

Coming Into the Middle

1. Ever come into the middle of a conversation? // A story?
2. Difficult to make sense of what's going on.
3. Characters have already been introduced.
4. Unaware of the context.
5. Can easily think the good guy is bad; the bad guy, good.
6. For most of us here this morning; like a weekly episode of an on-going story; a program we watch on TV from week to week.
7. But for visitors, can be confusing.
8. So, let's do a brief catch up >> **Previously on REVELATION: THINGS TO COME ...**
 - a. The Apostle John is given visions of the Last Days.
 - b. In a series of visions, he sees Jesus given the Title Deed to Earth.
 - c. As Jesus moves to take possession of what rightly belongs to Him,
 - d. He moves to evict rebellious humanity that doesn't want to give it up.
 - e. John sees wave after wave of divine judgment; each a bit more severe than the last.
 - f. And there's a reason for that: Each new judgment, results in some people repenting of their rebellion and coming to faith in Christ.
 - g. Those that don't, grow only harder and more determined to rebel.
9. These judgments are represented in Revelation by the breaking of 7 seals on the Title Deed to Earth, the sounding of 7 Trumpets, and the pouring out of 7 bowls.
10. We've already covered all 7 seals and 5 of the 7 trumpets.
11. Today we look at the 6th.
12. Be fore-warned: There isn't a big applicational payoff in today's study.

Vs. 13-15

¹³ Then the 6th angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the 4 horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴ saying to the 6th angel who had the trumpet, "Release the 4 angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵ So the 4 angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a 3rd of mankind.

1. When the 6th trumpet sounds, John hears a voice from the altar we saw in ch8.
 - a. That altar of incense represents the prayers of God's people that like the smoke of the incense rise before Him.
 - b. In Ch8, an angel added some incense to the altar, then scooped up some of the hot coals & flung them to Earth.
 - c. God answers the prayer His people have made over the years – "May Your Kingdom Come!"
 - d. Their prayers have gone up. Now the answer comes down.
2. What we see here is another aspect of God's answer, so it comes from the altar.
3. A command is given to **release** 4 angels somehow connected to the Euphrates River.
4. That these angels are **bound** means they aren't **holy** angels; they're **demons**.
5. What they have to do with the Euphrates isn't spelled out. All we can do is guess.
 - a. But knowing that the key for understanding Rev. is the OT, we ask,
 - b. What was the significance of the Euphrates there?
6. The Euphrates River was the **main feature** of the ancient Land of **Babylon**.
 - a. There would have **been no** Babylon w/o it.
 - b. It figured often in Babylon's history.
 - c. The Ancient Empire was even known as the "Land of the Euphrates."
7. Genesis tells us that Babylon was the birthplace of man-made religion.
8. And later in Rev., Babylon represents the political & economic center of the A/C's power.
9. The 4 demons we read about here are **tied to this region**.
 - a. I find it interesting that **this** is the birthplace & scene of many of History's great empires.

- b. And by empires, I mean peaks/summits of human political, economic & military power.
 - c. This is where the FIRST great civilization rose – the **Sumerians**.
 - d. This is the land of the **Assyrians**, the **Babylonians**, & **Persians**.
 - e. Though the **Greeks** started up to the West of this, **Alexander died in Babylon** after making it his capital.
10. Today it's the nation of Iraq & the territory ISIS claims for their caliphate.
11. If there was any one place you could say **historically**, has consistently defied God & persecuted His people, it's this region.
12. That's why, later in Rev., the final world system in rebellion against God is called "Babylon."
13. These 4 demons have an assignment they can't complete until the right time.
14. That time now comes & they're released to complete that task.
15. Let's pause there. Let that sink in.
- a. In just a moment we're going to see—these aren't **wimpy** demons. They're fearsome.
 - b. They aren't the demons who tempt little boys to stick their gum under their desk.
 - c. These are hardcore major demons who spread wide-scale death & destruction.
 - d. They're 4 star generals, not low rank privates.
16. But they can't do ANYTHING unless God permits them.
- a. They're let loose when He commands it.
 - b. If you're bothered by the fact God DOES let them loose,
 - c. Remember that this happens during the Trib when God is simply giving humanity what it wants – a world without Him.
 - d. He's backing His grace out, so people can see what life & the World are like without Him.
 - e. After all, that's what they've been asking for. Even more, it's what rebel man demands!
 - f. This is just **another layer** of God's grace that's being peeled back.
17. Listen: The Devil & demons **HATE** God.
- a. They hate **humans** because we bear God's image.
 - b. They know God created us to be His eternal companion so they do everything they can to **keep** us from that.
 - c. That's why Jesus said the devil comes to steal, kill & destroy.
 - d. If they could, the demons would wipe us all out right now.
 - e. They can't because God won't let them. His grace protects us.
 - f. But the time is coming when in answer to foolish man's rejection of God, God will pull back His protection & demons will get to do what they want.
18. Here's what that means for us. // Christian: Hear this.
- a. When you find yourself embroiled in Spiritual Warfare, it's because God's **allowed** it.
 - b. **His Grace covers you.**
 - c. So if the enemy is hassling you, it's only because God has some **greater plan** & purpose for it.
 - d. Most likely, the Spirit wants to toughen you and make you an effective spiritual warrior.
 - e. So, when you find yourself engaged in Spiritual battle, don't whine.
 - f. Don't play the "Woe is me; Life's so hard" card.
 - g. It's time to suit up in the whole armor of God, take the sword of the Spirit and go to war!
 - h. Because we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us.
 - i. The War is already won. Jesus won it. Ours is just a mop-up operation.
19. And here's what this says to those of you who AREN'T Christians yet
- a. The devil doesn't want you to prosper, to be blessed & happy.
 - b. He wants to destroy you. But he knows if you knew that you'd never fall for his lies.
 - c. So he wraps destruction in an attractive package and makes it look like what you want.
 - d. It's all just bait on a hook. He wants to get you hooked, addicted – whether it's to drugs, sex or just simply to pleasure & the world.
 - e. He'll even use career & family; Sports – RELIGION!
 - f. It doesn't matter what it is – Just so long as it keeps you from Jesus.
20. When these demons are released, they go forth to kill a one 3rd of humanity.
- a. Add that to the ¼ of the world's population already wiped out by the 4 horsemen of ch6, means

Earth's population has been reduced to ½ since the beginning of the Trib.

- b. Imagine the impact that will have on modern societies.
- c. History tells us the impact the Black Death had on Europe in the Middle Ages.
- d. It took a couple centuries to recover.

Vs. 16-19

1. As we read on, we see these demons accomplish their killing spree thru **some kind of army**.
- ¹⁶ Now the number of the army of the horsemen *was* 200 million; I heard the number of them. ¹⁷ And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery [bright] red, hyacinth [sky] blue, and sulfur [bright] yellow; and the heads of the horses *were* like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. ¹⁸ By these 3 *plagues* a 3rd of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. ¹⁹ For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails *are* like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.
2. The description of this army is almost as bizarre as the demonic scorpion-locusts we saw last week.
3. Are we to understand this as a **literal army** or a plague of demons?
4. Well: John hears their #; 200 million. So it would seem we're to understand this as a literal army.
5. Also, his description of it is even more precise than given for the locusts.
6. What's fascinating is that there were probably not more than 200 million alive on Earth in John's day.
 - a. At peak strength, the combined forces of the Axis & Allies during WWII was only **70 million**.
 - b. Yet several years ago, the Chinese boasted they could field an army of 200 million.
 - c. Not difficult in a nation of nearly 1.5 billion.
7. If John **does** attempt to describe a **modern army**, imagine how difficult that would be.
 - a. And consider this: Did God give him a vision of an actual modern army – like a video clip we see in the news?
 - b. Or did God use **images of things John knew** as representatives of a modern military force?
 - 1) How could a 1st C person describe a modern tank, helicopter, or bomber?
 - 2) Language would have to be bent; which explains why this is so difficult to understand.
8. John says this army is comprised of horsemen; meaning it's **mobile** – like all modern armies are.
 - a. It's armored, again, like all modern armies.
 - b. To John's readers, 3 different colors would speak of 3 divisions since the divisions of ancient armies carried different colored banners into battle. This may refer to an Army, Navy & Air Force.
 - d. The weapons this army uses are "fire, smoke & brimstone" = Liquid sulfur.
 - 1) This is where I'd love to dig into some more technical stuff.
 - 2) Talk about the anti-armor Brimstone missile that's an evolution of the Hellfire.
 - 3) Get into the latest developments in weapons systems. But we don't have time.
 - e. So, let it be enough to note that in John's day, weapons were by far of a melee type.
 - 1) Battle was hand to hand, face to face w/swords & spears.
 - 2) There just wasn't much done in the way of ranged weapons.
 - 3) Certainly nothing to speak of in the way John describes here.
 - 4) But if an ancient described modern ranged weapons like guns, missiles, & artillery, specially if those missiles & shells were chemical or nuclear weapons, what better way than to say it was fire, smoke & brimstone?
9. John returns to what we're reading here in ch16 and adds some details.
 - a. Demons are released who bring forth a massive army from the Far East.
 - b. It makes its way toward the Middle East & the scene of Earth's Last Great Battle; Armageddon.
 - c. As they make their way West, they cross India & southern Asia, some of the most heavily populated regions of the Planet.
 - d. As they do, they wreak great devastation, killing a 3rd of humanity.
10. We'd think w/these 6 trumpet judgments, everyone would repent.
11. A few do, but the great majority only harden even more to God.

Vs. 20-21

- ²⁰ But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear

nor walk. ²¹ And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

1. What a fool man becomes when he turns his back on God.
2. He turns from the source of life & tries to find meaning & satisfaction in things that have no capacity to provide them.
3. Anything we **give ourselves** to apart from God is an idol. ANYTHING.
4. We were made **for Him**. We'll never know peace till we give ourselves **to Him**.
5. During the Trib, as all hell, **literally**, breaks loose, people won't give to relief efforts like they're doing today in Nepal.
 - a. There won't be a Red Cross to ship supplies to the regions devastated by this army of 200 million.
 - b. It's going to be everyone for themselves.
 - c. The Doomsday preppers storing food, water & ammo probably have it right.
6. As God removes His grace, there'll be less & less of it and people will become more & more brutal; like the beasts they claim they evolved from.
7. Life will be cheap.

Drugs plentiful – which is what the sorcery refers to.

Perversion will be an epidemic.

And there'll be no regard for the rights or property of others.

8. It'll be a rude & crude time when might makes right & the strong victimize the weak.

CONCLUSION

1. What else can I say as we end but top repeat: Don't be here for this!
2. Believe in Jesus today. Trust Him to save you. Now.