

Do You Read The End Of A Book Before You're Supposed To?

Some do and some don't.

Those who don't say it's *cheating*.

Those who do say they read the end so that they don't have to worry along the way about what's going to happen.

We Are In A Story

A book - sit in a comfy chair and read.

Bible - we are in it; a part of its story.

We're encouraged to read the ending so that we might be comforted and not worry.

Reading The Middle

Can be confusing: no context; just random bits.

So with out study.

We need to step back and look at the bigger picture.

There Is A Cosmic Struggle Going On Between God and Satan

Man is the prize.

God loves us and wants to bring us to Himself - for eternity.

Satan hates us and wants to ruin us.

We bear the image of the God he hates - so he lashes out to mar, destroy.

Sin is his tactic of slash and burn to bring ruin.

But Satan's reign of terror is *limited* by God.

Though evil is present, it's kept in check by the gracious hand of God.

We see the truth of this in the story of Job (Job 1-3).

God is graciously restraining evil and the ravages of the devil, in spite of mankind's rejection of God and His grace.

Now - here is an amazing thing: God honors the choices people make.

If a person receives Him: He fills them with His love and grace and peace and promises protection.

But if a person *rejects* Him; He honors that rejection and God owes them nothing.

The time will come when a Christ-rejecting world will receive the full result of refusing Him.

When a person rejects God, they reject all He is and does; including His restraint of evil.

What we are reading about in the 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls is the fruit of mankind's rejection of God.

¹³Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, ¹⁴saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." ¹⁵So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. ¹⁶Now the number of the army of the horsemen *was* two hundred million; I heard the number of them. ¹⁷And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses *were* like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. ¹⁸By these three *plagues* a third of mankind was killed —by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. ¹⁹For their power

is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails *are* like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.

When the 6th trumpet sounds, John hears a voice from the golden altar of incense we saw in ch8.

A command is given to release the 4 angels bound at the Euphrates.

Holy angels are never bound so we know these are fallen angels – demons.

They are bound at the River Euphrates, which closely associated with Babylon.

Babylon stands in the Bible, and specially in the book of Revelation as a symbol of the home of wickedness. (Rev. 17-19 18:2)

These demons were bound for a set time, and that time has now come.

Everything happens according to God's perfect timing.

When they're released, they go forth to kill 1/3 of humanity.

Add this to the ¼ of the world's population that has already been killed in 4 horsemen of ch. 6, means that the earth has been reduced to ½ it's population in about 4 yrs.

And that's not including those who have died from the other seals and trumpets.

6 billion now – down to 2½ to 3 billion!

Food production / social services!

These 4 angels accomplish their killing spree through the use of an army.

Is this a literal army or another plague of demons?

John hears the number – 200 million; seems to imply a literal military force.

Also, the description of them, while just as wild and unnerving as that for the locusts, sounds a bit more literal.

In John's day, there were probably not 200 million alive on earth!

At peak strength, the combined forces of the Axis and Allies during WWII was only 70 million.

And yet a few years ago, the premier of China boasted they could field an army of 200 million. Not hard in a nation of nearly 2 billion!

Interesting he should chose that number!

If John is attempting to describe a modern army with modern weapons, we can understand why his description is stretched.

He seems more interested in the mounts of the army than with the men who comprise it.

These mounts are what are responsible for the lethality of the army.

They expel fire, smoke, brimstone (burning sulphur)

Chemical weapons?

We hear a lot about chemical weapons today.

Modern chemical weapons are terrible.

Blister agents: now much worse

Blood agents: hydrogen cyanide

Enter blood and block energy creating enzyme - die of exhaustion within hours

Nerve agents: soman & VX

Odorless and colorless; can be breathed or absorbed through skin.

Impair nerve functions in muscles.

Acetylcholine; causes contractions of muscles - Cholinesterase; breaks down acetylcholine.

Nerve agents block cholinesterase - muscles contract but don't relax; lungs, heart,

limbs.

From what we see here and will see in ch16, demons are released who prepare way for the armies of the east to come to the scene of the end events.

As they make their way toward the Middle East, they wreak great destruction on some of the most populous regions on earth - southern Asia, India.

One would think with the 5th & 6th trumpet judgments, humanity would repent.

But these judgments don't lead to repentance.

They prove to be merely punitive on rebel man.

²⁰But 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. ²¹And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

6 sins mentioned.

Interesting because they give us a glimpse of where people's heads will be at.

As we consider them, see if they don't sound a lot like what is happening today.

#1 They worship demons.

Jesus and Paul both tells us that the Tribulation will be a time of widespread religious deception.

Above all, what satan wants is worship.

He will use the career of the antichrist and the many false prophets to spread religious deception and promote the worship of the demonic.

The current growing interest in New Age spirituality is a set up for this.

#2 They worship idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, wood.

Modern man too sophisticated to worship carved images but not too sophisticated to worship wealth, power and possessions.

During the Tribulation, materialism will take over and people will sell their souls for personal gain of worldly luxury.

#3 They are murderers.

The value of human life will reach an all time low.

If someone gets in their way or hinders their pursuit of happiness they're fair game to be offed.

We see the seeds of this already at work in abortion, infanticide, euthanasia

#4 They are sorcerers.

Pharmakeia; pharmacy - drugs

Drugs/sorcery, witchcraft = synonymous in ancient world - drugs used to enter an altered state.

Demons would come and offer hidden wisdom

This happened in our time with the hippie movement - hallucinogens; mescaline, LSD.

Spirit beings came and imparted wisdom.

When sober, realized Eastern religions taught the same things - door was opened to the East.

This was the birth of the New Age; Western form of Hinduism.

Drugs continue to be a problem as we all well know.

#5 They are sexually immoral.

Doesn't take much explanation

#6 They are thieves.

When the value of human life has been so degraded as it will be at this time, then the rights of personal property slide with it.

This will be a period in which the world will actually work at breaking all 10 of the Ten Commandments!