

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 351 – December 17th – Revelation 8:1-13

Works frequently referenced in these notes on the book of Revelation

Morris, Leon	<i>The Revelation of St John</i> (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1969
Mounce, Robert H	<i>The Book of Revelation</i> (New International Commentary on the New Testament), Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1977
Peterson, Eugene H	<i>Reversed Thunder</i> , San Francisco, HarperCollins, 1991
Witherington, Ben	<i>Revelation</i> (New Cambridge Bible Commentary), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003

Chapter 8

Following the parenthesis of Ch 7 the drama returns to the opening of the seventh and final seal.

Verse 1

Καὶ ὅταν ἤνοιξεν τὴν σφραγίδα τὴν ἑβδόμην, ἐγένετο σιγή ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ὡς ἡμῶριον.

ὅταν when

ἀνοίγω see 5:2

σφραγίς, ἰδος f see 5:1

ἑβδομος, η, ον seventh

ἐγένετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s γινομαι

σιγή, ης f silence

οὐρανός, ου m heaven

ἡμῶριον, ου n half an hour

A dramatic pause. Cf. Hab 2:20; Zeph 1:7-8; Zech 2:13.

The seven trumpets and seven bowls in part recapitulate the themes of the seven seals. But it is not wise to seek to impose too rigid a structure upon the book.

Verse 2

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

ἑπτὰ seven

The use of the definite article indicates particular angels. Jewish tradition and apocalyptic seems to have considered that there were seven angels who stood in the very presence of God and presented to him the prayers of the saints (Tobit 12:15). These seven angels are named in the book of Enoch. Cf. Isa 63:9; Lk 1:19.

ἐνώπιον see 7:9

ἐστήκασιν Verb, perf act indic, 3 pl ἵστημι stand

ἐδόθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl δίδωμι σαλπῆξ, ἰγγος f trumpet

These are trumpets which will herald the day of God's wrath, Zeph 1:14-16 – like the trumpets blown before the fall of Jericho.

Verse 3

Καὶ ἄλλος ἄγγελος ἦλθεν καὶ ἐστάθη ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου ἔχων λιβανωτὸν χρυσοῦν, καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ θυμιάματα πολλὰ ἵνα δώσει ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων πάντων ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ χρυσοῦν τὸ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου.

ἄλλος, η, ο another, other

ἐστάθη Verb, 2 aor act indic, 3 s ἵστημι

θυσιαστηριον, ου n altar

λιβανωτός, ου m censer, incense container

χρυσός, η, ον made of gold, golden

θυμίαμα, ατος n incense

προσευχή, ης f prayer

ἅγιος, α, ον holy; οἱ ἅγιοι God's people

Similar to the scene in 5:8 which preceded the opening of the seven seals.

ἵνα δώσει ταῖς προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων πάντων 'that he might add it to the prayers...' Some suggest that the reference is to Christ and his intercession. Mounce thinks it unlikely that Christ would be referred to in such an indefinite fashion. Witherington writes, "Does the adding of incense by the angel mean that the angel's prayers are being added to those of the saints, or does the incense simply facilitate the prayers of the saints reaching and being acceptable to God? ... It seems likely that the angel is seen as the saints presenting their prayers to God. Once the prayers are offered, they are just as quickly answered as the angel becomes an avenging angel, casting coals from the altar upon the earth."

Verse 4

καὶ ἀνέβη ὁ καπνὸς τῶν θυμιαμάτων ταῖς
προσευχαῖς τῶν ἁγίων ἐκ χειρὸς τοῦ ἀγγέλου
ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ.

ἀνέβη Verb, aor act indic, 3 s ἀναβαινω go
up, ascend

καπνος, ου m smoke

χειρ, χειρος f hand

Verse 5

καὶ εἴληφεν ὁ ἄγγελος τὸν λιβανωτόν, καὶ
ἐγέμισεν αὐτὸν ἐκ τοῦ πυρὸς τοῦ
θυσιαστηρίου, καὶ ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν γῆν· καὶ
ἐγένοντο βρονταὶ καὶ φωναὶ καὶ ἀστραπαὶ καὶ
σεισμός.

εἴληφεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s λαμβανω

λιβανωτος, ου m see v.3

γεμιζω fill

πυρ, ος n fire

βαλλω throw, pour

ἐγένοντο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 pl

γινομαι

βροντη, ης f thunder

ἀστραπη, ης f lightning

σεισμος, ου m earthquake

Cf. Ex 19:16ff. "The action is somewhat parallel to that of Ezekiel's vision in which a man clothed in linen fills his hands with coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatters them over the city (Ezek 10:2-7). The prayers of the saints play an essential part in bringing the judgement of God upon the earth and its inhabitants. The martyrs' plea in 6:10 ('How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?') is here answered in part." Mounce.

Revelation 8:6-11:19 – 7 Trumpets

"The second series of sevens centres around the blowing of trumpets... The first four [judgments announced by these trumpets] are attacks on nature and the cosmos, the last three are directed against wicked humanity – the destroyers of the earth (11:18).

"Though these judgments are much more fearsome than the seven seals, they are balanced in a way the seals are not; namely, there is an announcement of the coming salvation as well. The trumpet scenes end in joy with a virtual coronation scene, like in Rev 5. These judgments, however gruesome, are not (at least in the case of the preliminary ones) punitive or final but rather are chastisements meant to lead humans to repentance. John's ultimate aim is to proclaim the calm and victory after the storm, though he gives us the storm in graphic detail as well...

"Notice that while the first four judgments affect the church [though are not directed against it], the last three do not. The last three are demonic attacks from which the church is protected." Witherington.

Verse 6

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

ἑπτα see v.2

ἐτοιμαζω prepare, make ready

σαλπίζω sound a trumpet

Verse 7

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

πρωτος, η, ον first

χαλαζα, ης f hail

"The first trumpet corresponds to some degree with the seventh plague in Exod 9:23ff. except that this hail is mixed with blood – a gruesome rain indeed." Witherington.

πυρ, ος n fire

μεμιγμένα Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s & n

nom/acc pl μιγνυμι mix, mingle

αἷμα, ατος f blood

τριτος, η, ον third; το τ. one third

A larger fraction than the effect of the seven seals.

κατεκάη Verb, 2nd aor pass indic, 3 s

κατακαιω burn, burn up, consume

δενδρον, ου n tree

χορτος, ου m grass, vegetation, shoot

χλωρος, α, ον green (pale)

"The trumpet-plagues are directed against a world adamant in its hostility toward God. As the intensity of the judgments increases, so also does the vehemence with which man refuses to repent (9:20-21; 16:9, 11, 21). But the trumpet judgements are not final. They affect a significant proportion but not all of the earth (one-third occurs twelve times in vss. 7-12). Their purpose is not so much retribution as to lead men to repentance. Like the watchman and his trumpet in Ezekiel 33, they warn the people of impending danger...

"As plagues preceded the release of the children of Israel from their Egyptian masters, so also will plagues precede the Exodus of the church from hostile political powers. We are dealing here with that montage of divine judgments upon a recalcitrant world which leads to the return of Jesus Christ as sovereign Lord." Mounce.

Verse 8

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

ὄρος, οὗς n mountain, hill
καιῶ light, keep burning, burn

The picture may have come from the eruption of Vesuvius that destroyed Pompeii and which had occurred less than 20 years before John wrote the Apocalypse. But it clearly "represents an eschatological judgement which goes beyond any explanation in terms of natural phenomena." Mounce.

θάλασσα, ἡς f sea

Witherington writes, "It is not clear whether John envisions a sea full of blood, or just a boiling blood-red sea."

Verse 9

καὶ ἀπέθανε τὸ τρίτον τῶν κτισμάτων τῶν ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ, τὰ ἔχοντα ψυχάς, καὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν πλοίων διεφθάρησαν.

ἀπέθανεν Verb, aor act indic, 3s ἀποθνήσκω die

κτίσμα, τος n what is created, creature
ψυχή, ἡς f life, 'soul'

πλοῖον, οὗ n boat, ship

διεφθάρησαν Verb, 2nd aor pass indic, 3 pl
διαφθεῖρω destroy, ruin

Verse 10

Καὶ ὁ τρίτος ἄγγελος ἐσάλπισεν· καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀστὴρ μέγας καιόμενος ὡς λαμπάς, καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐπὶ τὸ τρίτον τῶν ποταμῶν καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων.

ἔπεσεν Verb, aor act indic, 3s πίπτω fall
ἀστὴρ, ερος m star

καιῶ see v.8

λαμπάς, ἀδος f lamp, lantern

"The figure is that of a great meteorite set afire as it plunges through the earth's atmosphere. Like the blood-red storm and the burning mountain, it is a symbol of divine visitation." Mounce.

ποταμός, οὗ m river, stream

πηγή, ἡς f spring, fountain; well

ὕδωρ, ὕδατος n water

Verse 11

καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ ἀστέρος λέγεται· ὁ Ἄψινθος· καὶ ἐγένετο τὸ τρίτον τῶν ὑδάτων εἰς ἄψινθον, καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀπέθανον ἐκ τῶν ὑδάτων, ὅτι ἐπικράνθησαν.

ὄνομα, τος n name

ἄψινθος, οὗ m & f wormwood

A plant with a strong and bitter taste. For the metaphorical use of this name cf. Prov 5:3-4; Lam 3:19; Jer 9:15; 23:15 – the latter two passages speak of drinking wormwood as God's punishment on his people.

ἀπέθανον Verb, aor act indic, 1s & 3pl

ἀποθνήσκω die

ἐπικράνθησαν Verb, aor pass indic, 3 pl

πικραίνω make bitter; pass. become bitter

"This contamination of the fresh water supply recalls the first Egyptian plague in which the water was turned to blood (Ex 7:20)." Mounce.

Verse 12

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

τέταρτος, ἡ, ον fourth

ἐπλήγη Verb, aor pass indic, 3s πλησσω
strike, smite

ἡλίος, οὗ m the sun

σελήνη, ἡς f moon

σκοτισθῇ Verb, aor pass subj, 3s σκοτιζομαι
be or become darkened

φάνη Verb, aor act subj, 3s φαίνω shine,
give light

νύξ, νυκτος f night

ὁμοίως likewise, in the same way

"The scene recalls the ninth Egyptian plague with its thick darkness which spread over the land for a period of three days (Ex 10:21-23). Constant allusion to the Egyptian plagues is a way of saying that in the last days God will again bring punishment upon those hostile powers which oppress his people. They are the prelude to the great and final Exodus in which the church is taken out of the world and enters into the eternal presence of God." Mounce.

Verse 13

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

"Verse 13 serves as a transition between the four plagues brought by God upon nature to lead man to repentance and the subsequent demonic woes in which man will be directly subject to the forces of the abyss." Mounce.

εἶδον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl ὄραω see

εἰς, μια, ἐν gen ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one, a

ἄετος, οὗ m eagle, vulture

The message of doom is announced by a bird of prey, cf. 19:17-18. Witherington suggests that the bird spoken of here may be a vulture, as in Luke 17:37; cf. also Hosea 8:1.

πετομαι fly

μεσουρανημα, τος n mid-heaven, high in
the sky

ουαι interj. woe! how horrible it will be!

The threefold 'woe' corresponds with the three last trumpets.

κατοικεω live, settle, inhabit

λοιπος, η, ον rest, remaining, other

τρεις, τρια gen τριων dat τρισιν three

μελλω (before an infin) be going, be about

Witherington comments, "Here and in the rest of these plagues John has taken some of his audience's worst fears and experiences of wars and natural disasters and 'blown them into apocalyptic proportions, and cast them in biblically allusive terms. The point is not to predict a series of events. The point is to evoke the meaning of divine judgment which is impending on the sinful world.' [Bauckham]"