Kids’ Prophecy Corner

Josiah Litch and Revelation 9

Welcome to the Kids Prophecy Corner. This is part 8 of our series on Daniel and Revelation. In this study we will look at the understanding of Revelation 9 by Josiah Litch. The date of August 11, 1840 for the fall of the Ottoman Empire is derived from his studies. The Millerite movement and later Ellen White endorsed his interpretation of prophecy on this point. We will explore his views and the new ideas he brought in. This study is not an in-depth study of Revelation 9 but only an overview.

**The structure**

There is a chiastic structure that can be seen between the woes and the trumpets. To put it in place, we will move through the verses of Revelation 9.

6th Trumpet

7th Trumpet

5th Trumpet

**Rev. 9:1**

*9:1 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.*

In Bible prophecy a star represents an angel or a messenger. This is not necessarily a righteous messenger. In this case it is Muhammad the founder of Islam. He is the unrighteous messenger, **the star** that falls and this was in the **year 606 AD**.

Muhammad is the **fifth trumpet**. The **key in his hand** is the **battle of Nineveh in 627 AD.** This was a famous battle fought between the Sassanids or the Persians and Eastern Rome or the Byzantines - two superpowers at the time. It was an awfully long drawn-out war. The Byzantines conducted a surprise attack against the Persians and managed to turn the war in their favor and win.



606 AD

627AD

6th Trumpet

7th Trumpet

5th Trumpet

Battle of Nineveh

This battle is important because Muhammad is tied to that series of events. He was rising in the region south of where the battle took place in the Middle East.

Muhammad sent an ambassador to Khosrow the king of the Persians and invited the king to acknowledge Muhammad as God’s prophet. Khosrow responded by tearing up the letter and when Muhammad heard this, he said *“It is thus that God will tear the kingdom and reject the supplication of Khosrow”.* His prophecy was correct! He went on further to say that he believed that victory would turn to the Romans, and that is precisely what happened at the battle of Nineveh.

Once those two superpowers had finished the war and the Persians were defeated the way was then opened for Muhammad to rise.

From Wikipedia, we learn the following that nicely mirrors Revelation 9:

*The battle of Nineveh was the climactic battle of the last Roman Persian wars between the Byzantine empire and the Sassanids empire in 627. The Byzantine victory broke the power of the Sassanids dynasty and for a period of time restored the empire to its ancient boundaries in the Middle East. This resurgence of power and prestige was not to last however, as within a matter of decades as an Islamic caliphate emerged from the Arabian desert and once again brought the empire to the brink of destruction.*

*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\_of\_Nineveh\_(627)*

**Rev. 9:2**

*9:2 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.*

Here Muhammad opened the bottomless pit and there arose a smoke out of the pit as the smoke of a furnace. The sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. **The smoke** symbolizes **the religion of Islam** which spread like smoke throughout the Middle East. And it went around **darkening the sun and the air of the gospel.**

One important thing to remember is that this smoke is related to Islam in a general sense and not a specific sense. If one limited the term to defining Arabic Islam mistakes in application can be made.

**The Symbols**

**Rev. 9:3**

*9:3 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.*

Locusts are a symbol of Islam. This symbol can be traced through the Bible. In **Genesis 25: 1-6,** we have the lineage of Abraham’s sons. The one we want to focus on is **Midian**. Moreover, when Abraham decided to send away all his wives and concubines with their children, they went to live **eastward**, unto the **east country**. The direction of the east is another symbol of Islam.

In **Judges 6: 1-7; 7:12**, we learn that **the Midianites** (the descendants of Abraham) are the **children of the east** and they are compared to **grasshoppers** which are numberless in their swarms. Grasshoppers are the symbol used in the Hebrew, whereas in the Greek used in the New Testament the word used is locust. So grasshoppers and locusts are the same thing.

Another symbol of Islam is found in **Genesis 16:11,12:**

*16:11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou [art] with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.*

 *16:12 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.*

In Strong’s concordance the word *wild* corresponds to the number *H6501*. It refers to **the *onager*** *or* wild (ass). We learnt following from Wikipedia about the onager:

The **onager** ([/ˈɒnədʒər/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help%3AIPA/English); *Equus hemionus*), also known as **hemione** or **Asiatic wild ass**,[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onager#cite_note-SSC-3) is a species of the family [Equidae](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equidae) ([horse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse) family) native to [Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asia)…Unlike most [horses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horse) and [donkeys](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donkey), onagers have never been domesticated. They are among the [fastest mammals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fastest_animals#Mammals), as they can run as fast as 64 km/h (40 mph) to 70 km/h (43 mph)… Onagers are notoriously **untamable.**

All these symbols point to a people with a spirit that is wild as that of wild ass and that cannot be tamed.

**The structure (continues)**

**Revelation 9:4**

*9:4 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.*

Josiah Litch made the connection between this verse and a letter that was given by Abu Bakr who was an Islamic leader after Muhammad’s death. This was a letter that he sent out to all the tribesmen.

*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 fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat. When you make any covenant or article, 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.' {1842 JoL, PREX2 171.5}*

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| --- | --- |
| Revelation 9:4 says:  | The letter says: |
| “it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth neither any green thing neither any tree” | “destroy no palm trees nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees” |

We can see a strong connection between those two commands.

|  |  |
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| Revelation 9:4 says:  | The letter says: |
| “but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.”  | “you will find anothersort of person that belong to the synagogue of Satan who have shaven crowns, be sure that you cleave their skulls and give them no quarter till they eitherturn mohammedans or pay tribute.” |



In this verse, we are given the description of a group of men that do **not have the seal of God**. When we go back to the letter of Abu bakr, this group has a distinct way of dressing and hair cut. Historically it was part of the habit and dress of catholic monks to shave their hair in a style that resembled a crown. It was called a tonsure. They would shave the top of their head and leave a circular fringe. It was supposed to be symbolic of a holy crown. So you can see from the beginning that Islam was set against Catholicism.

So we have Muhammad who was the fifth trumpet. However two developments are presented in the scripture - a trumpet and a woe. So, One thing we need to be careful about is that we don't consider a woe to be a trumpet or a trumpet to be a woe. These are two separate symbols.



606 AD

627AD

6th Trumpet

7th Trumpet

5th Trumpet

1st Woe

Battle of Nineveh

5th Trumpet

So, Abu Bakr’s command was directed to **Arabic Islam** which was at the time restrained from destroying Rome. But in the second phase of the fifth trumpet which is the first woe, we'll see a different group of Muslims being addressed.

**Revelation 9:5**

*9:5 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.*

By looking at the structure of the verse, especially the pronouns, we can see two groups mentioned. It is important to see them otherwise we can make the mistake of thinking that:

1. The locusts mentioned here are those of the two previous verses.
2. There are two 150-year periods.

There are two groups being referred to in verse five. 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.

The other element the structure of Revelation 9:5 gives is **the experience of those that are suffering this torment**. This is the main purpose of this verse - **the unsealed men** who are tormented over that one single 150-year time period.



606 AD

627AD

6th Trumpet

7th Trumpet

5th Trumpet

1st Woe

Battle of Nineveh

Arabic Islam

“Hurt”

“Torment”

They are “tormented an not killed at this stage as the Arabic muslims are restrained from destroying Rome over this period of 150 years.et.

**Revelation 9: 6-10**

*9:6 And in those days shall men seek death and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.*

*9:7 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.*

*9:8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as [the teeth] of lions.*

 *9:9 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.*

 *9:10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power [was] to hurt men five months*

Verse 10 sets forth another reference to this five-months period and this is why some make the mistake thinking there are two 150-year time periods in the chapter. They apply the first 150-year time period to Arabic Islam and the second one to Ottoman Islam.

These verses are actually a repetition and enlargement on the duration over which they locusts would do their work of tormenting. Their power was to hurt men five months. What it is emphasized here is **the experience of those who are inflicting the torment.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Verse 5 | Verse 10 |
| the experience of those who experience the torment | Experience of those who inflict that torment. |

The work of those who inflicted the torment started on July 27,1299 and ended on July 27, 1499. We will take a moment to repeat how we arrive at these dates. But for further details, please go the *Millerites Curriculum* on White Stone Foundation’s website[[1]](#footnote-1) under resources: Kids Prophecy Corner.

Using biblical reckoning,

* a month = 30 days.
* So five months = 5 x 30 = 150 days or 150 years.
* The experience starts on 27 July 1299 which was the commencement of the first woe.
* 150 years later brings you to July 27, 1499



July 27, 1499

606 AD

July 27, 1299

627AD

6th Trumpet

7th Trumpet

5th Trumpet

1st Woe

Battle of Nineveh

Arabic Islam

“Hurt”

“Torment”

To understand how we can make this precise application we need to know how the **Ottoman power** came together. The following verse helps us.

**Revelation 9: 11**

*9:11 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.*

The king over them was **Othman I** who was the first sultan to unify the Turkic warriors into a state power. He ruled as a **king over this unified Islamic power**, and they made their first attack upon the Eastern Romans on the 27th of July 1299 with the battle (siege) of Nicomedia.

Another characteristic of Islam is given to us and it is the name Abaddon in the Hebrew and Apollyon in the Greek. These are Hebrew and Greek words which have the same meaning - death and destruction in Revelation. They express the character and work of Islam.

The first woe and the fifth trumpet **end simultaneously** on **July 27, 1499.**

**Revelation 9: 12**

*9:12 One woe is past; [and], behold, there come two woes more hereafter.*

William Miller and Josiah Litch did something interesting and new - something which was not seen in from the broader protestant interpretation of Revelation 9. They came up with a framework or structure within which they placed definite dates. Having a structure that projects dates into the future allowed them to test the correctness of their applications - which they did. They experimented with running the woes continuously after each other; so where the first woe ended the second would begin.



July 27, 1499

606 AD

July 27, 1299

627AD

6th Trumpet

7th Trumpet

5th Trumpet

2nd Woe

1st Woe

Battle of Nineveh

**Ottoman Islam**

**Arabic Islam**

“Hurt”

“Torment”

This was a new approach. No one else had interpreted the chapter this way at the time. And their reason for doing this was that they thought that the death of the Eastern Rome should come shortly after their torture. So, the hurt phase was the torture phase and the death would have to follow very swiftly afterwards. So, they connected them up.

**Revelation 9: 13,14**

*9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,*

 *9:14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet,* ***Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.***

The river Euphrates was a geographical clue for Josiah Litch. He observed the four regions round about it - Aleppo, Iconium, Damascus, and Baghdad. He interpreted the four angels as representing the four regions.

*The four angels denote ministers of judgment. They refer to the four nations of the Seljukian Turks of which the Ottoman empire was composed, located near the river Euphrates, at Aleppo, Iconium, Damascus and Bagdad. {1838 JoL, PSC 155.1}*

**Revelation 9 :15**

*9:15 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.*

*This is the verse Josiah Litch hung his August 11, 1840 prediction upon. This was the test of those new ideas that they were formulating.*

*According to Josiah Litch a third part of men is the third part of the empire which was under the scourge.*

*Under the first four trumpets the two western divisions fell, and under the fifth and sixth the eastern empire was crushed; but under the seventh trumpet great Babylon entire will sink to rise no more at all. {1842 JoL, PREX2 133.1}*

As stated in the paragraph above, the two parts of the Western Empire were crushed under the first four trumpets. The Eastern division fell under the fifth and sixth trumpets. The Eastern division empire was the third part of men that was crushed.

A time prophecy of an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year is also seen in connection with the killing of the third part of the kingdom.

* a year is 360days
* a month is 30 days
* a day is obviously one day
* the total is **391 days**
* an hour is 15 days

The total therefore is 391 literal years and 15 days. This is how verse 15 is to be understood (for review use the Millerite curriculum in the Kid’s Prophecy Corner). That is why the battle of Nicomedia was so important; it served as the starting point for this time prophecy and the junction between the two woes. **By running these woes continuously, one after the other,** they could arrive to the date of August 11, 1840 as marking the end of the 150 years and the 391 years and 15 days which followed.



July 27, 1499

606 AD

August 11, 1840

July 27, 1299

627AD

6th Trumpet

7th Trumpet

5th Trumpet

2nd Woe

1st Woe

Battle of Nineveh

**Ottoman Islam**

**Arabic Islam**

“Hurt”

“Torment”

This is how Josiah Litch puts it:

 *“The specified time for the continuance of Turkish or Mahometan supremacy over the Greeks, was an hour, day, month, and year. A prophetic year, three hundred and sixty days; a month, thirty days; one day; and an hour, or the twenty-fourth part of a day. Three hundred and sixty, the number of days in a prophetic year, divided by twenty-four, the number of hours in a day, gives us fifteen days. Three hundred and ninety-one years and fifteen days. On august 11, 1840 when the ottoman power in constantinople may be expected to be broken and this, I believe, will be found to be the case.” {1842 JoL, PREX2 188.2}*

And again, the second woe is not the sixth trumpet. It falls within the history of the sixth trumpet. And during the period of the sixth trumpet **Ottoman Islam** was allowed to “kill” or destroy a third part of man - the Eastern of Byzantine portion of the Roman Empire.

6th Trumpet



July 27, 1499

606 AD

August 11, 1840

July 27, 1299

627AD

6th Trumpet

7th Trumpet

5th Trumpet

2nd Woe

1st Woe

Battle of Nineveh

“ kill”

“Hurt”

“Torment”

**Ottoman Islam**

**Arabic Islam**

**Revelation 9:15,16**

 *9:15 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.*

 *9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen [were] two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.*

Josiah Litch speculated that this enormous number is in reference to the number of Ottoman warriors over the entirety of the woe. Something interesting the Ottomans had, and which is referred to in the chapter is the new form of warfare they introduced to the region. They used guns, explosives, and cannons.

*"****'Among the implements of destruction, he studied with peculiar care the recent and tremendous discovery of the Latins, and his artillery surpassed whatever had yet appeared in the world. A founder of cannon, a Dane or Hungarian, who had been almost starved in the Greek service, deserted to the Moslems, and was liberally entertained by the Turkish sultan****…* ***and the stone bullet weighed about six hundred pounds.*** *{1842 JoL, PREX2 185.2}*

In verse 19 we learn that 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. What does a tail represent?

**Isaiah chapter 9: 15.**

*9:15 The ancient and honourable, he [is] the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he [is] the tail.*

So the prophet that teaches lies is the tail. We have all these Islamic warriors in service of a tail - **a false prophet**. And then when you go back to the verse 19 of Revelation 9, we learn that their power is in their mouth and in their tails. In their mouth - they have all this wonderful new weaponry, these cannons, and muskets. And in their tails - they have this false religion.

**Revelation 9: 20-21**

*9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:*

 *9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*

What we are shown in these verses is a good description of the idolatry of the catholic church. It is a generally known fact that Islam is very much opposed to any form of idolatry. Even to the point that some teachings of Islam don’t allow photographs to be taken in case those photographs end up being used as idols. This is why Islamic artwork it is made of geometric shapes only. They do not want figures to be venerated.



In contrast to the muslims the artwork of the catholic church and the Eastern Romans was and is mostly represented by icons and statues. We can therefore see how Islam is the perfect enemy of Catholicism because one group won't allow images while the other worships pictures and statues. So through this we can see how these Islamic warriors were raised up in order to slay the third part of men.

**Sister White Endorsement of the Work of Josiah Litch**

*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. { GC 334.4}*

*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. { GC 335.1}*

When Ellen White quoted Litch she confirmed that his understanding of Revelation 9 is correct. The structure put in place was proven on August 11, 1840 when the Ottoman Empire was restrained. If the dates were wrong the whole structure would fall apart, and the message would have had no effect.

To summarize:

We looked at Revelation 9 from Josiah Litch's historicist point of view. We saw the dynamic between Eastern Rome and Islam. We looked at the various symbols that relate to Islam in the Bible. We have looked at the fact that there is a single 150-year time period; and that the two references to this time period are a repetition and enlargement showing two distinct experiences. One refers to the experience of those who suffer the torment, and the other to the experience of those who actually inflict the torment.

We established that the fifth trumpet covers two phases. One part applies to Arabic Islam and the other part to Ottoman Islam. We also established that Ottoman Islam was the second woe which came in the time of the sixth trumpet. And we identified a the starting point for it and its work of killing. We finally saw that Ellen white agrees with Josiah Litch's understanding of Revelation 9.

In our next studies we will go back to Revelation 9 to deepen our understanding of the role of Islam and its prophetic application for us today.

1. [www.white-stone.ca](http://www.white-stone.ca) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)