

Revelation 9:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

The threefold plague (fire, smoke, brimstone) killing a third of mankind demonstrates judgment's massive scale. The fraction 'third part' appears throughout Revelation's judgments, indicating partial rather than total destruction —still leaving opportunity for repentance. These plagues parallel the Egyptian plagues' escalation. Reformed theology sees such judgments as common grace warnings; God restrains full wrath while offering space for repentance (Romans 2:4). The staggering death toll underscores sin's seriousness and coming wrath's terror. Yet the impenitent remain hardened (9:20-21), demonstrating human depravity's extent.

Historical Context

Ancient warfare often involved burning cities and mass casualties, but this vision's scale exceeds any historical battle. The imagery communicated to first-century readers that coming judgments would surpass even Rome's devastating military campaigns. The partial nature (one-third) emphasized that these were warning judgments, not yet final consummation.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How should the reality of massive death in divine judgment affect your urgency in evangelism and prayer for the lost?
2. What does the limitation to 'a third' reveal about God's restraint even in judgment?

Interlinear Text

ὑπὸ τῶν τριῶν τούτων ἀπεκτάνθησαν τῶν τρίτον
By which three these killed which the third part
G5259 G3588 G5140 G5130 G615 G3588 G5154

τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἐκ τῶν πυρὸς καὶ ἐκ τῶν καπνοῦ
which of men by which the fire and by which the smoke
G3588 G444 G1537 G3588 G4442 G2532 G1537 G3588 G2586

καὶ ἐκ τῶν θείου τῶν ἐκπορευομένου ἐκ τῶν
and by which the brimstone which issued by which
G2532 G1537 G3588 G2303 G3588 G1607 G1537 G3588

στομάτων αὐτῶν
mouths their
G4750 G846

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 9:17 (Parallel theme): 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.

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.

