

Revelation 9:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

Analysis

The dual threat—mouths and serpent-like tails—indicates comprehensive danger from these judgment agents. Mouths issuing plagues suggest proclamations or teachings, while tails with serpent heads recall the serpent's deception (Genesis 3). This combination warns of both frontal assault (direct false teaching) and rear attack (subtle deception). Reformed theology recognizes that false doctrine both openly contradicts truth and subtly undermines it. The imagery emphasizes vigilance—spiritual threats come from multiple directions, requiring comprehensive doctrinal awareness and discernment.

Historical Context

Serpents symbolized deception and evil in Jewish thought. Two-headed danger would communicate total vulnerability to attack. In an era of competing religious and philosophical systems, this imagery warned believers that deception could come through respected sources (mouths/teachings) and unexpected sources (tail attacks/subtle infiltration).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How can you develop discernment to recognize both obvious false teaching (mouths) and subtle deception (tails)?
2. What areas of your spiritual life might be vulnerable to 'tail' attacks—unexpected or neglected areas where error creeps in?

Interlinear Text

ἡ γὰρ ἐξουσία αὐταῖς ἐν τῷ στόματι αὐταῖς εἰσιν,
G3588 For power their in G3588 mouth their is
G1063 G1849 G846 G1722 G4750 G846 G1526

καὶ ἐν ταῖς οὐραῖ αὐταῖς αἱ γὰρ οὐραῖ αὐταῖς
and in G3588 tails their G3588 For tails their
G2532 G1722 G3769 G846 G1063 G3769 G846

ὅμοιαι ὄφεσιν, ἔχουσαι κεφαλὰς, καὶ ἐν αὐταῖς
were like unto serpents and had heads and in their
G3664 G3789 G2192 G2776 G2532 G1722 G846

ἀδικοῦσιν.
they do hurt
G91

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 9:10 (Parallel theme): And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

Isaiah 9:15 (Parallel theme): The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail.

