

Revelation 9:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

Analysis

The vision's vivid colors—fiery red, hyacinth blue, sulfur yellow—suggest judgment by fire and plague. The riders' breastplates and horses' heads breathing fire, smoke, and brimstone depict supernatural destructive power. These are judgment agents executing divine wrath. The imagery recalls Sodom's destruction (Genesis 19:24) and prophetic warnings of fire-judgment. Reformed theology interprets such apocalyptic imagery as symbolic representation of spiritual realities—demonic forces or divine judgment agents accomplishing God's decree. The vision emphasizes judgment's terrifying certainty for those rejecting Christ.

Historical Context

Colored breastplates signified military divisions in Roman armies. The supernatural elements elevated natural warfare to cosmic conflict. First-century believers facing persecution needed assurance that earthly armies, however powerful, were merely pawns in divine judgment. Rome itself would face God's wrath if impenitent.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does recognizing that military powers serve divine purposes (even unknowingly) affect your view of geopolitical events?
2. What does the supernatural destructive power warn about judgment's severity for those outside Christ?

Interlinear Text

καὶ οὕτως εἶδον τοὺς ἵππων ἐν τῇ ὄράσει καὶ
And thus I saw G3588 of the horses in G3588 the vision And
G2532 G3779 G1492 G2462 G1722 G3706 G2532

τοὺς καθημένους ἐπ' αὐτῶν ἔχοντας θώρακας πυρίνους
G3588 them that sat on their having breastplates of fire
G2521 G1909 G846 G2192 G2382 G4447

καὶ ὑακινθίνους καὶ θειώδεις καὶ αἱ κεφαλαὶ τῶν
And of jacinth And brimstone And G3588 the heads G3588
G2532 G5191 G2532 G2306 G2532 G2776 G3588

ἵππων ὡς κεφαλαὶ λεόντων καὶ ἐκ τῶν
of the horses were as the heads of lions And out of G3588
G2462 G5613 G2776 G3023 G2532 G1537 G3588

στομάτων αὐτῶν ἐκπορεύεται πῦρ καὶ καπνὸς καὶ
mouths their issued fire And smoke And
G4750 G846 G1607 G4442 G2532 G2586 G2532

θεῖον
brimstone
G2303

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 21:8 (Parallel theme): But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Revelation 14:10 (Parallel theme): The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

1 Chronicles 12:8 (Parallel theme): And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains;

Revelation 19:20 (Parallel theme): And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Revelation 20:10 (Parallel theme): And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Isaiah 30:33 (Parallel theme): For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.

Psalms 11:6 (Parallel theme): Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

Genesis 19:24 (Parallel theme): Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven;

