

Revelation 9:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

Analysis

Scorpion-like tails with stings emphasize the localized, targeted nature of their torment. The five-month duration (v. 5, 10) suggests limited, measured judgment—not eternal hell but temporal warning. Scorpion venom causes excruciating pain without death, illustrating torment that cannot be escaped through death. Reformed theology sees such judgments as medicinal warnings, giving space for repentance before final judgment. The precise duration demonstrates God's sovereignty even in judgment's extent and timing—nothing occurs randomly or excessively.

Historical Context

Scorpion stings were common in the Near East, known for causing intense pain lasting hours or days. The imagery would immediately communicate severe suffering. Five months approximated a locust season's duration, suggesting natural plague elevated to supernatural intensity. Such specific details grounded apocalyptic visions in tangible experiences.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the limited duration (five months) of judgment reveal God's mercy even in wrath?
2. What does torment without death demonstrate about the seriousness of sin's consequences?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἔχουσιν οὐραῖς ὁμοίας σκορπίοις καὶ κέντρα
And **they had** **tails** **like** **unto scorpions** **And** **stings**
G2532 G2192 G3769 G3664 G4651 G2532 G2759

ἦν ἐν ταῖς οὐραῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτῶν
there were **in** ^{G3588} **tails** **their** **And** ^{G3588} **power** **their**
G2258 G1722 G3769 G846 G2532 G1849 G846

ἀδικῆσαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους μῆνας πέντε
was to hurt ^{G3588} **men** **months** **five**
G91 G444 G3376 G4002

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 9:5 (Parallel theme): 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.

Revelation 9:3 (Parallel theme): 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.