

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 375

Revelation 8:1-6

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Episode Summary

Revelation 8 begins the vision of the first six trumpets. The sequence is kicked off by the Lamb's opening of the seventh and final seal on the scroll from Revelation 5. The chapter raises some immediate questions: How are we to understand the silence in heaven? Who are the seven angels? Do the ensuing trumpet judgments have an Old Testament context? This episode of the podcast answers these questions and prepare us for the judgment sequence through the remainder of Revelation 8 and Revelation 9.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 375: Revelation 8:1-6. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

MH: Well, not too bad. I mean, it's rolling into NFL mode a little bit. The draft now is history. But we renewed the Naked Bible League, so Fantasy Football is now on the radar, which I'm sure you'd rather hear about than any more Fantasy Baseball talk. So I'm sure you're relieved.

TS: Oh, yeah. I saw the email. I was excited.

MH: Yeah? Well, if my team this year can stay out of the hospital [laughs], hopefully we'll be more competitive. But it's still a long way to go yet.

TS: Yeah, absolutely. Anything else in the world going on, Mike? Really nothing going on here.

MH: There's not much going on here. Although at our recording day here (as we sit here) it's supposed to be 90° today in Jacksonville. So this is looking like the first realistic pool day.

TS: Oh!

MH: Which means it's pug pool weekend. So I'll have to give you a report (or people will probably find out on Instagram) if there's anything funny to report. Hopefully not tragic. [laughs]

TS: Are there any updates on the war of the ducks?

MH: The ducks have not been back for almost a week. When I brought that up, a couple of days later they came back. And I actually had a video (of course that Drenna wanted me to delete, and I did) of her going after the ducks. [laughter]

TS: Did you put snakes up?

MH: No, we didn't even have to do that. They just have not been back after she just literally charged at them. [laughs] So maybe that was sufficiently terrifying. I don't know.

TS: There you go.

MH: But we haven't had ducks for, like, five days. So not too bad.

TS: What does that mean when we talk about the weather? I mean, does that mean we're old? Does that mean we have nothing to talk about? What does it mean when we talk about the weather?

MH: I just think that... Well, on *my* end, it's like now we have clear, discrete seasons. So...

TS: So it's fun to talk about. Yeah, I got you.

MH: [laughs] Even though it's sunny here all the time, you can actually tell more about seasons. Even though yes, I know, in the fall we won't get snow. So we're not really seasonal. But it's a lot better than just grey all the time. So we actually like talking about it right now. But we'll get tired of it.

TS: Yeah, okay. That's fair enough. We just need to remind the new listeners that you moved from the Northwest. So sunshine and palm trees.

MH: We've got some at our house. So they're just everywhere. It's not a novelty down here. They're just everywhere.

TS: Alright, Mike. Well, we're doing the first six verses of Revelation 8.

MH: Yeah, we can transition from talking about a little bit of paradise down here in Florida to the [laughs] plagues of the apocalypse. [laughs]

TS: Exactly.

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MH: Because that's what we get in Revelation 8. So this chapter is the beginning of the vision of the six trumpets. And the sequence of those is kicked off in the first verse of Revelation 8:1, which is where the Lamb (of course, whom we know is identified with Jesus according to Revelation 5 and 6 and so on)... It's kicked off by the Lamb's opening of the seventh and final seal on the scroll. So for those who are familiar with Revelation (at least vaguely familiar), you get this Divine Council scene in Revelation 4-5 that we spent a couple of weeks talking about. And in the hand of God who is seated on the throne is this scroll. The scroll has seven seals on it. And we're actually going to return to the issue of, the scroll isn't really opened until all of the seals are broken. Because just think about it, think about the real life equivalent or side of the metaphor. I mean, you might have seven seals on the thing, but if six of them are off and the seventh is still there, you're still not able to open the scroll. That might actually be a factor interpretively here, in the sequence beginning. But once that last seal is broken, now we get six trumpets. And these are going to be judgments, at least that spill on into chapter 9. You're going to get a seventh later on. But again, for a discrete unit, 8 and 9 go together. They operate in tandem. So in the space of those two chapters, we're going to get these six trumpets—these judgments.

And so we might as well just jump right in. I'm going to read the first six verses, because that's really what we're going to cover today. And then next time we're going to hit the trumpet judgments themselves. Because they (at least the first four of them) have a very obvious overlap with the plagues back in the Exodus story. So those six are going to be covered in the next episode. So this is going to be set-up for that. But anybody who looks at the chapter is going to know that, boy, this sounds very obviously like the plagues on Egypt at the Exodus. And we'll get to that, and that's important, because again, we're focused on the use of the Old Testament when it comes to the content of Revelation. So let's just read the first six verses. That's what we'll hit today.

When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. ² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. ³ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴ and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. ⁵ Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

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

That's the end of the sixth verse. And of course, then that starts off the sequence. So the first thing we hit here is (it's kind of obvious) "there was silence in heaven." Like, what's that all about? There are actually several interpretive options for this, all of which have been offered by scholars and those scholars have proposed some connection with the Old Testament. So we're just going to hit the options real quickly here. There are several of these:

1. Tonstad in his Revelation commentary... And this is a new resource that was actually recommended by a listener. And I went out and got it and have looked through it. And it's actually got some really interesting things to say, because this is an author that actually recognizes Divine Council stuff in the book, which I think is why it was recommended to me specifically. But Tonstad in his Revelation commentary (part of the Paideia commentary series on the New Testament) offers a couple of interpretations. The first one that he jumps into is that the silence is the silencing of prayers. And in this category, he writes in his commentary that R. H. Charles suggested this. And the quote from Charles' old Revelation commentary... And that name might be familiar to those who are into the book of Enoch. It's the same guy (R. H. Charles) who spent a lot of time in the book of Revelation. It's apocalyptic literature, and the book of Enoch is also apocalyptic literature. But Charles wrote,

The praises of the highest orders of angels are hushed that the prayers of *all* the suffering saints on earth may be heard before the throne.

So, again, this is just one option. And Tonstad goes through a few of these. And this is where I decided to start. In this scenario, there's an enforced silence in heaven so that the prayers of the people suffering on earth don't get drowned out. Well, I mean, the text doesn't actually say that. But there you go. Charles proposed this view in 1920. You can tend to find this sort of thing in apocalyptic literature. Certainly you find prayers, both in terms of what's being done in heaven and on earth, in the book of Revelation you'll find that. And again, this is just the way he takes the silence. So it's the silencing of prayers. Because what else could be going on that would need silencing? And so he opts for this, the prayers that have been mentioned up to this point. Plus, he's going to associate it with the incense language. Because again, that was language used in the Old Testament to symbolize the ascent of prayers to heaven, the burning of the incense and so on and so forth. So it's not a far-fetched view or just a stab in the dark. It's just one of several. And that's where Charles was at, and so Tonstad mentions it.

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2. But Tonstad actually prefers a different option, which again, I don't know how the audience is going to think about this. Again, we're just going through the options. This probably really wouldn't occur to anybody. And I have to be honest with you, I don't think this is that persuasive compared to some of the other

options. But Tonstad's own view is that the silence is really about the Lamb. That might sound a little weird. But here's how he puts it. He says:

Silence is the most striking feature of the OT scene that has the greatest bearing on how best to understand the silence in heaven [MH: here in Revelation 8:1].

And then he quotes Isaiah 52:14–15. And I would assume this is his own translation. So those verses say:

**Just as there were many
 who were *astonished at him* [MH: this is the suffering servant from Isaiah
 52, going into Isaiah 53]
 —so marred was his appearance,
 beyond human semblance,
 and his form beyond that of mortals
 —so he shall startle many nations;
kings shall shut their mouths because of him;
 for that which had not been told them
 they shall see,
 and that which they had not heard
 they shall contemplate. (Isa. 52:14–15, emphasis added)**

His argument is basically, “Look, these two verses in Isaiah 52 depict a silencing—‘the silence of shock and awe in the face of an unexpected discovery.’ Of course, in this case it’s the identity of the suffering servant.” So again, what’s the cause of the silence back in Isaiah 52? They “were astonished *at him*.” And of course, this is the identity of the messianic servant who everybody thought was beaten and defeated and so on and so forth. Well, it turns out, no, not at all. And so he says,

When this detail is applied to the mystery in Revelation, the cause for the silence will not be the events that are disclosed or events still to be disclosed—whether the terrors of judgment or the prayers of the saints...

He says, in fact, the silence is going to be due to “the Lamb in the middle of the throne.” When the people in the scene (or at least those who are causing the suffering) are awakened to the fact that the Lamb that was slain is now the holder of power (“the Lamb in the midst of the throne”), that’s going to be the eye-opener. He says:

When human and cosmic reality is held up to what he is and what he reveals God to be, they are [MH: going to be] at a loss for words.

So again, this is his interpretation. I don't know that there's any real specific (other than the feature of “shutting the mouth”)... There's really no textual

connection between Revelation 8 back to Isaiah 52. But again, a lot of these are going to be of like nature. There's going to be some loose association. But again, just going through the options. This is where Tonstad lands and the one he prefers.

3. The third option: Aune says that "Silence signals the eschatological return to primordial silence..." In other words, "the world shall be turned back to primeval silence for seven days, as it was at the first beginnings," at least according to some pseudepigraphical literature, *4 Ezra*. The idea is that this is "a reversion to the chaos that preceded the first creation." And again, if all this apocalyptic stuff (all this plague imagery) is going to happen to the earth, it's as though the earth is being taken apart. It's destroyed. It's "Ragnarök," to borrow the Norse language that might be more familiar to listeners. Everything's going to get destroyed and de-created. And so that's the silence that is in view. At least Aune says this is worth considering. But then... You know, he's honest. He says,

The weakness of this view lies in the fact that the text says nothing about a reversion to the silence that preceded creation.

So again, here you go. On the one hand, you could take this trajectory, "Oh, well, that makes sense. An apocalypse de-creates the earth. Oh, that sounds kind of good." But there's actually no specific textual hook back into Genesis 1:2 or something like that. It's just sort of a supposition. It's an interpretive effort. So Aune is honest about that.

4. But then he goes on and he actually has a different preference. He entertains that one for a while, and then where he lands would be:

Silence must be maintained in the presence of God, particularly during certain phases of the liturgy...

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So what he's going to say is, "Look, we've got all this incense thing. We've got an altar reference. We've got prayers." And so he looks at Revelation 8 as being part of a liturgical process—a ritual liturgical process. And then he takes that back to the Old Testament and observes that in Psalm 62:1, Habakkuk 2:20, you have some Second Temple texts like the Epistle of Aristeas 95, you have priests in the temple in Jerusalem do what they do in complete silence. Like it's actually noted that priests were doing what they were doing, but they maintained quiet while they were doing it. And so Aune draws attention to these kinds of references and says, "Well, we have some kind of ritual thing going on in Revelation 8. And so the silence is just there by those in the presence of God offering up the incense and burning it and all this sort of stuff. That's what the silence refers to." And interestingly enough, Malina lands here as well, just because of these Old Testament parallels. Aune thinks this is the most convincing view, because "silence was very probably maintained during the

incense offering in the Jerusalem temple cult.” And then he quotes some rabbinic texts. He quotes the *Testament of Adam* 1.12 for that. So this is where he lands. He sees the liturgy, and then he knows enough of the literature to think that, “Hey, just like when they were doing stuff in the temple, the priests would be silent, similar things are happening here, and that must be the silence.” So that’s the fourth view.

5. The fifth... And this is represented by Beale. And again, I’ll be honest and just say I think this one just makes the most sense, or at the least, seems to hook more deeply and more securely back into the Old Testament. He says that silence is basically an appalled silence at the final judgment of the world. Now what he means by this... It doesn’t necessarily have to be a response to the judgment rendered, like after all these judgments play out. That’s now when the silence happens. It doesn’t happen after the judgments happen. It happens essentially when they become known, when the seventh seal is broken and then these trumpets are... At least the scroll is open and you would be led to believe that when the scroll is opened that what ensues in chapter 8 and chapter 9 with these trumpet judgments, that that’s sort of the content of the scroll. When that becomes known, there’s just this appalled silence at what’s going to happen to the world. There’s just this shock. So Beale writes this:

Silence is used in a mundane, nontheological manner especially in contexts where someone has chosen not to speak. But the OT also associates silence with divine judgment... Idolaters who die abide in silence (Ps. 115:17). Those who persecute God’s people are judged by God and consequently sit in silence in Sheol (Ps. 31:17). There will be a “primeval silence” at the end of history [MH: so Beale actually loops in the primeval idea here] when all earth’s inhabitants die, immediately before the final judgment [MH: and then he gives us this *4 Ezra* 7:30 quote, and *4 Ezra* 6:39, just like Aune did when he discussed this]. Babylon and Israel are silent because of God’s judgment against them (Isa. 47:5; Ezek. 27:32; Amos 8:2–3; Lam. 2:10–11; likewise in 1 Macc. 1:3 “the earth was quiet before” Alexander after he defeated his enemies). An overt eschatological hope is formulated whereby “the wicked are silenced in darkness” because “the LORD will judge the ends of the earth” (1 Sam. 2:9–10).

So you can see this has some fairly obvious or fairly secure Old Testament roots. But Beale goes on and says:

Especially relevant are Hab. 2:20 and Zech. 2:13, in which the Lord is pictured as being in “his holy temple” in heaven [MH: and that’s where he’s at in the Revelation scene] from which he executes judgment on the ungodly (i.e., on Babylon).

You know, Habakkuk 2 and Zechariah 2, the context is Babylon. Of course, Babylon is going to become a factor later in the book of Revelation as the enemy. And so Beale is like, “Look, the setting is the same. The name Babylon is used for the one upon whom God is going to take judgment and so on and so forth.” So he sees sort of a clear path back to these two passages. And he continues and says:

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That this temple is in heaven is to be assumed from other OT texts (e.g., Ezekiel 1) and Jewish apocalyptic texts, and is in fact evident from Hab. 3:3–6 and Zech. 2:13–3:2. The response or anticipated response to the judgment in these two texts is that “all the earth” and “all flesh” stand in silent awe (cf. likewise Isa. 23:2; 41:1–5). Jewish commentators affirmed that the Song of Moses [MH: which is Deuteronomy 32], which predominantly predicts the judgment of Israel because of idolatry, caused the whole creation to respond in silence.

Let me just stop there. Now again, those are Jewish commentators. Deuteronomy 32 doesn’t say that, but it’s kind of interesting that this gets looped in [laughs] to the discussion by virtue of rabbinical thought about these other texts, about how judgment will produce this appalled silence. Back to Beale, he says:

Temple imagery is evoked again in Zeph. 1:7, where people are to “be silent” because God is about to slay them like a cultic sacrifice (cf. also Zeph. 1:11: “all the people of Canaan will be silenced”). These three announcements of judgment from the Minor Prophets are perceived by their writers as cosmic eschatological expectations, as implied by the pregnant word “all” [MH: and then he has some other cross references].

The “silence” in Rev. 8:1 is probably drawn from this OT background. This means that it cannot be taken as “emptiness” but represents judgment [MH: or impending judgment].

I think that makes sense. I think he marshals enough evidence to take our minds that way. And when it plays out, it fits. I think it just does more justice to Old Testament context than some of these other views. And I kind of like the primordial element as well, so I appreciate that Beale brought that in.

So again, we’re... Let’s loop in our earlier observation from an earlier episode, that you don’t really know what’s in the scroll until the last seal is broken. Aune had pointed that out earlier. And so the contents of the scroll can only be seen once this last seal is broken. And the contents of the scroll are essentially the rest of the book in terms of the judgments. So that’s Revelation 8:2 all the way through 22:5. Essentially, once this last seal is broken, we find out what’s going to happen. It’s the apocalypse, okay? It’s the apocalypse. It’s the Day of the Lord judgment—all this sort of stuff. And so the silence happens *before* all that, so it’s... Once it’s sort of revealed what God’s actually going to do and the horror of

the judgment, that's what produces the silence. And to loop in the de-creation idea, that it's going to be returned to chaos. And then God's going to reorder it into a new Eden, just like he did in Genesis 1. That is the kind of mirroring and bookending that makes a lot of sense, at least to me, which is why I appreciate Beale bringing the primeval silence back in here.

So there's no specific text that goes from 8:1 back into, like, Genesis 1:2. That's true. But the result... And again, if you look at Revelation 8:2 through 22:5, here's the de-creation. Here's the descent back into chaos by virtue of God's judgment happening. And then what's left of the book is this recreation into a new Eden. If you go back then and look at the first Eden... Prior to that you do have this primeval chaos that God has to bring into order. So to me, it makes more conceptual sense than actually a specific textual hook back into Genesis 1:2. And I think this is just the most reasonable trajectory to my eye. So I think this last option of Beale has a lot to commend it. And of the options, I just think this is the best one to explain what's going on with the silence. Now you get to verse 2 and you get these seven angels, which are also mentioned in verse 6:

² Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

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So the next question is, "Well, who are the seven angels?" Now what makes this interesting is in Second Temple Jewish literature, you get two kinds of listings of archangels. Sometimes there are seven; sometimes there are four. So it's not actually consistent. So since you do get lists of seven archangels, commentators have been inclined to see a connection there. Let me just jump into Beale and McDonough. This is from the Beale and Carson commentary on the Old Testament in the New Testament. And they write:

The seven angels may be identified with the seven well-known archangels of Jewish apocalyptic...

So you get them listed for instance in *1 Enoch* 20:1–8, *Tobit* 12:15. There are other places in *1 Enoch* 81:5, 90:21–22. These are sort of well-known. And Beale and McDonough continue. They say:

It is tempting to identify them with the seven guardian angels of the seven churches in chapters 2–3 [MH: so that's a second option]. Angels as divine agents executing the plagues follows the trajectory of biblical and Jewish tradition that angels were appointed by God to perform the judgments against the Egyptians, especially at the Red Sea [MH: there are hints of this, and he cites] (Exod. 12:23; Ps. 78:49–50; [MH: and then a few Targums at different Exodus passages—Targums are Aramaic translations—that sort of insert the angelic idea] *Tg. Jerus. Frag.* Exod. 4:25; 12:42; 15:18; *Jub.* 49:2; *Mek. R. Ish.* Beshallah 7:30–35, 40–45).

Personally, this is where I'm going to land here. I don't think it makes much sense to align the angels here—the seven angels that are meting out the judgment—with the guardian angels (the angel patrons) of the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. Because if you did that, that sort of makes it sound like the churches are somehow in the mix of meting out or dispensing judgment, which is pretty contrary to what's going on in the book. The Church is the one suffering. They're in no position to mete out judgment. I mean, God is, but they're not. So that just doesn't really seem coherent to my ear and my eye. I think the "seven" points to the completeness of the judgment—the thoroughness of it. After all, it is the Day of the Lord. There's not going to be anything left to do [laughs] after this is over. It is a total de-creation. I think the seven number helps to communicate that. And I do think there is something to the connection to the Exodus angelic agents being agents of the plagues back in the Exodus story. I think that's the better trajectory in light of what follows, because the first four clearly resemble the plagues. We'll hit that in the next episode.

But let me just read Psalm 78:49-50 just so you get an idea of what that passage is actually saying that Beale references here. In Psalm 78, this is a reiteration of the history of Israel. I'm going to all the way back to verse 42. So we're going to end up in 49 and 50, but here's verse 42 of Psalm 78:

- ⁴² [The Israelites] did not remember [God's] power
or the day when he redeemed them from the foe,
⁴³ when he performed his signs in Egypt
and his marvels in the fields of Zoan.
⁴⁴ He turned their rivers to blood,
so that they could not drink of their streams.
⁴⁵ He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them,
and frogs, which destroyed them.
⁴⁶ He gave their crops to the destroying locust
and the fruit of their labor to the locust.
⁴⁷ He destroyed their vines with hail
and their sycamores with frost.
⁴⁸ He gave over their cattle to the hail
and their flocks to thunderbolts.
⁴⁹ He let loose on them his burning anger,
wrath, indignation, and distress,
a company of destroying angels.
⁵⁰ He made a path for his anger;**

**he did not spare them from death,
but gave their lives over to the plague.**

But then in verse 51 it switches back to “*he* (God) struck down every firstborn in Egypt.” And I mention this because in my *Angels* book, which I know some of you will have read, Psalm 78:49 does not say that destroying angels killed the firstborn. So we have a distinction here. The death of the firstborn, ironically, specifically, is accomplished by the *mashkit* (the Destroyer). And here in Psalm 78, it’s God. And how can they be the same, because the *mashkit* (the Destroyer) is the Angel of the Lord? Again, this is what I discuss in my *Angels* book. 1 Chronicles 20... There are passages where the Angel of the Lord (who is God in human form) *is* a destroyer. He is the one who dispenses judgment in God’s stead.

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And so you have these passages that basically say two things: “The Destroyer... Well, the Destroyer is God. And the Destroyer is this angel.” And so on and so forth. So that’s consistent theologically in light of the Two Powers in Heaven, the two Yahweh figures that I write about in *Unseen Realm* and, of course, the book on *Angels*. So we don’t want to get *that* confused—the Destroyer (singular) with destroying angels. Those are two different things, but they’re related. The angels that are referenced in Psalm 78 *are* associated with enacting the plagues. So they become agents in some way of the judgment of the plagues. But the death of the firstborn is attributed to Yahweh as the Angel.

So again, I think Beale is picking the correct trajectory here, that the destroying angels here in the book of Revelation (especially since when you actually get into the trumpet judgments, at least the first four of them) mimic the plagues on Egypt. Okay, this is probably the best trajectory, to go back to what happened in Egypt, and “Oh! In Psalm 78 when it’s talking about what happened in Egypt, you have a company of destroying angels.” And so we don’t necessarily have to identify them as the specific seven archangels. Again, that terminology’s not used. But I think the best way to understand this in light of the Old Testament is that we have a company of destroying angels just like we had in Egypt, and the number seven is used to denote the completeness of it—the utter de-creation. Again, it is the Day of the Lord, after all. There’s nothing left to do. Let’s move on to Revelation 8:4. Well, let’s just pick up with verse 3.

³ And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴ and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel.

So we have reference here to “the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints,” which of course “rose before God from the hand of the angel.” Now Beale and McDonough write:

“prayer ... as incense” in the OT connotes a prayer accepted by God (e.g., Ps. 141:1–2; cf. *Midr. Rab.* Num. 13:18). Divine acceptance was also indicated by the fragrant “smoke of incense” in the OT temple (e.g., Lev. 16:12–13). In the OT and the NT incense was always associated with sacrifices. Incense was added to the burning of the sacrifice in order to make it acceptable to God (such as that on the Day of Atonement [e.g., Lev. 16:11–19; cf. Exod. 29:18, 25; Lev. 2:1–2; Eph. 5:2. Revelation 8:3–5 echoes Lev. 16:12–13 LXX: the priest “will take his censer full of coals of fire off the altar, which is before the Lord; and he will fill his hands with ... incense ... and he will put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will cover the mercy seat.” Similarly, Exod. 30:8–10 virtually equates “incense” with “burnt offering” and “meal offering” and links it directly with the Day of Atonement. The point here is that the Lord hears the prayers of his priestly people...

Remember, who are the priests in the book of Revelation? They’re believers. And the believers in the book of Revelation are the ones being martyred, the ones who are suffering. So the point here is that the Lord hears the prayers of his priestly people, just like using the Leviticus imagery for the Day of Atonement connects those prayers with the prayers of these Old Testament figures, which God accepted. And back to Beale and McDonough:

[And the Lord] answers with devastating judgment. Consequently, the Leviticus and Exodus portrayals serve as analogical precursors for Rev. 8:4.

Since the specific referent is the Day of Atonement, that’s going to matter as well. Because just think about the imagery that we’ve just talked about. Hey, we’ve got after Revelation 8:2... Really the rest of the book to Revelation 22:5 is the content of the scroll. It’s all this apocalyptic judgment stuff. So the world is going to be de-created. And then it’s going to be recreated again into a new Eden, just like what happened in Genesis. There’s a chaotic beginning—chaos. God brings order to the chaos. He produces a habitable world for humanity, and we get the Garden of Eden. So we have this same process going on. And what is the Day of Atonement for? Think back to the Leviticus series. I used this analogy, which should be familiar to everyone. It’s hitting the reset button. If you remember the sacrifice that occurs at the Day of Atonement, Aaron kills a bull, because that’s going to purge him of defilement. Because he’s going to have to enter into sacred space. And on *this* day, he even enters the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat. Because the two goats that are taken... The one that’s sacrificed is never sprinkled upon Israelites or the people corporately. That blood is sprinkled upon the tabernacle (the objects, these holy objects, including the mercy seat). Why? It’s to decontaminate them, to purge them, to essentially

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restore them to pristine condition as they were at the very beginning of the construction of all these objects when the worship—the whole Leviticus system—was first created and instituted by God. The Day of Atonement is a reset button. And if you look at it that way, it makes sense to have the Day of Atonement specifically referenced here in Revelation 8 as if to say, “God has heard the prayers of the suffering of his people. He is going to deal chaos a final death-blow (this is the Day of the Lord).” The wicked are going to be de-created. In fact, the whole earth is going to be de-created. All of those who are preserved through this, who will make it to the other side (the new Eden) are going to be the righteous. They’re going to be the Lord’s. Okay? Everyone else, this is their end. There’s going to be everlasting life for the righteous and everlasting death for the unrighteous. There is a clear demarcation point. And when you emerge on the other side, you get to a new Eden. And it is as if there had been no Fall, there had been no evil, there had been none of this stuff. It is a reset button. It is Eden as it was intended to be. And to use the imagery of the Day of Atonement trappings (the ceremony there) would be a good conceptual way of communicating the point of the reset. Everything is going to be de-created. Yes, it’s going to be awful. It’s so horrifying that there’s silence in heaven. But on the other side, everything is going to be restored and renewed to what God originally wanted it to be.

And so these hooks back into these Old Testament themes, and in some cases specifically passages (whether it’s Exodus or Leviticus or whatever), are important for communicating ideas—even the company of destroying angels that takes people’s minds back to the plagues in Egypt, which were a precursor to what? To deliverance of the people of God. Taking them to... It was the initial stage of arriving at and in the Promised Land. Okay? So all these themes are important to sort of cast what’s going to happen in imagery associated with the judgment of the gods of Egypt. That was the major force of chaos in the life of God’s people. It was Egypt. Because God’s people were living where? In Egypt! The descendants of Abraham are in Egypt. And so chaos and the gods that helped created it are destroyed. They’re dealt with. They are judged. And then God’s people are delivered. So that’s one set of images. The other set of images is the Day of Atonement—the reset button. All these things are important to sort of help communicate ideas about what’s being revealed in the book.

So that brings us to 8:5, and this’ll be the last verse I comment on for this episode. We have:

⁵ Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

Now that language ought to be familiar. Beale and McDonough write:

This is the last judgment. The fire results in “thunders and sounds and lightnings and quaking,” which is an almost identical expression for a description of consummate judgment [MH: later in the book] in [MH: Revelation] 11:19; 16:18. This fourfold metaphorical chain of cosmic disturbance has a precedent in the OT, where also it refers to divine judgment [MH: and look at the passages he references] (e.g., esp. Exod. 19:16, 18; also Ps. 77:17–18; Isa. 29:6)...

Okay, Exodus 19 ought to be ringing bells with Sinai. We’ve seen this language before in association with the presence of God—God showing up at Sinai. Beale and McDonough continue:

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Since the formulaic phrase concludes the series of trumpets and bowls by referring to the last judgment, the same formula here likewise must conclude the series of seals.

In those later references in Revelation (11:19; 16:18), you’re going to see the same language wrap up the series of trumpets and the series of bowls. It’s going to sound the same way. So what Beale and McDonough are saying is it’s here because it concludes the series of seals. So when the seals are done, you get this thunder, lightning, quaking language. When the next series is done you’re going to see it again. When the third series is done, you’re going to see it again. So back to Beale and McDonough:

The Sinai theophany of Exod. 19:16–18 is partly in mind in 8:5, since it was part of the allusion, if not the primary one, [MH: earlier in Revelation] in 4:5 [MH: which we talked about quite a bit in those episodes]... the virtually identical phrases in 4:5; 8:5; 11:19; 16:18–21 all Sinai allusions... The portrayal of 8:3–5 is modeled to a great extent on Ezek. 10:1–7. There also an angelic figure stands in the heavenly temple (cf. Ezek. 1:1–28) and is told, “Fill your hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim [presumably from the altar] and scatter them over the city [Jerusalem]” (10:2; cf. 10:6–7). This comes immediately after the narrative of Ezek. 9, in which the angels are commanded to slay all the unfaithful in Jerusalem upon whose foreheads God’s angel did not place a protective mark.

Now we’ve been through some of that before when we talked about Revelation 4, so we’re not going to rehearse that here. But again, you get the same feel. You’ve got Day of the Lord imagery. You’ve got it married to Sinai imagery, because this is a way to communicate the presence of God—the wrath of God, God being the agent behind all this. It’s God seated on his throne. In Sinai, it’s on the mountain. Here it’s the heavenly temple—it’s the heavenly abode. Back at Sinai, it was this earthly abode on this particular mountain.

So John again wants to communicate all of these ideas: the deliverance of his people preceded by the judgment of the gods of Egypt, the judgment of chaos,

and so on and so forth, the deliverance of his people. They're coming to a place. In the Old Testament they wind up at Sinai and God makes a covenant with them. With this same Sinai imagery (the thundering and the lightning and the quaking and all that stuff), but God is not their enemy. God is the one who loves them and enters into a covenant with them. I mean, people are scared (because we've covered this is the book of Exodus series as well), but they actually enter into a covenant there. And here, by looping this in, it's like, okay, God's remembering his covenant. He has heard the prayers of his people. He's going to do it all over again. He's going to judge the agents of chaos, whether they're human or supernatural. He's going to de-created everything. But he's also going to recreate. He will remember his covenant. He will remember those who are his. And they will emerge (once the reset button is hit) on the other side in the new Eden.

Really, Revelation 8:1-5 or 1-6 kind of sets up not only the de-creation stuff from this point on to early in Revelation 22, but it also sort of sets up what follows that, when you get to the vision of the new Jerusalem—the new Eden, the global Eden, the new earth. It sets up all this stuff thematically. And so this is a good place to stop, because next time we'll take a specific look at the plagues and their similarities to what's going on in Egypt. And then there are a couple of these judgments (the trumpet judgments, the first four of these, essentially the plagues of Egypt all over again), but there are others that are different that take us into (if I dare say it) more supernatural territory.

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So what you get is the first four trumpets are going to be modeled on the Exodus plagues against Egypt. In essence, they're a re-enactment. It's what was done to Egypt all over again. Plus, that helps us see sort of a new Exodus deliverance for the people of God. They're the ones that are going to survive on the other side. The righteous are vindicated at the Day of the Lord. But chapter 9's fifth trumpet, believe it or not, is oriented by the fall of *halal ben shakar* (the shining one, the Lucifer figure, if you will). There are connections to that one in the fifth trumpet. and also the judgment of the Watchers in the abyss. That happens in Revelation 9, too, in conjunction with these judgments. There's a lot of demonic imagery in the last two. Let's just put it that way—a lot of supernatural cosmic powers of darkness imagery in the last two. So that's what we're going to hit next time. We'll go through all six of them that occur in these two chapters. And again, hopefully by listening to this introductory part you can kind of see where things are going to go and the logic of what parts of the Old Testament are sort of brought into play to help us understand what's going to follow and really help the reader understand what's going to emerge on the other side of, basically, the world being annihilated. [laughs] You know? I mean, because that's what the apocalypse is. That's what the Day of the Lord is. So it sets up what God is doing. It's not random destruction. The apocalypse itself—the de-creation itself—has a goal. Things are going to get reset. And again, that's what's going to play out in the rest of the book.

TS: Alright, Mike. Looking forward to Part 2, I guess we could call it, of chapters 8-9 and the trumpets. Can you imagine if the trumpets were actually like a saxophone? Does that make it scarier? [MH laughs]

MH: Gosh. That doesn't really strike me as a scary instrument. Unless maybe I was playing it. Then it would...

TS: I should've saved that joke for next week. Maybe I'll bring it back then. Since I played the saxophone, that's why I bring it up.

MH: Okay.

TS: Alright, Mike, good stuff. Looking forward to it next week. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.