End Times Prophecy (Eschatology) 314: Revelation Chronology



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Revelation Chronology: Section 2.04 Continued

Additional Relevant Comments

We are about ready to close our analysis concerning the trumpets in Revelation 8:6-9:21. However, before we move on, there are two additional comments that should be made.

First, it is important to comment on the frequent mention of fractions, such as "third part," in this passage. Second, we will make some closing comments concerning the trumpets and the bowls of wrath.

Concerning the first point, in the English, readers might very easily read "the third part" and think it denotes a fractional third of the human population. For example, with a human population of 6 billion, some might interpret this to refer to 2 billion persons. However, in the Greek, "the third part" can also be taken to mean the third in a series rather than a fractional third. This is most clearly seen when viewing verses 9 and 10 side by side.

Revelation 8:9 And the third part (5154) of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part (5154) of the ships were destroyed. 10 And the third (5154) angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part (5154) of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters.

Notice that although the English has the phrase "third part," the Greek contains a single word, the Greek word "tritos" (Strong's No. 5154), which simply means, "the third." In other words, although the meaning is equivalent with or without it, the word "part" does not appear in the underlying Greek.

But more importantly, notice that the exact same Greek word, "tritos," which is used to discuss the creatures and ships of the sea is also used in verse 10 to denote the third angel in the series of seven angels with trumpets. Thus, even from this side-by-side occurrence in the immediate context, we can see that "tritos," or "the third part," is not meant to denote 1/3 of a whole but instead denotes the third in a larger series. In particular, concerning the trumpets, it is the third of seven trumpets and has nothing to do with fractions at all.

Likewise, the mention of "the third" throughout the trumpets should be taken, not as a fraction, but in terms of a series. To be more specific, we recall from our examination of chapter 7 that four corners or quadrants of the earth are in view concerning the four angels known as the four winds or four horsemen.

Revelation 7:1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four (5064) corners (1137) of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

In fact, as the Strong's numbers below show, the same phrasing is used in chapter 20, where even in the English it is translated into "the four quarters of the earth."

Revelation 20:8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are **in the four** (**5064**) **quarters** (**1137**) **of the earth,** Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom *is* as the sand of the sea.

Furthermore, Revelation is quite clear in its depiction that the authority given to these angels builds gradually. It builds in two ways. It builds concerning the geographic area, or quadrants, they are able to operate in. And it also builds concerning what exactly they can do in an area, whether to hurt or to kill.

We see the earliest stage of this unfolding authority in Revelation 7 itself where these four angels are not allowed to do anything, not even to hurt, until the 144,000 Jews are sealed.

Revelation 7:1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

The next stage is discussed in Revelation 6, where these four angels are given authority to kill in the fourth quadrant of the earth.

Revelation 6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. 3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. 5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. 7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the

voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part (5067) of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Here verse 8 sums up that the killing that results from these four angels, whether by sword or hunger, or even death directly, at least at this time is given only over a fourth of the earth. Once again, we note that the word "part" does not occur in the Greek, but simply the word, "tetartos," (Strong's No. 5067), which simply means "the fourth."

So, initially, the four angels are not even allowed to hurt the sea of mankind or any tree. Then, after the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel are converted, they are permitted to kill in the fourth part, which stirs up the sea of mankind leading to the rise of the last empire, just as in Daniel 7 when the four winds stir up the rise of kingdoms. Additionally, after the sealing of the 144,000, these four angels are seen killing and hurting in the third part accompanied by the falling away, as seen already in the first four trumpets, in which the sea turns to blood and many men die from the bitterness of wormwood in the waters.

However, their authority is also limited in terms of *how* they kill. In chapter 6, we can see that they are allowed to kill in the fourth quadrant by using the sword, hunger, death, and the beasts of the field. Likewise, although they are seen hurting the trees and the sea, even inducing killing, in the first four trumpets, they are not allowed to kill *by means of the locusts specifically* until the sixth trumpet.

Revelation 9:3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. 5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. 6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

As we can see in verse 4 above, these locusts are restricted to hurting, but not killing, those men who do not have the seal of God. However, in the latter verses of chapter 9, after the sixth trumpet, we see the four overarching angels using this army of "locusts" to actually kill in the third part of the earth.

Revelation 9:14 Saying to **the sixth angel** which had the trumpet, **Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.** 15 And **the four angels were loosed,** which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for **to slay the third part of men.** 16 And the number of the army of the horsemen *were* two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. 17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having

breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. 18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

It is important to note that verse 18 explicitly states that the killing mentioned in verse 15 is specifically the killing by means of this army of "locusts," and not any or all killing by any means. Thus, prior to this, these angels are allowed to kill by other means in the third and the fourth quadrants, as outlined in chapter 6 and the first four trumpets in chapter 8, but they are not allowed to use the "locusts" to do so until the sixth trumpet. Furthermore, the first four trumpets seem to largely deal with harm done to Christians and Jews, which in turn affects the falling away, whereas the fifth trumpet seems to pertain to the ungodly. This is indicated by Revelation 9:4-5, which states, "And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads."

Lastly, in Revelation 8:6, we find the statement, "the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." In this instance, the contrast between "third part" and "all" does not necessitate a fractional proportion contrasted to a whole. Instead, the passage is designating that the effect of "burning up" is occurring to the trees in the third quadrant and to the grass in all the quadrants. Assuming that the casting down of the adversaries in the third quadrant is detrimental enough to affect those in the third quadrant who are mature and deeply rooted, it is easy to imagine how such a powerful event in one quadrant would affect those worldwide who are immature and without roots.

In conclusion, we can see that not only is authority given to these angels incrementally and gradually, but that the references to "the third" or "the fourth" generally denote geographic quadrants of the earth rather than fractional proportions of the human population. Thus, the frequent references to "the third" in the first four trumpets denotes the focus of those events and effects in the third quadrant rather than making any indication about the exact percentage of the population, or even the proportion of individual Christians or Jews, that are effected.

As we prepare to leave chapter 8:6-9:21, the second point worth commenting on concerns the plagues of the trumpets in contrast to the plagues of the bowls of wrath. In the pages above, we have been establishing that although the physical imagery in the seven trumpets might typically be interpreted literally as physical plagues, instead this imagery is intended figuratively to denote the fall of the satanic kingdom, the rise of the empire of the antichrist, and the resulting great falling away of many Christians.

However, given our assertions that these seemingly physical plagues should instead be taken figuratively, the question might arise as to whether or not we interpret any of the plagues described in Revelation literally and physically? This would pertain particularly to the bowls of wrath, as the other series involving

plagues. And additionally, after our figurative interpretation of the plagues in the trumpets, how could we take any plagues in Revelation literally and physically? On what basis would we discriminate some as figurative and others, such as the bowls of wrath, as literal and physical?

At this point, we should plainly state that we do consider the plagues dispensed at the bowls of wrath to be actual, physical events in contrast to the seven trumpets, which we take to be figurative descriptions of the fall of the satanic kingdom. The reasons for this are simple. First, as we have stated from the beginning of this segment, one of the primary indicators for interpreting the plagues of chapter 8:6-9:21 as figurative references to the fall of the satanic kingdom is the plain fact that the theme of the passage is one of seven trumpets. Seven trumpets is famously associated with the fall of Jericho in the Old Testament, a city that opposed the people of Israel as they were about to enter the Promised Land. Thus, casting the entire passage in terms of seven trumpets directly connects the events that follow to the fall of a kingdom.

In contrast, the bowls of wrath do not start out with and are not characterized by any theme that relates so clearly to the fall of an opposing kingdom. Instead, the imagery of the "bowls" relates directly to the Old Testament imagery of the bowls that emptied their oil into a candlestick to produce light.

First, the Greek word for bowl, or vial, of wrath in Revelation is "phiale."

Revelation 15:6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels **seven golden vials (5357)** full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

The word "phiale" (Strong's No. 5357) simply means, "a broad shallow bowl, deep saucer." Notice also that these bowls or saucers are described as being gold. This directly relates to the book of Exodus 25:31-37 and 37:17-22 where we find the creation of a seven-branched candlestick, whose ornaments, including its bowls, are all made of gold. The purpose of the bowls was to hold the oil so that the seven lamps of the candlestick could burn and give their light. In Leviticus 4:1-4 and Numbers 8:2-4, God commands that oil is to be put into the seven lamps of the candlestick continually as a sign for Israel.

Concerning the relationship of the candlestick to the bowls of oil, *Smith's Bible Dictionary* has the following to say.

"Candlestick – It was not strictly a 'candlestick,' as it held seven richly-adorned lamps...From the Arch of Titus, where are sculptured the spoils taken from Jerusalem, we learn that it consisted of a central stem, with six branches, three on each side. It was about five feet high...Each lamp was supplied with cotton and about two wineglasses of the purest olive oil, which was sufficient to keep it burning during a long night...In the temple of Zerubbabel there was again a single candlestick. 1 Macc. 1:21; 4:49." – Smith's Bible Dictionary, page 105

As we can see, each of the seven lamps was provided with oil. This oil was provided by the accompanying bowls or saucers, which were also made of gold, just like the seven vials of wrath in Revelation 15 and 16.

And notice also that Revelation 15 connects the bowls of oil to the plagues of wrath.

Revelation 15:6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, **having the seven plagues**, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels **seven golden vials (5357) full of the wrath of God,** who liveth for ever and ever.

This imagery of seven bowls of oil connects to the two witnesses who are described in both Revelation 11 and Zechariah 4 as the two olive trees.

Revelation 11:3 And I will give *power* unto **my two witnesses**, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 These are **the two olive trees**, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

Zechariah 4:1 And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, 2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: 3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof...12 And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? 13 And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. 14 Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

It is important to clarify what is being described in Zechariah 4, since this provides the precedent for the imagery used in Revelation.

First, the term "two witnesses" is a title for *an office*. In Zechariah's day, that office was held by Zerubbabel and by the High Priest Joshua, who were the two men that were instrumental in leading the people of Israel. In Revelation, this role is held by two other men. Thus, Zechariah is not discussing or prophesying about the specific two men that will hold this office in the last days before the return of Christ. Instead, Zechariah is discussing that office in order to communicate something about the two men who old held the office in his day, namely Zerubbabel and Joshua. Nevertheless, since Zechariah is describing the office that will later be held by two men in the end times, Zechariah's description here serves as the definitive precedent for *the office of the two witnesses*, no matter who holds that office.

Second, in Zechariah's vision we note the following items are arranged in the following manner. There are two olive trees. These olive trees have two pipes through which they empty their oil, which makes sense since the chief use for olive trees was that they produced olives for oil. These two olive trees are also specifically described as being beside the bowl. The bowl is then said to empty oil through seven pipes into a candlestick with seven lamps on it. Rather than thinking the olive trees empty their oil into an unidentified location while the bowl empties its oil into the seven lamps, the designation that the two olive trees stand beside the bowl and each have a pipe of their own indicates that the oil from the olive trees is being emptied through their two pipes into the bowl from which that same oil then empties into the seven lamps through seven other pipes.

Thus, in this scenario, the two olive trees are the source of the oil for the rest of the imagery, including the seven lamps. In turn, these two trees receive their oil from God, which is indicated by verse 14's statement that they are "the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord." The concept of these two men being "anointed" indicates that God has put oil upon or in them. Thus, God is the ultimate source of the oil.

Third, it is important to identify the relationship between the two olive trees and the seven angels who hold the seven golden bowls of wrath. It is clear that the single candlestick in Zechariah 4 is a Jewish menorah, which is the seven-branched candlestick described in Exodus 25:31-37, 37:17-22 and *Smith's Bible Dictionary* above. This seven-branched candlestick had seven lamps on it and, as *Smith's Bible Dictionary* denotes, "Each lamp was supplied with cotton and about two wineglasses of the purest olive oil." Exodus 25:31-37, 37:17-22 also indicates that each branch has its own bowl, including four additional bowls on the main shaft, three to act as auxiliary feeds for each of three branches and presumably one for the seventh lamp in the center. Thus, as *Smith's Bible Dictionary* indicates, each of the seven lamps had its own bowl, which provided its own supply of oil to fuel the light.

Revelation 4:5 is clear that the seven lamps, or lights, are the seven angels that stand before the Lord.

Revelation 4:5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

Revelation 5:6 goes on to inform us that these seven spirits, or angels, go to and fro throughout the earth.

Revelation 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

These same seven angels, which are represented as seven lamps and go to and fro throughout the earth, are mentioned specifically in Zechariah 4.

Zechariah 3:9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes...4:2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof...10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

Thus, the seven angels with the seven bowls in Revelation are the same seven angels who are watching and working in conjunction with Zerubbabel and Joshua, who filled the office of the two witnesses, or two olive trees, in Zechariah's day. Consequently, this imagery in both Zechariah and Revelation describes a direct relationship between the two witnesses and the seven angels, who in Revelation dispense the seven golden bowls of wrath. In particular, as Zechariah 4 depicts, the two witnesses are olive trees, who receive oil from God and who dispense that oil into a bowl, which then filters through seven pipes into the seven bowls of the seven lamps, which represent the seven angels. Or, in other words, two men are anointed by God and watched by seven angels. Those two men receive oil from God, which the angels then dispense, providing light, and showing God strong on behalf of these two men, just as 2 Chronicles 16:9 states.

2 Chronicles 16:9 For **the eyes of the LORD run to and fro** throughout the whole earth, **to shew himself strong in the behalf of** *them* whose heart *is* perfect toward him...

Incidentally, the seven-branched candlestick itself represents God's people collectively. In the Old Testament, as in the book of Zechariah, this referred to the faithful people of Israel, whose work of rebuilding the temple was fueled by Zerubbabel and Joshua and was watched over by the seven angels, or seven lamps, who provided light and aid to complete the task. Likewise, in the New Testament, the seven-branched candlestick itself refers collectively to the church, as can be seen in Revelation 1:20.

Revelation 1:20 ...and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Like the imagery of trumpets informs us that the events in Revelation 8:6-9:21 should be understood to describe the fall of an opposing kingdom, the imagery of bowls informs us that the events in Revelation 15-16 should be understood to convey the idea of plagues *dispensed by the two olive trees* of Revelation 11, providing light and testimony to mankind.

In addition, this imagery of plagues dispensed by two men also connects directly to Moses and Aaron, precursors of the two witnesses, who likewise dispensed

actual, physical plagues. In addition, Elijah, who is also a precursor to the two witnesses, dispensed a physical draught, which is listed in Revelation 11 as one of the plagues that the two witnesses dispense. Thus, it is no surprise that when describing these two olive trees, from whom the oil flows, Revelation 11 informs us that they dispense the plagues.

Revelation 11:3 And I will give *power* unto **my two witnesses**, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 **These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks** standing before the God of the earth. 5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 6 **These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not** in the days of their prophecy: **and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues,** as often as they will.

In conclusion, the reason the plagues of the bowls of wrath are interpreted to be actual, physical plagues is simply that the very idea of bowls as plagues relates directly to the idea of the two witnesses, like Moses and Aaron or Moses and Elijah, actually dispensing physical plagues. This is in direct contrast to the imagery of seven trumpets, which speaks not of physical plagues, but of the fall of a kingdom, in this case, the satanic kingdom.

Status of the 8 Conceptual Threads

The last item to cover before we move on to the next Parallel Description is the current status of our eight conceptual threads after this *Long Series* in chapter 8:6-9:21. Here again for reference is our list of the 8 overarching conceptual threads in Revelation.

- **1.** The angel's appearing to John for the transmission of the Revelation to God's servants
- **2.** The transmission of the Revelation from the Father to Jesus
- 3. The ministry of the 2 witnesses (including the Temple's building) and plagues
- **4.** God's covenant people, Israel: purging & protection; the 144,000; building the Temple
- 5. The fall of the Satanic Kingdom and the subsequent falling away in the Church
- **6.** The rise of the last empire and the antichrist; tribulation and the persecution of saints
- 7. The battle of Armageddon and the return of Christ
- **8.** Millennial reign of Christ and the final judgment

Our previous four sections, including a *Long Series* in chapter 1:1-6:17, 8:1, an *Expansion* in chapter 10:1-11:13, a *Parallel Description* in chapter 7, and a *Short Series* in chapter 8:2-5, provided some important skeletal structure for the chronological relationship of certain key events as well as some detail concerning roughly 3 1/2 of these eight conceptual threads. Specifically, previous sections have provided somewhat longer descriptions concerning numbers 1, 2, 6, and

somewhat shorter references to events surrounding numbers 3, 4, and 7. This left a lot of room for the remaining *Parallel Descriptions* to fill in the connections and details concerning numbers 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8.

At last, here in this second *Long Series* of the book of Revelation, we are beginning to get detailed descriptions concerning a few of these remaining conceptual threads. Specifically, the sequence of seven trumpets in Revelation 8:6-9:21 has focused in on the fall of the satanic kingdom and the subsequent falling away of the church as well as including the release of the angelic king over the abyss. In addition, as our article entitled, "Prophetic Symbols: Revelation 17 (Part 2)" explains, this angelic king is the spirit who possesses the human antichrist and rules over the final Gentile empire, persecuting the saints in the last days. So, this passage in Revelation 8 and 9 also provides important details concerning the rise of the antichrist and how that rise is related to the release from the abyss of this angelic king. And this information provides an explanatory connection for Revelation 13 and 17, which discusses the rise of this last empire and the antichrist himself.

Nevertheless, despite the immense amount of detail concerning numbers 5 and 6, there is still room for the remaining *Parallel Descriptions* to provide details concerning numbers 3, 4, and 8 as well as any additional connections to the rest of the eight conceptual threads.