

ISLAM AND THE UNITED STATES IN PROPHECY

The United States and its allies the United Kingdom, Australia, Israel, and others have been living in the shadow of 911. With the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the looming nuclear threat of Iran and the ongoing terrorist plots the future seems uncertain. We are told by our leaders that the war on terror will be a long, drawn out affair.

What does the Bible have to say about Islam and the United States? And what does the future hold for these two forces? Does God have a word for us?

There are those who would say that the last three trumpets of Revelation 9-11 have either been fulfilled or are for the future. However, there is a long history of prophetic understanding called historicism which views their message as having relevance for every age since the early Christian church until our day. In others words, the seven trumpets and the final three “woes” have a word of comfort and hope for the faithful throughout Christian history. The trumpets parallel Jesus’ history of the seven churches (Rev. 3-4) and the seven seals (Rev. 5-6).

We are introduced to the last three trumpets by John the Revelator. “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.

The first four trumpets depict the activity of the ten barbaric tribes which swept away the Western Roman Empire. The fifth and sixth trumpet woes depict the unleashing of Islam as a scourge upon the Eastern Roman Empire (Constantinople).

Many Americans and Seventh-day Adventists have a negative view of Islam in a post-911 world. Let us see God’s perspective of Islam. We have a Fijian Moslem group who meet in the home north of our church. We have many Moslem neighbors living in our community. If we can see God’s perspective regarding this people group, we shall know how we are to treat our neighbors. Moslems comprise 22% of the world’s population.

What are the positive contributions which Mohammed made to Islam? We read: “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. This “star fall from heaven” is Mohammed (born 570 A. D.). The Christian church had developed over five centuries into an apostate religion with the bishop of Rome fully ensconced as monarch over the western half of the Roman Empire by 538 A. D. God permitted Islam to arise for the apostasy that developed in the church of Rome.

Romanism had embraced paganism to accommodate the masses with their folklore religion. The Bible no longer held central place as the source of Christian teaching and experience. The traditions of men displace the Word of God. Veneration for dead saints, idol worship, belief in the immortality of the soul, abandonment of the seventh-day Sabbath for Sunday worship, the eating of unclean foods forbidden by the Bible, the drinking of strong drink, etc., were common practices in Catholicism. The Pope had displaced Jesus Christ as the head of the church. Monarchical government of the one over the many was the hierarchical structure.

Mohammed was the star fall from heaven. There were many positive truths taught by the prophet. He believed in one God. Images and idols in Christian churches smacked of idol worship. Eating unclean food, swine’s flesh, was forbidden, along with strong drink.

The Sabbath was the seal of God throughout the entire history of the Christian church. The Koran had strong words for people who break the Sabbath. Mohammed says, “And well ye knew those amongst you who transgressed in the matter of the Sabbath; we said to them: Be ye apes despised and rejected.” Mohammed had respect for the Bible, in particular the Old Testament. The common father of Arabs, Jews, and Christians was Abraham.

God promised Abraham “in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). God promised Abraham a son through whom that blessing would come. After many years when Sarai became impatient with God’s promise, she gave her handmaid Hagar to Abram and her son was Ishmael. That affair with Abraham and Hagar was the old covenant which Paul said, “these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar” (Gal. 4:24).

The Lord told Hagar to name her son Ishmael “because the Lord hath heard thy affliction” (Gen. 16:11). Ishmael means “God hears.” That is one characteristic of Ishmael and his Arab descendants. There are many among them who are honest in heart and will hear the word of God. Another characteristic of Ishmael is “he will be a wild

man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him" (Gen. 16:12). That is the characteristic we are more familiar with.

Although Ishmael as the son of a bondwoman could never be the child of the covenant promise through whom the Messiah would come, yet God did bless him. "And as for Ishmael, . . . I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceeding; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation" (Gen. 17:20). God's blessing is Himself. The same everlasting covenant blessings which God gave to Abraham and all the families of the earth were given to Ishmael and his descendants.

Whenever the people of Israel apostatized from God, His protective hand was withdrawn from them in order to turn them in repentance for sin. We read how "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord: and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Midian seven years. . . . the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them" (Judges 6:1, 3). Midian was the son of Abraham and Keturah, his third wife (Gen. 25:1, 2). These "children of the east" were the descendants of Ishmael—the Arabs.

The affliction of Israel by their long lost cousins was for the purpose of turning them in repentance back to the Lord. In this case, it seems to have worked in that "the children of Israel cried unto the Lord" (Judges 6:7). The Lord heard their cry and sent Gideon as a deliverer.

This pattern of apostasy recurred in the Christian church progressively over the course of six centuries. The Lord's protective hand was withdrawn and again "the children of the east" descended as a plague upon the Eastern Roman Empire.

Prior to Mohammed the Prophet the Arabian desert had been home to Bedouin tribes. The Prophet's religion united somewhat the disparate groups. "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. 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 9:2, 3. The religion was not the pure truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It obscured the sunlight of the gospel.

"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!

Muslim conquests surged across Central Asia into western China, throughout North Africa and north as far as Poitiers, France. This military movement of Islam did start the downfall of Rome, but did not deliver the deathblow. Eastern Rome did not fall until the period of the sixth trumpet woe had started. The power of scorpions granted to Islam during this period did not include the power to kill or destroy the church or empire.

“And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: . . . 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.

The prophetic period of five months or 150 years after the Turks were organized into a kingdom under Othman.

“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.

The 150 years should begin from the time that “they had a king over them.” 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. It was the first assault of Othman upon the Greeks when he entered into the land of Nicomedia as an aggressor, as the “Apollyon” (or *destroyer*).

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. They were to torment men and not kill them. Would Islam with its successive generations of fighting men, wage war against the Greek Eastern Empire with its eyes on Constantinople without killing men in the sense of taking their lives? This cannot be. Political or national death must, therefore, be intended. Especially did they aim at the destruction of the Greeks from about the close of the thirteenth century and onward; but for more than one century they failed to kill them politically.

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. 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 [here a symbol of the Turkish Empire].” Revelation 9:12-14.

By the four angels being loosed to slay or kill “the third part of men” is meant the war cry from the four headquarters of the Turks at that time; namely, Aleppo, Iconium, Damascus, and Baghdad. By “the third part of men,” is meant one of the three divisions of the Roman Empire. At the death of Constantine, A. D. 337, the Roman Empire was divided between his three sons, one of whom received that part of the empire that is now denominated the Eastern, or Greek Empire. It is this part of the Roman Empire that was to be killed politically by the Turks.

“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 9:15-17.

John saw in vision, men on horseback, rushing on the foe; and as they fired with their short guns, which were out of sight, being on the right side of the horses’ heads, it seemed to him that the elements of destruction issued from the mouths of the horses.

“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 9:14.

The period under consideration begins at the close of five months, or 150 days, during which the Mohammedans were to torment the Eastern Empire without killing it. Now, decided measures were taken by the Turk to make Constantinople the capital of their empire. Constantinople fell to the Turks as the fruit of their gigantic, persevering, and well-directed efforts in 1453—only four years after the termination of the 150 days.

As the 150 days are symbolical, so is the period 391 years and 15 days. Add to July 27, 1449 and it comes to August 11, 1840. So

predicted Josiah Litch in 1838 during the Millerite movement. This is when he forecast that the Ottoman empire would fall.

In 1840 two prominent characters were figuring in the Mohammedan world,—the sultan of Constantinople, and Mehemet Ali of Egypt. These two had gone to war. The Sultan lost the battle. Mehemet Ali was so exacting that the Sultan was fearful of losing his empire. So in 1840 he request help from the European powers of England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia. A conference was held in London negotiating terms for both Constantinople and Egypt. The Europeans dictated their ultimatum on August 11, 1840. That very day the Ottoman supremacy died at Constantinople and the Turk became known as “The Sick Man of the East.”

When news of the Turks supremacy reached students of Bible prophecy Josiah Litch’s fulfilled prediction became a great impetus to the 1844 movement because it was an affirmation of the year for a day principle in Bible prophecy. It was an assurance that the 2300 day/years in Daniel 8:14 would be fulfilled on October 22, 1844.

“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 9:19, 20.

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.

We are living in the days of the seventh trumpet since October 22, 1844. The work of our High Priest in the most holy of the heavenly sanctuary is to finish the atonement, seal the servants of God in preparation for the second coming. This is the closing work of the gospel ministry.

The first four trumpets marked the sweeping away of the first Roman Empire by the ten barbarian tribes of Europe and North Africa. That was a consequence of the Empire uniting with Christianity. The church incorporated the paganism of the Empire perpetuating Sunday worship, veneration of saints and idols, and consolidating the monarchical power of the church in the head of one, the bishop of Rome. Therefore the ten toes of Nebuchadnezzar's image saw the sweeping away of the Western Roman Empire because of its union with Christianity.

But a check had to be placed upon the ascendancy of the power of the church and therefore the unleashing of the first two woe trumpets of Islam upon the Eastern Roman Empire. Since the first two "woe" trumpets involve Islam it is safe to conclude that the third "woe" involves Islam. The Church received its deadly wound in 1798 by the Pope being taken prisoner. By 1840 the Turk of Islam had weakened for there was no more need of it being a check upon apostate Christianity.

But Bible prophecy presents the New Roman Empire ascending subsequent to 1798 in the form of "another beast." "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed." Revelation 13:11, 12. This power is the United States. The "first beast" is the papacy. Its DNA was the union of the church with the state. This other beast starts out like a lamb but it ends up speaking like a dragon. It forms an image to the first beast (Rev. 13:14, 15). By the churches forming an alliance with the United States, they have their way in taking Sunday the characteristic mark of the papacy which it took over from paganism and formed as the day of worship, and enforcing its worship by public law.

It's not by coincidence that we are now seeing the revival of radical Islamic terrorism as a plague upon the new Roman Empire—the Western Christian nations—as a check upon their expansionist policies. It is also a check upon the rising power of the papacy. The third "woe" or seventh trumpet involves Islam. The rising force of Islam is in part due to the dependence of the West upon oil. Oil money is fueling the rising power of Islam as a force to be reckoned with. If Iran truly gets its hands upon nuclear weapons as a rogue

state, it will not hesitate to support terrorists in plaguing the west with such weapons.

Islam has been dismissed as an anachronistic prophetic oddity by many today. The trumpets are popularly being interpreted as futuristic. However, it is time that we take seriously the historicist understanding of the seven churches, the seven seals, and the seven trumpets. They have a message for every age and the seventh trumpet is an intensification of the “woes” that have preceded.

We may yet see “the king of the north”—the Turk—“plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him” (Dan. 11:45). The sick man of the east—Islam—may yet be successful briefly in conquering Jerusalem as its capital.

God loves the 22% of the world’s population who identify themselves as Muslims. His everlasting covenant of salvation in Christ is for them. God is calling for a true demonstration of His gospel in the lives of the remnant church who proclaim the Third Angel’s message in order that they may see Christ crucified, the Sabbath, and righteousness by faith in them. It will be in stark contrast with the old covenant religion and formalistic Sunday worship of dominant Christianity.

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.”