

TORMENTED BY LOCUSTS

FIVE MONTHS OF TORMENT
WHY DID GOD DECREE IT?

Conrad Baker

www.MaranathaMedia.com.au

An Exposition of the Fifth Trumpet of Revelation 9:1-11

“And the fifth angel sounded and I saw a star fall from heaven to the earth and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 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. And it was commanded that they should not hurt the grass of the earth nor any green thing, neither any tree but only those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads. 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 strikes 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 to horses prepared to 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 of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like to scorpions and there were stings in their tails: 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 9:1-11.

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 denotes a leader. (1) In this prediction it is a falling star, and a falling star represents an apostate religious leader. (2) Some claim that the falling star represents Satan, but Satan fell centuries before this. (3) It is true that Jesus Christ saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven but Satan’s latest fall was at the crucifixion of Christ. (4) The fourth trumpet that brought the end to Western Rome was in 476 A.D. In the third trumpet there was also a falling star, a meteor - representing Attila and his Huns. (5)-The falling star of the fifth trumpet must be another earthly leader, an apostate leader, who appears after the fourth trumpet. 476 A.D.

Let us examine the details of the prediction so that this fallen star can be identified.

“TO HIM WAS GIVEN THE KEY OF 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 11 it describes the region from which the beast emerges to attack the two witnesses. The abyss is also used of the power’ in Revelation 17 when it comes back, as it were, from death, after receiving its deadly wound, when “it was not”. In Revelation 20 it is used twice to describe the earth when it becomes a vast worldwide prison house for Satan for a 1000 years. In

most places where it is used, it represents the place of death and the domain of Satan. In Romans 10:7 the word “deep” [Greek: 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. The abyss, many scholars believe, is a term describing the arsenal or stronghold of Satan. Any power emerging from the 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 the sea, from the earth, from the abyss. (7)

This leader in the fifth trumpet has the key to the abyss - the arsenal of Satan. What does the key represent? It represents power or authority - the ability to unlock, to free, or release. What does he release? He releases smoke that darkens the sun and air. The sun of course represents Christ the light of the world. It also represents truth. Under this trumpet a leader is given the key to release from the arsenal of Satan, falsehood and error that would darken the light of the gospel - that would obscure Jesus Christ the Light of the world.

These points give us a clue as to where to search for the fulfillment of this prediction.

“THERE CAME OUT OF THE SMOKE LOCUSTS UPON THE EARTH.”

These locusts are undoubtedly symbolic. In this trumpet there are a number of symbolic creatures - at least four: the locust, the horse, the lion, and the scorpion. It is significant to notice that these four creatures in their natural habitat are Arabian. (8) “The zoology of the hieroglyphic,” [or symbol] as one scholar says, “is all Arabian.”. (9). This is a further clue in identifying the power represented in the trumpet. The Bible employs the locust as a symbol of the Arab. Speaking of the Midianite Arabs it says, They came as grasshoppers [or locusts] for multitude.” Judges 6:5 [The original word is “locusts!”]

Midianites and the Amalekites (Arab tribes) ... lay along the valley like grasshoppers or [locusts] for multitude.” Judges 7:12

Notice the statement by Forster, concerning the Arabs.

“In the Bedoween Romance of Antar the locust is introduced as the national emblem of the Ishmaelites.” ‘Mahomedanism Unveiled.’ - Volume 1. 217. (10).

Who are the Ishmaelites? They are one of the greatest tribes of the Arab people. There are other evidences that the prediction concerns the 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.” Exod.10:13.

The country east of Egypt is Arabia and secular authorities are very clear that Arabia is the home of the 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) A famous traveler of last century named Niebuhr in his journeys through Arabia described the appearance of the swarms of locusts that afflict that particular area of the world.

“The swarms of these insects darken the air and appear at a distance like clouds of smoke.” ‘Travels’ Volume II. page 337. (13).

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

After the fall of Western Rome in 476 A.D. [i.e. after the first four trumpets] did a falling star, a leader of false religion, arise in Arabia and obscure the Christian faith and bring torment to a significant proportion of mankind ? The answer is yes! only one event fulfills it and to the very letter. It was the rise of Mohomed and the Islam or Moslem religion. A historian of the near East, without a thought of this Bible prediction, when he described the rise of Mohomet, used language very similar to that of the fifth trumpet. Writing of the inspirer of the desert tribes of Arabia he declared,

“ ... at that juncture however, like a meteorite from the blue came into the world a new religion, a religion primarily of power and not of love, a militant fanaticism appealing to the evil which lies in men, and only partly to the good” William S. Davis. ‘A Short History of the Near East.’ P100 (14)

Authorities have recognised that the religion of Mohomet was the key that opened the abyss, as it were, and set the Arabs in motion. Gibbon said,

“The Arabs had languished in poverty and contempt, till Mohomet breathed into those savage hordes the soul of enthusiasm.” Edward Gibbon. ‘Decline & Fall.’ (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.” Schlegel. ‘The Philosophy of History.- (16).

Notice that! He 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 onset of the Arabs says,

“The Persian war ended in 628 A.D. Five later the cloud of Saracenic [or Arab] invasion rolled northward from the Arabian deserts.” ‘A Short History of the Near,East.’ page 32. (17).

Sir William Muir also 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.” Sir William Muir. ‘The Caliphate.’ page 144. (18).

Upham in his history says,

“The Persian Empire soon attracted the arms of ‘these locusts’ as the swarms of the Saracens were not inaptly called.” Edward Upham. ‘The Ottoman Empire.’ Volume 1. page 40. (19).

Historians repeatedly confirm the application of the locusts to the Arabs and their religion. The prediction states that

“...TO HIM WAS GIVEN THE KEY OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT.” (or abyss]

Did Mohomet actually possess a key? It is significant to notice that Peyron in his essay on this question says,

“The Koran (the Moslem 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 [Mohomet] 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?’“ Peyronts Essais Sar I’Espagne. page 189. (20).

Cambridge Professor E.B. Elliott says that whenever a convert from the Moslem religion was accepted into the faith of the Greek church, he had to state his rejection of Mohomet’s “pretended key of heaven”.

(Commentary on Revelation 9) (21). So in harmony with the symbolism of the trumpet Mohomet did have a key.

This leads to the question: from whence did Mohomet obtain his inspiration for his religion? This is extremely important because so many today would believe that one religion is as good as another, and that all religions lead to the same end. Is the Moslem religion from beneath or is it from above? Let us quote from Gibbon. In describing the inspiration that Mohomet received, he says,

"Each year during the month of Ramadan, he would withdraw 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." Edward Gibbon. 'Decline & Fall.' Volume V. page 396-397. (22).

Edward Gibbon was a sceptic, an unbeliever and that makes his history so much more authoritative, he was actually biased against the Bible. Mohomet's constant claim was that the angel Gabriel was his instructor. Mohomet certainly had a superhuman inspiration, but it could not have been divine. The only other alternative is that he was inspired by occult powers. It is the practice of these intelligences to impersonate others in order to deceive.

The prophecy states that,

"THEY [the Arabs] HAD A KING OVER THEM WHICH IS THE ANGEL OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT, WHOSE NAME IN THE HEBREW TONGUE IS 'ABADDON'." [OR DESTROYER]. Revelation 9:11.

Who is the invisible king of the abyss - 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 Mohomet! If anyone was inspired by Lucifer undoubtedly it was Mohomet as we will soon show. Mohomet in turn, inspired Arabia to conquer and destroy and in the first ten years of Omar's reign who was the second successor of Mohomet,

"The Saracens reduced 36,000 cities or castles, destroyed 4,000 churches and built 1,400 mosques (24)

As 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.' Gibbon Volume V. page 466. (25)

The more we learn concerning the Moslem religion, the more we realise that it is a religion that has a terrific appeal to the carnal heart.

On this ground the Moslem religion cannot be from above. It must be from beneath. 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 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 resplendent 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 fate 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 Moslem heaven that was promised to them 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 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)

Competent scholars of the past have recognized that the fifth trumpet fits only one power and that is the Arabian Empire that rose in the 7th century A.D. Dr. Albert Barnes, that famous 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. (24).

"THE SHAPES OF THE LOCUSTS WERE LIKE UNTO HORSES PREPARED UNTO BATTLE"

When one examines the locust of Arabia he 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 means "little horses".

The locust is used in scripture to denote swarming numbers, and this was a neat symbol of the amazing numbers of the Arabs as they swarmed out of the desert in conquest. The prophet said,

"Make thyself many as the locusts." Nah.3:5

"They came as the grasshoppers [or locusts] for multitude." Judges 6:5.

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

The Arab warriors are likened to "horses prepared for battle". This also is 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 OF IRON."

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

"THE SOUND OF THEIR WINGS WAS AS THE SOUND OF CHARIOTS OF MANY HORSES RUSHING TO BATTLE." V 9.

This correctly 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 Arab army of cavalry rushing into battle for which they were so famous and by which such great terror was brought to the world of the day.

"ON THEIR HEADS WERE AS IT WERE CROWNS LIKE GOLD." V 7

This may refer to their colour. It is interesting to notice that the prophet Ezekiel in speaking of the Sabeans 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:

19. Their turbans should be to them instead of diadems.
20. Their tents instead of walls and houses.
21. Their swords instead of entrenchments.
22. Their poems instead of written laws. (32)

Niebuhr the Eastern traveller describes the turbans of the wealthy Arabs. He says,

"The Arabs wear fifteen caps, one over the other... that which covers all the rest is usually richly embroidered with gold" Alwood. 'Key to Revelation.' Volume I. page 340. -(32 A)

Mahomet says,

"Make a point of wearing turbans, because it is the way of angels (33)

"THEIR FACES WERE AS THE FACES OF MEN." V 7

What is significant about the face of a man? Wherein does the face of a man differ from the face of a woman? The answer is that man grows hair-on his face especially in the form of 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 demeanour, 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." (34).

The Arab was noted for the wearing of a beard, whereas the Gothic tribes - of the first four trumpets were recognised as having smooth and shaven faces. What a contrast! (35).

But not only that, the prophecy says that,

"...THEY HAD HAIR AS THE HAIR OF WOMEN." (V8)

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

"Doth not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair it is a shame to him, but if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her."

1 Cor.11:14-15.

The prediction means that the Arabs of that day wore long hair. In Roman times when St. Paul wrote, long hair on men was abhorred.

Five authorities record the fact that the Arabs of Mahomet's day literally wore long hair. In the famous "Antar" poem, written at the time of the Arab invasions it says,

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

Again,
"His hair flowed down his shoulders.".

Again
"We will hang him up by his hair." (36).

"THEIR TEETH WERE AS THE TEETH OF LIONS."

This is a symbol of the courage and destructive power of the Arabs in their invasions. As previously noted the lion is associated with Arabia. In describing Arabia Isaiah the prophet says,

"The land of trouble and of anguish from which came the old and young lion." Isaiah 30:6

Naturalists inform us that the home of the lion is Arabia. (8) .It is generally considered that Africa is the home of the lion but Africa is closely connected with Arabia and originally in Arabia there were extensive forests indicating that it was much different from what it is now. In Arabic literature the lion is the constant emblem of the valiant warriors. (8) Gibbon says,

"Eutychius the patriarch observes that the Saracens fought with the courage of lions." (37)

They also were very destructive, which is typical of the lion.

"THEY HAD TAILS LIKE UNTO SCORPIONS AND THERE WERE, STINGS IN THEIR TAILS AND THEIR POWER WAS TO HURT MAN FIVE MONTHS." Verse 10.

This particular verse has proved- very difficult for students through the years. What does-it mean? When Moses described the deserts of Arabia through which Israel wandered from Egypt to Canaan, he said,

"Who led thee [Israel] through that great and terrible wilderness wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions and drought, where there was no water." Deuteronomy 8:15.

The natural home of the scorpion is Arabia. There, scorpions are twelve inches in length, very malignant, with eight feet and eight eyes.

No creature, they, say, is more irascible. Their sting is not fatal but causes acute and dangerous suffering.

"THERE WERE STINGS IN THEIR TAILS."

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

"The ancient and honourable he is the head and the prophet that 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 Mohomet is the tail which tormented men. The sting was in the false religion and by it men were tormented for five months.

“THEIR POWER WAS TO HURT MEN FIVE MONTHS.” Verse 10.

These words denote stress and anguish caused by injustice - not bodily, but mental torment, through doing wrong to others.

Commentators of yesteryear recognised this. Joseph Mede lecturer at Oxford University, a great student of Revelation, recognised this truth. (38). Scripture applies the term “scorpions” to humans. God warned the prophet Ezekiel,

“...thou dost dwell amongst scorpions, be not afraid of their words nor be by their looks.” Ezekiel 2:6.

Matthew Henry on this verse says that it represents the stinging verbal attacks, full of venom and malice, by some of the people against 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 Moslem conquerors fulfilled this point in their attitude to the apostate Christians.

The bitter contempt and hatred displayed” against the Christians.

They were called dogs and infidels.

The Christians were forced to pay a life redemption tax every year in order to preserve their lives.

The Christians were compelled to dress differently from their conquerors.

They were compelled to ride in a humbler mode of transport.

Whenever a Moslem entered into their presence even though he was the meanest of men they were to rise in deference to him.

They must freely entertain an Arab when he required it, including sexuality with their females. The Arabs were notorious for their immorality. (39).

They were to build no-new churches.

They were to chime no bells in existing churches.

They were to admit to their churches any Arab no matter how much he scoffed and ridiculed the service, or how frequently he insulted them.

Frequent insults to the Christian women.

A thousand other injuries of oppression that rankled the Christians and made life a burden. (40)

The prediction said

“IN THOSE DAYS SHALL MEN SEEK DEATH AND NOT FIND IT, AND SHALL DESIRE TO DIE AND DEATH SHALL FLEE FROM THEM.” V6.

That was the lot of the oppressed Christians. What a punishment! What a woe! This was God’s judgment upon apostasy. This 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)

We now arrive at a more positive and pleasing part of the prophecy.;

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.” V4

This is a remarkable prediction., Was such a command issued to the Arab conquerors? It, is interesting to notice that in the other trumpets.- the first trumpet for example “...a third part of trees was burnt up and all green grass was burnt up.” (Revelation 8:7) The Goths - who fulfilled three of the first four trumpets, deliberately destroyed the vegetation in western Europe - so much so that it resulted in the formation :of desert areas. On the other hand the policy of the Arabs was exactly the opposite. The Koran - the Moslem Bible - decreed that trees and vegetation must- not be destroyed. This was a distinct characteristic of the Arabs and it resulted in the rapid rise of flourishing kingdoms and countries that they overran. (41) But the prediction says that “it was commanded them... not to hurt the grass”

etc. Was there such a command?

The writer was once accosted by a graduate of Theology from a nearby college who was very cynical concerning the historical interpretation of prophecy as expounded by Seventh Day Adventists. When the topic of the trumpets was mentioned he exclaimed, "How can we possibly interpret the trumpets - no man could interpret the trumpets!" The writer answered "Well, the events of history seem to very clearly fit the historical application." He replied, 'Tell me one event that fits the fulfillment of the trumpets?" The writer said, 'Take the command not to hurt the grass of the earth neither any green thing, neither any tree, that was issued to the Arabs.' He said, "What command?" The writer replied "Haven't you heard of the command recorded by Gibbon, the skeptic, in his 'Decline and Fall..' ?" "No" he replied.

Here is this remarkable command. It was issued at the very time when-the Arabs were about to invade the Roman Empire. They had just raided Persia and now they were about to invade Syria, the Eastern portion of Eastern Rome. Mohomet had died, Abubeker his successor was now in charge. Gibbon declares,

"As soon as their numbers were complete, Abubeker 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 judgement, 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, nor 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 sure you cleave their skulls, and give them no quarter, till they either turn Mahometans or pay tribute. (42).

That was the actual command. The Arabs were not to destroy any green thing or trees etc. just as the prophecy had declared six hundred years before. Is not this remarkable? What indisputable evidence is this "that all scripture is inspired of God!".

Now the command also included the hurting of "...those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads". In the previous quotation from Gibbon you will recall the command of Abubeker 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 dishevelled, 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 who had shaven crowns were the priests - the priests of the apostate Christian church - and the shaven ring on their crowns, represented the sun. it came from Babylon! But is it correct 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 as being 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. (43). Did the-Arabs protect those, who were 'observers of the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment? Notice the record as 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.” (59)

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 the church had developed. Medicine made great progress in the hands of the Church of the East. [They had the right arm of the gospel, the health message.] 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 Moslems, but later much more 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 by Abubeker 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 500 years.” B.G. Wilkinson ‘Truth Triumphant.’ page 268-291. Pacific Press. (44)

What a surprising fulfillment of this particular part ,of the fifth trumpet? Edward Gibbon confirms Dr. Wilkinson’s statement. He says,

“To his christian subjects [i.e. the true christians, not the apostate ones whom the Arabs tormented]; Mohomet readily granted the security of their persons, the freedom of their trade, the property of their goods, and the toleration of their worship.” (45).

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

“TO THEM IT WAS GIVEN THAT THEY SHOULD NOT KILL THEM, BUT THAT THEY SHOULD BE TORMENTED FIVE MONTHS.” V5

“And their power was to hurt men five months.” V 10.

They were not to kill but they were to hurt and torment. Does this mean that the Arabs did not kill in their conquests? No! It could not mean that. The killing concerned the political killing or destroying of the Roman Empire i.e. Eastern Rome. In their battles the Arabs killed hundreds of thousands of people and they themselves lost hundreds of thousands. They overran 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. But in all their conquests they were not able to destroy or kill or end, the Empire of Eastern Rome. They made concerted efforts to capture Constantinople, the capital of the Empire, but always they were unsuccessful.

It is significant to notice a remarkable parallel, published by Dr. Mervyn Maxwell in which he shows how the territory which is occupied by the swarms of locusts when in flight, is almost identical to the territory which was conquered by the symbolic Arab locusts of the trumpet. (47)

It is also significant to learn of the ambitions of the Arabs in their conquests. They determined to make the Mediterranean sea a Moslem lake. It was their intention to conquer Spain, France, Italy, the Vatican, Germany, the Danube, Constantinople, and return to Syria thus enveloping the Mediterranean, making it a lake of Islam. (48) .If they had succeeded in their ambitions 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, each time they dismally failed. Two times they attacked Constantinople, the very vitals of the empire, the first siege lasted five long years, at the height of the Arabs’ pride and power, but they failed. The second siege was in 716-718 A.D. Again, they were forced to retire defeated and disgraced. As one historian says,

"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." (49).

Finally the Arabs determined that they would invade France and over run Europe even to the Baltic. Their design was to conquer Eastern Rome by attacking it from the direction of the West. Thus in 721 A.D. they invaded South Western France. In 732 A.D. they mounted a grand invasion of Northern France by which they planned to reach the Baltic and fulfil their dream of Moslem supremacy and create a Moslem lake of the Mediterranean. This great invasion was led by Abd-ar-Rahman and it is significant to read 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[i.e. Moslems] flocked to the white standard from the farthest part of the Caliph's dominions; and that the whole Mohammedon 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, the 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 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 in the field [including their leader]

At daybreak the victors arose to renew the battle - the white Saracen tents extended as far 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 Moslem 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." (50).

What a description! However 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 spoken of by historians as "remarkable" and "perplexing" something they find very difficult to understand, because 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.” (51).

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.” (52)

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. Was it to save the Papacy from extinction? That would have been a blessing! Was it to save the apostate Christendom of the West? Its destruction would have saved Europe from the thrall of the Dark Ages. “Europe owes its existence, its religion... to his [Charles Martel’s] victory.” Amid the rampant apostasy in the Roman empire there were 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 were nearing areas where God’s true people were dwelling and it is believed that one reason the Arabs were repelled was to protect the people of God.

Professor William Whiston the brilliant Cambridge scholar, and a great student of Daniel and Revelation, enunciates this very clearly in his notes on Revelation 9.

“Those who have the best plea from history, being indeed real witnesses against the 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; i.e. the forerunners of the first authors of the Waldenses and Albigenses, of whom those were the habitations. (53).

And the providence of God was so remarkable in delivering these people from the plague of the Saracens, that when, 726 A.D., 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.”

But what of the five months of torment?

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. (54) 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. This period of time is a part of a symbolic prophecy therefore 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. (55) 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 Mohomet began his career of Islamic conquest. Let historians speak.

“After the year 612 A.D. Mohomet sought to propagate his religion with all his might.” (56).

“Thus began Mohomet’s prophetic career in the year 610 or 612 of our era.” (61).

The first major attack of the period took place in AD612. ‘The Arabs raided Syria, destroyed towns and many houses and then withdrew,’

wrote the eighth century Roman (Byzantine) historian Theophones, who was almost certainly quoting from a now lost seventh-century source.” (62)

For how long did the period of Arab torment continue? The period of Arab torment continued until there was a sharp division in the leadership of the Arab world. As a result there were formed two Islamic caliphates. This occurred in 756 A.D. The new caliph reigning in Damascus, Syria, transferred his capital to the West Bank of the Tigris and founded the city of Bagdad, 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. In what year did the Caliph transfer his capital outside the realm of the Roman Empire? It was 762 A.D. 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.” (57).

They named their city, Bagdad - “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;...” (58)

The period of conquest and torment had ceased and it ceased in 762 A.D. 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 to the very letter.

What confidence the fulfillment of this prediction gives us in the truth and reliability of Holy Writ. We can be very certain concerning the accuracy of the word of God. This is one of the great lessons we learn from this remarkable prediction of the fifth trumpet. Maybe there are other lessons for God’s people from this prediction. What was the purpose behind this trumpet? It was ‘God’s judgment on apostasy.

This reveals the attitude of God toward apostasy. Heaven hates it. 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 throughout the Middle East and beyond. While it is a false religion it is opposed to idolatry and religious corruption and maybe is preferable in the sight of heaven than the apostate christian religion was of the Roman empire. Islam was undoubtedly inspired by Satan, but so also was the apostasy in the Christian church. However 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 Benjamen Wilkinson true Christianity in that period spread amazingly throughout the eastern world. The gospel was taken even to China, and other distant lands. (60). Maybe the rise of Islam was to protect the true church. Had not the Papal apostasy been hindered in its early development, the church of the East may not have survived.

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

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