

The Rise of the Muslim Religion

The fifth trumpet prophecy

An explanation of Revelation chapter 9:1-11

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Introduction

The fifth trumpet prophecy

¹Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. And to him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

²And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.

³Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

⁴They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

⁵And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man.

⁶In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

⁷And the shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle and on their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.

⁸They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth.

⁹And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle.

¹⁰They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. And their power was to hurt men five months.

¹¹And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. Revelation 9:1-11

The fifth trumpet is referred to as the first of the three woe trumpets. It commences with a star falling from heaven to the earth. In Scripture, a star symbolises a leader.¹ In this prediction the star has fallen to the earth, and a fallen star represents an apostate religious leader.² Some have claimed that this fallen star represents Satan, however Satan had already fallen from heaven millennia before this prophecy was to be fulfilled.³

¹ Revelation 1:20; Daniel 8:10; 12:4.

² Jude 1:13.

³ Luke 10:18.

While it is true that Jesus Christ saw *Satan as lightning fall from heaven* Satan's latest fall was at the crucifixion of Christ⁴ and the period of the fourth trumpet which brought an end to Western Rome took place in 476 AD.

A falling star is also depicted in the third trumpet, as a meteor, representing Attila and his Huns.⁵ The fallen star of the fifth trumpet must therefore be another apostate earthly leader who appears after the fourth trumpet's conclusion in 476 AD.

Let us examine the details of the prophecy to identify this fallen star.

Identity of the "fallen star"

Given the key to the bottomless pit

...to him was given the key to the bottomless pit.

What is the *bottomless pit*, or *abyss* as given in the Greek? This term is used seven times in the book of Revelation.⁶ It is used in a symbolic sense. In Revelation Chapter 11 it describes the region from which a beast emerges to attack the two witnesses. The *abyss* is also used to describe the power in Revelation Chapter 17 which comes back from death, as it were, after receiving its deadly wound when *it was not*. In Revelation 20 the term is used twice to describe the earth when it becomes a vast worldwide prison-house for Satan for one thousand years.

In most places where it is used, *abyss* represents the place of death and the domain of Satan. In Romans 10:7 the word *abyss* is also used to describe the grave or the place of death.

Who is it that reigns in the region of the grave in the domain of death? It is Satan. Many scholars believe *the abyss* is a term describing the arsenal or stronghold of Satan and that any power emerging from the bottomless pit or abyss is inspired by him.

In the book of Revelation, powers inspired of God are represented as "coming from above", but powers inspired by Satan are represented as "coming from beneath", from either the sea, the earth, or the bottomless pit, the abyss.⁷

The leader in the fifth trumpet prophecy *has the key to the bottomless pit* - to the arsenal of Satan. A key represents power and authority - the ability to unlock, to free, to release.

This leader is able to release smoke that darkens the sun and air. The sun represents Christ the light of the world. It also represents truth. Under the fifth trumpet a leader is given the key to release from the arsenal of Satan falsehood and error which would darken the light of the gospel, and that would obscure Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. These pointers give us a clue as to where to search for the fulfillment of this prediction.

⁴ Revelation 12:9-10.

⁵ See chapter 13, *Visigoths, Vandals, Huns & Heruli*.

⁶ *Abyss* is used 7 times in Revelation 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:9; 20:1-3.

⁷ Revelation 10:8; 14:6, 8, 9; 13:1, 11; 17:9; James 3:15-17.

Significance of the locust imagery

Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth...

These locusts are undoubtedly symbolic. In the fifth trumpet there are at least four symbolic creatures: the locusts, the horse, the lion, and the scorpion. It is significant to note that the natural habitat of these four creatures is Arabia.⁸ As one scholar says

*The zoology of the hieroglyphic (or symbol), is all Arabian.*⁹

This is a further clue to identifying the power represented in the trumpet.

The Bible employs locust imagery when referring to Arabs. Speaking of the Midianite Arabs it says

...they would come up ... as numerous as locusts... Judges 6:5

The Midianites and the Amalekites (Arab tribes) ...were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts.... Judges 7:12.

Notice this statement by Forster, concerning the Arabs.

*In the Bedoween Romance of Antar, the locust is introduced as the national emblem of the Ishmaelites.*¹⁰

Who were the Ishmaelites? They were one of the greatest tribes of Arab people.

There are further evidences that the fifth trumpet prediction relates to Arab peoples. It is recognized that the home of the locust is Arabia. In describing one of the plagues that smote Egypt in the days of Moses, the scripture says,

... the east wind brought the locusts. Exodus 10:13

The country east of Egypt is Arabia and secular authorities are very clear that Arabia is the home of locusts. Edward Gibbon, quoting Volney, *the most judicious of our Syrian travelers*, declared,

The inhabitants of Syria have remarked that locusts come constantly from the desert of Arabia.¹¹

The word *Arab* and *locust* in Arabic are very similar in sound. The word Arab is pronounced *Arbi* and the word locust, *Arbeh*.¹² Niebuhr, a famous traveler of the 19th

⁸ Edward B. Elliot, *Horae Apocalypticæ* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1862), 434.

⁹ Ibid.

Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Strahan and Cadell, 1789), 5:369.

¹⁰ Charles Forster, *Mahometanism Unveiled* (London: Paternoster-Row & Cochane, 1829), 1:217.

¹¹ Constantin Francois Volney, *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie* (Paris: Bossange Freres, Libraires, 1822), ch. 20, Sect. 5.

¹² *Arab and Locust* sound very similar in Arabic
Edward B. Elliot, *Horae Apocalypticæ* 1:434.

century, journeying through Arabia described the appearance of the swarms of locusts that afflicted that region.

*The swarms of these insects darken the air and appear at a distance like clouds of smoke.*¹³

This description is in harmony with the picture presented in the fifth trumpet where smoke emerges from the bottomless pit.

After the fall of Western Rome in 476 AD (after the first four trumpets) did a fallen star, a leader of a false religion, arise in Arabia and obscure the Christian faith and bring torment to a significant proportion of mankind? He did. Only one event fulfills the prediction to the letter. It was the rise of Mohammed and Islam, the Muslim religion.

Rise of Mohammed

One historian of the near East, without any reference to this Bible prediction, described the rise of Mohammed using language very similar to that of the fifth trumpet. Writing of the one who inspired the desert tribes of Arabia he declared:

*... at that juncture however, like a meteorite from the blue, there came into the world a new religion, a religion primarily of power and not of love, a militant fanaticism, appealing partly to the evil which lies in men, and only partly to the good.*¹⁴

Authorities have recognized that the religion of Mohammed was the key that opened the abyss, as it were, and set the Arab cause in motion. Gibbon said

*The Arabs had languished in poverty and contempt, till Mohammed breathed into those savage hordes the soul of enthusiasm.*¹⁵

*There broke out among the nations of Asia that mighty conflagration whose flames were scattered over the terrified globe by the sons of the desert, guided by their new prophet of unbelief.*¹⁶

Notice that Gibbon likens the Arab invasion to a *mighty conflagration*. The Revelator speaks of it as *the smoke of a great furnace*. Professor Davis speaking of the rise of the Arabs says

*The Persian war ended in 628 AD. Five years later the cloud of Saracenic (or Arab) invasion rolled northward from the Arabian deserts.*¹⁷

¹³ Carsten Niebuhr, *Travels through Arabia* (Edinburgh: Morrison and Son, 1792), 2:337.

¹⁴ William S. Davis, *A Short History of the Near East* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 100.

¹⁵ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 3:550.

¹⁶ Frederick Von Schlegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: D.Appleton & Co, 1841), 2:75.

¹⁷ William S. Davis, *A Short History of the Near East*, 32.

Sir William Muir in his classic history says of the Arab armies:

*Onward and still onward like swarms from the hive, or flights of locusts darkening the land, tribe after tribe issued forth and hastening northward spread in great masses to the east and to the west.*¹⁸

Upham in his history says

*The Persian Empire soon attracted the arms of 'these locusts' as the swarms of hungry Saracens were not inaptly called.*¹⁹

Historians repeatedly confirm the application of locusts to the Arabs and their religion.

The key to the bottomless pit

The prediction states that

...to him was given the key of the bottomless pit (or abyss).

Did Mohammed actually possess a key? Note what Peyron in his essay on this question says.

*The Koran (Muslim Bible) continually speaks of the key of God which opened to them the gates of the world and of religion. So in the Koran; 'Did not God give to his legate (Mohammed) the power of heaven which is above and fire which is beneath? With the key, did he not give him the title and power of a porter that he may open to those whom he shall have chosen?'*²⁰

Cambridge Professor E.B. Elliott says:

*Whenever a convert from the Muslim religion was accepted into the faith of the Greek Church, he had to state his rejection of Mohamet's "pretended key of heaven".*²¹

Therefore, in harmony with the symbolism of the trumpet, Mohammed did have a key.

This leads us to the question: Where did Mohammed obtain the inspiration for his religion? This is extremely important because many people today believe that there is little to distinguish one religion from another, and that all religions lead ultimately to the same end. But the question needs to be asked whether the Muslim religion is from *beneath* or is it from *above*?

¹⁸ William Muir, *The Caliphate, its Rise, Decline and Fall...* (London: Smith, Elder, 1891), 44

¹⁹ Edward Upham, *History of the Ottoman Empire* (Edinburgh: Constable and Co, 1829), 1:40

²⁰ Jean-François Peyron, *Essais sur l'Espagne* (Paris: Theophile Barrois, 1780), 189

²¹ E.B. Elliott, *Commentary on Revelation* (London: Cambridge University Press 1844), 44-46

Let us quote from Gibbon. In describing the inspiration that Mohammed received Gibbon states

*Each year during the month of Ramadan, he withdrew from the world and...in the cave of Hera, three miles from Mecca, he consulted the spirit of fraud or enthusiasm, whose abode is not in the heaven, but in the mind of the prophet.*²²

Edward Gibbon was a skeptic and an unbeliever. This fact makes his history so much more convincing, because he was actually biased against Bible truth. Mohammed certainly had superhuman inspiration, but it could not have been from a divine source, even though Mohammed's constant claim was that the angel Gabriel was his instructor. The only alternative is that he was inspired by occult powers. It is the practice of these intelligences to impersonate others in order to deceive.

The king(s) of the bottomless pit

Revelation 9:11 states

And they (the Arabs) had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon (or Destroyer) but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

Who is this invisible king of the bottomless pit, the stronghold of Satan? Lucifer is the angel of the abyss. The prophet Isaiah reveals Lucifer as the great destroyer.²³ Thus the first king is Satan but there is probably a second king, a visible leader, and that was Mohammed. If anyone was inspired by Lucifer it was Mohammed, as will be shown shortly. Mohammed in turn inspired Arabia to conquer and to destroy. In the first ten years of the reign of Omar, the second successor of Mohammed,

*The Saracens reduced 36,000 cities or castles, destroyed 4,000 churches and built 1,400 mosques.*²⁴

Gibbon records,

*Mohomet was alike instructed to preach and to fight, and the union of these opposite qualities... contributed to his success: his voice invited the Arabs to freedom and victory, to arms and rapine, to the indulgence of their darling passions, in this world and the next.*²⁵

The more we learn concerning the Muslim religion, the more we realize that it is a belief system which has terrific appeal to the carnal heart. On this ground alone the Muslim religion cannot be from above. Gibbon continues:

From all sides the roving Arabs were allured to the standard of religion and plunder, the apostle sanctified the license of embracing the female captives as their wives or concubines... 'The sword (says Mohomet) is the key of heaven and

²² Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 5:395-397

²³ Isaiah 14:12-14

²⁴ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

²⁵ *Ibid.* 5:466

of hell. A drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms is of more avail than two months of fasting or prayer. Whosoever falls in battle, his sins are forgiven. At the day of Judgment his wounds shall be resplendid as vermillion and odoriferous as musk and the loss of his limbs shall be supplied by angels and cherubim.' The intrepid souls of the Arabs were fired with enthusiasm: the picture of the invisible world was strongly painted on their imagination; and the death which they had always despised became an object of hope and desire. The Koran inculcates in the most absolute sense the tenets of fate and predestination... The practical result was the inspiration of a magnificent but terrible courage. Arab warriors went into battle convinced that their lifespan was so definitely determined that whether they stayed at home or went to the fight, their hap would surely overtake them...

The warrior who dies in battle is sure of paradise, the first companions of Mohomet advanced to battle with a fearless confidence; there is no danger where there is no chance: they were ordained to perish in their beds; or they were safe and invulnerable amidst the darts of the enemy...

The temper of a people thus armed against mankind was doubly inflamed by the domestic license of rapine, murder and revenge.²⁶

The Muslim heaven that was promised was a paradise of sexual and intellectual pleasure.

Seventy-two black-eyed girls of resplendent beauty, blooming youth, virgin purity, and exquisite sensibility, will be created for the use of the meanest believer; a moment of pleasure will be prolonged to a thousand years, and his faculties will be increased an hundred fold, to render him worthy of his felicity.²⁷

This was the carnal appeal of this satanic religion that inspired those savage Arabs to burst forth in the conquest of the Roman Empire. As Professor Davis says

Like a meteorite from the blue there came into the world a new religion, a religion primarily of power, and not of love, a militant fanaticism appealing partly to the evil which lies in men, and only partly to the good.²⁸

Consequently competent scholars of the past have recognized that the fifth trumpet fits only the power that is the Arabian Empire that rose in the 7th century AD. Dr Albert Barnes, respected Presbyterian commentator says:

With surprising unanimity commentators have agreed in regarding this trumpet as referring to the empire of the Saracens, or the rise and progress of the religion and empire, set up by Mohomet.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid. 5:425-426

²⁷ Ibid. 5:413-414

²⁸ William S. Davis, *A Short History of the Near East* 100

²⁹ A. Barnes, *Notes on the Book of Revelation* (New York: Harber and Brothers, 1859), 254

Description of Arab armies

Locusts shaped like battle horses

And the shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle... v7

When you examine Arabian locusts, you will soon see that they literally look like little horses. In fact the Bedouins describe them as *soldiers' horses*. The old Italians called them Cavaletta, which literally means *little horses*.

The locust is used in Scripture to denote swarming numbers, and this was a fitting symbol of the amazing numbers of the Arabs that swarmed out of the desert in conquest. The prophet said

...Make yourself many- like the locust! ... Nahum 3:15

For they would come up ... as numerous as locusts... Judges 6:5

The Arab tribes, issuing from Arabia with their great speed, their far ranging and irresistible progress, were appropriately symbolized by swarms of locusts.

The Arab warriors are also likened to horses prepared for battle.

This gives a true picture of the type of military force that was used by the Arabs in their method of attack. Edward Gibbon says

I shall here observe what I must often repeat, that the charge of the Arabs was not like that of the Greeks and Romans, the effort of a firm and compact infantry: their military force was chiefly formed of cavalry and archers.³⁰

...they had breastplates like breastplates of iron... v9

Three Arab authorities confirm the fact that the Saracen warriors wore iron breastplates.³¹

...the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. v9

This effectively describes a locust invasion. When locusts swarm out into the countryside their sound is similar to that of chariots charging to battle. This aptly describes an army of Arab cavalry rushing into battle, and by which great terror was brought to the peoples of the day.

³⁰ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

³¹ Edward B. Elliot, *Horae Apocalypticæ* Commentary on Revelation 9:9

Gold crowns

...on their heads were crowns of something like gold... v7

This may refer to their color. It is interesting to notice that the prophet Ezekiel in speaking of the Sabean Arab says,

*The Sabeans from the wilderness, which put beautiful crowns upon their heads.
Ezekiel 23:42*

What were these crowns? An Arabian proverb tells that God had bestowed four peculiar things upon the Arabs:

*Their turbans should be to them instead of diadems.
Their tents instead of walls and houses.
Their swords instead of entrenchments.
Their poems instead of written laws.³²*

Niebuhr describes the turbans of the wealthy Arabs by recording,

The Arabs wear fifteen caps, one over the other... That which covers all the rest is usually richly embroidered with gold.³³

Mohammed said,

Make a point of wearing turbans, because it is the way of angels³⁴

Men's faces

...their faces were like the faces of men. v7

What is significant about the face of a man? How does the face of a man differ from the face of a woman? The answer is that men grow hair on their faces, usually as a beard. Edward Gibbon in describing the Arab of that day, says

*His breast is fortified with the austere virtues of courage, patience and sobriety.
The gravity and firmness of the mind is conspicuous in his outward demeanor, his speech is slow, weighty and concise. He is seldom provoked to laughter; his only gesture is that of stroking his beard, the venerable symbol of manhood.³⁵*

The Arab male was noted for wearing a beard, whereas the Gothic tribes of the first four trumpets were recognized as having smooth and shaven faces.³⁶

³² Ibid. Footnote to Revelation 9:7

³³ P. Allwood, *A Key to the Revelation of St John* (London: C&F Rivington, 1829), 340

³⁴ Charles Forster, *Mahometanism Unveiled*

³⁵ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

³⁶ Edward B. Elliot, *Horae Apocalypticæ*, 1:434

Women's hair

However the prophecy also states that

...they had hair like women's hair... v8

What is significant about women's hair? The Bible says,

Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. I Corinthians 11:14-15

The Arabs of that day wore long hair. In Roman times when Paul wrote, long hair on men was abhorred. Five authorities record the fact that the Arabs of Mohammed's day wore long hair. Quotes from the famous *Antar* poem, written at the time of the Arab invasions:

He adjusted himself properly, twirling his whiskers, folded up his hair under his turban drawing it from off his shoulders.

His hair flowed down his shoulders.

We will hang him by his hair.³⁷

Lion's teeth

... their teeth were like lions teeth. v8

This is a symbol of the courage and destructive power of the Arabs in their invasions. The lion is also associated with Arabia. In describing Arabia, Isaiah the prophet wrote:

*Through a land of trouble and anguish, from which came the lioness and lion...
Isaiah 30:6*

Africa is generally considered to be the home of the lion; however Africa is closely connected with Arabia. Originally Arabia had extensive forests, meaning that it was much different from the way it is today. Naturalists, in fact, inform us that the home of the lion is Arabia.⁸ In Arabic literature the lion is the constant emblem of the valiant warrior.⁸ Gibbon says

Eutychius the patriarch observes that the Saracens fought with the courage of lions.³⁸

The Arab forces were very destructive, which is a trait typical of the lion.

³⁷ Elliott, *Commentary on Revelation* 1:434

³⁸ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 5:531

Scorpion's tails

They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. And their power was to hurt men five months. v10

This particular verse has proved very difficult for students through the years regarding what it really means. When Moses described the deserts of Arabia through which Israel wandered from Egypt to Canaan, he said

who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the rock of flint. Deuteronomy 8:15

As already noted, Arabia is the natural home of the scorpion. Scorpions in that region are up to thirty cm in length, with eight feet and eight eyes. No creature, it is said, is more irascible or malignant. While the scorpion's sting is not fatal it causes acute suffering.

...there were stings in their tails...

What is the significance of the scorpion's tail? The key is found in the writings of Isaiah in the Old Testament.

*The elder and honorable, he is the head;
The prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail. Isaiah 9:15*

The false prophet, the lying prophet, false religion - that is the tail. In other words, the false religion of Mohammed is the tail which tormented human beings. The sting was in the false religion and by it men were tormented *for five months*.

... And their power was to hurt men five months. v10

These words denote stress and anguish caused by injustice: mental rather than physical torment. Many commentators in the past have recognized this. Joseph Mede, a lecturer at Oxford University, and a great student of the book of Revelation, recognized this truth.³⁹ Scripture applies the term *scorpion* to humans. God warned the prophet Ezekiel,

... you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house. Ezekiel 2:6

³⁹ J. Mede, *Clavis Apocalyptica (Trans)* (London: J&F Rivington, 1833), on Revelation 9

Matthew Henry commenting on this verse says that it represents the stinging verbal attacks, full of venom and malice, directed by some who were opposed to Ezekiel the prophet. This is how the Revelator describes the venomous insults of the Arabs toward the apostate Christians whom they conquered.

E.B. Elliott of Cambridge University presents eleven ways in which the Muslim conquerors demonstrated these characteristics in their attitude to apostate Christians.

1. Bitter contempt and hatred was displayed against Christians, who were called dogs and infidels.
2. Christians were forced to pay a life redemption tax every year in order to preserve their lives.
3. Christians were compelled to dress differently from their conquerors.
4. Christians were compelled to ride in a humbler mode of transport.
5. Whenever a Muslim entered into their presence even though he was the meanest of men Christians were to rise in deference to him.
6. Christians must freely entertain an Arab when required, including allowing sexual relations with their females. The Arabs were notorious for their immorality.⁴⁰
7. Christians were to build no new churches.
8. Christians were to chime no bells in existing churches.
9. Christians were to admit to their church any Arab no matter how much he scoffed and ridiculed the service, or how frequently he insulted them.
10. Frequent insults were leveled at Christian women.
11. There were a thousand other injuries of oppression that rankled Christians and made life a burden.⁴¹

The fifth trumpet prophecy states:

In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them. v6

This was the lot of oppressed Christians and was God's judgment upon apostasy. It was God's response to the prayers of the saints that had ascended to the altar of incense of the heavenly sanctuary where our great High Priest ministered before God (Revelation 8:3-5).

⁴⁰ *The immoral person* was the term applied to the Arabs by the Christians

Edward B. Elliot, *Horae Apocalypticae*

Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 5:425, 446-447

⁴¹ Edward B. Elliott, *Horae Apocalypticae*, Elliott, *Commentary on Revelation* Commentary on Revelation 9:4

Fulfillment of commands issued in the prophecy

Protect vegetation

This is one of the more positive and pleasing aspects of the fifth trumpet prophecy.

They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. v4.

This is a remarkable prediction. Was such a command issued to the Arab conquerors? It is interesting to note that in other trumpet prophecies - the first trumpet for example -

*...a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.
Revelation 8:7*

The Goths who fulfilled three of the first four trumpets deliberately destroyed the vegetation in Western Europe – to the extent that it resulted in the formation of desert areas. On the other hand the policy of the Arabs was exactly the opposite. The Qu'ran - the Muslim Bible - had decreed that trees and vegetation must not be destroyed. This was a distinct characteristic of Arab domination which enabled subjugated kingdoms and countries to flourish in an environmental sense.⁴²

Yet the prediction says that the Arabs were commanded not to hurt the grass, etcetera. Was there such a command?

There was. The following remarkable command was issued at the very time when the Arabs were about to invade the Roman Empire. They had just raided Persia and were now about to enter Syria, the Eastern portion of Eastern Rome. Mohammed had died and Abuakeker his successor was in charge. Gibbons states

As soon as their numbers were complete, Abuakeker ascended the hill, reviewed the men, the horses, and the arms, and poured forth a fervent prayer for the success of their undertaking... 'Remember', said the successor of the prophet, 'that you are always in the presence of God, on the verge of death, in the assurance of judgment and the hope of paradise. Avoid injustice and oppression; consult with your brethren, and study to preserve the love and confidence of your troops.

When you fight the battles of the lord, acquit yourselves like men, without turning your backs; but let not your victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm trees, do not burn any field of corn. Cut down no fruit trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat. When you make a covenant... stand to it and be as good as your word.

As you go on, 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

⁴² Elliott, *Commentary on Revelation*, on chapter 9:4

*sure you cleave their skulls, and give them no quarter, till they either turn Mahometans or pay tribute.*⁴³

This was the actual command. The Arabs were not to destroy any green vegetation, just as the prophecy had declared six hundred years before. This is remarkable and indisputable evidence that *all Scripture is inspired of God!*

Hurt apostate Christians

The command in Revelation 9:4 also included the hurting of

...those men who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads.

In the previous quotation from Gibbon you will recall the command of Abuakeker concerning those of *the synagogue of Satan who have shaven crowns* and what the Arab warriors were to do with them. Who were these men with shaven crowns? In the footnote Gibbon says,

Even in the 7th century the monks were generally laymen; they wore their hair long and disheveled, and shaved their heads when they were ordained priests. The circular tonsure was sacred and mysterious; it was the crown of thorns; but it was likewise a royal diadem, and every priest was a king.

The men with shaven crowns were priests of the apostate Christian church and the shaven ring of their crowns represented the sun. This practice came from Babylon. But is it true that those who *had the seal of God* were protected by the Arab invaders? What do we understand by the term *the seal of God*?

In Revelation 7 the seal of God is shown implanted in the foreheads of God's people in the last days, in order to protect them from the judgments of God. The Scripture clearly reveals that the seal of God refers to the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.⁴⁴

Protect Sabbath-keepers

Did the Arabs protect those who were observers of the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment? Notice the record given by Dr B.G. Wilkinson in his study of the rise and spread of the early Christian faith. He gives some remarkable information concerning this period of church history.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, the Church of the East [not the Western or Latin church] sometimes called the Assyrian church, sometimes the Nestorian church (who were observers of the true Sabbath) very effectively spread throughout Asia and the East, but remained separate from the church in the West, especially the apostasy.

These true Christians became the teachers of the Saracens, and were responsible for establishing an educational system in Syria, Mesopotamia, Turkestan, Tibet, China, India, Ceylon and other areas.

⁴³ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 3:249.

⁴⁴ A.P. Cooke, *A Shelter in the Storm Self* (published, 2010),

The Arabs, like the Persians, were very partial to the Assyrian Christians because they found it necessary in the early days of their power to lean upon the splendid schools which this church had developed. Medicine made great progress in the hands of the Church of the East. The Arabian court and its extended administrations employed its members as secretaries and imperial representatives.

Assyrian Christians suffered comparatively little at the hands of the Muslims, but later much more so at the hands of the Jesuits. The leader of the Church of the East sensing that the conquest of the Persian Empire was imminent, succeeded in obtaining a pledge of protection and freedom of worship on condition that the Christians paid certain tribute... These immunities extended by Abu-bekr were not only confirmed by Omar, his successor, but even the taxes were remitted..”

When the Arabian empire was fully established, it built up Bagdad, its magnificent new capital. The Church of the East... removed its spiritual capital from Seleucia to Bagdad, where it remained for approximately the next five hundred years.⁴⁵

This is a significant fulfillment of this aspect of the fifth trumpet prophecy. Edward Gibbon confirms Wilkinson’s statement:

To his Christian subjects (meaning the true Christians, not the apostates whom the Arabs tormented) Mohammed readily granted the security of their persons, the freedom of their trade, the property of their goods, and the toleration of their worship.⁴⁶

Torment and hurt men

We now come to the prediction concerning *torment and to hurt men* for five months.

And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. v5

... their power was to hurt men five months. v10

The Arabs were to hurt and torment men rather than to kill them. However the Arabs did kill hundreds of thousands during their conquest while overrunning almost all of Eastern Rome. They conquered North Africa, they crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and conquered most of Spain and even overran some of south-western France. Consequently this imagery must mean something else: rather, the killing must refer to a denial to allow the political destruction of the Roman Empire (Eastern Rome).⁴⁷ While they made concerted efforts to capture Constantinople, the capital of the Empire, they were always unsuccessful. In all their conquests they were not able to destroy (or kill, ~~or end~~) the Empire of Eastern Rome.

⁴⁵ B.G. Wilkinson, *Truth Triumphant: The Church in the Wilderness* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland Publications, 1995), 268-291

⁴⁶ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 5:439-440, 579-580, 390-391

⁴⁷ T. Newton, *Dissertations on the Prohecies* (New York: William Durell, 1794), 544

It is significant to note a remarkable parallel published by Dr Mervyn Maxwell in which he shows how the territory occupied by the swarms of locusts when in flight, is quite similar to the territory conquered by the symbolic Arab locusts of the fifth trumpet.⁴⁸

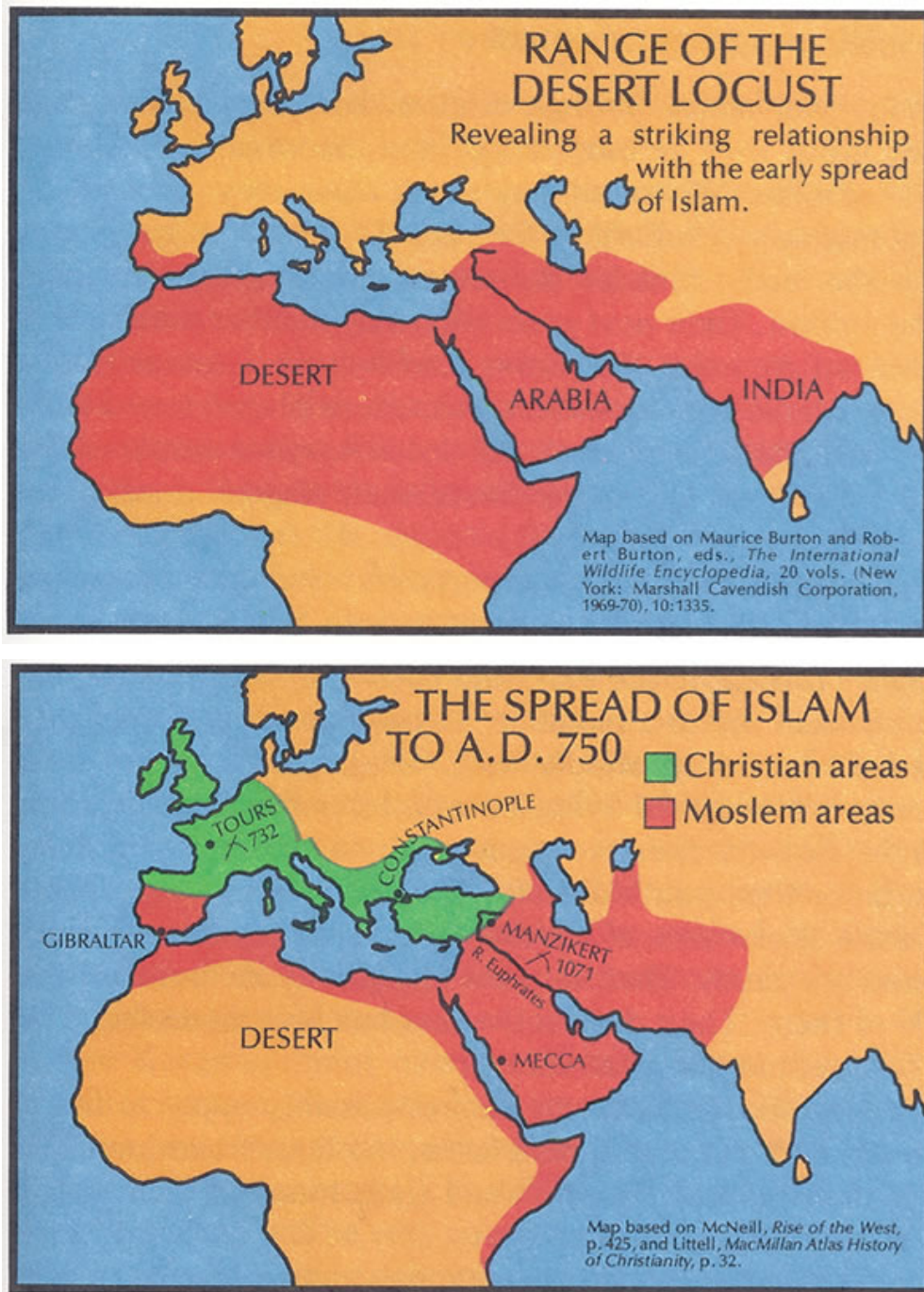


Figure 1 – Comparison between the range of the desert locust and the spread of Islam to 750 AD

⁴⁸ C.M. Maxwell, *God Cares Vol 2* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Assn, 1985), 245-246

It is also significant to learn of the ambitions of the Arabs during their conquests. They determined to make the Mediterranean Sea into a Muslim lake. It was their intention to conquer Spain, France, Italy, the Vatican, Germany, the Danube and Constantinople, then returning to Syria and thus enveloping the Mediterranean, making it a lake of Islam.⁴⁹

Had they succeeded in their ambition it would have meant the killing or destruction of Eastern Rome. But God decreed that the Arabs' function was *to hurt or torment* the apostate power. Thus whenever the Arabs made tremendous onslaughts to destroy the empire, they failed. Twice they attacked Constantinople - the very vitals of the empire. At the height of the Arabs' pride and power their first siege lasted five long years, before it finally failed. The second siege occurred in 716-718 AD. Again, they were forced to retire defeated and disgraced.

*Fruitlessly the Arabs assailed the Byzantine capital by land and sea for five whole years [673-678]: but they did not succeed in taking it.*⁵⁰

Invasion of France

Finally the Arabs determined that they would invade France and overrun the whole of Europe up to the Baltic. Their purpose was to conquer Eastern Rome by attacking it from the West. Consequently, in 721 AD they invaded south western France.

In 732 AD they then mounted a grand invasion of northern France planning to rampage through to the Baltic and fulfill their dream of Muslim supremacy, led by Abd-ar-Rahman. It is noteworthy to consider the outcome of the Arabian effort to accomplish a purpose which was contrary to the prophecy of the fifth trumpet.

These cares could not long divert him (Abd-ar-Rahman) from the great design he had formed – that of invading the whole of Gaul (or France). Though the Arabic historians conceal the extent of the preparations, for the natural purpose of palliating the disgrace of failure, there can be no doubt that those preparations were on an immense scale; that the true believers (Muslims) flocked to the white standard from the farthest part of the Caliph's dominions; and that the whole Mohammedan world contemplated the expedition with intense anxiety.

Abd-ar-Rahman commenced his momentous march, in the hope of carrying the banner of the prophet to the very shores of the Baltic. His progress brought dismay throughout Europe; and well it might, for so formidable and destructive an armament Europe had not seen since the days of Attila and his Huns.

Conflagrations, ruin, shrieks of violated chastity and the groans of the dying, rendered this memorable invasion more like the work of a demon than of a man.

The towns of Southern and Central France were converted to smoking ruins and appeals were made to Charles Martel, the leader of the Franks. He knew too well the magnitude of the danger to meet it by premature efforts. He silently collected

⁴⁹ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* 5:567-568

⁵⁰ Charles Diehl, *History of the Byzantine Empire* (Paris: A&J Picard, 1969), 44

in Belgium and Germany a powerful force to meet the dreaded enemy. He boldly advanced to meet the Saracens at Tours which they had just overrun.

After six days of skirmishing there came the long and bloody battle in which great valor and skilful leadership was evident on both sides. Eventually the impenetrable ranks, robust frames and iron hands of the Germans turned the tide and by nightfall vast numbers of Saracens lay dead on the field (including their leader).

At daybreak the victors arose to renew the battle – the white Saracen tents extended as afar as the eye could see, but not a soul emerged to meet them. The Saracens had silently abandoned their camp and the immense wealth and booty they had amassed. Christendom was saved. Pope and monk, priest and peasant, flocked to church to thank Heaven for deliverance. A blow had been dealt to Islam that meant its return was no longer dreaded.

The far-famed victory spread consternation over the whole Muslim world. Another Emir (or leader) was appointed to revenge the appalling defeat. After passing through the Pyrenees into France, a complete panic seized the Saracen host which retreated and which was pursued and destroyed.⁵¹

This is a remarkable description, and one point is very clear. The Arab invaders were permitted to torment the peoples of the Roman Empire, but when they attempted to kill or end the empire they were signally repelled. This shattering of the Arab dream is described by historians as *remarkable* and *perplexing* - something they find very difficult to understand. From a human viewpoint the Arabs should have succeeded, but when success would have dealt a deathblow to the empire, they themselves were broken. Edward Gibbon says

When the Arabs first issued from the desert, they must have been surprised at the ease and rapidity of their own success. But when they advanced in the career of victory to the banks of the Indus and the summit of the Pyrenees; ... they might be equally astonished that any nation could resist their invincible arms; that any boundary should confine the dominion of the successor of the prophet...

The calm historian of the present hour, who strives to follow the rapid course of the Saracens, must study to explain by what means the church and state were saved from this impending and, as it should seem, from this inevitable danger.⁵²

Henry Hallam describes the turning back of the Arab hordes as one of the marvels of history.

These conquests, which astonish the careless and superficial, are less perplexing to a calm inquirer, than their cessation; the loss of half the Roman Empire, than the preservation of the rest.⁵³

⁵¹ Henry Smith Williams, *Historians History of the World* (New York: Hooper Jackson, 1907), 8:198-199

⁵² Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

The faithful preserved

Heaven decreed that the Arabs were not to kill the Roman Empire but only to torment it. However some scholars believe that there was a second reason why the Arabs were repelled. It was not to save the Papacy from extinction because its demise would have been a blessing. Nor was it to save apostate Christendom in the West, for its destruction would have saved Europe from the thralldom of the Dark Ages.

Europe owes its existence, its religion...to his (Charles Martel's) victory.

Amid the rampant apostasy within the Roman Empire existed remnants of God's faithful people, who were withdrawing to the wilderness regions in order to maintain their faith. These were the Albigenses of South France, the Waldenses of Northern Italy, and others in Bohemia, Germany etc. When the Arabs invaded France they almost encroached on areas where God's true people were dwelling. It is believed that one reason the Arabs were repelled was to protect the people of God. Professor William Whiston, brilliant Cambridge scholar and a great student of Daniel and Revelation, enunciates this very clearly in his note on Revelation 9.⁵⁴

Those who have the best plea from history, being indeed real witnesses against idolatry and corruptions of the church in that age, were such as inhabited some parts of Savoy, Piedmont, Milan, and perhaps some in the southern parts of France; ie, the forerunners of the first authors of the Waldenses and Albigenses, of whom those were the habitations.

And the providence of God was so remarkable in delivering these people from the plague of the Saracens, that in 726 AD, when they attempted these southern parts of France, they were so terribly destroyed, and with so little slaughter on the other side, that history can scarce afford a parallel.⁵⁴

⁵³ Henry Hallam, *View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages* (London: Alex Murray & Son, 1869), 319.

⁵⁴ W. Whiston, *An Essay on the Revelation of St John* (London: John Whiston, 1744), 194



Figure 2 – The Saracen empire at the time of Charlemagne

Significance of the five month time period

It is significant to note that the period in which the natural desert locusts swarm over the area of the Middle East is a period of exactly five months. This is from the month of May to September inclusive - exactly five months.⁵⁵

Likewise when the Revelator describes the period of the Arab invasions in which they would torment the apostate Christians of the Roman Empire, it is exactly five months. However since this period of time is embedded in a symbolic prophecy then the allotted time must be symbolic time. It is a prophetic five months. Symbolic time must always be reduced to days, because in prophecy, a day equals a year.⁵⁶ In a Bible month there are exactly thirty days. Therefore five months would equal 150 days.

In symbolic prophecy, a day equals a year therefore the 150 days represent 150 years. Here we have a very rigid test by which we can check the accuracy of our interpretation of the fifth trumpet. Did the period of torment by the Arabs continue for exactly 150 years? To answer this vital question we must ascertain the exact year in which Mohammed began his career of Islamic conquest.

*Thus began Muhammed's prophetic career in the year 610 or 612 of our era.*⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Barnes, *Notes on the Book of Revelation* 250

⁵⁶ The year-Day principle see Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6 (margin)

⁵⁷ Henry Smith Williams, *Historians History of the World* 8:115

*The first major Arab attack of the period took place in AD 612. 'The Arabs raided Syria, destroyed towns and many houses and then withdrew,' wrote the eighth century Roman (Byzantine) historian, Theophanes, who was almost certainly quoting from a now lost seventh-century source.*⁵⁸

How long did the period of Arab torment continue for? The period of Arab torment continued until there was sharp division in the leadership of the Arab world. As a result there were formed two Islamic caliphates. This occurred in 756 AD. The new caliph reigning in Damascus, Syria, transferred his capital to the West Bank of the Tigris and founded the city of Baghdad, where he became the leading caliph of the Arabian empire. He built his city on a canal flowing from the Euphrates to the Tigris, an area outside the boundaries of the Roman Empire. The year the Caliph transferred his capital outside the realm of the Roman Empire was 762 AD and with this transfer came a complete change of attitude on the part of the Arabs. As Waddington says

*The (Arab) conquerors now settled tranquilly in the countries they had subdued.*⁵⁹

They named their city, Baghdad - *Medinat al Salem* - "city of peace".

*In this city of peace, amidst the riches of the East, the Abassides (ruling Caliphs) soon disdained the abstinence and frugality of the first caliphs and aspired to emulate the magnificence of the Persian kings...the glories of the court were brightened rather than impaired in the decline of the empire... the luxury of the caliph... terminated the progress of the Arabian empire. Temporal and spiritual conquest had been the sole occupation of the first successors of Mahomet... their stern enthusiasm was softened by time and prosperity... war was no longer the passion of the Saracens ...*⁶⁰

The period of conquest and torment finally ended in 762 AD. If we deduct 612 from 762, we have exactly 150 years or five prophetic months. Thus the prophetic period in which the Arabs were to torment or hurt men, was fulfilled exactly.⁶¹

⁵⁸ David Keys, *Catastrophe: an investigation into the origins of the Modern World* (New York: Ballantine Publishing, 2000), 95

⁵⁹ George Waddington, *A History of the Church from Earliest Times to the Reformation* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1835), 2:44

⁶⁰ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

⁶¹ Edward B. Elliot, *Horae Apocalypticæ* 461

Conclusion

Scripture is reliable

The accurate fulfillment of this prediction of the fifth trumpet gives us confidence in the truth and reliability of the Scriptures. We can be certain concerning the accuracy of the Word of God. This is one of the great lessons we learn from this remarkable prediction for the fifth trumpet. There are other lessons for God's people from this prophecy.

God abhors apostasy

God's judgment on apostasy was demonstrated during the fulfillment of this prophecy. Apostasy is repulsive to Jesus Christ. The fact that heaven permitted the rise of Islam in order to punish apostasy indicates how serious and offensive apostate Christianity must be in the sight of heaven.

For 1200 years Islam has dominated the lives of millions of people in the Middle East and beyond. While it is a false religion, it is opposed to idolatry and religious corruption. Maybe this is preferable in the sight of heaven than the apostate Christian religion of the Roman Empire. Islam was undoubtedly inspired by Satan, but so also was the apostasy in the Christian church.

God protects His true church

It is salutary to consider that while Islam destroyed much of the apostasy it did permit true Christianity - those with the seal of God - to continue to spread their faith and influence. According to Benjamin Wilkinson, true Christianity in that period spread amazingly throughout the eastern world. The gospel was taken as far as China and other distant lands.⁶² Maybe the rise of Islam was for the protection of the true church. Had the Papal apostasy not been hindered in its early development, the faithful church of the East may not have survived.

May the study of this fifth trumpet prophecy confirm our faith in the Word of God and in the wisdom and leadership of Jesus Christ as He guides and protects His people.

⁶² B.G. Wilkinson, *Truth Triumphant: The Church in the Wilderness*

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