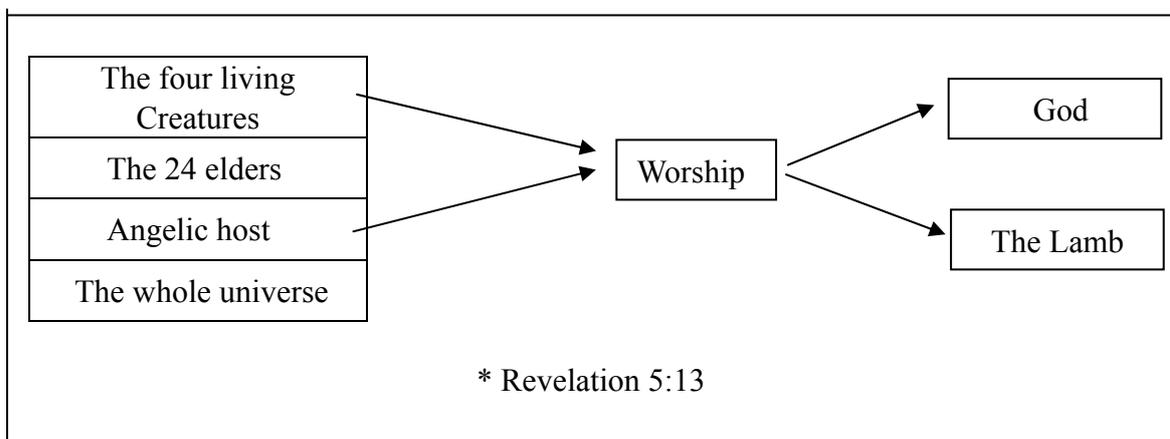
Christ is the Lamb, portrayed as the powerful Lamb with seven horns, as a symbol of complete power and authority (cf. Collins, 1979:41; Davis, 1992:140; Morris, 1999:95; Hendriksen, 2000:90; Poythress, 2000:110), with seven eyes as a symbol of complete omniscience (cf. Harrington, 1969:118; Boring, 1989:110; Slater, 1999:170). Hillyer (1967:231) emphasizes that the image of the Lamb is, however, not based on an image of weakness but on an image of absolute power. He does currently have “seven horns” — symbolic of absolute power, authority (Ps. 75:4-7), and royal dignity (Zech. 1:18-21) and “seven eyes”, indicating omniscience, namely perfect knowledge and perception. That is why the Lamb is worshipped as the conqueror by all creatures, with the redeemed people of God singing a new song (ὡδὴν καινὴν) in 5:9.

The death of the Lamb has created an atmosphere within the new community of the people belonging to God, in order to worship the Lamb with a new song. According to Revelation 14:3, no one could learn the song except the 144,000, who had been redeemed from the earth. One can thus determine that the people who sing the new song are the people of God redeemed by the blood of Christ. Just as the hymn in 4:11 praises the Creator God who is sitting upon the throne in 5:9-10 and 12-13, the Lamb is worthy to receive praise and worship by all creatures, because he as conqueror redeemed all his people through his death as well as through his resurrection (Beale, 1999:365). The suffering of the Lamb implies the conquering Lamb who is worthy to be worshipped by all creatures. It can be illustrated as follows:



This scene is to be applied to the Lamb who was slain. Whereas the One who is seated upon the throne is worshiped by the living creatures, with *δόξαν, τιμὴν, and εὐχαριστίαν* (4:9) and by the 24 elders with *δόξαν, τιμὴν, and δύναμιν* (4:11) as Creator, the Lamb is worshipped by the living creatures, elders, and the angelic hosts, with *δύναμιν, πλοῦτον, σοφίαν, ἰσχὺν, τιμὴν, δόξαν, and εὐλογίαν*, implying his perfection as the conquering Lamb. The conquering Lamb is able to open the book and brings about God’s redemptive purpose of conquering through his death (Sweet, 1979:125).

Owing to the redemption of the total people of God through the Lamb as an agent of God (cf. Fiorenza, 1991:61), the whole universe praises God while recognizing the Lamb’s kingly authority and rule (cf. Rev. 5:9-10). The scene encompasses a hymn towards God and the Lamb, in order to worship God and the Lamb, demonstrating a progressive development towards a climax (Mounce, 1977:150). Whereas the first two hymns in 4:8, 11 are focused on God, the third and fourth in 5:9-10, 12 are focused on the Lamb. The last hymn in 5:13, which is focused on both, implying the whole universe as well as the living creatures and the 24 elders, praises God and the Lamb (Letseli, 2001:168, 175-177).



From this diagram, it seems clear that the Lamb as conqueror and God as Creator are proclaimed by the four living creatures, the 24 elders, angelic host, and the whole universe as Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev. 17:14). In a liturgical setting, the Lamb as well as God is worthy to receive worship by all creatures because God created and the Lamb redeemed in contrast to the worship of the beast and the dragon (cf. 12:3, 13:1-8, 11-18). Indeed, the honest worship of believers demonstrates that Jesus is God, the true test of faith for a first-century Christian and hence a crucial key in John's Christology (Charles, 1991:464-465). It could be said that chapter 5 is the most important part in Revelation, which connects the whole text (Krodel, 1989:168).

#### IV.3.2. The Lamb in 14:1-5

John sees the Lamb and the 144,000 in 14:1-5 that stand on Mount Zion. The Lamb's followers have his name and his father's name written on their foreheads (Rev. 14:1). The saints sing a new song<sup>136</sup> that no one except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth could sing (14:3). These are those who did not defile themselves with the woman and who were redeemed from humanity as the first-fruit of God and to the Lamb (14:4). The text 14:1 starts with *καὶ εἶδον*, indicating a new section and a reversal of the previous section. This section should therefore be understood in relation to the previous chapter, because one will find a predominantly contrastive image (cf. Farrer, 1964:159; Fiorenza, 1985:144-145). If one is not aware of this contrastive image between chapter 13 and 14:1-5, one might be missing the focal point of this section.

##### IV.3.2.1 Mount Zion

John observes the Lamb and the 144,000 that stand on Mount Zion (14:1; ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος Σιών). For Israel, Zion was thought to be the place of deliverance or of the Almighty

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<sup>136</sup> The *ᾠδὴν καινὴν* used in Rev. 5:9 for 'new song' could be distinguished from *νέος*. Behm (1965:3.447) insists that while "νέος is new in time and origin..., καινός is what is new in nature, different from the usual, impressive, better than the old, superior in value or attraction." If one agrees with that the word 'new' is a recurring theme in Revelation, implying the qualitative change into new nature, it makes sense that the new name in 2:17 (*ὄνομα καινόν*); 3:12 (*τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν*), the new Jerusalem in 3:12 (*τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλήμ*), new heaven and new earth in 21:1 (*οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν*), making all things new in 21:5 (*καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα*) mean the qualitative change of the new nature in contrast to the old nature as a whole (cf. Morris, 1999:96-97).

God's presence (Krodel, 1989:260; Ps. 2:6; 1Pe. 2:6; Heb. 12:22). As the Holy place, in which God dwells for his people, in the Old Testament Zion is also considered to be the site of a mighty *theophany*, where Yahweh will defeat the evil powers of chaos (cf. Isa. 14:32; 17:12-14; 18:1-6; 29:1-8; 31:4-9; Ezk. 38-39; Joel 2:1; 3:21; Am. 1:2; Zec. 12:1-9; 14:3; 12-15). It may otherwise indicate that Mount Zion was regarded as the temple Mount and applied to the heavenly temple in the present (Rev. 11:19) as the place of "victory and rest" (Michael, 1997:169) and also applied to the New Jerusalem of the future (21:2), a hope expected by nearly all ancient Jews, who looked for the restoration of Jerusalem and its temple (cf. Fiorenza, 1985:149).

In contrast to the Lamb and the 144,000 that stand on Mount Zion, in Revelation 13 one takes note of a beast rising out of the sea (ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίου ἀναβαῖνον: 13:1) and a beast coming out of the earth (θηρίου ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς γῆς: 13:11), implying the Roman empire (see Friesen, 2004:281-313). One may probably suppose that these are the adversaries of the Lamb as well as the people of God, because in the ancient world, the sea could have been regarded as evil (Mounce, 1977:249-250). The earth in Revelation was regarded as implying the pagan world or the inhabitants of Palestine (Ford, 1975:213). As the contrastive image with the Lamb or a parody of the Lamb,<sup>137</sup> a beast coming out of the sea and a beast coming out of the earth are given their authority to deceive the world from the dragon (Rev. 13:4). Just as the dragon stood on the shore of the sea to fight with the people of God, the Lamb stands on Mount Zion with the 144,000.

In the case of 14:1, who are these 144,000? It is clear that they are the followers of the Lamb, because they had the Lamb's name and his Father's name written on their foreheads (cf. Ezk. 9:4). The mark on the foreheads indicates the stamp of loyalty to "the kingdom of the Lord and his Anointed" (Farrer, 1964:160), "God's property, and .. God's protection" (Charles, 1975:1.196; cf. Krodel, 1989:256; Johnson, 2001:201), "a symbol of basic allegiance" (Mounce, 1977:268), "marks of genuine membership in the community of the redeemed" (Beale, 1999:735), "the mark of Christian baptism" (Barker, 2000:245; contra

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<sup>137</sup> In Revelation 13:3, the image of a beast coming out of the sea (Rev. 13:3) is predominantly contrasted with the image of the Lamb (Rev. 5:6). Just as the Lamb looking as if it had been slain, is used in the phrase ὡς ἐφαγμένον (to slaughter), a beast who seemed to have had a fatal wound is used in the phrase ὡς ἐφαγμένην. The application of the same participle from the verb σφάζω (cf. Laws, 1988:41n 6) in Rev. 5:6 and 13:3 indicates that the characteristic of both the Lamb and the beast is predominantly contrasted.

Farrer, 1964:160).<sup>138</sup>

This mark could be contrasted with chapter 13:16-17 in that everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, receive the mark of the beast on their right hand or on their foreheads and no one could buy or sell unless they had the mark. First of all, one must consider what the function of these two beasts is. The purpose of two beasts is to deceive all the people, making them believe in these beasts. The inhabitants of the earth will be forced to worship these two beasts. It is accordingly clear from this context that receiving the mark of the beast will imply total devotion or allegiance to the beast (cf. Collins, 1979:96; Ladd, 1979:185; Poythress, 2000:147).

#### IV.3.2.2. The Virgin, Conqueror

The 144,000 who stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion have the Lamb's name as well as his Father's written on their foreheads, indicating their dedication or devotion or allegiance to the Lamb (cf. Ellul, 1977:95-97; Wall, 1991:179; Beale, 1999:734). They have received the name because they did not defile themselves with the women in contrast with the worshippers of the beast. One should, however, ask who are these women? In which way should one interpret her, literally or symbolically?

To begin with, the 144,000 are called the *παρθένοι* (virgin)-male virgins, thus, if one thinks about this one in a literal way, it doesn't make sense (cf. Charles, 1976:2.8). The arguments regarding the issue as to who these virgins are have attempted to solve this by way of an ascetic element. Collins (1979:100) insists that the conduct of celibacy is derived from the Israelite traditions of the holy war and priesthood, which required a temporary sexual abstinence before going to war (cf. Swete, 1977:179; Ex. 19:15; 1 Sa. 21:4). According to Kiddle (1940:267-268), the word 'virgin' is closely linked with widows who lived a life of purity and devotion. He interprets this word quite literally (cf. contra Farrer, 1964:160-161; Charles, 1976:2.8-9). In the case of Caird (1966:179), this

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<sup>138</sup> Barclay (1983:2.102-103) explains that a mark in ancient times could represent five different things: 1. it represents ownership just as the slave was branded with his owner's mark. 2. it represents loyalty in the case of a soldier. 3. it represents security in life and in death. 4. it represents dependence, implying the relationship between the patron and the client. 5. it represents safety given to the devotees of god. According to Louw & Nida (1993:1.60-61), *σφραγίς* (seal) usually means ownership, approval or closure of something.

virgin image is clearly applied within a military setting, which is derived from the Deuteronomic regulations for holy war (e.g. Dt. 20; 23:9-10; 1 Sa. 21:5; 2 Sa. 11:11). In ancient Israel, war was initiated with a religious ceremony, and soldiers needed to keep their ceremonial purity (cf. Grimsrud, 1987:105). In contrast with the scholars that are mentioned above, Olson (1997:500) interprets ‘virgins’ as good angels, standing in opposition to the fallen angels that are based on the “book of the Watchers.” In this case, it is not easy to find any textual evidence for considering ‘virgins’ as good angels.

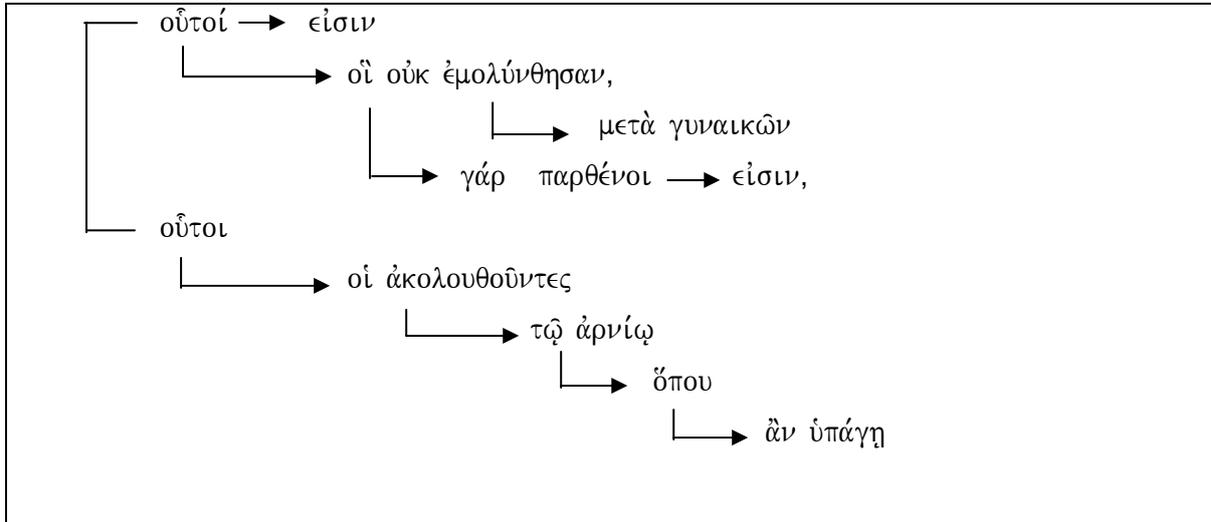
A certain application and combatant terminology is applied to Revelation in an endeavour to deliver the message of Jesus Christ as the Lamb. The conquerors that are followers of the Lamb fight with the forces of the beast on the earth. In connection with this section, in Revelation chapters 12-13, there are several statements with a certain reference towards a military implication. These statements are stated: the dragon went off to make war against the rest of the woman’s offspring (12:17; ἀπῆλθεν ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν λοιπῶν τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς): who can make war against him? (13:4; τίς δύναται πολεμῆσαι μετ’ αὐτοῦ): to make war against the saints (13:7; ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων).

Therefore, the 144,000 who did not defile themselves with the woman<sup>139</sup> could be called God’s soldiers, fighting not with the sword or spear, but with the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ (cf. Rev. 1:2; 19:13; 22:7). With the emphasis on the military setting as soldiers of God (Aune, 1996:274), ceremonial purity must be emphasized in contrast with the worshippers of the beast, who defiled themselves with the beasts (e.g. Rev. 13:3-4, 12, 14-15). This has an implication and reference to emperor-worship or imperial-worship (cf. Bauckham, 1993b:37-38; Morris, 1999:168; Hendrikson, 2000:149-150). Contrary to the worshippers of the beasts, the 144,000 stand as the new community

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<sup>139</sup> Pippin, (1992:80) who is a feminist, thinks that Revelation does contain from its perspective only negative and male-dominated images of woman. According to her, woman in the Apocalypse is regarded as victims of war and patriarchy, and the Apocalypse is not a safe place for woman. She insists that the Biblical text referring to the end of time is so male chauvinistic, that she continued to be shocked by its blatant voice (cf. contra Mounce, 1977:269-270; Ladd, 1979:192). Just as the 144,000 are a symbolic number indicating the new community of God or the “representative of the whole of the redeemed people of God” (Guthrie, 1981:67), the woman with whom the 144,000 did not defile themselves, indicates a symbolic image personified as the great harlot of Rome (cf. Rev. 17). Generally speaking, Revelation sometimes uses the word ‘woman’ to indicate the ‘church’ (cf. Rev. 12:1-2; 19:7; 21:2, 9) or the great harlot Rome (cf. Rev. 14:4; 17:1, 3-7, 9, 15, 18; 19:2). It is accordingly not good to consider Revelation as containing words of ill-treatment concerning woman.

of God’s people, who keep their purity in this world as faithful witnesses of Christ (cf. Rev. 1:5, 9). Wall (1991:180) states that the community’s sexual chastity can be regarded as a pure relationship with God that should keep and maintain in order to resist evil. The topic of the virgin conqueror in 14:4a can be structured as follows:



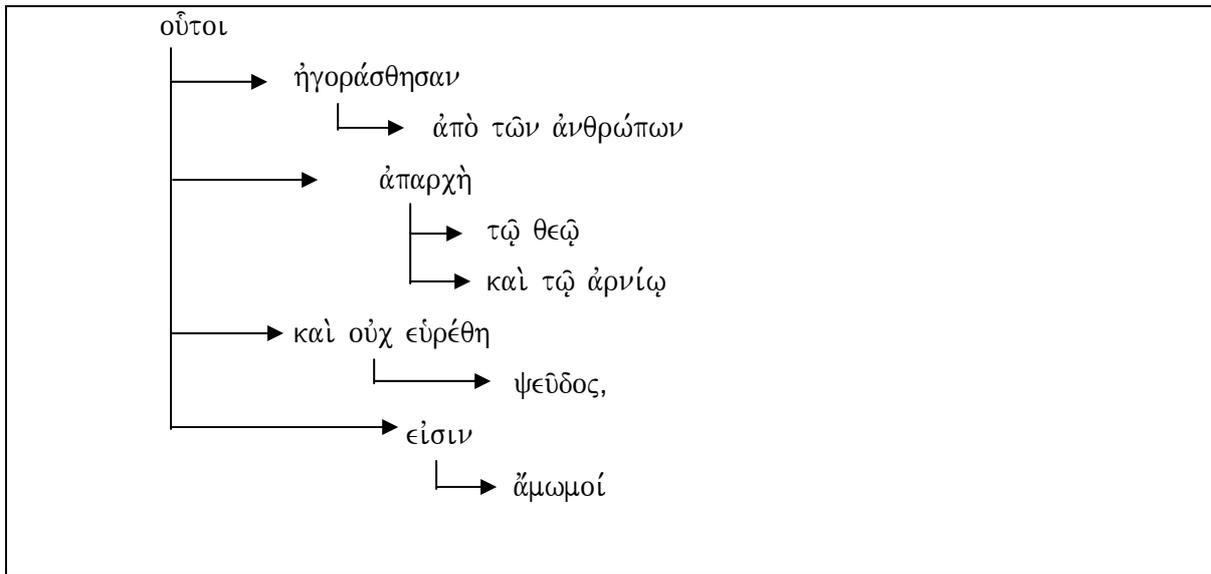
This diagram above indicates who the conquerors expressed as οὗτοι are. On the one hand, these are those who did not defile themselves with the woman, implying the great harlot Rome (e.g. 14:4; 17:1, 3-7, 9, 15, 18; 19:2). In the Bible, virginity means an image of faithfulness to God (cf. Jer. 14:17). That is, virginity as conqueror indicates that they are faithful people of God, even enduring death. On the other hand, these are the followers of the Lamb. The use of the present participle ἀκολουθοῦντες means following the teaching and commandments of the Lamb no matter what he says (Aune, 1996:275). Therefore, the conquerors can be defined as virgins who are faithful to God and as the followers of the Lamb who follow him even unto death.

#### IV.3.2.3. The first fruit

Owing to their victory, power, and purity through the death of Christ (cf. Newman, 1968:85), they are offered as first fruits (*ἀπαρχή*) to God and the Lamb (Rev. 14:4). In the Old Testament, first fruits (*ἀπαρχή*) are used as the first fruits of the field or flocks, which are offered to God as well as to men belonging to God (Delling, 1968:1.485; Ro. 16:5; 1 Co. 16:15). These were regarded as holy, separated for divine use and were consecrated

unto God (Bauer, 1979:81; cf. Lev. 23:9-14). The first fruits were, thus, regarded as “the peculiar property of God” (Ford, 1975:246), as “the harvest of salvation” (Krodel, 1989:265), as “the best of the harvest” (Slater, 1999:192), indicating the particular eschatological people as the conquerors who belong to God and the Lamb. They are the chosen people of God, redeemed from the earth (cf. Bauckham, 1993b:96), implying the sacrificial language of the Old Testament (Aune, 1996:276; Ex. 23:19; Nu. 28:26-27).

On the basis of this context, the first fruits as the followers of the Lamb can be called conquerors who overcame the false teaching and deception of the Roman Empire. It should accordingly be clear that the 144,000 as the first fruits represent the new particular community of God who devoted their lives to the Lamb as conqueror, while fighting against the beast. The fact that they are referred to as virgins does give us an indication of the victory and power obtained through the death of the Lamb, as well as their ceremonial purity. The structure of 14:14b-15 for the first fruit is as follows:



This diagram shown above provides us with who the real conquerors are in the present situation the first Christians faced. The conquerors are delivered from the people who belong to the earth, introduced as a hostile power against God and his people (cf. Beagley, 1987:91; e.g. 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10, 18; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6; 17:2, 8; 18:3, 11; 19:2). The verb ἀγοράζω provides a religious implication of Christ redeeming the people of God (Kistemaker, 2001:403). In fact, they are conquerors redeemed by the blood of the Lamb

(cf. Beale, 1999:737-738). In contrast with the people who belong to the beasts (13:1-18), the conquerors can be identified with a fourfold meaning in the above diagram: the redeemed people of God, the first fruits, indicating a particular new community of God and the Lamb, and the people who are truthful and blameless. According to Kistemaker (2001:406), these characteristics indicate the people of God and the saints who are able to conquer the evil ones. When the One like a Son of man executes his divine judgment in 14:14-20, the destiny of the conquerors and the people who belong to the earth is divided into two parts: salvation (14:14-16) and judgment (14:17-20).

#### IV.3.3. The Lamb in 17:14

This verse (17:14) could be included within the macrostructure of 17:1-18. John sees a vision of the great prostitute in 17:1, who was called Babylon the great (v. 5). The woman, that is a symbolic image of Rome, (cf. Summers, 1951:191; Reddish, 1982:207) was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony regarding Jesus (v. 6). The identity of the woman and the beast as an oppressive force is revealed (vv. 7-13). The victory of the Lamb (τὸ ἀρνίον νικῆσει) against the woman and the beast indicates that the Roman Empire has been defeated by the Lamb, because the Lamb is Lord of lords and King of kings (κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων: v. 14; cf. 19:16).

The description of the judgment of Babylon<sup>140</sup> already announced in chapter 14:8 as well as in chapter 16:17-21 will be fulfilled in chapter 19:11-21. The relevance between 14:8 and 17:2 could be connected closely with each other as follows: she made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries (ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη: Rev. 14:8) and intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries (ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς: Rev. 17:2). The description concerning the beasts in chapter 13 is mainly focused on the military and the religious power of the Roman Emperors

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<sup>140</sup> The references occur regarding the appearance of Babylon in Revelation: 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21. There are two interpretations concerning the possibility that Babylon has some symbolic meaning, referring to either Rome or Jerusalem. While most scholars (cf. Phillips, 1974:213; Barclay, 1983:142; Metzger, 1993:85; Roloff, 1993:1966; Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:157) suggest that the Babylon in Revelation chapters 17-18 is none other than Rome, Beagley (1987:92-102) insists that Babylon can be applied better to Jerusalem than Rome, by quoting Mt 23:35 and Rev. 11:8. It is, however, very doubtful that for the Christians in Asia Minor, who were composed of both gentiles and Jewish Christians, this prophetic message from John regarding the destruction of Jerusalem would not be persuasive enough for them.

towards both the people who were Christians as well as those of the earth (cf. Bauckham, 1993b:35; Court, 1994:59-60). But the great Babylon as the symbol of Rome in Revelation 17 is mainly focused on the economic power of Babylon (Bauckham, 1993b:36).

Bauckham (1993b:35-39) does insist that while chapter 13 is primarily focused on the political aspect, the focus of chapters 17-18 is mainly economic, but in both cases also deeply religious. It is, however, not easy to divide respectively between religion, politics, military power, and the economy of the ancient world, because these are closely related to each other. In chapters 17-18 one can substantially find many implications, indicating religious, political, and military as well as economical implications, as stated in the following: the wine of her adulteries<sup>141</sup> (τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς: Rev. 17:2) – referring to political and religious implications, the filth of her adulteries (τὰ ἀκάθαρτα τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς: Rev. 17:4) – religious and moral implications (cf. Mounce, 1977:309), and the blood of the saints (τοῦ αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων: Rev. 17:6] – religious, political, and military implications. The people of God that fight with the enemies of the earth and heaven, ultimately Satan himself, faced with various contexts (see Harland, 2000:99-121). The reason why the blood of certain faithful Christians must be shed by the woman symbolizing Rome's oppressive power is that they are witnesses of Jesus (τῶν μαρτύρων Ἰησοῦ: Rev 17:6) even unto death.

#### IV.3.3.1. Lord of lords and King of kings (κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων)

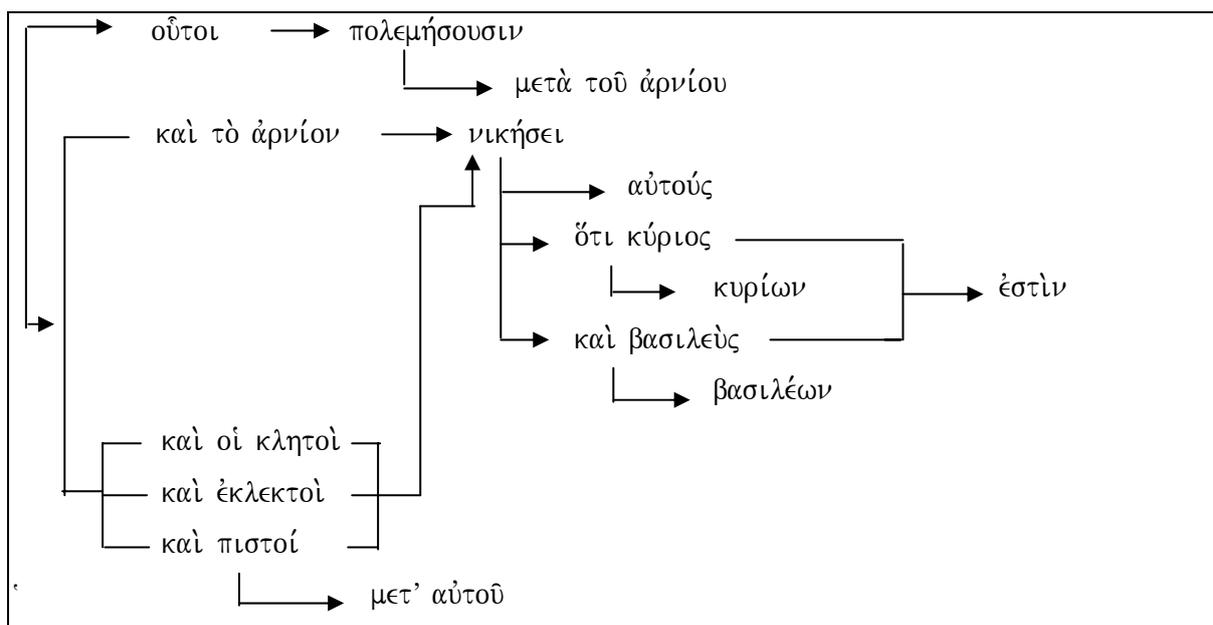
To be a witness of Jesus (τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ) could be interpreted in two possible ways: an objective genitive translated as 'the witness about Jesus' or 'the witness to Jesus' and a subjective genitive as 'the witness borne by Jesus'. In the present context, it is appropriate to regard the objective genitive interpretation, meaning 'the witness about Jesus' or 'the witness to Jesus' (Vassiliadis, 1985:129-134; Aune, 1996:282; contra Mazzaferri, 1988:114-122).

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<sup>141</sup> In the Old Testament, the term 'harlotry' is mainly linked with Israel's unfaithfulness and a certain political disloyalty to God as the people that are under the covenant relationship with God (Court, 1979:140), who is the real object of worship. Concerning Israel's unfaithfulness to God, the prophet Hosea (cf. 2:2-5; 4:12-15, 17; 5:4; 6:10; 7:4; 9:1, 10; 13:2) reveals the unfaithfulness of the people of Israel through the marriage between God and Israel (cf. Hauck & Schulz, 1973:6.587). As covenant people, the people of Israel failed to keep their loyalty to God, by following pagan gods and proving themselves to be disloyal towards God (cf. Court, 1994:64-65).

Just as Jesus himself is called and confirmed as the faithful witness (ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός; 1:5) through his death, “er mit seinem Tod sein Zeugnis besiegelt hat” (Satake, 1966:114). This passage echoes a social context where the conquerors have faced oppression by way of certain imperial cults or emperor worship (cf. Perrin, 1983:144; Slater, 1999:196). Aune (1996:283) writes that paradoxically, the term victory is an ironical term, implying a victory achieved through apparent defeat and death. The exalted Christ as the conqueror must clearly be regarded as an example for Christian followers

In 17:14, the Lamb is introduced as the conqueror over the great ‘harlot’, beasts and the kings (Rev. 17:14). In this war with the great ‘harlot’, beasts, and the kings, the Lamb will conquer the enemies in Revelation 19:11-21 through the image of the Divine-Warrior. The application of the future tense πολεμήσουσιν, and νικήσει in 17:14 indicates that the war between the great harlot, beasts, and the kings and the Lamb will occur in the future that will be completed in 19:11-21 (cf. Mounce, 1977:317). The statement in 17:14 reveals the message of the whole book that the Lamb will conquer his enemies (Guthrie, 1981:68) because he is the Lord of lords and King of kings (κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων). On the basis of 1 Enoch. 9:4 and Daniel. 4:37 (LXX), Beale (1985:618) regards the title “Lord of lords and King of kings (κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων)” as the divine power that removes the rule of evil kings. The syntactic analysis of 17:14 will be helpful to understand the identity of the conquerors.



The diagram above shows us that just as the conqueror, Christ overcame the enemies through the image of the warring Lamb, the community of the people of God who are called (*κλητοί*), the chosen (*ἐκλεκτοί*) and faithful followers (*πιστοί*) will overcome through the power of the warring Lamb the enemies who threatened their daily life in their social context (cf. Dyer, 1987:305-316). In other words, just as Jesus Christ as conqueror is a faithful witness (cf. 1:5: *μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός*; 3:14: *ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός*; 19:11: *πιστός*) to God even at the cost of his life, the conquerors who have been called (*κλητοί*), the elected (*ἐκλεκτοί*) and faithful followers (*πιστοί*) must keep their identity as faithful witnesses to the Lamb under any situation. These three terms as the conquerors are related to the people of God who are faithful, steadfast, and loyal to God the Lamb even unto the death (Charles, 1976:2.75; Slater, 1999:196). That is why they who have been called (*κλητοί*), the elected (*ἐκλεκτοί*) and faithful followers (*πιστοί*) can stand as conquerors like the Lamb who was faithful, steadfast, and loyal to God (Michaels, 1997:199). It is clear that the situation of the Christians under persecution, social and political, and economical threats will ultimately be reversed into the victory of the people of God as conquerors.

#### IV.3.4. Summary

In Revelation, the Lamb Christology is a prominent title, which has several important christological implications. These christological implications are spread out in various texts to deliver some important messages to those who were in a very difficult situation, because of the name of God and the Lamb, and of the testimony over God and the Lamb.

The references to the Lamb (*ἀρνίου*) appear 29 times (cf. 5:6, 8, 12, 13; 6:1, 16; 7:9, 10, 14, 17; 12:11; 13:8, 11; 14:1, 4, 10; 15:3; 17:14 (x 2); 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1, 3). Through this symbolic image, one can find out that the Lamb image provides an ironical message in the victory and conquering that only the conquerors can achieve (Du Rand, 1993a:243-248). In 5:5-6, the symbolic transformation of the Lamb is clear from the Lion of Judah, the Root of the David to the slain Lamb. The traditional messianic expectation, reflecting military or political expectation (cf. Edward, 1982:142-146) is transformed into a 'New Perspective' that an alternative victory is provided. The Lamb is not a Davidic messianic figure who Jewish people expected as a military and political figure. The victory

of the Lamb is achieved through the symbol of death (cf. Guthrie, 1981:65). This ‘New Perspective’ reveals a ‘reversal effect’ (cf. Laws, 1988:24-35) and a ‘rhetorical effect’. In 5:5-6, the Lamb-Christology suggests that a victory is not achieved through military or political expectations but through suffering (Aune, 1996:271-272). That is why the Lamb-Christ can be called the conqueror that overcame the whole world against God and the people of God.

The Lamb in 14:1-5 stands with the 144,000 on Mount Zion as the place of salvation. This section is mostly focused on the conquerors as the people of God, expressed as the 144,000 rather than the Lamb. The people of God are contrasted with the people of the beasts who have the mark. The judgment of the beasts and their followers is announced in 14:8 and accomplished in 19:11-21. In contrast with the defeated, the conquerors in 14:1-5 are introduced as the 144,000 who stand with the Lamb as conquerors on Mount Zion. For what reason, can the 144,000 be called conquerors? There are, in fact, several reasons why they can be called conquerors. Firstly, they have the name of the Lamb and God against being coerced to receive the mark of the beasts. Secondly, they are virgins who are not soiled by the women. This image is based on a military setting (Caird, 1966:179), derived from the image for holy war (e.g. Dt. 20; 23:9-10; 1 Sa. 21:5; 2 Sa. 11:11). This image is reinterpreted with a ‘New Perspective’ that does not fight with the sword or spear in terms of the military background, but with the word of God and the testimony of Christ. This image has a ceremonial purity that is required for the conquerors. Finally, They are the first fruits that are offered to God as the first fruits of the field or flocks (Delling, 1968:1.485), reflecting the sacrificial language of the Old Testament (e.g. Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Nu. 28:26-27). They devoted their lives unto God and the Lamb as the new eschatological community of God. That is why they can be called conquerors who devoted their lives to God and the Lamb rather than the beasts (cf. 13:1-17).

Unlike the Lamb, looking as if it had been slain in 5:6, in 17:14, the Lamb appears as the universal figure that fights against the beasts and their followers. The war between God and the people of God and the beasts and their followers occurs. But the Lamb conquers them because he is the Lord of universe (Beasley-Murray, 1992:259). Beale (1985:618) is of the opinion that the title “Lord of lords and King of kings (κύριος κυρίων ἐστίν καὶ

βασιλεὺς βασιλέων)” reflects the divine power that removes the rule of evil kings. Just as the Lamb conqueror as the Lord of universe, those who have been called (*κλητοὶ*), the elected (*ἐκλεκτοὶ*) and faithful followers (*πιστοί*) can be called conquerors that were faithful, steadfast and loyal towards God and the Lamb. Therefore, the symbolic transformation of the slain Lamb to the warring Lamb might provide some intentional purpose to persuade Christians to remain faithful as revealing the universal characteristic of the Lamb (cf. Slater, 1999:203).

#### **IV.4. The Divine-Warrior as Conqueror in Revelation 19:11-21**

In Revelation one often encounters the Divine-Warrior motif (e.g. Rev. 1:16; 2:16, 26; 6:2; 12:7-12; 14:17-20; 17:14; 19:2). But among these verses, the clearest use of the Divine-Warrior motif is in Revelation 19:11-21. According to Aune (1998b:1046-1047), this section reveals the Divine-Warrior motif as conqueror, executing the judgment of the enemies of God. Bauckham (1993a:233) also emphasizes the Divine-Warrior motif as conqueror who fights with his enemies militarily. In contrast to previous disasters (seals: 6-8:2; trumpets: 8:7-18; bowls: 16:2-21), expecting the final judgment of Christ’s second coming, these verses show a fuller picture of Christ’s final judgment on the evil ones during the last battle. Looking at the Divine-Warrior motif in 19:11-21, one could assume that it is not possible to separate this section (19:11-21) from the previous chapters (17:1-19:10). This section is a realization or the fulfillment of the previous chapters that predicted the destruction of the evil ones such as the great harlot, the beasts and the kings. One can recognize that the final victory of Christ as a Divine-Warrior will provide us with various crucial principles necessary in order to obtain the final victory (Collins, 1984:130). When one regards the implication of the Old Testament in Revelation in terms of victory or conquest, the motif of the Divine-Warrior can be linked with the implication of the Old Testament (cf. Paulien, 2001:113-129), reflecting the victory of the Divine-Warrior.

In the Old Testament, one finds various stories concerning God as a Warrior against the enemies of Israel. According to the event in Exodus 15, Israel proclaims the power of God as a Warrior against his enemy in the following way: “the Lord is a Warrior” (Ex. 15:3), “Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power, Your right hand, O Lord, shattered the

enemy” (Ex. 15:6). The victory by Yahweh over the forces of chaos in Exodus was praised in the liturgical context of Israel’s redemption (Casey, 1982:155; cf. Ps. 74:12-19; Isa. 51:9-10). Therefore, the event of Exodus provides a crucial biblical typology concerning God’s act of salvation towards his chosen people and the warring God as a divine warrior against Israel herself, as well as the enemies of God’s people (cf. Day, 1985:97-101; Nysse, 1987:192-201). One can suppose that God as a divine warrior is the main character who leads a war into victory (cf. Longman III, 1982:292), even though there were some actions of war on the side of the human being.<sup>142</sup>

The holy war belonged to God and was initiated by God (e.g. Ex. 14:13-14; 17:16; Dt. 20:4), never by Israel, because God as the divine Warrior will intervene to help his chosen people. That is, it was regarded that God’s action could be connected with the theology of the holy war. Many historical narratives in the Old Testament reveal the meaning of the holy war to the people of God, which is based on the religious covenant relationship or cultic ceremony between God and Israel (cf. Lind, 1980:85-87). As von Rad (1991:51) writes, one can, indeed, regard holy war as a prominent cultic ceremony that is prescribed and sanctioned by fixed, traditional, sacred rites and observances. Therefore, in the case of Israel, the meaning of holy war could be divided into three parts such as pre-war, war, and post-war (cf. Kang, 1989:215-222; Longman III & Reid, 1995:33-47), which indicate the presence of God among his people from the beginning to the end.

#### IV.4.1. The Divine-Warrior in Revelation 19:11-21

Revelation 19:11-21 presents various contrasting images, compared to the previous chapters (17:1-19:10). It is divided into three parts.

1. Christ’s appearance as a Divine-Warrior in 19: 11-16 (the anti-image with the great harlot: a desert (17:3) ↔ heaven (19:11); a scarlet beast (17:3) ↔ a white horse (19:11); blasphemous names (17:3) ↔ Faithful and True (19:11); seven heads and seven horns

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<sup>142</sup> According to Kang (1989:42-48; 56-72; 98-107; 215-222), the three stages of the divine wars are suggested: before battle, battle, and post-battle. Through his thorough research, one can reach some common points: 1) Prior to the battle: the first task prior to battle was the divine consultation, and the prior approval of the gods, 2) Battle: according to the divine oracle, the kings conducted their campaign, 3) Post-battle: the final stage of the divine war was to treat the spoils which were taken from the enemy and to erect a monument or boundary stone to remember the victory of the battle and the praise of the divine warriors.

(17:3) ↔ many crowns (19:12); Babylon the great (17:5) ↔ King of kings and Lord of lords in 19:6).

2. Great supper of God for the birds in 19:17-18 (the anti-image of the wedding of the Lamb in 19:7-9: the wedding feast of the Lamb and the saints wearing fine linen:19:7-8) ↔ the feast of death of all the people who are involved with the earth (19:17-18).

3. The punishment into the fiery lake of burning sulphur of the beast, the false prophet and his followers in 19:19-21 ↔ an invitation to the wedding supper of the Lamb in 19:9.

As Wall (1991:229) insists, if the image of this future “war on earth” is the same symbol system of the earlier “war in heaven” (12:7-12) begun by Michael and the heavenly host, the victory of Christ as a Divine Warrior in 19:11-21 expects the final defeat of Satan, Death, and Hades in 20:1-3, 7-10. That is, one can assume that chapter 19 is central to interpreting both the previous, as well as following section in terms of victory and judgment (cf. Shea, 1984:251).

#### IV.4.1.1. Faithful and True

Chapter 19:11 starts with the explanation of a rider called Faithful and True who rides upon the white horse through the opened heaven. It is significant that the rider was called Faithful and True. The term Faithful and True (πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός: e.g. 1:5; 2:10, 13; 3:7, 14; 21:5; 22:6) is a familiar term in Revelation that expresses the relationship between God and Christ and between Christ and the saints (Kistemaker, 2001:519). The term Faithful and True could be connected with 21:5 (πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί) and 22:6 (πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί), revealing God’s faithful and true words, and apocalypse (Beale, 1999:950). The Faithful and True nature of God as a real Creator and Christ as a real Saviour to the audiences who listened to the prophetic message of John make them verify the words of God and Christ as it is (Mounce, 1977:344). In contrast to these terms, Faithful and True, the great harlot has blasphemous names (Rev. 17:3). It explains that what God and Christ have said until now (from the first to the end) is true and real.

The term Faithful and True could be connected with 2:10 (πιστὸς) and 2:13 (ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστός μου) that reveal the exhortations to the conquerors to remain faithful. This

message that Christ as a Faithful and True witness to God is exalted to the throne with God (e.g. 5:6) is the message of encouragement, hope, and religious conviction for the conquerors (cf. Miller, 1998:312-314). This is to ensure that the conquerors stay true to Christ even though they lived under a dangerous social setting (cf. Trites, 1973:72-80). Accordingly, it is quite correct to say that the intent of John was to encourage the conquerors to be faithful witnesses and to give them eschatological hope so that, if necessary, they will be willing to prove their faithfulness even in death. By so doing they would maintain the victory of the cross. John, therefore, illustrates the image of victory in depicting the conquering Christ as the martyred Christ (Reddish, 1995:219).

One has concluded that Jesus' testimony as faithful and true witness to God and to the people of God is really trustworthy. What one should ask next is for what reason his clothing was dipped in blood and if it was, is this rider's blood, the saint's or his enemies' (Rev. 19:13)? On the basis of Isaiah 63:2-3, some scholars (cf. Mounce, 1977:345; Reddish, 1982:157; Metzger, 1993:91; Roloff, 1993:218 Slater, 1999:224 Poythress, 2000:174-175; Johnson, 2001:270) insist that it is the blood of Christ's enemies. According to them, it makes more sense that the robe dipped in blood symbolizes the blood of Christ's enemies expressed in vv. 19:11, 15, 17-21 (cf. Kistemaker, 2001:521).

However, in contrast with their argument, other scholars (cf. Lenski, 1943:554; Rissi, 1972:24; Sweet, 1979:283; Grimsrud, 1987:149-150; Boring, 1989:196; Krodel, 1989:323; Wall, 1991:231; Court, 1994:32; Morris, 1999: 224; Barker, 2000:308) firmly believe that the robe dipped in blood symbolizes none other than the blood of Christ. It seems a plausible interpretation to me. He dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the word of God (e.g. 19:13). Christ is called the word of God (cf. 1:2, 9; 6:9; 20:4). When Christ fights with the enemies of God, his weapon is not a literal sword, but the Word of God received from God (Rev. 1:1). That is, Christ as Divine-Warrior defeats the enemies with the sharp sword coming from his mouth (Rev. 19:15; cf. 1:16; 2:12, 16; Isa. 11:4; 49:2; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12), indicating the word of God and the testimony of Jesus for judgment (cf. Mounce, 1977:346). Therefore, the robe dipped in blood is not the blood of his enemies but Christ's own martyr blood to be shed on the cross (Boring, 1989:196).

Through this argument, one is able to interpret the structure of Revelation consistently. Christ as Divine-Warrior is the Lamb looking as if it had been slain (5:6). Owing to his blood, he could open the sealed scroll that no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open or even look inside it (5:3). For that reason, he could be called conqueror in front of the world. Likewise, the Divine Warrior wearing the robe dipped in blood overcomes the enemies with his blood. In this sense, the supreme manifestation of the Messiah's glory is not political power, but self-sacrificial passion (Bauckham, 1993b:104-106). Ironically, it is at the *parousia* of the slain Lamb expressed as Divine Warrior that the eschatological age will come to its final conclusion (Wall, 1991:231). One can, thus, conclude that Christ as Divine-Warrior conquers the enemies through the blood, shed on the cross and the word of God or the testimony of himself.

#### IV.4.1.2. Divine Judgment

In 19:15, one can see the judgment theme: the iron sceptre (ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ), the wine press of the fury of the wrath (ληνὸν τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς). The image of the iron sceptre could closely be linked with 2:27 in that the conquerors receive the promise statement from Christ to rule his enemies with an iron sceptre, and with 12:5 in that the Messiah's birth and exaltation are introduced. The context of these passages has some common features. It has a military motif<sup>143</sup> fighting with the nations and a judgment motif on the nations who do not follow the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

The other judgment image in 19:15 is that he tramples the winepress of the furious anger of God Almighty (πατεῖ τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος). That this scene is an absolute image of judgment could be seen through 14:17-20 in which the divine judgment is introduced. As I noted above, in 14:17-20 the great winepress of God's wrath (ληνὸν τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μέγαν) is a natural symbol

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<sup>143</sup> Bauckham (1993b:67-73) divides the theme of Revelation into three stages. The first is the theme of the messianic war. This takes up the Jewish hope for a Messiah who is a descendant of David, anointed by God as king and military leader of his people. The second is that of the eschatological exodus. Since the exodus was the key salvation event of the history of Israel, it was naturally the model for prophetic and apocalyptic hopes of another great salvation event in the future. The third theme is that of witness. It is primarily Jesus' and his followers' witness to the true God and his righteousness. His division into three stages concerning the theme of Revelation shows good insight, but it is not easy to divide the theme of Revelation into just three stages because there are a lot of detailed and important themes in Revelation, for example Christology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology for the future that the first Christians longed for.

for ultimate judgment (Court, 1994:52). In order to portray the judgment image, John uses the judgment image of the Old Testament against the nations in Isaiah 63:3 and Joel 3:13.<sup>144</sup> Here, Christ as Divine-Warrior is described as judge who fights with his enemies that will ultimately lead the Divine-Warrior as conqueror and his followers to victory, because he is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The titles ‘King of kings’ and ‘Lord of lords (κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων)’ explain that the supreme lordship of the Lamb confirms his victory over the enemies (Beckwith, 1967:701). The universal sovereignty of the warrior Christ lies in his eschatological victory over all the enemies of God (Mounce, 1977:347; cf. Rev. 17:14; 1 Ti. 6:15; Dt. 10:17). However, when one considers the context of Revelation in 17:14 and 19:15, the titles ‘King of kings’ and ‘Lord of lords’ demonstrate Christ’s universal sovereignty (cf. Fiorenza, 1991:106) through the death of the Lamb and the judgment of the Divine-Warrior. Two christological titles can be combined: on the one hand, the Lamb Christology (cf. Rev. 17:14) described as that of fighting against the great harlot, beasts and the kings through the death of the Lamb (cf. Caird, 1966:246), and on the other hand, the Divine-Warrior Christology executing the divine judgment through the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God. One can assume that the titles ‘King of kings’ and ‘Lord of lords’ are the sum of the previous (19:11-15) and following scene (19:17-21), explained as the function and role of the Divine-Warrior in his final *parousia*.

With the figure of Divine Judge, Christ as the Divine-Warrior wears many crowns, characterizing him as ruler of the world (19:12) and no one but Christ himself knows Christ’s true name (cf. Fiorenza, 1991:105). The sword that is coming from the mouth implies his faithful testimony (Maier, 2002:188) that he will strike down the nations (19:15). The appearance of the Divine-Warrior as judge explained above could be best connected with the next two visions in 19:17-21.

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<sup>144</sup> Isaiah 63:3 and Joel 3:13 are known as familiar judgment images in the Old Testament, especially if connected with Revelation 14:17-20 and 19:15, also implying a judgment image. In Isaiah. 63:3 and Joel 3:13, God tramples the winepress in anger as a symbolic act to judge the nations and sometimes Israel herself when Israel doesn’t obey the word of God. Therefore, the application of θυμός and ὀργή in Isaiah 63:3, 5-6 (LXX) and ληνός in Joel 3:13 (LXX) indicates the meaning of God’s judgment against the nations. The same is true of the parallel passages in 19:15 as well as in 14:17-20, indicating God’s wrath as a symbol of judgment evil (cf. Slater, 1999:228).

#### IV.4.1.3. The great supper

The great supper of God in 19:17-18 is an opposite image to the wedding of the Lamb in 19:7-9. In contrast with the conquerors who were followers of Christ the Lamb, and attended the wedding feast of the Lamb, an angel shouts to all the birds flying in midair to “Come, gather together for the great supper of God and eat on the flesh of the fallen.” This judgment reveals the true status of people whether they are the followers of Christ or the followers of the beasts (Grimsrud, 1987:150). The symbolic image of birds eating the flesh of all rebellious people might be derived from the Ezekiel 39:17-20 in that the image of birds and all the wild animals eating the flesh of all rebellious people appears here. Although there are some similarities between the two texts, one can also see some differences.

In Revelation 19:17-18, while all the birds flying in midair just eat the flesh of all the rebellious people, in Ezekiel 39:17-20 the birds and all the wild animals eat the flesh and drink the blood of all rebellious people. Ezekiel 39:17-20 confines the boundary of the judgment mainly to those of the higher social and economical and political status. Revelation 19:17-18 expands its boundary to include all people, even slaves as well as the high and mighty (cf. Sweet, 1979:285; Boring, 1989:199; Slater, 1999:228).<sup>145</sup> Therefore, the image of messianic divine judgment indicates the boundary of the judgment expanding to all rebellious people as a whole, implying the universal judgment of all the evil ones (Morris, 1999:226; Gilbertson, 2003:134-135). Accordingly, the image of divine judgment, that is expanded into the boundary of all rebellious people, denoting judgment of the whole universe is well explained in 6:15 and 19:18 as follows: 6:15 ⇒ “the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, every slave and every freeman”, 19:18 ⇒ “kings, generals, mighty men, horses and their riders, the flesh of all people, free, slave, small and great.”

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<sup>145</sup> In Ezekiel 39:17-20, the lists are as follows: mighty men, princes, horses, riders, and soldiers. But in Revelation 19:17-18, the lists are as follows: kings, generals, mighty men, horses, riders, free, slave, small, and great. Even though Revelation 19:17-18 adduces Ezekiel 39:17-20, John reinterprets this message into his context in which the first audiences can understand. Thus, this message that John wanted to deliver might have been meaningful to the first Christians.

#### IV.4.1.4. Final salvation and final judgment

The last image of this section (19:11-21) is the description of the beast and kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army (v.19). Without any battle between Christ the rider on the horse and his army, the beast and the false prophet were captured and thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulphur (v. 20). And the rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of Christ and the birds ate until they become full (v. 21).<sup>146</sup> This scene where the evil forces are defeated is a realization of the nature of reality, indicating that this section describes the final victory of Christ as the Divine-Warrior conqueror and his army over those of the beasts, the false prophet and all the rebellious people (cf. Collins, 1979:138). This eschatological combat image can be connected with 12:1-12 of the previous section and 20:1-6 of the following section.

In there, Satan was hurled to the earth (ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν;12:9) and an angel seized the dragon or Satan and bound him for a thousand years and threw (ἐκράτησεν, ἔδησεν, ἔβαλεν) him into the Abyss. The defeat of Satan in these two images is based on the final victory that derived from the victory of the Divine Warrior (see Mckelvey, 2001:85-100). The most interesting thing in these verses is that these words are used with the aorist tense rather than the future tense. That is, the image of combat-victory in these sections is explained as the result of Christ and the martyrs' death, reflecting the past event on the cross (Collins, 1976:234).

In terms of the pattern of the combat myth, Collins (1976; cf. Hanson, 1975:402-413) explains the motif of combat-victory between God as conqueror and Satan as the enemy of God, especially focusing on chapter 12. For her, the repeated pattern of the structure in

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<sup>146</sup> In order to understand this section better, Michaels (1997:218) suggests a kind of chiasm concerning this section as follows: (a) the birds of the sky are invited to feast (v. 17), (b) the doomed armies are described (v. 18), (c) the beast gathers these armies for battle (v. 19), (c') the beast and false prophet are captured and thrown into the lake of fire (v. 20), (b') the armies are killed by the sword of the rider on the white horse (v. 21), (a') the birds feast on their flesh (v. 21). Even though it is good suggestion to make understanding this section through this diagram, it is not enough to show the role of Christ as the Divine-Warrior who fights to destroy the evil ones as a whole. Thus, I want to suggest a kind of ring composition in the following way: (a) the great feast of God for birds (v. 17), (b) the destiny of the all rebellious people (v. 18), (c) the victory of Christ as the Divine-Warrior against all evil ones (vv. 19-20a), (b') the destiny of the beast and the false prophet (v. 20b), (a') the great feast for birds (v. 21). Through this kind of analysis, the role of Christ as the Divine-Warrior that fights against all evil ones is revealed much better.

Revelation is deeply rooted to the victory that is derived from the framework of the ancient myths of combat. She compares the motif of combat-victory in Revelation with the ancient myths of combat, expressed as combat between the forces of order or good and those of chaos or evil. Her argument gives us insight to help interpret the Revelation in terms of victory and conquest. For Collins (1976:44), the primary impact on the first-century Christians is based on the motif from persecution to salvation through combat-victory.

It is also a realization of 16:17 when a great voice from the throne proclaims that “it is done (*γέγονεν*).” It declares that this is the manifestation of the completed judgment of Christ (Krodel, 1989:288-289) as the Divine-Warrior against all the rebellious people, as well as the beast and the false prophet. The fact that the beast and the false prophet were thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur implies the punishment by fire, and the confinement of a rebellious foe (cf. Collins, 1979:137; Barker, 2000:312-313; Dt. 32:22; Da. 7:11; Mt. 3:12; Lk. 16:24; Rev. 17:16; 18:8-9, 18) and indicates their final judgment by Christ as the Divine-Warrior.

In this section of Revelation (19:11-21), the familiar military symbolism expresses the victory of Christ, the conqueror as the Divine-Warrior and of his army over the beast, the false prophet, and their allies through various military images. Summers (1951:201) is of the opinion that this implies the complete victory of Christ as the Divine Warrior over all the enemies, not just in John’s age, but in any age of the world’s history. That may be so, but the primary emphasis is on the victory over the false pagan religion of Asia Minor in A.D. 95. The message of this section explains the true status of Christians in the greater Roman society, where the suffering and suppression of Christians through various elements were a central concern (cf. Slater, 1999:229).

As for encouragement, hope and resistance against evil forces, the message of the victory of Christ as the Divine-Warrior and of his followers (19:11-21) is well matched with the wedding feast of the Lamb (19:7). This is evaluated as being a frequent method for the expression of apocalyptic eschatology after the defeat of all the evil-doers in 17:1-18:24. The attending of the wedding feast of the Lamb will be connected with the everlasting blessing of 21:1-22:5 in that “God’s justice within history is vindicated” (Mckelvey,

2001:99) for his chosen people.

#### IV.4.2. The Conquerors as the followers of Christ the Divine-Warrior

##### IV.4.2.1. The 144,000 as Conquerors in 7:4-8

The issue of who the 144,000 in Revelation are, is very important. When one does actually regard only this text as it is without considering its immediate context, some problems could arise. In order to interpret some texts, it is necessary to consider the immediate context, together with the Jewish culture and tradition (cf. Gonzalez, 1999:40-68). I want to deal with the 144,000 in 7:4-8 to find its application, as well as within the immediate context, even though to avoid repetition I will not deal with Revelation 14:1-5.<sup>147</sup>

##### *IV.4.2.1.1. Interlude or expansion?*

Chapter 7 could be divided into two parts: verses 1-8 speak of the 144,000, and verses 9-17 describe the innumerable multitude. The 144,000 are described as 12,000 chosen from each of the 12 tribes of Israel and the innumerable multitude is described as those who come out of the great tribulation (7:14). Before one considers the development of this theme, it is necessary to examine the immediate context of 7:4-8. In form and content, it is possible that chapter 7:1-8, which connects chapter 6 and chapter 8:1-5, could be regarded as an interlude<sup>148</sup> as most of scholars suggest (cf. Warren, 1983:123; Fiorenza, 1991:65). However, I agree with Müller (1994:251) that even though many scholars define chapter 7 as an interlude, the term ‘expansion’ is better than the term ‘interlude’. The reason is that chapter 7 does not interrupt the flow of the seals and trumpets and does not introduce

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<sup>147</sup> The statements regarding the 144,000 in Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1-5 must obviously be the same group (cf. Collins, 1979:99; Ladd, 1979:189; Fiorenza, 1991:87). Revelation 7:1-8 parallels 14:1-5 as follows: (1) both verses are connected with the Lamb who is conqueror (7:10 and 14:1, 4), (2) both refer to the salvation of the chosen people of God against the evil ones (7:4 and 14:1) and the chosen people of God who have a seal on the foreheads of the servants of God (7:3) and have the name of the Lamb and his father’s name written on their foreheads (14:1), (3) both refer to the saints who follow the Lamb-Christ (7:14 and 14:4; cf. Slater, 1999:193). The context in which Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1-5 are considered indicates the 144,000 as a symbolical image of the faithful people of God (cf. Beckwith, 1967:650).

<sup>148</sup> The scholars who regard this section as an interlude are: Mounce, 1977:164; Boring, 1989:127; Metzger, 1993:60; Poythress, 2000:117. But in contrast with them, Mazzaferri (1989:335) insists that even though chapter 7:1-8 appears as answer to the closing question of chapter 6:17, this does not make chapter 7 as part of the sixth seal. One doesn’t have any reason to deny the connection between chapter 6:17 and chapter 7:1-8.

totally unrelated material into the following section (cf. Strand, 1989:202).

The 144,000 in 7:1-8 fall within the seven seals sequence (6:1-8:1). The opening of the first four seals (6:1-8) shows us the four horsemen, indicating the destruction of the earth from an earthly perspective. However, when one gets to the five seals (6:9-11), the scene changes to a heavenly perspective in that John saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. After that, the eschatological disaster falls upon the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man (6:15). In 6:17, the question is asked: “For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand”? The answer to this question is now given in 7:1-8 as an “expansion” (Müller, 1994:251) over the previous section, with a contrastive image. While 6:15-17 describes people who can’t survive on the day of the wrath of God and the Lamb, 7:1-8, in contrast, describes people who can survive on the day of the wrath of God and the Lamb.

The security of the people of God is confirmed through the four angels standing at the four corners of the earth who hold the four winds of the earth. This refers to a destructive force in the Old Testament (cf. Caird, 1966:94; Fiorenza, 1991:66; Ps. 11:6; Isa. 41:16 Jr. 49:36; Da. 7:2), implying a state of being sealed (cf. Müller, 1994:257; 7:1). A seal on the foreheads of the servants of God is regarded as a sign of God’s protection (Bullinger, 1909:281; Reddish, 1982:173; Krodel, 1989:181; Ulfgard, 1989:74) or the baptism of identifying oneself with God (Grimsrud, 1987:64; Kraybill, 1996:140) or the victory of the people of God (Farrer, 1964:110).<sup>149</sup> In contrast with those who have been marked with the seal of the beast (Rev. 13:16), those who have been marked with God’s seal could be protected against these plagues fallen upon the wicked people. The image of the 144,000 as the people of God provides “special pathos” (Carey, 1999:140) for John’s audiences who are now able to cross the boundaries between the earthly and the heavenly perspective.

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<sup>149</sup> The most obvious parallel to the sealing in the Old Testament is found in Ezekiel 9:1-8. In this section, before God destroys the wicked of Jerusalem, he sends out a man to put a mark upon the foreheads of the faithful Israelites in order to save their lives and spare them from the impending judgment. In this case, the seal means a symbol of “divine protection or God’s property” (Krodel, 1989:182) over them from the judgment of the city. According to Schippers (1992:3.497-501), seals were widely used very early (3<sup>rd</sup> millennium onwards) in Mesopotamia and the real meaning of the seal is a legal one: the owner puts his mark on his possessions, his beasts, his slaves in order to protect his property against theft. For more useful information, see Fitzer (1975:7.939-953).

This section could be connected with 9:4 in that the seal of God's people with a mark upon their foreheads can guarantee their protection by the plague of demonic locusts. Charles (1975:1.196, 243) explains the meaning of the seal as a security of the faithful against demonic forces. Through the text of 7:3 and 9:4, one can suggest that the seal upon the foreheads of God's people is the guarantee and sign of the spiritual or physical security (cf. Newman, 1968:66; Beasley-Murray, 1992:140; Barker, 2000:159-163) of God's people in the time of eschatological judgment upon the wicked people.

#### *IV.4.2.1.2. The twelve tribes of Israel and the innumerable multitude*

##### *IV.4.2.1.2.1. The twelve tribes of Israel*

Then, the question that one could ask is who are the 144,000 in Revelation 7:4-8? The issue of the identity of these 144,000 is hotly debated. The 144,000 in Revelation 7:4-8 are explained as 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. On the basis of the conjecture that 7:4-8 is derived from a Jewish or Jewish-Christian source, Charles (1975:1.193; cf. Ladd, 1979:112-113; contra Lenski, 1943:254; Summers, 1951:148) insists that the 144,000 were Jews or Jewish-Christians, indicating a certain Jewish particularism.

As with Charles, Bauckham (1993b:76-80) observes in these verses two contrasting images. That is, on the one hand, the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel (7:4-8) implies that the 144,000 Israelites are the followers of the Davidic Messiah in terms of a nationalistic image. On the other hand, the innumerable multitude (7:9) as people of the slaughtered Lamb indicates those who are ransomed from every nation (5:9).<sup>150</sup> One should actually reject these theories that the 144,000 indicate Jewish Christians or the followers of Davidic Messiah in terms of a nationalistic image, because there are not enough statements to limit the protection of the seal to these groups (cf. Collins, 1979:52; Warren, 1983:130).

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<sup>150</sup> Reddish (1982:168) argues, however, that such cannot be John's use of the tradition. John does not distinguish between Jewish and Gentile Christian. The entire church is the New Israel in which radical distinctions play no part. The intention of John to send his prophetic message is not to make a distinction between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians, but to reveal God's will to the eschatological people of God in order to give encouragement, hope, and God's purpose to those who are on the side of God, even under persecution.

Collins (1979:52-53; 99) describes the 144,000 as a particular group within the faithful, that is, the martyrs (cf. Kiddle, 1940:133; Caird, 1966:95). But, she regards the innumerable multitude as the ultimate, complete salvation and triumph of all the faithful (7:9-17). However, one doesn't have any reason to limit the 144,000 to the martyrs. It is doubtful that through the enumeration of the tribes of Israel, just the 144,000, martyrs were to be protected and through the innumerable multitude, all the faithful Christians were to be saved as distinctive and particular distinguished groups.

In the New Testament times, the twelve tribes of Israel were not a historical, but a theological entity (Fiorenza, 1981:92; cf. Strand, 1984:318) as the new eschatological Israel of God.<sup>151</sup> Just as the 'twelve' in Mark are thus understood as the disciples encompassing a wider range in meaning than merely the twelve, one shouldn't necessarily regard the 144,000 as Jewish Christians or chosen minor martyrs. But one can consider 144,000 as a symbol for the eschatologically newly saved Israel beyond historical reference (cf. Ellul, 1977:168; Ulfgard, 1989:72-73). Here, one faces another symbolic transformation (Barr, 1984:39-50) such as the parallel between the Lion and the Lamb in 5:5-6. Just as in 5:5-6, the word λέγει (heard) has been transformed into εἶδον (saw), the image of the 144,000 (ἄκουσα;7:4) has also been transformed into the innumerable multitude (εἶδον;7:9).

The description of 'the twelve tribes' list confirms a symbolic meaning of this section because it does not follow the usual pattern of this list (cf. Ladd, 1979:115). Unlike other texts (e.g. Ge. 35:22-26; 49:2-28; Nu. 1:5-15; 1 Ch. 2:1-2; Ezk. 48), Judah is mentioned first and Dan is omitted (cf. Winkle, 1989:58-67) while Manasse is replaced.<sup>152</sup> The order

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<sup>151</sup> In the New Testament, the 'Israel' or 'the twelve tribes' could be reinterpreted as the new community of the people of God. For example, Gal. 6:16 mentions the Israel of God. Here, it is not necessary to limit the Israel of God to the empirical and national Israel (cf. Ridderbos, 1984:227), but it means the new Israel as a community of God's people. In the case of James, the statement regarding the twelve tribes (Jas. 1:1) appears. This term is used here figuratively to denote the whole Christian church, which receives the letter of James (cf. Adamson, 1984:49-50). Thus, it is clear that the application of term 'Israel' or 'the twelve tribes' in the New Testament denotes the new community of God's people (cf. Boring, 1989:131).

<sup>152</sup> Unlike other texts, in Revelation 7:4-8 the Judah is mentioned first. It is related to the intention of John because the Judah tribe is the tribe from which Jesus, the Messiah, came. It could be connected with Rev. 5:5 in that the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, as conqueror has triumphed, that is, built on biblical tradition (cf. Winkle, 1989:58). The omission of the Dan tribe is a debatable issue. But, it is a persuasive suggestion to combine two theories. That is, the reason for the omission of Dan is a tradition that on the one hand, the Anti-Christ would come forth from that tribe as proposed by Irenaeus (Adv. Here. 5, 30, 2; cf. Peake, 1919:279; Collins, 1979:52-53; Boring, 1989:130) and on the other hand, it was infamous for its idolatry (cf. Lenski, 1943:254; Fiorenza, 1981:92; e.g. Lev. 24:11; Jdg. 18; 1 Ki. 12:29). Thus, one can

of the twelve tribe' list in this section does not follow the historical sequence, but it reflects the theological intention of John, implying the eschatologically saved, that is, God's spiritual people who conquered the temptation of the world. Accordingly, one must exclude the historical relevance that tries to connect with Israel's historical tribes. As a symbolic meaning the 144,000 as the conquerors could be regarded as the new eschatological Israel of God who avoided the wrath of the Lamb (6:17). How can they be called the conquerors? It depends on the seal on their forehead and the name of God and the Lamb, which only the conquerors have (cf. Thompson, 1998:107). This section expresses who the conquerors are from an earthly perspective. That is why they as the 144,000 are introduced as the conquerors, implying the new community of God. The image of the conquerors in 7:2-8 is contrasted with the defeated ones who have a mark of the beast on their right hand and their forehead in 13:16.

#### IV.4.2.1.2.2. The innumerable multitude

Who is the innumerable multitude in Revelation 7:9-17? John observed a great multitude that was represented by every nation, tribe, people and language (ἐκ παντὸς ἔθνους καὶ φυλῶν καὶ λαῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν). Regarding the fourfold formula in this text, Bauckham (1993a:326) is quite correct that John's intent was to use formulas and variations deliberately. Through a detailed study of this formula, one can recognize how John has embodied his central prophetic conviction regarding the conversion of the nations in his literary composition. That is, when one connects this section with the previous section (7:1-8), one can find some similarities between two sections, composed very carefully according to John's intent. One of those similarities is the number 'four', implying totality or universality or the number of the world (Summers, 1951:22; Prévost, 1991:33, 89; Bauckham, 1993a:326).<sup>153</sup>

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suppose that the tribes' list reflects of John's intention to deliver his message to his audiences and also it is built throughout the biblical tradition and social-historical backgrounds faced by the first Christians under the Rome.

<sup>153</sup> When one compares other examples that are quoted in other texts, it will be much clearer to regard the number four as the number of totality or the whole of the world. In Rev. 4:8, the praise of the four living creatures to the one who is sitting upon the throne indicates the praise of the whole world to worship God (cf. Letseli, 2001:152). In 6:2-8, the four horses execute the divine judgment on the wicked world. Even though this divine judgment is limited to the nature (cf. Ladd, 1979:98), the power or boundary of judgment means

In section 7:1-8, the four angels, who are God's perfect agents to perform his divine will, stand at the four corners of the earth, implying the inclusion of all of the earth. They hold back the four winds<sup>154</sup> of the earth, symbolizing the divine retribution towards the wicked world (cf. Jr. 49:36; Da. 7:2). It means that except for the 144,000 from the tribes of Israel who were sealed, the universal judgment on the whole wicked world would take place by way of applying his wrath through the angels - stating a negative perspective.

In contrast with this section (7:1-8), in 7:9 there is a great multitude that no one could count that comes from every nation, tribe, people and language. They stand before the throne and in front of the Lamb while wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. This section also has the fourfold formula, that is, expressed as every nation, tribe, people and language (ἔθνους καὶ φυλῶν καὶ λαῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν). When one regards white robes and palm branches as symbols of victory (Krodel, 1989:184; Ulfgard, 1989:81-85, 89-91; Beasley-Murray, 1992; 145-146; Slater, 1999:180), a great multitude is expressed to indicate the victorious people of God from a positive perspective as applied to the fourfold formula.

The other similarity between the two sections is based on the fact that the 144,000, who are sealed on their foreheads, could correspond to those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). This idea is based on the Exodus pattern. When Israel left Egypt, Israel was saved from Egypt through the protective sign of the blood of lambs (Ex. 12:7). Likewise, the great multitude who have come out of great tribulation (ἐκ τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης) have washed their robes (ἐπλυναν τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν) and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (ἐλεύκαναν αὐτὰς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου] and will be saved through the protective sign of the blood of the Lamb (7:14). Therefore, I strongly believe that the two terms for the 144,000 and the great multitude refer to the same identity, indicating the same eschatological people of God, namely the conquerors (Kistemaker, 2001:245, 252-253; contra Johnson, 2001:131).

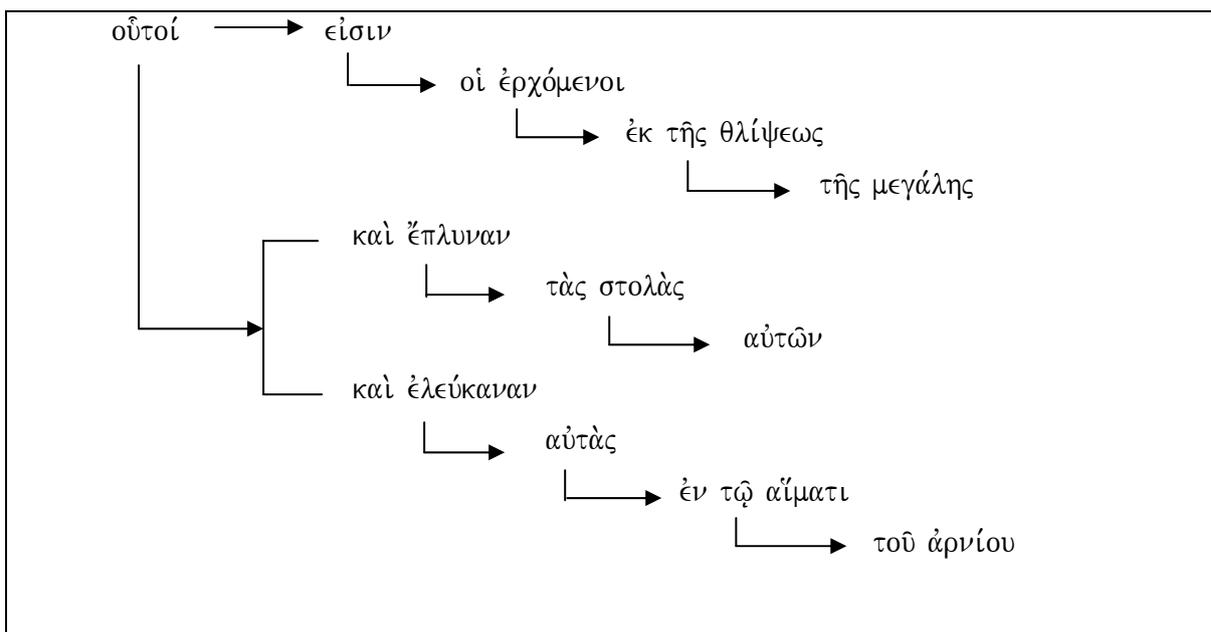
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the perfect destruction of creation. Thus, it must be certain that the number four implies the totality or the whole of the world.

<sup>154</sup> In the Old Testament, the wind as the destructive power or element to God's judgment is a prominent idea. Cf. Job. 38:24; Ps. 11:6; Isa. 41:16; 64:6; Jer. 4:11-13; 10:13; 13:24; 22:22; 49:36; 51:16; Ezk. 5:2; Da. 2:35; Hos. 4:19; 8:7; 12:1.

The difference between 7:1-8 and 9-17 lies in competing point of views or perspectives (cf. Boring, 1989:131; Ulfgard, 1989:73). The 144,000 (7:1-8) is expressed in terms of an earthly perspective. The great multitude (7:9-17) is expressed in terms of a heavenly perspective through the throne and the Lamb who are in heaven. The division of these two sections can be absolutely identified with μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον introducing a new vision (cf. Kelly, 1986:289-292; Rev. 4:1). One can accordingly conclude that the description of the 144,000 and the great multitude refers to the same identity, which indicates the new eschatological people of God. Whereas the 144,000 as conquerors will be sealed safely through persecution or ordeal or tribulation, the heavenly perspective presents the conquerors as people who will be saved by the blood of the Lamb.

Ulfgard (1989:102) is of the opinion that while John hears in 7:1-8 those who will be protected by God, expressed through the 144,000, John sees in 7:9-17 those who will be saved by the Lamb, expressed as an innumerable multitude. The 144,000 and the multitude are visualized as the victorious conquerors. This message had “therapeutic functions” (Slater, 1999:181) for the Christians who lived under the threat of social ostracism and deprivation. It encouraged his readers and audiences to remain faithful even until death. Mclean (1996:194) is correct in saying that for a therapeutic function, John describes the final picture of the faithful saint by putting them with the Lamb. In order to understand who the conquerors are, one can analyze 7:14 as follows:



This diagram clearly shows us that the reason for victory or conquest is to endure the great tribulation (ἐκ τῆς θλίψεως τῆς μεγάλης) that was the destiny of the Christians in those days and to wash and make their garments white with the blood of the Lamb to be conquerors. The use for the second time of aorist (ἐπλυναν, ἐλεύκαναν) indicates that the blood of the Lamb made the saints the conquerors as had already happened on the cross.

#### IV.4.3. The martyrs as Conquerors in 6:9-11

One can suppose that the theme of martyrdom in Revelation is one of the more well-known themes, because the story about the blood and tribulation of Christ and the saints is widely spread (e.g. 1:5, 9; 2:10, 13; 6:9-11; 7:14; 11:7; 12:11; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2, 13). It must be certain that the martyrdom of Jesus Christ as conqueror is a central message in John's Christology. That is why he is worthy of being called conqueror. The role of Christ as conqueror is to complete his messianic mission, not by a military struggle, but through his sacrificial death (ἐσφάγης) on the cross as a martyr (cf. Scott, 1940:118). As Scott (1940:120) says, "the Great Avenger of the martyrs had Himself been the supreme Martyr." As the proto-martyr, the image of Christ has a particular role in providing a role modal in his portrayal in Revelation.

##### IV.4.3.1. The word of God and testimony

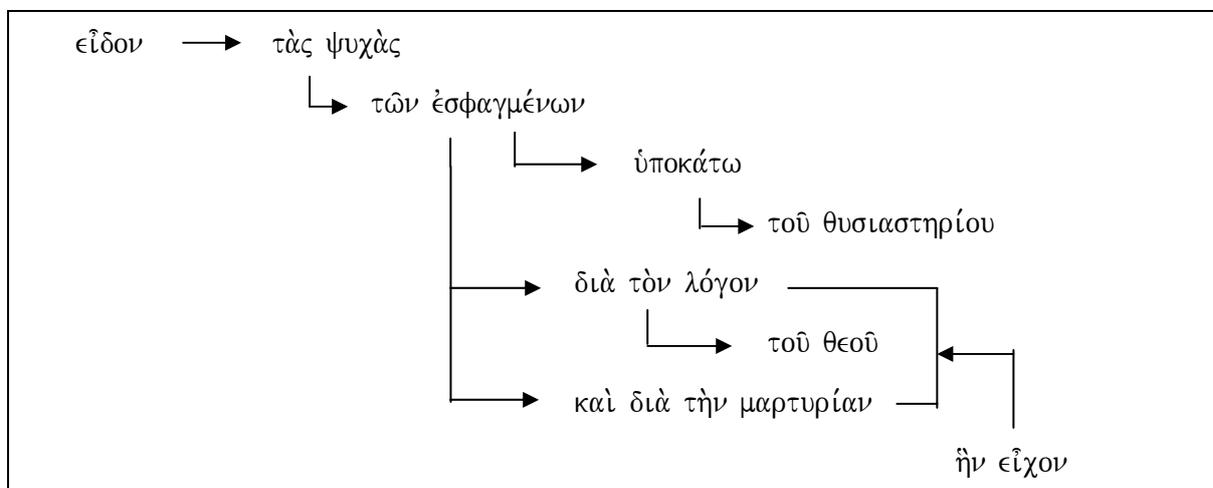
Section 6:9-11 is connected with the seven seals sequence (6:1-8:1). Concerning the opening of the first four seals, the four horsemen explain the judgment of God on the people because of their human self-indulgence and rebellion. These are manifested through the persecuting Roman power (cf. Boring, 1989:122; contra Chilton, 1987:67) or in a socio-political critique of imperial rule (Fiorenza, 1991:63) from an earthly perspective. The perspective is here transformed from an earthly perspective to a heavenly perspective. It clearly indicates the statement regarding the altar (θυσιαστηρίου)<sup>155</sup> where John saw the

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. 6:9; 8:3(x 2), 8:5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; 16:7. The image of the altar in Revelation shows us the heavenly perspective. The important role of the altar in Revelation is suggested by Resseguie (1998:94): (1) it is a place of refuge where the believers gather who have lost their lives on earth, (2) it is from the altar that the word of God is given to angels to bring about the end, (3) it is at the altar that the prayers of the saints intertwined with the smoke of the incense are offered to God. Accordingly, the altar in terms of a heavenly perspective must be the place for the people of God and the place where God dwells.

souls of those who had been slain, because of the word of God and the testimony (διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον) they had maintained. The souls of those who had been slain could be connected with the case of John in 1:9 (διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ), the case of the saints in 12:11 (διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν) and 14:12 (τὰς ἐντολάς τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ), and the souls of those who had been beheaded in 20:4 (διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ).

In the case of each verse, they are conquerors triumphing because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained whether they were martyred or not. According to Gilbertson (2003:112-113), to keep (τηρέω) the word of God and testimony is closely linked with νικάω. Therefore, keeping the word of God and maintaining the testimony of Jesus are crucial points to be a conqueror in the present context. One can see that the book of Revelation was written to encourage and to assure as a “maintenance strategy” (Slater, 1999:179) the Christian community who faced life-threatening persecution for their faith. Thus, the intention of John was to deliver this prophetic message to his audiences to remind them of God’s promise to those who remain faithful witnesses. Since events in heaven are sometimes descriptive of earthly events, at other times, events on earth are determined by heavenly events (Resseguie, 1998:86). The vindication of those who are under the altar as the martyr (6:9) is to assure and to guarantee their ultimate protection and salvation from the hands of their enemies (cf. Beale, 1999:391-392). Greek text of 6:9 clearly shows us the theme of conqueror.



That the souls of those who had been slain are under the altar reflects that they are people of God who were slain in terms of the sacrificial death of the martyrs (cf. Pattemore, 2004:76-82). This sacrificial death of the martyrs (ἐσφαγγμένων) is connected with the death of the Lamb (ἐσφαγγμένον) in 5:6. The reason for the death of souls who had been slain depends on the word of God and testimony about the Lamb. To bear the word of God and the testimony is closely related to suffering or even death. Pattemore (2004:97) is of the opinion that “ the martyrs, then, are conquerors whose victory is both dependent on and modelled on the victory through suffering and death of the Lamb.”

The victory of the martyrs in 6:9-11 is revealed through the giving of a white robe to the martyr, as noted above, because the image of a white robe indicates victory (Harrington, 1969:125; Boring, 1989:126) or purity (Buchanan, 1993:173), and the righteousness (Morris, 1983:120) of the Christians. The statement regarding a white robe might be connected with 7:14 in that the innumerable multitude have washed (ἐπλυναν) their robes and made them white (ἐλεύκαναν) in the blood of the Lamb. The object of these two Greek words is closely linked with ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ἀρνίου. In both these verses (6:9 and 7:14), the description of the white robe indicates victory of the conquerors martyred from a heavenly perspective rather than in purity or righteousness, as some scholars suggest.

When one carefully considers both verses (6:9 and 7:14), one will find that they have some similarities. First of all, they describe a heavenly environment (e.g. altar, throne, angels, elders and four living creatures) in contrast to an earthly environment of the previous section (6:1-8 and 7:1-8). The earthly environment of the conquerors who suffered, even to the point of death, could be determined by a heavenly perspective that their martyrdom will be vindicated by God’s intervention (cf. Caird, 1966:61; Boring, 1989:126). According to Resseguie (1998:43), “The *above* may overturn, modify, or add to the limited perspective of *below*.” Another similarity in both sections is the ‘seeing’ formula in contrast to the previous section having a ‘hearing’ formula (cf. Enroth, 1990:598-608). In the case of Sweet (1979:125-126; cf. Caird, 1966:73), what is heard represents the inner reality, but what is seen represents the outward, the flesh. Even though he doesn’t overlook the importance of the ‘seeing’ formula, the weight of his argument rests on the ‘hearing’ formula translating the ‘seeing’ formula.

In 6:1-8, the judgment of the people who belong to the earth begins with a ‘hearing’ (καὶ ἤκουσα) formula. When the fifth seal is opened, John saw (εἶδον) the souls of those who had been slain under the altar. What John saw, in contrast to the divine judgment of the earthly people, is the vindication of the martyrs who died for the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. Those who have been killed are conquerors in terms of the heavenly perspective even though they are defeated in terms of the earthly perspective. This section (6:9-11) will help to assure and guarantee the victory of martyrs as conquerors who died for the word of God and their testimony. Therefore, Scott (1940:127) says that “Martyrdom, for John, is not only the decisive test of fidelity, but is a positive achievement which helps forward Christ’s victory.”

#### IV.4.4. Two witnesses as Conquerors in 11:3-13

As with the case where the breaking of the seven seals has an interlude (7:1-8:1),<sup>156</sup> the seven trumpets also have an interlude section (Bauckham, 1993b:82; 10:1-11:13). In the case of this section, it is much better to view it as an expansion or enlargement because this section (10:1-11:13) doesn’t break the flow of the trumpets. The sixth trumpet in 9:13-21 is similar to the sixth seal in having some expansion or enlargement.

The sixth trumpet explains the judgment of one-third of mankind who don’t have the seal of God upon their foreheads (9:4). Although this terrible plague afflicted one-third of mankind, they did not repent (οὐ μετενόησαν). One can assume that the function of the sixth trumpet is to lead the people who do not have the seal of God upon their foreheads to repentance (cf. Müller, 1994:351). In response to the people who did not repent between the sixth and seven trumpets, an expansion or enlargement (10:1-11:13) is described as the preparatory to the seventh trumpet (11:15-19).

##### IV.4.4.1. Little scroll

The scholars (cf. Summers, 1951:160-167; Beckwith, 1967:573; Collins, 1979:160; Boring,

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<sup>156</sup> Here, I have not called it an ‘interlude’ but an ‘expansion’ following Müller (1994:250-251) or an ‘enlargement’ because the term expansion or enlargement explains the concept better than the term interlude when one considers the flow of the seals and the context of the text.

1989:139-148; Müller, 1994:352-353) divide Revelation 10:1-11:13 into two parts, namely the little scroll section (10:1-11) and the measuring of the temple and the two witnesses (11:1-13).<sup>157</sup> The issue in the first section (10:1-11) is the relationship between the scroll (βιβλίον) of chapter 5<sup>158</sup> and the little scroll (βιβλαρίδιον) of chapter 10. The scholars, insisting that the scroll (βιβλίον) in chapter 5 and the little scroll (βιβλαρίδιον) in chapter 10 are the same, consider the lexiconic approach of the two words and the numerous parallels between them.

As with Mazzaferri (1989:267-279), Bauckham (1993a:243-257) argues that βιβλίον and βιβλαρίδιον can be used interchangeably, implying that the diminutive forms in Revelation do not seem to be intended to be diminutive in meaning (cf. Mazzaferri, 1989:267-279). He takes full account of the Old Testament source that was derived from Ezekiel 2:8-3:3 both for the scroll in chapter 5 and for the scroll in chapter 10. His argument is based on the fact that the statement of the scroll in chapter 5 and chapter 10 is thoroughly indebted to Ezekiel 2:8-3:3. His argument also depends on the appearance of a mighty angel (ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν) in 10:1 who is the same mighty angel (ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν) appearing in 5:2. Therefore, he suggests that the two scrolls in Revelation 5:2-3 and 10:2, 8 must be regarded as the same scroll (Holwerda, 1999:150-153).

In contrast to Bauckham (1993a:243-257), Beale (1999:530-532) argues that even though he recognizes that to regard the two books as the same ones is plausible, he rejects the notion for the following reasons: 1) to say that βιβλαρίδιον has lost its diminutive meaning

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<sup>157</sup> Krodell (1989:217-218) emphasizes the continuity between two sections (10:1-11 and 11:1-13) as follows:  
 A (10:8-11): the symbolic action of eating the little scroll  
     B (10:11): the commission  
     A' (11:1-2): the new prophetic action of measuring the temple  
     B' (11:3-13): the commission and fate of the two witnesses

But in contrast to Krodell, one must recognize the difference between the two sections (10:1-11 and 11:1-13).

<sup>158</sup> In Revelation, the word βιβλίον occurs 23 times (cf. Schrenk, 1968:1.615-620): 1:11; 3:5; 5:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9; 6:14; 10:8; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12 (x 3); 21:27; 22:7, 9, 18 (x 2), 19 (x 2). Concerning the contents and meaning of the sealed βιβλίον, Stefanović (1996:2) suggests a variety of proposals: the OT, the entire Scripture, the book of judgment, the memory of God, Christ himself, the symbol of Divine providence, Revelation itself or part of it, the book containing God's decrees, the bill of divorce, the future history of the church, prophecy, the book of God's secret purposes, the transcript of God's mind, the book of God's covenant, the New Covenant, a part of Daniel's prophecy, the book of the history of humankind, the antitype to the tables of the Law, a magical scroll, a will or testament, a title-deed of sale, the book of Christ's inheritance, the book of redemption, the OT Torah, a double inscribed contract-deed, a certificate of debt or guilt, a *mancipatio*, the book of Life, the book of destiny, etc.

or nuance is possible, but not necessarily an inference, 2) most of the major lexicons support the idea that βιβλαρίδιον means “little book,” especially in Revelation 10, 3) the little book in 10:2 is introduced without a definite article. It has some nuance that John saw for the first time (cf. Michaels, 1997:133), 4) above all, John has chosen to use βιβλαρίδιον only here and nowhere else in the Apocalypse, where he uses βιβλίον about twenty times (cf. Michaels, 1992:60-61; Aune, 1998a:558, 570-572).

When one compares these two sections in detail, one can find some dissimilarity between the two. First of all, chapter 5 begins with the one who is sitting on the throne (τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου) who holds the scroll in his the right hand (5:1). Even though the mighty angel is present at this scene with many angels, the living creatures, and the elders, only the Lamb (ἀρνίου) is able to open the scroll and its seven seals (5:5). It happens in heaven and one can’t hear any voice speaking ‘to take it and eat’ to John. In contrast to this section (chapter 5), chapter 10 begins with a mighty angel (ἄγγελον ἰσχυρὸν) coming down from heaven (10:1), implying the transfer of the place from heaven to earth. The one who is holding the scroll is not God but an angel (ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου) and John hears “Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel.” And John is also told to eat the little scroll from the angel’s hand (10:10).

As Michaels (1992:61) argues, while John’s visions in chapters 1-11 are introduced as a heavenly mystery, the dramatic events of chapters 12-20 realize the plan of God. The identification of the two scrolls of chapter 5 and chapter 10 is not the same, but is plausible. This little scroll in chapter 10 speaks of John’s prophetic renewed commission to proclaim the Gospel to the people who did not repent (e.g. 9:20-21) and to give glory to God (cf. Holwerda, 1999:154). This emphasizes both judgment to those who did not repent and salvation to those who are the people of God. That is, John must prophesy again (δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι) to many peoples, nations, languages and kings for their salvation on the one hand, and judgment on the other hand (Bauckham, 1993b:80-84).

The content of the little scroll that condemns people, who did not repent, is, in spite of the woes of the trumpet, to reveal God’s plan of salvation for the whole world (cf. Rissi, 1966:43). Through chapter 11:1-13, the content of the little scroll (cf. Schrenk, 1968:1.619;

Charles, 1975:1.260; Bauckham, 1993b:83-84; contra Harrington, 1969:161; Beasley-Murray, 1992:168, 171) presents the temple measuring (11:1-2) and the two witnesses (11:3-13), thereby implying a prophetic renewed commission to the church for the unrepentant world related to 9:20-21. The temple measuring symbolizes the protection and the security from destruction for the conquerors (cf. Warren, 1983:133-137; Strand, 1984:324-325; Krodel, 1989:217-221; Beale, 1999:557-559) or “God’s promised protection of his church” (Holwerda, 1999:154).

#### IV.4.4.2. Prophet witness

Then, who are the two witnesses in 11:3-13? Should this section be interpreted literally as it is? Or should this section be interpreted as a statement that is applied to the martyrs in the church? In 11:4, the two witnesses are described as ‘two olive trees and two lamp-stands that stand before the Lord of the earth’. Two olive trees derived from Zechariah 4 symbolize Zerubbabel as the king and Joshua as the priest from a historical background. Some expect that in 11:5-6 the two witnesses are Elijah (e.g. 1 Ki. 18:38; 2 Ki. 1:9-16) and Moses (e.g. Ex. 7:14-24). Beckwith (1967:595) offers that even though he does not expect the reappearance of the historical figures such as Elijah and Moses, the appearance of prophets who will perform the function executed by Elijah and Moses in the Old Testament is expected (cf. Glasson, 1965:66).

Reddish (1982:178-187) argues that whereas verses 1-2 of chapter 11 are concerned with the entire church, verses 3-13 are concerned with some limited figures within the church – the martyrs (cf. Caird, 1966:133-140). But it doesn’t seem to be John’s intended meaning for the two witnesses. One doesn’t have any reason to limit the two witnesses to the martyrs, who represent the members of the church that are called to witness and die for their faith (cf. Reddish, 1982:183). Only two of the seven churches were to suffer martyrdom (churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia; Caird, 1966:134; contra Beale, 1999:572-573). That is why specific groupings in the church such as “Christian prophets” (Fiorenza, 1991:78) and “martyrs” (Caird, 1966:134; Reddish, 1982:180, 183) are not technically emphasized as a special group differentiated within the church (cf. Gnatkowski, 1989:43). The function of the two witnesses is to witness the word of God and the

testimony of Jesus to the world as the conquerors. Who can witness the word of God and the testimony of Jesus to the world? They are none other than the conquerors as Christ who overcame the world with the word of God and testimony. Therefore, one can't agree that the identity of the two witnesses is none other than martyrs who are called to witness and die for their faith. This is the role of all the conquerors who are called to witness and die for their faith if necessary.

It seems more likely that they do not indicate the two individuals literally, but as a symbol of the witnessing church in the world during the time of the church's persecution (Mounce, 1977:223; cf. Resseguie, 1998:147, 162, 182). John, in his application of the Old Testament, uses a free quote rather than the literal one. That is, the meaning of two olive trees that is quoted from Zechariah 4 is transformed eschatologically into God's people, the church in the New Testament. Zechariah's symbol of the two olive trees is applied to the royal-priestly role of the church (cf. Holwerda, 1999:157). Further, it is clear that the two lampstands symbolize the church because the lampstands have been used to indicate the seven churches in Revelation 1:20, symbolizing the whole universal church.

Then, why is the number seven changed into two? One could ask what it means? For John, the number two is a number of confirmation and of valid testimony (cf. Wall, 1991:144; Resseguie, 1998:10-11). The trustworthy and valid testimony of the number two symbolized as the two lampstands is based on Deuteronomy 19:15 (cf. Dt. 17:6; Mt. 18:16; Jn. 8:17; 2 Co. 13:1; 1 Ti. 5:19; Heb. 10:28), echoing valid legal witness. The number two, as the number of valid legal witnesses, is also applied to the church that must witness the word of God and the testimony of Jesus to the world, even under persecution. The two olive trees have the royal and priestly role applied to the church. Mounce (1977:224) rightly points out that by these two metaphors, John emphasizes the role of the faithful truth of the conquerors that the church under persecution and threat in this world must proclaim.

The most important thing to consider concerning the two witnesses does not depend on their identity as historical figures such as Moses or Elijah, but on their function or role in executing prophetic commissioning to the nations who refuse to repent (e.g. 9:21). One

may suppose that through this section 10:1-11:13, the ultimate function or role of the two witnesses is the role of witnessing, having a function of judgment to the evil ones and salvation to the conquerors. This duty has a prominent emphasis in Revelation (cf. Stevenson, 2001:257-258). As Beale (1992:375) argues, this framework is that of the inaugurated eschatological judgment against cosmic forces and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. One can, therefore, recognize that the transference from the kingdom of the world to the kingdom of God is only possible by the prophetic function or role of the two witnesses through the death, resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses as the conquerors (11:7-8, 11-12: cf. Stevenson, 2001:262). As a result of that witnessing, the inhabitants of the earth were terrified and gave glory to God (11:13: οἱ λοιποὶ ἔμφοβοι ἐγένοντο καὶ ἔδωκαν δόξαν τῷ θεῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ).

How is it possible to witness in this world as two witnesses? It could be compared with Jesus' ministry as a faithful witness. Just as Jesus as conqueror died and rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, the prophetic witnessing of the church, symbolized as two witnesses, is very similar to the life of Jesus. They are killed (11:7: ἀποκτενεῖ αὐτούς), stood on their feet (11:11: ἔστησαν ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας αὐτῶν) and went up to heaven in a cloud (11:12: ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ). That is, just as Jesus has achieved his victory as conqueror through suffering and death, the two witnesses as church also achieve their victory as the conquerors through suffering and death<sup>159</sup> in the sight of the

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<sup>159</sup> The place "where also their Lord was crucified" could be interpreted as having literal or symbolic or figurative meaning. The arguments of scholars who insist on a literal interpretation (cf. Bratcher, 1984:90; Aune, 1998a:619; Thompson, 1998:127) depend on their interpretation of verse 8 "where their Lord was crucified" as Jerusalem. When one regards this section 11:1-13, one can easily find that it is full of symbolic elements. Therefore, it makes sense that the mention of "where their Lord was crucified" doesn't indicate Jerusalem as it is. Wall (1991:146) is of the opinion that he does not move from symbolism to literalism to speak of the city of Jerusalem. He says something about the theological significance of the death of the "two witnesses." The symbolic interpretation of this section insists that the term Jerusalem (11:8) conveys a spiritual meaning, not as earthly Jerusalem. Thus, there are only two cities, indicating holy city in that the people of God live with God, namely, the spiritual Jerusalem of the saints and the profane city in which the enemies of God's people live (cf. Kistemaker, 2001:333-334). Morris (1999:146: cf. Metzger, 1993:70: Johnson, 2001:168-169) argues that the 'great city' is every city and no city. This interpretation is a suitable interpretation of the book of Revelation, which is full of symbolism. But, it overlooks the socio-historical setting of the book of Revelation, which was written to the people who were under persecution and were in danger. At this point, De Villiers (1988:132) is quite correct to say that the social life-world behind the Apocalypse of John is ultimately connected with the symbols, because symbols are completely integrated into this social life world. A literary analysis of symbols can't be divided by a social analysis. According to him, the great city refers to none other than Rome because the only real threat to the community would be the Roman state. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the place "where their Lord was crucified" is not a literal Jerusalem, but Rome, which is matched with their socio-historical setting and religious and imperial cult (see

inhabitants of the earth. It makes sense that the prophetic witness of the church is thereby modeled on the prophetic witness of Christ (Stevenson, 2001:262). That is why the two witnesses are called as the conquerors, not in terms of a worldly perspective, but in terms of a heavenly perspective. This is why they must act in this world as prophetic witnesses and conquerors.

#### IV.4.5. Summary

The theme of the Divine-Warrior in Revelation is a prominent christological title revealing salvation and judgment (e.g. Rev. 1:16; 2:16, 26; 6:2; 12:7-12; 14:17-20; 17:14; 19:2). This picture provides a full image of Christ's final judgment on those who persecuted the people of God. The Divine-Warrior is described with the figure of conqueror that rides the white horse and executes the divine judgment. Interestingly, when he executes the divine judgment, his war is not like other military wars. He is called Faithful and True, which reveals the characteristic of God. It demonstrates the justification of the divine judgment to evil ones because the divine judgment is done by the Faithful and True one (cf. Rev. 2:10, 13; 21:5; 22:6).

What is his weapon to judge the evil ones? To reveal the meaning of this verse (19:13), it is important to understand the theme of Revelation. The Divine-Warrior wears the robes dipped in blood. Even though many scholars see this robe with the blood of the enemies (Metzger, 1993:91; Johnson, 2001:270), the robe that the Divine-Warrior wears is the blood of Christ himself (Grimsrud, 1987:149-150; Barker, 2000:308). This statement is confirmed by saying that his name is the word of God. When the Divine-Warrior fights the enemies of God, his weapon is not a literal sword, but the word of God that is received from God (Rev. 1:1) and comes from his mouth (Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; Isa. 11:4; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12). It means that the Divine-Warrior, like the Lamb looking as if slain, conquers the evil ones with his blood shed on the cross and with the word of God and testimony. This is the distinctive way of conquest or victory, which the symbolic transformation occurs through the Revelation. On the basis of the blood of Christ and the word of God and testimony, the Divine-Warrior can be called conqueror.

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Botha, 1988:87-102).

The 144,000 (7:2-8) have the same identity as the innumerable multitude in 7:9-17. But, they are explained from a different perspective, namely the earthly and heavenly perspective. The 144,000 have the mark of God, indicating God's protection (Reddish, 1982:173; Ulfgard, 1989:74) against the wrath of God (6:12-17). In contrast with the image of eschatological judgment, the number 144,000 expressing the people of God, delivers some 'rhetorical effect' to guarantee and secure the people of God who were under threat of the wicked people (Beasley-Murray, 1992:140).

Then the 144,000 are changed into the innumerable multitude. Why can they be called the conquerors? There are several reasons. Firstly, they come out of great tribulation. The tribulation is another expression for victory, conquest, and kingship in Revelation (Thompson, 1986:153). Secondly, they washed their robes with the blood of the Lamb. Just as the foundation of victory of Jesus as conqueror firmly depends on his blood shed on the cross (Rev. 1:5), the victory of the people of God depends on the blood of the Lamb to be conquerors (cf. Ex. 12:7). Finally, they worship God day and night. It is closely related to the four animals, 24 elders, and innumerable angels who worship God and the Lamb in 5:11-13. Who can worship God and the Lamb in heaven? They are none other than conquerors who endured the great tribulation and washed their robes with the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, one can suppose that the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude are the same people of God who can be called the conquerors.

The theme of martyrdom in Revelation is a prominent theme. The section 6:9-11 is a good example. To the Christians who lived daily under the threat of death, to keep the word of God and testimony over the Lamb was to give up their lives in a hostile world. The reason for the death of those who had been slain (6:9) was their witness to the word of God and the testimony they kept. But in contrast with their death, the vindication of the martyrs is to secure and guarantee their ultimate protection and salvation against the wicked people (cf. Beale, 1999:391-392). This well-organized prophetic message provides the "maintenance strategy" (Slater, 1999:179) to the Christian community in a difficult time. That is why the souls who had been slain can be called the conquerors because they keep the word of God and the testimony even under the threat of death. It is closely linked with the role of two witnesses who must prophesize to the wicked world.

## IV.5. Conclusion

Until now, I have studied the role or function of the Christology of the “one like a Son of man” in Daniel, and Mark’s and John’s gospel and Revelation, and of “the Lamb”, and of “the Divine Warrior”. The survey of the Christology ascertains that these christological images demonstrate their distinctive contextual circumstance of the seven churches to give evocative messages. Slater (1999:13) distinguishes these titles as follows: the title of the ‘one like a son of man’ as a pastoral role; the Lamb as pastor, role model, liberator; and the Divine Warrior as an eschatological judge. Even though these christological implications may function differently to some degree, they demonstrate the present context and the future salvation of the conquerors and judgment of the defeated.

The one like a Son of man is introduced as the divine and heavenly being. When one describes the One like a Son of man, here the One like a Son of man was used not as a title but as a comparison to express a heavenly being in human likeness (Slater, 1999:155-160). It could be drawn from Daniel 7:13 where the One like a Son of man is sitting on the cloud. Here, the term ‘sitting’ has a theological and political implication, indicating an image of enthronement and divinity (Rossing, 1999:67). It is worth noting that in Daniel 7:13, the One like a Son of man wasn’t used to indicate ‘a Son of man’, implying human being, but the One like a Son of man was used to indicate a divine figure or heavenly being (cf. Beale, 1984:154-177) who executes the divine salvation and judgment as an application comparison (like:ִּוּן).

Within the micro-structure in Daniel 7:9-14, the coming of the One like a Son of man in Daniel 7:13 as a divine and heavenly figure is to provide salvation to the saints of God and judgment to the enemies of God. As Casey (1979:22) pointed out, in this section the divine judgment and the triumph of the one like a Son of man are, indeed, emphasized even though the victory or conquest motif through suffering and death scarcely appears. The description of the one like the Son of man (Da. 7:14; cf. 10:5) to whom authority, glory, and sovereign power were given, explains his heavenly nature or divine origin as conqueror (Caragounis, 1986:80-81). He has already won his victory against the enemies (cf. 7:18-27). Put differently, the features of the one like a Son of man refer to none other

than Christ as the heavenly conqueror.

In the case of Mark and John's gospel, the title of the Son of man focuses mainly on the Messiah and the heavenly being through the death and resurrection of Christ. Whereas Hooker (1967:191) limits the title of the son of man within the earthly work of Jesus, Bultmann (1963:150-163) considers Jesus, the Son of man, as the Messiah and the heavenly judge of the world. But one must combine the title of Son of man into Jesus' earthly life, suffering, and his exaltation and coming. The proofs of the texts about the Son of man (cf. Mk. 13:26; Mt. 26:64) indicate what the identity of the Son of man is. He is none other than the messenger of the coming salvation and judgment as judge and heavenly exalted being (cf. Järvinen, 1999:194-198).

In comparison to Daniel 7:13-14, the description of the one like the Son of man is clearly depicted with the feature of the heavenly conqueror (cf. Da. 10:5-6). In the gospels, the characteristic of the Son of man is dealt with as three categories: Jesus' earthly life and ministry (cf. Mk. 2:10, 28; Mt. 9:6; Lk. 5:24), Jesus' suffering and death (cf. Mk. 8:31; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; Mt. 16:21; Lk. 9:22), and Jesus' exaltation or future coming in glory (cf. Mk. 13:26; 14:62; Mt. 26:64; Lk. 22:69). It means that Jesus' earthly life and work as conqueror through suffering and death on the cross (Barr, 1998:146) is closely linked with his exaltation and glorification as a heavenly and divine being. In Mark 14:62, the Son of man who is sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven can be regarded as a heavenly being, executing salvation and judgment (Hooker, 1967:171).

In the Gospel of John, the Christology of the Son of man is a useful instrument to reveal the identity of Jesus. Whereas Moloney (2003:252-259; 257n87) emphasizes the earthly life of the Son of Man and denies the role of the preexistent or postexistent Son of Man, Brown (2003:252-259) regards the heavenly characteristics of the Son of Man. The 'ascending and descending' and 'lifting' motifs of the Son of Man especially reveal the identity of Jesus as a heavenly being. These pictures of the 'ascending and descending' and 'lifting up' provide a heavenly characteristic of the Son of Man, connecting the heaven and earth and indicating the exaltation (Dodd, 1960:247).

In conjunction with this quotation of Daniel 7:13, the One like a Son of man in Revelation 1:13, 14:14 also uses a comparison like ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου. That is, the description of One like a Son of man doesn't have a definite article. This title is used as "comparison" (Slater, 1995:192). Through this comparison, one can recognize that the author of Revelation wanted to reveal the identity of the One like a Son of man not as a human being, but a divine figure or heavenly being. The characteristics of the One like a Son of man as a heavenly or divine being are mainly introduced as the one who is coming on the clouds (e.g. Rev. 1:7; 14:14-16) to execute divine judgment and as the one who possesses the attributes of God (e.g. 1:13-16). The scene of these texts puts together OT images of judgment such as Daniel 7:13, Zechariah 12:10, and Joel 3:13 "as a means of reminding the hearers of God's thoroughgoing commitment to tread down the ungodly" (Desilva, 2002:225).

The characteristics of the One like a Son of man in 1:13-16 provide his divine and heavenly origin or feature to encourage the people who were in difficulty with choices between Christ and Caesar and rich and poor and suffering and assimilation (see Kraybill, 1996). The One like a Son of man having a divine and heavenly origin executes the work of conqueror and judge against the people who are held in his right hand. The seven churches (1:16-20) implies the role of the One like a Son of man as the Lord of the seven churches, even as the Lord of the whole world's churches, as well as the Lord of the cosmos and human history (Beasley-Murray, 1992:66-67). The victory of Christ as conqueror to the churches might give the churches a unity with Christ and strong power to resist the problems in the midst of suffering, poverty, compromise, and persecution. Because the victory of the conquerors had already been completed and guaranteed by Christ, the prophetic message of hope and encouragement might motivate the life of the conquerors as faithful witnesses.

The exaltation of the One like a Son of man could be connected with the suffering on the cross as conqueror (Reddish, 1995:222; cf. 1:5, 7, 9, 18; 2:8; 5:6, 9, 12; 7:14 etc). The features of the One like a Son of man as conqueror through his faithful testimony and his blood (Rev. 1:2, 5, 18) are reflected in the message of the eschatological salvation and judgment. The characteristics of Christ as exalted heavenly and divine being through

suffering and death provide the unity of God's people with Christ. It made the Christians the conquerors through death (θάνατος) or faithful testimony (ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός) under social threat, suffering, persecution, and compromise (Stevenson, 2001:283).

The Lamb-Christology in Revelation reveals a very important function, that of both death and victory because the references to the Lamb are spread throughout this book (e.g. Rev. 5:6-13; 6:1,16; 7:9-17; 12:11; 13:8-11; 14:1-10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7-9). One can say that to understand the meaning of the Lamb is to understand the meaning of Revelation as a whole. As the eschatological agent of God, only the Lamb can reveal the sealed book (ch.5), containing God's eschatological promise to the conquerors and to the defeated. The victory of the Lamb, in contrast to their expectations, has achieved through the death of the Lamb salvation to God's faithful people, namely the conquerors. The sacrificial death of the Lamb can bring salvation for the righteous and judgment for the unrighteous (Du Rand, 1995:209).

This image over the Lamb is expressed in various symbolic pictures. First of all, on the one hand the Lamb is expressed through the image of a sacrificial Lamb "looking as if it had been slain" (Rev. 5:6; cf. Johns, 2003:127-149). Owing to the death of the Lamb, the Lamb can open the sealed book and bring salvation to the community of the people of God. The Lamb is worthy of worship and to take the scroll and to open its seal because the Lamb was slain. Through the symbolic transformation from the tribe of Judah, the root of David, to the slain Lamb, he reveals his identity as conqueror by being slaughtered, and dying (Beasley-Murray, 1992:124-125) and redeeming people.

Charles (1991:463) writes that the central feature in chapter 5 is based not on the Lamb's nature, but on the sacrificial role he performs. The sacrificial death of the Lamb guarantees the victory of God's people, whatever the context of God's people is, and confirms the destruction of the enemies of God's people. Through the sacrificial death of the Lamb, one can verify that the victory of the Lamb as conqueror will be obtained through suffering as a symbol of strength (Reddish, 1995:217).

As Johns (2003:159) argued, the Lamb standing as slaughtered (5:6) "lies at the theological

heart of the Apocalypse. It is specifically designed to communicate the shock, irony, and ethical import of his message that *the Conquering One conquers by being a slain lamb*, not a devouring lion.” Therefore, the victory of the Lamb through death brings the rhetorical effect to the conquerors, implying “victory means that they (like their Lord) must be killed” (Aune, 1996:272). Owing to the rhetorical reverse of the victory through the death of the Lamb, the Lamb can be called conqueror and worshipped by the whole world. According to Du Rand (1993a:246), “By the symbolic transformation or remodelling of their thinking through apocalyptic rhetoric, in their belief and convictions the readers move out of their precarious situation into a world where a Lamb conquers and where the oppressed are the victors.”

Apart from the image of victory through suffering, another important image is the image of warring Lamb, Divine Warrior who is God’s eschatological divine agent (e.g. Rev. 17:14; cf. Bauckham, 1993b:66-76). The Divine Warrior makes war against the great harlot, beasts, and the kings of earth, and defeats and overcomes them. The function of the Rider on the white horse, who is called Faithful and True, is divided into two parts: vindication or salvation to the conquerors and judgment or punishment to the defeated. This image will be completed in Revelation 19:11-21 as the Divine-Warrior motif that will be fighting with the enemies of God’s people on earth. The image of the Divine Warrior is to reveal Christ “as God Almighty’s eschatological judge, a divine agent” (Slater, 1999:212). One should keep in mind that the image of the Divine Warrior is the characteristic of the warring Lamb, executing salvation to the conquerors and judgment to the defeated (e.g. 19:11-21), rather than the suffering Lamb (e.g. 12:7-12; 14:1-5). As Barr (1998:138) comments, “John is showing how the death of Jesus has the power to destroy evil, using the graphic imagery of holy war.”

The Divine Warrior will conquer the enemies of God’s people, because the Divine Warrior is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (κύριος κυρίων ἐστὶν καὶ βασιλεὺς βασιλέων: e.g. 17:14; 19:16; cf. Longman III & Reid, 1995:182) fighting for his people who faced dangerous situations. Whereas Babylon in chapters 17-18 is depicted as political and economic images of the power of Rome (Rossing, 1999:70), the Divine Warrior image in chapters 19-20 is transformed into nonviolent resistance in terms of faithful witness and

the testimony unto death. Bauckham (1993a:233) argues that the image of holy war transforms the holy war in military terms into non-military meaning of victory over evil power. Just as the Divine Warrior as a faithful witness against evil's forces has won victory, the faithful conquerors of God are called as faithful witnesses against the forces of evil's power (cf. Rev. 1:5; 2:10, 13; 3:14; 19:11; 21:5; 22:6). Therefore, Reddish (1995:215) is quite correct to say that in Revelation, Christ can be expressed as more than a sacrificial victim and as the slain Lamb. He is, paradoxically, the powerful, conquering martyr who leads his army of martyrs to victory as he did (cf. Collins, 1996:206-207).

Accordingly, in the case of the Divine-Warrior Christology, Christ is described as judge who fights against his enemies and for his people. Even though this Christology is used by way of certain militant terminology, his battle with the forces of evil was not executed by way of usual military means, but through divine power (cf. Collins, 1998:277-278). His only weapon is the sword that comes out of his mouth (e.g. 19:15; cf. 1:16; 2:12). It is, accordingly, a very prominent theme that the Divine-Warrior as judge will execute the divine judgment over the forces of evil, and the divine salvation to the conquerors in terms of his faithful witness (Bauckham, 1993b:104-106).

The clearest use of the Divine-Warrior motif in Revelation 19:11-21 will reveal the divine victory in terms of "his death and resurrection" (Johns, 2003:185). This characteristic shows a fuller picture of Christ's final judgment to the evil ones by his word and testimony during the last battle. One can, accordingly, recognize that the final victory of Christ as a Divine-Warrior will provide us with various crucial principles necessary to obtain the final victory over the evil ones (cf. Collins, 1984:130).

## CHAPTER V. THE CONQUEROR MOTIF IN TERMS OF THE HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY PERSPECTIVES: FOCUSING ON CHAPTERS 12-13

### V.1. Introduction

As I have noted in the previous section, nowadays it has become an agreeable statement that Revelation consisted of apocalypse, letter and prophecy (cf. Bauckham, 1993b:1-17). It means that the book of Revelation is structured to reveal its rhetorical situation, prophetic message and the true reality of the heavenly aspect. One must remember that it is a unified literary work that has a consistent plot. For example, it is a well-structured prophetic message that has a prologue (Rev. 1:1-8), an epilogue (Rev. 22:6-21), conflict (6:1-20:10) and resolution (20:11-21:22:5) according to the intention of the author (cf. Charles, 1975:1.xvii-xxviii; Ford, 1975:55-56).<sup>160</sup>

In contrast to the view of source or redaction criticism, Revelation must be regarded as a unified literary work (cf. Du Rand, 1993a:257) that shows the intention of the author. As Lambrecht (1980:103) pointed out, the visionary work of Revelation is not a patchwork of unconnected materials, but an impressive coherent whole, consisting of Apocalypse, letter, and prophecy. Barr (1984:43) is also of the opinion that whereas one might be interested in dividing the book, John's main concern in Revelation is to bind it together as a whole. The structure of Revelation consisting of a letter-form, symbols, imagery, and visions could be expressed through the passages of the literary, theological, and historical backgrounds. Whereas the famous Apocalypse definition of Collins (1979:9) deals with the apocalyptic definition in terms of form and content, which are also inseparable from each other, a functional structure of Revelation must also be dealt with (cf. Du Rand, 1993a:261-262;

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<sup>160</sup> Ford (1975:3; 26-37; 50-56) divides Revelation into three parts: 1. chaps. 4-11 produced from the circle of John the Baptist 2. chaps. 12-22 is of a later date but still originates from the disciples of John the Baptist who may or may not have converted to Christianity 3. chaps. 1-3 are collected together with some interpolations that were added later by Jewish Christian disciples. For this theory, she connects several similarities between Revelation and John the Baptist's teachings; for example, the Lamb, He that cometh, baptism by fire, the bridegroom and minor similarities- divine wrath, adultery, corrupt Jerusalem, trees as metaphors for leaders, and priestly knowledge. Because Ford's theory that divides Revelation into three parts is too arbitrary to accept, this theory could not be accepted (contra Collins, 1984:31). In contrast to Ford's theory, Revelation should be read as a unified literary work with an intentional purpose.

Jang, 2001:29) as a book that evokes special rhetorical and communicative effect.

The book of Revelation is full of stories, consisting of visions, images, metaphors, hymns and liturgical elements. It is the story of Jesus who died, rose and conquered death and sin, and of a human being who must choose the way between God and Satan. In the case of Revelation, this story is told in a narrative form, and from the beginning to the end it has a God-centered and Christ-centered point of view (see Rotz & Du Rand, 1999:91-111). As Du Rand (1997a:213) pointed out, Revelation is “a dramatic narrative within a letter framework.”<sup>161</sup> However, I do not think that it is enough to label it as “a dramatic narrative within a letter framework”, because one distinguishes Revelation according to genre. As I noted above, the book of Revelation could be divided into the Apocalypse, letter, and prophecy.

Even though various methodological approaches for interpreting the book of Revelation are tried, three dimensions such as literature, theology, and history must be emphasized as being of great importance in order to interpret the book of Revelation. In Boring’s opinion (1992:702-723), Revelation should be understood in the light of a narrative point of view, even though he agrees that Revelation is a visionary document to communicate by means of image or vision. According to Du Rand (1997b:59-68), the book of Revelation is called a narrative theology. In contrast to the emphasis of the historical criticism (in fact, they complement each other in some parts) to rebuild the original context of the text and historical background, his emphasis about the Bible as narrative story is based on the real power of Revelation, on a communicative label. It does not only lie in its symbolism, composition or historical perspective, but in its theologically evocative power.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> According to Du Rand (1997b:60-66), the narrative analysis of Revelation could be divided into three levels: 1. Narrative level 1  $\Rightarrow$  it can be called “John and the churches’ story” (Rev. 1-3) 2. Narrative level 2  $\Rightarrow$  it can be called “the divine and cosmic story” (Rev. 4-11) 3. Narrative level 3  $\Rightarrow$  it can be called “the theological or God’s story” (Rev. 12-22). Even though his analysis is quite good, it is not easy to distinguish the content of Revelation into three levels because they are intertwined or intermingled with each other. In other words, from the first, one can easily recognize that the book of Revelation is God’s story (Rev. 1:1; 5-6), the divine and cosmic story (Rev. 12:1-12; 19:11-21) as well as John’s and church’s story (Rev. 11:3-4; 14:1-5; 21:1-22:5) that are mixed from the first to the end. Therefore, it is suitable to see the book of Revelation as a work having a consistent theme.

<sup>162</sup> On the basis of the historical criticism, narrative criticism is often criticized as being anti-historical or non-historical. Powell (1993:91-98) describes the objection of narrative criticism as follows: 1. Narrative criticism treats the Gospels as coherent narratives when they are actually collections of disparate material 2.

By using the narrative approach, Resseguie (1998) suggests a U-shaped structure that begins with a stable condition, moves downward owing to a series of threatening conditions and instabilities, and at the end moves upward to a new stable condition (:166) on the basis of the theory of Frye (cf. 1982:169-198).<sup>163</sup> This structure gives us dynamic power by means of literary analysis. Although these approaches are used for the book of Revelation, John's symbolic world could not be understood in terms of its doctrinal principles, historical problems or grotesque visions, but as voices of the Bible to be remembered, heard, and interpreted within their textual form.

For Barr (1984:39-50), Revelation provides symbolic transformation in order to change the way or the life his audience experienced. Through this symbolic transformation, he suggests that Revelation reverses the value of certain symbols of power and conquest by transforming them into images of suffering and weakness. According to Barr, this symbolic transformation in Revelation can be related to the literature of catharsis. Therefore, one can say that the symbolic transformation and analysis of language opened the new horizons for the understanding of Revelation.

Revelation, having a powerful rhetorical effect through various structural-framework, creates a symbolic transformation and participation of the world, which the first century Christian faced. Historical, literature, and theological points of view through various images, metaphors, and contrasted pictures between heavenly and earthly dimensions provide the prophetic message to discern who the real 'conquerors and defeated' in this world are. This 'above or heavenly point of view' modifies and corrects the 'below or earthly point of view' in which the people of earth try to follow (Resseguie, 1998:43).

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Narrative criticism imposes on ancient literature concepts drawn from the study of modern literature 3. Narrative criticism seeks to interpret the Gospels through methods that were devised for the study of fiction 4. Narrative criticism lacks objective criteria for the analysis of texts 5. Narrative criticism rejects or ignores the historical witness of the Gospels. In terms of historical criticism that rebuilt the life and teaching of Jesus and the tradition of early Christianity, narrative criticism is not an appropriate method to rebuild historical origin or situation. But, narrative criticism emphasizes another literary perspective to reveal the texts, which were given (cf. Stamps, 1997:221). Therefore, we must regard both the historical and literary perspectives in the Bible together in order to understand the text itself and to communicate more (cf. Egger, 1996:113-120). Otherwise, one will miss the important meaning of the text (cf. Bailey, 1995:211).

<sup>163</sup> According to Frye (1982:169), the U-shaped narrative structure recurs in literature as the standard shape of comedy. Thus, when he applies this structure for the entire Bible, viewed as a 'divine comedy', the losing of the tree and water of life at the beginning of Genesis and restoration at the end of Revelation can be regarded as a low point for misfortunes and misunderstandings, happily concluded in the end.

According to Beasley-Murray (1992:191), chapters 12-13 are a central part of the book of Revelation. Kistemaker (2001:351) also explains these chapters as a central section. In order to reveal the theological message about the conqueror motif within this section, the interaction of different historical and literary aspects like heaven and earth or above and below should be surveyed. Whereas in 11:15-19, the kingdom of God given to the conquerors is proclaimed in the light of a heavenly (above) aspect, chapters 12-13 introduce the defeat of Satan and the two beasts, highlighted by the verb cast out (ἐβλήθη). The heavenly (above) and earthly (below) perspectives in chapters 12-13 reveal the heavenly reality of who the conquerors are (cf. De Jonge, 1980:272). Through the heavenly perspective of chapters 12-13, the author of Revelation wanted to reveal the ultimate sovereignty of God and the real identity of the conquerors (Gilbertson, 2003:83). By providing the contrasting image of heaven and earth, Bauckham (1993b:90-91) gives us the real identity of conquerors and the defeated, that is the rhetorical power unmasking the heavenly and earthly reality in its many forms.

The book of Revelation can be understood as revealing hidden dimensions of the world and transcendent realities of the universe (Thompson, 1990:31). The interplay of the heavenly and earthly points of views is used as rhetorical communication by John to deliver his prophetic message through the contrasted image. The point of view provides a new perspective that guarantees the victory of God's people during their present crisis. In terms of spatial and temporal horizon, Gilbertson (2003:84) comments on the heavenly perspective as follows:

This heavenly perspective enables him to discern the true nature of earthly events. ... The expansion of spatial horizons has the effect of unmasking reality, of revealing the divine hand at work and exposing the nature of evil in its many forms.

Bauckham (1993b:88-94) also suggests that the heavenly perspective answers the question of who the real conquerors are, because the heavenly perspective breaks the earth-bound delusion of the evil trinity, namely the Dragon, the sea beast, and the earth beast. Therefore, the heavenly perspective reveals that the everyday reality of people should be considered

in order to understand John's narrative world that he wanted to present to his audiences.

## **V.2. Apocalyptic symbols in chapters 12-13**

Many scholars agree that the book of Revelation can be divided into two parts: chapters 1-11 and 12-22 (Hendriksen, 2000:134). The characteristic of the One like the son of man in chapter 1:12-20 permeates chapter 1 to chapter 11 from the perspective of church and worldly kingdom. But, in order to understand chapters 12-22 as a whole, chapters 12-13 are introduced in terms of deeper spiritual conflict between God and Satan through the images of the heavenly and earthly aspects. In other words, it explains how, after the proclamation of God's kingdom in 11:15 and of the destruction of Satan's kingdom in 11:18, God's kingdom is established in chapters 12-13.

Revelation 12-13 is full of various war stories, which are not easy to understand. The images in these stories include: the appearances of a woman clothed with the sun (Rev. 12:1), an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads (12:3), the battle between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels in heaven (12:7-9), the fleeing of the woman to the desert (12:13-16), a beast coming out of the sea (13:1), and a beast coming out of the earth. These are grotesque pictures whose meanings are not easy to understand. One agrees that Revelation is not a compilation of various sources, minor displacement and interpolations, and redactional material. Thus, it would be a much better understanding to view a text as having a special intention rather than to understand it through a literal interpretation within the structure of the Revelation as a whole (Boring, 1992:711-713). When one considers chapters 12-13 within the structure of Revelation, chapters 12-13 show us a great cosmic conflict between God and Satan that evokes a powerful symbolic image through a dynamic framework (Beasley-Murray, 1992:191-197).

It is accepted that Revelation 12-13 is one of the most important chapters (Collins, 1976:231) in revealing the motif of victory and judgment through the contrasting image of a heavenly and earthly framework. That is why the hymn of victory in 12:10-12, forming the central verses in this section, is proclaimed to praise God and Christ as the main

characters. In terms of micro and macro structure, this section demonstrates the final victory of God and the conquerors as a future perspective that will be accomplished in 20:1-15, as well as the detailed interpretation of the previous section in chapter 11:15-19. This is accomplished through the unified combination of the smaller unit within a narrative framework. Collins (1979:80) rightly points out that:

The links between the cycles of chapters 12-22 also show that these chapters form a literary unity, just as chapters 1-11 do. These two major parts of the book are telling the same basic story, as has been noted. The difference between the two is that part one introduces and hints at what part two reveals more fully. The relationship between the two parts can be illustrated by showing how a major theme of the book is developed.

Just as Collins mentioned above, one must carefully consider the continuity of chapters 12-13 between the previous section and following section. While chapters 12-13 start with a new section, beginning with *καὶ σημεῖον μέγα ὄφθη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*, it completes the final eschatological judgment and salvation in chapters 20-22 (Mounce, 1977:234). Chapters 12-13 must be a pivotal section (Kistemaker, 2001:351) connecting chapters 1-11 and chapters 12-22 in terms of salvation to the conquerors and judgment to the defeated, but having a different perspective. Even though this part will be focusing on chapters 12-13, I will also deal with other sections, which are connected with chapters 12-13 in terms of the heavenly and earthly perspectives.

### V.2.1. The Theophany Formula

One of the characteristics dealing with final eschatological salvation and judgment in Revelation chapters 12-13 is the theophany formula, expressed as flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm (e.g. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18-21; see Shea, 1985:37-54). These eschatological phenomena indicate the presence of God to execute salvation and judgment in connection with the Old Testament (e.g. Ex. 19:16; 20:18), where one hears echoes of salvation and judgment. According to Bauckham (1993a:201), the scene that shows the final eschatological event expects the coming of God

as King or Judge, who gives eventual salvation to the conquerors and executes his final judgment on the people of Satan (cf. Beale, 1999:618). This idea can be linked with the throne scene that is the demonstration of God's rule revealed in 4:2 (θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ; cf. Johnson, 2001:178), and that is one of the central symbols of the book of Revelation (Bauckham, 1993b:31). In contrast with the present crisis situations that the community of God's people in chapters 2-3 faced, John introduces the opened door and the scene of heavenly throne in chapter 4:1-2. That is, John's vision reveals a heavenly worship scene where God is constantly worshipped by four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. Here, God is described as none other than the conqueror who is able to conquer the world of Satan, personified as the Roman Empire. It means that God is in control of the whole world and shows his sovereignty as the one who is worshipped by all creatures in contrast with Satan expressed as the deified Roman Empire (Witherington III, 2003:111-122).

The examples of the theophany formula are introduced in 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18. This formula appears in different places in Revelation, for example at the throne (4:5), from the altar (8:5), and from the temple (11:19; 16:18). All these things are closely connected with the heavenly temple in which God's divine salvation and judgment are executed and where the heavenly perspective is provided. To the first-century Christians, the image of the temple might provide both transcendence and transformation in terms of the heavenly perspective that the conquerors will have (Stevenson, 2001:220).

The most interesting thing about the theophany formula is that the theophany formulas appearing from the throne in 4:5 are closely linked with three judgment series (Bauckham, 1993b:41) in the seals (6:1-8:5), trumpets (8:6-11:19), and bowls (16:1-21). In the theophany formula in 4:5, God's holiness to the conquerors and his divine judgment of the people of Satan are manifested. This theophany formula, based on the rhetorical and social situations, provides the transformation of their viewpoint and a new divine understanding. That is, the image of the theophany formula provides a symbolic picture in which to look at this world from "God's kingship" (Poythress, 2000:101), requiring new understanding and a new point of view. As Stevenson (2001:231) argues, this revelation displays this world from a heavenly point of view and the reality that Christians faced in the Roman

Empire. Therefore, this kind of a heavenly perspective provides a clear boundary between God and his people and Satan and his followers.

Then, who are the people of God, the conquerors? The prophetic message of Revelation is very clearly seen in the light of a heavenly perspective. Some Jewish communities and even some Christian members have joined with Satan through compromise and assimilation with the Roman Empire. Self-sacrifice, receiving harsh treatment, faithfulness in keeping the word of God (cf. 1:3, 9; 2:25; 3:10; 12:17; 22:7) and suffering unto death (cf. 2:2-3, 13, 19; 12:11; 13:10; 14:12) are the true attributes of God's people as the conquerors. They maintain a heavenly perspective in contrast with an earthly perspective. While the oppressed people of God as the conquerors experience the transformed universe and the newly understood heavenly perspective (De Smidt, 1994:231), the people of Satan are involved in a three judgment series as the object of God's judgment (Mounce, 1977:231).

Before the heavenly scene is introduced in order to reveal the destiny of the conquerors and of the evil ones in chapters 12-13, the scene in 11:19 is divided into two kinds of motif: salvation and judgment. In this context, it has a dual meaning that concludes the seventh trumpet (11:15-19) and introduces the following visions (chaps. 12-13). On the one hand, the theme of God's open temple (ἡνοίγη ὁ ναὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ) indicates the place where God presents. The ark of his covenant (ἡ κιβωτὸς τῆς διαθήκης αὐτοῦ) reflects God's continued presence to save his faithful people from their enemies (cf. Wilcock, 1989:116). Regarding the covenant people of God, the message of the theophany formula emphasizes the opened temple and the ark of God's covenant. It is clear that "no matter what happens on earth nor how fierce the opposing forces become, God's covenant is secure just as the ark is secure in the heavenly temple" (Stevenson, 2001:264).

On the other hand, through the eschatological phenomena, namely the theophany formula, the judgment on the people of Satan is executed. That is why the trumpet plague that occurred from the temple of God is concluded with the seventh trumpet in 11:19. The structural continuity between 11:15-19 and chapters 12-13 (contra Bauckham, 1993a:15-18) must be emphasized in order to reveal the theme of victory and judgment. Song (2003:141) is of the opinion that "the great significance of John's placement of events is

clear when he emphasizes the great power of God by placing an appearance of the ark of the covenant (Rev. 11:19) in dramatic precedence over the immediately following actions of the dragon.” Accordingly, chapters 12-13 have a structural framework that is located within the whole structural framework of chapters 1-22, providing a divine war story.

## V.2.2 Heavenly War between the Conqueror and the Defeated

Chapters 12-13 reveal a heavenly dimension of how the conquerors won the victory and how the people of Satan received the judgment from God. This is explained by using intense interaction between the heavenly and earthly perspectives in order to unmask the true nature of events (Poythress, 2000:133-134). These divine war events provide throughout chapters 12-13 a heavenly perspective on the earthly reality. The meaning of the heavenly perspective is to transform our earthly perspective into the heavenly perspective (Gilbertson, 2003:84) and to give us a new understanding as to how Christians should see the world they experience now. In Revelation, this element has a reversed effect at times (cf. Thompson, 1990:42-43).

The characteristics of chapters 12-13 are, indeed, evaluated as including the final judgment against the evil ones in chapters 19-20. In chapters 12-13 and 19-20, the prominent theme of victory or salvation and judgment or defeat frequently appears in conjunction with combatant terminology between God and Satan. The story of God and Satan in chapters 12-13 and 19-20 can be paralleled as the same symbolic story in terms of victory and judgment, focusing on the victory of God/his people and the judgment of Satan/his followers (see Shea, 1985:37-54). According to Poythress (2000:64), the structural parallel of chapters 12-13 and 19-20 can be suggested as follows:

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| <p>A. The people of God depicted with the imagery of light and creation (12:1-2)</p> <p>B. The Dragon, Satan (12:3-6)</p> <p>C. The Beast and the False Prophet (13:1-18)</p> <p>C.' The Beast and the False Prophet are destroyed (19:11-21)</p> <p>B.' The Dragon is destroyed (20:1-10)</p> <p>A.' The people of God in the imagery of light and creation (21:1-22:5)</p> |
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The above structural parallel shows, according to Poythress, the final victory of the people of God in terms of the new creation and the total destruction of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. One can assume that the theme of victory and judgment is the prominent narrative story in understanding the whole content of Revelation as the central chapters. In terms of John's heavenly perspective and structural parallel with chapters 12-13 and 19-20, these chapters suggest that the reader or audience must see the deep spiritual struggle of salvation and judgment between God and Satan (Bauckham, 1993b:88-90). This is in contrast with the historical situation they faced under several problems such as compromise, persecution, and self-satisfaction (cf. Johnson, 2001:198).

In connection with the theme of victory and judgment, the most interesting thing is the parallel between chapters 12-13 and 19-20, introduced from various narrative perspectives with a theological meaning (Kistemaker, 2001:532). The literary structure of chapters 12-13 and 19-20 reveals God, Christ and the destiny of the people of God as the conquerors; Satan as defeated, and the punishment of the people of Satan, in the light of victory and conquest. When one considers the combatant terminology in these chapters, one can easily recognize the theme of conquest and victory that happened between God and Satan:

**\* Chapters:12-13**

- 1) 12:7: πόλεμος, πολεμήσαι, ἐπολέμησεν: war in heaven Michael and his angels against the dragon and his angels
- 2) 12:8: οὐκ ἴσχυσεν, οὐδὲ τόπος εὐρέθη: the evil ones lost their place in heaven
- 3) 12:9: ἐβλήθη, ἐβλήθη, ἐβλήθησαν: Satan and his followers are hurled to the earth
- 4) 12:10: ἐβλήθη: the accuser has been hurled down
- 5) 12:11: ἐνίκησαν αὐτὸν διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας: conquest or victory
- 6) 12:13: ἐβλήθη: the dragon has been hurled down
- 7) 12:17: πόλεμον: war against the rest of the woman's offspring
- 8) 13:4: πολεμήσαι: war of the beast of the sea
- 9) 13:7: πόλεμον, νικῆσαι: the victory of the beast of sea
- 10) 13:14: πλανᾶ: deception of the earthly beast

**\* Chapters: 19-20**

- 1)' 19:11: πολεμῆι: Christ's war as Divine Warrior
- 2)' 19:15: πατάξει: Christ's punishment to the nation
- 3)' 19:19: πόλεμον: war between Christ's army and Satan's army
- 4)' 19:20: ἐπιάσθη, ἐβλήθησαν: the beast and the false prophet are thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulphur
- 5)' 19:21: ἀπεκτάνθησαν: the followers of evil killed
- 6)' 20:2: ἐκράτησεν, ἔδησεν: the binding of the dragon

As suggested above through the words used between chapters 12-13 and 19-20, the events of 12-13 and 19-20 are in most cases well matched with each other in terms of victory/conquest and judgment/defeat. In no 1) and no 6)', the fighting and the binding of the dragon (12:7-8) correspond with the binding of the dragon (20:2). In no 8) and no 4)', the fighting of the sea beast in 13:4 is closely linked with his binding in 19:20. And in no 10) and no 4)', the deception of the earth beast in 13:14 is connected with the binding of the earth beast in 19:20. As recognized through these parallels, it can be assumed that chapters 12-13 and 19-20 have a very similar structural parallel (cf. Shea, 1985:38; Giblin, 1994:81-95; contra Jauhiainen, 2003:543-559).

As noted above, very significant words used throughout chapters 12-13 and 19-20 are πόλεμος (noun), πολεμέω (verb), implying "military as well as a juridical symbol" (Leivestad, 1954:219). The frequent use of πόλεμος, πολεμέω in this section implies the combat between God and Satan, highlighted by the defeat of Satan (Kistemaker, 2001:353). The words of these various wars (πόλεμος, πολεμέω) in chapters 12-13 and 19-20 reveal who the real conquerors are in the light of eschatological salvation and judgment perspectives. That is why the author of the book of Revelation delivers some encouragement and hope to those who were in need of being encouraged (cf. Beasley-Murray, 1992:191-197).

The result of this war, as we know through the use of these words ἐβλήθη, ἐβλήθη,

ἐβλήθησαν (aorist, passive of βάλλω: cf. 12:10, 13; 19:20; Kistemaker, 2001:353) in 12:9, is the defeat of Satan and his followers. That is, their defeat and judgment are highlighted by the use of these verbs ἐβλήθη, ἐβλήθη, ἐβλήθησαν in 12:9, as well as of these verbs ἐβλήθησαν in 19:20 and ἔδησεν in 20:2. The casting down from heaven and their limitation to the earth in chapter 12:8, 12 describe their ultimate judgment in terms of spatial dimension (cf. Gilbertson, 2003:100-102). Through the use of these words, we can suppose that ἐβλήθη, ἐβλήθησαν (to throw away) and ἔδησεν (to bind) indicate the victory of Christ and the conquerors against the evil forces as a passive meaning (Aune, 1998a:527-528, 695). The words like ἐβλήθη, ἐβλήθησαν (to throw away), ἔδησεν (to bind), and οὐδὲ τόπος εὐρέθη (there was no longer any place; cf. 20:11: τόπος οὐχ εὐρέθη ) are used as other ways of conquering. That God has thrown out and conquered Satan and his followers from heaven, and God has established his kingdom (cf. 11:15), emphasizes salvation and victory (Aune, 1998a:664) διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν in 12:11 in terms of active meaning. Therefore, the thematic parallelism suggested through chapters 12-13 and the interrelation within chapters 19-20 depict two warring kingdoms – God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom. It establishes a well-constructed cosmic divine war story in terms of victory and judgment and climaxes with the victory of Christ who became the real conqueror through the death on the cross (Harrington, 1969:167-172).

Chapters 12-13 provide a heavenly perspective to show victory or salvation and to give encouragement to those who were under in desperate situations. These are closely linked with chapters 19-20 in terms of victory to God and his people and judgment to Satan and his followers. From now on, I want to focus on the text itself to disclose how it works within the completed texts that are carefully intended to deliver something that the Christians wanted to listen to through John the prophet in this section.

### V.2.3. Symbolic transformation

What I try to do in this section is to reveal the reality of the heavenly point of view and of the earthly point of view. The reason for this is that the first Christians needed to be encouraged by the exalted Christ, to be provided with a different symbolic cosmos in contrast with the present reality of those days (Beale, 1999:624). Therefore, the symbolic

transformation point of view<sup>164</sup> between heaven and earth in Revelation, in fact, might give some powerful rhetorical effects to those who listened to the prophetic messages.

#### V.2.3.1. The Conqueror, The Victim

The prominent example of symbolic transformation is the image of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, which was the traditional messianic expectation. But these titles, Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David are reinterpreted by the slain Lamb (Michaels, 1992:131; cf. 5:5-6) and introduced as conqueror. Through this symbolic transformation, this picture provides a powerful message in conjunction with the question of the conquerors. It indicates that the victory of the Lamb is not connected with the overthrowing of enemies by military or political power, but his own self-sacrifice on the cross (Michaels, 1992:137). According to Aune (1997:352), the figure of the Lamb can be interpreted as the conquering Messiah and the atoning sacrificial victim, which has a transformed symbolic meaning. That is, the conqueror is the victim through his self-sacrificial death (cf. Barr, 1984:39-50).

In chapters 12-13, the point of view provides a contrasting image of heaven (above)/earth (below) to give God's point of view. John's narrative world, however, is explained beyond the surface meaning of this section in the light of the heavenly (above) perspective (Du Rand, 1997a:258-259; cf. Louw, 1982:11-14). It is John's narrative meaning that his beliefs, values, and points of view lead the audience/readers to recognize behind the situation of everyday life, the world of ultimate reality through the contrasting point of view (cf. Thompson, 1990:41). Events that happened on earth must be regarded from another perspective, that is the heavenly or above perspective (cf. Caird, 1966:153-154; Barr, 1984:41; Resseguie, 1998:48). As Gnatkowski (1988:96) comments, images of contrast in Revelation demand the choice of the reader between God and Satan and provide

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<sup>164</sup> Upensky's (1973:8-100) point of view can be classified into four separate planes: ideological, phraseological, spatial and temporal, and psychological. The ideological point of view refers to the normative system of the narrator that shapes the work. This point of view may be the author's point of view, value, norm, and the worldview. The phraseological point of view is described as an expression of speech in the level of words and diction. The spatial and temporal point of view is heard in terms of space and time provided in the narrative story. This point of view adopted by the author reveals the settings, characters, events, and process of time in the narrative story in order to give a clearer narrative perspective. The psychological point of view focuses on an individual consciousness through the action and speech of the characters in the narrative story, indicating emotions, thoughts, and perceptions.

the heavenly view about the real world in the symbolic world of Revelation. In this present situation, the most urgent message to his reader/audience is to see the contrasting image between God the Creator, as the sole object of worship, and the Roman Emperor, as the pretentious counterpart (Barnett, 1989:112). Hence, John's symbolic world accomplishes the remarkable symbolic transformation through the contrasted images of heaven (above) and earth (below), and of visible and deep structure.<sup>165</sup>

In 12:11, one encounters the saints as the conquerors to whom Satan is opposed. In this verse, one has the other symbolic transformation that the conquerors are none other than the victims. Through chapter 12:9-11, the scene of victory or salvation is proclaimed in heaven and reveals the conquerors as follows:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| → | A (12:9): Satan (dragon) hurled down                   |
| — | B (12:10): Proclamation of victory/salvation in heaven |
| → | A' (12:11): The Conqueror, the Victim                  |

What makes the saints conquerors? The basis of the victory of the saints depends on 'the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony' that are closely linked with 6:9, 7:14, and 20:4. The reference regarding the blood of the Lamb can be connected with 7:14 (cf. 5:9) that "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The reference 7:14 that is linked with 144,000 describes the conquerors through the blood of the Lamb. This verse also encounters a symbolic transformation and a "striking paradox" (Mounce, 1977:174).

The interesting thing is the mentioning of salvation through the word of their testimony. This passage is closely linked with 6:9 and 20:4 in that it has similar lexical and thematic correspondence (Aune, 1998a:406). A similar lexical and thematic correspondence of these three passages are: 6:9: διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν, 12:11: διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν, 20:4: διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ. These three passages (e.g. 6:9; 12:11; 20:4) are given to the souls who are in heaven

<sup>165</sup> In Revelation, the image of contrast is one of the important literary patterns. Contrast associates things that are dissimilar or opposite (cf. Powell, 1993:32-33). Through the image of contrast, the author can reveal the meaning of the text. For example, John uses the heaven (above)/earth (below) point of view (between chaps. 2-3 and 4-5) that contrasts ultimate reality between theological confidence with present experience.

(Gourgues, 1985:679). These images provide a heavenly (above) perspective through which the first Christians must conquer as the conquerors. The word and testimony of Jesus and God make them martyrs (Aune, 1998a:406). That is, the use of these same word clusters in these passages implies that the same group of people is in view (cf. Shea, 1985:45-47). They are none other than the conquerors who died as victims at the hand of Babylon (Resseguie, 1998:184; cf. 11:7-10). Therefore, the death of God's people is clearly a prominent theme to help discern (Beale, 1999:392) whether they belong to the people of God or the people of Satan. As Pattemore (2004:90-98) argues, their death is a result of their witness (6:9; 11:7; 12:11; 17:6; 20:4) and their victory is by means of this witness, which leads unto death. The idea that their victory is their death imparts a powerful symbolic transformation – the conquerors are the victims.

### V.2.3.2. Seeing and Hearing

In Revelation, it is very interesting to see the causation between the seeing and hearing formula. The hearing, implying the inner reality, often interprets the seeing – implying the outer reality or *vice versa*. According to Resseguie (1998:33), while seeing is influenced by outer reality, hearing uncovers what is hidden in the inner nature. It shows us that the author leads the reader from an old perspective to a new understanding – as was his intention. It is depicted with an irony that Christ is both a lion and the Lamb.<sup>166</sup>

In chapter 12 John sees a great and wondrous sign about a woman who appeared (ὠφθη) in heaven (12:1) and also sees another sign of a red dragon appearing (ὠφθη) from heaven (12:3). The red dragon stands in front of the woman who is about to give birth, so that he might devour her child. The outward appearance and power seen from the red dragon is the outward reality or surface meaning, which is not the essential character. But the appearance and power of the red dragon is reinterpreted from a doxological view in Revelation 12:10-12. This unfolds inner reality in contrast with the previous section (Du Rand, 1993b:315).

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<sup>166</sup> In Revelation, irony is one of the figures of speech that are used. Irony reveals the character of the true meaning of the hidden thing in contrast to what appears. According to Kenney (1966:71), irony in fiction consists of a discrepancy between what is stated and what is suggested. Through the ironical implication as rhetorical devices that occurs often in Revelation, the author delivers his intentional meaning to his audiences (e.g. 2:9; 3:1, 9, 17; 5:5-6).

The seeing formula is changed into a hearing formula (ἤκουσα) that brings into symbolic transformation, or the audience's point of view (12:10-12). The hearing formula indicates the inner reality and the seeing formula provides the outward reality (cf. Resseguie, 1998:33-37). The foundation of the hearing formula is that the inner reality can be linked with the Christ-event, which the Christian community conquered by the blood of the Lamb (διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου) and by the word of their testimony (διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν). As Du Rand (1993b:319) argues, "God is the Conqueror through the Christ-event." The comparison between outer reality and inner reality provides "the rhetorical power" (Fiorenza, 2001:11) to the reader/audience to make decisions as to who the real conquerors are and who the real rulers of this world are. The foundation for the victory of Christ and his people as the conquerors is based on the death and exaltation of Christ and the downfall and binding of Satan (cf. 12:1-12; 20:1-3) from διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν in 12:11. Leivestad (1954:225) is quite correct to say:

The blood of the Lamb and the word of the gospel form the objective base of the Christian victory over the devil. Through the sacrificial and victorious death of Christ they have been delivered from the authority of the devil and supported with moral strength to reject his temptations and persecutions.

In Revelation 13, while John sees (εἶδον) a beast coming out of the earth in 13:1, he hears a voice that sounds like the dragon (ἐλάλει ὡς δράκων) in 13:11. What John sees is that the earth beast had two horns like a lamb. He imitates the Lamb, but John hears that the earth beast speaks like a dragon. The identity of the earth beast is expressed in his speech. He speaks with proud words and blasphemies (ἐδόθη αὐτῷ στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα καὶ βλασφημίας:13:5) which he received from the dragon. Through deceptive language and blasphemy, the beast asks to worship the dragon as being more exalted than God (Beale, 1999:695-696). The words or speeches of the dragon and the two beasts reveal their identity and what they think. As a reliable narrator, John describes the identity of the earth beast as the one who speaks like a dragon. Here, John hears the loud voices and the voices of the twenty-four elders as follows: "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever (11:15)" and God will

reign because he has taken his great power. Therefore, the content of what John hears through these narrative voices is the establishment of the kingdom of God.

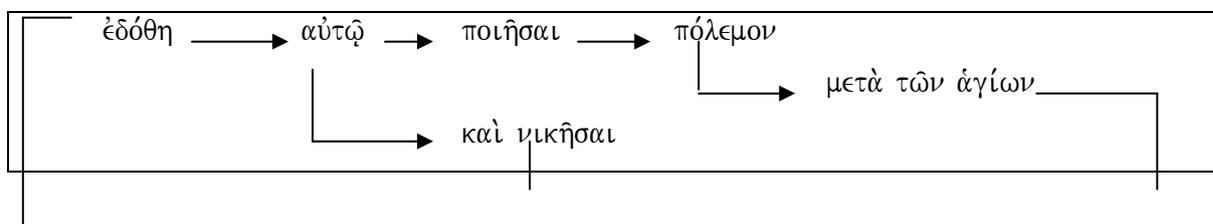
One can say that in 13:11, the earth beast seems like the Lamb, implying a parody of the Lamb. He makes people worship the satanic forces (13:12-17), but his speech reveals his true nature or his inner reality as deceiver. According to Kenney (1966:60-63), it can be called denotation echoing its surface meaning and connotation, echoing the associations in connection with denotation. Through these kinds of dictions, speeches, and words, John corrects or reinterprets the viewpoint of the audience or reader in order to see the inner reality or deeper meaning.

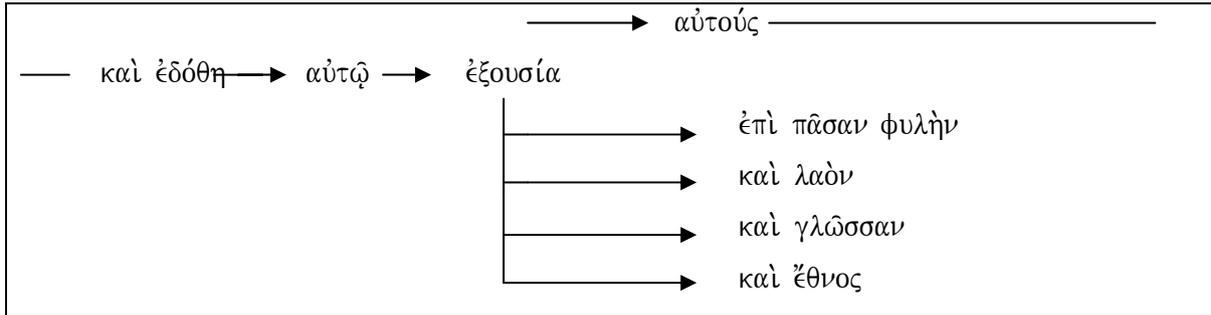
As Barr (1986:256) mentioned, as a story the Apocalypse has the power to transform into a new symbolic world that helps us to see the paramount reality in contrast with worldly reality. In connection with the social, political, and religious perspectives in which the book of Revelation was written, this section provides the symbolic transformation to the conquerors to see the identity of “competing cities, competing worship communities, and competing cosmic leaders” (Marshall, 2001:180) in their present situation as seen and heard from a heavenly perspective.

#### V.2.3.3. The People of God and the people of Satan

One could suppose that the formula of seeing and hearing is a good vehicle to reveal the identity of the conquerors as reinterpreted through the outer and inner reality of the dragon, the sea beast, and the earth beast. Then, one can ask who the real conquerors are or who the true people of God are. What do the texts say about their identity? Are the conquerors the dragon, the sea beast, and the earth beast or anyone else?

In chapter 13:7, the sea beast is given his authority to make war against the saints and to conquer them and to rule the whole world. It can be analyzed as follows:

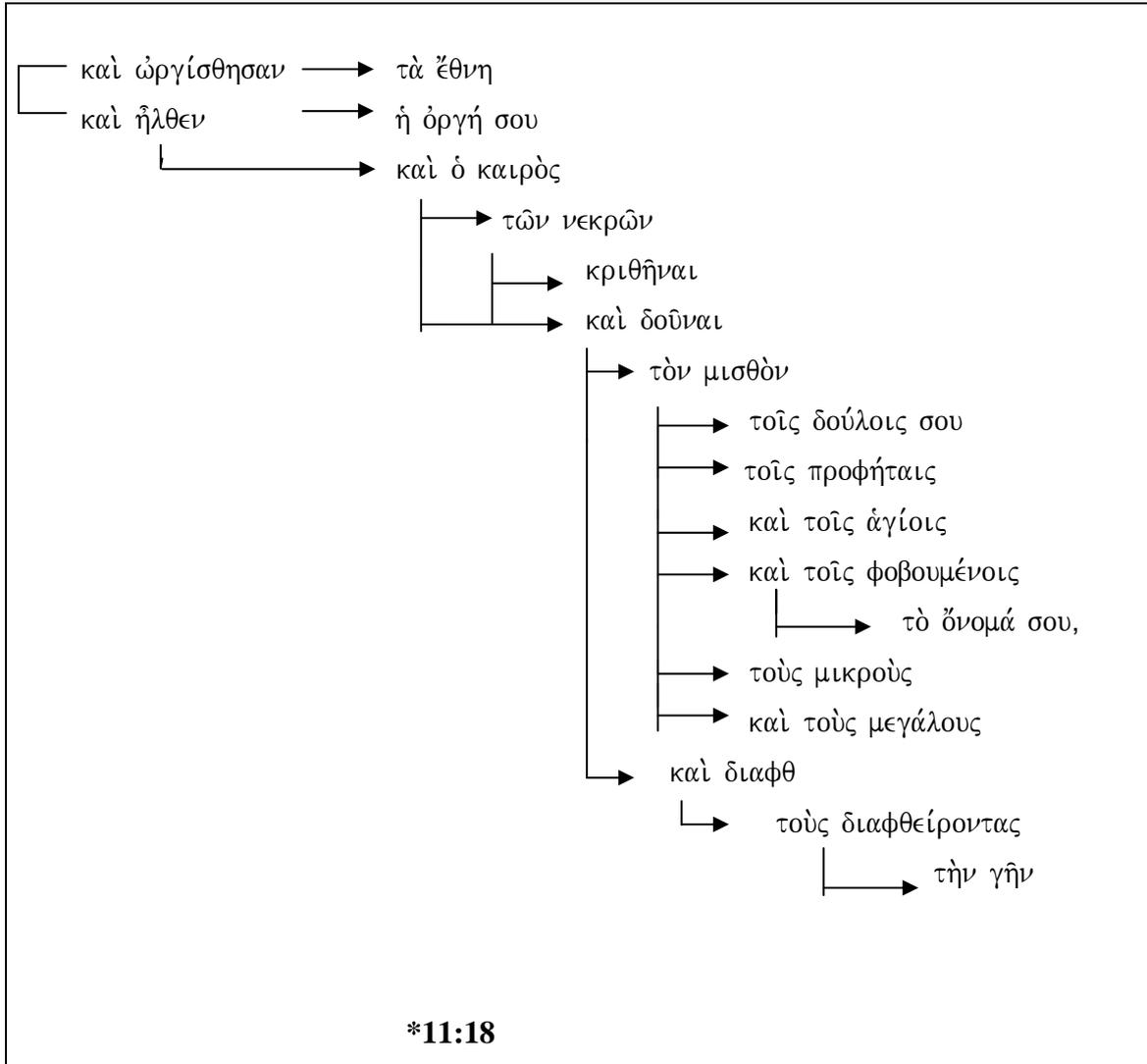




The dragon gives the sea beast the authority to make war against the saints and the whole world. Unlike the victory of Christ who wages war on the dragon and the beasts, the sea beast’s attacks are leveled against the saints, every tribe, people, language, and nation. This fourfold formula (cf. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:5; see Bauckham, 1993a:326-337) is reflected in 5:9 in that Christ, the Lamb, purchased the whole world with his blood (ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους).

The contrasting image between the Lamb and the sea beast leads the conquerors to see the present reality in terms of a heavenly perspective. Bauckham (1993a:333) is of the opinion that “The close relationship between 5:9 and 13:7 is part of a deliberate pattern of ironic parallels between the Lamb’s conquest and the beast’s.” It means that, in contrast with the deceptive identity of the sea beast who makes war to conquer the whole world (ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους), the Lamb and the 144,000 standing on Mount Zion are the real conquerors as the people of God. As the conquerors, they did not have the number of the beast but received the name of the Lamb and his father on their heads (14:1-5). Through this, the conquerors experience a violent death (13:10). It implies that the conquerors overcame “the Beast through death itself” (Michaels, 1992:135). Even though the sea beast tried to conquer the people of God with his deceptive power, he proved a false conqueror from a heavenly perspective.

In contrast with the deceptive power of the sea beast, the identity of the conquerors is described in chapter 11:18 and 14:1, implying the inclusion of chapters 12-13 as a vehicle for revealing victory and judgment. Chapter 11:18 can be analyzed as follows:



Through the analysis above, one can recognize that the theme of reward and judgment in this verse is a prominent characteristic. This analysis can be classified into two parts in terms of reward and judgment that are given to the conquerors and the people of Satan. In this section, the reward is given τοῖς δούλοις σου, τοῖς προφήταις, τοῖς ἁγίοις, τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου as the people of God. It means that they are none other than the conquerors because they defeated the dragon, namely Satan in 12:10-11 and the beasts in 15:2. The judgment is inflicted upon τοὺς διαφθείροντας τὴν γῆν as the people of Satan.

The servant: The mentioning of servants appears in 1:1; 2:20; 6:11; 7:3; 10:7; 11:18; 15:3; 19:2, 5, 10; 22:3, 6, 9. The image of the servant is especially frequently echoed in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, Abraham (e.g. Ge. 26:24) and Moses (e.g. Nu. 12:7-8) are called as servants. The prominent evidence in the Old Testament is the prophecy of

Isaiah (e.g. 42:1; 49:3; 52:13; 53:11) where the servant is portrayed as chosen by God (cf. Barker, 2000:133-139). On the one hand, whenever the book of Revelation describes the word about the servants, it is closely linked with the community of faith. For example, in the case of chapter 2:20, which was sent to the church of Thyatira, the prophetess Jezebel lures God's servants into fornication and into eating food sacrificed to idols. Here, δούλος indicates the faithful community against the false prophetess Jezebel (Beale, 1999:183). On the other hand, the word servant is used together with God, implying that all believers are those who belong to God (Kistemaker, 2001:248).

As the servants of Christ, the souls of those who were slaughtered ask for revenge on the inhabitants of the earth in chapter 6:9-11. The reason that they had been slaughtered is based on διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον as God's servants. Their vindication as God's servants is completed in 20:4 (see Beasley-Murray, 1992:292-295). The souls of those who had been beheaded and had not worshipped the beast and his image reign with Christ for a thousand years because "they are martyrs" (Michaels, 1992:134). That is, their reason for reigning with Christ for a thousand years is also based on διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ like 6:9. The people who reign with Christ are none other than the conquerors because the foundation of victory for the conquerors is possible through τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ. Therefore, the expression to the servant in 11:18 is another way of expressing the conquerors in Revelation (cf. Mounce, 1977:355).

The prophet: The references to the prophet (τοῖς προφήταις) are introduced in 10:7; 11:10, 18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:6, 9. The expression to the prophet is closely linked with the servant of God (cf. τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ δούλους τοὺς προφῆτας; 10:7; 11:18; 22:6). The term "his servants the prophets" is frequently used in the Old Testament together (cf. 2 Ki. 17:13, 23; Jer. 7:25; 35:15; 44:4; Da. 9:6; Am. 3:7). The prophets in the Old Testament proclaimed the mystery of God to reveal the prophetic message and word between salvation and judgment. As Bauckham (1993b:87) comments, "the judgment is actually salvific." In Revelation, the role of the prophets is to proclaim and to reveal through the prophetic witness and word the meaning of history that will be delayed no more (Bauckham, 1993b:84-85). The word of prophecy that the prophet announced means 'good news'

bringing salvation to the people of God (cf. Michaels, 1997:135). That is why, even though the proclamation of the prophetic word is announced in 10:6, the fulfillment of that prophetic word appears in 11:15-19; 15:1; 16:17, and 19:17-20:15.

When one considers the functional role of the prophets to deliver the mystery of God, the announcement of this prophetic word can intimately be connected with 10:11 and 11:3 in terms of micro-structure. In the case of Bauckham (1993a:258), chapters 10:1-11:13, the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, are understood as the climax of the church's witness to the world. The prophetic witness given to the prophets in 10:11 (δέϊ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι) is changed with the prophesy of two witnesses in 11:3-13 that means "the unavoidable necessity of prophesying" (Aune, 1998a:573). This implies that the functional role of two witnesses is to execute the same functional role (προφητεύουσιν) as well as the prophets' function. Therefore, the text in chapters 10 and 11 must be regarded as the same thematic parallel, implying the proclamation of God's prophetic witness in order to ensure the conversion of the nations (Bauckham, 1993b:84).

Here, the word προφητεύω (prophesy) does not merely indicate God's word talking about the future events that will happen someday, but rather reveals the present reality (Boring, 1992:716) and its interpretation of what the first Christians faced. The present reality is to endure the present situation and to proclaim the word of God to the unrepentant people as a warning. That is why the primary function of two witnesses as the conquerors is to proclaim the prophetic word to the unrepentant people (Beale, 1999:573). The similarity between the prophets in 10:7 and the two witnesses in 11:3 can be regarded as the same functional role that is to proclaim the gospel. It demonstrates that they are conquerors through the witness of God's word and their death and resurrection (Pattemore, 2004:85) just as Christ has achieved victory as conqueror through his witness over God's word and his death and resurrection in this world.

The saint: The references to the ἁγίοις appear in 5:8; 8:3, 4; 11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 16:6; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:8; 20:9. Through these references, one can recognize that the words connected with the saints are αἱ προσευχαὶ τῶν ἁγίων in 5:8, ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων in 8:3, ἡ ὑπομονὴ καὶ ἡ πίστις τῶν ἁγίων in 13:10, ἡ ὑπομονὴ τῶν ἁγίων in 14:12,

αἵματος τῶν ἁγίων in 17:6, αἷμα ἁγίων in 18:24. These words such as prayer, endurance, faith, and blood, are political, social and religious terms, where the severe situation of the first Christians is reflected (Kistemaker, 2001:345). That is, words such as prayer, endurance, faith, and blood in Revelation represent the characteristics of what the conquerors bore. The characteristics of worship between God and Satan and of endurance under severe stress and of the blood to be shed because of the name of Christ are provided as proper characteristics of the saints as conquerors of those days (see Friesen, 2004:303-313). As Wilson (1996:184) points out, “The saints and the victors are one and the same.” The first Christians must have been confronted with the choice over worship between Christ and Caesar or God and Satan. This action, in the light of believer, is the need to be faithful as well as to shed blood and endure under any circumstances. Accordingly, John offers his audiences the possibility of joining as faithful saints as well as slaves and prophets (Carey, 2001:177). The faithful saints, as the people of God, can be called conquerors because they endure a period of desperate suffering.

God fearer: The references about God fearer are introduced in 11:18 and 19:5. The interesting things in these two verses are that they are in the midst of the scene of salvation and judgment. After the testimony of the two witnesses in 11:3-13, the end of the kingdom of Satan and the initiation of the kingdom of God are introduced. And the judgment of the evil ones and the reward of God’s people are also introduced. In 11:18, there is a division between the two sides, implying the people of God and the people of Satan in terms of μισθός and ὀργή. The people of God, who will be rewarded by Christ as the conquerors, are the servants, the prophets, the saints, and God fearer. They are all conquerors as the people of God, because they will be rewarded (μισθός) by God in the eschatological final time. The reward of the conquerors depends on their worship of God, their endurance unto death, keeping the faith under severe suffering, and the blood they shed in the name of Christ (Aune, 1987:244; Boring, 1989:5-23). That is why one can say that “the martyrs, then, are conquerors” (Pattemore, 2004:97).

The context of 19:5 where the word οἱ φοβούμενοι is introduced, is linked with the judgment of Babylon and God’s sovereignty to the whole world. In contrast with the judgment of Babylon that is executed in chapters 17-18, chapter 19 includes the

glorification of God who executed his righteous judgment of the great whore. As mentioned in 11:18, this verse is well matched with the previous and following sections that explained the judgment (ὄργη) of the great whore of Babylon and her followers (chapters 17-18) and the wedding ceremony of the Lamb (chapter 19:1-10) who conquered his enemies by his blood (cf. 1:5; 5:6, 9, 12; 7:14; 12:11; 19:13). Therefore, the word οἱ φοβούμενοι, indicating that those who are God fearing, can closely be connected with the praise of God that only the conquerors can sing a new song to God (Mounce, 1977:286-287; cf. 5:12; 15:3-4). The word οἱ φοβούμενοι can be contrasted with the τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς as the people of Satan in 13:14 (cf. Kistemaker, 2001:345) because they worship the beast. The contrasting image between two sides οἱ φοβούμενοι and οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς indicates that God fearers can be called conquerors because they did not worship the beast as did the inhabitants of the earth (cf. 3:10; 6:10; 11:10).

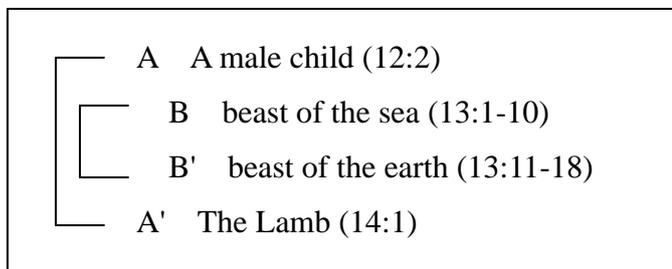
Generally speaking, those who dwell on the earth are regarded as “the enemies of God and his people” (Beagley, 1987:34) and it is confirmed in 6:10 that the martyrs ask to avenge the inhabitants of the earth for shedding the innocent blood of the martyr. Through this analysis, one can recognize that the servant, the prophet, the saint, and the God fearers are conquerors as the people of God who conquer the situation they confronted, and keep the word of God and the testimony of Christ unto death. In contrast with them, the inhabitants of the earth shedding the blood of the martyrs can be regarded as the people of Satan, namely the defeated.

### **V.3. The Conqueror motif from a heavenly perspective**

Generally, the heavenly point of view in Revelation reflects the context for earthly events because that context is often closely connected with the socio-political situation that makes the story meaningful (cf. Sweet, 1979:16, 113-114). Consequently, the spatial dimension between heaven and earth functions as the prominent element of the text, as well as a powerful tool created by the author (Van Eck, 1995:129).

In Revelation, the heavenly point of view offers the overall framework for the movement

and development of the plot to reveal the earthly reality (Gilbertson, 2003:81). John divides his prophetic message into two aspects, those of heaven and earth. The reason why he divides his message into heaven and earth is to focus on the core of his prophetic message or theology to the audience. Therefore, the earth must be reinterpreted through heaven or *vice versa*. The doxology of 12:10-12 concerning Christ and the conquerors emphasizes the reason for victory, as martyrdom by the blood of the Lamb and the word of the believers' testimony (Strand, 1990:242-243). The story flows into an earthly perspective again, that indicates a beast coming out of the sea (13:1) and the earth (13:11). The destiny of the beasts is decided with the appearance of the Lamb as the conqueror who stands on Mount Zion as the heavenly figure. It can be drawn as follows:



Through the diagram above, one can see that A and A', indicating the Messiah Christ and the Lamb, are the heavenly figures who will judge B and B', namely the sea beast and the earth beast. The scene of a male child, implying the exalted Christ in salvation history, in an earthly perspective is changed into the scene of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. Zion is introduced as the place of God's kingdom and of his presence to avoid God's woe, having a theological and eschatological meaning (Beasley-Murray, 1992:221-222). An inclusion of A and A' in contrast with B and B', indicating the deceptive worldly power, supposes that the victory of Christ, the Lamb and the conquerors is confirmed in the heavenly perspective, as well as in the earthly perspective, against the sea and the earth beast (Du Rand, 1993b:318-319). Therefore, one can find out the heavenly point of view of John that a male child and the Lamb as the conquerors will defeat the sea and earth beast and will win.

### V.3.1. Temporal dimension

In the book of Revelation, the temporal dimension is the important element to unravel how

the author's apocalyptic message flows. Its importance is that the narrative story<sup>167</sup> provides the heavenly point of view (Boring, 1992:706) in that readers or audiences must follow the intention of the author. By and large, the temporal dimension of Revelation can be divided into chronological order (linear order)<sup>168</sup> and typological or symbolical order (Powell, 1993:72), including various kinds of temporal elements. When one applies the temporal possibility of Revelation only to chronological order, it might be wrong to apply the message of the book of Revelation as such. One must keep in mind that to see the dynamic or cyclical temporal process or movement of the content of Revelation (cf. Gilbertson, 2003:109-142), it is helpful to reveal the true message of Revelation.

The sign of the woman and the dragon and the cosmic battle between Michael and the dragon in heaven (12:1-9) and the appearance of the sea and earth beast on earth (13:1-18) seem to be depicted in chronological order. When, however, one looks carefully at the text itself, it is very clear that the text is filled with flashforward (prolepsis) and flashback (analepsis; Barr, 1998:121-122). The sign about the woman who gives birth to a male child and the cosmic battle between Michael and the dragon is expressed as flashback (analepsis), indicating Jesus' death on the cross. With the method of flashback, it discloses that the victory of the Christian community is only possible through the death of Jesus on the cross (cf. Boring, 1989:158; Johnson, 2001:183-185). Even though some scholars insist that the battle in heaven between Michael and the dragon indicates the primeval conflict of Satan's fall, this story may rather refer to Jesus' death or victory (Goldsworthy, 1984:121).

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<sup>167</sup> In the narrative story, narration time is called objective time and narrated time is called subjective time. Objective time in the narrative story means the flow of the continued story without any interruption, breaking, and insertion. Thus, narration time can be evaluated in a precise and objective way. Subjective time in the narrative story, in contrast to objective time, is never continuous and enlarges or diminishes the narrative story according to the intention of the implied author. This narrative time fashion does not express the story within a chronological framework. It mingles the past, present, and future with intention. That is, narrated time is not uniform or regular and its directions and speed often change (Bar-Efrat, 1989:141-143). Whenever one reads the narrative story, if one distinguishes between the narration time (objective time) and narrated time (subjective time), it might be helpful to understand the meaning of the narrative story according to the intention of the author.

<sup>168</sup> The crucial text to find out the temporal structure of the book of Revelation is Revelation 1:19 because this text is understood to be the interpretative key to Revelation. Many commentators (e.g. Charles, 1975:1.33; Ladd, 1979:34) have seen Revelation 1:19 as implying a threefold chronological division: "what you have seen (ὃ εἶδες)" refers to the previous vision of chapter 1 and "what is now (ὃ εἶσιν)" is a reference to the condition of the seven churches of chapters 2-3 in Asia Minor and "what will take place (ὃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα)" refers to the chapter 4-22, denoting the final tribulation and final salvation (cf. contra Beale, 1992:360-386). This opinion does not regard the possible recapitulative nature or progressive parallelism (cf. Hendriksen, 2000:34-36). Thus, each of the three clauses in v. 19 refers equally to the entire book (Beale, 1992:381).

The doxology of 12:10-11 is functioned as flashforward (prolepsis), implying the future victory of the Christian community. The dragon's war with a woman and a male child is not heard in order<sup>169</sup> but is rather interchangeable within the narrative story in order to give the message of victory and conquest in terms of the death and victory of Jesus (Shea, 1985:52). In terms of the temporal dimension, as Caird (1966:26) rightly pointed out, the whole of the book of Revelation is closely intertwined with past, present, and future. Through flashback and flashforward, the conquerors as the people of God confirm their victory against the dragon and the hostile world.

### V.3.2. The Psychological perspective: positive and negative

In chapters 12-13, the characteristic words are as follows: 'fighting', 'repulsion', 'conquest', and 'death'.<sup>170</sup> The repetitive use of these military words between Michael and his angels and the dragon and the sea/earth beasts symbolizes the positive and negative psychological perspective in terms of victory and judgment (cf. Resseguie, 1998:44-45).

The psychological perspective in Revelation discloses the thoughts, emotions, and responses of characters in order to evoke some effects on their audience (Powell, 1993:64-65). It is designed to catch the imagination of the audience and to see one's historical situation and perspective in a new way or from a new understanding. As Collins (1984:145) pointed out, "The Apocalypse handles skillfully the hearers' thoughts, attitudes, and feelings by the use of effective symbols and a narrative plot that invites imaginative participation." Therefore, the type of language in Revelation that discloses the thoughts, attitudes, and feelings of the audience in terms of a psychological perspective, is a very

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<sup>169</sup> According to Gilbertson (2003:110-111), the temporal categories can be classified into five different categories as follows: present, primordial past, historical past, penultimate future and ultimate future. While he divides the temporal dimension in Revelation into five categories, he denies a chronological order. He (:111) argues that "it is misguided to seek to construct a chronological scheme out of it." Thus, through the temporal dimension, one should find out the dynamic moving of the text from the beginning to the end.

<sup>170</sup> These words such as 'fighting', 'repulsion', 'conquest', and 'death' in chapters 12-13 are the prominent words, indicating combatant terminology or eschatological battle. For example, 'fighting' is used in 12:7 (πόλεμος, πολεμήσαι, ἐπολέμησεν), 17 (πόλεμον); 13:4 (πολεμήσαι), 7 (πόλεμον). 'Repulsion' is used in 12:9 (ἐβλήθη, ἐβλήθη, ἐβλήθησαν), 10 (ἐβλήθη), 13 (ἐβλήθη). 'Conquest' is used in 12:11 (ἐνίκησαν); 13:7 (νικήσαι). 'Death' is used in 12:11 (θανάτου); 13:3 (ἐσφαγμένην εἰς θάνατον, θανάτου), 8 (ἐσφαγμένου), 10 (ἀποκτανθῆναι, ἀποκτανθῆναι). Through these words one can see that in Revelation 12-13, the theme of conquest or victory in terms of a heavenly community and death or defeat in terms of an earthly community are the prominent theme.

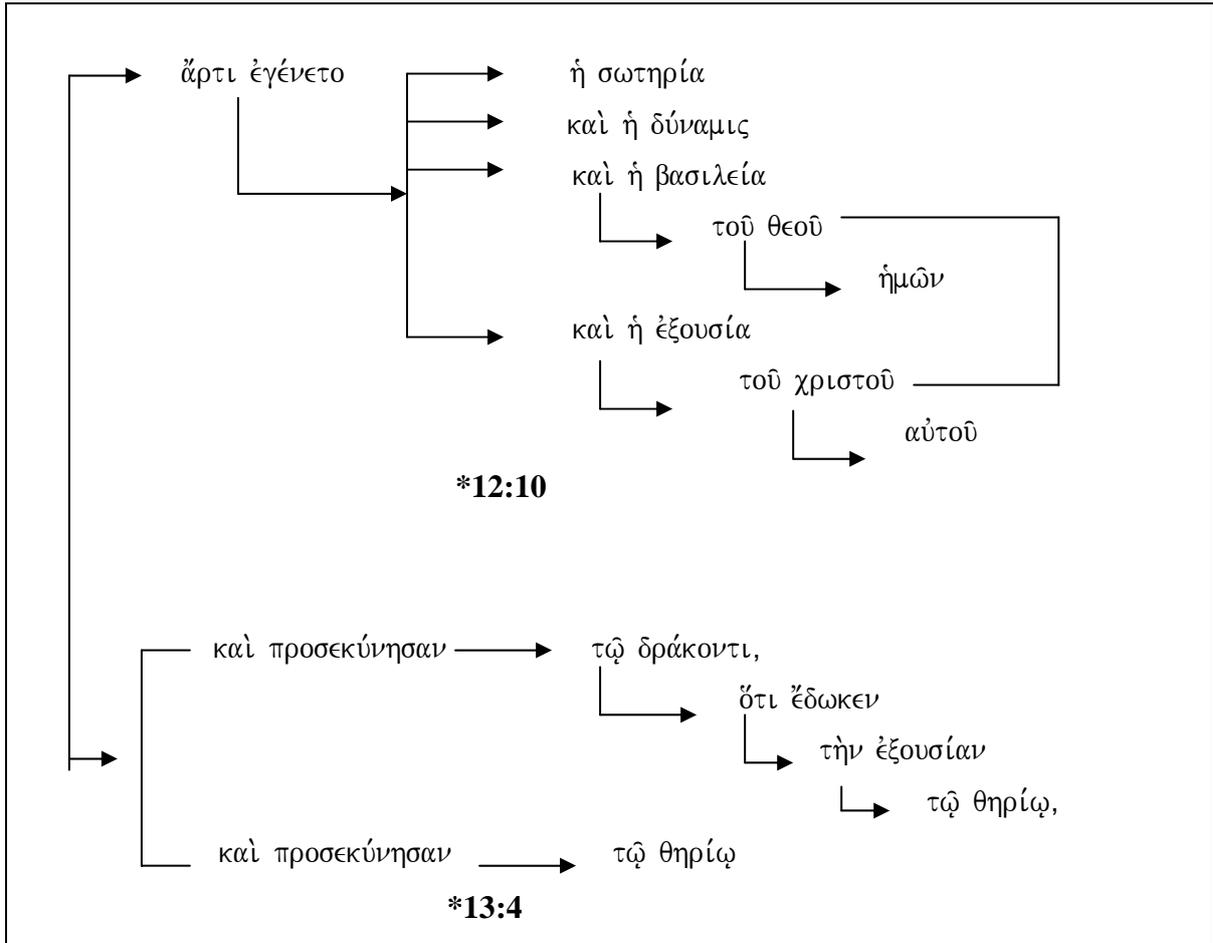
important element.<sup>171</sup> The thoughts, attitudes, and feelings of characters disclose the meaning of events.

The response of the major psychological perspective in Revelation 12-13 can be divided into two parts: the positive and the negative (cf. Barr, 1998:105-115). In the cosmic battle (12:1-9), the defeat of the dragon brings about two responses. In the positive part, a loud voice in heaven responds with praise of the salvation and power of the kingdom of God and the authority of his Christ (ἄρτι ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ). But in another part, one has a negative response because Christ's death on the cross and the saint's testimony, the devil responds with fury (θυμὸν μέγαν:12:12).

In 13:3-10, the response to the healing of the sea beast's head can again be divided into two parts: positive and negative. In the positive part, the whole earth was astonished and followed the beast (ἐθαυμάσθη ὅλη ἡ γῆ ὀπίσω τοῦ θηρίου:13:3] and worshipped (προσεκύνησαν:13:4) the dragon and the beast because of their act. And the saint who did not worship the dragon and the beast must be patient and faithful (13:10) in the negative part. Whereas this psychological perspective reveals the deceptive power of evil as conqueror from an earthly perspective, it also discloses the victory of God's people as the conquerors from a heavenly perspective (Kistemaker, 2001:353). Therefore, the audience must decide which way to choose. That is, the psychological perspective represents the reality for one's identity whether one is a conqueror or not. As one will see below, the contrasting response of these verses (12:10, 12:12, 13:3-4 and 13:10) shows us which side they belong to, namely the conquerors or the defeated.

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<sup>171</sup> The language of Revelation provides the crucial interpretive key of the texts, if one regards carefully the text itself. Because Revelation itself is not the book to deliver information over the historical situation to the ancient audience but to give evocative or expressive language, the book of Revelation demands to share and participate in the language of the symbolic transformation (cf. Caird, 1980:7-36).



The contradictory features of these two verses reveal the characteristics of God/Christ and Satan, and of the worshipper of God/Christ, along with Satan's worshipper, the dragon. The conquerors who praise the works of God and Christ, and who recognize the ultimate reality confirm the salvation, power, kingdom, and authority of God and Christ in heaven as well as on earth (e.g. 5:12-13).

The victorious hymn of God, Christ, and the conquerors in 12:10 are based on 12:7-9 in that the war between Michael and the dragon is mentioned. The heavenly war between Michael and the dragon is reflected in 12:10-12 on the basis of Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Mounce, 1977:243). The result of this war between Michael and the dragon has brought a different positive and negative psychological response. The establishment of God's kingdom and his sovereignty in heaven is expressed with the praise of God and Christ as the object of worship by people of God in contrast with the worship of Satan (Du Rand, 1993b:316-317), personified as the Roman Emperor. This is a proper message in the

context of the conflict situation between Christ and Caesar (cf. Aune, 1987:243-246). Therefore, those who praise the works of God and Christ might be called conquerors because they accept salvation, power, kingdom, and authority derived from God against Satan. Even though they live in difficult circumstances enduring persecution, compromise, and self-deception, they recognize the ultimate reality of God and Satan. Through this hymnic composition, John provides the heavenly perspective that God is in control of the cosmos as well as of history (Lee, 1998:192). As Witherington III (2003:34) insists, “The very heart of apocalyptic is the unveiling of secrets and truths about God’s perspective on a variety of subjects, including justice and the problem of evil.”

The diagram shown above implies that the source of their authority in the text is derived from God and the dragon respectively. According to DeSilva (1998:79-110), epideictic rhetoric, dealing with the topics of honour through praise and censure, reinforces virtues to the audience or reader in order to lead to honour and honourable remembrance after death. Only God and Christ can receive honour through the whole world. The first Christians had to accept faith that God and Christ are in control of the whole world and they are the ultimate conquerors who should be worshipped. Consequently, the analysis above indicates that the right worship of God and Christ in contrast with its alternative, idolatrous worship of the dragon and the beast in a socio-political situation (cf. Botha, 1988:87-98), had to be executed in the first Christian community to be called the conquerors (cf. Boring, 1986:257-269).

### V.3.3. Social and political implications

Because understanding social conditions and the political *milieu* in biblical times is important in interpreting the text itself, an analysis of various socio-political approaches as a social setting must be attempted. When one studies the book of Revelation, one may find that, within the narrative story, various methodological interrelationships must be tested. That is, Revelation must be read from its social matrix as well as a narrative story that has a unified intention, emphasizing history, literature, and theology (Du Rand, 1997b:59). The author, John, focuses his message on history (eschatology), the narrative, and theology to conquer the outcome of their present crisis (cf. Fiorenza, 1985:46-56).

In fact, because the social, economic and historical settings had been mentioned above, I just want to deal briefly with the socio-political situation of chapters 12-13, which is based on the pressing circumstance wherein God's people were persecuted. But in contrast with the previous section (e.g. 8:6-11:18), chapters 12-13 deal with God's victory from the perspective of a "cosmic war" (Barr, 1998:104), dividing worshippers of the Lamb and worshippers of the beast (13:8).

In the Old Testament, a dragon is a symbol of evil (e.g. Job. 7:12; Ps. 74:13; Isa. 27:1; 51:9; Jer. 51:9). The purpose of the Satan in this section is to kill the woman, who represents the people of God or the Church (Bruns, 1964:459), and a male child who will rule all the nations with an iron sceptre.<sup>172</sup> This story is provided to depict God and Christ's victory in terms of a cosmic dimension and war, but in a real sense, it is stated to describe the socio-political situation that the first Christians confronted within pagan society. Because the characteristic of the dragon as an image of God's opposition is embedded in a historical context, here the dragon depicts the imperial power of Rome (Harrington, 1969:177-181; Wilcock, 1989:124).

In chapter 13, John explains the beast of the sea as the 'Roman Empire' (see Fiorenza, 1991:83; Roloff, 1993:155; Talbert, 1994:52; Barr, 1998:107; Beale, 1999:684; Marshall, 2001:139-140). As the dragon's minion, the beast of the sea encourages the imperial cult of Rome and Emperor worship in order to worship both the dragon and the beast of the sea (13:3-4). In contrast with the scholars mentioned above, Van De Water (2000:246) regards the two beasts not as the Roman government, but political messianism in Palestine and Diaspora Judaism against the followers of Jesus (see Beagley, 1987). Although his argument shows good insight, it cannot be supported by the text itself.

The parody continues with the appearance of another beast coming out of the earth (13:11). The beast of the earth can be defined as John's opponents, indicating the prophets "Balaam

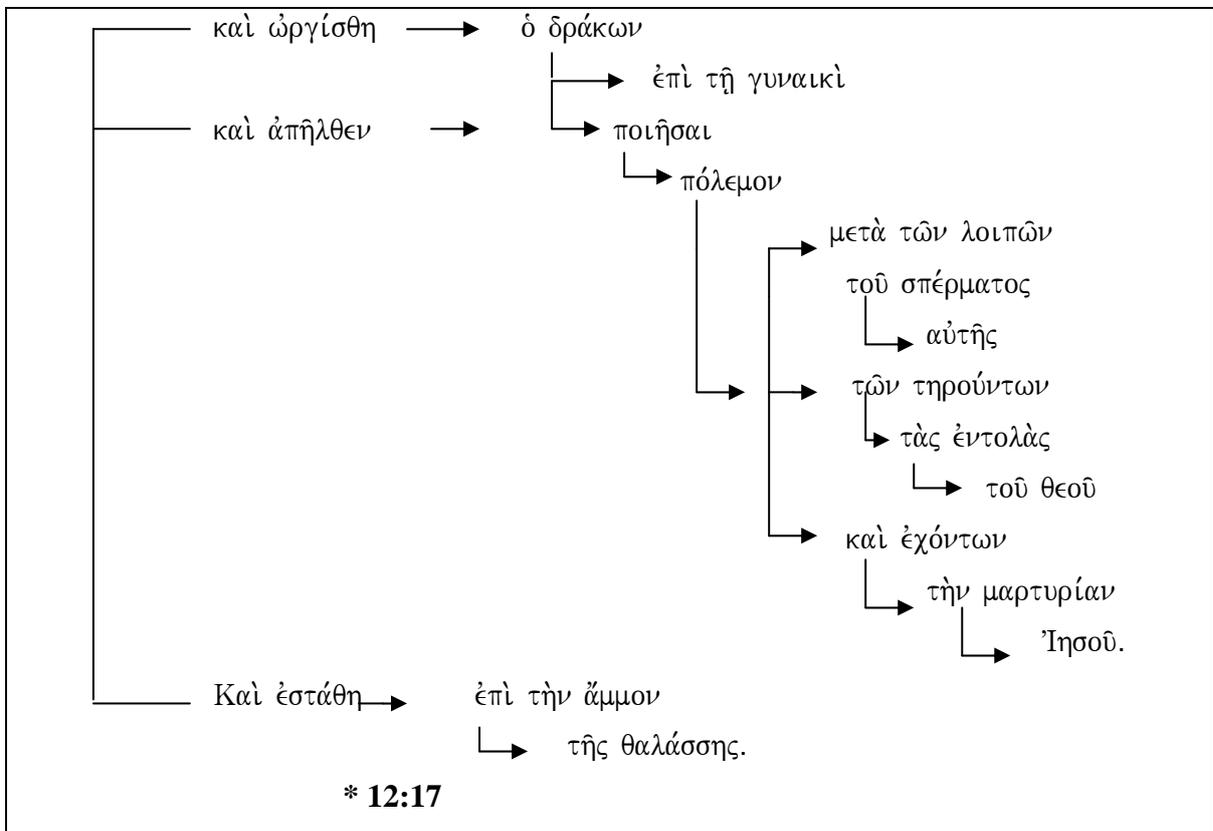
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<sup>172</sup> The conflict between the woman and a male child and Satan in 12:1-6 does not refer to Satan's futile hostility toward the Messiah from the beginning (cf. Beckwith, 1967:617). It is speculated that John put the story into pre-historical conflict between Messiah and Satan. But John tells this story on the horizontal line of history. That is, Revelation's primary hermeneutical perspective is to interpret the present events of history by placing them in their *heilsgechichtlich* context (Boring, 1986:268). Thus, the pursuit and the defeat of the dragon (12:1-9) must be based on the death and resurrection of Christ. This story is confirmed in 12:10-11, explaining the death of the Lamb and the testimony of the saints (cf. Torrance, 1959:78-81).

and Jezebel” (Garrow, 1997:89), or “the false prophet”, promoting an imperial cult and emperor worship (Kistemaker, 2001:388; cf. Boring, 1989:156; Thompson, 1998:143) or “the false religions and philosophies” (Hendriksen, 2000:144) or “provincial cult” (Price, 1984:197). Even though there are many debates among scholars about what the identity might be, one can suppose that it is the epitome of evil against the people of God, encouraging the imperial cult and emperor worship, false religion, and the provincial cult. As Bauckham (1993b:38) argued, Revelation provides prophetic critique of the system of Roman power. Therefore, the prophetic critique of the system of Roman power provides the socio-historical setting of chapters 12-13 in order to help the reading of this section.

V.3.3.1. The Conquerors versus the Dragon (δράκων)

The dragon is always a ‘flat character’ in Revelation that carries out evil’s destructive power against God and his people, that is, the conquerors. But the heavenly war between Michael and the dragon (12:7-9) determines in advance the destiny of the dragon. The diagram below will show the contrast between the conquerors and the evil ones.



The analysis of the diagram above shows us how the dragon fights in anger against God's people. The rest of woman's offspring, implying the promise of Genesis 3:15, points to the church as a whole (Michaels, 1997:153-154). The war between the dragon and the woman happens in two places: heaven (12:7-12) and earth (12:13-17). The reason why the woman is persecuted is due to the dragon's defeat in heaven. After his defeat, the dragon comes down to the earth to persecute her. This image provides a contrast between the spiritual church and the earthly church, reflecting protection and victory of the conquerors (cf. Lee, 1998:189-190). It implies that "God shields the church's members not from physical violence but from spiritual destruction" (Johnson, 2001:187).

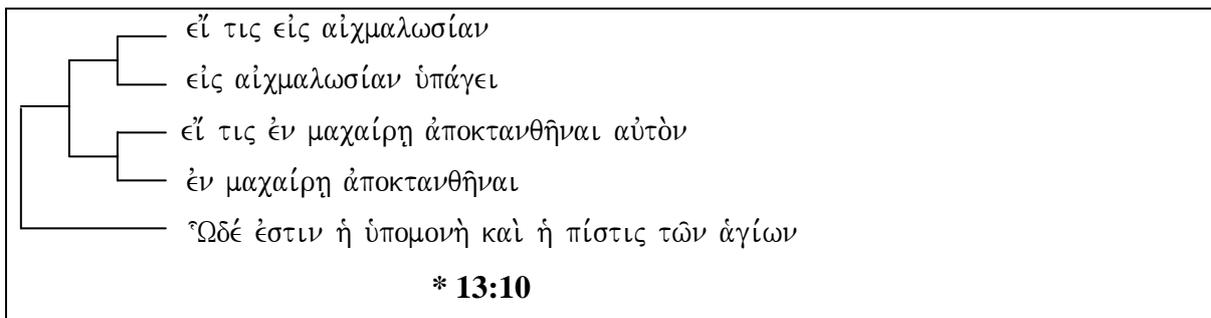
When one views the diagram above, the identity of the conquerors is clearly demonstrated. That is, the conquerors are the rest of woman's offspring but it does not mean that they imply all human beings. Who are the rest of woman's offspring? They are those who obey God's commandment and hold to the testimony of Jesus. Obeying God's commandment and holding the testimony of Jesus brought about suffering and death for the first Christians (Mounce, 1977:245). It is really "a clash of total cultures, a clash of life-styles" (Downing, 1995:248). This verse can be linked with John's situation in Patmos (1:9). The confinement of John resulted from his witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. Because of his witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, he was ἐν τῇ θλίψει. In the book of Revelation, tribulation (θλίψις) is used to indicate the victory, conquest, and kingship of the conquerors (Thompson, 1986:153). This would mean that God and Christ in a heavenly court would reward the witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. To keep and hold the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, which are characteristics of all true saints, are the way of victory and conquest as the conquerors (Bauckham, 1993b:91). This prophetic rhetoric of John's demands the church's endurance and the Christian faith under circumstances that the conquerors experienced, that is, suffering, distress, poverty, and economic disadvantage in a daily life (cf. Fiorenza, 1991:50-51).

#### V.3.3.2. The Conquerors versus the Beast from the sea

The beast of the sea is expressed as a 'flat character' in the story. He comes up from the

Abyss that is part of John's spiritual topographical place, representing the abode of evil (cf. Resseguie, 1998:88-90). Just as the function of the dragon has to make war (ποιῆσαι πόλεμον) against the rest of her offspring, the beast coming up from the Abyss is to make war (ποιήσει μετ' αὐτῶν πόλεμον) on the saints. The beast of the sea appears as a servant of the dragon imitating the dragon. The author portrays the beast of the sea as being on the dragon's side. That is, many of his actions and speeches expose his imitation of the dragon. In fact, what the beast of the sea did to the conquerors was derived from the authority of the dragon. The beast was given (ἐδόθη) his power, his throne and his great authority from the dragon. The beast was given (ἐδόθη) a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies, and was allowed (ἐδόθη) to exercise his authority for forty-two months (13:5; cf. 13:7), implying a period of limited but intense persecution (Mounce, 1977:254).

The repeated use of the passive voice mentioned above, like ἐδόθη, discloses the functional unity between the dragon and the beast of the sea as evil ones blaspheming God and the conquerors (Aune, 1998a:735). The outer appearance of the beast of the sea is like the dragon, and his speech copies the dragon in uttering proud words and blasphemies. The narrator's statement as a negative meaning represents the inner reality or deeper meaning of the beast of the sea. The analysis of conqueror in 13:10 can be suggested as follows:



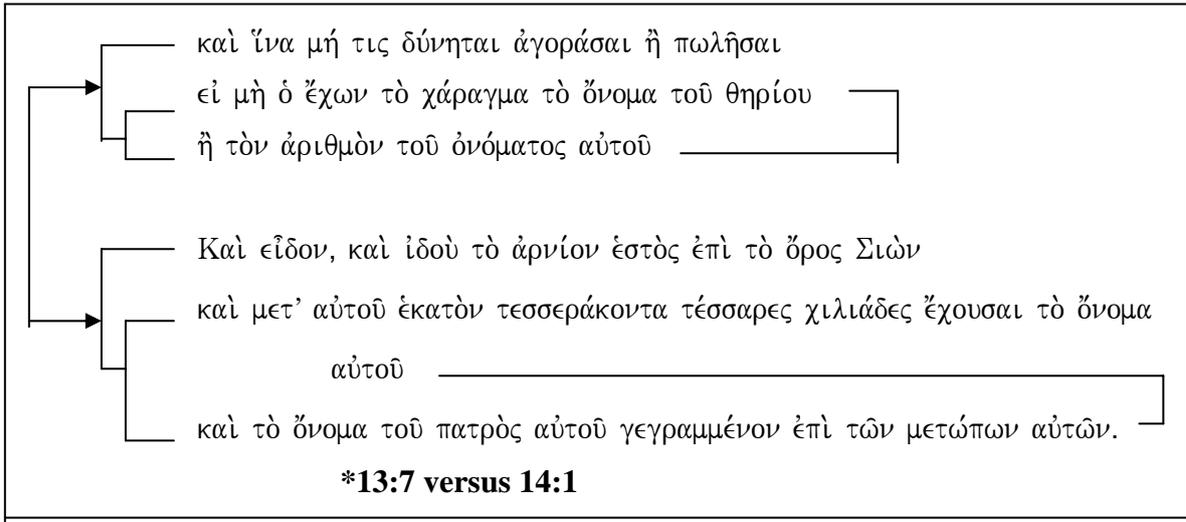
These lines are derived from the quotation of the prophecy of Jeremiah 15:2 and 43:11 that wrote about the destiny of the wicked people. But John reinterprets this text into the concept of a suffering Christian. The emphasis in this verse is not on the judgment of the wicked people, but on the suffering of the conquerors to give encouragement and consolation in their present situation (Morris, 1999:165; contra Wall, 1991:170). Their suffering in this world is not the end, but God and Christ will vindicate them as the

conquerors. Therefore, the conquerors have to maintain the endurance and the faithfulness unto death. According to Bauckham (1993b:91), “the beast’s apparent victory is the martyrs’ - and therefore God’s- real victory.”

Interestingly enough, a hearing formula is contained in the exhortation of 13:9. The hearing formula, that “He who has an ear let him hear”, can be connected with the refrain in the letters to the churches, immediately preceding and following the reference about the conquerors (cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). This hearing formula in the seven churches is accompanied by the promise that was given to the conquerors as an eschatological reward (cf. Duff, 2001:31-47). One can suppose that this combination between the hearing formula and the promise given to the conquerors in the seven churches intended to encourage and to give hope to the Christians as spiritual conquerors in the midst of worldly hostility. The same idea in 13:9-10 is used to encourage and to give hope to the Christians who “practice the qualities of faith and endurance” (Aune, 1998a:750). Just as the promise statement given to the conquerors in the seven churches encourages Christians to maintain their status in the worldly conflict as spiritual conquerors, 13:9-10 also emphasizes the perseverance and faithfulness of the conquerors in the midst of conflict with the beast of the sea. If they do that, they could be called conquerors/victors from a heavenly perspective (cf. Reddish, 1995:212-222).

#### V.3.3.3. The Conquerors versus the Beast from the earth

The beast from the earth is the third member of the evil ones. His function is to deceive the inhabitants of the earth and lead them to worship the first beast (13:12, 14). That is, he is a deceiver, and as a deceiver, he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men (13:13; see Scherrer, 1984:599-610). Just as the followers of the Lamb and God receive the seal of the living God on their forehead (ἄχρι σφραγίσωμεν τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων αὐτῶν; e.g. 7:3-8; 14:1-5), the followers of the beast receive a mark on their right hand or on their forehead (13:16: δώσιν αὐτοῖς χάραγμα ἐπὶ τῆς χειρὸς αὐτῶν τῆς δεξιᾶς ἢ ἐπὶ τὸ μέτωπον αὐτῶν). Here, the actions and attributes of the beast of the earth disclose his inner reality as a deceiver. With the identity of the beast of the earth, the identity of the conquerors can be analyzed as follows:



The analysis of 13:17 and 14:1 reveals the contrasting identity between the conquerors and the earthly beast (cf. Ford, 1975:225).<sup>173</sup> Those who have the mark of the name of the beast or the number of his name, understood as the characteristics of slaves, soldiers, indicate to where they belong. It means that they who have the mark of the beast are devotees and true followers of the beast because having the mark indicates “divine ownership” (Aune, 1998a:768).

Just as the followers of the earthly beast have the mark on their forehead or right hand, the 144,000 who are the followers of the Lamb have received the mark of the name of the Lamb and of his father. The name of the Lamb and of his father, written on the foreheads of the 144,000, is in contrast with the name of the beast of earth. Whether they have the mark of the Lamb and of his father or of the earthly beast or not, it identifies where they belong. As Beale (1999:735) pointed out, “the divine name and the seal are marks of genuine membership in the community of the redeemed.” It means that they are none other than the conquerors who have the name of the Lamb in terms of the heavenly perspective.

The conquering or victory of the conquerors and judgment over all three evil ones begins with the statement of 16:17 about γέγονεν. In chapters 17-18, the destruction of great

<sup>173</sup> The argument whether the beast of the earth is a true prophetic witness of chapter 11 or of the Holy Spirit is not easy to determine. If the dragon is the counterpart to God and the beast of the sea the counterpart to Christ the Lamb, the beast of the earth is the counterpart to the Holy Spirit. As Boring (1989:156) argued, John explicitly reveals this second beast that rose out of the earth as the false prophet. It is the Satanic counterpart and a parody of the Holy Spirit at work in the churches, thought of especially as the Spirit that inspires prophecy (cf. Coetzee, 1993:317-318; contra Resseguie, 1998:127-129).

Babylon as an apparently powerful and rich city or the woman who was destroyed by the beast and her own evil occurs as the result of her own evil disposition. That is, great Babylon is destroyed by evil because evil has a self-destructive character in itself. That is why great Babylon can never conquer and rule the people of God as the conquerors (cf. Bauckham, 1993b:35-39). In chapter 19, the conquering and victory in heaven are proclaimed with the hymn (see Shea, 1984:249-257) against the judgment over great Babylon. In 19:19-20:15, the final judgment scene against Satan, beasts, and the false prophets is introduced. Here, one encounters the theme of victory or conquering of all faithful Christians, implying the members of the church, believers, and the martyrs, as well as the judgment of evil powers. According to the expression of Shea (1985:51), it can be described as “God’s throne (*victory and conquering*)<sup>174</sup>, and the judgment given from it.” All glorification of evil will be gone forever (e.g. 20:11-15) and the result of the destruction of all evil ones will be a new heaven and new earth (e.g. 21:1-7).

#### **V.4. Victory and Doxology of the Conquerors**

It is widely accepted that Revelation 12-13 is the central position in the book (cf. Mounce, 1977:234-235; Beasley-Murray, 1992:191) because this section makes up the structural framework as a whole. Kistemaker (2001:351-353) suggests that there is no close connection between the content of chapter 11 and that of chapter 12. But this section (chaps. 12-13) is closely tied up with the previous section (e.g. 10:1-11:14) and the following section (15:1-16:21) in terms of micro-narrative (Aune, 1998a:635) to emphasize continuity (cf. Smith, 1994:284-293). The use of the conjunction *καί* demonstrates that the two sections (11:15-19 and 12:14) are closely related (contra Kistemaker, 2001:351-352). That is, it indicates that the victory and the kingship of the Lord or Christ have thematically been reinterpreted in terms of a historical and cosmological perspective (Beale, 1999:619, 622-624). Christ has already made us to be a kingship and priests of God through the blood of the Lamb and the word of the saints’ testimony (Bandstra, 1992:12).

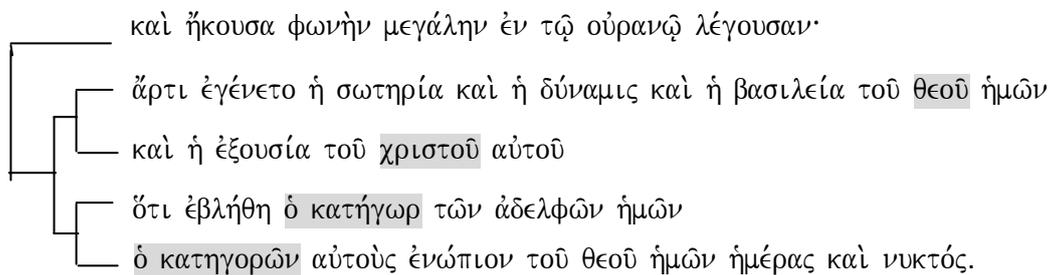
The crucial issue in Revelation is on the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven (Du

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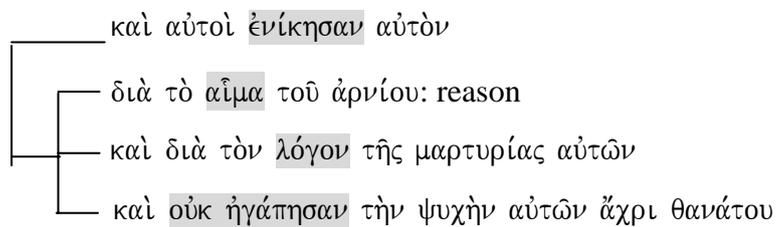
<sup>174</sup> Italics in the bracket are mine.

Rand, 1993b:318-319; cf. 4:11; 5:13). The establishment of the kingdom of God is the task of Christ, involving both victory and judgment. Charles (1975:1.294) argues that the hymn celebrates the divine victory of the world as if it were already achieved. The hymn represents a proleptic reflection as flash-forward (cf. 19:17-21; 20:10). Therefore, the hymn in 12:10-12 represents the establishment of the kingdom and sovereignty of God on the earth as it is in heaven. The hymn in 12:10-12 can be analyzed as follows:

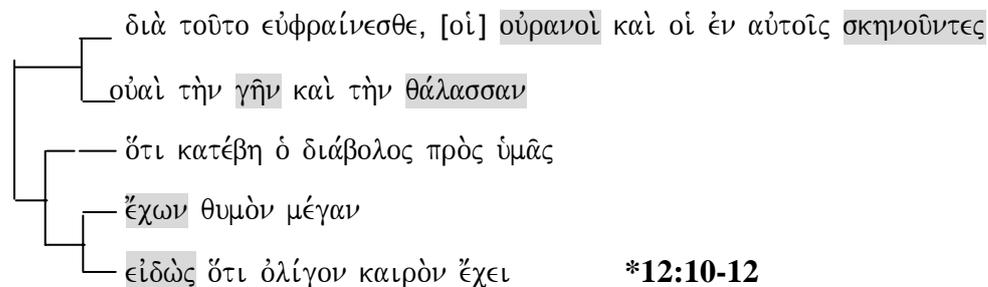
#### Phase 1 (v. 10): Kingship/Sovereignty



#### Phase 2 (v.11): Victory



#### Phase 3 (v. 12): Result (Effect)



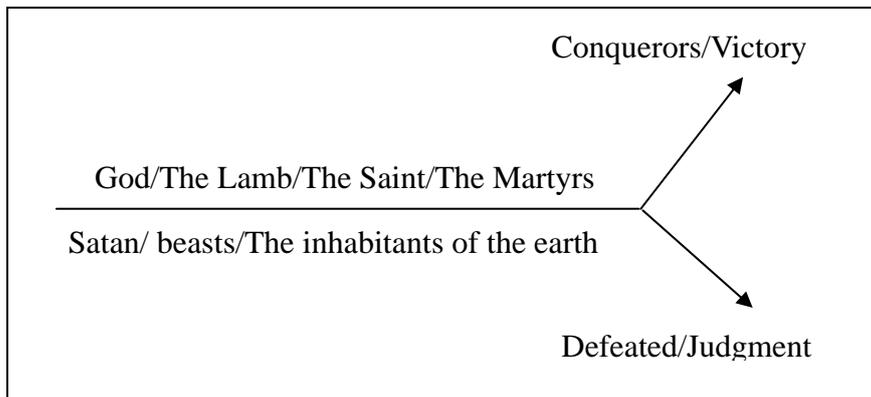
These phases are constructed with various patterns, indicating parallel, contrast, and causality. It consists of three phases. In phase 1, the salvation, power, and kingdom of God and Christ's authority contrast with the accuser Satan, who accuses our brothers before our God day and night. It has already occurred in hurling down the accuser, Satan, to the earth, indicated by the use of the aorist tense ἐβλήθη. God and Christ are already conquerors who have achieved the decisive victory against the accuser, Satan, on earth as it is in heaven.

In phase 2, the reason for the conquest (ἐνίκησαν) is suggested with three items- αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου, λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν, and οὐκ ἠγάπησαν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν. Here, the objects of the conquest are changed into the people of God. In order to conquer the accuser, Satan (αὐτὸν), their lives must be dependent on the blood of the Lamb who died on the cross and on the word of their testimony, even to the death. Just as God and Christ are the subjects of the conquest through the death of the Lamb, the same things can be applied to the Christians (Aune, 1998a:702). If Christians who live their lives in difficult situations depend on the blood of the Lamb and on the words of their testimony even unto death, they can be called the conquerors because of the already determined event of Christ on the cross (Homcy, 1995:193).

In phase 3, the audiences are exhorted to rejoice (εὐφραίνεσθε) because the devil has been cast down to earth and he is defeated. The result of rejoicing is a typical element of a victory song (Collins, 1976:138). The victory and the defeat are expressed with two points of view: heavens (οὐρανοὶ) and those who dwell in them (σκηνοῦντες) and the earth (γῆν) and the sea (θάλασσαν). As the sphere of ultimate reality, the heaven contrasts with the earth and the sea as the place of evil. The casting (κατέβη) of Satan out of heaven can be connected with the kingdom of God in 12:10 (ἐγένετο ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ) as a contrast image. That is, the heavenly victory of God and Christ is a guarantee of victory of God's people as the conquerors in the given situation.

The song of victory in 12:10-12 is based on Christ the Lamb's event as the conqueror on the cross and as the defeated in the light of the historical and cosmological aspect. It reflects the dualism in Revelation between God/Satan, the Lamb/the sea beast, heaven/earth, salvation/judgment, and the kingdom of God/the kingdom of Satan. The

hymn in 12:10-12 is connected with the hymn in 11:15b, 17-18, expressing the thematic assimilation. Ford (1998:222) is of the opinion that the hymn in Rev. 12 elaborates the themes of 11:15b, that Christ will reign, and of 11:17-18, the presence of the Christ which brings judgment with it. Thus, the theme of victory or judgment and conqueror or defeated must be one of the prominent themes in 12:10-12. It can be summarized as follows:



## V.5. Conclusion

Until now, I have described the conqueror motif in terms of the heavenly and earthly perspectives, focusing on chapters 12-13. When one understands the conqueror motif, an interesting thing is that it is dramatically expressed. To reveal the theme of conquering or victory and defeat or judgment, various symbolic images and transformations are suggested.

In the light of judgment, the theophany formula is provided in verses such as 4:5, 8:5, 11:19, and 16:18. In conjunction with the Egyptian plagues (e.g. Ex. 9:18, 24; 10:6), Bauckham (1993a:199-209) argues that the theophany formula is introduced to provide the increasing severity of each series of judgment, reflecting eschatological salvation and judgment events. That is why the temple as the place of divine salvation and judgment is introduced wherever the theophany formula appears. The use of temple and throne reveals a dual purpose in terms of the heavenly and earthly perspective: victory and judgment (Mounce, 1977:232-233). As the place of God's presence, glory, and victory, the temple is seen and nothing unholy is allowed to replace it as the place of judgment. Stevenson (2001:264) correctly argues that "no matter what happens on earth nor how fierce the

opposing forces become, God's covenant is secure just as the ark is secure in the heavenly temple."

In terms of the theophany formula and the temple, John provides two perspectives, namely the heavenly and earthly perspectives. God's salvation and judgment are initiated upon the conquerors and the dragon, the beast of the sea, and the beast of the earth and proclaim the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. That is, the heavenly reality reinterprets the earthly reality that is dominated by the dragon, the beast of the sea, and the beast of the earth. The purpose of the heavenly perspective is to reinterpret how Christians should understand the earthly world they experience in pagan circumstances as the people of God (Barr, 1998:4, 64-65, 104-105). That is why in chapters 12-13, the eschatological battle between Michael and Satan is introduced from a heavenly perspective. In the light of the earthly point of view, the dragon and two beasts look like conquerors who accomplish various wonderful works such as ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ἐθεραπεύθη (13:3), σημεῖα μεγάλα (13:13). But in the light of the heavenly point of view, they are the defeated. According to Caird (1966:153-154), the earthly reality can't be the same as the heavenly reality. The real victory can be won by the blood of the Lamb unlike that of the dragon and two beasts (Boring, 1992:715).

The dragon and two beasts have the socio-political settings based on the exigency and urgency over the people of God. The story of the dragon and two beasts provides the victory of God and the conquerors and the defeat of the evil ones in the light of the cosmic dimension. The heavenly war between Michael and the dragon (12:7-9) and the doxology over the Lamb and the people of God show who the conquerors are (cf. Hendrickson, 2000:134-151). Even though the dragon, Satan, tried to kill the people of God, he is defeated from a heavenly perspective. That is why two images like the heavenly war between Michael and the dragon (12:7-9) and the doxology of the victory of the Lamb and of his people (12:10-12) are introduced to give victory and encouragement in the light of the heavenly point of view (Kistemaker, 2001:53-54).

The function of two beasts, as the servant of the dragon, is to make war and to conquer the people of God on this earth. It reveals that as the dragon, two beasts opposed to the people

of God are the object of God's judgment, even though they look like conquerors in the light of the earthly point of view. The close relationship between the dragon and the two beasts can be identified with the use of these words as follows: ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ δράκων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην (13:2), ἔδωκεν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τῷ θηρίῳ (13:4), ἔδόθη αὐτῷ στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα καὶ βλασφημίας καὶ ἔδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία (13:5), ἔδόθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι πόλεμον μετὰ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ νικῆσαι αὐτούς (13:7), ἔδόθη αὐτῷ ποιῆσαι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θηρίου (13:14), ἔδόθη αὐτῷ (13:15). The transfer of authority from the dragon ⇒ the beast of the sea ⇒ to the beast of the earth portrays their evil identification that fights with the people of God. The repeated use of the passive voice reveals the functional unity as “the satanic trinity” (Bauckham, 1993b:89), fighting against God and his people.

Although they tried to kill the people of God, their judgment is introduced in 16:17 through the word γέγονεν. In chapters 17-18, the judgment of great Babylon occurs as the result of her evil disposition. In 19:19-20:15, the destruction of two beasts and of the dragon occurs. These images are presented as the ultimate judgment images through which the final judgment of the evil ones as defeated is executed (cf. White, 1989:330-336).

Then, who are the conquerors in this section? A good insight into the identity of the conquerors is provided in 11:18 and 14:1. In 11:18, those who would receive the heavenly reward are introduced as those who are the servants, the prophets, the saints, God fearers, and the small and great. Why are they called conquerors? The reasons are in the fact that they endure a time of desperate suffering and death and conquer the circumstances that the first Christians faced (Mounce, 1977:31-36).

In conjunction with 11:18, the doxology of 12:10-12 praises the real victory of God and his people by the blood of the Lamb (διὰ τὸ αἷμα τοῦ ἀρνίου) and the word of the believer's testimony (διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν) in terms of the heavenly perspective. One can recognize that to keep and to hold the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, and to trust the blood of the Lamb are the way of victory and conquest of all the faithful saints as the conquerors in pagan circumstances.

## **CHAPTER VI. THE CONQUEROR MOTIF AS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE STATEMENT IN REVELATION 21-22**

### **VI.1. Introduction**

In chapter 3, it is noted that the promise statements, which were given to the conquerors, were studied within chapters 2-3 in terms of historical, topographical, and social realities. Revelation as a prophetic message must be considered in the historical, topographical, and social realities as well as in an apocalyptic context because the empirical reality of human world-building is always on the basis of a social one (Berger, 1969:7).

If one agrees that Revelation is constructed as a unified work, one must remember that chapters 2-3 and chapters 21-22 must be regarded as having a thematic unity of promise and fulfillment. Even when one considers the New Jerusalem in chapters 21-22, one cannot deny the socio-historical reality of that time as far as the image of the New Jerusalem is concerned. Just as the historical churches in chapters 2-3 were clearly rooted on the socio-historical reality with which the first century Christian was confronted, the image of the New Jerusalem is deeply rooted within the context of social and historical realities. That is, it is given to exhort and encourage its audiences to come out of Babylon (e.g. 17:1-18:24) and to dwell in New Jerusalem (e.g. 21:1-22:5; Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:157-159). The image of the New Jerusalem could be interpreted as a social and historical reality rather than just a place waiting for one's own death or the end of the world (cf. Rossing, 1999:144-147). That is why one can see the book of Revelation as a framework of promise and fulfillment, having a concentric structure (Fiorenza, 1985:159-177).

The promise statements about the conquerors in chapters 2-3 can be matched with the fulfillment statements given to the conquerors in chapters 21-22. Through chapter 6, I try to focus on both salvation and victory in terms of the conquerors and the defeated. These two contrasting images, namely the New Jerusalem and the Babylon, can be regarded in the light of victory and judgment and promise and fulfillment.

As Wilson (1996:258) comments, the fulfillment statements accomplish the promise

statements given to the conquerors, confronting various problems. According to Koester (1989:123), the imagery of the New Jerusalem also fulfills the promise statements in the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor (chaps. 2-3), who were the intended recipients of the apocalypse. Fekkes III (1994:92; cf. Vanni, 1991:348-372) is also of the opinion that the manifestation of divine fulfillment and reward demonstrated in Rev. 21:1-22:5 was already presupposed in the promise statements of chapters 2-3 given to the conquerors. Through this structural unit between chapters 2-3 and chapters 21-22, one can suppose that Revelation was written as a structurally cohesive work (cf. Raber, 1986:296-301). In order to understand the New Jerusalem theme as fulfillment of the promise given to the conquerors (chaps. 2-3), it is necessary to investigate how the book of Revelation is structured and how the section of Babylon judgment is contrasted with the conqueror's fulfillment statements. Two-contrasting images of salvation and judgment upon the conquerors and the evil forces will reveal the identity of the conquerors and the defeated.

## **VI.2. Structural analysis in Revelation 21-22 as promise and fulfillment**

One of the main debates of the book of Revelation is how it must be interpreted, namely as recapitulation or chronological progression. Even though this issue is not my concern in this section, it is clearly connected with the structure of Revelation as both promise and fulfillment. In order to reveal the theme of New Jerusalem, the structural analysis of Revelation should be examined.

To begin with, the chronological progression view of Revelation could be connected to the futurist interpretative approach, indicating progressive development of the events from the first to the end. That is, the seals, trumpets, and bowls are regarded as explaining different events in terms of chronological progression. According to Jauhiainen (2003:543-559), John sees his prophecy as covering the time from Christ's enthronement to the end, having a chronological progression view (contra Tenny, 1957:37; Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:158). The seals portray the beginning of the birth pains and the trumpets represent the warning of impending judgments on the earth-dwellers. The bowls destroy the destroyers of the earth, the beast and his forces. Jauhiainen doesn't regard the septets as providing a blueprint for the future or for one-to-one correspondence between individual elements of

the septets and events in the real world. But this chronological progression view overlooks the structural analysis and linguistic marker that have prevailed in Revelation. Revelation wanted to deliver the message of hope and encouragement to those whose situation is desperate in terms of social and historical realities.<sup>175</sup> This means that the hope for the future New Jerusalem must be interpreted as the present reality as well as the past reality (Barr, 1998:121).

Tenny (1957:32-41) had tried the structural analysis of the repeated phrase like the linguistic marker “in the Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι)” in that he has developed his structural analysis. Each occurrence of this phrase can be located in a different place: Patmos (1:9-10), heaven (4:2), a wilderness (17:3), and a mountain great and high (21:10). On the basis of these four phrases, he refers to the structural analysis of Revelation as follows:

Prologue:	Christ Communicating	1:1-8
Vision I :	Christ in the Church	1:9-3:22
Vision II:	Christ in the Cosmos	4:1-16:21
Vision III:	Christ in Conquest	17:1-21:8
Vision IV:	Christ in Consummation	21:9-22:5
Epilogue:	Christ Challenging	22:6-21

Through the repeated phrase ‘in the Spirit: ἐν πνεύματι’ (e.g. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), Tenny (1957:33) divides these four phrases into two pairs of contrast and comparison: the first pair contrasts Patmos with heaven, and the second, the wilderness with the mountain, the harlot and the bride, corruption and purity, doom and destiny, despair and delight. Even though he uses the useful phrase “in the Spirit” to interpret the book of Revelation (cf. Bauckham, 1993a:1-37; Smith, 1994:373-393), this division doesn’t reveal the relationship

<sup>175</sup> Through the study of the first-century Eastern Mediterranean that provided the dimension of human experience on the mental maps of most people of ancient times, Malina (1989:1-17) emphasizes the present-oriented character of the first-century Eastern Mediterranean. According to him, in the ancient world, there was no one, neither Greek nor barbarian, who might have been future-oriented. The presupposed future-orientation categories of the Bible are in fact not based on the future-oriented at all, but present-oriented. Thus, it is a crucial point to see that when one regards the book of Revelation in terms of recapitulation or chronological progression, the image of New Jerusalem should also be regarded as having a present-orientation characteristic as well as having a future-orientation characteristic to achieve mental catharsis for its audience who suffered.

between chapters 2-3 and 21-22 as promise and fulfillment.

According to Lambrecht (1980:85-95), the structure of the Revelation has a definite linear development as well as elements of recapitulation. He regards both recapitulation and progression between the seals, trumpets, and bowls as a unit. His important contribution to the structural analysis is that the outline of 4:1-22:5 means a visual presentation of the principle of encompassing. That is, it depends on the fact that the two seven-series of seals and trumpets contain all of the following content: seals: 4:1-22:5, trumpets: 8:1-22:5, bowls: 11:15-22:5. His structural analysis of 4:1-22:5 is as follows:

A 4-5: Introductory Vision of the Scroll

B 6-7: First Six Seal

C 8:1-22:5: Seventh Seal and Trumpets

A 8:1-6: Introduction

B 8:7-11:14: First Six Trumpets

C 11:15-22:5: Seventh Trumpets and Bowls

A 11:15-16:1: Introduction

B 16:2-16: First Six Bowls

C 16:17-22:5: Seventh Bowls and Completion

Even though he (:88-89) attempts progressive repetition movement in structural analysis, he doesn't include chapters 2-3 in this structural analysis. They are important parts in explaining the rhetorical context of Revelation as a whole and the fulfillment structure of the New Jerusalem. Therefore, although his important contribution to the structural analysis of Revelation couldn't be overlooked, unfortunately he didn't regard the structural repetition of chapters 2-3 and 21-22 as a promise and fulfillment framework (Lee, 1998:180-183).

Fiorenza (1985:159-177) suggests that the structural analysis of chapters 2-3 and 21-22 as a promise and fulfillment framework has a concentric outline. For her, means of achieving a unitary pattern of Revelation are regarded as the author's use of a common stock of symbols and images because the main symbols and images prevail throughout the book. That is, the author of Revelation uses various symbols and images to achieve the unitary

characteristic of Revelation (cf. Giblin, 1994:81-95). The techniques of composition in Revelation are pre-announcements and cross-reference (:171; e.g. chaps. 2-3 and 21-22 and 14:6-20 and 17-20). The structural analysis of Fiorenza (:175) can be divided as follows:

- A. 1:1-8: Introduction
- B. 1:9-3:22: The inaugural vision and the letter scepter
- C. 4:1-9:21; 11:15-19: The seven sealed scroll
- D. 10:1-15:14: The small prophetic scroll
- C' 15:1, 5-19:10: The seven sealed scroll
- B' 19:11-22:9: The visions of judgment and salvation
- A' 22:10-22-21: Conclusion

This concentric ABCDC'B'A' pattern of Revelation shows that the whole book is patterned after the epistolary framework which represents an inclusion (:176). It is insightful to reveal the parallelism between A, B, C and A', B', C'. The parallelism between chapters 2-3 and 21-22 particularly provides the most important structural outline in the book of Revelation. As Fiorenza (:175) suggests, the first unit (*chaps. 2-3*) and the last unit (*chaps. 21-22*) of Revelation are closely connected with each other as promise and fulfillment.<sup>176</sup> Even though one finds that Fiorenza's structural analysis is flawed and contradictory in the detailed parts, she provides an important contribution to seeing the structural analysis of Revelation in terms of promise and fulfillment.<sup>177</sup>

Until now, I have surveyed the structural analysis suggested by three scholars. As noted above, the structural analysis showed us that the structural analysis has both strong and weak points. The structural analysis must complement each other to interpret the message of Revelation according to the author's literary intention. In fact, even though the three scholars' approach tried to show the unity and cohesive characteristic to provide the structural analysis of the Revelation, one find their limitations or shortcomings in providing their structural outlines. Even though Fiorenza's suggestion has a weak point and can't be accepted in the detailed parts, one can't deny that Fiorenza's structural pattern as promise and fulfillment in chapters 2-3 and 21-22 provides a crucial structural outline to

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<sup>176</sup> Italics in the bracket are mine.

<sup>177</sup> For more information about the concentric approach in terms of recapitulation and the literary coherence of Revelation, see Giblin (1991:12-18; 1994:81-95) and Lee (1998:164-94).

revealing the final salvation and fulfillment given to the conquerors.

### VI.3. Babylon and the New Jerusalem as promise and fulfillment

This section can be divided into two parts: 1) 17:1-19:10 and 19:11-22:5. These two images of Babylon the harlot and New Jerusalem the bride have a prominent contrasted pattern as city (e.g. 17:18; 18:2, 10, 16, 18-19, 21 and 21:2, 10, 12-25) and woman (e.g. 17:1, 3-7, 9, 15-16, 18; 18:7 and 21:2, 9), symbolized as victory and judgment. When one accepts the combination of place and image in the Revelation as the one of prominent features (cf. Barr, 1986:245-246), the place and image of Babylon and New Jerusalem as city and woman can be related to other related messages or images as a whole.

#### VI.3.1. Ἐν πνεύματι

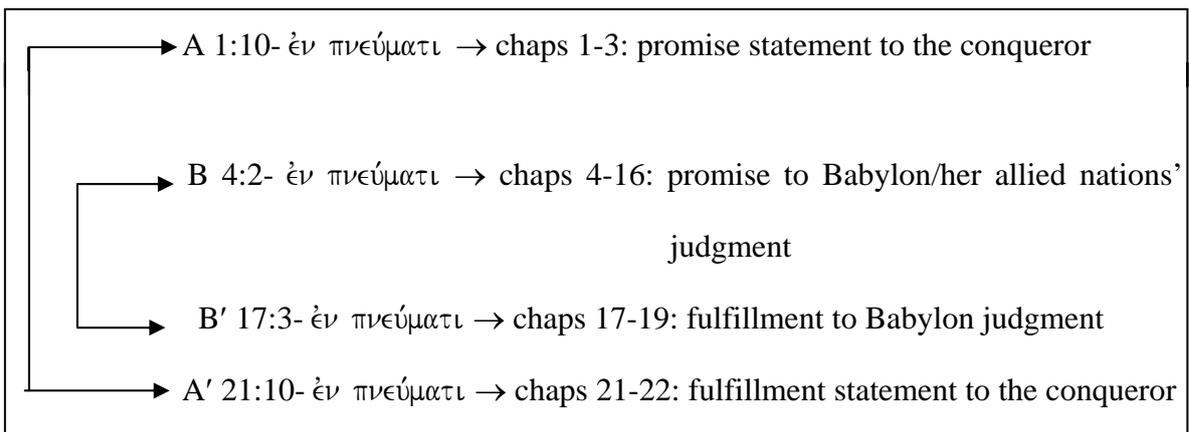
One of the most important elements in 17:1-19:10 and 19:11-22:5 is the phrase “in the Spirit”. This phrase is noted by Tenny (1957:32-41) although he has missed very important points. Ἐν πνεύματι (in the Spirit) appears four times in Revelation (e.g. Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). Four occurrences of this phrase ‘ἐν πνεύματι’ can be described as follows: 1) 1:10- I was in the Spirit (ἔγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι) 2) 4:2- I was in the Spirit (ἔγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι) 3) 17:3- carried me away in the Spirit (ἁπήμεναι με ἐν πνεύματι) 4) 21:10- carried me away in the Spirit (ἁπήμεναι με ἐν πνεύματι).<sup>178</sup> The interesting thing is the different expressions of ἔγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι (e.g. 1:10 and 4:2) and ἁπήμεναι με ἐν πνεύματι (e.g. 17:3 and 21:10). These expressions are well suggested by Bauckham (1993a:152, 157) that in 1:10; 4:2, the expression ἔγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι, though not precisely attested elsewhere, is best understood as a technical term as well as a conventional term for the visionary’s experience and for visionary transportation (e.g. 17:3

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<sup>178</sup> Following Tenny (1957:32-41), Bauckham (1993a:1-37, 150-173) explains the structural outline in the phrase ‘in the Spirit’ as a linguistic marker. For him, the whole of the book between prologue (e.g. 1:1-8) and epilogue (e.g. 22:6-21) can be explained in the relationship with these visionary experiences. Thus, the technical phrase ἔγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι (1:10) indicates the beginning of this whole visionary experience and at 4:2 the same phrase as in 1:10 is introduced as the inaugural vision of heaven (chaps. 4-5) from which develops the whole sequence of judgments down to the end of chapter 16. And in 17:3 and 21:10, these two sections form the climax towards which the whole book had aimed. Even though his insight and analysis are important, involving various detailed structural analyses, he fails to see chaps 2-3 and 21-22 as a promise and fulfillment framework.

and 21:10).<sup>179</sup> Here, my concern is to focus on 17:3 and 21:10. Therefore I will deal with these two verses.

The description of Babylon, the harlot, and the New Jerusalem, the bride, are constructed as a climax of Revelation in terms of promise and fulfillment. These sections were written as parallel units, but also as a promise and fulfillment framework. Just as the first phrase ἐν πνεύματι from 1:10 to 3:21 has a structural unity with the third phrase ἐν πνεύματι extending from 21 to 22 as promise and fulfillment, in 17:3 ἐν πνεύματι also has a structural unity as promise and fulfillment that most commentators missed. To see the structural unity between chapters 2-3 and 21-22 and chapters 4-16 and 17-19 as a promise and fulfillment framework is crucial to the apocalyptic interpretation that stands at the heart of Revelation (Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:159). It can be systematized as follows:



Just as the above diagram shows, one can see that the Babylon/her allied nations' judgment of chapters 17-19 is closely connected with the previous chapters as promise and fulfillment in 14:8 and 16:19.

### VI.3.1.1. The judgment of Babylon

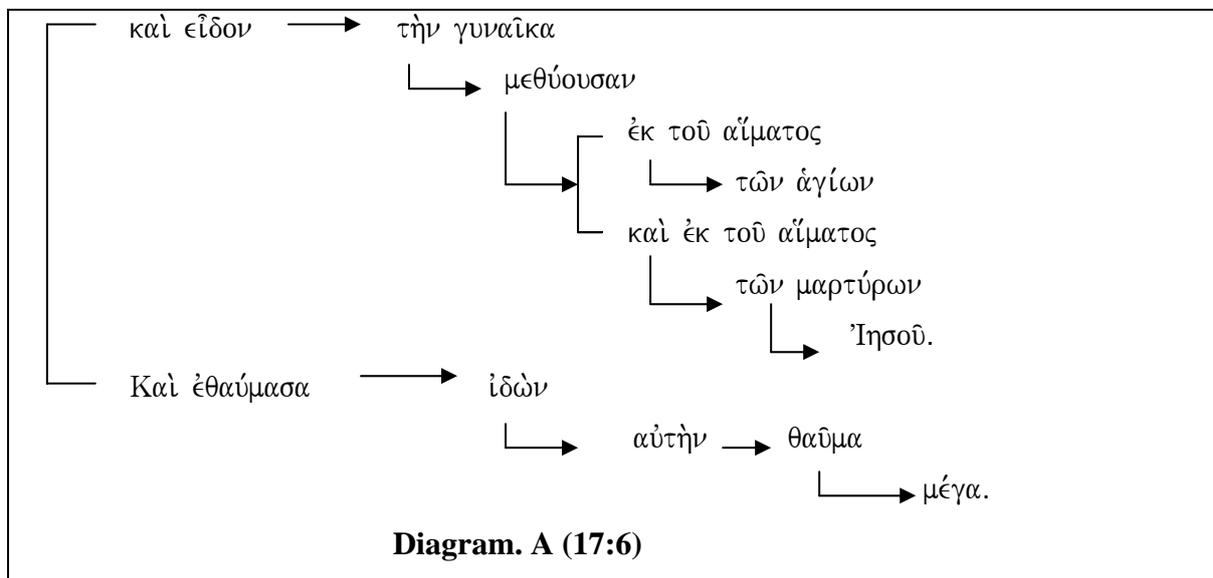
The first reference to Babylon's judgment appears in 14:8: "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries." The central message of this verse may be divided into two parts: salvation to the conquerors and

<sup>179</sup> Italics in the bracket are mine.

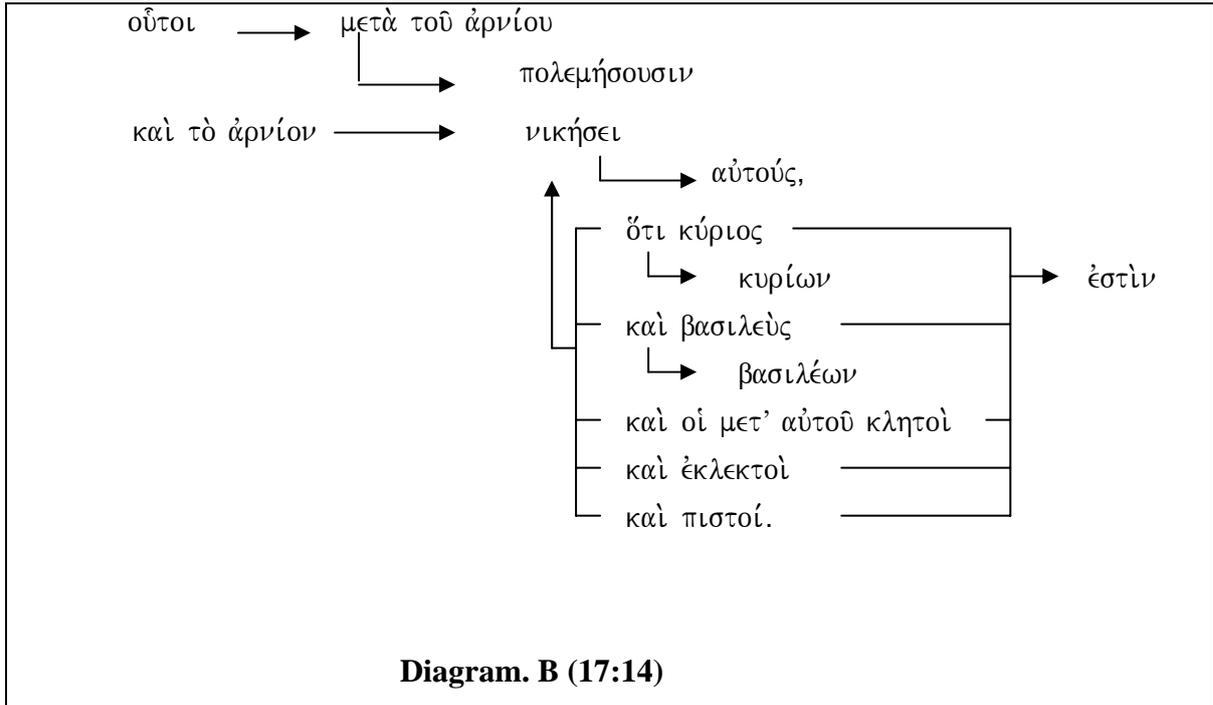
judgment to Babylon and her followers (cf. Wall, 1991:184-185).<sup>180</sup> Repeating “fallen” twice (ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν), the prophetic aorist active indicative of πίπτω emphasizes the solemn judgment declaration to reveal the certainty of Babylon’s fall (Robertson, 1933:6.411; Beale, 1999:754).

The linguistic parallels in chapter 14:8 and chapters 17-18 show the structural unity as promise and fulfillment (Kistemaker, 2001:486). The description of ἔπεσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη in 14:8 corresponds with εσεν ἔπεσεν Βαβυλῶν ἡ μεγάλη in 18:2 and ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς in 14:8 to ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς in 17:2 and ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς in 18:3 and πεπότικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in 14:8 to πέπωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in 18:3. The linguistic unity between 14:8 and 17-18 explains that the prelude to the final outpouring of wrath on Babylon can be connected with the judgment of Babylon in chapters 17-18 as fulfillment (Aune, 1998b:987).

The contrasting image in chapter 17:6 and 17:14 reveals who the conquerors are and who the defeated are. Both verses can be analyzed as follows:



<sup>180</sup> This image in Revelation 14:8 may be derived from Isa. 21:9 (cf. Jer. 51:7-8): “Babylon has fallen, has fallen.” The destruction of the idols and false religions of Babylon in Isa. 21:9 is predicted as judgment to the world empire. When John as author quotes this verse from the Old Testament, the judgment of the idolatrous and false religious system of the world empire might be in mind (cf. Beale, 1999:754).



When one compares the two diagrams suggested above, the identity of the two contrasted images, namely the conqueror and the defeated, is absolutely depicted. The woman is introduced as drunk with the blood of the saints. Here, John describes the woman's unquenchable thirst against the saints who want to follow the Lamb. The identity of the woman in diagram A (17:6) is revealed with the word μεθύουσαν, indicating the woman to be drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of those who bore testimony of Jesus. The debate about τῶν μαρτύρων ἰησοῦ whether this one indicates the subjective genitive or objective genitive can closely be linked with martyrs who died or suffered because of their witness (Vassiliadis, 1985:129-134; contra Mazzaferri, 1988:114-122). The unquenchable thirst of woman for the people of God is based on the witness of the conquerors to a hostile world that is also reflected in the testimony of two witnesses (see Considine, 1946:377-392; Du Rand, 1997b, 73-74). That is, the death of two witnesses in 11:7 is based on their μαρτυρία (Trites, 1973:78), implying the victory of the two witnesses. As in this case, just as the irony of this victory for the conquerors can be achieved through death, the shedding of the blood by the woman is the same witness that accomplishes victory in terms of the conquerors (Lee, 1998:187-188).

In contrast with the saints who are conquerors, the woman symbolizes the Roman Empire

in opposition to the Christianity in the light of her economical, political, and religious oppressions (cf. Talbert, 1994:82; Court, 2000:208-218, 256-257; contra Boxall, 2001:51-68). She is depicted with the evil Roman imperial power as defeated, shedding and drinking the blood of the people of God. The identity and destiny of her and her followers explained in 17:16 is contrasted with the explanation of 17:14 that depicts the conquerors. When one compares diagram A and diagram B, diagram A shows that the identity of the enemy of God is opposed to conqueror's identity because the woman was drunk and satisfied with the blood of the saints. It means that she is none other than the object of God's judgment (Mounce, 1977:306) and she can be contrasted with the blood of the saints who are called conquerors.

In contrast with diagram A, diagram B clearly reveals the identity of the conquerors that conquer the beast. The subject of diagram B is οἱ, those who are μετὰ τοῦ ἀρνίου. The conquering figures in diagram B can be explained in two groups: the Lamb and the called and elect, and faithful (Mounce, 1977:318). Οἱ as the plural pronoun indicate the people of God as the called, elect and faithful, as well as the Lamb. The victorious assurance of the people of God is based on the death of the Lamb who died and rose (cf. Kistemaker, 2001:475). Therefore, μετ' αὐτοῦ, the called, elected and faithful witness will conquer the enemy of the people of God. The use of the word νικήσει, indicating the future tense, "is not merely a prophecy but also a guarantee of what is going to happen" (Kistemaker, 2001:475) that will be accomplished in chapters 21-22.

The second reference to Babylon's judgment appears in 16:19, which is the part of the seven bowls (16:1-21). The seven bowls are poured out on the land (16:2), sea (16:3), river and springs of water (16:4), sun (16:8), throne of the beast (16:10), and the great river Euphrates (16:12). When the seventh angel pours out his bowl into the air, out of the temple comes a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done (γέγονεν)!" The intimate relationship between 16:19 and 17-18 can be found through the structural unity of the angels (16:1-17) and the angel (17:1) who had the seven bowls (Beale, 1999:847). When one considers the agent of judgment as an angel, it suggests that both sections are closely intertwined with each other. The crucial theme of both sections is the wine of the fury of his wrath (Rossing, 1999:62-66). The mentioning of wine of the fury of wrath (τοῦ οἴνου

τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ) in 16:19 corresponds to τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς in 17:2 and τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς in 18:3.<sup>181</sup> Here, ‘wine of wrath’ and ‘wine of adultery’ can be used interchangeably or appositionally as different expressions of the same theme, indicating judgment against Babylon and her allied nations (Aune, 1998b:932-933).

Fekkes III (1994:86-91) provides insight into the relationship between 14:8, 16:19, and 17-18. According to John’s presentation of Babylon and her judgment, he provides these sections in three stages: 1) 14:8-11 → a preliminary warning 2) 16:1-21 → the fall of Babylon 3) 17:1-19:4 → and the characteristic and judgment of Babylon. He (:88) argues that the announcement of the prophetic statement in 14:8, ‘fallen, fallen is Babylon’, emphasizes the righteous proclamation of God and anticipates its actual fulfillment in 16:19, but not 18:2. He is quite correct in regarding 14:8 as a promise statement of Babylon’s judgment that will eventually be fulfilled. But his problem is that he expects its actual fulfillment in 16:19. If one accepts this verse 16:19 as a fulfillment saying regarding Babylon’s judgment, it will make the message of Babylon’s judgment too simple.

In terms of a structural perspective, chapter 16:19 might be an introductory warning of a fulfillment statement of the Babylon’s judgment because 17:1 begins with the statement of one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls (Beasley-Murray, 1992:248), who is saying “I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute (δείξω σοι τὸ κρίμα τῆς πόρνῆς τῆς μεγάλης).” The judgment of Babylon the harlot and her allied nations has been announced only, and not described in full in 16:19 (cf. Collins, 1980:192). Rather the actual fulfillment saying of 14:8 is fulfilled in 17:1-19:2. For this, Collins (1980:189) is quite correct to say that chapters 17-19:10 depict and represent the meaning of the bowls (cf. Beckwith, 1967:670). Therefore, the promise statement concerning the judgment of Babylon and all the allied nations in 14:8 can be defined as a proleptic judgment announcement. That is why one can confirm that the structural unity of ἐν πνεύματι between 4:2 and 17:3 can be regarded as having structural unity of promise and fulfillment

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<sup>181</sup> The image of ‘wine of wrath or adultery’ and ‘cup of wrath’ can be derived from prophetic traditions in which the wine of wrath and the cup of wrath are judgment images to all foreign nations against God (e.g. Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15; 51:7). The reason for judgment against Babylon does not refer to sexual activity, but rather to the seductive characteristic of Rome in terms of political, economical, and religious involvements.

as well as thematic unity.

The throne image in Revelation is one of the crucial central images. Surprisingly, the two ἐν πνεύματι references are closely connected to the throne (θρόνος) image, which indicates the judgment, power, splendour, authority, and “God’s sovereignty” (Beale, 1999:172). As Strauss (1964:126) pointed out, Revelation is the “throne book” of the Bible. Thrones often speak of judgment, and there are divinely inspired prophecies of coming judgments upon the living wicked and the wicked who have already died (cf. Minear, 1967:228). The references to the throne and the temple, like the thunderstorm-and-earthquake expressions, emphasize the heavenly origin and characteristic of the eschatological judgment (Lambrecht, 1980:95). These judgment announcements, through each of three series, are finished with a loud voice from the throne (θρόνος) in 16:17, which is the seventh bowl judgment, saying, “it is done (γέγονεν)!” Knight (1999:114) recognizes that the final judgment of the enemies of God and his people has been undertaken through this judgment announcement (cf. Boring, 1989:178). Therefore, the judgment scene as fulfillment to Babylon and her allied nations in chapters 17-18 can be connected with the previous chapters 4-16 (cf. Fiorenza, 1991:95) which are bound up with “ἐν πνεύματι” as a whole.

### VI.3.2. Babylon versus the New Jerusalem as a city and woman

Babylon and New Jerusalem have prominent images being expressed respectively as the harlot and the bride, indicating the contrasting image of judgment/negative and salvation/positive. It means that this prophetic message is fulfilled as a negative judgment and positive salvation (cf. Rissi, 1966:49). The introductory and contrasting statements of these two images appear in 16:17 (γέγονεν) as judgment and in 21:6 (γέγοναν) as salvation. The use of this formula describes the judgment of Babylon and her allied nations as the hostile forces of God and the victory of the New Jerusalem as fulfillment, expected in the previous chapters 2-3 and 4-16 (Giblin, 1994:90).<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Malina (1998:77; 2000: 69, 153, 201, 243) divides the book of Revelation into four major scenes. According to him, the first scene describes the fate of Judea and Jerusalem (chaps. 4-11) and the second the antediluvian situation of creation (12-16) and the third the fate of the first postdiluvian city of humankind, Babel/Babylon (17-20) and the fourth the celestial Jerusalem to be wedded to the Lamb in the presence of

### VI.3.2.1 Babylon as a woman and city

The image and language depicting Babylon as a great harlot and great city, are, in fact, deeply dependent on the Old Testament in order to criticize the political, religious, and economic tyranny of Rome in the first-century context (cf. Beale, 1999:76-99, 849-850). While John does not directly quote biblical traditions (Beale, 1998:68), he regards the book of Revelation as a prophetic reinterpretation of the Old Testament. That is, it delivers his prophetic message in terms of rhetoric, primarily having a critique of Babylon/Rome's real identity. One can suppose that the image and language depicting Babylon as the great harlot and city have a special rhetorical device to reveal the identity of Rome as the centre of emperor-worship, religious oppression, and economical exploitation. For that reason, Babylon the great harlot, and the New Jerusalem, the bride, are structured with contrasting image and language in chapters 17-22 according to rhetorical device (Mounce, 1977:371).

#### *VI.3.2.1.1. Babylon as a woman*

The reason for Babylon's judgment can mainly be divided into three spheres: religious, political, and economic. To begin with, the great harlot who sits on many waters is depicted in a powerful religious, political, and economical terminology which is derived from Jeremiah 51:13 (LXX: Jer. 28:13). In Jeremiah 51:13 Jeremiah predicts Babylon's judgment in religious, political, and economic aspects. The judgment of the great harlot in Revelation 17:1 is fulfilled and expanded as predicted in the previous chapters 4-16. Here the 'sitting (*καθήμενης*) reveals an important political and religious feature of Babylon the harlot (e.g. 17:1, 3, 9, 15; 18:7). In Revelation, the terminology 'sitting' has a theological-political meaning as an image of enthronement and divinity (Rossing, 1999:67; cf. Aune, 1998b:930). Thus, the image of "sitting" must be regarded as a crucial element in revealing the nature or reality of Babylon the harlot as woman.

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God (21-22). His analysis about Revelation that is based on the ancient astronomical/astrological document and these structural analyses cannot be accepted according to the intention of the author and the text itself. The author does not provide information on the stars, but deals with the words of God as revelation which were delivered from Jesus. This structural analysis also does not fit the intention of the author or the text itself because the insistence of Malina does not reveal various linguistic markers (e.g. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), structural unity as recapitulation (e.g. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18), and literary coherence as a whole.

Babylon the harlot is sitting on many waters (καθημένης ἐπὶ ὑδάτων πολλῶν), the identity of which is revealed as peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages in 17:15. The role of Babylon the harlot sitting on many waters is to lead the kings of the earth and the inhabitants of the earth to commit adultery and to intoxicate them with the wine of her adulteries (ἐπόρνευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐμεθύσθησαν οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς). A woman<sup>183</sup> sitting (καθημένην) on a scarlet beast is called ‘Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth’ (17:3, 5). A scarlet beast is introduced in 13:1-8. His role on earth leads people to worship (προσεκυνέω) the dragon and beast by using political and religious powers in the context of emperor-worship or the imperial cult (Rossing, 1999:68-69). The harlot expands her influence to the economic, political and religious spheres. That is, they are closely connected. (Bauckham, 1993b:36).

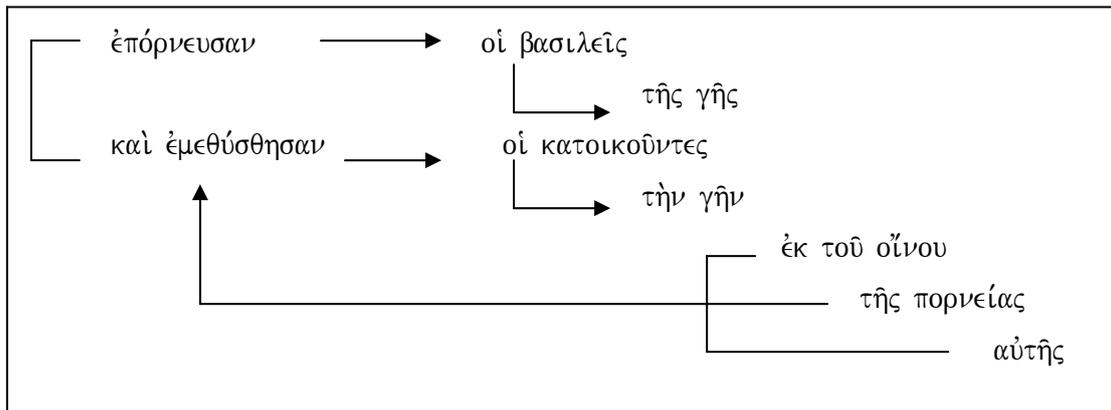
The harlot indicates the city of Rome (Court, 1979:125) and refers to total control in terms of political and religious dominations over the kings of the earth and inhabitants of the earth. Contrary to the feminist reading of Revelation, it is not natural sexual contact that leads the kings astray and the inhabitants of the earth but spiritual fornication against God. As Beale (1998:268) points out, the king’s and the nations’ compromise over fornication represents not literal immorality, but figurative acceptance of the religious and idolatrous demands of the ungodly world. In the Old Testament, fornication or prostitution implies infidelity to God (e.g. Ex. 34:14-17; Isa. 1:21; 47:1-3; 57:3-5; Ezk, 16:15-22, 26-34; Hos. 1:2; 2:2-7; 4:12-14). By making a covenant with the inhabitants of the earth, the people of Israel accepted their cult and culture. The prophets in the Old Testament expressed Israel’s political and religious compromises with foreign pagan neighbours in terms of prostitution.

As these examples in the Old Testament, Revelation sees this long-standing critique of

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<sup>183</sup> Concerning the image of woman in Revelation, Selvidge (1992:157-167) suggests that in chapter 14:8, Babylon the Great as woman must be understood in terms of her sexual abilities and influences and of an unquenchable sexual desires which extend to all of the nations. Selvidge (:164) regards the death of a great prostitute as rape (ἡρμηωμένην). As materialist-feminist, Pippin (1992:57-58) also regards the death of Whore/Goddess/Queen/Babylon as a sexual murder. The feminist reading of Revelation is far from the intention of the author and the text itself. The sexual image like fornication or harlotry that John intended here is unfaithfulness to God in terms of religious, political, economic, and spiritual aspects (cf. Morris, 1983:325). Thus, the feminist reading in Revelation could not be accepted as the intention of the author and of the text itself.

imperial compromise with Rome as prostitution or fornication from political and religious views (Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:166-169). The angel’s proclamation, that announced the judgment of Babylon the harlot, can be regarded as the fulfillment of the result of unfaithfulness to God. The analysis of 17:2 would be helpful to understand what the identity of Babylon the harlot and the foundation of her fornication are.



Babylon the harlot leads the kings of the earth and the people who dwell in the earth astray to make herself drunk on the wine of her fornication. The role of Babylon the harlot characterized with these words ἐπόρνευσαν καὶ ἐμεθύσθησαν. Πλανιάω (‘lead astray, deceive’) reveals the characteristic of the evil forces that “is intentional and associated with an evil purpose” (Song, 2003:165). In contrast with the conquerors who were shed their blood for the word of God and testimony of Jesus, Babylon the harlot as deceiver was drunk with the blood of God’s people. Here, one can see the irony that “true meaning reverses what appears” (Thompson, 1990:48). Therefore, the true meaning of this section is based on the fact that whereas Babylon the harlot is defeated, the people of God who shed their blood for God’s word and testimony of Jesus were really the conquerors.

‘Prostitution (πορνεία)’ in 17:2, 4-5; 18:3 is a similar image in 2:14 (πορνεῦσαι) and 2:20 (πορνεῦσαι) which were in the seven letters. The examples of ‘Balaam’ and ‘Jezebel’ who enticed the people of God to commit sexual immorality, reveal metaphorically their real nature as the defeated in terms of religious and political aspects (Selvidge, 1992:159-161). John criticizes their religious and political compromises as Christians, implying the worship of Satan’s throne (2:13) and emperor-worship or the imperial cult (2:20-21, 24).

### VI.3.2.1.2. *Babylon as a city*

While in chapter 17 Babylon is introduced as a woman, the harlot in political and religious terms, in chapter 18 Babylon is introduced as the great city, implying an economic characteristic (e.g. 18:2, 10, 16, 18-19, 21). A reference to the woman as the great city appears in 17:18 with the emphasis on economic, political and religious aspects. But both chapters are closely related (contra Bauckham, 1993b:35-39).

The first reference to the great city (ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη) symbolized as Rome (cf. Talbert, 1994:83; Garrow, 1997:97; Garrett, 1998:472; Marshall, 2001:171) is introduced in 11:8 in which two witnesses were killed. Therefore, the first reference to the reason for the great city's judgment in 11:8-13 and 16:6 is fulfilled as a proleptic result of the shedding of the blood of the Lord and his witnesses and the saints. The second reference to the great city Babylon is introduced in 14:8 in which the judgment of Babylon also appears as a proleptic result of making all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries. The combination of chapter 11:8, 16:6 and 14:8 as the proleptic judgment statement of Babylon can be found in 18:3 and 24 as the completion of judgment of Babylon (cf. Rossing, 1999:62-66).

In chapter 18, the sphere of judgment of Babylon expands to her excessive luxuries as well as the shedding of the blood of the Lord, his witnesses, and the saints (and the spiritual fornication). The place of the shedding of the blood of the Lord and of the two witnesses in 11:8 is introduced as Sodom and Egypt that reflects figuratively the great city, Rome (Mounce, 1977:226). The shedding of the blood of the saints and of the prophets (αἷμα ἁγίων καὶ προφητῶν ἐξέχεαν) in 16:6 corresponds with αἷμα προφητῶν καὶ ἁγίων εὐρέθη καὶ πάντων τῶν ἐσφαγμένων ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς in 18:24. But 18:24 is shown in a more expanded form as the final judgment's fulfillment. In 14:8 the fornication of the great harlot that made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries (ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πέποτικεν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) corresponds with ἐκ τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς πέπωκαν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς μετ' αὐτῆς ἐπόρνευσαν καὶ οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς in 18:3 (Aune, 1998a:831-832). But just as in the case above, 18:3 is shown in a more expanded form as an addition of οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς and

οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς (Kistemaker, 2001:487). The expanded form compared to the previous statement means that the universal judgment, without exception, over the enemies of God includes the economic, political and religious spheres (cf. Collins, 1980:200-203).

The judgment of the wealth of Babylon as a city can closely be connected with chapters 2-3 given to the defeated (e.g. 2:10, 18-20; 3:14-21). Of the Laodicean church, the Lord describes their present situation as ‘wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked’ even though they are rich. This statement about the church of Laodicea is closely related to a desire to improve their economic situation, reflecting economic, political and religious compromise (Beale, 1999:304-305). Their compromise with wealth as Christians is already criticized as a proleptic judgment statement and the judgment of Rome as the source of their wealth is fulfilled as the completion of the promise in chapter 18. While John criticizes the economic sphere of Babylon as the economic exploiter’s city, John provides an alternative ideal city, namely the New Jerusalem (Duff, 2001:83-84, 89), in chapters 21-22. As Marshall (2001:165) points out, “The persuasive project of the Apocalypse may be understood as revealing Rome-the center of economic, political, and ritual power-as negative in every sense and replacing orientation to that centre with orientation to the New Jerusalem.” Therefore, one understands that the judgment of Babylon as a city is deeply rooted as fulfillment to the promise statement, which will be given to the conquerors.<sup>184</sup>

#### VI.3.2.2. The New Jerusalem

In terms of the contrasting imagery between the two cities, one notes that the image of Babylon and the New Jerusalem is closely related. Between two contrasting images, even though there is a transitional part in 19:11-20-15, one cannot deny that the contrasting image between Babylon, the great harlot and the New Jerusalem, the bride has a structural unity (Fekkes III, 1990:269-274, 283-287). These two cities are determined as judgment upon the defeated and salvation or victory upon the conquerors. These two images of the Babylon and the New Jerusalem must be understood as dramatic pictures drawn in terms of the conquerors and the defeated, to which is given reward and judgment (Hendriksen,

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<sup>184</sup> In terms of the kings, merchants, and mariners who lament their great loss, chapter 18 described Babylon as a great city, closely connected with Old Testament prophecies, indicating the fall of Babylon (Jer. 50-51) and the fall of Tyre (Ezk. 26-28).

2000:166, 196-198).

#### *VI.3.2.2.1. The New Jerusalem as a bride*

The bride image in 21:2 is not a new one here. The bride image as the New Jerusalem could be connected with 19:7-9. These two sections in 19:7-9 and 21:2 have thematic and verbal parallels (Lee, 2001:240-241). One can recognize that ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ ἠτοιμάσεν ἑαυτήν in 19:7 parallels ἠτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς in 21:2. In terms of thematic parallel, the wedding of the Lamb and the preparation of his bride in 19:7-9 was the result of the judgment of Babylon the great harlot (e.g. 17-19:2).

The appearance of the New Jerusalem as a bride is also due to the judgment of all evil forces (Sharkey, 1986:269-270): two beasts and false prophets are thrown into the lake of fire (19:20), Satan or the dragon is thrown into the lake of burning sulphur (20:10), and those whose names could not be found in the book of life are thrown into the lake of fire (20:15). In light of the thematic and logical sequence, the appearance of the wedding of the Lamb after the judgment of Babylon and of the New Jerusalem after the judgment of all evil forces in these contexts reveals the structural parallel of these sections. Fekkes III (1990:269) insists that a variety of parallels between the Babylon section (chaps. 17-18) and the New Jerusalem section (chaps. 21-22) should be regarded as adopting similar introductory phraseology, thematic sequences, and verbal patterns according to John's intention.

The image of the bride is closely related to Isaiah 54:5 and 61:10. In these verses, the relationship between God and Israel is expressed as a husband and a wife and a bridegroom and a bride (cf. Isa. 62:5; Hos. 2:2, 19-20; Mt. 25:1-13; 2 Co. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33). In the Old Testament, the nuptial image is closely linked with the covenantal relationship between God and his people (Thompson, 1998:173). In Revelation, the image of the New Jerusalem as a bride is closely linked with the eschatological covenantal restoration between God and his people.<sup>185</sup> As Wall (1991:246) argued, John's creative

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<sup>185</sup> The identity of the image of the New Jerusalem as a bride is hotly debated. In the case of Rossing (1999:137), the bride is regarded as the good-woman figure of the two-woman tradition, which is based on the wisdom texts as Sir 15:2-6 and Wis 8:2-16. But this idea is not enough to be supported by text itself.

combination of the New Jerusalem and marriage typologies is matched with his theological and rhetorical purpose, since it speaks of restoration as an intimate relationship. In fact, the fulfillment statement of the eschatological covenantal restoration of the people suffering with the present evil's problem will constitute an evocative power or symbolic world (Bauckham, 1993b:129) to the first-century Christians.

#### *VI.3.2.2.2. New Jerusalem as eschatological fulfillment statement in 21:1-8*

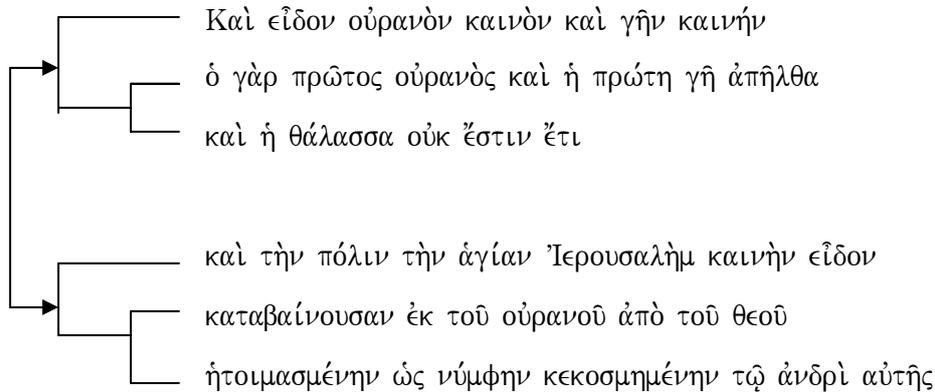
While the 21:1-8 section is mainly involved in chapters 21-22:5, it can be treated as an introductory section (Lee, 2001:267), like the introductory proclamation of Babylon's judgment in 16:17-17:2. The first prominent linguistic marker to distinguish both these sections into introductory sections is 'έν πνεύματι'. Just as 16:17-17:2 has been treated as an introductory proclamation of Babylon's judgment, 21:1-8 can be treated as an introductory section of the New Jerusalem section of 21:9-22:5 (cf. Fekkes III, 1994:93).

The second linguistic marker is the use of 'γένονεν' in 16:17 and 'γένοναν' (it is done!) in 21:6. In the first case, γένονεν can be connected with the announcement of Babylon's judgment, completed in the fall of Babylon in 17:3-19:2. In the second place, γένοναν can also be connected with the eschatological fulfillment announcement to the New Creation and New Jerusalem, completed in 21:9-22:5 (cf. Bauckham, 1993a:7). The use of 'γένονεν' in 16:17 and 'γένοναν' in 21:6 might be closely linked with the theme of judgment given to the defeated and of victory given to the conquerors. That is, the use of 'γένονεν' in 16:17 and 'γένοναν' in 21:6 is the same expression about victory and judgment, but depicted with different aspects (Johnson, 2001:306; cf. Sweet, 1979:299; Aune, 1998b:1126). The structural analysis as an introductory announcement of the New Creation and New Jerusalem in 21:1-8 is as follows:

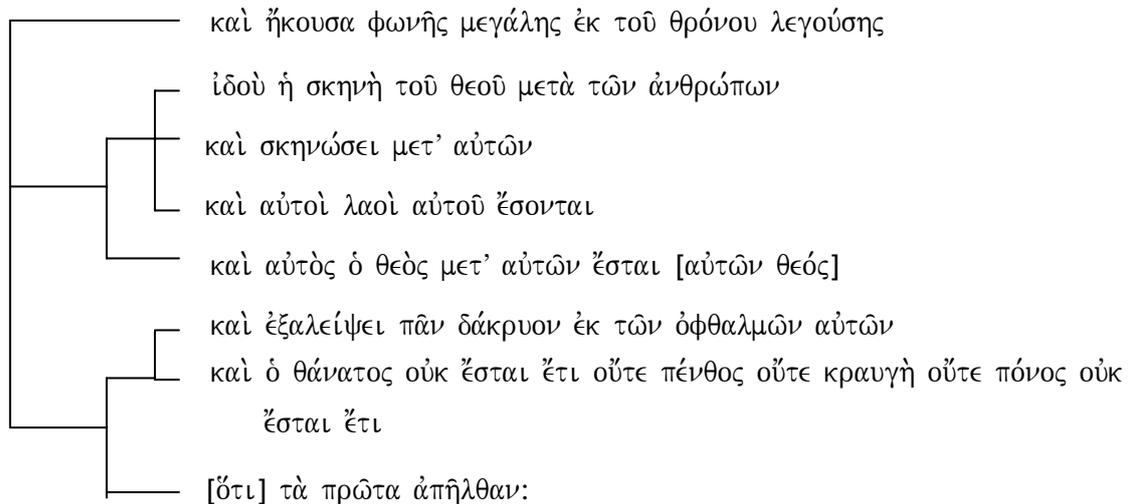
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Malina (2000:45-65) regards the New Jerusalem as a sky city and connects this city to the fundamental doctrine of astrology/astronomy concerning the regular figures in the zodiac. But this argument of Malina is also not to be supported by text itself and one must keep in mind that Revelation is not a book on astrology/astronomy, rather a book which delivers God's prophetic message to the people who long for God's intervention in history. Therefore, the insistence of Malina must be rejected on the basis of text itself. According to Bauckham (1993b:126-143), it can be considered in its three aspects: place, people, and presence of God. The image of the New Jerusalem filling as symbolic language is explained by Bauckham's insight regarded as place, people, and presence of God on the basis of exegetic or interpretive insight.

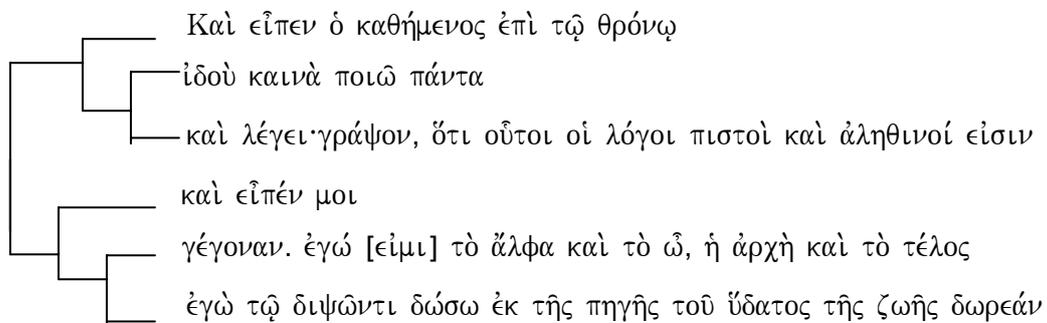
**\* Phase 1 (v. 1-2): New Creation/New Jerusalem**

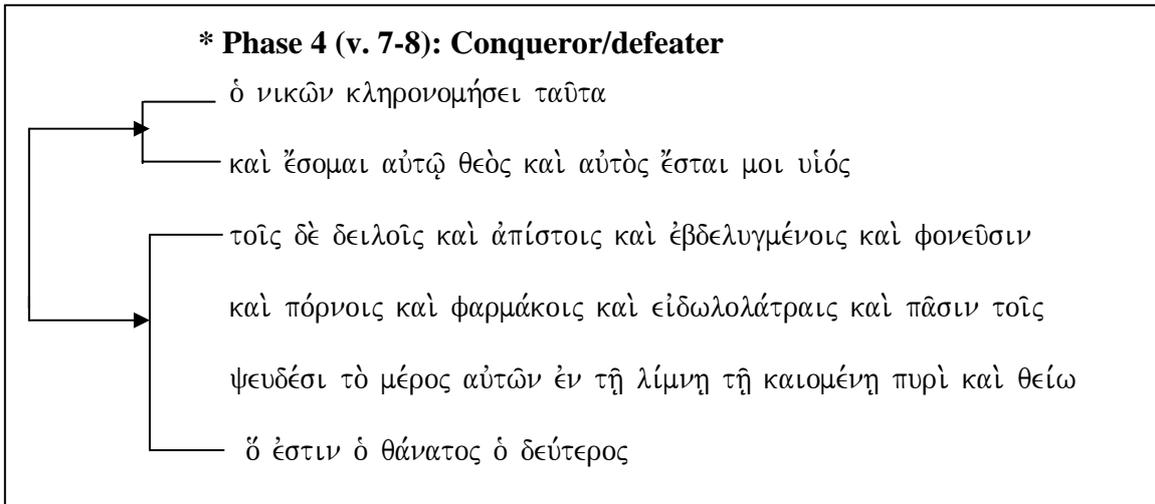


**\* Phase 2 (v. 3-4): New Creation/New Covenant**



**\* Phase 3 (v. 5-6): New Creation/New Covenant**

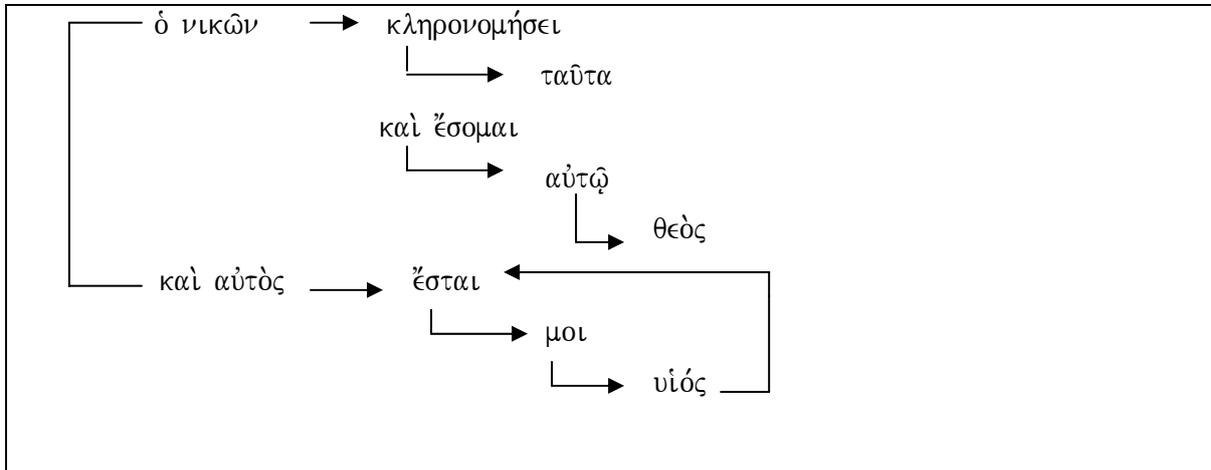




When one looks into these structures, one can find some characteristic aspects that this introductory composition in 21:1-8 has carefully structured that are related to parallelism, cause and result, contrast and chiasm. There are some rhythms within this section that consist of various formulas: 1) the repetition of *καινὸν, καινήν* and *καινα* in 21:1, 5 has an inclusion formula in terms of New Creation and New Covenant. The use of *καινὸν, καινήν* in 21:1a has a prominent contrasting image with *πρῶτος, πρώτη* and *οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι* in 21:1b, c (cf. Wall, 1991:244), 2) the use of *θρόνου, θεοῦ*, and *θεὸς* in 21:3 in terms of New Creation contrasts with the use of *θάνατος, πένθος, κραυγή*, and *πόνος* in 21:4 in terms of Old Creation, 3) the mentioning of *καινὰ, ἄλφά*, and *ἀρχὴ* and *γένεσθαι, ὦ*, and *τέλος* in 21:5-6 makes an inclusion in terms of New Covenant/Creation, 4) *νικῶν, θεὸς*, and *υἱός* have an antithetic parallelism with *ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος*.

These structural formulas reveal a structural and thematic characteristic that is the fulfillment theme of salvation and judgment (Poythress, 2000:183-184) expressed as New Creation and Old Creation in this section. That is, the use of *οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινήν* in 21:1 is closely related to *ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος* as a contrasting image, implying the fulfillment statement of victory to the conquerors and fulfillment statement of judgment to the defeated in 21:1-8. As the introductory announcement of 21:9-22:5, it is true that this section 21:1-8 has enough eschatological fulfillment formulas to give the message of victory and judgment to the conquerors and the defeated (cf. Giblin, 1991:195-196; Roloff, 1993:237-238).

The most interesting thing is the contrasting image between the conquerors and the defeated in 21:7 and 21:8. The analysis of 21:7 is as follows:



When one looks at the diagram above, the greatest privilege of the conquerors is based on the relationship with God and Christ. On the basis of 2 Samuel 7:14 “I will be his father, and he will be my son”, only the conquerors will inherit (κληρονομήσει) the eschatological blessing in 21:4 that is expressed as no more death, mourning, crying, and pain (Aune, 1998b:1129). As Beale (1999:1057) insists, “The purpose of this verse, and the whole of 21:1-22:5, is to encourage true Christians to persevere through hardship in order to inherit the fullness of God’s blessings.” But in contrast to the conquerors in 21:7, 21:8 introduces a list of those who do not participate in the eschatological blessing as defeated. To be a conqueror means to have a righteous relationship with God and Christ under any circumstance.

#### **VI.4. The fulfillment statement given to the Conquerors of the seven churches**

The promise statements given to the conquerors in chapters 2-3 were surveyed in light of the historical context of the seven churches. The promise statements in chapters 2-3 have a proleptic expectation given to the conquerors that is deeply rooted in historical context according to various situations of the seven churches. It is also very important to notice that the New Jerusalem and Millennium sections of 20-22 have many eschatological fulfillment statements in terms of the promise-fulfillment formula. It means that this promise-fulfillment formula between Revelation 2-3 and 21-22 helps us understand the

book of Revelation as a unified work. As Fiorenza (1985:175) pointed out, while the letter corresponds with the last section, 19:11-22:9, the first unit and the last unit of Revelation are connected to each other as promise and fulfillment.

The continuity between chapters 2-3 and 21-22 reveals the structural unity as promise and fulfillment. That is, the messages of the promise and fulfillment formula are the messages of the judgment given to the defeated and of the victory given to the conquerors for prophetic exhortation and critical evaluation (Muse, 1986:155; Koester, 1989:120). Through this promise-fulfillment formula, one can suppose that the promise-fulfillment formula of chapters 2-3 and 21-22 is intended to give evocative power and to present a symbolic world to the first-century audience who were in various dangerous situations (cf. Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:192-195).

#### VI.4.1. The Ephesus fulfillment statement given to the Conquerors

In the promise statement given to the conquerors of the church of Ephesus, the conquerors are given the right to eat from the tree of life. This promise statement is fulfilled in the light of an eschatological blessing in 21-22. These eschatological fulfillment statements are more expanded and specific than the promise statement in 2-3. In order to understand the promise-fulfillment formula, it is necessary to link the reciprocal relationship between the two sections.

##### VI.4.1.1. The tree of life

The references to the tree of life appear in 22:2, 14, 19. These three references to the tree of life can be treated as a fulfillment of the promise given to the conquerors, even though 22:14 is treated as a positive blessing and 22:19 is treated as a negative curse. In order to see how the fulfillment statement is completed, it is necessary to survey each of them.

##### *VI.4.1.1.1. The tree of life in 22:2*

This verse is paralleled with 22:1 in that the river of the water of life is mentioned. That is,

in 22:1-2 the sections of the river of the water of life (ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς] and the tree of life (ξύλον ζωῆς) are paralleled with a blessing of the New Jerusalem given to the conquerors because the river of the water of life and the tree of life signify an image for the “blessings of the eternal state” (Mounce, 1977:386) or for “renewed Paradise” (Kistemaker, 2001:581). The images of the springs of living water (ζωῆς πηγᾶς ὑδάτων) in 7:17 and of the spring of the water of life (πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος τῆς ζωῆς] in 21:6 in connection with 22:1 also provide an ‘eschatological salvation’ or ‘renewed covenant’ between God and his people. As Wilson (1996:262) pointed out, John uses the image of water to symbolize the restored covenant between the conquerors, the new remnant Israel, and God.

In contrast to the Artemis-shrine as a place of salvation for the suppliant of Artemis, the tree of life in 22:2 provides the divine origin as a place of salvation for the people of God. Here, the river of the water of life in 22:1 and the tree of life can be connected with the throne of God and of the Lamb (θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου),<sup>186</sup> implying the sovereignty of God and the Lamb. The river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb and the tree of life signify the “Holy Spirit’s resurrection life” (Johnson, 2001:321) or “the spiritual life of God’s servants” (Beckwith, 1967:764). These are the blessings of the eschatological fulfillment, which will be given to the conquerors who belong to God and the Lamb.

The image of the tree of life is mentioned in Ezekiel 47:12 (cf. Zec. 14:8; 4 Ezra. 8:52; 1 Enoch. 25:4-5) in that it speaks of water issuing from the threshold of the sanctuary and of the vision of the renewed land. Even though the similarity between both texts (e.g. Ezk. 47:12 and Rev. 22:2) is a prominent picture, one can also find differences in both texts. In Ezekiel 47:1, he sees water coming out from under the threshold of the temple. Fruit trees of all kinds that will bear their fruit every month will grow on both banks of the river and their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail because of the water flowing from the sanctuary. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing. In conjunction with

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<sup>186</sup> The image of the throne of God and the image of the Lamb standing in the centre of the throne can be found in chapters 4-5: in chapter 4, God as Creator and in chapter 5, the Lamb as Redeemer. But in 22:1, the combination of the throne of God and the Lamb in the final eschatological fulfillment scene has a theological intention for John. That is, John wanted to deliver his message to his audience/reader in terms of the fulfillment of Creation and Redemption in the New Jerusalem. It means “the universal authority of the kingdom of God” (Fekkes III, 1994:101).

Ezekiel 47:12, Revelation 22:2 has a more detailed addition and more eschatological characteristic (Aune, 1998b:1177-1178). In contrast to the origin of water flowing from the threshold of the sanctuary in Ezekiel 47:1 (τοῦ οἴκου: LXX), in Revelation 22:1 the river of the water of life (ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς] flows from the throne of God and the Lamb (ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου).<sup>187</sup> It indicates the divine origin of the river of the water of life that is the source of the eternal life and salvation in the New Jerusalem (Hendriksen, 2000:206; cf. Minear, 1962:32-33) and that is given to the conquerors.<sup>188</sup>

In Ezekiel 47:12, fruit tree of all kinds will bear their fruits every month and their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing (ὁ καρπὸς αὐτοῦ τῆς καινότητος αὐτοῦ πρωτοβολήσει, ἔσται ὁ καρπὸς αὐτῶν εἰς βρώσιν καὶ ἀνάβασις αὐτῶν εἰς ὑγίειαν:LXX). In contrast to Ezekiel 47:12, in Revelation 22:2 the fruit of the tree of life will bear twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month (ξύλον ζωῆς ποιοῦν καρποὺς δώδεκα, κατὰ μῆνα ἕκαστον ἀποδιδόν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὰ φύλλα τοῦ ξύλου εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν). The fruit of the tree that will bear their fruits every month in Ezekiel 47:12 is transformed into twelve fruits that will bear every month in Revelation 22:2 (Beale, 1999:1107).

Just as the number twelve is used to point out a symbolic number as the completion or perfect fullness (Du Rand, 1997a:252; cf. Resseguie, 1998:10-12), also in the New Jerusalem section, the number twelve is repeatedly used to speak of twelve gates (21:12, 21), twelve angels (v. 12), twelve tribes of Israel (v. 12), twelve foundations (v. 14), twelve apostles (v. 14), and twelve pearls (v. 21). The symbolic number twelve in these verses indicates the perfect security or perfect blessing of the eschatological God's people or of the New Jerusalem. Therefore, the tree of life bearing twelve fruit every month provides

<sup>187</sup> In Zec. 14:8, Zechariah writes as follows: "On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem." In the case of both texts (e.g. Ezk. 47:1 and Zec. 14:8), the image of temple in Ezk 47:1 and Jerusalem in Zec 14:8 is transformed into the image of the throne of God and the Lamb. It signifies the eschatological fulfillment phase in New Jerusalem in the mind of the author because in New Jerusalem God and the Lamb are the temple itself.

<sup>188</sup> The throne image of God and of the Lamb (ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἀρνίου) in 22:1 can be linked with the term 'heaven'. In the New Jerusalem section, the combination of heaven and God is found in 21:2 as follows: "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ). In this case, the use of the phrase 'out of heaven' and 'from God' indicates "the ultimate source of the new creation or the ontological ultimacy of this heaven" (Minear, 1962:32). In other words, the phrase 'out of heaven' and 'from God' means the divine origin of New Jerusalem that is coming from 'above'.

“everlasting life” (Kistemaker, 2001:581; cf. Mounce, 1977:387; Knight, 1999:139) to those who eat the tree of life in terms of an eschatological scheme. It can be connected with John’s theological intention to state the eschatological fulfillment statement through the number twelve as a rhetorical device. The tree of life bearing twelve fruit every month will provide the perfect eternal life to God’s people in the New Jerusalem. Those who receive the perfect life in the New Jerusalem are those who conquer the practices of the Nicolaitans and hardships for Christ’s name.

In Ezekiel 47:12, while the leaves are mentioned for healing, in John 22:2 the leaves of the tree (cf. Ge. 2:9; 3:22) are mentioned for the healing of the nations (εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν). This section is connected with the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:9 and 3:22 in which the first Creation is mentioned. After Adam and Eve’s crime, indicating the Genesis story about old creation, John’s vision as New Creation completes the restoration of old creation, implying the fulfillment of the promise statement. The healing leaves signify the “complete absence of physical and spiritual want” (Mounce, 1977:387) or a “picture of total peace and well-being” (Hughes, 1990:231). That is, the healing leaves for the nations provide ‘eternal life’ to the conquerors who could enter the New Jerusalem (cf. Beale, 1999:1106-1108) because it can be linked with chapter 22:3 in which “no longer will there be any curse (καὶ πᾶν κατάθεμα οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι).” According to Bauckham (1993a:316), κατάθεμα does not refer to the thing which is cursed but to the curse itself. Thus, the healing leaves for the nations indicate the perfect condition of the eschatological redeemed conquerors in the New Jerusalem (cf. Beckwith, 1967:766).

According to Rissi (1972:80-81; contra Rowland, 1982:519n108), life and healing are, in fact, expanded to all nations, implying ‘universalism of salvation’ (cf. Bauckham, 1993a: 311-313). This universalism of salvation for the nations, according to Rissi, could not be supported from Revelation. Revelation does not support universal salvation for all nations, but provides the dualism of salvation/judgment and the mark of God/the mark of Satan. This statement can be limited to the eschatological people of God who can be called conquerors.

In Ezra 7:123, the fruit of Paradise and healing are linked with the meaning of the source

of perfect satisfaction and healing (cf. Aune, 1998b:1178). When one considers the symbolic and figurative language of this section, it does not refer to “therapeutic properties” (Swete, 1977:300) or mean the appropriateness of such a yield to the “nourishment of his twelvefold Israel” (Farrer, 1964:222). Instead, it means the eternal life of God’s redeemed people in the New Jerusalem (Kistemaker, 2001:582) who are free from all the physical and spiritual destitution. Hendriksen (2000:206) believes that all these items (*e.g. tree of life, the leaves for healing, fruit*)<sup>189</sup> symbolize the perfect character of our salvation and blessing.

#### VI.4.1.1.2. *The tree of life in 22:14*

The second reference to the tree of life appears in 22:14, which is in the midst of the seventh and final beatitude.<sup>190</sup> The fact that the blessed are those who wash their robes (Μακάριοι οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν) corresponds to the conqueror (τῷ νικῶντι) which is in chapter 2:7 (Charles, 1976:2.177). In both these passages, the reward for the blessed (22:14) and the conqueror (2:7) are given as a privilege to partake of the tree of life that is the eschatological spiritual food, namely, eternal life. The action of those who wash their robes (οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν) is connected with 7:14 (ἔπλυναν τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν), indicating the saint’s redemptive victory or moral and spiritual purity (Beale, 1999:436-438) through the blood of the Lamb (cf. Isa. 1:18; 64:6; Zec. 3:3-5). The action of washing their robes is closely linked with two parts as a reward to the blessed one and the conqueror: ἵνα ἔσται ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς and καὶ τοῖς πυλῶσιν εἰσέλθωσιν εἰς τὴν πόλιν.

The use of the future indicative ἵνα ἔσται and subjunctive καὶ .. εἰσέλθωσιν can be paralleled with each other (cf. Robertson, 1933:6.484; Seiss, 1974:518-519). If it (ἵνα] is to be distinguished in meaning from the conjunctive (καὶ)<sup>191</sup>, it may point to the certainty, the actuality, of the result, while the conjunctive suggests that there are conditions which must be fulfilled first (Swete, 1977:308). The washing of their robes guarantees the right to the tree of life and to the gates into the city, symbolizing eternal life and valid access to the

<sup>189</sup> Italics in the bracket are mine.

<sup>190</sup> The seven beatitudes in the book of Revelation are as follows: 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14.

<sup>191</sup> The italics in the bracket are mine.

New Jerusalem (Aune, 1998b:1222). Who are those who wash their robes? Here, the washing in the blood of the Lamb is the same expression of faith of the conquerors under the great tribulation (Mounce, 1977:174). Therefore, these two verses suggest that they are none other than the conquerors.

Even though Caird (1966:285) sees the reward of 22:14 as a promise given to the Christian martyrs, this interpretation is not supported by the text of Revelation because this fulfillment statement given to the conquerors is not limited only to the martyrs. But, it includes all God's redeemed people, namely the conquerors, who do not compromise with the imperial cult or emperor worship and have washed their robes through the blood of the Lamb in the end. Therefore, one can suppose that this fulfillment statement was given as a blessing for the eschatological conquerors.

#### *VI.4.1.1.3. The tree of life in 22:19*

The last reference to the tree of life appears in 22:19. Here, the use of the tree of life is functional as a negative meaning in the light of judgment of the evil forces. Surprisingly, this verse 22:19 (ἀφελεί ὁ θεὸς τὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ἐκ τῆς πόλεως τῆς ἁγίας) contrasts with the previous verse of 22:14, reflecting the destiny of the two different groups, namely, the conquerors/the defeated. In contrast to the conquerors in 22:14, to the defeated, God will take away his share (τὸ μέρος) in the tree of life and in the holy city. This warning is aimed against false teachings or false teachers who distort the book's message either by adding or by subtracting (Mounce, 1977:395; cf. Rev. 1:3; Dt. 4:2; 12:32). This prophetic message of warning as fulfillment statement can be connected with the members of the seven churches of Asia where the book of Revelation intended to be read aloud (cf. Beckwith, 1967:778-779).

In conjunction with the conquerors who inherit the tree of life and enter into the city of God (e.g. 2:7; 3:12), these warnings are mainly directed to the members within the church community who followed the false teaching of Balaam, Nicolaitans, and Jezebel. Whereas the conquerors who overcome their teaching inherit the tree of life and participate in the city of God, symbolized as eternal life, the defeated will be thrown away for eternal

judgment. As Kistemaker (2001:594) argues, the judgments include eternal separation from the living God as well as temporal judgments (cf. Plumptre, 1884:78-83).

#### VI.4.2. The Smyrna fulfillment statement given to the Conquerors

The Smyranean promise statement given to the conquerors is found in 2:11 and is a promise of not being hurt at all by the second death. Whereas the first death related to physical death temporally, the second death, in conjunction with the first death, related to eternal death (cf. Glasson, 1965:26; Johnson, 1983:46) to be inflicted upon the defeated. That is, the second death can be defined as the final penalty against the enemies of God in contrast with the people of God.

##### VI.4.2.1. The second death

The 'second death' as a fulfillment statement given to the conquerors of the church of Smyrna is found in chapters 20-21: 20:6, 14; 21:8. Through the exegetical analysis, I want to reveal how they work within their own context.

##### *VI.4.2.1.1. The second death (ὁ δεύτερος θάνατος) in 20:6*

The second death in 20:6 is found in the midst of the fifth beatitude. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them (ἐπὶ τούτων ὁ δεύτερος θάνατος οὐκ ἔχει ἐξουσίαν). The mentioning of the second death in 20:6 is connected with the section of Millennium in 20:1-6 in that the dragon is seized for a thousand years and the saint reigns with Christ a thousand years and the first resurrection is mentioned. The second death (ὁ δεύτερος θάνατος) in 20:6 is contrasted with the first resurrection (ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη; Poythress, 2000:180). The first resurrection occurs to the people who have been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and for the word of God (διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) and have not worshipped

the beast or his image and have not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands.<sup>192</sup>

When one examines the text, one can see that the first resurrection connects with the people who died for Jesus and the word of God. Many scholars (e.g. Lenski, 1943:586; Walvoord, 1972:279; Ford, 1975:350; Mealy, 1992:115; Michaels, 1997:225) argued that the first resurrection implies a second resurrection. In fact, John never speaks of a second resurrection. One should identify John's intention by analyzing context.

The first resurrection is given to the people who died because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God and for those who suffered because they did not worship the beast or his image. This image is absolutely a metaphorical expression implying a new life through union into Christ's resurrection (Ulfgard, 1989:63) or "spiritual exaltation" (Song, 2003:331) or "spiritual resurrection" (Beale, 1999:1013; cf. Mounce, 1977:356) of the conquerors or the faithful Christians. The first resurrection cannot indicate the intermediate state of the soul (cf. Ladd, 1979:266). Wall (1991:239) is correct to say that the interpreter should understand the first resurrection as a symbol for the eschatological priority God accords to the remnant community of Christian conquerors. John refers to this idiom as an exhortation for those in his embattled audience to conquer evil.

In conjunction with the first resurrection that provides the perfect blessings of eternal life for the conquerors, the second death as eternal suffering or spiritual death (Beale, 1999:1005) has a contrasting image with the first resurrection as an image of eternal life.<sup>193</sup> The message of the second death given to the church of Smyrna might be a meaningful one as a present reality in the lives of Christians who were in the midst of life and death. As

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<sup>192</sup> In the case of Morris (1999:230-231), the first resurrection can occur to the literal martyrs. He suggests the death of martyrs as the first resurrection and the general resurrection of all the saints as the second resurrection. For Beckwith (1967:740-741), the first resurrection means the resurrection of all Christian martyrs who can be contrasted with that of all others at the general resurrection. But in this context, one doesn't have any reason to limit the first resurrection to the martyrs because very few people were actually beheaded (cf. Lenski, 1943:581). Thus, one can't accept the theory of Beckwith and Morris that limits the first resurrection only to the martyrs.

<sup>193</sup> According to Ulfgard (1989:63), the first resurrection means a metaphorical expression for receiving life and royal dignity with Christ and for baptism into Christ. On the one hand, his idea about the first resurrection is quite correct but on the other hand, his idea as baptism into Christ is not supported by the text. In the case of Giblin (1999:555), the climatic, millennial heavenly bliss in 20:4-6 is regarded as the 'first/prior resurrection' in terms of the theme of the priestly kingdom, both the vertical and the horizontal aspects of the eschatology of Revelation.

Rissi (1966:123) explains, this expression (*the second death*)<sup>194</sup> suggests a connection with the “first death situation.” The contrasting images of the first resurrection as eternal life or spiritual exaltation and the second death as eternal death provide a rhetorical device for encouragement and hope to the conquerors who have to conquer their life situation. While participation in the first resurrection points out the fulfillment of the promised crown of life, the second death is the final judgment of the defeated – an eternal death in the lake of fire (Wilson, 1996:276).

#### *VI.4.2.1.2. The second death (the lake of fire) in 20:14*

The second reference to the second death is situated in 20:11-15 where the last judgment is depicted. The scene demonstrates the last judgment of Christ at the end of history. In this section, the most important image is the throne (θρόνος) in 20:11, implying victory or sovereignty. The throne image can be connected with Revelation 4:2 and 5:1 and 5:7 (cf. Ezk. 1:26-28; Da. 7:9). While the throne images<sup>195</sup> in chapters 4-5 imply the inaugurated reign of God as transcendent sovereign who executes his power over the whole world, the throne image in 20:11-15 depicts the execution of the final judgment that is the climax of all the previous judgments (Beale, 1999:1031).

The interesting thing in 20:11-15 is the use of the throne image<sup>196</sup> in conjunction with the throne image in 20:4-6. In this section, it is linked with the first resurrection (ἡ ἀνάστασις ἡ πρώτη) as eternal life or spiritual exaltation that will be given to the conquerors. While the throne image in 20:4-6 deals with the positive aspect of the conquerors, this section (20:11-15) starts with the throne image (εἶδον θρόνον μέγαν λευκόν) where two adjectives ‘great white’ (μέγαν λευκόν) are added. The addition of two adjectives ‘great and white’

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<sup>194</sup> Italics in the bracket are mine.

<sup>195</sup> According to Aune (1997:277-278), the throne image functions in one of six ways: (1) Enthronement scene (Da. 7:13; 4 Ezra 2:42-48) (2) Judgment scenes (Ps. 82:1-8; 1 Enoch 25:3; 45:3) (3) Commission scenes (1 Ki. 22:19-22; Isa. 6:1-13) (4) Eschatological heavenly festal gathering scenes (Heb. 12:22-24; 4 Ezra. 2:42-45) (5) Vision of God as the goal of Merkavah mysticism (3 Enoch 1:6-12) (6) Literary throne scenes (2 Ki. 22:19-20). Even though he suggests a broad sketch about the throne image, it is not easy to connect the throne image in Revelation to one of the six ways that Aune suggests. Therefore, one must approach the throne image in Revelation in the contextual dimension.

<sup>196</sup> The throne image in Revelation has two functions: vindication and judgment. It is the place of vindication (e.g. Rev. 6:9-11) for the Christians and of judgment (e.g. Rev. 4:5; 8:3-5; 11:19; 16:17-21) for the evil ones. According to Minear (1967:274), the throne-heaven is regarded as the realm where the unlimited power and love of God are fully revealed.

indicates the divine power and divine authority executing judgment as the sign of victory or vindication of the conquerors to the evil ones (Poythress, 2000:183). Whereas the first resurrection in 20:4-6 implies eternal life or spiritual exaltation of the conquerors, 20:11-15 reflects the judgment of the evil ones (cf. Boring, 1989:212) according to what they had done (κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν).

The reason why τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν must be interpreted in a negative sense appears in 20:13 where the sea gives up the dead and death, and Hades gives up the dead for the judgment image. According to Aune (1998b:1102), these ἔργα are sinful deeds and the record books in which records of sins were written.<sup>197</sup> The context of 20:12-13 will support the judgment scene of the evil ones as a negative side of the same scene at the end of history, because death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire, which is called the second death, implying eternal death. The destiny of death and Hades (ὁ θάνατος καὶ ὁ ᾄδης] is already determined in the redemptive act of Jesus Christ in chapter 1:18 as follows: “I am the Living one; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.” The dialectic of life and death between these two sections 20:4-6 and 20:11-15 delivers the destiny of the conquerors and of the defeated in terms of eternal life and eternal death. Rissi (1972:36) is quite correct to say:

Since, according to 20.4-6, the first resurrection has already brought God’s church to eternal life, one must assume that the seer is here thinking exclusively of those whose names are not written in the book of life, which is the book of the Lamb (13.18). The ἔργα are, therefore, in all likelihood to be understood only in the negative sense as *sinful ‘work’* and the ‘books’ as *registers of sin*.

Mealy (1992:169) is also of the opinion that Rev. 20:4-6 and 20:11-12 refers respectively to the positive and negative sides of the parousia as the judgment of those who have died. That is, 20.4-6 sees the judgment of Daniel 7 as the vindication of the lives (ψυχαί) of

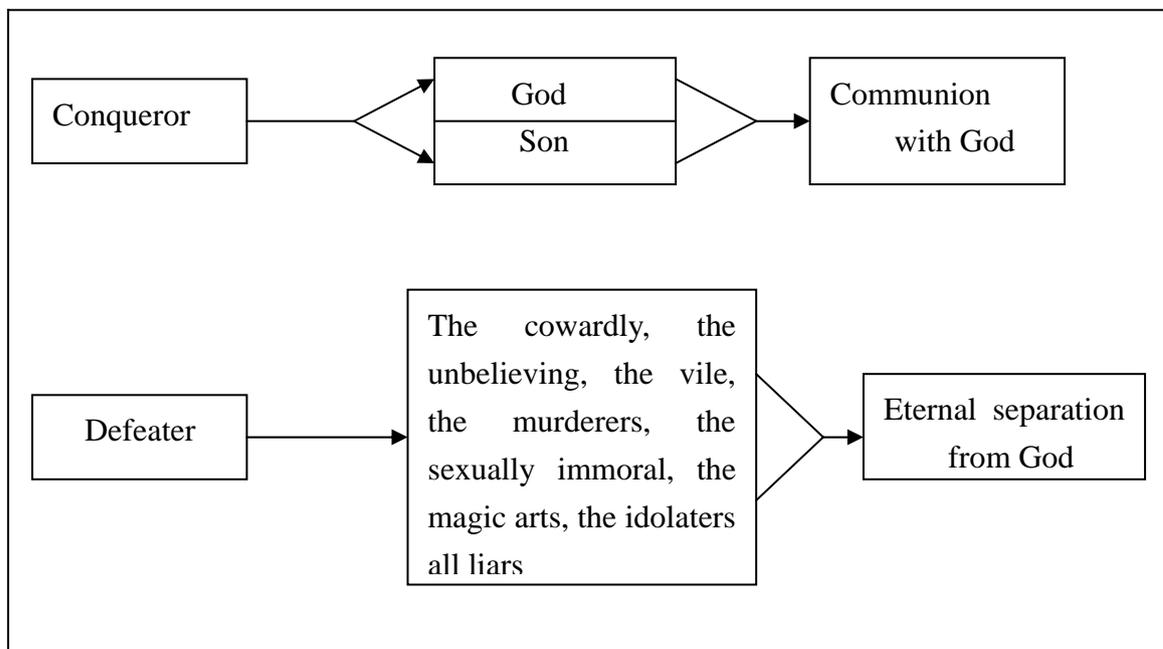
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<sup>197</sup> In Jewish literature, the judgment scene in conjunction with the heavenly record is often described. In 1 Enoch 89:70, it is written that “I saw that writer in my vision-how he writes down that which was destroyed by those shepherds, every day, and (how) he elevates, puts down, and shows the whole book to the Lord of the sheep; everything that each one has done; everything that each and every one of them has eliminated; and everything that they have given over to destruction.” In 2 Baruch 24:1, it is written that “for behold, the days are coming, and the books will be opened in which are written the sins of all those who have sinned.”

those who have been martyred (through their resurrection and reception of the kingdom), whereas Rev. 20:11-12 sees the same scene as the conviction of the dead. In terms of eternal life and eternal death, 20:11-15 refers to the negative side of the judgment of the evil ones at the end of history. Through these two sections, we can assume that the destiny of the conquerors and the defeated will be revealed in the light of victory and judgment.

*VI.4.2.1.3. The second death in 21:8*

In contrast to the conqueror motif that will inherit the eschatological blessing in 21:7, in 21:8 there are some ‘vice lists’ which are not part of God’s kingdom. One accepts that the conqueror motif in 21:7 is the fulfillment statement of the promise statement of the previous chapters 2-3 (e.g. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21). Vice lists in 21:8 mainly show failures of Christians who faced the threat, compromise, and persecution (cf. Raber, 1986:300-301) because vice lists imply a “summary of typical sins” (Beale, 1999:1059). The use of δὲ in 21:8 shows the contrasting picture between both verses, namely 21:7 and 21:8 (Beale, 1999:1059). The picture of 21:7 and 21:8 can be systemized as follows:



The diagram above shows us the direction of two radical patterns, which are eternal

communion with God as conqueror and eternal separation with God as defeated. The second death in 21:8 indicates the eternal separation or eternal judgment from God of the people who compromise their faith under the threat and reality of persecution (Kistemaker, 2001:560-561).

#### VI.4.3. The Pergamum fulfillment statement given to the Conquerors

The Pergamum promise statement given to the conquerors appears in 2:17 in that the hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name will be given to the conquerors. In fact, although one could not find the reference to manna in the fulfillment statement, scholars like Caird (1966:42) connect the heavenly manna with the messianic banquet (cf. Beasley-Murray, 1992:87-88). Wilson (1996:277) also recognizes that one could not find the image of manna in the fulfillment statement, but he tries to link this manna image with the image of water in 7:16-17 and 21:6. However, the text with which one is trying to connect this image with other images, does not support these insistences, because it does not have enough text- proof to connect 7:16-17 and 21:6.

##### VI.4.3.1. The white stone

The white stone in the promise statement given to the conquerors in the church of Pergamum can be defined as having two meanings: in the first place, lasting and imperishable in contrast to temporary and perishable, and in the second place, the conqueror's token of admission for the messianic banquet. In the fulfillment statement, the architectural characteristics of the New Jerusalem might be divided into three parts: wall, foundations, and gates. In 21:19-20, the twelve stones form the twelve foundations of the heavenly city. Even though the New Jerusalem is depicted as a physical building, material is used to explain the characteristic of the New Jerusalem and it must be interpreted symbolically (Lee, 2001:276-277). The stone image in 21:19-20 is derived from Exodus 28:17-21 and 39:10-13 in which the twelve stones indicate the high priest's breastplate. In these texts, the twelve stones symbolize the people of God (Poythress, 2000:190-191)<sup>198</sup>,

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<sup>198</sup> The image of twelve stones can have three possible alternatives: 1) the high priest's breastplate (Ex. 28:17-20) 2) the jewels on the dress of the king of Tyre (Ezk. 28:13) 3) the sign of the Zodiac. Charles (1976:2.165-169; cf. Sweet, 1979:306; contra Morris, 1999:245) connects these twelve stones with the sign

but in 21:19-20 the twelve stones are changed into the twelve apostles, implying the eschatological people of God, namely the church.

The use of the number twelve about walls, stones, and gates that are part of the New Jerusalem reflects a symbolic and intentional use of the number twelve by the author. Because the number twelve is a number of completeness, the accumulation of the number twelve provides the blessed city with a meaning of sublime completeness and perfect harmony (Resseguie, 1998:65). The mentioning that twelve foundation stones bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb indicates the number of eschatological redeemed people of God who endure various conflict situations unto death. This verse is contrasted with the harlot Babylon who is adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls in 17:4 and with those whose names were not found in the book of life in 20:15. These contrasting images of the New Jerusalem with the harlot Babylon reveal the essential characteristic of the New Jerusalem as God's city, namely the church (Sharkey, 1986:276-282; cf. Gundry, 1987:254-264). Therefore, just as the white stone means a lasting, imperishable thing and the conqueror's token of admission for the messianic banquet in the promise statement, the twelve stones in the fulfillment statement show us the complete people of God, implying "the perfect unity of God's people", namely the conquerors (Lee, 2001:281). It is not surprising that while the image of the white stone in the promise statement is changed into the image of twelve stones, in the New Jerusalem section and in the fulfillment statement, this image is greatly expanded and has a fuller perfect meaning.

#### VI.4.3.2. The new name in 22:4

As noted above, the name (ὄνομα) especially is connected with the name, person, and work of Jesus Christ. In 22:1-5, the eschatological blessings of God's people are depicted in this section. In the Old Testament, the presence of God was mainly situated in the temple of Israel (e.g. Lev. 20:3; Ps. 11:4; 27:4; 73:17; 102:19; Isa. 63:18; Jer. 51:51; Ezk. 48:10), whereas now the eschatological people of God will see God's face and his name (ὄψονται

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of the Zodiac. Also, even though Josephus (Ant. III.186) connects the twelve stones with the Zodiac, when John writes the book of Revelation, and especially the New Jerusalem section, it is not certain that John considers linking the image of the twelve stones with the sign of the Zodiac. In conjunction with the Old Testament and the New Testament, implying the eschatological people of God, one can say that the stones point to the high priest's breastplate (Morris, 1999:245).

τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ), indicating a direct “intimate bond” with God (Morris, 1999:238). That is, the mark of the divine name on the foreheads of the conquerors implies that the people of the New Jerusalem belong to God, and they are the conquerors of his kingdom (Kistemaker, 2001:583). Therefore, the fulfillment statement given to the conquerors who did not receive the mark and the name of the beast even under persecution, confirms these various eschatological blessings in the New Jerusalem section.

#### VI.4.4. The Thyatira fulfillment statement given to the Conquerors

The promise statement in the church of Thyatira is connected with the fulfillment statement in the millennial kingdom and the New Jerusalem section. As Giblin (1994:91) suggests, this scene of a heavenly blessing is the climatic recapitulation of the major theme. The fulfillment statement is none other than that the conquerors will inherit and share the sovereignty and authority of Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection (cf. Plumptre, 1884:148).

##### VI.4.4.1 Authority over the nations

This phrase is found in 20:4, which is the millennial kingdom section. The authority over the nations will be given to the conquerors and to those who keep the testimony of Jesus and the word of God (τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ καὶ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ). This phrase is repeatedly depicted by John who was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ) in 1:9, and also by those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον) in 6:9. These verses are closely linked with each other (Bauckham, 1993b:119). One can assume that the life, death, and victory of the conquerors are closely connected with the word of God and the testimony of Jesus that they had maintained.

As Vos (1965:209) argues, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus are based on the teachings, sayings, and revelation that Jesus delivered to his followers. In conjunction with the church of Thyatira, the fulfillment statement will be given to those who keep the word

of God and the testimony of Jesus as a proleptic achievement of the messianic kingdom as well as the eschatological life of the conquerors. Just as Jesus received the authority over the nations through his death and resurrection, the victory and authority of the conquerors over the nations can be possible as participating in the life of witness (cf. Bauckham, 1993b:118-125).

#### VI.4.4.2. The morning star

In conjunction with the promise statement, the fulfillment statement of the church of Thyatira appears in 22:16 saying ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυίδ, ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός. In the fulfillment statement in 22:16, the words ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυίδ, and λαμπρὸς are added. The Root of David (ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ) is adapted from Isaiah 11:10 (ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ Ἰεσσαί: LXX) in that the Messiah will come forth from the Root of Jesse. The Root of David is none other than a descendant of David's line (τὸ γένος Δαυίδ: cf. Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zec. 6:12) who will reign as king and implement law and justice on earth (cf. Ford, 1975:92-93).

The adaptation of these images from the Old Testament implies the unique identity of Jesus in the New Testament (Johnson, 2001:328). Bauckham (1993a:324) is of the opinion that by calling Jesus ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυίδ, he (*John*)<sup>199</sup> depicts him as the Messiah, the Davidic king who will include all the nations in the kingdom of God. How can it happen? The image concerning ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυίδ can be connected with ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ in 5:5 who is able to open the scroll and its seven seals. In there, the Root of David that is closely related to Isaiah 11:1, 10 is reinterpreted with the Lamb, looking as if it had been slain (Beale, 1999:1146). In the Old Testament, there is some expectation that the Messiah who is to be a descendant of David will fight a war against the gentile oppressors, liberating Israel and establishing the kingdom of God. In the New Testament it is reinterpreted that the Messiah Christ will conquer the enemies through his death and resurrection and with the word of God and the testimony of Jesus (Coetzee, 1993:296-298; cf. 1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:11; 20:4). Therefore, the use of ἡ ῥίζα καὶ τὸ γένος Δαυίδ in 22:16 reveals the identity of the eschatological Messiah, namely Jesus Christ, who will bring the

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<sup>199</sup> Italics in the brackets are mine.

blessing and victory to the eschatological people of God. It indicates the theme of messianic victory and blessing to the conquerors, reinterpreted through his death and resurrection.

The addition of λαμπρὸς (bright) in the morning star (τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν: Rev. 2:28) can have a special meaning in the New Jerusalem section because the bright motif in the New Jerusalem section is often depicted. In 21:23-4 and 22:5, the city does not need the sun or the moon because the glory of God gives it light and the Lamb is its lamp. Thus, Jesus is the bright Morning star, which indicates the “brightest of the stars” (Bauckham, 1993a:325) in 22:16. The bright Morning star (ὁ ἀστὴρ ὁ λαμπρὸς ὁ πρωϊνός) in 22:16 is connected with Isaiah 60:3 (λαμπρότητί: LXX), which is intended for the glory of the restored new age. He contains the promise of all that is to come as “the Light of the world” (Charles, 1976:2.219). Therefore, Revelation 22:16 combines two prophetic texts of Isaiah, 11:10 and 60:3, in order to give John’s own prophetic message to the conquerors.

On the one hand, Jesus is a descendant of David who is reinterpreted with the Lamb looking as if it had been slain, and on the other hand, he is the light of the restored new day in terms of eschatological fulfillment. As the bright morning star, Jesus will bring a new eschatological blessing or the “dawn of eternity” (Wilcock, 1989:218) or a “new day” (Morris, 1999:253) to the conquerors. As a weak and marginalized minor group who were under the threat and the compromise of the trade-guild, the common meal, and pagan ceremony, the fulfillment statement is offered as eternal eschatological blessings of hope and encouragement.

#### VI.4.5. The Sardis fulfillment statement given to the Conquerors

The church of Sardis in 3:1-6 deals primarily with life and death. The use of ἔργα (vv. 1 and 2) implies that one couldn’t find any persecution from the Roman authority or Jewish community. But one can see the attitude of spiritual idleness, spiritual debauchery, and the spiritual crisis of the Sardis Christians. To the Sardis Christians who faced various spiritual difficulties, Christ promises that the conquerors will be dressed in white, and their names will never be erased from the book of life, and that they will be acknowledged before the

Father and angels.

#### VI.4.5.1. The white garment

White garment (ἱματίοις λευκοῖς) in 3:5 is used several times throughout Revelation. The use of ἱματίον is found in 19:13 and 19:16 and the use of στολή is found in 22:14 in the fulfillment statement section. According to Charles (1975:1.187; cf. Ulfgard, 1989:81), the use of ἱματίον and στολή in Revelation can be regarded as a synonym. In 19:13, 16, the rider on the white horse is dressed in a robe (ἱμάτιον) dipped in blood and inscribed on his robe and on his thigh as “King of kings and Lord of lords.” The identity of the rider on the white horse is revealed with a robe that is dipped in blood. He is none other than the Divine Warrior Christ (Slater, 1999:214), through his blood on the cross and his resurrection. That robe was not dipped with his enemies’ blood but with his own that was shed on the cross – the reason for his victory and conquest.

The final beatitude (22:14) is explained with a blessing on those who wash their robes (Μακάριοι οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν). Charles (1976:2.177) suggests that this phrase is the same expression spiritually of οἱ νικῶντες. To those who wash their robes, the promise statement will be fulfilled in two ways: on the one hand, authority to have the right to the tree of life and on the other hand, the authority to go through the gates of the city. The image of the tree of life contrasts with the image of Adam and Eve who were driven out of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:24. Now, those who wash their robes (οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολὰς αὐτῶν) through the blood of the Lamb will inherit eternal life, which was lost in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:24. The authority to share in the tree of life indicates eternal life given to the conquerors (Lee, 2001:290-291) who washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

The authority to go through the gates of the city is linked with Isaiah 62:10, which mentions the saint’s salvation image. This verse can be contrasted with the following verse in that individual outsiders are depicted. The blessing of the conquerors and the destiny of the wicked are contrasted in 22:14 and 22:15, indicating they are inside of the city or outside of the city. While the conquerors will possess eternal life, the wicked will be out of

the city, implying eternal separation from God (cf. Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:187-189). The eternal separation from God is closely paralleled with 21:8 in that the doom of the wicked will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur that is the second death. The result for those who wash their robes (οἱ πλύνοντες τὰς στολάς αὐτῶν) and those who do not wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb can be seen as both positive and negative. It means that eternal life and eternal death will be given according to how they responded to the blood of the Lamb (cf. Johnson, 2001:299).

#### VI.4.5.2. The book of life (ἡ βιβλος τῆς ζωῆς)

The mentioning of the book of life in the fulfillment statement is found in 20:12, 15, and 21:27. The first two verses are included in the great white throne judgment in which all the dead stand before the throne. In these contexts, books are depicted as negative metaphors for judgment (Aune, 1997:224). In 2 Enoch. 52:15, it is said that all these things will be weighed in the balances and exposed in the books at the great judgment. In a similar way, 1 Enoch 98:8 explains that all your injustices, which you have committed, are written down every day until the day of your judgment. Just as books indicate negative judgment metaphors, the book of life implies a negative judgment metaphor. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he or she would be thrown into the lake of fire. In conjunction with the judgment on the wicked in 20:12, even though eternal life for the conquerors is not mentioned in 20:15, this nuance implies that the conquerors who were written in the book of life are spared from the judgment (Beale, 1999:1037).<sup>200</sup>

In these verses, one can suppose that the image of judgment (ἐκρίθησαν οἱ νεκροὶ: 20:12 and ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρός: 20:15) is the fulfilled image or even an expansion of chapter 11:18 (ὁ καιρὸς τῶν νεκρῶν κριθῆναι). In there, the final judgment and the joy of the redeemed are introduced (Hendriksen, 2000:34-36). In 11:15-18, whereas the execution of the judgment of the wicked and the rewarding of people of God is introduced, in 20:11-15 the scene of the final judgment is vividly described and expanded as an eschatological fulfillment. The mentioning of the book of life in 20:11-15 describes the

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<sup>200</sup> Daniel 12:1 has a similar positive statement in conjunction with Rev. 20:15. Daniel 12:1 says: "at that time your people-everyone whose name is found written in the book- will be delivered." (cf. Da. 7:10; 10:21).

book of life as a symbol of a citizen-register of God's kingdom in contrast to the Greek-Roman citizen-register of that world (Rossing, 1999:154; cf. Warren, 1983:187). Only the names of the conquerors would be written as a reward for eschatological salvation and victory.

The fuller title for the book of life is found in 21:27 as the book of life of the Lamb (ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου). Chapter 13:8 also explains the identity of the book further as the book of life of the Lamb who was slain (ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου). In both cases, the use 'of the Lamb' (τοῦ ἀρνίου) indicates a genitive of possession. That is, only those who belong to the Lamb (Mounce, 1977:256; Kistemaker, 2001:385, 385n16; cf. Beale, 1999:702) can be written in the book of life as a guarantee of eternal life. That is why the book of life can be connected with the Lamb who died as conqueror. Through his death, just as the Lamb became the conqueror, the followers of the Lamb whose names are written in the book of life can inherit the new heaven and new earth in chapters 21-22 (cf. Sharkey, 1986:283-287; Wilson, 1996:293). Swete (1977:167) is quite correct that "the Divine Register is represented as belonging to 'the Lamb that was slain,' i.e. the crucified but now risen and exalted Christ, Who purchased the Church for God with His Blood."

#### VI.4.6. The Philadelphia fulfillment statement given to the Conquerors

The promise statement given to the church of Philadelphia is that the conquerors would become pillars in the temple of their God. When one considers the geographical weak point due to earthquakes, the promise statement to become a pillar in the temple of their God would provide safety and security and intimate communion with God. Even though one could not deny the importance of the geographical point of view, the temple motif still has literary, symbolic, and religious significance, as well as geographical significance, to the image of the temple. As Stevenson (2001:16) argues, a temple was considered an important social and political place, but above all, it was a religious place. When one contemplates being a pillar in the temple of God, it is necessary to consider the theological and religious aspects as well as the geographical and literary aspects.

#### VI.4.6.1. The pillar in the temple

Firstly, one must recognize that the promise statement of 3:12,<sup>201</sup> like other promise statements should clearly be understood as symbolic and figurative language. The fulfillment statement about the New Jerusalem in chapters 21-22 functions as a symbolic replacement for the old Jerusalem. As Collins (1984:99) argues, images about a heavenly temple and the New Jerusalem are given as replacements for the destruction of the earthly temple and the city as a symbolic centre.

In the fulfillment statement, the New Jerusalem is coming down out of heaven (καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ), revealing the heavenly origin. The actual meaning of the New Jerusalem is God's presence (αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ' αὐτῶν ἔσται) among his people (Bauckham, 1993b:140-141). In contrast to old Jerusalem that was destroyed earlier, it is now called the *New (καινή) Jerusalem* that will fulfill God's promise given to the conquerors. That is, the New Jerusalem section in 21-22 provided a fulfillment statement to the conquerors or the Christian community that faced various problems. As Court (2000:260) suggests, these are "powerful metaphors of transcendence."

Throughout the section on the New Jerusalem, one doesn't find any references to the temple (ναὸν οὐκ εἶδον ἐν αὐτῇ) in 21:22. Even though one could not find any verbal correspondence between 3:12 and 21:22, one came across a thematic correspondence between the two verses about the temple. In 3:12, the phrase τοῦ θεοῦ μου is used as a subjective genitive. It means that God himself is the temple (Roloff, 1993:245). In the case of 21:22, there is no temple in the city because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (ὁ γὰρ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ναὸς αὐτῆς ἐστίν καὶ τὸ ἀρνίον).

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<sup>201</sup> Stevenson (2001:244-251) suggests five common backgrounds for the image of being a pillar in the temple: 1) the language of 3:12 derives from the subsequent statement in Isaiah 22:23, which is an image of stability and permanence 2) the promise is related to the two pillars which were called Jachin and Boaz (1 Ki. 7:15-22; 2 Ch. 3:15-17) 3) the pillar in the temple refers to the ancient "King's pillar" in Solomon's temple 4) the image of the pillar expresses permanence and stability 5) the practice of a provincial priest setting up a statue in the temple precinct at the end of his term and inscribing his name, his father's name, and his hometown on it. Apart from these five common backgrounds, Stevenson (Ibid, 247-251) insists that the pillar in the temple must be regarded as the practice of sculpting human figural pillars in sacred architecture. But it is not certain whether any sculptured human figural pillars existed in Philadelphia city. Thus, Stevenson's suggestion must be rejected.

The transfer from the visible temple to the invisible temple (Aune, 1998b:1168) does not indicate the removal of the temple, but implies the transformation of the idea of the temple (cf. Stevenson, 2001:268-272). The New Jerusalem has God and the Lamb as a temple (ναός) instead of a real building. It means that the fullness of God's presence, as well as the direct and actual presence of God as eschatological fulfillment, is given to the conquerors (Roloff, 1993:245). The promise statement in chapter 21:22 that the Lord will make the conquerors pillars confirms the security of the conquerors through God and the Lamb's perfect presence as the temple itself.

The promise statement that the conquerors will never go out of (ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ) the temple of God can be contrasted with 21:27 and 22:15 in that nothing impure will ever enter (οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ) into the city and the sinners will be kept out of (ἔξω) the city. The contrasting images of 'inside and outside' and 'the sacred and the profane' reveal the destiny of the conquerors and the sinners (Stevenson, 2001:223). That is, these distinctions between the 'inner and outer' or the 'pure and impure' throughout the book of Revelation establish the boundary of people of God and people of Satan in the heavenly sphere as well as in the earthly sphere. The boundary of the inside and the outside of the city or temple is given with the security, blessing, and stability of eternal life to the conquerors, but the doom of eschatological judgment to the sinners. As Rissi (1972:71) argued, the combination of the holy city and of the place of judgment would be an essential part of the prophecy of the New Jerusalem (cf. Gundry, 1987:254-264).

#### VI.4.7. The Laodicea fulfillment statement given to the Conquerors

The image of the throne (θρόνος) in Revelation is a primary one. It is not surprising that the conquerors in the church of Laodicea will be seated with Christ on his throne as promise statement because the image of the throne emphasizes the centrality of God and the Lamb's sovereignty. As Fiorenza (1991:58) suggests, the throne image (Rev. 4:2-6, 9-10; 5:1, 6-7, 11, 13) is introduced repeatedly as a prominent symbol throughout the book (cf. Bauckham, 1993b:31). In connection with the fulfillment statement, it is necessary to give thought as to how the image of the throne is emphasized in front of the audience or reader.

#### VI.4.7.1. The divine throne

When John was in the Spirit, the first thing he saw was the image of the throne. The use of ‘μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον’ in 4:1 functions to introduce a new vision in terms of the heavenly aspect (Swete, 1977:66). That is, the use of ‘μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον’ provides a new heavenly vision in contrast with the previous section, namely 3:14-22. While the conquerors of the church of Laodicea will be seated with Christ on his throne, the sinners who accommodated and compromised with Rome and local religions will not be with God. That is why John reveals heavenly figures focusing on the throne of God and the Lamb in chapters 4-5. The image of the throne (θρόνος) in chapters 4-5 occurs 19 times out of 47 times in Revelation. It indicates that the image of the throne in chapters 4-5 is the major image used to reveal the divine purpose of God to the people (Mounce, 1977:131-133), whether they are conquerors or not. Beale (1999:172; cf. Fiorenza, 1981:72) is quite correct to say:

Chs. 4-5 introduce and overshadow all the visions in 6:1-22:5, which flow out of this introductory vision and are to be seen as the historical consequences of divine sovereignty in its exercise of redemption and judgment. God and Christ are in ultimate control of all the woes of both believers and unbelievers.

The meaning of the throne’s image is divided into two parts: positive and negative, divided between redemption or judgment, eternal life or eternal death, and victory or defeat. The throne as judgment is linked with 4:5 and is connected with the seventh in the series of judgments. God’s presence from the throne indicates the absolute execution of God’s sovereignty over the people who are against God and for God. Davis (1992:124) suggests that the image of the throne must be regarded in the light of judgment of the wicked.

In contrast with the judgment image that appears especially in 8:5, 11:19, and 16:18, the image of the throne is positive. The throne image in the New Jerusalem appears as the central image (Wilson, 1996:304), which fulfills the promise statement in chapters 2-3. Chapter 21:3 and 21:5 reveal the eschatological blessing or sovereignty as an expression of God’s presence (Mounce, 1977:371-373). God’s dwelling with his people is the natural

result of the judgment that was given to the wicked in 8:5, 11:19, and 16:18. It is the natural result of the eschatological blessing and completion that was given to the conquerors. Therefore, the image of the throne as the central picture in Revelation can be considered as two parts: positive image and negative image. Through these contrasting images of the conquerors and defeated, John encourages the life of people of God who confronted the loss of the identity of church or people of God.

## **VI.5. Conclusion**

I agree that the book of Revelation was written in order to encourage and console and to be an evocative power and symbolic world to Christians who lived in Asia Minor (Du Rand, 1993a:245-247). That is, the prophetic message of John is not a sporadic message, but a unified work, which was intended to be read on the basis of the audience or reader's social, economic, political, and religious contexts (cf. Pilch, 1978:62-63). It is an accurate observation that the book of Revelation is constructed throughout as a contextual work with a structurally cohesive unit (cf. Sharkey, 1986:267-287). For useful information regarding the message of the book of Revelation, one should investigate how Revelation was structured.

The concentric structure suggested by Fiorenza (1985:159-177) is matched with the message of Revelation. Even though her work could not be accepted in other detailed parts, Fiorenza's concentric outline, which regards 1:9-3:22 as a promise statement and 19:11-22:9 as a fulfillment statement provides a good contextual analysis. In terms of the conqueror motif, her analysis, as a promise statement and fulfillment statement in chapters 2-3 and 21-22, helps us to understand who the conquerors are and what their rewards are. The implication and identity of the conquerors can be seen from different perspectives respectively. Why are they called the conquerors? What is the function of the conquerors? What is the reward of the conquerors? These questions are very important in understanding the message of Revelation in terms of promise and fulfillment. Therefore, one can say that the promise statement and fulfillment statement in Revelation have an important structural parallelism.

The structural parallelism of promise and fulfillment provides various symbolic messages in the New Jerusalem section: the tree of life, the crown of life, the second death, the hidden manna, a white stone, authority over the nations, the book of life, a pillar, and a throne. This structural parallelism of promise and fulfillment also provides the heavenly point of view in contrast with the earthly point of view as prophetic exhortation and critical evaluation (Muse, 1986:152) as a whole.

The fulfillment statements, for example, the tree of life, the crown of life, the second death, the hidden manna, a white stone, authority over the nations, the book of life, a pillar, and a throne provide a symbolic universe and alternative world points of view against death, sin, and conflict that were their present daily reality as a marginalized group (Sharkey, 1986:287). That is, the conquerors, even though they lived on earth as a marginalized group, would be rewarded in terms of a heavenly aspect of the fulfillment statements in chapters 21-22. Ulfgard (1989:103n442) is quite correct to say that the promises to the conquerors in the letters to the seven churches refer to various images in chapters 21-22, another way of showing how the faithful Christians share Christ's victory. Therefore, Revelation as promise and fulfillment must be treated as a work of structural parallelism that speaks about victory of the conquerors and judgment of the defeated as a whole.

The victory of the conquerors and the judgment of the defeated are introduced in 17:1-19:10 and 19:11-22:5. Two images of Babylon the harlot and the New Jerusalem the bride formulate the prominent characteristics about victory and judgment. The contrasting images between Babylon and the New Jerusalem are structured into the climax of the promise and fulfillment given to the conquerors and the defeated (Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:159). As a city and woman, the judgment to Babylon appears in 14:8, and chapters 17-18 introduce the destruction of Babylon as fulfillment to the defeated (Warren, 1983:177). The book of Revelation accuses Babylon, a city and woman, of being a "deceitful illusion" (Bauckham, 1993b:36).

The image of 'wine of wrath or cup of wrath' as a central image of judgment against Babylon is inflicted upon the defeated (Rossing, 1999:63). Rossing (:85) also believes that 'drinking and blood' reveal the important images of judgment against Babylon (cf. 14:8;

17:2; 18:3; 19:2). That is, both blood and wine are associated with the expression of the blood of wrath (Aune, 1998b:938). Through John's prophetic critic, he explains the victory of the people of God, namely the conquerors and the judgment of the defeated. As Dyer (1987:305) commented, the image of Babylon provides a crucial factor of God's judgment of the defeated, the true nature of the antichristian city and woman. Therefore, the image of Babylon as a city and woman is introduced to reveal the ultimate image of warning and judgment to the defeated (Warren, 1983:190).

In contrast with Babylon, symbolizing the evil power against the conquerors, the New Jerusalem appears as "the ultimate reality" (Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:184) that will be given to the conquerors. Those who conquer will partake of the water of life (21:6) and live forever in the New Jerusalem as the city of God (22:14). That is the promise that the conquerors inherit. As Stevenson (2001:300) argued, with God and the Lamb, the conquerors will experience the complete glory, power, total safety, and communion with the presence of God and the Lamb in the New Jerusalem. Various images of the New Jerusalem, for example, water of life, fruit, gates, and wall provide the New Jerusalem as an alternative image to Babylon that is the fulfillment statement to the conquerors and the defeated. The goal and climax of the New Jerusalem can be regarded as the final judgment of the defeated and the eschatological salvation of the conquerors (Fiorenza, 1985:47). Therefore, the specific image of the New Jerusalem is fulfilled as a reward to the conquerors as "God's alternative city of justice and well-being" (Rossing, 1999:165).

## CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION

### VII. 1. Introduction

The aim of the final chapter is to explore the previous chapters, in which I have expostulated the theme of conqueror, and finally to describe the function of the conqueror as the people of God who were faced with various problems in their present situations. As Collins (1986:239) asks, is it to deliver consolation in a concrete situation of persecution and martyrdom or something else? As one has said by looking at the circumstances surrounding the seven churches, the churches faced complex situations, which can't be simplified to the mere persecution and martyrdom background that Collins provided.

If the situations of the seven churches were various and complex, what were their actual circumstances? Who were their enemies? Was it just Judaism (see Beagley, 1987) or something else? When one researches the situations of the seven churches, one finds that there were many challenges such as the worship of Roman emperors (cf. Botha, 1988:87-102; Harland, 2000:99-121), alliance with society or the Whore of Babylon (cf. DeSilva, 1998:79-110), and conflict with unfaithful Jerusalem (cf. Van De Water, 2000:245-261; Duff, 2001:17-47). With regard to the situations that the first century Christians faced, one recognizes why John wanted to send his prophetic message through various symbolic references and universes, providing a different heavenly perspective in contrast with an earthly point of view (cf. Fiorenza, 2001:1-19). Through various contextual analyses, John exhorts his churches to be conquerors like Jesus Christ as follows: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33). Therefore, the theme of the conqueror motif will provide a valuable contribution to understanding the book of Revelation.

In Jewish literature and the Old Testament framework, just as the Messiah is regarded as the great conqueror and national hero for the judgment of the gentile nations and the salvation of Israel, the conqueror figure in the book of Revelation can be understood from different angles. The conqueror figure in the book of Revelation is explained

through “the irony of redemptive victory” (White, 2000:171). It means that even though John follows the example of Jewish literature and the Old Testament, Jewish literature and the Old Testament don’t determine John’s meaning. However, they provide a dynamic hermeneutical dimension between the old context and the new context (see Moyise, 2003:391-401). Therefore, when one considers the conqueror motif in the book of Revelation, it is necessary that various exegetical processions should be regarded. For the result of the analysis of conqueror motif, the primary concern of the conqueror motif is to describe the identity of God, the christological pictures, and the people of God as the conquerors.

## VII.2. God, Conqueror

As Bauckham (1993b:24) comments, the book of Revelation is “the product of a highly reflective consciousness of God” (cf. Boring, 1986:259). The idea of the centrality of God appears in 1:1 that “is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him.” It means that God is the original revealer of the book of Revelation. God’s characteristic is further expressed by the title ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ (Rev. 1:8). The term ὁ παντοκράτωρ refers to God’s supremacy as conqueror over the whole of creation (Aune, 1997:57-58; cf. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22).

In chapters 4-5, God is described as the centre of the whole world (Beale, 1999:172). The four living creatures and the 24 elders worship God upon the throne because he is conqueror and the “eternal King of the whole cosmos” (Coetzee, 1993:283). According to Coetzee (:283), the victory of the Lamb as conqueror over Satan and the enemies of God is the result of the victory of God as conqueror. The throne-room image of Revelation 4 describes the characteristic of God, conqueror who is still in control (cf. Cohen, 1987:87). This image portrays “the absolute sovereignty of God” (Mounce, 1977:134) in terms of an earthly sphere as well as a heavenly sphere. For this, John deals with a transcendent image of reality. That is, what John wanted to reveal is who the real conquerors in this world are. And who is still in the control? John’s answer is clear that “God rules in this world, that God stands faithful to his covenant,... and that he achieves victory over all who stand in opposition” (Stevenson, 2001:283).

In conjunction with the control of God, the image of worshipping the living God portrays an important picture in Revelation as well (cf. Guthrie, 1992:73). If one agrees that the Revelation was written within the liturgical setting (Vanni, 1991:370-371), within this liturgical setting, the element of worship plays an important role in providing the meaning between the earthly and heavenly reality. Worship reveals the reality of transcendent vision. That is, through the setting of worship, it reveals that God is the living God, conqueror, and still in control in history. As Leivestad (1954:22) commented, “God is the one who conquers, the one who grants victory.” Therefore, the heavenly worship is centred on God alone (Ford, 1998:211) because he is only conqueror in contrast with the Satan. Therefore, the victory of the Lamb that shares God’s privilege as conqueror is based on the victory of God (Beasley-Murray, 1992:111; cf. Du Rand, 1997b:63, 68-74). That is why God as a heavenly conqueror is worshipped by four living creatures and the 24 elders. As Barr (1998:148) argued, “It is in worship that... the final victory is won: worship God. The worship of God is the primary theme of the Apocalypse, contrasted with the worship of the beast.”

### **VII.3. Christ, Conqueror**

The primary theme in Revelation is to describe the divine identity of Christ as conqueror who won the whole world, by illustrating different angles of the christological characteristics. For John, Christ is conqueror like God because Christ reveals “the definitive expression of the power and love of God” (Boring, 1986:265). According to Boring (:265), Christ is the “functional equivalent of God.” That is why Christ can be called conqueror as the agent of God who is conqueror.

#### **VII.3.1. Martyr is Conqueror**

Christ is portrayed by the image of the Lamb (cf. 5:6-13; 6:1,16; 7:9-17; 12:11; 14:1-10; 17:14; 19:7-9). According to Beasley-Murray (1992:34), the Lamb Christology is the major title of the Messiah. Accordingly, the ‘Lamb’ Christology in understanding the meaning of conqueror is the important title. But when John uses the title Lamb in Revelation, he brings a symbolic transformation of the meaning. As Barr (1984:41)

argued, John reverses the symbol of power and victory by transforming them into images of suffering and death. That is, martyr is conqueror (Leivestad, 1954:215).

The image of the Lamb as conqueror begins with chapter 5. In fact, chapter 5 is the central chapter (Guthrie, 1981:65) to reveal the identity of the Lamb. In general, the images of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the Root of David were known images illustrating the power of the conquering Messiah (Aune, 1997:351). Just as John reinterprets the Old Testament with “a high degree of liberty and creativity” (Beale, 1999:81), these images are transformed into a ‘New Perspective’. The term that suggests in the Old Testament military and political images has been transformed into *ἀρνίου ἐστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον*. Even though these images look like a military and conquering Messiah, John didn’t intend to describe Christ in a military context of power, conflict and war. But, the victory and conquering was rather won by the Lamb’s death (Du Rand, 1997b:73).

According to Reddish (1982:136), Christ is the martyr. That is, the death of the Lamb as a martyr can be connected with the victory of the Lamb (cf. Leivestad, 1954:222). Through this symbolic transformation, the conquerors as the people of God will experience a rhetorical and psychotherapeutic effect of God’s victory over evil and tribulations (Du Rand, 1993a:247). Then, from where is this victory of the Lamb derived? It can be linked with God who is conqueror. The victory of the Lamb is based on God’s victory (Rosscup, 1982:264) because the Lamb is the agent of God who executes the will of God in this world. That is why in chapter 11:15, the establishment of the kingdom of God is proclaimed as the result of the victory of the conquerors.

### VII.3.2. Eschatological Agent, Conqueror

Whereas the Lamb has won the victory over the evil power through his sacrifice and death (Guthrie, 1981:65), Christ as eschatological agent is introduced as the one who executes the divine judgment. One of the images as eschatological agent is the Son of Man Christology. This image could be derived from Daniel 7:13 in that the vision of the ‘one like a Son of man’ is closely linked with the image of a heavenly figure (cf. Hooker,

1967:11). The ‘one like a Son of man’ shares God’s characteristic and sovereignty as the heavenly Judge. His characteristics in Daniel 7:13-14 especially portray the power of a heavenly figure that could be identified with God. That is, he is described as the one who comes to execute the judgment as a heavenly figure (Mounce, 1977:279-280). According to Ferch (1979:174), the ‘One like a Son of man’ can be regarded as a transcendent and an eschatological figure that executes a messianic role. This heavenly characteristic can especially be applied to the role of Christ as conqueror.

The One like a Son of man in 14:14-16 appears as a heavenly figure. Two visions of salvation (14:14-16) and judgment (14:17-20) reveal the One like a Son of man as an eschatological agent. He is seated on the cloud, which is the symbol of divine presence (Caragounis, 1986:74). In his hand, he has a sharp sickle. In order to reveal his identity as an eschatological agent of God, he has used the two images of salvation and judgment (Bauckham, 1993b:95). The first image of the grain harvest indicates the gathering of the conquerors for the kingdom of God. The second image of the gathering of the vintage describes the judgment of the defeated (Beasley-Murray, 1992:228). Through these two images, the One like a Son of man as an eschatological agent performs a similarly divine role that only God can execute. It is salvation to the conquerors and judgment to the defeated. That is why Christ can be regarded as “judge and warrior” (Leivestad, 1954:258).

Instead of the Lamb looking as if it has been slain, the image of the Divine Warrior is introduced in 19:11-21 (cf. 1:16; 2:16, 26; 6:2; 12:7-12; 14:17-20; 17:14; 19:2). In this section, these verses show a fuller picture of Christ as an eschatological agent, expecting the final judgment to the defeated. The judgment of the defeated is already expected in chapters 6-8:2, 8:7-18 and 16:2-21. But the victory of the Divine Warrior as an eschatological agent in 19:11-21 is executed as an eschatological final judgment. In contrast with the final judgment of the defeated, the Divine Warrior ushers in the final victory to the conquerors (Strand, 1990:242-243). His victory depends on his death. According to Barr (1998:138), “John is showing how the death of Jesus has the power to destroy evil, using the graphic imagery of holy war.” Therefore, the title ‘the King of kings and the Lord of the lords’ (19:16) indicates the divine power and sovereignty of

the Divine Warrior who executes salvation to the conquerors and judgment to the defeated (cf. Mounce, 1977:347).

### VII.3.3. Christ, Conqueror, the Giver of new life

The clear image with regard to new life of the conquerors is described in the New Jerusalem section. The fulfillment statements of the New Jerusalem are provided to the conquerors, those who endure their life situations and keep the word of God. The image of the New Jerusalem is clearly contrasted with the image of Babylon (Rossing, 1999:144). These two images portray the image of life to the conquerors and death to the defeated. That is, after the destruction of Babylon in 14:8, and 17-18:1-24, the wedding ceremony with the Lamb describes the eschatological life and blessing given to the conquerors, implying the coming of the kingdom of God (Beasley-Murray, 1992:273-274).

The eschatological life and blessing in the New Jerusalem section appear with the covenantal form as the husband and wife. In the Old Testament the image of the bride is closely linked with to Isaiah 54:5 and 61:10. In these verses, the covenantal relationship between God and his people is expressed as a husband and wife and a bridegroom and a bride (Thompson, 1998:173; cf. Isa. 62:5; Hos. 2:2, 19-20; Mt. 25:1-13; 2 Co. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33). The covenantal relationship between God and his people is completely realized by constituting an evocative power and symbolic world through the image of marriage and the New Jerusalem. For the conquerors, eternal life and eschatological blessing in the New Jerusalem occur not by military power but by the blood of the Lamb (Johns, 2003:169). That is why in chapters 21-22, one can find various eschatological blessings given the conquerors, such as the water of life and the tree of life.

According to Bauckham (1993b:132-143), the New Jerusalem as the image of eschatological life and blessing can be regarded as place, people and divine presence. In other words, the New Jerusalem is the image of “the blessings of eschatological salvation” to the conquerors given by God the Lamb (Aune, 1998b:1129). The entire

image of the New Jerusalem overflows with this eschatological life and blessing to the conquerors in contrast with the judgment and death to the defeated. The contrasted image of the New Jerusalem and Babylon reveals the eschatological life and blessing to the conquerors and judgment and death to the defeated. The statement  $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omicron\nu\alpha\nu$  in 21:6 is closely connected with the eschatological life and blessing and judgment and death announcement (Kistemaker, 2001:559). That is, this statement announces the victory to the conquerors and judgment to the defeated. As the eschatological life and blessing, the conquerors will live with God and the Lamb (21:3). To the conquerors, “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain.” The conquerors will see God’s face (22:4). They will drink the spring of the water of life as a guarantee of the eschatological life and blessing (cf. Rossing, 1999:151-153).

In contrast with the conquerors, God and the Lamb as the conquerors will judge the defeated. The defeated are those who are “the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters, and all liars” (21:8). Their destiny will be the second death. Whereas the Lamb as conqueror will give the eschatological life and blessing to the conquerors, the Lamb will judge the defeated as an eschatological judgment and death. These contrasted messages urge a close relationship with God and the Lamb as a covenantal people of God. That is why the ethical call to the conquerors is a call to keep the word of God unto death and to witness the testimony of Christ as conqueror. Only the word of God and the testimony of Christ can give a new life and blessing because he is already conqueror through the death and resurrection (cf. 1:5, 18; 7:14; 12:11; 19:13).

#### **VII.4. The Conquerors, the people of God**

The prominent evidence in Revelation with regard to the conqueror motif can be found in the seven churches of Asia Minor. The prophetic messages given to the seven churches show that Christ as conqueror is Lord over the world. When John provides this prophetic message to the members of the seven churches, he expands his reader’s perspective to divine transcendence (Bauckham, 1993b:7). That is, John offers a transcendent vision of a heavenly perspective, by contrasting an earthly perspective.

The earthly perspective of the people of God was desperation under persecution, compromise and conflict. That is why the message of hope and encouragement is strategically provided to the conquerors. If the people of God hold the word of God and the testimony of Christ until the end, they can be called the conquerors and they will receive the eschatological life and blessing. It is a message of encouragement and comfort to the conquerors as the people of God (Beale, 1999:33). As Stevenson (2001:264) also commented, “no matter what happens on earth nor how fierce the opposing forces become, God’s covenant is secure.” Thus, the faithful conquerors can share not only in Christ’s suffering and death but in his victory as well.

#### VII.4.1. The Conquerors in the seven letters

At the conclusion of the seven letters given to the seven churches in Asia Minor, promise-statements are given to the conquerors. The primary concern in chapters 2-3 is who are the conquerors and why are they called the conquerors? Whereas Caird (1966:32-34) argues that the conquerors are only martyrs, Beasley-Murray (1992:76-79) insists that the conquerors are all Christians. A better insight would be to regard the conquerors as all those who keep faithful witnesses and hold the testimony of Christ (Reddish, 1982:137). The promise statements given to the conquerors focus on the victory and judgment to encourage and give a hope to the conquerors.

John, as the author of the book of Revelation, wanted to create a rhetorical effect by providing a transcendent vision of reality. This book presents the victory of Christ and people of God as the conquerors, even though their lives seem to be hopelessly desperate (Hendriksen, 2000:8). Do the people of God seem to be defeated? In a transcendent vision of reality, the conquerors rule with Christ in heaven for a thousand years (20:4) as well as upon the earth (5:10). Even though the conquerors seem to be defeated in the light of an earthly perspective, they are the conquerors in terms of a heavenly perspective. That is, John provides a transcendent vision of reality that heaven is the place where the truth is unveiled (Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:128).

The conquerors in the seven churches are urged to look forward to the prospect of

victory and its rewards from the exalted Christ. Each message includes a promise statement to the one who conquers (cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21). The fulfillment statements of these promise statements are climactically fulfilled in the image of the New Jerusalem section. The book of Revelation is a prophetic message to encourage and exhort the conquerors to be conquering people of God in a crisis situation. That is, despite apparent defeat by evil forces, the faithful conquerors will ultimately triumph and share in the rule of Christ as eschatological life and blessing (Pattemore, 2004:205).

The churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only two churches that are praised and not called to repentance by an exalted Christ. In the case of the church of Smyrna, they suffered some afflictions and poverty. In Revelation, suffering of Jesus as well as suffering of the conquerors is the cause of victory (Barr, 1986:256). Mounce (1977:144) also argues that the decisive victory of Christ and the conquerors can be fulfilled by a complete self-sacrifice. Therefore, the theme of suffering is spread out through the book of Revelation.

- Revelation 1:9: “I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering”
- Revelation 5:6: “Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain”
- Revelation 6:9: “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain”
- Revelation 7:14: “These are they who have come out of the great tribulation”
- Revelation 12:11: “They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death”
- Revelation 20:4: “I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded”

As noted above, language about suffering and death overflows in Revelation. It means that the Revelation focuses on the suffering and death of Jesus as “ideal martyr” (Leivestad, 1954:257) and his followers as the conquerors. Concerning tribulation or suffering, Leivestad (1954:187) argues that “Tribulation is the sure lot of the Christian pilgrims on their journey through the wilderness of this world.” Johns (2003:169) is of the opinion that the death of Jesus is closely related to the language of conquering and victory in Revelation.

In the church of Philadelphia, believers in Philadelphia are called the conquerors because they were to hold firm to what they had. That is, the conquerors have kept Christ's word (3:8) and endured Christ's command (3:10). These words like 'to keep' and 'to endure' are important words in identifying what the conquerors are. These words are used in the situation to keep and to endure for faithfulness and endurance in the time of crisis and conflict (Gilbertson, 2003:112).

Τηρέω (to keep) in the seven churches occurs in 2:26; 3:3, 8, 10(x2). In 2:26, τηρέω is closely linked with νικάω in the context to do the works of Christ. Here, ὁ τηρῶν explains the meaning of ὁ νικῶν (Aune, 1997:208). It implies that only the people who keep the works of Christ can be called the conquerors. According to Aune (1997:209), 'keeping Christ's works' refers to the works that Jesus has commanded. Johns (2003:178) is of the opinion that "conquering is essentially equivalent to keeping Christ's works." As the case of the church of Thyatira, the church of Philadelphia has kept Christ's word. To keep the word of my endurance is understood as "the persevering nature of their witness in imitation of Jesus" unto the death (Beale, 1999:289). Therefore, in the seven churches, to keep the word and work of Christ can closely be linked with the conquerors who were faithful until the death as the people of God. It is sure that death is the inevitable result for those who keep the word of God and were faithful to Christ (Aune, 1996:270).

ὑπομονή (endurance) in the seven churches occurs in 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10. Endurance in the seven churches is one of the lists with which the conquerors can be identified (Aune, 1997:202). If they want to be conquerors, they must have love, faithfulness, service, and endurance (2:19). That is, the conquerors must keep the word of Christ and share the death of Jesus with endurance. Rhetorically, the nonviolent resistance by keeping the word of God and enduring the works of Christ provides the conquerors with Christ's eschatological life and blessing. Concerning ὑπομονή (endurance) as the cause of victory, Johns (2003:182) comments that "the means of this triumph is conceived of as ὑπομονή." That is why one can say that the conquerors possess the divine characteristics that reveal the real reality of heaven and earth.

#### VII.4.2. Victory by prophetic witness

The theme of suffering and martyrdom of Jesus and the conquerors as the eschatological people fills Revelation (cf. 1:5, 9; 2:10, 13; 6:9-11; 7:14; 11:7; 12:11; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2, 13). The suffering and martyrdom of Jesus as “the faithful and true witness” (3:14; cf. 1:5) make him conqueror because he was the “supreme martyr” (Beasley-Murray, 1992:56). The victory achieved by Jesus through suffering and martyrdom becomes an important paradigm for the conquerors as the people of God.

Just as Jesus conquered the evil powers through his faithful witness, the conquerors are urged to conquer the evil powers by their faithful witness. Therefore, there is a close relationship between Christology and prophetic witness, executed by the conquerors. In 6:9-11, one can see the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. Here, the testimony can be regarded with an objective genitive, interpreted as “about Jesus” (Kistemaker, 2001:232). These verses indicate the slain conquerors that hold the word of God and the testimony even though they face persecution and death. For the conquerors, witness is death in the conflict situation (Pattimore, 2004:96). But it provides a victory through the word of prophetic witness. That is why this section ensures the victory of the conquerors as martyrs who died for the word of God and testimony of Jesus.

Two witnesses in 11:3-13 describe the prophetic role to the world. They portray the faithful witness of church as eschatological people of God (Bauckham, 1993b:84). They are called to witness for their faith to the world, emphasizing a “truth concerning the church” (Mounce, 1977:224). That is, the role of the two witnesses as the eschatological church is to witness the word of God and the testimony of Jesus to the world. Who can witness the word of God and the testimony of Jesus to the world? They are none other than conquerors like Jesus who conquers the world with the word of God and testimony. Their ultimate function is to witness the victory to the conquerors and judgment to the defeated. The role of two witnesses is to die for the word of God and testimony. To be two witnesses is to be martyrs (Reddish, 1982:184). Like Christ, two witnesses too will suffer persecution and death because of the word of God and testimony. What was the

result of the persecution and death of two witnesses? God vindicated them as the true conquerors. Because of the witnessing by two witnesses, all the people repented and acknowledged the one true God. It means that two witnesses died on earth, but divine vindication in heaven will make them the conquerors (Gilbertson, 2003:125). The conquerors as the martyrs were to be “effective witnesses to the truth of the Gospel” (Bauckham, 1993b:88) because of their faith in Christ’s victory over death.

The powerful images in chapter 12 describe the cosmic war of evil powers against God and the conquerors as the people of God. As Beale (1999:622-623) argued, whereas chapters 1-11 only introduce and imply, chapter 12 reveals the real identity of God and the conquerors and the Devil. That is, chapter 12 portrays the coming of the kingdom of God and the final victory in detail in terms of a heavenly perspective. In 12:10 the coming of the kingdom of heaven is proclaimed as “Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.” What is the cause of victory of the conquerors? It is based on the blood of the Lamb and the word of God. Just as the cause of victory of the Lamb is not on the military power, but a glorious death (Maier, 2002:196), the conquerors must win the victory with the blood of the Lamb, the prophetic word of God and their martyrdom (cf. Aune, 1998a:702-703). Therefore, the victory achieved by the conquerors can be possible by the blood of the Lamb and their prophetic word about God and Christ. Concerning the victory of the conquerors, Reddish (1982:188-189) is quite right that the conquerors will win “the victory as they witness through their words and their death.”

John’s vision of the people of God as the conquerors highlights the vision of the millennium in 20:4-6. This section emphasizes victory and judgment. Whereas this section describes the divine judgment of the defeated, the victory to the conquerors is proclaimed. Who are the people that sat upon the thrones? They were the martyrs who were beheaded because they didn’t worship the beasts and witnessed for Jesus and proclaimed the word of God (Kistemaker, 2001:538). This section is closely linked to 6:9-11 in that the victory of the conquerors is revealed. The victory of the conquerors as martyrs in 6:9-11 is based on their faithful witness to the word of God and testimony. Also, the rule of the conquerors in the millennium (Rev. 20:4-6) is based on the witness

concerning the word of God and testimony. The close relationship between these two passages demonstrates the victory of the suffering conquerors because of the word of God and testimony (Beale, 1999:991). The primary theme of this section is that whereas the defeated will confront the judgment (Rev. 19:17-20:3), the conquerors will have eternal life and rule with Christ. The victory of the conquerors as martyrs will be their destiny that will be given by keeping the prophetic word of God and testimony. As Bauckham (1993b:107) argued, “the theological point of the millennium is solely to demonstrate the triumph of the martyrs.”

### **VII.5 Final remark**

This dissertation is intended to reveal the theme of the conqueror motif, which is spread throughout the book of Revelation. If we accept the historical situations that the seven churches faced, we can see that the theme of conqueror is not a timeless symbolic image, but a historical reality that the seven churches have to conquer. That is, the faithful people of God must conquer compromise, harassment, self-satisfaction, assimilation as well as persecution if they want to be conquerors before God. Otherwise, they can be called the defeated who follow the way of the Dragon, the first beast, and the second beast. In 21:8, they are represented as the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practise magic arts, the idolaters and all liars. They look like the conquerors in the light of the earthly point of view. But the people of Satan are really defeated like the Dragon who was thrown out of heaven.

The identity of the conquerors through the book of Revelation can closely be linked with various designations such as the souls of those who had been slain (6:9), the 144,000 (7:4; 14:1-5), the two witnesses (11:3-13), the servants, the prophets, the saints, those who revere God’s name (11:18), a woman clothed with the sun (12:1), and a bride (21:2). The reason why they are called the conquerors depends on the death of the Lamb as conqueror who kept the word of God and testimony. Therefore, the victory of the people of God as the conquerors depends on their witness to the word of God and testimony unto the death. That is, the situations that the conquerors have faced throughout their lives as a marginalized group.

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