

Revelation 8:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

Analysis

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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

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 8:12 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	ό	τέταρτος	ἄγγελος	ἐσάλπισεν·	καὶ	ἐπλήγη	τὸ
And	G3588	the fourth	angel	sounded	And	was smitten	G3588
G2532		G5067	G32	G4537	G2532	G4141	
τρίτον	τοῦ	ἡλίου	καὶ	τὸ	τρίτον	τῆς	σελήνης
for a third part	G3588	of the sun	And	G3588	for a third part	G3588	of the moon
G5154		G2246	G2532		G5154		G4582
καὶ	τὸ	τρίτον	τῶν	ἀστέρων	ἴνα	σκοτισθῇ	τὸ
And	G3588	for a third part	G3588	of the stars	so as	was darkened	G3588
G2532		G5154		G792	G2443	G4654	
τρίτον	αὐτῆς	καὶ	ἡ	ἡμέρα	μὴ	φαίνῃ	τὸ
for a third part	of them	And	G3588	the day	not	shone	G3588
G5154	G846	G2532		G2250	G3361	G5316	
τρίτον	αὐτῆς	καὶ	ἡ	νὺξ	όμοίως		
for a third part	of them	And	G3588	the night	likewise		
G5154	G846	G2532		G3571	G3668		

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 13:10 (Darkness): For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.

Joel 2:31 (Darkness): The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come.

Joel 2:10 (Darkness): The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining:

Revelation 6:12 (Parallel theme): And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

Mark 13:24 (Darkness): But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light,

Matthew 24:29 (Darkness): Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:

Joel 3:15 (Darkness): The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.

Revelation 9:15 (Parallel theme): 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.

Revelation 9:18 (Parallel theme): 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.

Revelation 12:4 (Parallel theme): And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.