

ISHMAEL AND THE THREE WOES

Identifying the Role of the Islamic World in Bible Prophecy

— Part 1

Introduction

Current developments in the Middle East are jolting the international powers to action, and raising questions as to the future regional order and the impact this will have on global politics. The Islamic world has played an integral part in the religious and political developments of history since the inception of the Caliphate in the 7th Century. On the most part, interaction with its global neighbours has been within the context of war, with all its devastating side effects that include the rise of sectarianism and religious intolerance, the spread of international terrorism, economic depression and seismic shifts in the global balance of power. These effects have reached a height never witnessed to this degree in the history of humanity. It is the purpose of this series of publications to shed light on the subject of Islam from a Biblical perspective, threading current developments from the time of Ishmael—the father of the Arabian people—in order to better understand the present power play in the region, and the momentous events it is forecasting for our planet.

Understanding Ishmael

Following the events of creation, the fall of man, the introduction of sin into the world and the flood, rebellion reached unprecedented levels. The post-diluvian world witnessed the rise of sturdy, defiant idolatry which found fertile ground most notably in the region of Mesopotamia (see Genesis 10 & 11). To preserve a knowledge of the Creator and His original design for the human race, the Lord called faithful Abram (who afterward was called Abraham) out from the heart of Mesopotamian paganism (see Joshua 24:1, 2) and committed to Him the work, privileges and promises of His covenant. One of those promises was that of a son to multiply his descendants and continue his spiritual legacy. However, the fulfilment of the promise tarried and led to a human orchestrated plot to obtain it. Sarah gave Hagar, her Egyptian handmaid, as a second wife to Abraham, resulting in the birth of Ishmael. That he was the son of Abraham, the father of the covenant, would place an importance on the life and role of this otherwise misbegotten child. This is evidenced in the interactions the Lord had with Hagar and with Abraham about Ishmael's life and the future of his descendants (see Genesis 16 & 17). In the first prophecy concerning him, the Lord had this to say:

Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. (Genesis 16:11, 12)

Ishmael was to have both a positive and negative connotation to his existence and life experience. These two antagonistic perspectives can be seen in his name and his earlier life experience respectively. Ishmael means, “God shall hear” and while it speaks directly to the Almighty's concern for the affliction of Hagar under her mistress, it also speaks indirectly to the role his children would play in alleviating the sufferings of God's people. This was positive. That he would

be a wild man, with his hand against every man and every man's hand against him referred to the experience of the greater part of his life. The Hebrew word for "wild man" literally means a "wild ass man" taken from the concept of the wild Asiatic or Arabian onager¹. This creature is known to lead a wild, free roaming life within the deserts of Arabia. This would characterise the life of Ishmael. The text further explains that to be a wild ass man means he would pit his power against the power of all his desert rivals, therein described as "every man". In other words, his would be a life of constant warfare. This, in contrast to his name, was negative; and based on the great law of heredity, this warlike nature would also characterise his posterity. Another point worth noting from the foregoing verses is that his life and power would be limited (or restricted) to his desert territory—he would live (and die) in the presence of all his brethren (see Genesis 25:12-18). Ellen White gives credence to the previously mentioned points in the following words:

*"Abraham's early teachings had not been without effect upon Ishmael, but the influence of his wives resulted in establishing idolatry in his family. Separated from his father, and embittered by the strife and contention of a home destitute of the love and fear of God, **Ishmael was driven to choose the wild, marauding life of the desert chief**, "his hand" "against every man, and every man's hand against him." Genesis 16:12. In his latter days he repented of his evil ways and returned to his father's God, but the stamp of character given to his posterity remained. The powerful nation descended from him were a turbulent, heathen people, who were ever an annoyance and affliction to the descendants of Isaac." – {Patriarchs and Prophets, pg.174.1}*

It should be pointed out at this stage that Ishmael's immediate descendants were not Muslim, they were heathen, followers of explicit pagan practises. Accordingly, while religion does play an important part, their role as brought to view in the Scriptures must be principally understood from a political vantage point—territorial interactions with surrounding tribes and nations, including the nation of Israel. This is a constant thread from the beginning of their story to its end. Their religious beliefs would change over time, and this would have to be factored in when considering the impact of Islam as a religion. This article will focus on the Ishmaelites from the time they had espoused the Islamic faith. A few other important specifications to highlight concerning Ishmael in the Scriptures are that his offspring would be a great and populous nation (see Genesis 17:20; 21:13), that he and his offspring in earlier times would be archers, skilful handlers of the bow (see Genesis 21:20; Isaiah 21:16, 17) and that they would be identified in Biblical geography as inhabitants of the east (see Genesis 25:5, 6). These all shed light on the resultant Muslim community and how they are symbolised in Bible prophecy. Some of these characteristics however may be beyond the scope of this series of studies to tackle. Having established an important ancient historical context, we will take a leap into the years when these natives of the Orient, under the banner of Islam, began to rise as a political force. We will consider this narrative from the perspective of the book of Revelation.

The Historical Context of Revelation and a Bird's Eye View of Revelation 9

The rise of Islam as a religion, but especially as a force to reckon with in world politics is etched in the sacred writings of John the Revelator. The account is found in the ninth chapter and is set within the framework of the seven trumpets of Revelation 8-11. The books of Daniel and Revelation touch on the same subjects, and thus complement each other². The premier theme of the book of Daniel is the rise and fall of empires, beginning in chapter 1 with the downfall of Judah and the rise of Babylon and concluding in other sections with the establishment of the eternal kingdom of God following the demise of the fourth and final great earthly empire³. John, picks up on this theme in his account, but places emphasis on the fourth of those empires, Rome, to which he was

contemporary, and the eternal kingdom that is to succeed it. Rome was colloquially referred to as Babylon in the time of the apostles⁴, verifying a broader perspective noted in Daniel 2 of the four great empires being parts of a fourfold burgeoning kingdom diametrically opposed to the kingdom of God, and that is destroyed all at once (the entire image) at the end of the war.

*And in the days of these kings [the four kingdoms of the image] shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume **all these kingdoms**, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, **and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold**; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. (Daniel 2:44, 45)*

At the head of this grand kingdom, the kingdom of Satan (the enemy of God), is Babylon. And as the head of a natural body determines the identity of a person and controls her/his operations, Rome's identity and modus operandi is determined by the religious principles of Ancient Babylon. It is accurately described as Babylon in the Revelation; and the fall of Babylon at the hands of the army of Christ in John's narrative (see Revelation 18 & 19) is a second witness to Daniel's account on the fall of Rome through God's instrumentality. The burden of the beloved apostle's message is the religious and political forces that would ensue in the time of Roman hegemony and come to a head at the time of its overthrow, the close of this earth's history. This substantiates the premise that Revelation addresses issues that extend to the end of the world. And it also sets the context for the seven trumpets. It is noteworthy that the trumpets are broken up into a four-three (4-3) structure. The first four trumpets are distinguished from the last three by the designation of 'woe' which is attached to the latter. The trumpets identify destructive events that, based on context, were to befall the enemy of God and His people in that history—the kingdom of Rome. That the trumpets are broken up into distinct phases indicates that the existence of the Roman kingdom can also be understood in phases. The first four trumpets related to a series of calamities that would overtake the first phase of the Roman kingdom and would lead to the end of its chapter. History attests to the fact that foreign incursions from various Barbaric tribes led to the end of the 'united' Roman empire and extinguished the power of the Caesars in its western borders.

*“The most straightforward theory for Western **Rome's** collapse pins the fall on a string of military losses sustained against outside forces. Rome had tangled with Germanic tribes for centuries, but by the 300s “barbarian” groups like the Goths had encroached beyond the Empire's borders. The Romans weathered a Germanic uprising in the late fourth century, but in 410 the Visigoth King Alaric successfully sacked the city of Rome. The Empire spent the next several decades under constant threat before “the Eternal City” was raided again in 455, this time by the Vandals. Finally, in 476, the Germanic leader Odoacer staged a revolt and deposed the Emperor Romulus Augustulus. From then on, no Roman emperor would ever again rule from a post in Italy, leading many to cite 476 as the year the Western Empire suffered its deathblow.” – {Andrews, E. (2014, January 14). 8 reasons why Rome fell. HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/news/8-reasons-why-rome-fell>}*

Revelation 9 then introduces the concept of a 'woe', identifying an intensification of calamities that would befall Rome in its following phases. With the Imperial system of the West all but gone, the Eastern Roman (or Byzantine) Empire remained, becoming dominant. However, from the ruins of the Eternal City, had arisen an ecclesiastical power destined to wield ultimate authority over the

kings of the West, and for a time, the emperor of the East. This threefold confederacy would constitute the next phase of Rome. A question of vital importance at this juncture would be: which power had sufficient military and political muscle to continue the warfare against this European giant on the eastern front begun by the Barbarians on the west? History unequivocally testifies to the Islamic Caliphate's role in politically—territorially and economically—weakening and thereafter dismantling this enduring medieval power. A third part of men, a third part of this triune empire, would be killed.

And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. (Revelation 9:15)

Both prophecy and history extend the reach of the Oriental warriors beyond Byzantium into the western part of Europe where the Holy Roman Empire (casually known as Papal Rome), the ultimate authority in this phase of Roman hegemony, had its seat. It was a war on Rome to the fullest extent under the 'woes' as it had been under the first four trumpets. Only now, the professed defenders of the cross and were at war with the soldiers of the crescent.

“THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE was a major threat to the hegemony of Christian Europe from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries... The greatest shock to Christian Europe came, however, with the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453. Many Byzantine scholars fled westward, particularly to Italy, and made a substantial contribution to the Renaissance. Hungary fell after the battle of Mohács, just over one hundred miles south of Buda, when in 1526 the Hungarian army was annihilated and the king killed. The Turkish army marched on to Vienna, placing the city under siege in 1529 and 1532 : it was in part this threat which prevented the Emperor Charles V from giving full attention to the developing Reformation in his German territories...

The turning-point in this Christian–Muslim conflict was the victory over the Turks, once again besieging Vienna, by the Polish King John III Sobieski in 1683 , who had already defeated them at Khotin in 1673 in defence of his homeland. The long decline of the Ottoman Empire then began, because of defeats in battle by Austrian and Russian forces, and because of internal weaknesses. (Hungary was recovered by the Habsburgs at the Treaty of Carlowitz in 1699 .) Many of the territories within the vast Empire, which stretched into Africa and Asia as much as into Europe, were effectively self-governing and in time became autonomous: Greece in 1830 , Serbia the following year and so on. In the course of the nineteenth century they became fully independent. By the mid-nineteenth century the European powers were exerting considerable influence on the Ottomans, partly because of their precarious financial state, and partly on behalf of the large numbers of Christians who lived under Turkish rule: the Armenians in particular had suffered persecution at the hands of the Turks.” – {Christianity and the Ottoman Empire. (n.d.). Oxford Islamic Studies Online - Oxford Islamic Studies Online. <https://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t253/e2>}

This warfare continued after the rule of the Byzantines to about “the mid-nineteenth century” when, as attested to by secular history, “the Europeans were exerting considerable influence over the Ottomans”. Power had changed hands once again, and the timeline of Revelation 9 was validated (more on this later). It is worthy of notice that the protracted Muslim-Christian conflict had a positive impact on the Protestant Reformation; but Catholic affiliated Europe were on the receiving end of its devastating effects. This substantiates the premise that Ishmael and his descendants would both be a curse and a blessing, and that theirs lives would be the epitome of perpetual antagonism

with political (and religious) neighbours, in accordance with the prophecy of Genesis 16. Ellen G White reinforces all the foregoing points on Islam's long war with Christian Europe and its connection to Bible prophecy as follows:

*“A dark and threatening day had come for the Reformation. Notwithstanding the Edict of Worms, declaring Luther to be an outlaw and forbidding the teaching or belief of his doctrines, religious toleration had thus far prevailed in the empire. God's providence had held in check the forces that opposed the truth. Charles V was bent on crushing the Reformation, but often as he raised his hand to strike he had been forced to turn aside the blow. Again and again the immediate destruction of all who dared to oppose themselves to Rome appeared inevitable; **but at the critical moment the armies of the Turk appeared on the eastern frontier**, or the king of France, or even the pope himself, jealous of the increasing greatness of the emperor, made war upon him; and thus, amid the strife and tumult of nations, the Reformation had been left to strengthen and extend.” – {Great Controversy, pg.197.2}*

*“**In the year 1840 another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy excited widespread interest.** Two years before, Josiah Litch, one of the leading ministers preaching the second advent, published an exposition of Revelation 9, predicting the fall of the Ottoman Empire. According to his calculations, this power was to be overthrown “in A.D. 1840, sometime in the month of August;” and only a few days previous to its accomplishment he wrote: “Allowing the first period, 150 years, to have been exactly fulfilled before Deacozes ascended the throne by permission of the Turks, and that the 391 years, fifteen days, commenced at the close of the first period, it will end on the 11th of August, 1840, when the Ottoman power in Constantinople may be expected to be broken. And this, I believe, will be found to be the case.”—Josiah Litch, in Signs of the Times, and Expositor of Prophecy, August 1, 1840.*

***At the very time specified, Turkey, through her ambassadors, accepted the protection of the allied powers of Europe, and thus placed herself under the control of Christian nations.** The event exactly fulfilled the prediction. (See Appendix.) When it became known, multitudes were convinced of the correctness of the principles of prophetic interpretation adopted by Miller and his associates, and a wonderful impetus was given to the advent movement. Men of learning and position united with Miller, both in preaching and in publishing his views, and from 1840 to 1844 the work rapidly extended.” – {Great Controversy, pg.334.4, 335.1}*

Islam also had the effect of sustaining the veracity of the Millerite message and methodology as stated above which became the foundation of Adventism's system of prophetic interpretation, a positive development in early Adventist history. It is important to highlight that John only provides information on two of the three 'woes', limiting his testimony on the third to a general prediction of its future fulfilment (see Revelation 11:14). This indicates the existence of another phase of the Roman kingdom to which we would have to give attention beyond the conflicts spanning from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century. And it goes without saying that the third woe would answer to a prediction of Islam's final and most intense conflict with the political forces of Christianity in the concluding episode of Roman rule. It is this 'woe' that this series wishes to address. Yet the third woe will have to draw its life from the first and second 'woes' through the mechanism of the rule of triple application. This is the means of explaining the nature and sequence of events of the Middle East in the 20th and 21st Centuries. In concluding this section, it must be observed that a general overview of the historical context of the book of Revelation, validates the idea that Islam is significant in world politics and in Bible prophecy. It has simplified the task of summarising the

content of Revelation 9, of taking a bird's eye view. This in turn will make it easier to decipher some of the symbolism and highlight some of the history contained in the first and second woes; necessary antecedents to understanding the fulfilment of the third.

Preparation for the First Woe: The Rise of the Caliphate

The warfare under the first woe is summarised in Revelation 9:5-12. In these verses, the purpose of the woe is described as that of torment to the Byzantine Empire (and its western counterparts) is contrasted with the work of killing. The killing of an empire refers to the total loss of its political power and status, the loss of its spheres of influence, and in some cases, the dissolution of its central government (see Revelation 13:3, 9, 10). Hence, the tormenting of an empire must refer to a systematic weakening of its parts both territorially and economically, but not to the extent of a total loss of power. This work of tormenting the empire was to occur for five prophetic months or 150 years, and would commence when a consolidated and organised Islamic force made inroads into the heart of the Roman Empire. But preceding this development, prophecy depicts a work of preparation on the part of the eastern marauders. This work of preparation is taken up in the first four verses.

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 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 them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. (Revelation 9:1-4)

A star according to the book of Revelation is an angel, an angel being a messenger or a religious leader (see Revelation 1:20). This particular angel is further described as a king in the eleventh verse of Revelation 9, a political leader. That he is a fallen star signifies that he is a messenger of darkness, an advocate of religious principles that are a far cry from the teachings of Christ. But he is also depicted as a king; we can thus conclude that this chapter introduces us to an organisational system that combines religious and political authority in one head. Islam was indeed the system thus described, uniting the aforementioned powers in its head known as the caliph.

caliph noun

ca·liph | \ 'kā-ləf , 'ka-ləf \
variants: or less commonly calif

Definition of caliph

: a successor of Muhammad as temporal and spiritual head of Islam —used as a title

The establishment of the caliph was based on the prior work of Muhammad/Mohammed to whom history attributes the founding, and early preaching and conquests of the new religion. There is no smoke without fire; we can therefore conclude that it is he who kindled the flame of the “great furnace” whose effects would later spread like smoke and be in tension with the sources of light and life, the sun and the air. The sun and the air sustain natural life; in the spiritual realm this is achieved by the gospel of Christ, the principles of love enshrined in His commandments (see Revelation

22:14). Principles can only be in tension with counter-principles. Accordingly, the great furnace of Revelation 9, and the smoke it generates, must be referring to the teachings of Islam. It is no secret that while Islam has notable similarities with the religion of Christianity, (such as historical figures, and the idea of submission to the will of God) they are fundamentally in tension; the prophecy is thus fulfilled. It must be noted that this fire had a definite location: it was not an open veld fire, but a systematically built and managed furnace burning within a bottomless pit. We need only turn to the pages of history to determine where this Mohammedan inferno began.

“Islam started in Mecca, in modern-day Saudi Arabia, during the time of the prophet Muhammad’s life.” – {History.com Editors. (2018, January 5). *Islam*. HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/topics/religion/islam>}

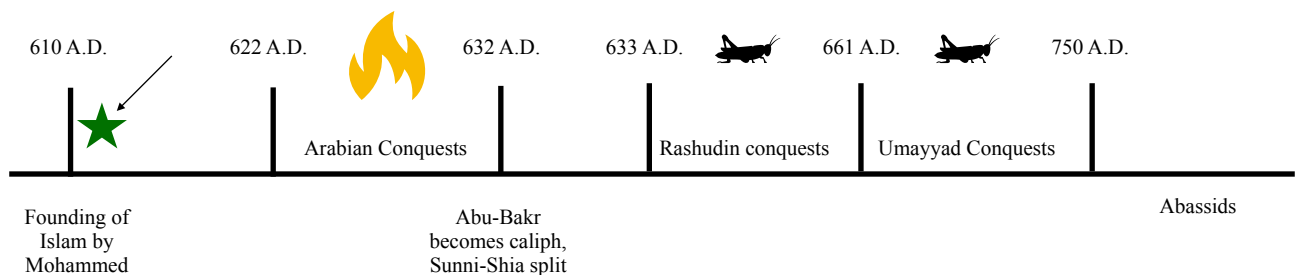
The religion of Islam was founded in the Arabian peninsula, it is here that it began its progressive spread. But for years it was contained to this part of the world. The deserts of Arabia, the same territory that Ishmael and his children had first inhabited, must therefore be the bottomless pit of Revelation 9. The bottomless pit is generally used in the book of Revelation to identify a place of death, dormancy or containment (see Revelation 11:7; 20:10). It is a fit symbol of Arabia to which the influence of Islam was restricted in its early history. The Adventist pioneers mark the beginning of Mohammed’s identification of Islam in 606 A.D⁵, but modern historians mark it in 610 A.D⁶. It was his work from this point to the year of his death in 632 A.D. to establish a strong Islamic presence in the region and unite the tribes under its banner. What then was the key to exporting this revolutionary religion and its corresponding polity beyond its Arabian borders? The answers lies in understanding what had contained it. During this time, two superpowers dominated the world, the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Persian Empire. These had been engaged in a long-drawn-out war for influence in the Middle East since 571 A.D. They had even enlisted opposing Arabic tribes as proxies in their jostles for power during this time. These two giants served as a buffer to any Islamic expansion. The key to opening the forces of Mohammed to new frontiers must consequently have been an event significant enough to weaken the grip of these two empires in the region. This key was provided in the decisive battle of Nineveh in 627 A.D.

“The Battle of Nineveh (Greek: Ἡ μάχη τῆς Νινεβί) was the climactic battle of the Byzantine-Sassanid War of 602–628. In mid-September 627, Heraclius invaded the Sasanian heartland in a surprising, risky winter campaign. Khosrow II appointed Rhahzadh as the commander of an army to confront him. Heraclius’ Göktürk allies quickly deserted, while Rhahzadh’s reinforcements did not arrive in time. In the ensuing battle, Rhahzadh was slain and the remaining Sasanians retreated. The Byzantine victory later resulted in civil war in Persia, and for a period of time restored the (Eastern) Roman Empire to its ancient boundaries in the Middle East. The Sasanian civil war significantly weakened the Sasanian Empire, contributing to the Islamic conquest of Persia...The victory at Nineveh was not total as the Byzantines were unable to capture the Persian camp. However, this victory was significant enough to shatter the resistance of the Persians.” – {Battle of Nineveh (627). (2002, July 6). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Nineveh_\(627\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Nineveh_(627))}

This battle was decisive in that while it did not end the Sassanid empire, it shattered “the resistance of the Persians”. In prophetic language, we can say the empire had received a deadly wound. While it continued nominally, its political power was effectively broken. The aftermath of the war included Muslim expansion in the region, great territorial losses for the Byzantines and the collapse of the Sassanid Empire. Following the death of Mohammed in 632 A.D., his close friend Abu-Bakr

became the first caliph of what would become known as the Rashudin Caliphate⁷. His assumption of power led to an internal revolt that resulted in the development of the two major factions of Islam today, the Sunni and the Shias⁸. The majority of Muslims however sided with Abu-Bakr, and the Caliphate consolidated under him. And from 633 A.D., Islamic hordes sprung into action, conquering vast swathes of Persian territory.

The Umayyad caliphs later arose and continued the expansion of Islam even further. The locusts were given power as scorpions have power, the power to induce tremendous suffering, to torment. The effect of this power was seen in the complete conquest of Persia, and the weakening of Byzantine influence in the Middle East. The cause of this was the notable religious and political influence of the caliphs over the Caliphate’s troops. This, according to prophecy, was the source of their power. That the Muslim forces are represented as locusts contextually speaks to their organised, destructive and persistent attacks on their enemies as that of locusts on vegetation spread across the open fields (see Exodus 10:13-15). The timeline of this early history can be illustrated in the following way:



As a result of Muslim expansion, the Arabisation of the Middle East, different groups of Christians came directly under their rule. Based on Mohammed’s idea of “dhimmis”: a name given to Christians for “people of the Book”, they were treated charitably and allowed the right to life and freedom to worship in exchange for tribute. Their attitude towards the Byzantines, a professedly Christian empire, was of a totally different character. This benevolent treatment of the Christians by the armies of Islam continued for centuries and guaranteed the protection of the faithful people of God from this scourge during the 1260 years. Ishmael was a blessing yet again. This fulfilled the command of Revelation 9:4 to hurt not those that had the seal of God, but only to torment those that had politicised Christianity and sought to push back Arab influence.

“As his authority Muhammad expanded, Muslims came in contact with Jewish tribes at the Khaibar Oasis northwest of Madina, Christians at Tabuk in northwest Arabia, the Christian tribe of Banu Taghlib in northeast Arabia, and Christians and Jews at Najran, Yemen. At first, Muhammad considered Christians and Jews as allies and potential converts to Islam, since his message was similar to theirs. They, however, rejected him and did not recognize him as a prophet of the stature of Moses and Jesus. Despite being snubbed, Muhammad considered Christians and Jews possessors of divine revelations, Ahl-al- Kitab, “people of the Book,” or dhimmis, entitled to protection in return for submission and tribute. The Koran addresses Muslims saying: “Be courteous when you argue with the People of the Book, except with those among them who do evil...Accordingly, Muhammad concluded treaties with both communities assuring them peace, toleration and freedom of work and worship.

The Christians of Banu Taghlib got preferential treatment. They were declared allies of Muhammad and did not have to pay tribute. In the same spirit, Muhammad sent a letter to the monks of Mount Sinai around 630 AD, saying, “Verily, I, the servants, the helpers and my followers defend them because Christians are my citizens. And by Allah, I hold out against anything that displeases them.” The letter went on to assure Christians that they would have security of life, religion and property. It ended with the admonition that its terms were binding on all Muslims till the Day of Judgment. This letter and the way Muhammad dealt with the Christians and Jews of Arabia became the model that Muhammad’s successors followed in dealing with Ahl-al-Kitab outside Arabia. It was not until the conquest of Iraq, Syria and Egypt that the Arabs came in contact with large numbers of Christians and Jews. Damascus surrendered in 635, Iraq in 637, Jerusalem in 638, and Alexandria in 641. Iraq, Syria and Egypt were predominantly Christian at the time of the conquest. In dealing with an overwhelmingly Christian population, Arab commanders and Caliph Umar I followed the example set by Muhammad in Arabia.” – {Christians and Jews under Islam. (n.d.). Al-Hewar Online. https://www.alhewar.com/Saliba_Christians_and_Jews_Under_Islam.htm}

This policy continued even into the period of the Ottoman Empire, a new and powerful phase of Islamic government. The founding work of Mohammed, the early Muslim expansion under the Caliphate and the policies of their rule in their newly acquired territory laid the groundwork for the rise of this Ottoman Empire which would fulfil the first woe of Bible prophecy.

The First Woe: The Rise of the Ottoman Empire

And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. 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 9:5-11)

Never were the Islamic hordes in the fullest sense united under one powerful government until the rise of Osman I, the Turk. History attributes to him the founding of the Ottoman Empire, a superpower under Muslim rule that would wage constant and determined warfare against the Byzantines until the latter empire’s collapse.

“The Ottoman Empire was one of the mightiest and longest-lasting dynasties in world history. This Islamic-run superpower ruled large areas of the Middle East, Eastern Europe and North Africa for more than 600 years. The chief leader, known as the Sultan, was given absolute religious and political authority over his people...Osman I, a leader of the Turkish tribes in Anatolia, founded the Ottoman Empire around 1299. The term “Ottoman” is derived from Osman’s name, which was “Uthman” in Arabic. The Ottoman Turks set up a formal government and expanded their territory under the leadership of Osman I, Orhan, Murad I and Bayezid I. In 1453, Mehmed II the Conqueror led the Ottoman Turks in seizing the ancient city of Constantinople, the Byzantine Empire’s capital. This put an end to 1,000-year reign of the Byzantine Empire.” – {History.com Editors. (2017,

November 3). *Ottoman Empire*. HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/ottoman-empire>}

Therefore, while we can see in the description of the angel of the bottomless pit the work of Mohammed and the early caliphs, it is not until the rise of the Ottoman Turks that the early Islamic system of church and state had fully developed. Then it could be truly said, “they had a king over them”. This became the most extensive, most centralised form of Islamic government. The Arab-dominated caliphates were not as extensive; neither were they as enduring, disintegrating after a time into smaller, pluralistic regional powers.

“Muslim-majority and Muslim-ruled societies underwent massive transformations during the medieval period. They went from being united under centralized, Arab-dominated caliphates like the Umayyads and Abbasids to being ruled by smaller, decentralized regional powers. Many of these regional powers were non-Arab or and had different religious traditions. As a result, Muslim societies featured very different kinds of social organization.” – {*Medieval Muslim societies (article)*. (n.d.). Khan Academy. <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/world-history/medieval-times/social-institutions-in-the-islamic-world/a/medieval-muslim-societies>}

In addition to this, warfare between the Arab states and the Byzantines had been intermittent, an insufficient development to fulfil the 150 years of almost unabated torment predicted in Revelation 9. The Turks on the other hand seem poised to accomplish this task in its entirety. The following historical record confirms the intermittency of Byzantine-Muslim conflict prior to the rise of the Ottoman Empire.

*“In the summer heat in the year 1071, a history-changing battle was raging in the eastern part of Anatolia (present-day Turkey). The Seljuk Turks, a group with origins in Central Asia, had built a powerful Muslim empire throughout Southwest Asia in the decades before, and were now clashing with the mighty Byzantine Empire, which had ruled these lands for centuries. **In fact, warfare between the Byzantines and the Muslims had been an on-and-off affair since the 600s.** The result of the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 was a decisive Seljuk victory the likes of which no Muslim army had seen before, with the Byzantine army in tatters.”* – {Administrator. (n.d.). *1299-The Ottoman Empire is founded*. Century Welfare Association. <https://www.centuryassociation.org/islamic-history-and-personalities/26-articles/islamic-history-and-personalities/2541-1299-the-ottoman-empire-is-founded>}

The Turks would eventually reach a point in history when, under the leadership of Osman I, they would begin carving out an empire worthy of international notice. It is worth noting that the supreme leader of the Ottoman Turks, the Sultan, fulfilled the same role as that of the caliphs in Arabia, assuming full religious and political authority⁹. Another interesting point to note is that the Ottomans claimed de facto leadership of the Muslim world by virtue of their role in protecting Mecca and Medina, the two holiest sites in Islam¹⁰. They would therefore dominate that Muslim world and wage incessant war with Christian Europe for centuries to come. It follows that it is from the founding of the Ottoman Islamic Empire, that we can mark the fulfilment of the five prophetic months of the first woe—an intensified conflict with the forces of Rome spanning from 1299 to 1449.

*“From a small Turkish state in Anatolia in the 1300s, the House of Osman ended up ruling a state that extended throughout Eastern Europe, Southwest Asia, and North Africa in the 1500s. **The early***

period of the Ottoman State sowed the seeds for this great empire.” – {Administrator. (n.d.). 1299-The Ottoman Empire is founded. Century Welfare Association. <https://www.centuryassociation.org/islamic-history-and-personalities/26-articles/islamic-history-and-personalities/2541-1299-the-ottoman-empire-is-founded>}

“From 1299, the newly founded Turkic state of the Ottomans had been slowly but surely capturing territory from the Byzantine Greeks. The loss of Nicaea was the beginning of a series of Ottoman expansions that led to the final dissolution of the Byzantine Empire and its scattered Greek successor states.” – {Siege of Nicomedia. (2006, December 22). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Nicomedia#}

But particularly, it is from the Ottoman Empire’s first inroads into Byzantine territory that the 150 years would be marked. This was on July 27, 1299 at a battle near Nicomedia. The lack of widespread historical verification is lamentable, yet it is acknowledged. The primary source for this battle and date is Edward Gibbon, an English historian of the 18th century, in his series of books titled “The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire”. But in the recent past, search was made into all the Greek histories referred to by Gibbon, put together by contemporaries of Osman I, and found to sustain the validity of the event and the date.¹¹ This period would be characterised by a severe loss of territory or spheres of influence on the part of the Byzantine Empire by reason of Ottoman expansionism. This was the torment or weakening spoken of in the prophecy. It may be of importance to note that the description of the locust army as battle horses, gives an important perspective of the Muslim’s military organisation. It has already been identified in this document that a head can symbolise the identity of an institution or empire. The various parts of the horses’ heads would therefore be speaking to the different features that constituted Ottoman political and military identity during the 150 years, chief of which would arguably be the teeth of lions. The razor-sharp teeth are employed by the rapacious animal to wound, tear and consume its prey. In like manner, the Turks would tear apart the Byzantine empire with a specific mode of warfare akin to the sharp-edged teeth of lions, i.e., with spears; and most prominently, with bows and arrows. They were renowned for their archers in the Islamic dispensation as had been their forefathers in Old Testament times. With the first phase of Ottoman conquest complete, prophecy would open up a change of scene—an escalation of the warfare calculated to kill the existing phase of the Roman kingdom.

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

The Second Woe: The Era of Ottoman Dominance

And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt. (Revelation 9:13-19)

The sixth trumpet, second woe begins with an address from Christ Who is represented as standing by the four horns of the golden altar in the heavenly sanctuary (see Revelation 8:3, 4; Hebrews 7:25). This indicates that part of His ministrations in the sanctuary above involves controlling and directing the political affairs that take place on the earth. At His command, four angels that had thus far been restrained in the river Euphrates were loosed. This restraint can be traced back to the command given at the beginning of the 150 year period (see Revelation 9:4); and hence, so can the location of the four angels be identified. From the inception of the Ottoman-Byzantine wars, the Turkish marauders had been able to weaken but not overthrow their Greek adversaries. They had accomplished this by taking over much of Byzantine controlled territory in the Eastern Mediterranean. The four angels must therefore be symbolising the Ottoman Turks, and the great river Euphrates must be speaking to these territories under Eastern Roman purview. Angels have already been contextually defined as being emblematic of the caliphs of Islam, which in the time of the Ottomans, had been effectively replaced by the sultans. The prophecy is thus identifying that the leadership of the Ottoman Empire was from 1449 to exercise unbridled authority over all four corners of Byzantine territory.

In ancient history, the river Euphrates afforded the Babylonian Empire significant economic leverage, sustaining a flourishing agricultural sector and facilitating naval trade. This made the city of Babylon a prized commercial centre. It also offered the city important military protection based on the city's architecture in relation to the river (see *Prophets and Kings*, pg.523.2). Babylon's strategic location by the banks of the river thus gave it political importance that constantly made the city a target for foreign invaders. As a harbinger of Babylon's fall, the armies of Cyrus diverted the waters of Euphrates, creating a passage way for them to enter unopposed, without a battle, into the heart of the Babylonian Empire and to slay its king. Historical sources fail us here, giving varying accounts of the events leading to the city's fall to the Persians. This document, based on the overall coherence of the Scriptural record with the historical record,—the weight of evidence—will go by the Bible account noted above. And the Spirit of prophecy confirms this version of events in the following words.

“While still in the festal hall, surrounded by those whose doom has been sealed, the king is informed by a messenger that “his city is taken” by the enemy against whose devices he had felt so secure; “that the passages are stopped, ... and the men of war are affrighted.” Verses 31, 32. Even while he and his nobles were drinking from the sacred vessels of Jehovah, and praising their gods of silver and of gold, the Medes and the Persians, having turned the Euphrates out of its channel, were marching into the heart of the unguarded city. The army of Cyrus now stood under the walls of the palace; the city was filled with the soldiers of the enemy, “as with caterpillars” (verse 14); and their triumphant shouts could be heard above the despairing cries of the astonished revelers.” – {Prophets and Kings, pg.531.2}

The events of 1449 would therefore herald not only the downfall of the Byzantine Empire and Christian Europe's loss of important spheres of influence, but the future collapse of the entire Christian Empire itself. This new era of Ottoman dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean would more directly threaten the power of Christianity in the west; it would also disrupt Western Europe's established oriental trade, and thus, its economic security. The Byzantine Empire had afforded both economic and military security to the West as did the Euphrates river to Babylon in the past. The developments of 1449 also opened the way for the rise and steady progress of the Protestant Reformation, as the attention and resources of the western kings would have to be constantly

directed to address this new Islamic threat (see Great Controversy 197.2). The combination of all these factors would only serve to weaken the European kings and the Catholic church and the bond they sustained with each other, paving the way for the political losses the Papal See would face in the future. This was the broader significance of 1449. With the death of John VIII Palaiologos in 1448, a succession dispute ensued between the brothers of the deceased. An appeal was sent to the Ottoman Sultan Murad II to arbitrate, and he decided in favour of Constantine XI, making the latter the next and last emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire.

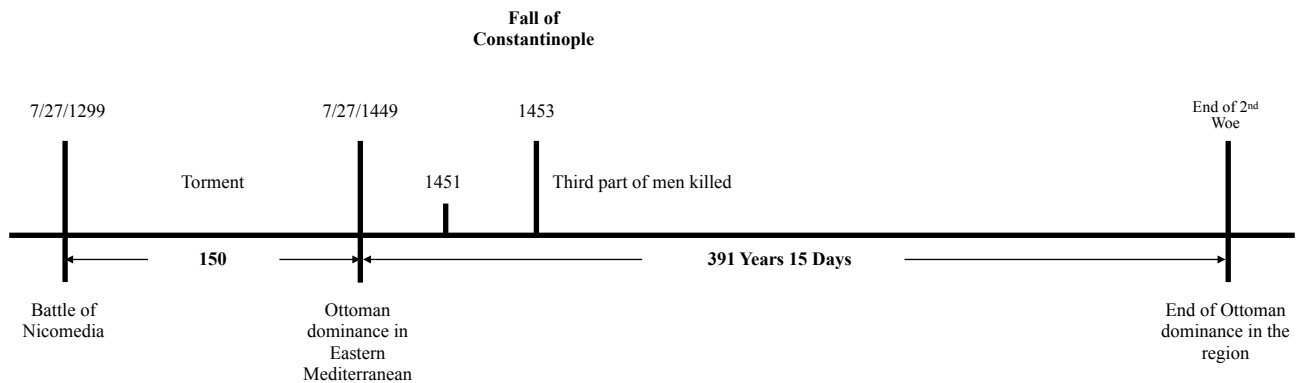
“Despite the foreign and domestic difficulties during his reign, which culminated in the fall of Constantinople and of the Byzantine Empire, contemporary sources generally speak respectfully of the Emperor Constantine. When his brother, Emperor John VIII Palaiologos, died childless, a dispute erupted between Constantine and his brother Demetrios Palaiologos over the throne. Demetrios drew support by opposing the union of the Orthodox and Catholic churches. The Empress Helena, acting as regent, supported Constantine. They appealed to the Ottoman Sultan Murad II to arbitrate the disagreement. Murad decided in favor of Constantine, and on 6 January 1449 Constantine was crowned in the cathedral at Mistra by the local bishop.” – {Constantine XI Palaiologos. (2002, July 26). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_XI_Palaiologos#Reign_as_emperor}

The crowning of Constantine XI in 1449 at the behest of the Turkish leader represented a shift in the balance of power—the Islamic forces had been loosed. And the balance would remain tipped in Ottoman favour from that point until the prophetic period amounting to 391 years and 15 days expired. Notice that as was the case with the fall of Babylon, there was no resistance, no battle. July 27, 1449 would formally conclude the 150 years of the first woe and officially commence the period of the second with the Ottomans having the upper hand, and the power of the Byzantines effectively broken. This demonstrates the progressive nature of the fulfilment of prophecy, bringing to view a gradual transition in reality not made apparent in the simplified prophetic model. Following the events of 1449, in 1451, Eastern Rome’s political arbiter, Murad II, died. His son, Mehmed II, ascended to the throne in his place. He possessed an ambition surpassing that of his father, and he immediately set his sights on Constantinople; in essence, the last stronghold of the Byzantine empire, the remaining symbol of the Christian Empire’s existence in the region.

“In 1451 CE Murad II died, leaving the throne to Mehmed in his will. Shortly after this, Mehmed set his eyes on the biggest prize in the region, the city of Constantinople. Constantinople itself was a husk of its former glory, the population reduced by plagues, constant sieges, and the loss of the surrounding territory made the city more of a symbolic target rather than a strategic one. Many of Mehmed’s predecessors attempted to conquer the city but to no avail. A short occupation after the Fourth Crusade aside, it remained nearly impregnable over the centuries, mostly due to the Theodosian Walls, a series of fortifications built by the Byzantine emperor Theodosius II (r. 402-450 CE).” – {Mehmed II. (2020, May 13). Ancient History Encyclopedia. https://www.ancient.eu/Mehmed_II/}

Constantinople would fall to the Turks in 1453, completing the inevitable collapse of the Eastern Roman Empire. The introduction of a new mode of warfare, gunpowder, was instrumental in bringing this about¹². This change in military tactics and operations is represented in Revelation 9 by the modified description of the army’s organisation and that of the heads of the horses. The conquest of 1453 sent shockwaves across Europe as they had thought the triangular city impregnable; and it forced the kings of Europe to brace themselves for a new phase of conflict with

the Muslim armies, one that would be worse than previous conflicts. The timeline from the rise of the Ottoman Empire to the capturing of Constantinople can be delineated as follows:



The Second Woe: The Decline of the Ottoman Empire

The 391 years and 15 days brought to view in the second woe would come to a conclusion on the 11th of August 1840. This date would mark the formal conclusion, according to the prophecy, of Ottoman hegemony in the Eastern Mediterranean. As was the case with the end of the first woe, the culmination of the second woe was progressive. The story of the loss of Ottoman power can be threaded to as far back as the mid to end of the 18th century. This same period witnessed the consolidation of the political power of two of Europe’s great Empires, Britain and France. Towards the close of the century, France experienced a revolution that would change Europe’s geopolitical landscape, and usher in a new era in global politics. The French Revolution is a subject of Bible prophecy (see Great Controversy chp. 15) and is noted in Revelation 11 within the context of the second woe. The Bible would in this way have us know that the end of Ottoman ascendancy in the Near East was inextricably linked with Revolutionary France’s conflict with the traditional monarchies of Christian Europe. The revolution spanned from 1789-1799 and resulted in the establishment of France as a dominant power on the continent. Britain was the only nation with sufficient leverage to push back this French phenomenon.

“France stood alone on the battlefield of continental Europe. Victorious against the European powers that had tried to crush the revolution, only Britain stood against her.” – {Napoleon’s middle-east quagmire - Amazing facts about the disastrous Egypt campaign - MilitaryHistoryNow.com. (2018, June 20). MilitaryHistoryNow.com. <https://militaryhistorynow.com/2018/06/19/napoleons-middle-east-quagmire-fascinating-facts-about-the-disastrous-french-campaign-in-egypt-and-syria/>}

1789 was also a significant year in Ottoman history. A decisive battle was fought with the Christian empire of Russia that exposed Turkish weakness. In the same year, a new Sultan arose, Selim III who would introduce a series of westernising political and military reforms, permanently changing the face of the Ottoman Islamic Empire. History dubs this year the end of the “Ottoman ancien regime”, and the beginning of the New Order under the name Nizam-I Cedid¹³. This series of reforms did nothing to strengthen the empire, but rather paved the way for western influence to penetrate the region. It is also worth noting that within this same history, tensions were rising between the Ottoman Empire and one of its vassals, Egypt. In 1798, which Bible prophecy refers to

as the time of the end, Revolutionary France, under Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt, sparking a war in the region. The purpose of France in this invasion was to bolster its economic and political leverage in Europe at the expense of its British rival. This would force Britain to come in support of the embattled Islamic Caliphate in defence of its own trade interests in the region.

“While Bonaparte waited for the right moment to seize power, he looked to win new glories. Great Britain dominated the seas and enjoyed unbridled success in overseas trade. France was still at war with Great Britain, and Bonaparte hoped to disrupt British trade routes to India and establish French domination in the exotic east. He eluded a British fleet, captured the port of Malta, and on July 1, 1798, landed with 35,000 soldiers in Egypt. Bonaparte quickly captured Alexandria, and then on July 3, led his soldiers across the desert toward Cairo — and a looming battle... But Bonaparte’s dreams of an empire in the middle East were quickly shattered. The British Admiral Horatio Nelson caught the French fleet anchored off the Egyptian coast and blew it to pieces. Bonaparte and 35,000 soldiers were trapped in Egypt.” – {PBS - Napoleon: Napoleon at war. (n.d.). PBS: Public Broadcasting Service. https://www.pbs.org/empires/napoleon/n_war/campaign/page_3.html}

In order to avoid an Ottoman invasion, Napoleon attempted to take control of Syria, but his unsuccessful efforts made imminent defeat evident, and eventually led to his return to France and the subsequent surrender of his army to the coalition of the British, Russians and Ottomans. This conflict, though short and seemingly inconsequential, highlighted that the threads that held the Ottoman fabric together were about to unravel. It also brought to view the strategic importance of the Middle Eastern region to Europe and brought Britain into the Mediterranean. Furthermore, it initiated the Anglo-French struggle for influence in the Middle East that would come to a head in the Oriental crisis of the mid-1800’s.

“The major impact of the French invasion was the effect it had on Europe. Napoleon’s invasion revealed the Middle East as an area of immense strategic importance to the European powers, thus inaugurating the Anglo-French rivalry for influence in the region and bringing the British into the Mediterranean.” – {Egypt - The French invasion and occupation, 1798-1801. (n.d.). Country Studies. <https://countrystudies.us/egypt/20.htm>}

From the early 1800’s, Turkish vassal states in Europe and the Middle East began to revolt, seeking for independence, having noticed cracks in the Ottoman system, particularly following Napoleon’s 1798 Egyptian invasion¹⁴. To crush the revolts, the Ottoman Sultan enlisted the aid of the pasha of Egypt, with Syria and Crete promised to the latter on condition of victory. Egypt successfully crushed the Mameluk and Wahhabi uprisings but was unable to suppress the Greeks given their European support¹⁵. A breakdown in communication would ensue between Egypt and Turkey on the terms of compensation, leading to the declaration of war in 1831. Egypt began to forcefully capture Crete and the Syrian provinces, strengthening its position in the region and in global politics. To address the situation, Turkey appealed to Europe and Russia, with imperial ambitions of its own, answered the call in 1833. The threat this had in turn to the balance of power in Europe and the stability of the Eastern Mediterranean forced Britain and France to also enter the conflict and fulfil the role of mediator. Terms of peace were agreed and Egypt was given control of the Syrian provinces as Ottoman territory, and persuaded to nominally submit to Ottoman rule in return.

“The First Egyptian–Ottoman War, First Turco-Egyptian War or First Syrian War (1831–1833) was a military conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Egypt brought about by Muhammad Ali

Pasha's demand to the Sublime Porte for control of Greater Syria, as reward for aiding the Sultan during the Greek War of Independence. As a result, Muhammad Ali's forces temporarily gained control of Syria, advancing as far north as Kütahya... Though no military forces remained between Ibrahim's army and Istanbul, severe winter weather forced him to make camp at Konya long enough for the Sublime Porte to conclude an alliance with Russia, and for Russian forces to arrive in Anatolia, blocking his route to the capital. The arrival of a European power would prove to be too great a challenge for Ibrahim's army to overcome. Wary of Moscow's expanding influence in the Ottoman Empire and its potential to upset the balance of power, French and British pressure forced Muhammad Ali and Ibrahim to agree to the Convention of Kütahya. Under the settlement, the Syrian provinces were ceded to Egypt, and Ibrahim Pasha was made the governor-general of the region. The treaty left Muhammad Ali a nominal vassal of the Sultan.” – {*Egyptian–ottoman war (1831–1833)*. (2006, August 18). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian–Ottoman_War_\(1831–1833\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian–Ottoman_War_(1831–1833))}

Hostilities resumed in 1839 when Egypt, sensing an opportunity, moved to declare independence. The Ottomans responded by sending in their army to reclaim territories lost to Egypt in the first war. The war was mainly fought over the provinces of Syria, hence it is also called the Syrian War. This resulted in an Egyptian victory at the battle of Nezib, solidifying Egypt's overall influence in the region. The growing power of this revolutionary Islamic power threatened the stability of the region, and forced the European powers—who favoured the status quo—to intervene in order to restrain the Egyptian Pasha, Mehmet Ali.

“Then, as now, the western powers preferred stability in the Middle East, but in the first half of the 19th century that stability was lacking. The Ottoman Empire, which was in nominal control, was enfeebled. Memhet Ali, the Pasha of Egypt, decided the time was right to seize independence for that country, and presumably power for himself. In 1839 his forces, commanded by his son Ibrahim, were in what was then Syria, now Lebanon, having defeated an Ottoman army at the battle of Nezib. This victory placed Constantinople (now Istanbul) and the Eastern Mediterranean under threat, and so the British, supported by the Russians and the Austrians, moved to forestall Mehmet's further advances, and push him back to Egypt, as they wished to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, presumably on the principle of better the devil you know, particularly a weakened one.” – {*The oriental crisis, Egyptian-ottoman war, 1840*. (n.d.). Britain's Small Forgotten Wars. <https://www.britainssmallwars.co.uk/storming-sidon-the-oriental-crisis-egyptian-ottoman-war-1840.html>}

But in order to stop and roll back Egyptian expansion, Ottoman affairs had to be completely handed over into western hands, which process was completed on 11 August, 1840, right on time for the end of the second woe. The European powers negotiated terms of peace at the Convention of London in July of 1840 in which it was agreed that the pasha would be granted permanent control of Egypt and the Eyalet of Acre, given that he cede all the Syrian provinces back to Ottoman rule and return the Ottoman fleet that had defected to him. Egypt, which at this time was backed by France, rejected the terms, sparking the Oriental Crisis of 1840¹⁶. A British fleet was sent with an order to have Egypt withdraw from its occupied territories. It arrived with the message to the Egyptian authorities on the 11th of August. That the Ottomans had voluntarily ceded their independence for regional security and continuity had now become evident and come into effect.

“On August 11, 1840, Napier's ships appeared off Beirut and he called upon Suleiman Pasha, Mehmet's governor, to abandon the town and leave Syria, whose population shortly revolted against

Mehmet's occupying army." – {*Egyptian–ottoman war (1839–1841)*}. (2008, December 26). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian%E2%80%93Ottoman_War_\(1839%E2%80%931841\)}](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian%E2%80%93Ottoman_War_(1839%E2%80%931841))

Note that it was a voluntary surrender of sovereignty on the part of the Ottomans similar to that of the Byzantines in 1449. Thus, the Sublime Porte's independent rule in the region was officially at an end, and the process to restrain Egyptian expansion had begun. A series of battles were fought following this date, erasing the Egyptian footprint in the territories it had come to control. This process was completed on 27 November, 1840 when Egypt, having recently lost French support, finally agreed to the terms of the Great Powers. The formal conclusion of the conflict was in a peace treaty signed at the London Straits Convention in July of 1841. This dealt a general blow on the other European powers excepting Britain with regards to influence in the Middle East. But especially was this the case for the Russian Empire as the treaty completely blocked out its access to the much coveted Mediterranean during peacetime. Russia's hopes of expanding its sphere of influence in the Middle East and the European nations of the Eastern Mediterranean were effectively extinguished. Britain on the other had become more dominant, and could act more unilaterally in the region because of Ottoman dependence upon Britain as well as free access to the Mediterranean.

"The Great Powers - France (marking its return to the concert of Europe), Austria, Prussia, Russia, and the United Kingdom - concluded the Straits Convention in London, closing the Turkish Straits to all warships, excepting those of the Ottoman Empire's allies during wartime. The agreement was a blow to Russia as it severely restricted Russian naval access to the Mediterranean Sea." – {Westera, R. (n.d.). *Historical atlas of Europe (10 September 1844): Franco-moroccan war*. Omniatlas. <https://omniatlas.com/maps/europe/18440910/#event-2937>}

"From the British point of view, this convention helped preserve the European balance of power by preventing Russia's newly powerful navy from dominating the Mediterranean. From the Russian point of view, the treaty encouraged the aggressive policies of Britain in the region, which would lead to the Crimean War." – {*London straits convention*. (2004, November 28). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_Straits_Convention#:~:text=In}

As has already been noted in this document, the Oriental crisis of the mid-19th century served to galvanise the Millerite movement and validate the claims of the first angel's message, announcing an approaching judgment. The prophetic message of Islam would be absolutely central to establishing the system of prophetic interpretation put together by Adventism on a firm footing. The Millerite understanding on this subject is brought to view in the writings of Adventist pioneer, Josiah Litch¹⁷. Now, with the Christian monarchies of Europe finally having the upper hand over the forces of Islam, the stage was being set for the revival of that spirit of intolerance which the Catholic church had exhibited during the 1260 year time period, and which Adventist prophecy would predict in the third angel's message post-1844. That reform movement eventually ended in failure. Accordingly, we can conclude that the third woe holds the same importance in the prophetic message of God's people of the final generation, confirming the validity of our system of prophetic interpretation as well as paving the way for us to proclaim the warning of the mark of the beast with power. This will be the subject of future instalments.

Closing Remarks

The Muslim world has been an integral part of the global community since its origination. The involvement of its adherents in the struggle for spheres of influence however, dates millennia prior to the advent Islam. With Ishmael, the father of the children of the east, lay the source of the fundamental principle that governs the turbulent Arab world—war and conquest. And his Biblical account constructs the basic framework upon which to build the story of Islam. It brings to view an unpalatable, sobering truth that the Islamic world is actually a microcosm of the entire world. The spirit that stirs Islam is the spirit that controls all of humanity; for not only is he against every man (the fighting spirit), every man is against him. The second instalment will make this point apparent.

¹ *Onager*. (n.d.). Info:Main Page - New World Encyclopedia. <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Onager>

² “In the Revelation all the books of the Bible meet and end. Here is the complement of the book of Daniel. One is a prophecy; the other a revelation. The book that was sealed is not the Revelation, but that portion of the prophecy of Daniel relating to the last days. The angel commanded, “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end.” Daniel 12:4.” – {*Acts of the Apostles*, pg.585.1}

³ “Hundreds of years before a people had come upon the stage of action, the prophetic pen, under the dictation of the Holy Spirit, had traced its history. The prophet Daniel described the kingdoms that would rise and fall. Interpreting to the king of Babylon the dream of the great image, he declared to Nebuchadnezzar that his kingdom would be superseded. His greatness and power in God's world would have its day, and a second kingdom should arise, which also should have its period of test, and trial, as to whether the people would exalt the one ruler, the only true God. Not doing this, their glory would fade away, and a third kingdom would occupy their place. Proved by obedience or disobedience, this also would pass away; and a fourth, strong as iron, was to subdue the nations of the world. This word, opened by the infinite God to finite man, recorded on the prophetic page and traced on the pages of history, declares that God is the ruling power. He changes the times and the seasons, He removeth kings and setteth up kings, to fulfill His own purpose.” – {*Bible Training School December 1, 1912*, par. 3}

“A careful study of the working out of God's purpose in the history of nations and in the revelation of things to come, will help us to estimate at their true value things seen and things unseen, and to learn what is the true aim of life. Thus, viewing the things of time in the light of eternity, we may, like Daniel and his fellows, live for that which is true and noble and enduring. And learning in this life the principles of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, that blessed kingdom which is to endure for ever and ever, we may be prepared at His coming to enter with Him into its possession.” – {*Prophets and Kings*, pg.548.2}

⁴ “That Babylon was an accredited name for Rome, both among the Jews and Christians, in the early period of the Christian era, and was so used by the apostles Peter and John, rests upon numerous testimonies. And the use of this name for Rome may be easily accounted for. Rome was in many respects the successor of Babylon. It was the chief city of the empire that succeeded that of which Babylon had been the capital. It stood in the same relation to the Jews, after the destruction of the second temple, as Babylon had done. And the use of this name for Rome enabled the apostles and early Christians to speak more freely of the end that awaited it. To foretell the destruction of Rome under its ordinary name, would have been suicidal to them.” – {*Source Book for Bible Students*, pg.61.2}

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⁵ “Faber seeks to apply the 1260 years to the “appointed hour” of both the papal and the Mohammedan powers, and fixes upon 606 as the most probable date that synchronizes for the two, as “the year 606 is the most proper date of the Mohammedan imposture,” when Mohammed retired to the cave of Hera.” – {*Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*, vol.3, pg.340.5}

⁶ *Muhammad: Legacy of a prophet . Life of Muhammad: HTML timeline | PBS*. (n.d.). PBS: Public Broadcasting Service. https://www.pbs.org/muhammad/timeline_html.shtml

⁷ “Abu Bakr (l. 573-634 CE, r. 632-634 CE) was an early convert of Islam; he was a close friend and confidant of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, and became the first caliph of the Islamic empire – a successor to Muhammad’s temporal position but not a prophet himself, as according to Islamic sources, that had ended with Muhammad (l. 570-632 CE). He helped his friend Muhammad through thick and thin in his mission and stayed by his side until the end of his days. After the death of the Prophet, he became the first of the four caliphs of the Rashidun Caliphate – as it is called by Sunni Muslims.” – {Abu Bakr. (2020, January 17). Ancient History Encyclopedia. https://www.ancient.eu/Abu_Bakr/}

⁸ *The origins of the shiite-sunni split.* (2007, February 12). NPR.org. <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2007/02/12/7332087/the-origins-of-the-shiite-sunni-split#>

⁹ “The chief leader, known as the Sultan, was given absolute religious and political authority over his people.” – {History.com Editors. (2017, November 3). *Ottoman Empire.* HISTORY. <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/ottoman-empire/>}

¹⁰ “When the Ottomans conquered Mamluk territory in 1517,^[18] the role of the Ottoman sultan in the Hijaz was first and foremost to take care of the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina, and provide safe passage for the many Muslims from various regions who travelled to Mecca in order to perform the Hajj.^[19] The Sultan was sometimes referred to as “Servant of the Holy Places” but since the Ottoman rulers could not claim lineage from the Prophet Muhammad,^[20] it was important to maintain an image of power and piety through construction projects, financial support and caretaking.” – {*Ottoman Arabia.* (2013, June 11). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottoman_Arabia#Hajj_in_the_16th_and_17th_centuries}

¹¹ *Gibbon's July 27, 1299, date sustained.* (n.d.). Ministry Magazine. <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1933/02/gibbons-july-27-1299-date-sustained>

¹² *The guns of Constantinople.* (2007, July 30). HistoryNet. <https://www.historynet.com/the-guns-of-constantinople.htm>

¹³ *Nizam-I cedit.* (n.d.). Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nizam-i-cedid>

¹⁴ *The Serbian revolution and the Serbian state.* (n.d.). Redirecting. <https://staff.lib.msu.edu/sowards/balkan/lecture5.html>; *Wahhabi war.* (2004, March 29). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wahhabi_War#; *War of Greek independence.* (n.d.). Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/War-of-Greek-Independence>

¹⁵ *War of Greek independence.* (n.d.). Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/event/War-of-Greek-Independence>

¹⁶ Westera, R. (n.d.). Historical atlas of Europe (27 November 1840): Oriental crisis. Omniatlas. <https://omniatlas.com/maps/europe/18401127/>; *Convention of London (1840).* (2008, August 24). Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Retrieved July 22, 2020, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_of_London_\(1840\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convention_of_London_(1840))

¹⁷ Litch, J. (1841) *An Address to the Public, and Especially the Clergy.* Joshua V. Himes, Boston., pg.97.2-103.3; 111.1-131.1