

ISLAM IN BIBLE PROPHECY

Have you ever wondered how the Arab-Israeli conflict got started? Why does all that intense hatred exist in the Middle East? Well in more recent years it goes back to the Zionist movement which coalesced the Jews who had been scattered in many nations over the course of centuries. They were badly persecuted. So they decided to take their ancient home which in the meantime had become the land of the Arab-Palestinians. The Zionist-political movement displaced the Palestinians.

In modern times Yassar Arafat has been the *de facto* Palestinian leader for years. He led the covert war of terrorism within the Israeli State. The struggle is over the land. But this decades-old war goes way back before the twentieth century.

It goes back to some decisions that Abraham and Sarah made in the Old Testament. God promised to give a child to Abraham. "And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed. . . the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, . . . he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir." Gen. 15:3, 4.

When many years had passed without God's promise being fulfilled, Sarah approached Abraham about taking things into their own hands. She proposed that he sleep with her Egyptian handmaid Hagar. "Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai." Gen. 16:2.

When it was a choice between God's voice and his wife's voice, Abraham should have listened to God's voice. It was just here that he demonstrated unbelief in God's promise. In other words, they said we believe what God has said, but we need to add to it our own works. And that is the old covenant. Faith plus our works equals the old covenant.

The apostle Paul explains the connection of Hagar with the old covenant. "But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh. . . . Which things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants; . . . which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar." Gal. 4:23, 24. That son "born after the flesh" was Ishmael.

Abraham loved Ishmael very much, but he could never be the child of promise given by God because of the circumstances of his birth. But God did promise to bless Ishmael. "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I

will make him a great nation.” Gen. 17:20. Ishmael became the father of the large family that we know as the Arabs.

When he was ninety-nine Abraham was circumcised as “a token of the covenant” (Gen. 17:11). Circumcision was “a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised (Rom. 4:11), says Paul. This was a dramatic outward mark reminding him that God removed the sin of adultery from his heart. The law of the Lord would be his delight and spring from a natural inward motivation of love to God—“my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant” (Gen. 17:13).

To be circumcised was to be justified by God. But so was Ishmael circumcised (Gen. 17:25), and thus he was justified by God though the Lord had predicted before his birth that “he will be a wild man; and his hand will be against every man” (Gen. 16:12).

God has called and elected every last man, woman and child of lost Adam to be saved in Christ and receive the inheritance. So any Arab could be included based on those conditions.

It is heart-rending to see the suicide bombers take their own lives while blasting away so many innocent Jewish lives. These Palestinians believe that when they die in such a “holy war” declared by Allah that they will go immediately to him and receive great reward.

God’s promise was to the seed of Abraham who is Christ. And hence all who are Christ’s become joint heirs with Him. God’s promise is not about Ishmael,—the Palestinians,—nor the Israelis, neither of whom want anything to do with Christ.

However, God’s promise is all in Christ. Belief in Christ is the only sure way of gaining the inheritance of the whole earth both for the Palestinian and the Israeli. The Arab-Israeli conflict will never be resolved. It will continue until Jesus comes the second time and His holy war will end the terrorism. All this fighting comes as a result of the old covenant. Men are seeking to grab what they believe has been promised to their people.

“And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!” Revelation 8:13.

These three woes belong with the last three trumpets, one with each. This is certain by the fact that, when the fifth angel’s work is ended, it is written: “One woe is past; and, behold, there come *two*

woes more hereafter.” Rev. 9:12. And when the sixth trumpet is ended, “the *third woe* cometh quickly. And the *seventh angel sounded*.” Rev. 11:15.

“And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.” Revelation 9:1.

Here a new religion is brought to view, with some good teachings—it is a star “fallen from heaven,” but it is mixed with “smoke” out of the “bottomless pit.” The gospel is the sunshine of the world, but this new power darkens the gospel sun and the spiritual air which the world needs.

Islam began by condemning the evil of idolatry as wrongly practiced in the apostate Christian church, and, so far, it was right. Never are we to bow down to idols. There is indeed only one God; and none are to be worshiped but Him. Only by blatant disregard of the teachings of the Bible could the theologians of the Dark Ages justify idol-worship.

“And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.” Revelation 9:2.

But the teachings of Islam which were a necessary scourge to an apostate church brought further “smoke” into the world. The rejection of the pure New Testament sunshine of the gospel has prepared the way for darkness to erupt from “the pit.”

God permits this check upon the church of Rome. The church has adopted un-biblical doctrines such as idol veneration, Marianism and adoration of deceased mortals. It also changed the day of worship to Sunday in direct opposition to the Sabbath of the Lord. The sun and the air were darkened. A judgment out of the “bottomless pit” of the Arabian desert is described as falling against the corrupt church of Rome. This affliction upon the apostate people should have turned them to God in repentance.

The “bottomless pit” in the Greek means any desolate wilderness, and thus fitly represents the desert of Arabia whence came the Arab Muslim invaders, in number like unto locusts.

The Greek word for “bottomless pit” is *abyssos*, from which we get our modern English word *abyss*. Modern Muslim writers use that very word in describing the Arabian society from which the power of Islam arose.

“And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.” Revelation 9:3.

One writer, not thinking of the book of Revelation, said of these followers of Mohammed: “Like locusts, the Osmanlis swarmed in all directions, and no village missed their notice up to the very walls of Constantinople.” As a scorpion strikes, so they exacted a cruel revenge in warfare.

The spread of Islam was a stinging challenge to the power and authority of the new Roman Catholic Church, which had been invested with power from the Roman Caesar. As the Roman Empire slowly declined, the Church of Rome emerged as the successor power forecast by Bible prophecy. It was the dramatic advance of Islam that ultimately contained and checked the temporal political power of the church. Ironically, the very shape of this containment on a map resembles a crescent starting in southern France and northern Spain and extending down through North Africa to the Middle East and on west to China. Thus the power of Catholicism was held from unlimited expansion during the fifth trumpet woe by the swarming Muslims from the “bottomless pit,” the “children of the East” of their day.

“And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.” Revelation 9:4.

When Mohammed died, he was succeeded by Abubaker in A. D. 632, who mobilized the Arabian tribes for conquest. He instructed them to respect the religious convictions of people who observed the law of God faithfully. His men were to scourge only those who worshiped idols. This glimpse of history reveals the early spirit of Islam. Even today Muslims respect those who truly reverence the Word of God. He commanded his soldiers:

“Let not your victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat. . . . You will find some religious persons who live retired in monasteries, and propose, to themselves to serve God that way; let them alone, and neither kill them nor destroy their monasteries and you will find another sort of people that belong to the synagogue of Satan, who

have shaven crowns; be sure you cleave their skulls, and give them no quarter till they either turn Mohammedans or pay tribute.”

Who were the people with the “seal of God in their foreheads” that Abubaker’s soldiers were commanded to spare? All through history there have been faithful observers of the Lord’s true Sabbath, which has always been the “seal of God.” In the days of Mohammed and Abubaker there were some such faithful ones. It seems that a higher authority than Abubaker overruled for the protection of His faithful people!

In the post-911 world, it seems natural to assume that the resurgence of the Islamic world is being motivated by the power of evil. However, the Bible and world history show something altogether different. At the height of Rome’s power during the 16th century Reformation Suleyman the Magnificent—the great Ottoman Turkish leader went up against the Hungarian army. Here is the description of it from the *National Geographic* magazine (Nov., 1987, pp. 580, 581).

“Next morning King Louis’s body is found. As he fled, his horse slipped on a slope. Thrown, he rolled into a stream. Held down by his golden armor, he drowned, face in the mud, “May God be merciful to him,” Suleyman says, “and punish those who misled his inexperience. I came indeed in arms against him; but it was not my wish that he should be thus cut off while he had scarcely tasted the sweets of life and royalty.

[The battle of] Mohacs struck the fear of God in Europe. With Hungary gone, Austria would be next, then Germany. Earlier Luther, whose Reformation was able to take root because of the empire’s distraction by the Turks, had declared that to fight against the Turks is to resist the Lord, who visits our sins with such rods.”

God used the activity of Islam to bring judgment on the apostate church of the day, as well as deliverers to the Reformers who were persecuted in calling the world back to the plain truth of the Bible. Could it be God will use Islam in the same way during the seventh trumpet for His people? Even a secular publication like *National Geographic* credits Islam with giving time for the Reformation to take root, by diverting the power of Rome to fight Islam.

But the wars to come of attrition and conquest were terrible enough. John now tries to describe Saracen battle scenes where guns and gunpowder are used when in his day he has never heard of such inventions.

“And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.” Revelation 9:5-10.

This description may seem fantastic to us today, but to the people living within the “security” of the Eastern Roman Empire, reports of the Saracen hordes of conquest sounded much like this. Like reports of a plague of locusts on its way, citizens of the empire lived under the constant shadow of the Islamic scourge.

The Arabians used horses extensively in their wars of conquest. The “crowns” may be the turban, which was for a long time a distinctive national headdress of the Arabians. The soldiers had long hair.

Here we have a test of the accuracy of the prophecy and its historical fulfillment of the “five months.” In Bible prophecy a day is a symbol of a year. There are 30 days to a month in Bible prophecy. Thus “five months” of prophetic time would equal 150 years.

The Saracens (Muslims) were “given authority” to “torment” the civilized Eastern Roman Empire for these 150 years, but not to “kill them,” that is, not to conquer them. The 150 years should begin from the time that “they had a king over them.”

“And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.” Revelation 9:11.

For hundreds of years after Mohammed’s death, his followers were divided into various groups and factions with no central government or king. But near the end of the 13th century, Othman founded an organized government which has been known as the Ottoman Empire. “The angel of the bottomless pit” is called an “angel” in the sense of the Greek word which also means “messenger” or “minister.” The Sultan became chief minister of the Muslim religion. The names

in Hebrew, “Abaddon,” and in Greek, “Apollyon,” mean “one who destroys.” Such was always the character of the Ottoman rulers.

Earnest students of the Bible 150 years ago searched out fulfillment of this prophecy in history, and found that Othman, first “king” of the Muslims, made his initial attack to “torment” the civilized world of the Eastern Roman Empire in A. D. 1299. These prophecy students depended on Edward Gibbons’ positive statement that the attack occurred on July 27 of that year.

We ask, did the Ottoman Turks “torment” the Eastern Roman Empire for 150 years? History tells us that they maintained an almost constant war of harassment and torment from A. D. 1299 through 1499, exactly 150 years, without completely dominating them. Then a great change came.

The Eastern Roman emperors had become gradually weaker and more corrupt until it became clear to everyone that they would soon lose their independence. When the Emperor John Palaeologus, died on October 31, 1448, his brothers humbly sought the consent of the Turkish Sultan, Murad II, to choose their elder brother, Constantine Deacozes to be crowned as the new emperor in January, 1449. Thus, in bowing to the Sultan of Turkey, they acknowledged that their independence was at an end.

“One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.” Revelation 9:12.

The “one woe” was the rise of the Muslim power. The second “woe” to follow is the triumph of that power. It was to apply the coup de grace to the last vestige of the Roman Empire and henceforth terrorize Europe for hundreds of years. The “third woe” is to be the final frightful anger of the nations, with God’s judgment-wrath which will bring a close to our world’ history.

“And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.” Revelation 9:13, 14.

Now, in A. D. 1449, the “sixth angel” looses the restraints which had heretofore prevented the Muslims from actually conquering the wealthy and powerful Eastern Empire. The “four angels . . . bound at the great river Euphrates” can refer to the four separate Muslim provinces of Aleppo, Iconium, Damascus, and Baghdad. The way was opened, the obstacles removed, for the Sultan later to wage successful war against Europe.

Constantinople actually fell to the Turkish armies in A. D. 1453. But in 1449, when the “five months” of prophetic time, 150 years, came to an end, the independence of the European empire was lost not by force of arms, but by the emperor meekly and voluntarily surrendering his independence into the hands of the Turks. In effect he said, “I cannot reign unless you first permit.”

How long was the Ottoman Moslem empire continue ruling in independence?

“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.” Revelation 9:15.

For a period designated as “the hour and day and month and year.” One “year” of 360 days is 360 literal years.” One “month” of 30 days is 30 years. One “day” of 24 hours is 1 year. One “hour” $1 \times 24^{\text{th}}$ of a year, or 15 days literally. Add up the totals and we have 391 years and 15 days.

When did this period of 391 years and 15 days begin? Clearly, at the end of the 150 years when the Moslems should cease “tormenting” the Eastern Empire and proceed to conquer it. Bible students added the 150 years to Gibbon’s beginning date of July 27, 1299 and came to July 27, 1449, then they added the 391 literal years and came to July 27, 1840. Then they added the remaining 15 days, which brought the end of the prophetic period to August 11, 1840.

Did the Turkish Sultan lose his independence on that very day by meekly and voluntarily surrendering it to the European rulers in the same way that the Eastern Empire lost his to the Sultan in 1449?

Bible students boldly predicted in 1838 that the Sultan of Turkey would lose his independence in August 1840. This was a public test of the year-day principle of interpreting prophecy.

The fulfillment would also establish that the Book of Revelation is pointing to something vastly more important than the rise and fall of the Muslim empire. In a moment we shall see what history says happened on August 11, 1840.

First, let us look briefly at what John says as to how the Turkish Muslim armies once terrified the Europeans for centuries. John is intrigued by the use of gunpowder, and may allude to the frightful loss of life that has followed this invention.

“And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. 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 9:16, 17.

This description is highly figurative. John is describing what he saw in the best language available to him at the time he lived. He knew nothing, had never even dreamed, of gunpowder or firearms.

There never has been an army of 200 million horsemen; either this is a Greek expression denoting vast numbers in general, or it includes all the soldiers and their supporters in all the armies of the Ottoman empire during the four centuries of its power. It figuratively denotes vast hordes.

“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. 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.” Revelation 9:18, 19.

It is here that history records the use of gunpowder for the first time in human history. To John the sight of fierce Muslim warriors on horseback shooting their guns would look as if the “fire, smoke, and brimstone” issued out of the horses’ mouths.

Until A. D. 1453, the walls of Constantinople had resisted attack by many armies. Thus the empire had survived. But now the Ottoman Turks used the newly-invented massive gunpowder cannon to demolish those once-impregnable walls. Thus was razed the last defense of the proud Roman Empire. The old thousand-year civilization was now in ruins.

But at last in 1840 selfishness and corruption had past from the once-proud Muslim empire. In 1838 there was war between the Sultans of Turkey and Egypt, with Egypt victorious. In 1840, four powerful European nations interfered for fear that Egypt might take the Sultan’s throne. In his distress, the weak Sultan voluntarily surrendered his independence into the hands of these four European nations, leaving them to manage his affairs. He sent an envoy to the ruler of Egypt to deliver a message from the four European nations, which message place his affairs in their hands.

The date? It was on the 11th of August, 1840, that this messenger arrived in Alexandria, and on that day placed the message in the hands of the ruler of Egypt!

On that day, the Sultan had meekly surrendered his independence in the same way that Murad II of the Eastern Roman Empire had surrendered his to the Sultan in 1449. The once vast Ottoman Empire is today splintered into the Balkan states. And since that day, Muslim Turkey in Europe has existed only at the sufferance and with the support of the European nations.

When this fact became known, multitudes of Bible students were convinced of the correctness of the year-day principle of interpreting Bible prophecy. What seemed to be unimportant history in reality provided the most convincing proof that the books of Daniel and the Revelation are inspired of God, and present a message of the utmost importance to all the inhabitants of the earth today. An apparently insignificant event became a key in unlocking Revelation.

“And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.” Revelation 9:20, 21.

Although the hordes of Muslims were let loose on the apostate Christian world, people refused to learn the lesson of repentance. European history during the time of the six trumpets is an almost unbroken record of vanity, arrogance, pride, and cruelty. Thus we see that God permits “woes” to come upon the world to bring sinners to their senses, and to lead them to respond to the gospel. Woe after woe comes, yet still they love their sin. Will the “third woe” lead them to repentance? When that time comes, it will be too late!

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.” Revelation 10:7.

What is the mystery of God? In Ephesians 1:9, 10, Paul tells us that God’s purpose to gather all things in Christ is the “mystery of His will.” He adds that this “mystery” includes the gathering of the Gentiles as “fellow heirs, . . . and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” (Eph. 3:3, 6). The “mystery of God” is therefore God’s great work of gathering out of a sinful world His true people, in preparation for the second coming of Christ.

Paul explains the “mystery” even more clearly in Colossians 1:27, 28. “The riches of the glory of this mystery” is “Christ in you, the hope of glory . . . that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

The great battle between Christ and Satan can never be finished until Christ has a people who follow Him “wherever He goes,” who are “without fault before the throne of God” (Rev. 14:4, 5).

Because this work has not yet been fully accomplished, sin, sorrow, and death still curse this unhappy world. This glorious work of making a people “perfect in Christ Jesus” is a result of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, spoken of by the angel to Daniel.

This is the greatest, most important work being done in the world today. It is a priceless privilege to cooperate with Christ in His great final work of salvation.

The mystery of God being the gospel, when the angel said that the mystery of God should be finished, he was but saying, according to these scriptures, that *the gospel* should be finished. Paul said that the gospel “is the power of God unto salvation;” therefore to say that the mystery of God—the gospel—should be finished, is but to say that the power of God for the salvation of men will cease to be exercised. Again, the mystery of God is God manifest in the flesh, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The finishing of that mystery will be God alone manifest, Christ in his completeness revealed, in the flesh in those who believe in him.

So then, according to the explanation given in these scriptures, the angel of Rev. 10:7 says, In the days—the years—of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the gospel should be finished, the power of God for the salvation of men shall cease to be exercised; and the work of God in Christ in those who truly believe in him, will be completed unto the measure of the fullness of the stature of Christ, “as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

The sanctuary of the Levitical law was a figure of the sanctuary of the gospel. Heb. 9:9, 11, 23. That was on earth, this is in heaven. That was made with hands, and was pitched by man; this was made without hands, and was pitched by the Lord. Heb. 9:9, 23, 24; 8:2; 9:11. The service of that sanctuary was by the men of the Levitical priesthood, and with the blood of beasts; the service of this sanctuary is by Christ the Lord, of the Melchisedec priesthood, and with the blood of Christ himself. Hebrews 7; 9:6, 9, 12-14, 22-26; 8:1. The service of that sanctuary was completed once a year; the service of this, when completed, is once for all. Heb. 9:25, 26; 10:3, 10.

The last work of the annual service in that sanctuary was upon what was called the day of atonement; and the service was called the cleansing of the sanctuary—the taking away of all the sins that had

been conveyed into the sanctuary by the service of the priests at the confessions and sacrifices of the people during the year that then ended. Lev. 23:27-32; 16:2-34. The last work of the once-for-all service of the heavenly sanctuary will be the great day of everlasting atonement; and the service will be to take away forever all the sins that have been borne by our High Priest, at the confession of believers, and the offering of Him by faith as our sacrifice, as he offers himself in fact in our behalf.

This also is called the cleansing of, *not* the *earthly*, but the *heavenly* sanctuary. As the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary was the last work for that year in behalf of that people, so the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary will be the last work forever in behalf of any people. As the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary was the very last day of that annual round of service, so, whenever the world shall have reached the time of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, the world will then have entered upon the very last days of the work of the gospel. And when the sanctuary shall have been cleansed, the gospel—the mystery of God—will have been “finished as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

And when that mystery of God shall be finished, the kingdoms of this world “become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” This is at the coming of Christ; and the coming of Christ brings the end of the world. The first four trumpets mark the downfall of the *Western* Empire of Rome; the fifth and sixth mark the destruction of the *Eastern* Empire of Rome; and *the seventh trumpet* marks the downfall of *all empires*, all kingdoms, and all nations; for when the God of heaven sets up his kingdom, “it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.” Dan. 2:44.