

Revelation 9:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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.... This verse from Revelation's vision of fifth and sixth trumpets - demonic torment and massive army, unrepentant humanity 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

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Revelation 9:15 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 ἐλύθησαν τῶν τέσσαρες ἄγγελοι τῶν ἡτοιμασμένοι
And were loosed which the four angels which were prepared
G2532 G3089 G3588 G5064 G32 G3588 G2090

εἰς τῶν ὥραν καὶ ἡμέραν καὶ μῆνα καὶ ἐνιαυτόν
for which an hour And a day And a month And a year
G1519 G3588 G5610 G2532 G2250 G2532 G3376 G2532 G1763

ἵνα ἀποκτείνωσιν τῶν τρίτον τῶν ἀνθρώπων
for to slay which the third part which of men
G2443 G615 G3588 G5154 G3588 G444

Additional Cross-References

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 8:7 (Parallel theme): The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

Revelation 8:9 (Parallel theme): And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.