

The Twitter Commentary on Revelation

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Revelation Chapter 8

Rev 8 (Introduction)—

The first verse of Rev 8 is a continuation of the seven seals following an interlude (Rev 7).

Rev 8:1--

There is a clean break between verses 1 and 2, so the inclusion of the seven trumpets in the seventh seal is unlikely. Therefore, my exploration of the seventh seal will be limited to the data in verse one of this chapter.

“When” (Greek: *hotan*) translates a different Greek word than the one used in the first six seals (Greek: *hote*). *Hotan* expresses more of a point in time (“at the time that”) than *hote*. *Hote* with the indicative includes “as long as.”

The silence in heaven could contrast with the speaking of the elder (7:13-17) or the sound of massive rejoicing in heaven (5:7-14).

The margin between the seals and the trumpets is at the end of verse one, yet boundaries in Rev are often porous. For example, verses 1-5 together reflect the daily (*Tamid*) service in the sanctuary.

The half hour of silence likely alludes to the daily service (*Tamid*) in the temple. The half hour could represent a week, according to the year-day principle, or twenty years along the lines of a day with the Lord is like a thousand years (Psa 90:4; 2 Pet 3:8).

One option for the silence in heaven is a signal that justice has finally been done for God’s people (Isa 62:1-7), the completion of God’s work of redemption.

The silence here may also correspond to the silence before creation and the silence of those watching the destruction of the wicked.

The silence may correspond to the silence of a courtroom when the “books” are opened. All in all, the silence would seem to be the eschatological Sabbath, celebrating the end of conflict.

Christ’s reign begins in Rev 5 but is not complete until the final defeat of Satan after the millennium. Seventh seal anticipates the day when Christ’s reign is full, final and complete.

Rev 8:2 (The Role of the Trumpets in Revelation)--

The role of the Seven Trumpets in Rev is actually grounded in the fifth seal (Rev 6:9-11). There is a significant parallel to this passage in the middle of the Seven Trumpets.

Rev 8:13 tells us that the woes of the trumpets are a reaction to the prayers of the saints in Rev 6:9-10. In the trumpets, God is responding to the cries of the martyrs.

In Rev 8:3-4 the prayers of the souls under the altar rise up before God and precipitate the blowing of the seven trumpets (8:5-6). This means the seven trumpets are a response to the persecution of God's people.

The trumpets tell us that God is already judging the persecutors of God's people *within* history.

Rev 8:2 (Introduction—Spiritual Lessons)--

Though the outcome of God's caring control is not always clear to those experiencing history, God's care for His suffering people is real and will be fully known one day.

The trumpets portray in the most fearful terms the consequences of rebellion against God. This is a subtle appeal to consider the gospel in spite of earthly incentives to the contrary.

God's active judgments during the time of probation have two purposes; 1) to deliver His people and, 2) to get the attention of the indifferent and the rebellious. The trumpets, unlike the bowl-plagues, are designed to stimulate repentance (2 Pet 3:9).

Rev 8:2 (The Time When the Trumpets End)—

The seven trumpets end with the Second Coming and the final events of history (Rev 10:7; 11:15-18). These events include the close of probation, when no one responds to the gospel anymore.

Rev 11:17, NIV confirms the end-time setting of the seventh trumpet by calling God "the one who is and who was," leaving out the "who is to come" (1:4; 4:8), because God has already come.

The five elements of 11:18 offer a summary in advance of those parts of Revelation that focus primarily on The End (chaps. 12-22). So it is safe to conclude that the seven trumpets of Revelation end with the final events of earth's history

Rev 8:2 (Background to the Seven Trumpets in the Bible)—

There are nine different Hebrew words related to trumpets and trumpeting. There are two Greek words with the same root (a noun and a verb) in the NT to accomplish the same purpose. We will study these Greek words in the Greek OT.

In the OT, trumpets are used primarily in two contexts, worship and battle.

In the NT, the primary context in which trumpets are mentioned is theophany (an appearance of God) in contrast with the OT where the predominant context is worship.

The key text on trumpets in the OT is Num 10:8-10. The blowing of trumpets was an act of worship even when used in battle.

In Num 10:8-10 trumpets are a symbol of covenant prayer, reminding God of His covenant with His people. The result is deliverance, whether in literal battle or the battle with sin.

Trumpets in the Bible symbolize covenant prayer, requesting God to deliver His people. This fits with the data of Rev, where the trumpets are God's response to the prayers of the saints (Rev 6:9-10) for judgment and deliverance (Rev 8:3-5; 8:13).

The many allusions to creation suggest that the trumpets function as a reversal of creation and a reminder of the Flood.

With the exception of the sixth (which has allusions to the fall of Babylon), all the trumpets have strong allusions to the Exodus story in parallel to the seven bowl-plagues.

There is a strong, structural parallel to the fall of Jericho in the seven trumpets of Rev.

The seven trumpets also make much use of the little book of Joel among the Minor Prophets of the OT.

The seven trumpets are built on what could be called the Exodus from Egypt/Fall of Babylon theme from the OT.

During the period between the testaments (425 BC to 30 AD) trumpets were increasingly associated with judgment.

A good example of trumpets as judgment in the intertestamental literature is 4 Ezra 6:18-23.

Trumpets in the NT are associated with theophany (a visible appearance of God) or christophany (a visible appearance of the heavenly Christ).

3 trumpet backgrounds: (OT) covenant prayer, (IT) judgment, (NT) theophany. All are relevant to the interpretation of the seven trumpets.

While there is no mention of a trumpet at the cross in the gospel stories, Jesus died at the time of the daily sacrifice in the temple, which included the blowing of seven trumpets.

Trumpets are associated with the mighty acts of God in the Bible: The cross, the second coming, Jesus' visit to John on Patmos; Mount Sinai (the Exodus), the battle of Jericho, and many others.

Where is Jesus Christ and the gospel in the seven trumpets of Rev? Definitely under the surface of the text.

The first trumpet recalls Luke 23:28-31 and addresses people's response to the gospel and the consequences of rejection. There is more gospel in the trumpets than most have seen.

The fifth trumpet (Rev 9:3-6) recalls Luke 10:17-20 where the disciples are protected from the power of Satan in their work of proclaiming the gospel (see Rev 9:4).

Themes of light and darkness in the fifth trumpet recall John 3:18-21, the consequences of receiving or rejecting the gospel.

Rev 8:2 (The Time When the Trumpets Begin 2)—

The trumpets begin with two altars and incense (Rev 8:2-4). In the daily service, incense is taken from the Altar of Burnt Offering into the temple where it is ministered at the Altar of Incense.

The scene in Rev 8:1-6 has multiple parallels to the daily service in the temple, even the throwing down of the censer is a feature of that service.

The angel of Revelation 8:3-4 comes to the altar of burnt offering, receives incense there, and ministers it inside the temple at the golden altar. First Century temple practices are relevant to the way the vision is described.

The incense of the daily service (Tamid) is grounded in the cross. That means that whatever we may do with the seven trumpets, they all flow from the cross of Christ.

In a perfect universe, no intercession at all would be needed (John 16:25-27). But intercession is needed in the context of the cosmic conflict. Satan is the "accuser of the brethren" (Rev 12:10), and by implication of God (Job 1 and 2).

Bizarre readings of the 7 trumpets often arise from reading Rev out of the context of the gospel. Rev 8:3-4 provides a stage backdrop of intercession in light of the cross of Christ. That is foundational for understanding the trumpets.

The Old Testament daily service (*Tamid*) imagery involved incense constantly hovering over the camp, sheltering the people with the reality of God's favor upon them. In the New Testament context, the incense represents the righteousness of Christ.

The seals begin with the ascension of the Lamb and His enthronement (AD 31). the intercession seen here flows immediately from that. So the beginning of the Seven Trumpets is at the same point as the Seven Seals, A.D. 31.

Throwing a censer down was actually part of the daily (*Tamid*) service in the temple before AD 70.

Rev 8:5 also parallels Ezekiel 10:2 where coals of fire were thrown down on Jerusalem, signifying God's "giving them up" to exile as a result of their rebellion.

If Ezek 10 is a key background to Rev 8:5, that verse could indicate that intercession ceases before the seven trumpets are blown.

If Rev 8:2-6 is like a stage backdrop to the trumpets, both intercession and judgment would be relevant to each of the trumpets. They are parallel rather than later.

We can validate the relation of 8:2-6 and the trumpets vision in comparison with how the introductory scenes play out in the churches, the seals and the bowl-plagues.

Each of the letters to the seven churches refers back to the introductory scene in Rev 1. The opening scene is like a stage backdrop to all that follows in Rev 2 and 3.

The seals and the bowl-plagues are all based on the introductory visions, the whole introduction in each case serves as a stage backdrop to the seven-part visions that follow.

Both the intercession of Christ and the throwing down of the censer are backdrops to the trumpets as a whole (Rev 8:2-6). The introduction sets a foundation for what follows and remains in view throughout the vision.

The seven trumpets are wake-up calls to the indifferent and the rebellious, inviting them to take hold of the gospel (the interlude [Rev 10:1 – 11:14] in general and 10:7 in particular), repent of their violence and oppression, and return to God.

Probation is clearly open in the first six trumpets, as is evidenced by the reference to the altar in 9:13 and the continuance of the gospel in 10:7, 11, 11:12-13.

What was thrown to the earth in this verse? Was it the censer or the fire? Grammatically it could be either one, although there is preference in Greek to the nearer antecedent, which in this case would be the fire.

Fire appears repeatedly in the seven trumpets, so it may be fire rather than the censer that is thrown to the earth in Rev 8:5.

The final close of probation is symbolized in Rev 10:7. The mystery of God (gospel) is brought to a close when the seventh trumpet is about to sound.

Rev 8:2 (Summary of Trumpets)—

I believe the seven trumpets of Rev begins with the enthronement of Christ (as in Rev 5) and the beginning of intercession (as in Rev 8:3-4) and run to the Second Coming.

If Rev 7 is before the sealing and Rev 9 is after (9:4), the trumpets would be after the time of Rev 7 unless the meaning of sealing is different in Rev 9 than in Rev 7. That will prove to be the case.

The predominant meaning of "sealing" in the New Testament is that a person has been accepted by God. The idea of sealing in this sense became associated with circumcision in Judaism and with baptism in early Christianity.

Biblical language must mean what it meant to John and those he was writing to. Sealing is primarily to be known and approved by God. In the end-time, however, it has the added meaning of protection against the forces of Satan.

One way to read Rev 8:1-6 is that the introduction to the seven trumpets is part of the seventh seal. But Rev 8 makes use of recapitulation, which revisits earlier ground from another angle or perspective.

Rev 8:2-6 is separated from the seventh seal (8:1) by an envelope structure (8:2, 6) and the significant phrase "and I saw" at the beginning of verse 2 (see Rev 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 8:2; 10:1; 14:6; 15:1, etc.).

If the close of probation is at the end of the sixth trumpet (Rev 10:7), the sealing in the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:4) must be of the more general kind (2 Tim 2:19), it is not the end-time seal.

Rev 8:2 (The Nature of the Trumpets)—

The seven trumpets are not a repeat of the seal, they affect only the opponents and persecutor's of God's people.

The seven trumpets of Rev are a response to the fifth seal (Rev 6:9-10; 8:13; 8:3-5). They portrayed God's interventions in history in behalf of His people.

Rev 9:4 and 9:20-21 very clearly indicate that the focus of the fifth and sixth trumpets is limited to those who are not sealed, those who are opposed to God.

A further evidence that the seven trumpets are focused on the opponents of God and His people are the strong parallels to the seven bowls which fall fully and totally on the opponents of God at the very end of time (Rev 16).

In Rev, Satan's kingdom is divided into three parts (Rev 16:13 and 19). Since the trumpets affect thirds of the earth, the trumpets affect portions of Satan's kingdom.

The seals affect fourths of the earth (6:8; 7:1-3). One part belongs to God, the other three are different aspects of Satan's kingdom.

The OT background of the seals is the covenant woes (Lev 26, Deut 32, Ezek 14, Zech 1 and 6). The OT background of the trumpets is judgment on the heathen enemies of God and His people.

In sum, the seven trumpets of Rev are judgments of God on those who have been persecuting (martyring) the "saints" (Rev 6:9-10; 8:13).

Unlike the seals, the trumpets contain many expressions of the passage of time; five months, forty-two months, three and a half days, etc.

The seals of Rev point back to the covenant woes of the OT, which can occur any time or any place. The trumpets recall the Jericho story, which is very sequential, consecutive events with a climax at the end.

The Feast of Trumpets and the Jubilee also serve as backgrounds to the seven trumpets. Both are sequential, setting the context for the trumpets.

Two of the strongest Old Testament backgrounds to the seven trumpets are the Exodus and Creation. Both also include consecutive historical events.

While God's judgments are historical, that does not mean that they are visible to the secular eye or obvious to the historian. Prophecy and history must be looked at together in order to make sense of human events.

The Exodus and the cross are examples of events whose deeper meaning is evident only through revelation.

There are strong and consistent parallels between the seven trumpets and the creation story.

The seven trumpets are a dismantling of creation, just like the Flood story in Genesis.

The trumpets combine the language of the Exodus with the language of Babylon's Fall. They are built on the historical recollections of the great Old Testament enemies of God's people.

The trumpets are focused on the enemies of God and His people in a series of historical judgments, running from the cross to the Second Coming of Jesus. They are also messages of comfort to the people of God.

Rev 8:2 (Spiritual Lessons)--

Superficial knowledge of the Bible may be sufficient in the good times. But when the time of trouble comes (Matt 24:21-22) we will need all the spiritual depth we can muster, the result of heavy, detailed investigation of Scripture.

The study of the trumpets requires the most vexing and detailed study in the entire book of Revelation. But the payoff is a deeper, more fulfilling understanding of the Bible in general and Revelation in particular.

God will arrange events in such a way that in the final crisis the whole world will be brought to a decision for or against God. God is not going to end history until every living person has been confronted with the gospel in some form.

When you are suffering pain, rejection, and hardship, it is hard to think that YOU are on the winning side and that God is still in control. The trumpets affirm God's awareness and action related to the injustices in the world.

The better we can understand God's purpose in history and understand how God is moving in history, the more we can cooperate with Him in achieving His goals. This is a good reason that the study of the trumpets is valuable today.

Rev 8:2-6—

These verses form are not a continuation of the seventh seals, they are the sanctuary introduction to the seven trumpets vision that follows (Rev 8:7 – 11:18).

Rev 8:2—

The verse opens with “and I saw” (Greek: *kai eidon*). This phrase comes at crucial points in the book of Revelation, almost always introducing a new scene or a new vision. In other words, the seven trumpets begin here.

The seven angels “have been standing” (Greek: *estêkasin*) before God. They did not arrive for this particular moment but stand always ready to serve God.

Verses 2 and 6 serve as an “envelope structure” that separates the introductory visions from what precedes (Rev 8:1) and what follows (Rev 8:7 and on).

One tradition in early Judaism spoke of seven archangels and another of four. Both traditions are reflected in the book of Rev.

Rev 8:3-4 (Introduction)--

This depicts the daily (Tamid) service of the sanctuary/temple. Incense and fire are gathered into a censer at the Altar of Burnt Offering in the outer court, then ministered in the Holy Place at the Altar of Incense.

Rev 8:3—

“The” altar is a reference back to the Altar of Burnt Offering in the fifth seal (Rev 6:9). The angel (priest) gathers fire and incense into the censer to carry it into the Holy Place.

The angel at the altar is not one of the seven trumpet angels, but appears to be the superior of the seven. The most natural reading of the passage is that this is Christ Himself.

According to the Greek, the angel stands “upon” the altar, which means it must be the Altar of Burnt Offering, which was large enough in Herod’s temple for priests to stand upon.

The golden censer indicates that the “angel” using it is even higher in status than the High Priest, probably Christ Himself.

The language of this verse indicates two different altars in view, not just one. There is movement from the Altar of Burnt Offering to the Altar of Incense, something that happened every day in the sanctuary/temple.

Rev 8:4—

The prayers here are expressed with a Greek dative of association. The smoke went up “along with” the prayers of the saints.

Rev 8:5—

It is not clear in the Greek what was thrown down in this verse, fire or the censer. Throwing down the censer would be an allusion to the daily service in the temple. Throwing down fire would anticipate the outcomes of various trumpets in Rev.

The four consequences of throwing down the censer/fire and in no consistent order in Rev. Their basic meaning in everyday life is plain, but their association here has a spiritual intent.

In Rev thunderstorm images like these are associated with appearances of God and with judgment.

In Psalm 18 the four elements of this verse are listed in a poetic description of God's judgments. In the trumpets God uses His great power to respond to the prayers of the saints for deliverance (Rev 6:9-10).

Rev 8:6—

But unlike Jericho or the trumpet priests in the daily (Tamid) service, the seven angels do not all sound their trumpets at the same time, they blow them one by one.

Rev 8:7—

In the trumpets, the language used is not difficult, what is hard is understanding the meaning of what has been clearly stated!

The Greek "in blood" can be read several ways in the English. I prefer to read it as identifying a location; the hail and fire fall "with" the blood.

Since the focus of the first trumpet is on the third of the earth where the hail, fire and blood fell, a third portion of the earth suffered the loss of a third of its trees and all of its green grass. The rest of the earth is unaffected by this trumpet.

The concept of thirds is found also in Ezekiel 5:2 and Zechariah 13:8-9. Both passages are in the context of judgment.

The OT background is more critical to interpretation in the seven trumpets than anywhere else in Rev.

In the Greek of Exod 9:22-26 the hail and fire set fire to the fields of Egypt, a close analogy to the first trumpet.

Ezek 38:22-23 contains the most parallels to the first trumpet. There is a probably allusion to Ezekiel here, though it tells us little about the first trumpet by itself.

In the first trumpet images of God's judgment fall on images of God's people. This can be explained by God's judgments on Israel when they went after other gods.

In Jer 11:15-17 the fire of God is a judgment on Israel and Judah for forsaking the covenant and burning incense to the Baals.

In Isa 5:1-7, Israel is symbolized by a vineyard that God has planted. When its fruit becomes sour, God lets go of the vineyard and starts over. The vegetation of God's people can come under judgment.

In Ezek 20:45-48 faithful Israelites are represented by green trees and unfaithful Israelites are represented by dry trees. When the Babylonians conquer Jerusalem, both groups suffer together.

The key NT parallel text for the first trumpet is Luke 23:28-31. Jesus is the green tree and the religious leadership of Jerusalem is the dry tree. The first trumpet is a symbolic reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

The first trumpet is a judgment on those who, for religious reasons, crucified Jesus. That judgment was carried out against Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70.

To see in the first trumpet the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is not to encourage prejudice against Jews any more than the actions of the Romans against Christ should lead us to discriminate against Italians.

God's judgments in Scripture are often portrayed in active language, then qualified as God "giving people up." The first trumpet is an example of a passive judgment in active language.

Rev 8:8-9 (Introduction)—

The first trumpet impacts symbols drawn solely from the plant kingdom (earth, trees and grass), the second trumpet also affects the animal kingdom and people who sail the sea.

Rev 8:8—

The concept of "as it were" underlines the symbolic or figurative nature of this part of the seven trumpets.

The concept of a "great mountain" represents Babylon here but can represent God's kingdom as well (Dan 2:35). The throwing down of the mountain anticipates Rev 12:10.

Rev 8:9—

The language of this verse specifically recalls Creation and the Flood.

Rev 8:8-9—

This trumpet is reminiscent of the first plague of the Exodus when water was turned to blood and the fish died as a result.

This trumpet reminds the reader of the judgment on Babylon in Jeremiah 51.

Sheshach in Jeremiah 51 is a code name for Babylon.

In the book of Daniel, God's kingdom is described in terms of a great mountain that will fill the whole earth. Babylon is the great counterfeit of God's kingdom and so can also be symbolized by a mountain.

In Isaiah 46 God judges the Gentile nations in order to deliver His people. In the second trumpet God's judgments fall on images of those who have hurt His people.

The "sea" of Babylon was the Euphrates River (Jer 51:36; see also Rev 9:14; 16:12). In the OT, ships are often symbols of human pride (Isa 2:16).

Rev 8:8-9 (Conclusion)—

The second trumpet follows the OT pattern of God permitting the nations to exercise judgment against Israel, but then holding those nations accountable as well.

The imagery of the second trumpet portrays the ultimate fall of the Roman Empire for the way they treated God's people as well as their own violence, greed and oppression of others.

The second trumpet foresees that, in John's future, Rome would fall beneath the waves of a great sea of "barbarians." The result of Rome's fall was the devastation of the whole social and economic order.

Rev 8:7-9 (Summary)—

Often in Rev the faithful ones are attacked from two directions, one directly religious and the other more political, secular, military. Rome and the Pharisees certainly fit that bill in Christ's case.

Like the seals, the trumpets display a 4-2-1 pattern. Four trumpets concern the natural world, the fifth and sixth concern demons and human beings, and the seventh is the climax.

Rev 8:7-9 (Spiritual Lessons)—

In Rev Jesus' experience is the model for His followers. We suffer just as He suffered. He was raised from the dead and one day we too will be raised. His death and resurrection are the model for our own.

The seven trumpets expand the end-time judgment back in time. Those who trouble and persecute God's people in this life will not only be judged in the end, God is already acting within history to deal with those who have persecuted His own.

Rev 8:10-11 (Introduction)—

Direct allusions are not particularly helpful for understanding the third trumpet. So we need to take a careful look at the echoes of Old Testament language and observe whatever patterns we can discern there.

Rev 8:10—

Stars can represent angels, earthly rulers and spiritual leaders. A falling star would be a natural symbol for a fall from spiritual faithfulness to idolatry or apostasy.

As a symbol in Rev, water could be applied in three different ways; destructive as in flooding, cleansing as in washing, and nourishing, as in a drink (Rev 22:17). It is the nourishing side of water that is in view here.

Springs of water in the Bible represent spiritual nourishment (Psa 1:3; Prov 13:14; John 7:37-39; Rev 21:6).

The language here strongly reminds the reader of Isaiah 14:12-15 (Lucifer) and the little horn (Dan 8:10).

Though Babylon was east/northeast of Israel, one had to travel north to get there, hence “king of the north” = Babylon.

Rev 8:11—

Wormwood is an old English word for the absinthe plant which has a bitter taste and in large quantities can cause convulsions and even death.

The waters of the rivers and springs are not laced with wormwood, they are turned into wormwood. The drink itself is pure poison. But those who drank the water were not aware of the change or they would not have drunk it.

Rev 8:10-11 (Conclusion)--

Rivers and springs of water are symbols of the spiritual nourishment that comes when the Holy Spirit arrives in a person's life (John 7:37-39, cf. Psa 1:3).

In the Old Testament, wormwood and bitterness are both symbols of apostasy and its consequences. Bitter water cannot sustain life (Jer 9:15; 32:15; Lam 3:15, 19; Exod 15:23).

Between the falling of the star, the burning of the torch and the poisoning of the waters, images of apostasy, false doctrine, and distorted gospel teaching seem to be intersecting in the third trumpet.

Rev 8:10-11 (Summary)—

In the third trumpet there are three objects of judgment: 1) the star, 2) the earth's rivers and springs, and 3) and the people who drink. First, the star symbolizes the leaders of the church who fall away from the teachings of Scripture.

Since water is a symbol of spiritual nourishment, the rivers and springs point to spiritual life and growth. But the symbols of truth are here distorted and bring death instead of life.

In the NT times, the concept of a coming apostasy is fairly widespread (2 Thess 2:3-4; Acts 20:26-31; 1 Tim 4:1-2; 2 Tim 4:2-4; 2 Pet 2:1-2).

The theme of the third trumpet fits well with the kind of compromised Christianity that came in with the church's popularity after the fall of Rome.

Rev 8:12—

The wording of the fourth trumpet is the most limited of the seven. There is essentially no action in this trumpet.

This is partial darkness, representing the dimming of the gospel or spiritual light.

An exegetical issue in the text is whether the darkness that comes upon the sun, moon and stars is the “smiting” itself or if it is the result of the smiting. But the key to understanding this text is what happens to the sun, moon and stars rather than how it happens.

In the Old Testament, darkness as a symbol is rooted in the creation story and represents reversal of creation and the absence of blessing, which is judgment.

In the New Testament, darkness is linked with supernatural powers and the absence of the gospel. The fourth trumpet represents a time in history when the gospel is eclipsed from human consciousness.

There is an apparent contradiction in this verse. In the first part it is implied that the light from the sun, moon and stars is dimmed by a third. But in the latter part of the text it is a third of the day and night that are darkened. The text itself does not clarify this dilemma.

There are a couple of direct allusions in this verse, to creation (Gen 1:14-18) and to the Exodus (Exod 10:21-23).

The literal events of creation and the Exodus became models in the NT of God's mighty deliverance in the Christ event. The trumpets need to be read with this history in mind.

Rev 8:10-12 (Analysis)—

In the third trumpet, the water remains but is transformed into spiritual poison, a distortion of the gospel. But in the fourth trumpet, the symbols of God's Word and the gospel are not distorted, they are obscured.

The third and fourth trumpets anticipate the rise of apostasy within Christendom and the rise of secular thinking in the course of Christian history. These two phenomena have an end-time manifestation in the fifth and sixth trumpets.

Rev 8:10-12 (Summary)—

These two trumpets would represent the rise of two great Anti-Christ philosophies that will affect the end-time; false religion and anti-religion. The power play between these two intensifies in the final crisis (Rev 13 and 18).

From a biblical perspective, secular thinking is not all bad, there are a number of positive outcomes from it: For example, separation of religion and the state is the foundation of both religious liberty and the American Revolution.

Public education, the Bible societies, archaeology and linguistics are all positive developments associated with secularization. So secularization has not been all negative for people of faith.

Secularism today has removed Christendom's economic and political advantages in gaining adherents, forcing Christians back to Jesus' original plan of "power made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor 12:9.

Among the negatives of secularization are Communism, institutional ecumenism, materialism and spiritualism.

Secularism is an interesting phenomenon that has both positive and negative implications. It was and is a judgment on the ineffectiveness of institutional Christianity. I see the rise of secularism imaged in the fourth trumpet.

Every religious movement is a battle ground between God and Satan. That means there will be something of God in every faith and something darker as well.

Institutional Christianity has exhibited some positives: The formation and acceptance of the NT canon, the Trinity doctrine and a living reminder of the existence of Jesus and the NT.

If God is at work in every religion, not all religions will bear equal witness to the character and government of God, yet we can all learn something about God from His witness in other contexts.

If Satan is at work in every religion, we should all beware his influence in our own religion as well as others.

Rev 8:13--

The same Greek word can be translated eagle or vulture. Vulture would seem more appropriate in this context. Death and destruction are about to take place.

Mid-heaven is a Greek way of describing the zenith in the sky, it is also where the vulture flies. The triple “woe” is a Hebrew superlative, the worst kind of woe.

“Those who live on the earth” is a common expression in Rev for unbelievers. The vulture signals judgment consequences for those in rebellion against God and the gospel.

Rev 8:7-13 (Spiritual Lesson)—

When we misrepresent what the Bible teaches (whether intentionally or not) it can be damaging to others spiritually. To misunderstand or misinterpret the Scriptures may be as harmful to spiritual life as not understanding them at all.