



# THE REVELATION OF JOHN

## Bible Study 23

Text: Rev. 8:6-13

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1. **What the text meant.**

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2. **What the text means**

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**Trumpets 1 - 4**

**Greek NT**

6 Καὶ οἱ ἑπτὰ ἄγγελοι οἱ ἔχοντες τὰς ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγας ἠτοίμασαν αὐτοὺς ἵνα σαλπίσωσιν.

7 Καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἐγένετο χάλαζα καὶ πῦρ μεμιγμένα ἐν αἵματι καὶ ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῆς γῆς κατεκῆ καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν δένδρων κατεκῆ καὶ πᾶς χόρτος χλωρὸς κατεκῆ.

8 Καὶ ὁ δεύτερος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ὡς ὄρος μέγα πυρὶ καιόμενον ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ ἐγένετο τὸ τρίτον τῆς θαλάσσης αἷμα

9 καὶ ἀπέθανεν τὸ τρίτον τῶν κτισμάτων τῶν ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ τὰ ἔχοντα ψυχὰς καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν πλοίων διεφάρησαν.

10 Καὶ ὁ τρίτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀστὴρ μέγας καιόμενος ὡς λαμπὰς καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν ποταμῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων, 11 καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἀστέρος λέγεται ὁ Ἄψινθος, καὶ ἐγένετο τὸ τρίτον τῶν ὑδάτων εἰς ἄψινθον καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπέθανον ἐκ τῶν ὑδάτων ὅτι ἐπικράνθησαν.

12 Καὶ ὁ τέταρτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἐπλήγη τὸ τρίτον τοῦ ἡλίου

**La Biblia de las Américas**

6 Entonces los siete ángeles que tenían las siete trompetas se prepararon para tocarlas.

7 El primero tocó la trompeta, y vino granizo y fuego mezclados con sangre, y fueron arrojados a la tierra; y se quemó la tercera parte de la tierra, se quemó la tercera parte de los árboles y se quemó toda la hierba verde.

8 El segundo ángel tocó la trompeta, y algo como una gran montaña ardiendo en llamas fue arrojado al mar, y la tercera parte del mar se convirtió en sangre. 9 Y murió la tercera parte de los seres que estaban en el mar y que tenían vida; y la tercera parte de los barcos fue destruida.

10 El tercer ángel tocó la trompeta, y cayó del cielo como una gran estrella, ardiendo como una antorcha, y cayó sobre la tercera parte de los ríos y sobre los manantiales de las aguas. 11 Y el nombre de la estrella es Ajenjo; y la tercera parte de las aguas se convirtió en ajenjo, y muchos hombres murieron por causa de las aguas, porque se habían vuelto amargas.

12 El cuarto ángel tocó la trompeta, y fue herida la tercera parte del sol, la tercera

**NRSV**

6 Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them.

7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were hurled to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

8 The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea. 9 A third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

10 The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter.

12 The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light was darkened; a third of

**NLT**

6 Then the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to blow their mighty blasts.

7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood were thrown down upon the earth, and one-third of the earth was set on fire. One-third of the trees were burned, and all the grass was burned.

8 Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and a great mountain of fire was thrown into the sea. And one-third of the water in the sea became blood. 9 And one-third of all things living in the sea died. And one-third of all the ships on the sea were destroyed.

10 Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a great flaming star fell out of the sky, burning like a torch. It fell upon one-third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star was Bitterness. It made one-third of the water bitter, and many people died because the water was so bitter.

12 Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and one-third of the sun was struck, and one-third of the moon, and one-third of the stars,

καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῆς σελήνης καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν ἀστέρων, ἵνα σκοτισθῇ τὸ τρίτον αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ ἡμέρα μὴ φάνη τὸ τρίτον αὐτῆς καὶ ἡ νύξ ὁμοίως.

13 Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἤκουσα ἑνὸς ἀετοῦ πετομένου ἐν μεσουρανήματι λέγοντος φωνῇ μεγάλῃ· οὐαὶ οὐαὶ οὐαὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῶν λοιπῶν φωνῶν τῆς σάλπιγγος τῶν τριῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν μελλόντων σαλπίζειν.

parte de la luna y la tercera parte de las estrellas, para que la tercera parte de ellos se oscureciera y el día no resplandeciera en su tercera parte, y asimismo la noche.

13 Entonces miré, y oí volar a un águila en medio del cielo, que decía a gran voz: ¡Ay, ay, ay, de los que habitan en la tierra, a causa de los toques de trompeta que faltan, que los otros tres ángeles están para tocar!

the day was kept from shining, and likewise the night.

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew in mid-heaven, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

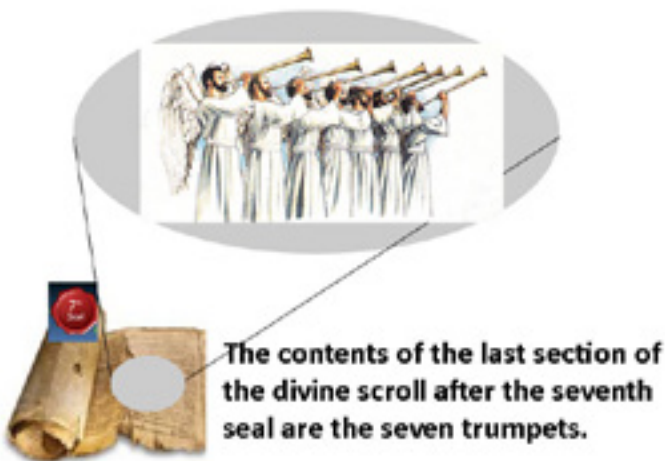
and they became dark. And one-third of the day was dark and one-third of the night also.

13 Then I looked up. And I heard a single eagle crying loudly as it flew through the air, "Terror, terror, terror to all who belong to this world because of what will happen when the last three angels blow their trumpets."

## INTRODUCTION

After setting up the scene for the seven trumpets in 8:1-5, this passage in vv. 6-13 presents the first four of these trumpets. Chapter nine presents trumpets five and six with trumpet seven surfacing in 11:15-18. A much larger 'interlude' between the sixth and seventh trumpets occurs than did between the last two seals. What we are looking at here is that these seven trumpets comprise the content of the seventh seal, so that the expressions of divine wrath in the trumpets make up the content of the last segment of the divine scroll containing the will of God as it is unrolled after the seventh seal is untied. The content of the punishments set forth in the first four seals (6:1-8) is similar to the content of punishments in these first four trumpets.

### The Seventh Seal & The Seven Trumpets



The pattern of the seven trumpets will resemble the 4 + 3 structure that we first encountered in the seven seals. The series begins with four plagues in the first four trumpets, which are presented in rapid fire succession similar to the first four seals in 6:1-8. And then the series moves to three woes in the last three trumpets. Dependency upon the ten plagues of God against the

Egyptian pharaoh in Exodus is very evident with the combining of multiple plagues under each of the four trumpets.

An identical formulaic pattern is used to introduce all seven trumpets: Καὶ ὁ (# inserted).. ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν. **And the ??? angel blew his trumpet:** The commonality between the seals and the trumpets is that distinctive formula patterns are repeated with both series, although they are different formulas. The contents of each trumpet are introduced in a variety of patterns. John's standard personal reaction, Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἤκουσα, **and I saw and I heard**, comes after the fourth trumpet (8:13) thus pulling these first four units close together. This also serves to set up the fifth through the seventh seals. Then in connection with the fifth trumpet is καὶ εἶδον, **and I saw**. With the sixth trumpet it is καὶ ἤκουσα, **and I heard**. No statement of his reaction is with the seventh trumpet. But with the first and the seventh trumpets, while no statement of personal reaction is given after the angel blows his trumpet, what follows is the formulaic introduction of the contents that is exactly the same: καὶ ἐγένετο, **and there happened**.

These repetitive patterns help shape the presentation of the contents of the punishments specified in the trumpets. They signal groupings of the series of trumpets, which in turn helps with the interpretation of the contents of each trumpet.

Once we get this somewhat complex structural arrangement figured out, we will discover a lot of spiritual insights are put on the table to encourage us about the actions of our God in behalf of His people.

#### 1. What did the text mean to the first readers?

##### Historical Aspects:

As is often the case with apocalyptic visionary texts the historical aspects will most center on the composition and transmission of the scripture text. Seldom are the internal history place and time markers of major importance as background sources of information. In-

stead they fall more naturally into exegetical concerns. That is clearly the case with 8:6-13.

**External History.** Regarding the Transmission History of 8:6-13 the text reflects a very stable process of hand copying through the second through tenth centuries. The Text Apparatus of *The Greek New Testament* (UBS 4th rev. ed.) that lists only variations considered to have an impact on the translation of the passage does not list any variations for this passage.

Of course this does not mean that variations are not present among the several ancient manuscripts existing today that contain this passage. The *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th rev. ed) that lists virtually every change in wording contains some twenty places containing variations of wording in this passage.<sup>1</sup> Once again either



#### **Offenbarung 8,6**

- \* 2053. 2351 pc (oi is omitted in some mss)
- \* εαυτ- κ<sup>1</sup> M (Instead of αὐτοὺς some mss have ἑαυτοὺς)
- | txt κ\* A 2351 pc

#### **Offenbarung 8,7**

- \* αγγελος 2329 M<sup>A</sup> it vg<sup>ww</sup> sa<sup>mss</sup> bo; Tyc (ἄγγελος is inserted after πρῶτος)
- \* -νον κ M<sup>A</sup> ar sa<sup>mss</sup> bo<sup>mss</sup>; Tyc Bea (the singular μεμίγμενον is inserted rather than the plural μεμιγμένα)
- \* M<sup>A</sup> vg<sup>mss</sup> (the preposition ἐν is omitted in some mss)
- \* 1854 pc (the phrase καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῆς γῆς κατεκάν is omitted in a few mss)
- \* 1 046\*. (2053) gig sa (καὶ in front of τὸ τρίτον τῶν is omitted)

#### **Offenbarung 8,8**

- \* 2053 sy<sup>ph</sup> (ἄγγελος is omitted in some mss)
- \*<sup>1</sup> M<sup>K</sup> sy<sup>ph</sup>; Tyc (πυρὶ is omitted in some mss)

#### **Offenbarung 8,9**

- \* μέρος κ 1611. 2344 pc (μέρος is inserted before τῶν κτισμάτων)
- \* 2-4 M; Bea (variations of sequence and omissions in the phrase τῶν ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ show up)
- | --1 pc vg<sup>st</sup>
- | txt κ A<sup>vid</sup> P 1006. 1841. 1854. 2053. 2329. 2344. 2351 al it vgcl

- \* -χην κ pc sy<sup>h</sup>; Tyc (the singular ψυχὴν is used rather than the plural ψυχὰς)

#### **Offenbarung 8,10**

- \* A (the phrase καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων is omitted in this one mss.)

#### **Offenbarung 8,11**

- \* -θος κ<sup>1</sup> 2053. 2329 al (alternatives spellings for ὁ Ἄψινθος show up in some mss)
- | -θιον κ\* 2344 pc h vgcl; Tyc Bea
- \* -θιον κ 1611. 2329 pc lat sy<sup>ph</sup> (an alternative spelling for ἄψινθον shows up)
- \* ἐπι A (alternative prepositions for ἐκ surface in two mss)
- | απο 1854

efforts to update the language to that more contemporary to the copyist or careless mistakes in copying are reflected in these variations. None of them shift the meaning of the text. Virtually all of them are supported by only a small number of manuscripts, usually very late in origin.

Consequently we can exegete the adopted reading of the text in the full confidence that it represents the original wording of the passage.

**Internal History.** No internal history issues emerge as significant background issues. The minimum number of time and place markers are better treated under the Exegesis section.

#### **Literary Aspects:**

As is usually the case with apocalyptic visionary texts the literary aspects place a greater role than do the historical aspects.

**Genre:** The broad genre continues to be the apocalyptic vision pattern of writing. At the small genre level no similar pattern outside Revelation for seven trumpets exists in any of the Jewish apocalyptic literature. But bits and pieces in the details of the various trumpets do exist in somewhat of a parallel manner to Revelation. John seems to be very creative here and not so deeply depending on previously established forms in order to communicate his ideas.

**Literary Setting:** The literary context of 8:6-13 is illustrated from the [outline on Revelation](#) at [crafordville.com](#):

#### **C. The seven trumpets (8:2-14:20)**

##### **1. The six trumpets (8:2-9:21)**

##### **a) Preparation (8:2-6)**

**b) The first trumpet: hail, fire, and blood (8:7)**

**c) The second trumpet: sea turned into blood (8:8-9)**

**d) The third trumpet: star falling upon waters (8:10-11)**

**e) The fourth trumpet: sun, moon, and**

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#### **Offenbarung 8,12**

- \* 5-7 3 4 1 2 046. 2351 M<sup>K</sup> (words in the phrase ἡ ἡμέρα μὴ φάνη τὸ τρίτον αὐτῆς are replaced)
- | ut txt, sed φανη M<sup>A</sup>
- | txt v1 φανῆ κ A 1006. 1611. 1841. 1854. 2053. 2329 al gig sy

#### **Offenbarung 8,13**

- \* (14,6) αγγελου M<sup>A</sup> (ἀετοῦ is replaced by ἀγγέλου)
- \* 2329 al vg<sup>mss</sup>; Tyc (the second οὐαὶ is omitted)
- \* τοὶς -κουσιν A 1006. 1841. 2329 M<sup>A</sup> (the accusative τοὺς κατοικοῦντας is replaced by the dative spelling)
- | txt κ 1611. 1854. 2053. 2351 M<sup>K</sup>

[Eberhard Nestle et al., Universität Münster. Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27. Aufl., rev. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1993), 647–648.



**stars darkened (8:12-13)**

- f) **The fifth trumpet: opening of bottomless pit (9:1-12)**
- g) **The sixth trumpet: loosing of four angels (9:13-21)**
- 2. **Interlude (10:1-11:13)**
  - a) **The angel and the little book (10:1-11)**
  - b) **The measuring of the temple and the two witnesses (11:1-13)**
- 3. **The seventh trumpet: announcement of consummation (11:14-19)**
- 4. **Interlude (12:1-14:20)**
  - a) **The dragon, the woman, and her seed (12:1-17)**
  - b) **The two beasts (13:1-18)**
  - c) **Visions of assurance (14:1-20)**

These verses contain the first four trumpets which have an identical literary structure through following the 4 + 3 pattern that we noticed with the first four seals.<sup>2</sup> Additionally a similar theme is carried out in these four trumpets stressing the outpouring of the wrath of God upon evil people on the earth.<sup>3</sup> Also in a structural manner similar to the seven seals, an ‘interlude’ is inserted between the sixth and seventh trumpet, although longer than the one in chapter seven for the seals. Plus another

<sup>2</sup>“The series of seven trumpet plagues narrated in 8:7–9:21 and 11:15–18 is introduced with a scene in the heavenly temple in 8:2–6. This prelude (the fitting term *Vorspiel* is used by Rissi, *Babylon*, 15), like the prelude to the seven seals in 4:1–5:14 and the prelude to the seven bowls in 15:1–8, is set in the heavenly temple. It is framed by the mention of the seven trumpet angels in vv 2 and 6 and centers on two focal actions: the offering of incense to God, accompanied by the prayers of the saints, and the throwing of fiery embers down to the earth. If the coals of fire from the heavenly altar symbolize the series of judgments that are about to be inflicted on the people of the earth, then the prayers of the saints must be construed as prayers for divine vengeance upon those who have persecuted them, such as the prayer for vengeance uttered by the souls of the martyrs under the heavenly altar in 6:9–10.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 494–495.]

<sup>3</sup>“The series of plagues introduced by the seven trumpets in Rev 8:7–9:21 and 11:15–19 begins with a series of four plagues, which are narrated only very briefly (similar to the rapid narrative of the results of the opening of the first four seals in 6:1–8): (1) Hail, fire, and blood fall, burning up one-third of the earth (v 7; resembles the seventh plague in Exod 9:22–26 and the fourth and seventh bowls in Rev 16:8–9, 19–21). (2) A great mountain is thrown into the sea, which becomes blood; one-third of sea creatures and ships are destroyed (vv 8–9; resembles the first plague of Exod 7:20–21 and the second bowl in Rev 16:3). (3) A star named Wormwood (Greek σαψινοθος, *Apsinthos*; named for its effect, since no actual star had that name) falls on a third of the rivers and springs, poisoning them (vv 10–11; no model in Exod 7–12 or counterpart in Rev 15–16). (4) One-third of the sun, moon, and stars become darkened (v 12; similar to the ninth plague of Exod 10:21 and the fifth bowl plague in Rev 16:10).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 495.]

er ‘interlude’ is inserted after the seventh trumpet which helps prepare for the seven bowls of wrath that follows.

These seven trumpets flow out of the disclosure of the section of the divine scroll opened up with the untying of the seventh seal in 8:1. As the previous study reflected, 8:2-6 then served to set up the mechanism for the blowing of each trumpet and the implementation of divine wrath that is linked to each trumpet.

In the exegesis below the contents of each of the four trumpets will be compared to that in the first four seals showing similarities and differences:<sup>4</sup>

| # | Seal                               | Trumpet   |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | rider w. bow, crown to conquer     | hail, fire, blood; 1/3 burned up                          |
| 2 | rider takes peace from the earth   | burning mountain thrown in sea; 1/3 died                  |
| 3 | rider w. scales announcing poverty | Wormwood star fell on water; 1/3 waters ruined; many died |
| 4 | Death & Hades w. power to kill 1/4 | sun & moon struck w. 1/3 light lost causing darkness      |

The common theme of divine punishments being thrust upon the earth binds these two sets of fours together. This ‘double whammy’ effect of these two sets pound in this common theme but in reality only prepares for the seven bowls of wrath in 15:1-16:21 with even more severe punishments being inflicted as indicated in the introduction of 15:1,

Καὶ εἶδον ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ μέγα καὶ θαυμαστόν, ἀγγέλους ἑπτὰ ἔχοντας πληγὰς ἑπτὰ τὰς ἐσχάτας, ὅτι ἐν αὐταῖς ἐτελέσθη ὁ θυμὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and amazing: seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.

The content of each of the seven bowls that was poured out on the earth is familiar:

- 1) foul & painful sore afflicted those with the mark of beast
- 2) sea turned into blood killing everything in it
- 3) contents poured into waters turning them into blood
- 4) sun scorches people with fire
- 5) poured onto the beast’s throne plunging it into

<sup>4</sup>“The plagues unleashed by the seven trumpets consist of a group of four that have a homogeneous character and are described very succinctly (8:7–12). The last three trumpets also have a homogeneous framework in that they presumably consist of a series of three woes (8:13–9:21; 11:14–18). The first four seals also form a group that has a strikingly homogeneous formulation and structure and is also (like the first four trumpets) described only briefly (6:1–8). Only the seven bowls have a homogeneous character and do not exhibit the subgrouping of four + three.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 496.]

- darkness
- 6) poured into Euphrates drying it up for invading armies
  - 7) poured into air with heavenly voice declaring, "It is done."

This threefold depiction of the temporal punishments of God upon evil people on earth, and particularly upon those who have harmed and killed the people of God, drives home the point dramatically posed by the martyrs about whether God would answer their pleas for Him to prove that He is a just and holy God who holds humanity accountable for its evil deeds. Out of this could be no uncertainty of the holy character of the God

of this universe. And yet these temporal judgments of God are only appetizers to the eternal destiny of such evil people in Hell as described in 20:1-15. They are doomed to spend eternity with Satan suffering his torments and punishments. This stands in stark contrast to the blessedness of the people of God spending eternity in the very presence of God Himself, cf. 21:9-22:5.

**Literary Structure:** The block diagram of 8:6-13 will now reflect visually the internal arrangement of ideas inside the passage. The highly literal English translation below reflects the grammatical structure of the Greek text rather than of the English translation.

8.6           And  
**236       the seven angels . . . prepared themselves**  
                  who possessed| the seven trumpets  
                                  in order that they might blow the trumpets.

8.7           And  
**237       the first one blew;**  
                  and  
**238       happened hail and fire**  
                  mixed  
                  in blood  
                  and  
**239       (it) was thrown**  
                          into the earth  
                  and  
**240       the third of the earth was burned up**  
                  and  
**241       the third of the trees was burned up**  
                  and  
**242       all green grass was burned up.**

8.8           And  
**243       the second angel blew;**  
                  and  
                          like a great mountain  
                          burning with fire  
**244       (something) was thrown**  
                          into the sea,

                  and  
**245       the third of the sea became blood**  
8.9           and  
**246       died the third of the living creatures**  
                  |                           of those in the sea  
                  the ones having life  
                  and  
**247       the third of the ships were destroyed.**

8.10          And  
**248       the third angel blew;**  
                  and  
**249       fell . . . a star**  
                  out of heaven           great  
                  blazing  
                  like a torch

and  
 250 **fell**  
 upon the third of the rivers  
 and  
 upon the third of the springs of waters  
 8.11 and  
 251 **the name of the star is being called Wormwood,**  
 and  
 252 **became the third of the waters**  
 into wormwood (bitterness)  
 and  
 253 **many of the men died**  
 out of the waters  
 because they were made bitter.

8.12 And  
 254 **the fourth angel blew;**  
 and  
 255 **was struck the third of the sun**  
 | and  
 | **the third of the moon**  
 | and  
 | **the third of the stars**  
 so that was darkened the third of them  
 and  
 -- ---- the day would not appear  
 and  
 -- ---- the night likewise.

8.13 And  
 256 **I saw**  
 and  
 257 **I heard one of the eagles**  
 flying  
 in mid-heaven  
 saying:  
 in a loud voice  
 Woe, woe, woe -- to those dwelling  
 | on the earth  
 /-----|  
 of the remaining sounds  
 of the trumpet  
 of the three angels  
 who are going to blow.

### Summary of Rhetorical Structure

The division of thought in this passage is easy to determine. It begins with the introductory statement 236 and then divides into the four trumpets sections: 1) #s 237 - 242; 2) #s 243 - 247; 3) #s 248 - 253; and 4) #s 254 - 257. The fourth trumpet subdivides into two sub-groups of #s 254-255 and 256-257.

Each of the four trumpets is introduced by a repeated formula statement:

- 1) ***Καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἐσάλπισεν·***
- 2) ***Καὶ ὁ δεῦτερος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν·***
- 3) ***Καὶ ὁ τρίτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν·***
- 4) ***Καὶ ὁ τέταρτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν·***

These 'header' statements function to signal the im-

plementation of the set of punishments connected to each of the four trumpets. The second sub-group in the fourth trumpet, #s 256-257 additionally serves to introduce an eagle proclaiming three woes upon the earth to be signaled by the blowing of a trumpet by the remaining three angels in the seven series.

### Exegesis of the Text:

The above diagram clearly signals the organizational structure for proper exegesis of the passage that follows the natural division contain inside the scripture passage itself. By following such guidelines the interpreter is much less likely to get off target in understand-

ing correctly the historical meaning of the text.

### A. Introduction to the seven angels, v. 6

6 Καὶ οἱ ἑπτὰ ἄγγελοι οἱ ἔχοντες τὰς ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγας ἠτοίμασαν αὐτοὺς ἵνα σαλπίσωσιν.<sup>5</sup>

6 Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them.

The introductory role of this sentence is clear. Also it essentially repeats verse two:

Καὶ εἶδον τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλους οἱ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ἑστήκασιν, καὶ ἐδόθησαν αὐτοῖς ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγες.

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

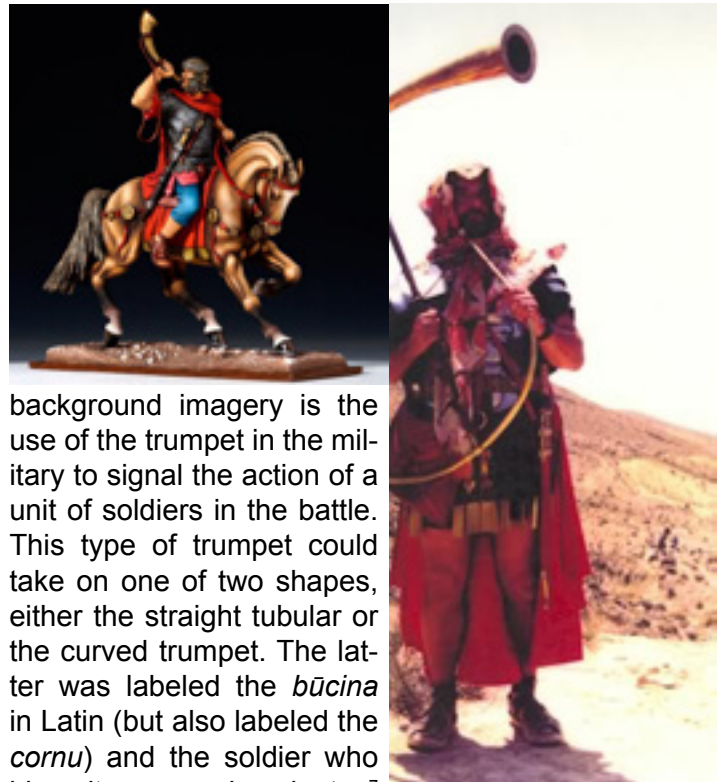
The one difference is that in the first instance the angels are given trumpets by God while in this second instance they get ready to blow them at God's command.

The structuring pattern is that the blowing (ἵνα σαλπίσωσιν) of the trumpets signals warning of the implementation of a set of divine punishments.<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>5</sup>“Variants: (1) σαλπίσωσιν] 8 A (lacuna in C) 025 046 fam 1006<sup>1006</sup> fam 1611<sup>1854</sup>. (2) σαλπίσουσιν] fam 1611<sup>2329</sup> Andr/Byz 4a<sup>2084</sup>. Reading (2) is a correction based on the phonetic similarity of ω and ου, coupled with the increasing use of the fut. ind. in ἵνα clauses.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998).]

“The future indicative instead of the subjunctive following ἵνα (‘in order that’) is a Semitism, which is apparent from the LXX translation of Hebrew imperfects preceded by final conjunctions (so likewise 8:3).<sup>14</sup>” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 473.]

<sup>6</sup>“Rev 8:1–9:21 (with 11:14–18) constitutes a clearly defined textual unit that focuses on a series of seven tribulations unleashed upon the sounding of seven trumpets. The structure and content of this section are dependent on the framework provided by seven trumpets blown in succession by seven angels and on the sequence of seven plagues, which owes something to the Egyptian plague tradition in the OT and early Judaism. The use of the metaphor of the sounding of a trumpet for introducing a series of eschatological divine punishments has an inherent logic, if only because of the use of the trumpet in ancient warfare to deploy successive units of troops and cavalry in attacking the enemy forces at a variety of points. The only apocalyptic text that uses the blowing of trumpets as a structural device is Apoc. Zeph. 9–12 (first century B.C. to first century A.D.). The same ‘great angel’ blows a golden trumpet to introduce three different scenes. Although the MS lacks the concluding four pages, which cannot be examined, it is not impossible that the same formal device was used to introduce subsequent scenes. The first scene is introduced with three blasts on a golden trumpet by a great angel proclaiming the triumph of Zephaniah over the accuser and his access to the place where famous righteous Israelites reside (Apoc. Zeph. 9:1–5). The second scene is introduced with a blast toward heaven of the golden trumpet, resulting in the opening of heaven and Zephaniah’s vision of the place where souls were being punished; a daily trumpet call summons the righteous to intercede for those in torment (10:1–11:6). The third blast of the golden trumpet by the great angel is directed toward earth and then again toward heaven as a prelude to the destruction of earth and heaven and the judgment of all people before God (12:1–8). De-



background imagery is the use of the trumpet in the military to signal the action of a unit of soldiers in the battle. This type of trumpet could take on one of two shapes, either the straight tubular or the curved trumpet. The latter was labeled the *būcina* in Latin (but also labeled the *cornu*) and the soldier who blew it was a *buccinātor*.<sup>7</sup>

This was the preferred horn for use in military battles. What was played was the *classicum* which was a signal sound, rather than a piece of music. Very likely this image was in the background for the readers of Revelation since the angel’s trumpets served essentially the same role as that of the Roman soldier. The Jewish horn was the *shofar*, which might have been in John’s mind in writing these descriptions. But it was seldom associated with military battle and was connected instead to a wide range of religious observances. The depiction, however, by John greatly favors the military background.

John’s seeing οἱ ἑπτὰ ἄγγελοι οἱ ἔχοντες τὰς ἑπτὰ σάλπιγγας, the seven angels who possess the seven trumpets, raises the question of whether these are the same seven angels as will pour out the bowls of wrath in the third series of sevens (cf. 15:1-16:21): ἀγγέλους ἑπτὰ ἔχοντας πληγὰς ἑπτὰ τὰς ἐσχάτας, seven angels having seven final plagues (15:1). On the surface, it does seem that these seven angels did ‘double duty’ but we must examine each text closely in order to draw a firm conclusion.

spite the many differences between this text and that of the heptad of trumpets in Rev 8:1–11:19, the use of an angelic figure blowing a trumpet as a formal structuring device is significant.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 497.]

<sup>7</sup>“A *buccina* (Latin: *buccina*) or *bucina* (Latin: *būcina*), anglicized *buccin* or *bucine*, is a brass instrument that was used in the ancient Roman army, similar to the *Cornu*. An *aeneator* who blew a *buccina* was called a ‘*buccinator*’ or ‘*bucinator*’ (Latin: *buccinātor*; *būcinātor*).” [“*Buccina*,” [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buccina)]

There are quite a number of similarities between the trumpets and the bowls further pointing to the close linkage of the two sets:<sup>8</sup>

**Seven Trumpets**

of Rev 8:1–11:19

1. Hail and fire mixed with blood

One-third of earth, trees, and grass burned up (8:7)

2. Burning mountain falls into the sea (8:8)

One-third of sea becomes blood

One-third of sea life dies

One-third of ships destroyed (8:9)

3. Blazing star falls on one-third of rivers and fountains (8:10)

One-third of waters poisoned and many people die (8:11)

4. One-third of sun, moon, and stars darkened

One-third of day and one-third of night kept from shining (8:12)

5. Star falls from heaven to earth opens bottomless pit and locusts emerge (9:1–11)

6. Four angels bound at Euphrates released; large cavalry kills one-third of humankind

**Seven Bowls**

of Rev 15:1–16:21

1. Foul and evil sores (16:2)

2. Sea becomes blood (16:3)

All sea animals die

3. Rivers and fountains become blood (16:4)

4. Sun allowed to scorch people

People curse God and do not repent (16:8)

5. Kingdom of beast in darkness. People curse God and did not repent (16:10–11)

6. Euphrates dries up, opening way for kings of east; kings of whole world assemble at Armageddon (16:12–16)

(9:13–19)

Rest of humankind

do not repent of evil (9:20–21)

7. Kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of Christ (11:15–18)

7. Earthquake splits Babylon three parts; cities destroyed (16:17–21)

What seems to be the case is a double description of punishments being poured out upon the earth with each highlighting some punishments and the same punishment being stressed in other instances.<sup>9</sup>

Also in the background of these seven trumpets is the connection of the punishments in the seven trumpets -- and the seven bowls of wrath -- with the ten plagues of the Exodus (cf. 7:8-12:36).<sup>10</sup> What is particularly interesting is that the ten plagues in Exod. 7:8-12:36 are preserved in Psalms 78:43-51 and 105:27-36 as seven plagues rather than ten, and also in Amos 4:6-11 with seven plagues unconnected to the Exodus mentioned. The imagery of the Exodus plagues and subsequent lists of seven plagues evidently plays an important role for John.

<sup>9</sup>In the next study an examination will be made of the close similarities between the fifth and sixth trumpets. Then additionally after the fourth trumpet announcement is made of the three woes contained in the last three trumpets with the first woe equated to the fifth trumpet and the second and third woes coming possibly with the last two trumpets (9:12). In 11:14 the second woe is linked to the sixth trumpet and the third one with either the seventh trumpet in 11:15 or more likely to 12:12, since the tone of the seventh trumpet is positive rather than negative. .

<sup>10</sup>“The narrative of the punishments unleashed with the blowing of each successive trumpet (8:1–9:21 and 11:15–18), similar to that of the pouring out of the seven bowls or cups of God’s wrath (15:1–16:21), is an eschatological application of the ten plagues inflicted on Egypt by God (Exod 7–12). One of the major interpretive problems of Revelation has been the matter of determining whether the plagues unleashed by the seven bowls are recapitulations of the plagues unleashed by the seven trumpets. Another problem has been the relationship between the seven trumpets and seven bowls and the ten plagues of Exod 7:8–12:36, a problem complicated by the fact that two other OT versions of the Egyptian plagues are preserved in Pss 78:43–51 and 105:27–36, where seven rather than ten plagues are enumerated (see also Amos 4:6–11, in which seven plagues are mentioned, though apparently not directly related to the Egyptian plague tradition of Exodus; the passage from Amos will be considered below). There is also the further, though perhaps related, compositional problem of the intercalation of Rev 10:1–11:13 between the sixth and seventh trumpets, which may be structurally related to the parenthetical discussion of the Passover festival in Exod 12:1–28, inserted between the ninth and tenth plagues. Though the Egyptian plagues were a recurring theme in early Jewish literature, they are rarely interpreted eschatologically.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 499.]

<sup>8</sup> David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 498–501.



In early Jewish literature the plagues of the Exodus is a common topic but these are not generally interpreted eschatologically, except for the [Apocalypse of Abraham](#)<sup>11</sup> in 30:14-16.<sup>12</sup> The ten plagues understood as a

<sup>11</sup>“The relative age of these works can be determined by comparing the legend of Abraham as contained in the Apocalypse with those in the Talmud and in the Book of Jubilees. The legend of the raven in the Book of Jubilees (xi. 18) and the account of the conversion of Abraham in his boyhood are still unknown to the Apocalypse, while the legend of the fire of the Chaldees is found there still in its incipient stage. The mockery of the idol Barisat is more extended in the Midrash than in the Apocalypse; also the condemnation of Terah as an idolater, as related in the Apocalypse, discloses the older Haggadah (Gen. R. xxxix. 7), whereas the Book of Jubilees presents the later one (compare Gen. R. xxx. 4, xxxix. 7, where Terah is treated quite mildly). As the Book of Jubilees can not have been written later than 70 (see Jubilees, Book of), the date of the composition should be set before the middle of the first century.” [“Apocalypse of Abraham,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*]

<sup>12</sup>And He said to me: “What is desired in thine<sup>1</sup> heart I will tell thee, because thou hast sought to see the ten plagues which I have prepared for the heathen, and have prepared beforehand<sup>2</sup> at the passing over of the twelfth hour<sup>3</sup> of the earth. Hear what I divulge to thee, so shall it come to pass:<sup>4</sup> the first<sup>5</sup> (is) pain of great distress;<sup>6</sup> the second, conflagration of many cities;<sup>7</sup> the third, destruction and pestilence of animals<sup>8</sup>; the fourth, hunger of the whole world and of its people<sup>9</sup>; the fifth by destruction among its rulers,<sup>10</sup> destruction by earthquake<sup>11</sup> and the sword; the sixth, multiplication of hail and snow;<sup>12</sup> the seventh, the wild beasts will be their grave; the eighth, hunger and pestilence will alternate with their destruction; the ninth, punishment by the sword and flight<sup>13</sup> in distress; the tenth,<sup>14</sup>thunder and voices<sup>14</sup> and destructive earthquake.<sup>15</sup>

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1 A K, mine.

2 These also have been pre-determined.

3 i.e. the last hour of the present Age.

4 It is God’s property to announce beforehand what is to occur and then to bring it to pass; cf. Justin Martyr, Apology i. 14 (end): For this . . . is the work of God to declare a thing shall come to be long before it is in being, and then to bring about that thing to pass according to the same declaration. Cf. also 4 Ezra ix. 6 (Gunkel’s rendering of the “times of the Most High”): their beginning is in word (i. e. the prophetic word) and portents, but their end in deeds and marvels.

5 The ten “plagues” here enumerated mark the distressful period which precedes the advent of the new Age; they correspond to the “signs” which are a common feature in the traditional eschatology; cf.

4 Ezra iv. 52-v. 13, vi. 13-28, ix. 1-6, xi. i. 16 ff., Ap. Bar. xxv-xxvii., xlviii. 30-38, lxx., 1 Enoch xcix. 4f., 7-10, c. 1-6 (Dan. xii.). The first of the Ezra passages just cited affords a good example of the contents of these descriptions. It depicts a time of commotions, and the general break-up of moral and religious forces; the heathen world-power (i. e. Rome) will be destroyed; there will be portents in nature, general chaos in society; monstrous and untimely births, the failure of the means of subsistence, and internecine strife; and wisdom and understanding will have perished from the earth. With our passage depicting ten plagues may be compared T.B. Sanh. 97a, which divides the period into seven years; in the first there will be rain on one city and no rain on another (cf. Amos iv. 7); in the second arrows of famine; in the third a great famine in which men, women, and children and pious will perish, and the Torah will be forgotten; in the fourth abundance and dearth; in the fifth great abundance, the people will eat and drink, and the Torah will return; in the sixth voices announcing the coming of the Messiah; in the seventh war, and at its end

punishments of God on the earth at the end of time.<sup>13</sup> Additional Jewish writings reflect a series of plagues happening on earth at the end of time that reflect to some degree the ten plagues of the Exodus include:<sup>14</sup>

Messiah ben David will come. In the New Testament, besides the Apocalyptic passage in Matt. xxiv. 8-31 and parallels, there is a marked parallelism with the Apocalypse of the seven trumpets (Rev. viii. 6-ix. 21, x. 7, xi. 14-19), six of which mark partial judgements, while the seventh ushers in the final judgement. Several of the “trumpets” announce judgements like the Egyptian plagues.

6 i. e. distressful pain, sickness.

7 The fall of fire is one of the portents of the End in Ap. Bar. xxvii. 10; cf. the fiery hail of the seventh Egyptian plague (Ex. ix. 23 f.) and the “first trumpet” (Rev. viii. 6-7); cf. also Rev. xi. 19b (“great hail”).

8 Cf. the fifth Egyptian plague (murrain among the cattle, Ex. ix. 1 ff.).

9 Cf. 4 Ezra vi. 22, Ap. Bar. xxvii. 5-6, Matt. xxiv. 7.

10 Cf. Ap. Bar. xxvii. 3, 4 Ezra ix. 3.

11 Cf. Ap. Bar. xxvii. 7.

12 Cf. Ex. ix. 23 f.

13 Cf. Matt. xxiv. 16.

14 K, “voices of thunder.”

15 Cf. Rev. xi. 19b. [Perhaps the passage most closely parallel with our text is Ap. Bar. xxvii. 1-13.]

[“The Apocalypse of Abraham,” Marquette University at [www.marquette.edu/maqom/box.pdf](http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/box.pdf)]

<sup>13</sup>“There are several features of this brief narrative that require some discussion. (1) Though there is no explicit mention of the plague narrative of Exodus, the fact that ten plagues are mentioned strongly suggests an allusion to the ten canonical plagues of Exod 7:8–12:36. (2) The ten plagues of the biblical tradition are considered a typological anticipation of the eschatological plagues, which God will unleash on the world and which constitute the eschatological judgment of God. (3) The ten eschatological plagues are primarily punitive; i.e., they appear to have no remedial function, and the possibility of repentance is not mentioned. (4) These ten eschatological plagues will be inflicted upon ‘all earthly creation’; i.e., they will affect the entire cosmos and its inhabitants. (5) This text contains all the necessary features of the seal plagues, the trumpet plagues, and the bowl plagues, which have been incorporated into Revelation.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 499.]

<sup>14</sup>“In another Jewish text, the Testament of Dan (5:8), there is a prediction that the sons of Dan, together with the sons of Levi and Judah, because of their apostasy, will be led off to captivity and there experience ‘all the plagues of Egypt’ (πάσας τὰς πληγὰς Αἰγύπτου). The purpose of these plagues, however, is remedial; i.e., they function to insure the eschatological restoration of both tribes (T. Dan 5:9). Further, the number seven can be used as a way of structuring history (1 Enoch 93:3–10, part of the Apocalypse of Weeks).

The notion of eschatological plagues in general as part of the period of great tribulation that precedes the end of the world, however, was a widespread notion in Jewish eschatological expectation. In 1 Enoch 91:7–9 (tr. Knibb, Enoch), we read:

And when iniquity and sin and blasphemy and wrong and all kinds of (evil) deeds increase, and (when) apostasy and wickedness and uncleanness increase, a great punishment will come from heaven upon all these, and the holy Lord will come in anger and in wrath to execute judgment on the earth. In those days wrongdoing will be cut off at its roots, and the roots of iniquity together with deceit will be destroyed from under heaven. And all the idols of the

Testament of Dan (5:8)

1 Enoch 91:7-9

3 Apocalypse of Baruch 16:3

Of particular interest, however, is 1 Enoch 90:20-27 with its seven angels inflicting final judgment upon the non-righteous ones on earth.<sup>15</sup> The 'white men' in 1 Enoch are angels dressed in white robes who inflict the prescribed punishments of God on various individuals.<sup>16</sup>

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nations will be given up; (their) towers will be burnt in fire, and they will remove them from the whole earth; and they will be thrown down into the judgment of fire and will be destroyed in anger and in the severe judgment which (is) for ever.

"Another list of eschatological plagues that have no explicit connection with the Exodus plague tradition, though there are a number of shared motifs, is found in 3 Apoc. Bar. 16:3 (tr. Charlesworth, OTP 1:677; the archangel Michael is speaking): 'Moreover, send forth caterpillars and locusts, rust and grasshoppers, hail with lightning and fury. Punish them with the sword and death, and their children with demons'."

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 499-500.]

<sup>15</sup>"20 And I saw until a throne was constructed in the pleasant land and the Lord of the sheep sat upon it, and he took all the sealed books and opened those books before the Lord of the sheep. 21/ And the Lord summoned those first seven white men, and he commanded them to bring before him beginning with the first star that had preceded those stars whose organs were like the organs of horses,<sup>c</sup> and they brought all of them before him. 22/ And he said to the man who had been writing before him — who was one of those seven white ones — he said to him, 'Bring those seventy shepherds to whom I delivered the sheep and who took and killed more than I commanded them.' 23/ And behold, I saw all of them bound, and they all stood before him. 24/ And judgment was exacted first on the stars, and they were judged and found to be sinners. And they went to the place of judgment, and they threw them into an abyss;<sup>a</sup> and it was full of fire, and it was burning and was full of pillars of fire. 25/ And those seventy shepherds were judged and found to be sinners, and they were thrown into that fiery abyss. 26/ And I saw at that time that an abyss like it was opened in the middle of the earth, which was full of fire. And they brought those blinded sheep, and they were all judged and found to be sinners. And they were thrown into that fiery abyss, and they burned. And that abyss was to the south of that house. 27/ And I saw those sheep burning and their bones burning." [George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: a Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch*, ed. Klaus Baltzer, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 402.]

<sup>16</sup>"90:20-27 The remainder of the Vision resolves problems that have been raised throughout. The first part of that resolution occurs in the judgment described in 90:20-27. The scene is set in v 20. Some details of this narrative are reminiscent of Dan 7:9-10: a throne is set up, the Lord takes his seat, books containing the record of deeds are opened, a fiery punishment follows.<sup>1</sup> In this text, however, the judgment takes place not in the heavenly court but in 'the pleasant land' of Israel (cf. 89:40). An earthly setting for the final judgment is presumed also in 1:4, 25:3, and perhaps 102:3, but none of these passages specifies Israel as the place of judgment.

"The judgment is recounted as a series of stereotyped events. The Lord commands certain individuals to be summoned. They are judged, found guilty, and consigned to a fiery abyss. The fallen

What is involved in ἠτοιμάσαν αὐτοὺς ἵνα σαλπίσωσιν, *they prepared themselves to blow*? For humans such would imply that they took a deep breath in order to complete the blowing cycle necessary. Possibly angels needed to do the same, but it is not certain. With the military background image, the idea of 'coming to attention' in order to take orders from the Commander would likely be included.

## B. The first trumpeting angel, v. 7

stars, the rebel watchers, are the first group to be judged, and as in chap. 86, the first star is distinguished from those who followed and mated with the heifers (v 21). The fiery abyss to which they are consigned is the one described in 18:11 + 19:1 and 21:7-10, with its fiery pillars. This committal completes the process of initial imprisonment and final punishment described in 10:6, 13. The special mention of this judgment of the stars underscores the importance of the events described in chaps. 86-88.

"The second group to be judged and condemned are the seventy shepherds. Different from the rebel watchers, who were brought to the Judge by the seven angels who previously interacted with them, the seventy are brought to the Judge by the angelic scribe who recorded their deeds (89:62-64, 68-71, 76-77; 90:14-70) rather than by all seven 'white ones,' among whose number the scribe is said to have been (v 22). They are, however, consigned to the same fiery abyss as the watchers. Perhaps the author thinks of the tradition in 18:12-14 and 21:1-5, where transgressing stars are banished to a fiery abyss on the perimeter of the earth, which is not identical with the one described in 18:10 + 19:1 and 21:7-10, but which is mentioned in the journeys in immediate connection with it.

"The final part of the judgment (vv 26-27) is introduced as a separate event, 'And I saw....' With an allusion to the idea in chaps. 26-27, the pit of the Valley of Hinnom is opened up "in the center of the earth" (90:26; cf. 26:1). On the significance of this place as the locus of eschatological punishment, see comm. on 27:2-3a. Without being commanded to do so, the angels bring 'the blind sheep,' who are condemned and consigned to the pit, which is accurately located 'to the south of that house,' that is, south of the city of Jerusalem. That their bones burn suggests the intensity of the heat. Which blind sheep are condemned is not made clear. Is it only those who survive to the judgment, that is, those mentioned in 90:7? Or does the author think of a resurrection that will make possible the judgment of all the blind sheep since the time of the golden calf?"

"Although the great judgment does not involve a cataclysmic return to chaos,<sup>3</sup> it does function as a counterpart to the flood. The two events have four points of similarity. (1) Both are triggered by the cry from the earth (87:1; 90:11). (2) The archangels are agents of judgment. (3) The watchers who were condemned before the flood are now formally judged (90:21, 23-24; cf. 88:1-3). (4) As earlier, both the angelic and human sinners of this era are judged (90:22, 25-27). There is, however, a qualitative difference between the conclusions of the two eras; the great judgment brings total closure to the first two eras together by consigning the watchers from the first era to eternal punishment."

[George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch: a Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch*, ed. Klaus Baltzer, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2001), 403-404.]





7 Καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἐγένετο χάλαζα καὶ πῦρ μεμιγμένα ἐν αἵματι καὶ ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῆς γῆς κατεκάη καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν δένδρων κατεκάη καὶ πᾶς χόρτος χλωρὸς κατεκάη.

7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were hurled to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.

The formulaic Καὶ ὁ πρῶτος ἐσάλπισεν, and the first one blew, sends the signal for action by blowing his trumpet.<sup>17</sup> Although an angel as the one blowing the trumpet is not stated directly in the first instance, the second one is ὁ δεῦτερος ἄγγελος, the second angel, as well as the remaining ones, make it clear that the first trumpet blower is an angel as well. As a consequence of the blowing of the trumpet, three actions occur.

First, ἐγένετο χάλαζα καὶ πῦρ μεμιγμένα ἐν αἵματι, there happened hail and fire mixed in blood. The first things that appear are hail and fire<sup>18</sup> (χάλαζα καὶ πῦρ),

<sup>17</sup>“The mysterious sounding of a trumpet was sometimes considered a prodigy, i.e., a sign warning people of divine anger (Caesar Civ. 3.105; Lucan 1.578; Cassius Dio 47.40.2; Plutarch Sulla 7.3; Sib. Or. 8.239; Lactantius Div. Inst. 7.16; see Excursus 6A: Ancient Prodigies and the Plagues of Revelation). Plutarch mentions that the Etruscan diviners considered the prodigy of the sounding of a trumpet to be the harbinger of a new age, one of eight ages in all (Sulla 7.3–4). The sounding of the trumpet is called a σημεῖον in Did. 16:6 and Sib. Or. 4.124 and a signum in Commodian Instr. 43.1. The sounding of the trumpet is also found in some of the later OT prophets and in early Judaism as a signal for the arrival of the day of the Lord (Zech 9:14; Zeph 1:14–16; Apoc. Abr. 31:1; 4 Ezra 6:23; Sib. Or. 4.124; Gk Ap. Ezra 4:36). It was taken over into early Christian eschatology as a way of announcing the return of Christ (1 Thess 4:16; Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:52; Did. 16:6; Clement of Alex. Quis dives salv. 3; Questions of Ezra [Rec. B] 11; Commodian Instr. 43.1; Apost. Const. 7.32.3).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 518–519.]

<sup>18</sup>χάλαζα, ης, ἡ (Hom. et al.; LXX, En, Philo) hail Rv 8:7 (w. fire as Ex 9:23–28); 11:19 (lightning, thunder, and hail as a divine manifestation as GrBar 16:3; Jos, Ant. 6, 92; cp. SibOr 3, 691; also Cat. Cod. Astr. passim); 16:21ab (for the extraordinary size cp. Diod S 19, 45, 2 χ. ἄπιστος τὸ μέγεθος, a single hailstone weighed

two opposite natural entities that cannot exist together normally. Even stranger is that the hail and fire<sup>19</sup> are

a mina [approx. a half kilogram] or more. The hail caused houses to collapse and killed people: Jos., Ant. 2, 305; deadly hail on the wicked as Ctesias, Pers. 25); hailstone Hm 11:20. Hail puts a halt to Paul’s animal combat AcPI Ha 5, 6 and tears off one of the consul’s ears 5, 10f.—DELG. M-M.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1075.]

<sup>19</sup>πῦρ, ὄς, τό (Hom.+) fire. . . .

**b. of fire that is heavenly in origin and nature** (cp. Diod S 4, 2, 3 of the ‘fire’ of lightning, accompanying the appearance of Zeus; 16, 63, 3 τὸ θεῖον πῦρ; Just., D. 88, 3 πῦρ ἀνήφθη ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῳ [at Jesus’ baptism]. In gnostic speculation Iren. 1, 17, 1 [Harv. I 164, 14]; Hippol., Ref. 6, 9, 5.—Orig., C. Cels. 4, 13, 19): an angel appears to Moses ἐν φλογὶ πυρὸς βάλτου *in the flame of a burning thorn-bush* Ac 7:30 (s. Ex 3:2; cp. Just., A I, 62, 3 ἐν ιδέα πυρός.—PKatz, ZNW 46, ’55, 133–38). God makes τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πυρὸς φλόγα (cp. Ps 103:4, esp. in the v.l. [AR-ahfs, Psalmi cum Odis ’31]) Hb 1:7; 1 Cl 36:3. Corresp., there burn before the heavenly throne seven λαμπάδες πυρός Rv 4:5 and the ‘strong angel’ 10:1 has πόδες ὡς στῦλοι πυρός, but both of these pass. fit equally well in a. Fire appears mostly as a means used by God to execute punishment: in the past, in the case of Sodom ἐβρεξεν πῦρ καὶ θεῖον ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ Lk 17:29 (Gen 19:24; cp. 1QH 3:31). Cp. Lk 9:54 (4 Km 1:10, 12; TestAbr A 10 p. 88, 13 [Stone p. 24, 13] ἐξ οὐρανοῦ; Jos., Ant. 9, 23 πῦρ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ πεσόν). Quite predom. in connection w. the Last Judgment: the end of the world δι’ αἵματος καὶ πυρός Hn 4, 3, 3; cp. Ac 2:19 (Jo 3:3. Also Sib-Or 4, 173; 5, 376f); Rv 8:7. κόσμος αἴρεται ἐν πυρὶ AcPI Ha 2, 26; 9, 11. The Judgment Day ἐν πυρὶ ἀποκαλύπτεται makes its appearance with fire 1 Cor 3:13a; cp. 13b (JGnilka, Ist 1 Cor 3:10–15 . . . Fegfeuer? ’55); 2 Pt 3:7 (on first-century cosmological views s. FDowning, L’AntCl 64, ’95, 99–109, esp. 107f). When Jesus comes again he will reveal himself w. his angels ἐν πυρὶ φλογός (cp. Sir 45:19) 2 Th 1:8. Oft. in Rv: fire is cast fr. heaven upon the earth 8:5; 13:13; 20:9 (καταβαίνω 1b). It proceeds fr. the mouths of God’s two witnesses 11:5 and fr. the mouths of plague-bringing horses 9:17f. See 16:8. For πυρὸς ζῆλος ἐσθίειν μέλλοντος τ. ὑπεναντίους Hb 10:27 s. ζῆλος 1, end. ἡ χεὶρ μου πυρὶ ἀποπίπτει ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ my hand falls off me from (burning in) the fire GJs 20:1 (codd.).—The fire w. which God punishes sinners (cp. ApcSed 4:1 κόλασις καὶ πῦρ ἐστὶν ἡ παιδευσὶς σου) οὐ σβέννυται (cp. Is 66:24) Mk 9:48; 2 Cl 7:6; 17:5. Hence it is called (s. PGM 5, 147 τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἀθάνατον): (τὸ) πῦρ (τὸ) αἰώνιον (4 Macc 12:12; TestZeb 10:3; GrBar 4:16; Just., A I, 21, 6 al.; Tat. 17, 1; Theoph. Ant. 1, 14 [p. 92, 9]) Mt 18:8; 25:41; Jd 7; Dg 10:7 (opp. τὸ πῦρ τὸ πρόσκαιρον 10:8). πῦρ ἄσβεστον (ἄσβεστος 1) Mt 3:12; Mk 9:43, 45 v.l.; Lk 3:17; 2 Cl 17:7; IEph 16:2; AcPI Ha 1, 22. It burns in the γέεννα (τοῦ) πυρός (ApcEsdr 1:9 p. 25, 1 Tdf.; s. γέεννα and cp. En 10:13 τὸ χάος τοῦ πυρός) Mt 5:22; 18:9 (cp. 1QS 2:7f); Mk 9:47 v.l.; 2 Cl 5:4 (a saying of Jesus not recorded elsewhere). ἡ λίμνη τοῦ πυρός (καὶ θείου) Rv 19:20; 20:10, 14ab, 15 (cp. Jos As 12, 10 ἄβυσσος τοῦ πυρός); cp. Rv 21:8; 14:10, 18; 15:2. The fiery place of punishment as ἡ κάμνος τοῦ πυρός Mt 13:42, 50 (diff. AcPI Ha 6, 20 see at the end of a, above). τὸ πῦρ ἐστὶ μετ’ αὐτοῦ fire awaits that person AcPICor 2:37. The fire of hell is also meant in certain parables and allegories, in which trees and vines represent persons worthy of punishment Mt 3:10;

mixed together in blood (μεμιγμένα ἐν αἵματι).<sup>20</sup> Even though not contained in the biblical account of Exod. 14:26-31, Jewish tradition asserts that God through His angels threw down on the Egyptians arrows, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone to destroy them, according to *Mek. de-Rabbi Ismael, Beshallah 7*.<sup>21</sup> Thus among Jewish people at the end of the first century, the occurrence of unusual natural phenomena was associated with the Exodus and punishments upon those who harmed God's people.

What is clearer, however, is that the hail and fire thrown down onto earth here echoes the plague of hail and fire that rained down on Egypt in Exodus 9:22-25.<sup>22</sup>

**7:19; Lk 3:9; J 15:6.** The one whose coming was proclaimed by John the Baptist βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ; whether πῦρ in **Mt 3:11; Lk 3:16** refers to reception of the Holy Spirit (esp. in **Lk 3:16**) or to the fire of divine judgment is debatable; for association of πῦρ with πνεῦμα s. **Ac 2:3f; AcPICor 2:13** (βαπτίζω 3b). As Lord of Judgment God is called πῦρ καταναλίσκον **Hb 12:29** (Dt 4:24; 9:3.—Mesomedes calls Isis πῦρ τέλεον ἄρρητον [IAndrosIsis p. 145, 14]).—Of a different kind is the idea that fire is to be worshiped as a god (Maximus Tyr. 2, 4b of the Persians: πῦρ δέσποτα; Theosophien 14 p. 170, 11 τὸ πῦρ ἀληθῶς θεός) Dg 8:2.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 898.]

<sup>20</sup>Even though the assumption is widespread that πῦρ actually indicates flashes of lightening, the problem is that such a flash of lightening is referenced in Koine Greek as ἀστραπή, as Mt. 24:27 makes clear. John knows the difference as well as Rev. 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18 illustrate with his use of ἀστραπή. To equate πῦρ with ἀστραπή is not possible in ancient Greek, for they are not synonyms at all.

The picture painted by John moves somewhat along the lines of a ball of hail made out of fire or a clump of fire embedded inside a ball of frozen ice. The additional ingredient of blood complicates the picture greatly. Now we are looking at clumps of blood with both hail and fire embedded in them. The most natural explanation is that this last picture is correct and is achieved supernaturally within the framework of apocalyptic visionary depiction. Such a phenomenon was not possible naturally.

The hail and fire symbolize divine punishments, while the blood reaches back to the blood of the martyrs. All of this is now bundled together in the punishments inflicted by the angel on evil people on earth.

<sup>21</sup>“According to *Mek. de-Rabbi Ishmael, Beshallah 7* (Lauterbach, *Ishmael* 1:245), after the Israelites had passed through the sea on dry ground, the ministering angels hurled arrows, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone down on the pursuing Egyptians.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 519.]

<sup>22</sup>**Exod. 9:22-26.** 22 εἶπεν δὲ κύριος πρὸς Μωϋσῆν Ἐκτεινον τὴν χεῖρά σου εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, καὶ ἔσται χάλαζα ἐπὶ πᾶσαν γῆν Αἰγύπτου, ἐπὶ τε τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ τὰ κτήνη καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν βοτάνην τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς.† 23 ἐξέτεινεν δὲ Μωϋσῆς τὴν χεῖρα εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, καὶ κύριος ἔδωκεν φωνάς καὶ χάλαζαν, καὶ διέτρεχεν τὸ πῦρ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, καὶ ἔβρεξεν κύριος χάλαζαν ἐπὶ πᾶσαν γῆν Αἰγύπτου.† 24 ἦν δὲ ἡ χάλαζα καὶ τὸ πῦρ φλογίζον ἐν τῇ χαλάζῃ· ἡ δὲ χάλαζα πολλὴ σφόδρα σφόδρα, ἦτις τοιαύτη οὐ γέγονεν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ ἄφ’ οὗ γεγένηται ἐπ’ αὐτῆς ἔθνος.† 25 ἐπάταξεν δὲ ἡ

In the Egyptian plague, the combination of hail and fire is hail with lightening flashes.<sup>23</sup> But clearly in Rev. 8:7, we are looking at apocalyptic phenomena here rather than natural phenomena.

Second, καὶ ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν, and it was thrown into the earth.<sup>24</sup> What is the subject of the verb ἐβλήθη? By rules of English grammar for this third person singular verb, the subject would be either χάλαζα, hail, or πῦρ, fire. But Greek grammar does not follow the same rules of agreement between subject and verb as does English. It can easily bundle up multiple subjects into a perceived single item with the use of a singular ending verb with a plural listing of subjects.

The reason for this being important is the proposal of some from the reference in 8:5 where the other an-

χάλαζα ἐν πάσῃ γῇ Αἰγύπτου ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπου ἕως κτήνους, καὶ πᾶσαν βοτάνην τὴν ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ ἐπάταξεν ἡ χάλαζα, καὶ πάντα τὰ ξύλα τὰ ἐν τοῖς πεδίοις συνέτριπεν ἡ χάλαζα.† 26 πλὴν ἐν γῇ Γεσεμ, οὗ ἦσαν οἱ υἱοὶ Ἰσραὴλ, οὐκ ἐγένετο ἡ χάλαζα.†

22 The Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven so that hail may fall on the whole land of Egypt, on humans and animals and all the plants of the field in the land of Egypt.” 23 Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and **hail**, and **fire** came down on the earth. And the Lord rained hail on the land of Egypt; 24 there was **hail with fire** flashing continually in the midst of it, such heavy **hail** as had never fallen in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. 25 The **hail** struck down everything that was in the open field throughout all the land of Egypt, both human and animal; the **hail** also struck down all the plants of the field, and shattered every tree in the field. 26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the Israelites were, there was no **hail**.

<sup>23</sup>“Revelation modifies the Exodus plague in that now only a third of the land and the trees are harmed, yet the affliction of all the grass remains unchanged, though the limitation to one third may be carried over from the previous clauses, as is more clearly the case in 8:11b.15 Although in one sense the trial has thus been limited in its effects, it has also been universalized in that it now has effect throughout the inhabited earth and not just within one nation (unless one adopts a preterist reading of the Apocalypse in which either Israel or the Roman Empire is the scene of the woes). Revelation also emphasizes that fire did the major harm, whereas Exodus gives this role to the hail. The addition of the element of /blood/ may come from the first Egyptian plague, the Nile turning to blood, so that the first plague becomes an aspect of the first trumpet.<sup>167</sup> [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Pater-noster Press, 1999), 473.]

<sup>24</sup>“The phenomenon of blood raining from the sky (the recurring technical phrase is *sanguinem pluit*) occurs frequently in Roman prodigy lists (Cicero *De div.* 1.43.98; 2.27.58; Pliny *Hist. nat.* 2.57.147; Luterbacher, *Prodienglaube*, 14; Wülker, *Prodi-gienswesens*, 11; see *Excursus 6A*). A parallel occurs in *Sib. Or.* 5.377–80 (tr. Collins in Charlesworth, *OTP* 1:402), ‘For fire will rain on men from the floors of heaven, fire and blood, water, lightning bolt, darkness, heavenly night.’” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 519.]



gel (ἄλλος ἄγγελος) gathered up coals of fire from the altar of incense and threw them on the earth, ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν γῆν, in the same action as this first of the seven angels, ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν γῆν. This would be true if πῦρ, fire, is the intended subject of the passive voice verb ἐβλήθη. But not true if χάλαζα καὶ πῦρ, hail and fire, is the verb subject. Most likely the latter understanding is the correct one. Clearly both angels throw fire down on the earth, but the initial actions of the other angel in vv. 3-5 summarizes and symbolizes the actions of all seven angels, not just the first of the seven. Thus the actions of the two angels are linked to one another, but not synonymous with each other.

Third, καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῆς γῆς κατεκάη καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν δένδρων κατεκάη καὶ πᾶς χόρτος χλωρὸς κατεκάη, and the third of the earth was burned up and the third of the trees was burned up and all green grass was burned up. Here the impact of throwing down the mixture of hail, fire, and blood is defined in a triplet expression which uses the same verb three times. The aorist passive verb singular κατεκάη from κατακαίω means to burn something totally, and of the eleven NT uses five of them are in Revelation. Three of them are here and in both 17:16 and 18:8 Babylon the whore will be totally burned up. Also in Mt. 3:12 // Lk. 3:17 and 1 Cor. 3:15 this burning action is associated with end time punishments. Thus destruction as a divinely imposed penalty for sinfulness is central to the use of this verb in the New Testament.

The extent of the punishment from this mixture of hail, fire and blood is defined as follows:

- a) τὸ τρίτον τῆς γῆς κατεκάη
- b) καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν δένδρων κατεκάη
- c) καὶ πᾶς χόρτος χλωρὸς κατεκάη

The earth, trees, and all green grass suffer destruction. With the first two items only τὸ τρίτον, the third, suffers destruction, but all green grass πᾶς χόρτος χλωρὸς is destroyed. Interestingly both the earth and trees are a part of the earth not to be harmed by the four angels in 7:3 while the servants of God are being sealed. But now a third of them are to be destroyed. But in 9:4, the locusts are instructed “not to damage the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads” (ἵνα μὴ ἀδικήσουσιν τὸν χόρτον τῆς γῆς οὐδὲ πᾶν χλωρὸν οὐδὲ πᾶν δένδρον, εἰ μὴ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους οἵτινες οὐκ ἔχουσιν τὴν σφραγίδα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν μετώπων).

The image of one-third is based on Ezekiel 5:2, 12.<sup>25</sup> It is rather common in Revelation 8:2-9:21 as well:

<sup>25</sup>“The eschatological destructions of one-third of various aspects of the cosmos (a consistent theme throughout 8:2–9:21: 8:7[2x], 9[3x], 10, 11, 12[5x]; 9:15, 18) is loosely based on Ezek 5:2(3x), 12(3x), where three different fates befall each third of the population of Jerusalem, represented by what Ezekiel does to each third of the hairs of his head and beard. The motif of one-third destruction also appears later in b. B. Mes. 59b, where an anecdote

8:7[2x], 9[3x], 10, 11, 12[5x]; 9:15, 18. Of the 56 uses of the adjective τρίτος, η, ον, third, the vast majority are references to the resurrection of Christ on the third day, which may have some role to play in the background here. To be sure, however, the substantial construction, τὸ τρίτον, the third (part of), is used exclusively in Revelation chapters eight, nine, and twelve, with a partitive genitive case noun.<sup>26</sup> This partial destruction stands in contrast to the seven bowls of wrath with the destruction is total rather than partial.

In the Egyptian plague of Exod. 9:22-25, the hail and fire spread destruction also upon the earth, trees, and vegetation. The influence of this background argues also that the intent of these punishments is not remedial but intended solely as punishments upon those harming God’s people. The pleas of the martyr saints in the fifth seal still are very much in the background here. God is defending His integrity as a holy and just God with these punishments.

### C. The second trumpeting angel, vv. 8-9

8 Καὶ ὁ δεύτερος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ὡς ὄρος μέγα πυρὶ καιόμενον ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, καὶ ἐγένετο τὸ τρίτον τῆς θαλάσσης αἷμα 9 καὶ ἀπέθανεν τὸ τρίτον τῶν κτισμάτων τῶν ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ τὰ ἔχοντα ψυχὰς καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν πλοίων διεφθάρησαν.

8 The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea. 9 A third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

Again the formulaic introduction signals the implementation of the second set of punishments: Καὶ ὁ δεύτερος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν.

The punishment defined here is depicted as καὶ ὡς ὄρος μέγα πυρὶ καιόμενον ἐβλήθη εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν,

is told of R. Eliezer, whose declarations had been rejected by his peers and cursed. In order to keep R. Eliezer from destroying the world with a curse, R. Akiba personally informed him. R. Eliezer then tore his garments, took off his shoes, and sat on the ground, whereupon only one-third of the olives, wheat, and barley of the world were blighted.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 519.]

<sup>26</sup>τρίτος, η, ον (τρεις; Hom.+)

2. as a subst. a third part of someth., third, third part τὸ τρίτον (sc. μέρος; s. B-D-F §241, 7.—τὸ τρ. in this sense Diod S 17, 30, 3; Lucian, Tox. 46 τὸ τρ. τῆς ἀτιμίας; PFlor 4, 17; 19; Mitt-Wilck. I/2, 402 I, 18 τὸ νενομισμένον τρίτον=the third in accordance w. the law; Num 15:6, ) the third part, one-third foll. by partitive gen. (Appian, Illyr. 26 §75 τὸ τρ. τούτων) Rv 8:7–12; 9:15, 18; 12:4.—DELG s.v. τρεῖς, M-M. EDNT. TW. Sv.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1016.]

something like a large mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea.<sup>27</sup> In the background here may very well be images of the volcanic eruption at Mt. Vesuvius on August 24, 79, some 15 to 20 years before the writing of Revelation.<sup>28</sup> If so, then vivid images would

<sup>27</sup>“In 8:10 it is said that a huge star burning like a torch fell on the rivers and springs. This is virtually a doublet of 8:8b. This sounds like extraordinary volcanic activity such as the tragic eruption of Vesuvius on 24 August A.D. 79, which radically affected the Bay of Naples from Capri to Cumae. Debris from Vesuvius fell into the bay making it impossible to land boats (Pliny Ep. 6.16.11), though no streams of lava were emitted from the crater. Zahn has argued that the details of the vision in 8:7–12 reflect aspects of the eruption of Vesuvius (2:390–94; id., “Der Ausbruch des Vesuvs,” 151–69; cf. Kehnscherper, Sonne, 26–29; Metzger, Code, 64). While there are several brief notices of the eruption (Tacitus Annals 4.67; Ant. 20.144; Suetonius Titus 8.3–4), an eyewitness account of the eruption is provided by Pliny the Younger (Ep. 6.16, 20), and an epitomized account is preserved in Dio 66.21–23. Dio, including a stereotypical theme from Roman prodigy lore, claims that the sound of trumpets was heard before the disaster (66.23.1). The eruption of Vesuvius is described in Sib. Or. 4.130–34 (written ca. A.D. 80) in the context of divine judgment (tr. J. J. Collins in Charlesworth, OTP 1:387):

But when a firebrand, turned away from a cleft in the earth  
in the land of Italy, reaches to broad heaven,  
it will burn many cities and destroy men.  
Much smoking ashes will fill the great sky,  
and showers will fall from heaven like red earth.

“Seven stars like great burning mountains are mentioned in 1 Enoch 18:13; 21:3, and it would make sense to speak of stars like burning mountains cast into the sea though that motif is not found in 1 Enoch. Sib. Or. 5.158–59 speaks of a star from heaven that burns the sea and Babylon.”

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 519–520.]

<sup>28</sup>Another common interpretation is that the mountain stands for a kingdom, in this case the Roman empire labeled Babylon later on in the document, although I’m not very convinced of the accuracy of this approach:

The likeness of a mountain could be metaphorical for a kingdom, as elsewhere in the Apocalypse, in the OT, and in Jewish apocalyptic writings (so Rev. 14:1; 17:9; 21:10; see further on 6:14 for OT and Jewish references). Fire in the Apocalypse and elsewhere is an image of judgment. Consequently, the burning mountain connotes the judgment of an evil kingdom. This meaning is supported by 18:21, where “one strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea.” The angel immediately interprets the symbolism of his action: “Thus will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.” 18:20 also interprets this to mean that “God has pronounced judgment for you [saints, et al.] against her.”

Jer. 51:25 refers to Babylon’s judgment thus: “I am against you, O destroying mountain ... and I will make you a burned out mountain” (note likewise 1 En. 18:13 and 21:3, in which the preliminary judgment of the fallen angels is spoken of as “stars like great burning mountains”; see similarly Sib. Or. 5.512–31). That this judgment is alluded to in Rev. 8:8 is apparent from the repeated allusion to it in the seventh trumpet (see on 11:18b) and from Jer. 51:27: “Blow a trumpet among the nations,” which is a signal to gather armies against Jerusalem. Later in the same oracle of judgment Jeremiah speaks of a scroll of woe written against Babylon, tied to a stone, and

be conjured up in the minds of the readers who had by this point in time been informed of this natural disaster almost two decades later. With the brutality and massiveness of ancient warfare the blood from dead soldiers around bodies of water would create the effect described here. Notice that the picture here is almost the same as with the third trumpet: καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀστὴρ μέγας καιόμενος ὡς λαμπρὰς, and a large star fell out of heaven burning like a torch.

The impact of this burning mountain being thrown into the sea is: καὶ ἐγένετο τὸ τρίτον τῆς θαλάσσης αἷμα καὶ ἀπέθανεν τὸ τρίτον τῶν κτισμάτων τῶν ἐν τῇ θαλάσσει τὰ ἔχοντα ψυχὰς καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν πλοίων διεφθάρησαν, and a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. Again the triplet impact is set forth as found in the pattern with the first trumpet, with two of the three units introduced by τὸ τρίτον in the first trumpet but all three here. Plus τὸ τρίτον, the third (part), is repeated emphasizing limited punishments. The sea turns into blood, a third of the fish die and a third of the ships are destroyed. In the Greco-Roman culture of the first century were oracles predicting similar destruction from the [Rubicon](#) river with Caesar’s crossing of it in 49 BCE.<sup>29</sup>

thrown into a river. Jeremiah interprets this symbolic action by saying, “so shall Babylon sink down and not rise again” (Jer. 51:63–64). Here we have the basis of Rev. 18:21. Since the stone and the mountain, metaphors for Babylon undergoing judgment, are both found in Jeremiah 51, it is plausible that the metaphors are also related in Revelation 8 and 18.

All this enforces the conclusion in Rev. 8:8 that the burning mountain cast into the sea refers to the judgment of a wicked kingdom. This kingdom is to be identified as “Babylon,” “the great city” of Revelation 11–18, which holds sway over the evil world system. That the burning mountain is the object of God’s judgment and not the agent of judgment is clear from Jeremiah 51 and from the fact elsewhere in the OT that mountains representing nations are always portrayed as the objects of God’s judgment (e.g., Isa. 41:15 [the Targum has “Gentiles and kingdoms”]; 42:15; Ezek. 35:2–7; Zech. 4:7).<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the picture in Rev. 8:8 did not originate from an attempt to depict a literal volcanic eruption or some other natural phenomenon occurring in the first century or predicted for later.<sup>21</sup> A literal reading is rendered unlikely here and throughout the visionary section by the simple observation that the catastrophes are inspired primarily by OT literary models that contain figures of speech.<sup>22</sup> This does not mean that such models could not have been used to describe literal disasters, but the burden of proof is on those who hold to a literal understanding in addition to a figurative perspective.

[G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 475–476.]

<sup>29</sup>“As part of the extensive prodigy list linked to Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon (1.522–83), Lucan reports that “Black Charybdis churned up waves of blood from the bottom of the sea” (1.547–48). In an oracle against the Gauls in Sib. Or. 5.201, the

Perhaps there lays in the background of the sea turning into blood also the Egyptian plague (cf., Exod. 7:18-19, 21, 24) when the Nile turned into blood and created a massive water shortage. But this Egyptian plague is more clearly in the background of the third trumpet than here.

What dies in the sea<sup>30</sup> turned into blood are καὶ ἀπέθανεν τὸ τρίτον τῶν κτισμάτων τῶν ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ τὰ ἔχοντα ψυχὰς, and died the third part of the creatures in the sea, those having life.<sup>31</sup> If the Vesuvius image is in the background then the depictions of damage done even in the sea from the volcanic eruption may well be alluded to here as a point of comparison of what had happened and what was going to happen.<sup>32</sup>

The destruction of a third of the ships here corresponds closely to the depiction in [18:11-19](#) where merchant ships are no longer able to sell their wares in the fallen city of Babylon, which by this point is completely gone. Babylon as representing the Roman Empire at this point is gone under the judgment of God.

#### D. The third trumpeting angel, vv. 10-11

10 Καὶ ὁ τρίτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀστὴρ μέγας καιόμενος ὡς λαμπὰς καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν ποταμῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων, 11 καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἀστέρος λέγεται ὁ Ἄψινθος, καὶ ἐγένετο τὸ τρίτον τῶν ὑδάτων εἰς ἄψινθον καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπέθανον ἐκ τῶν

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prediction is made that “the ocean will be resounding, filled with much blood [πληρούμενος αἵματι πολλῶ],” though here the reference is probably to the blood that will flow from the slaughtered Gauls.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 520.]

<sup>30</sup>The sea envisioned here is the Mediterranean Sea as alluded to in Acts 10:6, 32; 17:14; 27:30, 38, 40..

<sup>31</sup>“Note the solecism τὰ ἔχοντα ψυχὰς (‘those having life’), which should be genitive rather than nominative to agree with its antecedent τῶν κτισμάτων (‘of the creatures’). The lack of agreement may be due to Semitic influence, since Hebrew had fewer declined forms than Greek. In particular, the phrase may reflect Gen. 1:20,25 where the phrase *nephesh hayyâ* (literally ‘soul of life’ = ‘having a soul of life’) is undeclined according to Hebrew conventions but according to syntactical position is in apposition to the cognate accusative *sheret* (‘swarming things’).” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 477–478.]

<sup>32</sup>“Speaking of the eruption of Vesuvius (see Comment on 8:8a), Dio (66.23.2; LCL tr.) claims that ‘it wrought much injury of various kinds, as chance befell, to men and farms and cattle, and in particular it destroyed all fish and birds.’ Pliny the Younger, an eyewitness of the eruption of Vesuvius, observed that the sea level went down and many sea creatures were left stranded on the dry sand (Ep. 6.20.9). It has been estimated that from 12,000 to 15,000 people lost their lives.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 520.]

ὑδάτων ὅτι ἐπικράνησαν.

10 The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter.

Once again the formulaic introduction triggers the third set of temporal punishments leveled against evil people on the earth: Καὶ ὁ τρίτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν, and the third trumpet blew. The action is then stated and is followed by its impact on the earth.

This time the action is καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀστὴρ μέγας καιόμενος ὡς λαμπὰς καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν ποταμῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. Not a burning mountain, ὡς ὄρος μέγα πυρὶ καιόμενον, as in the second trumpet, but rather ἀστὴρ μέγας καιόμενος ὡς λαμπὰς, a large burning star like a burning torch, is what hits the earth. The large burning star, comparable to a big meteorite or a comet, hits the rivers and springs on the earth. For one meteorite to impact a third of all rivers and springs in the Mediterranean world at one time implies it was a huge chunk of rock falling out of the sky! Once again we are seeing this in an apocalyptic visionary mode, not from a natural viewpoint. Note in 6:13 with the sixth seal that “the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale” (καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔπεσαν εἰς τὴν γῆν, ὡς συκὴ βάλλει τοὺς ὀλύνθους αὐτῆς ὑπὸ ἀνέμου μεγάλου σειομένη). There all of them fall out of the sky and hit earth, while here only one very large one comes down. The idea of comets or meteors falling to the earth and killing people was widely understood across the ancient Greco-Roman world, and even them being compared to ‘torches.’<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup>“In the ancient world, comets were considered prodigies that signaled the imminence of death and disaster (Manilius Astron. 1.892–926). Pliny describes one type of comet as ‘torches’ (Hist. nat. 2.22.90; 2.25.96). On the motif of the star falling from heaven to earth, i.e., a meteor or a comet, see Comment on 9:1. According to Artemidorus (Oneirocritica 2.36; 5.23), a falling star means the death of a person, and that certainly happens in Rev 8:10–11. Boll proposed that the poisonous influence of the star Apsinth or Wormwood on the rivers and fountains of the earth was through the Hellenistic conception of ἀπόρροια, ‘emanations,’ from stars, which gave off πνεύματα, ‘emissions, emanations,’ which came to earth (Offenbarung, 41–42). A closer parallel is found in Sib. Or. 5.155–61 (see Collins, Sibylline Oracles, 89–92), which predicts that a star will shine that will destroy the entire earth. Apparently the same ‘great star will come from heaven [ἦξει δ’ οὐρανόθεν ἀστὴρ μέγας] to the wondrous sea and will burn the deep sea and Babylon itself and the land of Italy’ (Sib. Or. 5.158–59; tr. Charlesworth, OTP 1:397). Here the sea and Babylon (= Rome) are negative symbols, and their destruction implies the deliverance of the just.





wormwood | 2 of 2  
 Re 8:11 The name of the star is wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many died from the water, because it was made bitter.

Interestingly, this ἀστήρ is given a name: καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἀστέρος λέγεται ὁ Ἄψινθος, and the name of the star is Wormwood. The Greek term refers to a plant in the ancient world well known for its exceedingly bitter taste, and consequently was widely used as a medicine to kill off intestinal worms.<sup>34</sup> No known star in the ancient world was ever named with this name.<sup>35</sup> The

There are two major differences between these passages (Collins, Sibylline Oracles, 90): (1) In Rev 8:10–11, the star poisons the waters, while the star in Sib. Or. 5.158–59 destroys the waters. (2) In Rev 8:10–11 the star is a physical element instrumental in causing a plague on earth, while in Sib. Or. 5.158–59 the star is a savior figure.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 520–521.]

<sup>34</sup>ἀψίνθιον, ου, τό (Hippocr. et al.; X., An. 1, 5, 1; PSI 1180, 55; StudPal XX, 27, 9; P RyI IV ind.; Pr 5:4 Aq.; Jer 9:15; 23:15; so in rabb.) and ἄψινθος, ου, ἡ (Aretaeus [II A.D.], χρονίων νοούσων θερ. 1, 13 Hude; on the art. s. Mussies 197) a plant of the genus ‘Artemisia’, proverbially bitter to the taste, yielding a dark green oil (the rendering *wormwood* derives from its association with medicinal use to kill intestinal worms) τὸ ἐλάχιστον ἄ. a very little bit of wormwood Hm 5, 1, 5. In imagery, water changed to wormw., i.e. the water became bitter as wormw. **Rv 8:11b**. As name of a star, and (prob. because of ὁ ἀστήρ) masc. ὁ Ἄψινθος ibid. a (s. Boll 41f).—DELG s.v. ἄψινθος.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 161.]

<sup>35</sup>“καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἀστέρος λέγεται ὁ ἀψινθος, ‘Now the name of the star is Apsinth.’ There is no evidence that any star was called by this name in antiquity; rather, the star is given an *ad hoc* name in conformity with its effect upon the world. This phrase is very probably an explanatory gloss added by the author since it interrupts the thought (Charles, 1:235). Several forms of nouns formed on the stem Ἀψινθ- are attested: (1) the neuter τὸ ἀψίνθιον, (2) the feminine ἡ ἄψινθος, (3) the feminine ἡ ἀψινθία, and (4) the masculine ὁ ἄψινθος (see LSJ, 299; Bauer-Aland, 260; BAGD 129). ἄψινθος is either a back formation from ἀψίνθιον or a survival of a pre-Greek word (-vθ-) accidentally unattested in earlier literature (Mussies, Morphology, 113–14). Ἀψινθος is probably masculine because it is the name of a star, ὁ ἀστήρ, which is also masculine in gender. Normally, proper names are anarthrous, while here ὁ Ἀψινθος is articular. Perhaps the explanation is that the author uses the article with words first used as proper names (Schmid, Studien 2:199). It is possible that Ἀψινθος is articular because it is a notion known in ancient apocalyptic tradition but unknown to us (Mussies, Morphology, 199).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 521.]

name appears to come from its effect of extreme bitterness: ἐγένετο τὸ τρίτον τῶν ὑδάτων εἰς ἄψινθον, and a third of the waters turned into wormwood, and also ὅτι ἐπικράνθησαν, because it was made into bitterness. The impact of this is the death of many people. Somewhat similar scenes are found in the Jewish writings.<sup>36</sup> Clearly punishments are intended by the image of a star with the name of Wormwood.

Two impacts of the action of sending the star down to earth:

First, καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν ποταμῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the springs of water. Very clearly the Egyptian plague in Exod. 7:16-18<sup>37</sup> stands in the background here. In the Jewish interpretation of this plague the understanding is that God was punishing both the Egyptians and their false gods for the harm done to the

<sup>36</sup>Philo, Vit. Mos. 1.100, also affirms that the Exodus plagues, including the plague on the waters, resulted in ‘a great multitude of people killed.’ The scene of judgment here is based on Jer. 9:15 and 23:15, which both affirm that God ‘will feed them [Israel] ... with wormwood and give them poisoned water to drink.’ The polluting judgment comes because Israel’s religious leaders have spiritually polluted the nation with their idolatrous Ba’al worship. This judgment in Jeremiah is part of a description of coming famine, which is alluded to earlier in Jer. 8:13–14: ‘There will be no grapes on the vine and no figs on the fig tree, the leaf will wither, and what I have given them will pass away ... the LORD has doomed us and has given us poisoned water to drink.’ There also the woe of famine occurs because of idolatry (Jer. 8:19).” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 479.]

<sup>37</sup>**Exod. 7:16-19.** 16 καὶ ἐρεῖς πρὸς αὐτὸν Κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν Εβραίων ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς σέ λέγων Ἐξαπόστειλον τὸν λαόν μου, ἵνα μοι λατρεύσῃ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ· καὶ ἰδοὺ οὐκ εἰσήκουσας ἕως τούτου.† 17 τάδε λέγει κύριος Ἐν τούτῳ γνώσῃ ὅτι ἐγὼ κύριος· ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ τύπτω τῇ ῥάβδῳ τῇ ἐν τῇ χειρὶ μου ἐπὶ τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ, καὶ μεταβαλεῖ εἰς αἷμα·† 18 καὶ οἱ ἰχθύες οἱ ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ τελευτήσουσιν, καὶ ἐποξέσει ὁ ποταμός, καὶ οὐ δυνήσονται οἱ Αἰγύπτιοι πιεῖν ὕδωρ ἀπὸ τοῦ ποταμοῦ.† 19 εἶπεν δὲ κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν Εἰπὸν Ααρων τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου Λαβὲ τὴν ῥάβδον σου καὶ ἔκτεινον τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπὶ τὰ ὕδατα Αἰγύπτου καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς ποταμοὺς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς διώρυγας αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔλη αὐτῶν καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶν συνεστηκὸς ὕδωρ αὐτῶν, καὶ ἔσται αἷμα. καὶ ἐγένετο αἷμα ἐν πάσῃ γῆ Αἰγύπτου ἔν τε τοῖς ζύλοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς λίθοις.†

16 Say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, sent me to you to say, “Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness.” But until now you have not listened. 17 Thus says the Lord, “By this you shall know that I am the Lord.” See, with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall be turned to blood. 18 The fish in the river shall die, the river itself shall stink, and the Egyptians shall be unable to drink water from the Nile.’” 19 The Lord said to Moses, “Say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt — over its rivers, its canals, and its ponds, and all its pools of water — so that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout the whole land of Egypt, even in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.’”



Israelites.<sup>38</sup> Whether John had such in mind is unclear, but he did envision a divine punishment implemented along the lines of what God had done centuries before in punishing the Egyptians. The ruining of a third of the sources of fresh water would trigger massive famines and starvation among people.

Second, καὶ ἐγένετο τὸ τρίτον τῶν ὑδάτων εἰς ἄψινθον καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπέθανον ἐκ τῶν ὑδάτων ὅτι ἐπικράνθησαν, and the third of the waters turned into wormwood and many of the people died from the waters because they were made bitterness.<sup>39</sup> Interest-

<sup>38</sup>“Furthermore, Midr. Rab. Exod. 9.9 interprets the Exod. 7:16–18 plague on the waters, which is still in the background of Rev. 8:10, as a judgment on heavenly beings (i.e., the Nile god) who are legal agents representing sinful people, the latter of whom are likewise affected. Isa. 24:21 is adduced in support of the mid-rashic interpretation: “the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high and the kings of the earth on earth” (cf. also b. Suk. 29a in its comment on Exod. 12:12). So similarly Midr. Rab. Exod. 23.15 affirms that both the Egyptians and their guardian angel were judged at the Red Sea).<sup>27</sup> This interpretation is supported by 1 En. 18:13 and 21:3, which describe the judgment of fallen angels as ‘stars like great burning mountains,’ and 1 En. 108:3–6, which borrows the same image to portray the punishment of sinful people (cf. also 1 En. 86–88).” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 478–479.]

<sup>39</sup>“Wormwood belongs to the daisy family (Compositae) and is native to central and southern Europe, North Africa, Siberia, and northwestern India (Morton, Atlas, 908). It is also found in North America, Central America, and South America. The spice tarragon and the plant sagebrush belong to the same genus. The medicinal properties of three types of absinthium are discussed in some detail by Dioscorides Pedanius, an army physician and pharmacologist who lived in the first century A.D. during the reigns of Claudius and Nero (A.D. 41–68). The first type of absinthe is called ἀψίνθιον βαθύπικρον, ‘extremely bitter absinthe,’ i.e., wormwood (*Materia medica* 3.23.1–4; ed. Wellmann, 2:30–33), the best of which grows in Pontus and Cappadocia and is used primarily for external use since it is bad for the stomach and causes headache, though it is used to flavor wine. The second type, ἀψίνθιον θαλάσσιον, *absinthium marinum* (3.23.5–6), found in Cappadocia and Egypt, is an effective vermifuge. The third variety, ἀψίνθιον σαντονικόν (3.23.6), grows in alpine Galatia and gets its name from Santonicum, where it is found. The bitterness of wormwood was proverbial throughout the ancient world (Prov 5:4; Theophrastus Hist. plant. 1.12.1). A single ounce diluted in 524 gallons of water can still be tasted! The term ‘wormwood,’ apparently an alteration of ‘wormwort,’ is based on the medicinal use of the herb as a vermifuge, i.e., a specific use to expel worms from the intestines, an ‘intestinal insecticide’ (N. Taylor, *Plant Drugs*, 44–45). It is still widely used for this purpose in Central and South America (Morton, Atlas, 908). The German term for wormwood, Wermut, is related to ‘vermouth,’ a wine containing an extract from wormwood. One ingredient in wormwood is the toxic agent *thujone*, a chemical that can cause intoxication, hallucinations, convulsions, and permanent damage to the nervous system. Oil of wormwood was extracted from the herb’s stem, flowers, and leaves. The Hebrew term נֶגְנָה *la-ānā*, ‘wormwood,’ occurs several times in the

ingly in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition the turning of fresh water into undrinkable salt water is a common motif for eschatological judgment.<sup>40</sup>

Again only a third of the waters in the springs and rivers is impacted, thus signaling limited temporal judgments at this point.

## E. The fourth trumpeting angel, vv. 12-13

12 Καὶ ὁ τέταρτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἐπλήγη τὸ τρίτον τοῦ ἡλίου καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῆς σελήνης καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν ἀστέρων, ἵνα σκοτισθῇ τὸ τρίτον αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ ἡμέρα μὴ φάνη τὸ τρίτον αὐτῆς καὶ ἡ νύξ ὁμοίως.

13 Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἤκουσα ἑνὸς ἀετοῦ πετομένου ἐν μεσουρανήματι λέγοντος φωνῇ μεγάλῃ· οὐαὶ οὐαὶ οὐαὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῶν λοιπῶν φωνῶν τῆς σάλπιγγος τῶν τριῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν μελλόντων σαλπίζειν.

12 The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light was darkened; a third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise the night.

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew in midheaven, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!”

The same formulaic expression introduces the fourth trumpet, which triggers the action and impacts connected to this segment: Καὶ ὁ τέταρτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν, and the fourth angel blew.

The implementation of the actions triggered by the fourth trumpet is built around the single verb καὶ ἐπλήγη, and was struck. This aorist passive verb from πλήσσω is only found in this one place inside the New Testament, and conveys the idea to be struck hard with major force. In some texts outside the NT the idea of something being struck with lightening is common. The passive voice form of the verb clearly signals that the source of the blow is from God on His throne. With either one blow or possibly three blows He knocks out a third of the sun, the moon, and the stars!. God has a really powerful punch!

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OT (e.g., Prov 5:4; Lam 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7; 6:12), though in these cases a different species, *Artemisia judaica*, is probably in view.” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 521–522.]

<sup>40</sup>“The transformation of fresh water to salt water at the eschaton is found in 4 Ezra 5:9, which is also found in a verbatim formulation in Paral. Jer. 9:18. The plant genus *Artemisia*, to which absinthe or wormwood belongs (*Artemisia absinthium* L.), is the type associated with the constellation of Scorpio (an arachnid of the order Scorpionida), which has a stinging, poisonous tail (Boll, *Offenbarung*, 42).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 521.]

Here three elements in the atmosphere are hit hard: sun, moon, and stars. The point of the blow is to knock out a third of the light given off by these three celestial bodies, as defined by ἵνα σκοτισθῇ τὸ τρίτον αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ ἡμέρα μὴ φάνη τὸ τρίτον αὐτῆς καὶ ἡ νύξ ὁμοίως, so that a third of their light was darkened; a third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise the night.<sup>41</sup>

Also interesting is the difference in perspective here to that in the sixth seal in 6:12-14.

12 Καὶ εἶδον ὅτε ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν ἕκτην, καὶ σεισμός μέγας ἐγένετο καὶ ὁ ἥλιος ἐγένετο μέλας ὡς σάκκος τρίχινος καὶ ἡ σελήνη ὅλη ἐγένετο ὡς αἷμα 13 καὶ οἱ ἀστέρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔπεσαν εἰς τὴν γῆν, ὡς συκὴ βάλλει τοὺς ὀλύνθους αὐτῆς ὑπὸ ἀνέμου μεγάλου σειομένη, 14 καὶ ὁ οὐρανὸς ἀπεχωρίσθη ὡς βιβλίον ἐλισσόμενον καὶ πᾶν ὄρος καὶ νῆσος ἐκ τῶν τόπων αὐτῶν ἐκινήθησαν.

12 When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and there came a great earthquake; the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree drops its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. 14 The sky vanished like a scroll rolling itself up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>41</sup>“If one-third of the lighted heavenly bodies are darkened, the result would necessarily involve the diminishing of their light by one-third, not their failure to appear during one-third of the day and one-third of the night. The author apparently thinks of the lighted heavenly bodies like torches, which burn out after a certain length of time, or an eclipse, in which the light of the sun or the moon is suddenly, if temporarily, obscured. Cf. Amos 8:9, ‘On that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight,’ and Herodotus 7.37.2, ‘the sun, leaving his place in the heavens, disappeared, though there were no clouds and the sky was absolutely clear; and there was night instead of day’ (see Bousset [1906] 296; Charles, 1:236–37). A similar prodigy is reported by Lucan (1.536–43; LCL tr.):

[The moon] suddenly was smitten by earth’s shadow and grew dim. The sun himself, while rearing his head in the zenith, hid his burning chariot in black darkness and veiled his sphere in gloom, forcing mankind to despair of daylight.

[David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 522.]

<sup>42</sup>“The effects of the fourth trumpet are in some tension with effects of the opening of the sixth seal (6:12–14), where the sun is blackened, the moon turns red, and the stars fall to earth — a scenario that involves virtually complete cosmic destruction. It is perhaps not mere coincidence that on the fourth creative day, God is reported to have created the sun, moon, and stars (Gen 1:14–19), so that the cosmic destruction that occurs here can be understood against the background of the creation account. In Zonara’s epitomized account of Dio in which he described the eruption of Vesuvius (see Comment on 8:8a), he notes that the airborne volcanic ash darkened the sun for several days running (66.22.4; 66.23.4–5); this darkness during daylight hours agrees with the eyewitness report of Pliny the Younger (Ep. 6.16.17; 6.20.15).” [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 523.]

In this seal not a third of the light from these three elements is destroyed, but the sun is blackened completely; the moon turns red, and the stars fall to the earth.

Once again the ninth Egyptian plague stands in the background from Exodus 10:21 where darkness is pronounced over Egypt for three days and nights. This particularly targeted the Egyptian sun god Ra in order to demonstrate the superior power of God over the Egyptian god.<sup>43</sup> Jewish interpretive tradition tends to expand these ideas in the same general direction that John appears to be going.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup>“The woe in 8:12 is partly based on Exod. 10:21, where God causes darkness over Egypt for three days and three nights. Most of the exodus plagues were designed to be judgments on the false Egyptian gods (cf. Exod. 12:12).<sup>31</sup> This was true with the plague of darkness, which was partly a polemic against the sun god Ra, of whom Pharaoh was considered an incarnation. This lends further force to the idea that the partial darkness of the fourth trumpet is sent against idolaters. The limitation to a third in Rev. 8:12 may be sparked by the three-day limitation in Exodus and by the additional restriction that the darkness did not affect the light in Israelite houses (Exod. 10:23). The judgment of darkening the luminaries over a later generation of Egyptians in Ezek. 32:7–8 could also be in mind.” [G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 481.]

<sup>44</sup>“Early Jewish tradition understood the plague of darkness as having symbolic significance. Wisdom 15–17 (from the first century B.C.–A.D.) contains an extended commentary on the plague narratives. The plagues are seen as punishments on the Egyptians because of their idolatry and oppression of Israel (see particularly chs. 14–16; 17:1–2, 7–8). In particular, the plague of darkness is viewed as coming because the Egyptians had persecuted Israel with harsh bondage. The darkness obscured ‘the light ... of the stars,’ and the Egyptians were ‘deprived of light’ from the ‘sun’ (17:5, 20; 18:3–4). They are punished ironically in that they became ‘prisoners of darkness’ and were ‘fettered with bonds of a long night’ (17:2) and ‘were all bound with one chain of darkness’ (17:17). The darkness ‘came on them out of the bottoms of inevitable hell’ (17:14) and symbolized their exile ‘from the eternal providence’ (17:2). ‘Over them was spread a heavy night, an image of the darkness that would afterward receive them’ forever (17:21; so likewise Midr. Rab. Exod. 14.2 on Exod. 9:22; Philo, *On Dreams*, 1.114, speaking of Exod. 10:21). The darkness also caused them to suffer from horror and fear.

“These texts from Wisdom provide an early precedent in Jewish interpretation showing that the exodus plague of darkness was understood partly as a theological metaphor. Rev. 8:12 may reflect the same theological understanding.<sup>32</sup> That is, John sees the plague of darkness coming on part of the world to punish people because of their idolatry and oppression of the saints. The judgment is partial to indicate its nonconsummative nature, but it is an emblem of humans’ separation from God and inevitable final condemnation, which will result in their dwelling in eternal darkness. The darkness is probably not literal but refers to all those divinely ordained events intended to remind the idolatrous persecutors that their idolatry is folly and that they are separated from the living God. Such events cause them to live in fear and terror in response to their desperate plight (in Luke 21:25–27 changes in the sun,

Both the similarities and the difference remind us again that in apocalyptic visionary express the same essential point can be made different ways, even if these are somewhat contradictory to one another. The religious point being made is foundational, not the synchronized details of each depiction.

The role of verse 13 is debated but is relatively clear. John's introductory Καὶ εἶδον, καὶ ἤκουσα, *And i saw and heard*, clearly reaches back to the first Καὶ εἶδον τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλους, *and I saw the seven angels*, in verse two at the beginning of this series. The second καὶ ἤκουσα is not used in the first four trumpets, in part because neither the angels nor anyone in the actions taking place with each of the four speak words that need to be heard. Some speaking will take place, however, in the final three trumpets, which are labeled also as three woes. So both seeing and hearing become more important in what follows.

All of this suggests a literary function as important here. First, along with the reference in v. 2 these phrases serve as boundary markers bracketing off the first four as a unit of expression. This is following the 4 + 3 pattern observed with the seven seals. Second, it also is functioning to introduce the last three trumpets that follow beginning in chapter nine.

What John saw and heard was an eagle flying ἐν μεσουρανήματι.<sup>45</sup> That is the eagle was flying above the ground and below the canopy that separates sky from God's dwelling place.<sup>46</sup> The announcement of

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moon, and stars preceding the parousia also cause 'dismay, perplexity, and fear' among the nations)."

[[G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: a Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 481–482.]

<sup>45</sup>μεσουράνημα, ατος, τό (Posidon.: 87 Fgm. 85 p. 273, 15 Jac.; Manetho, Plut.; Sext. Emp., POxy 235, 13 [I A.D.]) lit., in astronomy the 'meridian' ('culmination'; μεσουρανεῖν means 'be at the zenith', of the sun [Aristot., Plut.; schol. on Apollon. Rhod. 1, 450; PGM 4, 2992]) zenith ἐν μεσουρανήματι in midheaven **Rv 8:13; 14:6; 19:17.**—M-M.

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 635.]

<sup>46</sup>"The noun τὸ μεσουράνημα, 'midheaven,' occurs three times in Revelation (8:13; 14:6; 19:17). The term also occurs on a magical amulet, probably of Jewish origin, with a sun, moon, and two stars on the obverse and this inscription on the reverse: 'One God in the heavens, who exists and who preexists [ὁ ὄν καὶ προὄν], who is greater than all, who dominates all the beings in midheaven [μεσουρανῶν]' (Delatte-Derchain, *Les intailles magiques*, 266, no. 381; extensive commentary in Peterson, *Εἰς Θεός*, 260–64). Midheaven is the location of the sun, moon, stars, and planets; one constellation is named Aquila, 'Eagle,' the bird of Zeus/Jupiter (Varro *Res rusticae* 2.2.13; Cicero *Arat.* 328; Manilius *Astron.* 1.343–45; Vitruvius 9.4.3; Pliny *Hist. nat.* 8.187). The eagle is a

the eagle was λέγοντος φωνῆ μεγάλης· οὐαὶ οὐαὶ οὐαὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐκ τῶν λοιπῶν φωνῶν τῆς σάλπιγγος τῶν τριῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν μελλόντων σαλπίζειν, crying with a loud voice as it flew in mid-heaven, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!"

The three woes, οὐαὶ οὐαὶ οὐαὶ, pronounced upon τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, *those dwelling upon the earth*, are defined as anticipating ἐκ τῶν λοιπῶν φωνῶν τῆς σάλπιγγος τῶν τριῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν μελλόντων σαλπίζειν, *at the blasts of the other trumpets that the three angels are about to blow!* Just as the fourth seal (6:7-8) gathered up in summation the punishments of the first four seals (6:1-8), the fourth seal here anticipates the last three trumpets with a similar emphasis upon God protecting His people.

## 2. What does the text mean to us today?

Wow! These first four trumpets take the idea of the punishments of God in the first four seals and extend them with more detail and different depiction. Both sets are cast in the setting of the heavenly temple, cf. 8:2-5 and 4:1-5:14. And also the same setting for the seven bowls of wrath is described in 15:1-8. Thus we are vividly reminded that these actions originate directly from heaven at the command of God Himself. Both the seals and the trumpets are cast in a somewhat similar 4 + 3 structure with the first four units mainly stressing the punishments of God upon evil people on the earth, and the second set of three mainly stressing the protection of God of His people on earth. Clearly the tight structures of the formulaic introductions in each series of seven, although different in content, are very similar in literary structure.

The punishments of God are not soliciting repentance from the evil people from either series of sevens. Perhaps this is from the influence of the Egyptian plagues playing a formative role from Exodus 7-14.

The emphasis on τὸ τρίτον, *the third part*, stresses temporal punishments that are preparatory for the final series of punishments in the seven bowls in which the destructions are total rather than partial.

With vivid drama through apocalyptic visionary depiction John is driving home the point repeatedly that God is holy and just. This is seen mainly in His holding evil people fully accountable for their actions.

bird who has strong solar associations (Boll, *Offenbarung*, 38–39), and these associations are suggested by the fact that the angel in Rev 19:17 who 'stands in the sun' calls to the birds who fly in midheaven (Peterson, *Εἰς Θεός*, 263). Cf. PGM XII.45, which contains an invocation to 'Beetle [Scarabaeus], winged ruler of midheaven [μεσουρανῶν]'. [David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, vol. 52B, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 523.]