

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.