

Revelation 8:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

Analysis

And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.... This verse from Revelation's vision of seventh seal and first four trumpets - escalating judgments, angelic ministry employs apocalyptic imagery rich with Old Testament allusions and symbolic meaning. The Greek text uses vivid apocalyptic language characteristic of Jewish prophetic literature, drawing heavily from Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Zechariah.

The symbolism must be interpreted within its first-century context while recognizing timeless spiritual realities. The imagery would resonate powerfully with persecuted believers facing Roman imperial cult worship, providing hope that despite present suffering, Christ reigns sovereign and will consummate His kingdom. The apocalyptic genre uses symbolic numbers (seven, twelve, 144,000), colors, beasts, and cosmic imagery to convey theological truth rather than photographic descriptions.

Christologically, Revelation consistently exalts Jesus as the victorious Lamb, the faithful witness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every vision ultimately points to Christ's supremacy, His finished redemptive work, and His certain return to judge the living and dead and establish the new creation.

Historical Context

John received this revelation circa AD 95 during Domitian's persecution, exiled on Patmos for his testimony. The seven churches of Asia Minor faced increasing pressure to participate in emperor worship and pagan religious practices. Refusal meant economic hardship, social ostracism, and potential martyrdom. Understanding this context illuminates Revelation's encouragement to faithful endurance.

The apocalyptic genre was familiar to first-century Jewish and Christian readers. Rather than newspaper-style predictions, apocalyptic literature uses symbolic imagery to reveal spiritual realities behind earthly events, encourage the faithful, warn the unfaithful, and assert God's ultimate sovereignty over history. Parallels with Daniel, Ezekiel, and intertestamental apocalyptic writings would help original readers decode the symbols.

Rome's imperial cult demanded worship of Caesar as divine, placing Christians in impossible situations—compromise their faith or face persecution. Revelation identifies Rome as "Babylon" and assures believers that despite appearances, the Lamb conquered through His death and resurrection, and all earthly kingdoms will submit to His reign.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 8:11 reveal God's character, particularly His sovereignty, holiness, and justice?

2. What specific encouragement or warning does this verse offer for maintaining faithful Christian witness amid cultural pressure?
3. How does this passage point to Christ's victory and the hope of new creation, and how should that shape your present priorities?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	τὸ	ὄνομα	τοῦ	ἀστέρος	λέγεται	ἄψινθον	καὶ
And	G3588	the name	G3588	of the star	is called	Wormwood	And
G2532		G3686		G792	G3004	G894	G2532
γίνεται	τὸ	τρίτον	τῶν	ὑδάτων	εἰς	ἄψινθον	καὶ
became	G3588	the third part	G3588	of the waters	G1519	Wormwood	And
G1096		G5154		G5204		G894	G2532
πολλοὶ	ἀνθρώπων	ἀπέθανον	ἐκ	τῶν	ὑδάτων	ὅτι	
many	men	died	of	G3588	of the waters	because	
G4183	G444	G599	G1537		G5204	G3754	
ἐπικράνθησαν							
they were made bitter							
G4087							

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 23:15 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and make them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

Jeremiah 9:15 (Parallel theme): Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

Deuteronomy 29:18 (Parallel theme): Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;

Proverbs 5:4 (Parallel theme): But her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a twoedged sword.

Amos 6:12 (Parallel theme): Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

Amos 5:7 (Parallel theme): Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth,

Lamentations 3:19 (Parallel theme): Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

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