

Naked Bible Podcast Transcript

Episode 376

Revelation 8:7-13

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Episode Summary

Revelation 8 begins the vision of the first six trumpets. In Part 1 of our look at this chapter, we looked at features of the first six verses, such as the Lamb's opening of the seventh and final seal on the scroll from Revelation, the accompanying silence in heaven 5, and the seven angels in the scene. In Part 2 we discuss verses 7-13, a description of the first four trumpet judgments. The Old Testament context of these four trumpet judgments reveals clear connections to the exodus plagues and the Deuteronomy 32 worldview.

Transcript

TS: Welcome to the Naked Bible Podcast, Episode 376: Revelation 8:7-13. I'm the layman, Trey Stricklin, and he's the scholar, Dr. Michael Heiser. Hey, Mike! How are you doing?

MH: Pretty good. I can't complain. Busy. Doing lots of good stuff.

TS: Well, Mike, you know we get lots of emails from random people. And I think somebody reached out to you recently that's pretty cool, if you want to tell that story.

MH: Yeah. Yeah, it was surprising. I got an email from a major league baseball pitcher. I'm not going to give the name here. But somebody who's read some of my stuff, watched some videos, listens to the podcast. And this guy leads a Bible study in his clubhouse. So he had a question on the Deuteronomy 32 worldview, believe it or not. So it's just kind of cool, that there's just stuff like that going on all the time that nobody knows about, you never hear about it, it never gets posted, thrown to the winds and all that sort of stuff. But yeah, there you go. One of the major league baseball teams has a guy that's into the content and gets to lead a Bible study. So that's pretty cool.

TS: Yeah, that *is* cool. I like to hear Christian athletes actively studying in the clubhouse. That's pretty cool. That's secretly what I wish I was doing, in a clubhouse as a professional athlete studying the Bible. It sounds amazing.

MH: Yeah. And my only hope now is that he helps my Fantasy team. Because I picked him up. [laughs]

TS: That was my first question to you. I asked, “Did you pick him up?” And you’re like, “Yep.” [laughter]

MH: I did, I did. So it’s like, “Okay. I’m giving you content here, so you can get me some stats.” [laughs]

TS: Yeah. That’s awesome.

MH: My Naked Bible baseball team is in last place. It just... Man. It’s really weird, because I’m in first place in two of my brother’s leagues. And I’m in last place in this one. It’s like, “What in the world?” So I don’t know. Who can figure it out?

TS: Yeah. Well, hopefully they listen to this podcast, since we talk sports. You know? Maybe we’ll get a listener to... So if you *are* in the clubhouse, here’s a shoutout to you all listening. Just in case you’re listening.

MH: Yeah, absolutely.

TS: Yeah, that’s pretty sweet. Well, hey, we’re still in Revelation 8.

MH: And people might have noticed by virtue of the title that we are *not* going to get into chapter 9 today. We’re going to finish chapter 8. So we’re going to move into chapter 9 in its own episode. Because once I got into this, it’s like, there’s just too much stuff here to talk about. So I’m not going to try to weed things out just to get through.

So we will finish verses 7-13. That’s the rest of chapter 8, and these are the first four trumpet judgments. So that’s what we’ll cover today. And again, the focus here is to cover them in their Old Testament context. And so a lot of the discussion today is going to involve in some way the plagues on Egypt. You recall from the Exodus series we did that the plagues were directed against Egyptian gods. And so, consequently, there will also be a couple of references to the Deuteronomy 32 worldview in this, which I suspect is going to be pretty unique in terms of how Revelation anywhere gets talked about. So we’re going to go through the four trumpets, just with an eye toward what is John (what are the visions he sees) hooking into as far as Old Testament imagery? And what might that mean? What might that suggest? So the first trumpet is Revelation 8:7. I’m just going to take these as we go through and just read the passage. Again, I’m reading ESV.

⁷The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and these were thrown upon 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.

Now there's an obvious correlation here with the plagues of Egypt. You've got the hail and the fire mixed with blood. So on and so forth. And Beale and McDonough comment on this in the *Old Testament in the New Testament* commentary that Beale and Carson edited.

This verse is patterned after the Egyptian plague of hail and fire in Exod. 9:23–25 LXX [MH: specifically in the Septuagint you have a strong correlation—an overlap in the language—which reads]: “And the Lord gave... hail, and fire ran upon the land [gē]. And the Lord rained hail upon all the land [gē]... And there was hail and flaming fire mingled with the hail... And the hail struck in all the land [gē] [MH: you know, this “land” is mentioned repeatedly there]... And the hail struck all the vegetation in the field, and the hail shattered all the trees in the field.”

5:00

So you get a little bit of added detail there when you reference the Septuagint here. And Beale and McDonough go on to note:

Both Exod. 9 and Rev. 8:7 present an affliction of hail together with fire sent from heaven against three parts of creation: the earth or land, the trees, and the grass. Although the trial from Exodus has been limited in Revelation in two of its effects to “one-third,” it has also undergone universalization. Now the affliction has effect throughout the inhabited earth...

Whereas obviously in Exodus, it's on the land of Egypt. Now the “third” wording here isn't really as transparent as to its context. Going back to Revelation 8:7, a third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees burned up, all the green grass was burned up. So you have this “third” idea in there a couple of times. And where that might come from isn't very clear. So Tonstad in his commentary says that there are so many threes as you go through Revelation 8 (and these trumpets) that it's kind of pointless to look to one Old Testament passage. And then he proceeds to say the most important third is going to be later in the book, Revelation 12 (a third of the stars). And then he proceeds to interpret *this* third and others by the third of the stars in Revelation 12 cast down. I don't know why he does that. He actually doesn't bother noting that passage's connection to Deuteronomy 8:10. So they're the good guys. It's not like a judging evil or anything like that. And he doesn't argue for an identification specifically at all about the third of the stars, but then he proceeds to filter everything else through the dragon. Honestly, his approach just doesn't make sense to me. It seems arbitrary. But I thought I'd mention it. He'll come up again later on when we go through different trumpets where I think he's tracking on something a little bit better. But a more common approach to the “third” language is reflected by Aune in his commentary. And he writes:

The eschatological destructions of one-third of various aspects of the cosmos (a consistent theme throughout 8:2–9:21...) is loosely based on Ezek 5:2 [MH: where you get this language three times and Revelation 5:12 three times], 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.

So Aune (again, this is his comment) thinks that the “third” language has something to do with Ezekiel 5. And that makes more sense than Tonstad, but honestly not a whole lot. It amounts to using the “third” judgment language on Israel back in Ezekiel to describe the judgment of the world here. Now Beale doesn’t rule out a connection to Ezekiel 5, but other things he proposes, I think, are more simple. He says in one place in his commentary:

In both Exodus 9 and Rev. 8:7 hail and fire are sent from heaven against three parts of creation: earth/land [MH: you could translate it either way] (γῆ), trees, and grass... 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 [MH: that would be similar to what goes on in Egypt], though the limitation to one third may be carried over from the previous clauses, as is more clearly the case in 8:11b. 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 so then he goes on to offer another possibility, drawn from the Old Testament, but not Ezekiel 5. He writes:

Rev. 8:7 might also evoke Zech. 13:8–9...

And I’m going to just read that so that listeners can get a feel for that.

**⁸ In the whole land, declares the LORD,
two thirds shall be cut off and perish,
and one third shall be left alive.**

**⁹ And I will put this third into the fire,
and refine them as one refines silver,
and test them as gold is tested.**

So if we actually go back in Zechariah 13, this is a judgment. It’s a judgment on what’s going on in terms of Zechariah’s timing. I mean, this is either exile or post-exilic. And it’s really talking about Day of the Lord. And so you have a judgment, but then you also have a third that’s spared. So if that’s the case, Beale writes, at the end time there’s a fiery judgment that will:

... affect “thirds” in Israel: “two parts will be cut off and perish, but the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third through the fire.” Both the righteous and the ungodly suffer the same trial, but the trial positively refines the righteous, but only punishes the ungodly.

10:00

So that might have a little bit more to do with things. It might fit the context of Revelation 8 and 9 and going on through the book, about the righteous and the unrighteous are affected by these plagues—these trials—but the righteous aren’t going to be the ones that are destroyed. That kind of thing. So they’re refined through the process, or they will be brought through it in some way. So that feels to me like a bit of a better fit.

There’s another factor, though, and that’s a structural one. That’s going to become a little more relevant when we get to Revelation 9. I may mention it again. But I’m just going to throw this out. This is kind of interesting. Steve Moyise, in his book on *Old Testament in Revelation*, observes how the trumpet judgments in Revelation 8 and 9 (and even some material in chapter 10) follows the themes of Joel and Amos consecutively. He has a little chart in his book, and I’ll try to relay this.

<i>Rev.</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Parallel</i>	<i>Old Testament</i>
8:6–13	4 Trumpets	Fire, sun, moon	Joel 2
9:1–12	Locust-scorpions	Smoke, locusts	Joel 3
9:13–21	Lion cavalry	Lions, fire (horses)	Amos 1–2
10:1–7	Angel of oath	Mystery revealed to the prophets	Amos 3

But if you look at Revelation 8:6-13 (that’s what we’re covering today in this episode—the first four trumpets), there’s fire and sun and moon judged. And that’s what happens in Joel 2. If you keep going into chapter 9 in Revelation, you get these locust-scorpions, smoke and locusts. Well, that happens in Joel 3. So Joel 3 follows Joel 2. So Revelation 8 and 9 seem to track on Joel 2 and 3. You keep going in Revelation 9, and you get what Moyise calls a “lion cavalry” (lions and fiery horses). And lo and behold, those are mentioned in Amos 1 and 2. And then on into Revelation 10, you have an angel of an oath and a mystery revealed to the prophets. And you’ll actually read about that in Amos 3. So John is apparently (in 8, 9, and 10) following Joel 2 and 3 and Amos 1-3, just in the ordering of things. And so that’s probably going to be of some use in terms of the context of what’s going on, especially when we hit Revelation 9. But taking that here, that might be a good Old Testament context for this language. So we have maybe Ezekiel 5; maybe Zechariah 13; maybe Joel 2 has something to do with this. And one last note, particularly for those who might favor a recapitulation

view of Revelation as opposed to a linear chronology reading of Revelation. Beale adds this note in his commentary:

[Revelation] 8:7 also echoes Ezek. 38:22 [MH: remember, that's the Gog and Magog passage], which refers to the final end-time defeat of Gog by the Lord: "I will judge him... with blood, and sweeping rain, and hailstones. And I will rain fire on him."

Doesn't that sound like Revelation? [laughs] Sounds like Revelation 8.

Jewish exegetical tradition used Ezek. 38:22 in connection with the hail-plague tradition of Exodus and applied it to end-time events.

So you say, "Why bother mentioning that?" Well, as we're going to see as we keep going through the trumpet judgments, there's going to be similar language repeated in several of the trumpet judgments on into Revelation 9. And if you remember, there's this big debate about how we should read Revelation. Is it a linear chronology of events? That's typically the way a dispensationalist would be taught or explain Revelation. It's a linear chronology. Other views would say, "No, you have cycles of repetition. You have sets of things that just, you roll through those and then they repeat themselves. And so the book is not designed to be read as a linear chronology. There are repetitive factors. And that affects... For instance, when you get to Gog and Magog in Revelation 20, well maybe some of that imagery actually already occurred. And so we don't have Gog and Magog of Ezekiel 8 following a 1,000-year millennium. Maybe the millennium is really the Church on earth, and some of these judgments (Gog, Magog, all these trumpets and stuff like that) actually are things that are happening to believers and unbelievers simultaneously on earth, and they just keep getting recycled. They just keep getting described, but in slightly different language throughout the book, so that you can't (here's the point), so that you can't establish an "end times chronology" from the book of Revelation. It's just impossible to do that because it's not to be read as a linear chronology.

So again, that's the kind of stuff, if we were talking about End Times views, that we would get into. But I thought it was worth observing here. Because you're going to see this language repeated a lot.

So let's go to Revelation 8:8-9... Really, let's just go through Revelation 8:8-11, and trumpets 2 and 3. We're going to take them basically together. Because Trumpet 3 is largely repetitive of Trumpet 2 in terms of some of its language, anyway. So I'm going to read this and you'll see what I mean. So Revelation 8:8:

⁸The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became

blood. ⁹ A third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

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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 people died from the water, because it had been made bitter.

Now obviously there's repetitive, very similar language between both of those—a great mountain falling into the sea, and then the sea becomes blood, and then creatures die. And the next one is a great star falls from heaven, falls on the fresh water, springs of water, and then the people die, the water's poisoned. So there's obviously some overlap here. You know, the plague reference is really the sea turning to blood. That draws our attention right back to Exodus. That one's kind of obvious. The third trumpet (the water becoming bitter) kind of harkens back to the incident at Marah, where the waters were made bitter (Exodus 15). Again, this is following the Red Sea crossing. And between them, there's really little appreciable difference. And so in Beale's commentary, he has some things to say here about kind of the overlap, and really that these two things can be read together. So with respect to Trumpet 2 (the second trumpet) he writes:

The likeness of a mountain could be metaphorical for a kingdom, as elsewhere in the Apocalypse [MH: in the book of Revelation], 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 [MH: on your behalf] [saints, et al.] against her [MH: against Babylon]."

So let me just stop there. What Beale's saying is this throwing this big stone or this "mountain" into the sea, he says there are passages where there's similar language to that, both within the book and outside the book, where this mountain thing is actually a kingdom. And he draws attention to Revelation 18, where it's Babylon. You could also go back to Daniel and you have the "stone made without hands." That's actually the kingdom of God. There are other references like this that take cosmic mountain imagery and relate it to either God's kingdom or the kingdom under some other deity. So he just wants to make his readers aware

that sometimes this language gets used of actual kingdoms. So back to Beale, he says:

Jer. 51:25 refers to Babylon's judgment thus [MH: this one's very clear]: "I am against you, O destroying mountain..."

Okay? [laughs] I mean, Babylon's called a mountain there.

"... and I will make you a burned out mountain" [MH: again, the language is pretty explicit there]... (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" [MH: that language is used of fallen supernatural beings]...). 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) [MH: we'll get to the seventh trumpet later because it's in a later chapter] 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 [MH: there we go again with this big stone imagery of Babylon], and 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 [MH: which we just read]...

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. 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. 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...

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The destruction of ships here anticipates the description [MH: again] in 18:11–19 [MH: so it's going to be repeated later on, just like the "mountain" stuff, you're going to see the ships destroyed in Revelation 18] of the complete destruction of "the great city, Babylon [MH: again, pointing back to Babylon]," the source of maritime commerce: "every shipmaster and all who sail anywhere and every sailor and as many as work on the sea... cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning... and they were weeping and mourning, saying 'woe, woe, is the great city, through which all those who have ships in the sea became wealthy because of her wealth' " (18:17–19). The seafarers mourn because they realize that Babylon's destruction entails their own demise. There may be in 8:9 an implicit idea of a shortage of water, since that was a major effect of the Nile turning into blood ([MH: back in] Exod. 7:18–19, 21, 24), which would intensify the picture of

maritime disaster here. But that aspect of the Exodus background is expressed explicitly only with the third trumpet. The judgment of the great city (“the great mountain” = “Babylon the great”) results in famine, which affects parts of the entire world, here “the sea.” “The sea” is figurative for unbelieving peoples in 17:1, 15, but that may not be the case here because 8:9b continues with a description of what was in the sea. On the other hand, in the light of influence from Jeremiah 51, it is probably no coincidence that Jer. 28(51):42 LXX describes Babylon’s demise with the metaphorical picture of a “sea” that “has come up on Babylon ... and she is covered.”

Now again, Beale goes on for quite a bit demonstrating that (here’s his point) the language in Revelation 8 you’re going to find repeated in Revelation 18, and some in 17. And if you trace that back to the Old Testament in all these places, it leads to one destination, and that is Babylon. This is about the destruction of the world system, i.e., Babylon, that is hostile to God and his people. That’s what the trumpets are about. And he’s saying, “Look, if you’re going to take the Old Testament imagery seriously, you’re not going to be postulating an asteroid impact or something like that for wormwood.” This is what’s commonly out there on the internet—that this either refers to a volcanic eruption in the first century or we’re going to get hit with an asteroid later, or something like that. He’s saying, “Look, we have all this Old Testament imagery here used in this chapter and then repeated. Where this language is repeated in chapter 18, we have references that clearly go back to Babylon in the imagery.” And that makes sense if we’re reading the book of Revelation, because these are the trumpet judgments. They’re judgments against the people who have been persecuting God’s people. I mean, how much more obvious could it be? And Babylon itself is going to be mentioned in the book of Revelation as the entity or city or supernatural force—cosmic Babylon—behind this persecution. And so those people (the people of the nations) and their gods are the ones who are subject to these judgments. And that goes all the way back to the Old Testament, where Babylon is the poster child for anti-Eden in the Old Testament, cosmic evil. And not only that, but where do we get the nations and their gods to begin with? Aha! Genesis 11. Deuteronomy 32. Babylon. It actually coheres really well if we pay attention to the Old Testament imagery.

Now that doesn’t necessarily mean we’re going to be able to figure out, “Okay, what exactly, precisely, is being described here?” It’s not going to answer the question of, “Should we be preterists now, or should we not?” Because those questions are tied to bigger questions about the date of the book and things like this. And Beale was what he would call an “idealistic amillennialist.” He’s not going to be in the preterist camp. He doesn’t live there. But again, you get the idea. I hate to say it this way, but if you ignore the Old Testament connections and read Revelation simply as a linear chronology, you’re not going to get any of this. [laughs] It’s all going to just be invisible to you.

Let's go to Trumpet 3. Again, we're taking 2 and 3 in tandem. And Beale has a few things to say about the third trumpet specifically. Here Beale actually gets into what we would recognize as Deuteronomy 32 worldview language. And you might ask, "Well, how?" And the answer to that is, the language for fallen divine beings (i.e., fallen stars) gets married to judgment of the earth's nations. This is Psalm 82, Deuteronomy 32. So Beale writes:

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With the third trumpet the judgment of famine appears to be continued. The misery of foul, undrinkable water implicit in the second trumpet is brought to the fore. Therefore, Exod. 7:15–24 still stands in the background [MH: the plagues], as is also evident from the statement here that "rivers and springs of waters" were affected (MH: and that's the wording drawn from] Exod. 7:19). The similarity is enhanced by Ps. 78:44, which paraphrases the exodus plague by saying that God "changed their rivers into blood, and their streams, that they should not drink..."

So Psalm 78:44, which describes the Exodus plagues, is actually a really, really close parallel to both Trumpets 2 and 3. It covers what happens there. Back to Beale:

As with the second trumpet, so again here a great fireball is thrown from heaven. This time it is not depicted as "a great mountain" but as "a great star burning like a torch." If this is a continuation of the similar judgment of the first two trumpets, then the fire can again be understood as a metaphor of famine. We have observed elsewhere that stars represent angelic beings in Revelation, the OT, and post-biblical Judaism (see on 1:19). These angels themselves often corporately represent earthly peoples [MH: that would make sense] and kingdoms [MH: *that* would make sense, again, Deuteronomy 32 worldview], and fire typically symbolizes judgment in the Apocalypse and other related literature (see on 8:8). The same must be the case here. As in v 8, we see here the judgment of an angel who is a legal-like representation of sinful people.

These are the gods of the nations. This is Deuteronomy 32 worldview thinking. Now what's interesting here is that Beale actually finds this in rabbinic literature. He says:

[The] *Midrash Rabbah* for 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...

Rabbinic Judaism actually saw this. It interprets this plague—the plague on the waters—as a judgment on heavenly beings, just like Revelation's doing. In other words, in that case it's a judgment on the Nile deity.

... who are legal agents representing sinful people, the latter of whom are likewise affected. Isa. 24:21 [MH: this passage should be familiar to those of you familiar with what I write, Deuteronomy 32 worldview, Day of the Lord judgment, combined with Deuteronomy 32 thinking] is adduced in support of the midrashic interpretation: “the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high and the kings of the earth on earth”...

So there you get both. Mike isn't making this up. There it is right in the Rabbis, where you have Isaiah 24 describing a judgment of not only earthly armies, but those supernatural beings which correspond to the punished nations right there in the same passage. Okay? So he references another rabbinic text, commenting on Exodus 12:12 for the same thing. He says:

... So similarly *Midr. Rab.* Exod. 23.15 affirms that both the Egyptians and their guardian angel...

Again, this is rabbinic language. [laughs] Patron angels associated with the nations. Let me just stop here. What's really striking about this is that a lot of this rabbinic stuff... Now catch this. This is going to be really important to some of you out in the audience. Because I always get this, “You know, well, the traditional Hebrew text doesn't say that the nations were allotted to the sons of God. That's the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Septuagint. We're going to stick with the traditional Hebrew text, regardless of whether it makes sense or not. We're just going to stick with it, because it's the Masoretic Text.” What do you think the rabbis in the early medieval period are using? They're using the traditional Masoretic Text. But they *still* have this theology. Lo and behold, they're still catching it. Now that either suggests (and I've made this comment before)... The idea that there is one Masoretic Text that every Jew after 100 A.D. followed slavishly and just bought what the council of rabbis who decided to standardize the text were selling. That is not true. Within the Jewish community, there is still a multiplicity of texts. And I'm willing to bet (because the theology comes through real nicely here, in the Jewish community)... I'm willing to bet that the Deuteronomy 32:8 reading of Qumran did survive, in the minds, at least, of some people, if not the texts. You know, it's still there. The theology is still there, one way or the other.

30:00

Now I've referenced Aptowitz before. He's a German scholar who collected *all* of the citations of the Hebrew Bible in rabbinic writings. It's seven volumes. It's in German, unfortunately. And if you look at his work, it makes the point that the rabbinic community (the Jewish community, the serious community, the rabbis that we all like to talk about—“the rabbis”) were quoting Hebrew Bible texts that in places do not align with the Masoretic Text. They had their own preferences. There are variations. So I'm just saying. It's no defense... You can try to retreat from the theology all you want. But we can whip out here some rabbinic texts that have the same Deuteronomy 32 worldview in them, and say, “Wow, what about

that? Check that out.” So let’s go back to Beale. He’s commenting on *Midrash Rabbah*, Exodus 23.

Midr. Rab. Exod. 23.15 affirms that both the Egyptians and their guardian angel were judged at the Red Sea.

“Egyptians and their guardian angel.” Gosh, where are they getting that?

This interpretation is supported by *1 En.* 18:13...

How dare he invoke Enoch when commenting on rabbinic texts? [laughs] But he does.

... 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).

Again, this association with punishing “fallen angels” with people—marrying those two things together—folks, that *is* the Deuteronomy 32 worldview. That’s what it is. It’s the Psalm 82 worldview. Back to Beale:

Rev. 8:10 appears, then, to portray judgment that people and their representative angel(s) endure throughout history and that precedes their final condemnation at the end of history. The burning star could, on the other hand, represent merely an agent of divine judgment. However, the observation that the descent of the burning mountain in v 10 is parallel to the descent of the burning star in v 8 also indicates that the star should be identified as an angelic representative of an evil kingdom undergoing judgment. Here the judgment of Babylon’s angel is in view, since v 8 concerns the judgment of Babylon the Great.

Okay? Let’s transition a little bit to wormwood. I want to say a few things about this. What about the terminology “wormwood”? ESV Study Bible has a note:

Wormwood (Gk: *apsinthos*) is the name of a plant and of the bitter-tasting extract derived from it. (*Artemisia Absinthium*).

Now the curious thing is there’s no direct Septuagint use of this Greek term. It might sound surprising, but it’s true. And so Silva... Moisés Silva is the editor. I don’t know who wrote the article off the top of my head. But this is from the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*. It’s a multivolume word study resource. And we read there:

The form *apsinthos* is not attested prior to the NT, although it occurs twice in Aretaeus, a medical author from Cappadocia who lived in the 2nd cent. AD... then

mainly in Christian writers [MH: thereafter]. In the classical period this word occurs in the form *apsinthov* (Hippocrates and other medical writers). It refers to *Artemisia absinthium*, a herbaceous perennial with silky leaves that bears masses of small yellow flowers; it yields a bitter dark oil that is sometimes used medicinally to kill intestinal worms [MH: isn't that pleasant?].

[In Jewish literature] Neither form occurs in the LXX, but Aquila uses it to transl. [MH: a particular word] לַעֲנָה H4360 [*la^anâ*] (Prov 5:4 et al.).

Let me just reference Proverbs 5:4 so that we can sort of think back to it here.

⁴ but in the end she is bitter as wormwood...

And so we have the word translated here in English “wormwood” is לַעֲנָה (H4360—*la^anâ*), which in Aquila... Again, this is an early writer that has a relationship to the Septuagint, but he's not the point of origin for what we think of as the Septuagint. He does use *apsinthos*. So there's some correlation. We're going to see Proverbs 5:4 again in a moment. Back to Silva:

The problem is that here the affected water causes death, whereas wormwood, at least as we understand the term, is bitter but not poisonous. The author may have in mind a different substance that was genuinely poisonous. Or he may be employing a way of speech, not uncommon in antiquity, whereby bitterness and poison were connected (see *χολή* G5958). He may be reasoning from the bitterness of the taste to the bitterness of the results. This fits in also with the fact that in the OT wormwood or gall is used of God's punishment of the wicked: “I will make this people eat bitter food [לַעֲנָה – the [MH: same] word found in Prov 5:4 above] and drink poisoned water” (Jer 9:15 [9:14]).

So Jeremiah 9:15 (and I think it's verse 14 in the Septuagint):

I will make this people eat bitter food.

35:00 לַעֲנָה, food. Okay? So that's wormwood or gall, which is kind of interesting because of the reference to Jesus on the cross, and what they offer him, and what he refuses, and so on and so forth. But anyway, let's bring Beale into the picture here. (That was Silva.) Beale writes this:

The metaphor was chosen to show that judgment was well-suited to the crime: because the prophets figuratively “polluted” Israel with idolatry, so God is pictured as polluting them with bad water...

In other words, the prophets bring judgment against Israel because of their idolatry. They bring out its pollution. And so God is sort of returning the gesture—the favor. In other words, it's referring to bitterness of suffering, and the suffering is well deserved.

... This figurative meaning is confirmed from the indisputable metaphorical uses of the word everywhere else in the OT, where it also represents severe affliction resulting from divine wrath (Deut. 29:17–18, again in connection with idolatry...

So there לַעֲנָה is connected with idolatry. He cites Proverbs 5:4, which we've already mentioned. He has a number of other citations (Lamentations 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7; 6:12; Hosea 10:4). Again, there are places in the Old Testament where לַעֲנָה (that word depicting bitterness) connects it to suffering, and it also connects it to idolatry. And so what Beale is saying, this concatenation of associations is how we need to go back and look at what's being written here in Revelation. So Beale comments:

So likewise in Rev. 8:11 Babylon, the prevailing world system, has influenced the earth-dwellers and some in the covenant community to become idolatrous. And the consequence of such idolatrous pollution is judgment on both Babylon and those held under its sway.

Against the OT background, the third trumpet does not unleash a woe in which water becomes literally poisoned. Rather, the tone is one of judgment that brings bitter suffering, including death, not only on “outsiders” to the covenant but also on purported members of the community of faith [MH: that turned to idolatry]...

They're all going to suffer bitterly, is Beale's point, again, using it metaphorically. Beale adds one more thought:

The judgment of poisoning water with wormwood in 8:11 conveys the idea of famine and so continues the theme of the preceding two trumpet woes. This is in line with ideas seen in early Jewish writings.

So this connection with famine... Look, if your plants are burned up and if the water that waters those plants is made bitter or poisonous to those plants, guess what? You're not going to have a lot to eat. That's the connection with famine, which, again, goes back to the Old Testament and the whole Egyptian situation as well.

Let's go to Trumpet 4 and the transition to chapter 9. I'll read the last two verses of the chapter.

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 might be darkened, and a third of the day might be kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

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

So that one’s looking forward into what is yet to come. So verse 12, the fourth trumpet, is at least in part an allusion based on Exodus 10:21-22 (the plague of darkness over Egypt). Again, Egypt was the persecutor of God’s people. And the plague lasted three days. Recall from our series on Exodus that the plagues were directed against Egyptian gods, and none more noteworthy than this one, the blotting out of the sun. Just think how solar theology was so important to Egypt, and this one would’ve really freaked them out. Early Jewish literature, for example, the *Wisdom of Solomon* (in the Apocrypha) or if you have an English translation of the Septuagint, you can find it there too. So the *Wisdom of Solomon* in particular... That material interpreted the plague of darkness to have symbolic significance: exile from the true God; prisoners of darkness. Amos 8:9 is also likely part of John’s reference (in that case, a judgment on apostate Israelites patterned after the plague on Egypt). The fourth trumpet language may hearken back to the creation account, though, as well. Now this is a little bit of a different... It’s obvious to see a connection back to the Egyptian plague, the plague of darkness. But Aune and a few other commentators wonder about, there might be another antecedent in the Old Testament. And they go back to the creation account. Here’s what he means. He writes:

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.

40:00

So what he’s getting at there is a situation that reverts to pre-Day 4 chaos. Elsewhere Aune notes the ancient Jewish context of the “midheaven” terminology in some of these passages. So if we go back to... Well, I’ll just continue with Aune. It’s Revelation 8:13 for the sake of *this* passage. It’s going to come up a little bit later. But let me go to Revelation 8:13 again:

13 Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice as it flew directly overhead...

Okay, the “overhead” terminology there is actually *mesouranēma*. So *ouranós* in Greek is “heaven.” *Mes* is “midst.” So it’s actually a term that means “midheaven.” Directly overhead, if you think about the imagery. You look directly over your head, and the sun would be right in the middle of the sky. So it’s “midheaven.” You say, “Who cares?” Well, Aune is going to comment on this terminology, and he sees something interesting here. He says:

The noun *mesouranēma* “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, who is greater than all, who dominates all the beings in midheaven.

That’s kind of interesting. This position of dominance also makes the reference to the eagle interesting. So what he’s basically saying is the midheaven term was the place... It’s the center of the heavens. And at the center of the heavens is the place from which God rules everything in heaven. That’s the idea. So now he’s going to move from that and he’s going to talk about the eagle. So Aune writes,

The eagle was regarded as the messenger of Zeus.

This would, as in earlier references in Revelation 1, be a usurpation of Zeus’ “most high” status. Go back to the “midheaven” amulet (the most likely Jewish amulet) that is talking about Yahweh. “One God in the heavens...” Look at “who exists and who preexists (who is, and who was) and is greater than all.” “[W]ho preexists, who is greater than all.” So that God is “midheaven.” He’s the one who actually controls things. And then the “eagle” reference, regarded as a symbol as the messenger of Zeus. No, it’s not the symbol of the messenger of Zeus for John; it’s the symbol of the messenger of the God of Israel, because the God of Israel is the one sending the angel, okay? So this is actually kind of an oblique way... Again, it’s taking a shot at Zeus’ claim to be Most High. It’s kind of interesting. So I thought I’d loop that in here. It’s a bit obscure, in terms of first century Jewish cosmology. It’s not technically Old Testament. But again, it’s another swipe at Zeus, which we saw John do a couple of times back in Revelation 1:4.

Now Pilch and Malina... Malina is a name familiar to the podcast audience. He's the one who did the book on Astral Theology and Revelation. The book is called *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*. He has a co-author—Pilch. They're both New Testament scholars. And they wrote a separate book, a social science commentary on the book of Revelation. And they note this about the astro-theological worldview context of the midheaven and the eagle and all that. They write:

As we have previously noted, the word translated here as “mid-heaven” (*mesouranema*) is a technical term in astrology and astronomy. The eagle in this context occupies the position of the constellation Pegasus. Its location in mid-heaven points to its significance [MH: and they're going to quote Firmicus Maternus, who was an ancient astronomer]. “This is because frequently—or rather always—in all charts, the medium *caeli* (mid-heaven) holds the principal place” (Firmicus Maternus, *Mathesis* III, 1, 18; Rhys Bram 1975:75).

This is sort of like the “center of the universe” idea. Earlier, in discussing Revelation 4 and the heavenly creatures full of eyes in the same commentary, Pilch and Malina wrote this:

... [S]tars are called “eyes.” Because of this, the four living creatures “full of eyes” would be constellations [MH: we covered this back in Revelation 4], “full of stars,” both here as well as in Ezekiel 1 and 10. In this scenario, it seems they bear the throne on their cosmic backs, while the front of their bodies faces outward.

Let me just stop here. So if you think of the four cherubim, if you're thinking they're constellations, they're going to be facing outward. And then the back parts of them are going to be facing inward. And then atop them is where the deity sits. And so on and so forth. So just get that image in your mind, these four constellations. So they write:

45:00

The four constellations both here as well as in Ezekiel are the four Babylonian seasonal constellations: [Scorpio], Leo, Taurus, and Pegasus... Pegasus, a constellation which a Babylonian inscription calls “the leader of the stars from the divinity Anu,” namely, the stars of the equator. This constellation was the Babylonian Thunderbird (see Jacobsen 1976:128–29), the flying eagle to be identified with the constellation called “Hippos” in the Greek sky. This constellation occurs again in 8:13 [MH: so the eagle, they're saying, is the Pegasus (the flying eagle in astral theological thinking)]. In Babylonian lore, traceable to the seventh century B.C.E., Pegasus is the leader of the stars along the celestial equator, just as Aries is the leader of the stars of the ecliptic. Thus, each of these constellations bears a “royal” star—that is, enough to prove their special

significance in Greek astronomy/astrology, which follows Babylonian sources in this case.

These four constellations are likewise depicted in a Babylonian source as designating the four directions of the sky, for they lie about 90 degrees from each other. In this position, they duly circumscribed the whole vault of the sky, and in our scenario, the reference to “the throne of God” would refer to the whole of the sky. Furthermore, since these constellations stood at the equator opposite each other, the phrase “in the middle of the throne and around the throne” makes sense, for the equator both cuts the sky in half and goes around it.

Now what’s the point of bringing their commentary from Revelation 4 into Revelation 8, with the midheaven thing and Pegasus and whatnot? If you’re thinking on these terms and then you read Revelation, you realize what John is doing. John is saying that, no, the Greek pantheon (Zeus or whoever—the eagle being the symbol of Zeus), this midheaven Pegasus that’s supposed to be marking where Zeus’ throne is... John is basically taking all of that and not throwing it in the dumpster, but he’s saying, “No. We’re going to kick Zeus off the throne here. We’re going to take Zeus out of this position. The constellations that map out time and all this sort of stuff were created by God—the God of Israel—back in Genesis. He is the one, just like in Ezekiel 1, who sits on the throne and controls the course of time and history.” Again, this is Ezekiel 1 messaging, tucked away in one verse in Revelation 8. That’s the whole point.

Again, if you have this kind of thinking in your mind, as a first century pagan, or even possibly a first century Jew, if you were interested in this sort of thing (astronomy), you would know all these things and you would’ve been exposed to the religious significance of the terminology in a first century Greco-Roman astral-theological worldview. And John is basically just wiping Zeus right out of the picture. That’s the point.

So in terms of John’s theology, the judgment of Babylon and its gods is what’s happening with the first four trumpets. Zeus isn’t on the throne. His Babylonian equivalent isn’t on the throne. The God of Israel is on the throne—the God of heaven, and also the God who is father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is going to punish those who are persecuting the people who are loyal to him. And again, he’s using all this messaging, taking our minds back to the Old Testament, specifically the judgment of Babylon. Because Babylon was the primo persecutor of the people of God in the Old Testament. They’re the ones who took Judah, the royal dynasty, into exile. They’re the ones that destroyed the temple. They are ground-zero for anti-Eden chaos thinking. All that is opposed to what God wants. Okay? They just [laughs] wiped out. And yeah, they did it under the sovereignty of God and punishment for Israel’s apostasy. We get that. But they still bear this label.

50:00

And so here in Revelation, John, in terms of both symbology and also quotations about Babylon, is dipping into the Old Testament. That fits right into the Old Testament judgment now being transferred to the enemies of God in the book of Revelation, who are getting what they deserve. You know, just to reinforce the notion of who's in control (that would be God) and who is going to be punished (well, that's the boots-on-the-ground people who persecute the people of God and their gods). And you say, "What about Egypt? Why would Egypt get looped into this?" Before Babylon, which nation was the nation that was the major force of chaos that persecuted the people of God? That would be Egypt. It's a repetitive theme. The supervillain changes. [laughs] Okay? It's Egypt and then it becomes Babylon. These are the two focal points. And if you think about the birth of Israel in terms of being brought out of Egypt, passing through the sea, entering into a covenant, a renewed relationship with God at Sinai, well, that's where things sort of begin again, post-Abraham. I mean, Abraham's obviously the person God chooses to raise up Israel as a seed, as a new humanity. And again, even Abraham has Mesopotamian origins, possibly Babylonian, depending on where Ur is. But you see the Babylon thing or the Mesopotamia thing; then it's Egypt; now it's back to Babylon. All these episodes sort of telegraph the conflict between what God wants (the Edenic relationship, to be God among his people on earth) and what happens. What happens to the whole plan? It gets destroyed. Why? Not because God wants it destroyed, but because of disloyalty—unbelieving disloyalty, the opposite of believing loyalty. That's why it happens. Apostasy. Moving over to some other god. And it just gets repeated here in Revelation, using the same Old Testament themes.

So again, if we're reading the book of Revelation and we're using a newspaper as our commentary, and we're reading it in linear fashion only... Again, my view is that both things happen. There's both recapitulation and linear. But if you're reading the book of Revelation with *Meet the Press* or the newspaper or something like that as your commentary and you're blind to how the Old Testament is used by John, all of this is invisible. All of this is invisible. You're going to be talking black helicopters and asteroid hits. And that is just not the point. It's just not the point.

So again, what we're trying to do in this series, and what we'll continue on with in Revelation 9 when we pick up Trumpets 5 and 6, is to at least encourage you to look up some of these references. The cross references in your Bible are there for a reason. Because scholars who produce these things in committee translation projects... These cross references are supposed to help you locate the context, or at least a parallel, to what's being said in your translation. And when those cross references lead you back to the Old Testament, chances are high that that has some importance for how we should interpret what we're reading in the New Testament (in this case, the book of Revelation). But anyway, next time we'll pick up with Revelation 9. Everybody likes Revelation 9 because of the locusts and all that stuff. And if you've read *Reversing Hermon*, you

already know I think this has something to do with the release of the Watchers. But that'll be in the next episode as we pick up with the next two trumpet judgments and tackle that chapter.

TS: Alright, Mike, looking forward to that. Lots of questions in 8 and 9. I suspect we'll be getting into that.

MH: Yeah.

TS: And again, I want to remind our listeners that I've been getting some emails about Revelation and I want to remind them that I'm collecting them and we're going to do several Q&As just on Revelation. I've got some questions about that, Mike. So I'm collecting them. We're saving them. And then at the conclusion of Revelation on the podcast, we'll have several Q&As.

MH: I've also gotten a couple of emails. And I'm glad you mentioned that, Trey, because we are going to wait till we're done with the book to do the Q&As about Revelation. And like Trey said, there'll be more than one, we're sure. So make sure Trey is the one who gets your questions in email, because he's compiling those.

TS: I think we had three Q&As covering the last book.

MH: Something like that.

TS: So I'm sure this one is going to be a lot. [laughter] They're already starting to pour in. So TreyStricklin@gmail.com. That's where you can send that. And if you don't know how to spell my last name, then go to NakedBiblePodcast.com and get the right spelling. Because I think lots of people... I get some emails about that. "Oh, I've been spelling your name wrong..."

MH: Yeah, they're bouncing.

TS: Absolutely. Well, Mike, that's awesome. We'll be looking for chapter 9 next week. And with that, I want to thank everybody for listening to the Naked Bible Podcast! God Bless.