

## Chapter 9

### Fifth Trumpet: The Locusts from the Bottomless Pit

Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. <sup>2</sup>And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.

John CLEARLY connects the 5<sup>th</sup> trumpet to the 4<sup>th</sup>. The 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet was the darkest point in the philosophical and intellectual development of the Christian Church, heralded, as we have previously discussed, by Papal Domination. To be clear, the Papal domination was the final cumulation of a process that had taken a little more than 200 years. Although it began as a scattered group of churches, through the pressures of persecution and then the unrestrained power of holding near divine authority, the Christian Church had become highly centralised and doctrinal authority was contained in a very small selection of people. The separation of the Papacy from the Emperor apexed this evolution as the dictatorship that remains in the Roman Church answered and answers to no earthly power. As we saw in the 4<sup>th</sup> Trumpet, and have discussed heavily, to protect itself from outside challenges, the Roman movement implemented whatever doctrine it felt necessary to keep the Church dominant. See the Smyrna Church notes for more details.

But John gives an explanation for this darkening. He says the spirit that fell from Heaven opened a bottomless pit from which smoke arose, like the smoke of a great furnace. Although this is the basis for the 'hell' doctrine in the Roman Church, John is clearly not saying that there is fire in the pit, he is using a simile. He is saying the darkness was caused by the smoke released from this pit.

To understand what the smoke represents, we need to spend some time reviewing why the Christian Church imposed its period of absolute darkness. Although adversarial Roman Catholic writers like to simply claim they wished to keep the world ignorant, in their eyes the Papal organisation had good reason for their doctrines. Partly this revolves around their intent to absorb and adopt other religious groups into their movement without any question as to why doctrines such as the Sabbath were changed or new views like Christmas and Easter were added without cause. Partly this was because of the general ignorance of the individual; being mostly illiterate and easily led as can be seen in much later literature such as Shakespeare.

Partly this was also concerns about what the general populace would discover if they were given access to all the facts and information; what type of deductions they might come to that could impact what the Church saw as its role in shepherding souls to salvation. If we take a celebration in our church – Communion – and its Roman counterpart – the Mass – we find that it is a highly embellished and ritualised reinvention of the Jewish Passover service. The symbols of unleavened bread and red wine, the concept of a sacrificial lamb, extensive

prayers of thanksgiving and intercession are common to these three ceremonies, and we know that Jesus based Communion on and at the time of Passover when he developed it. A review by free-thinking Christians could easily have led to discord as some Christians recognised their Jewish roots, which was the last thing the avid anti-Semitic Roman Church.

## **Islam / Mohammedanism**

Shortly after the Papacy started to stretch its own legs and started large-scale missions to convert the world to Christianity, begun with the Gregorian Mission, to convert the then-pagan Anglo-Saxons in England to Christianity, an Arab named Muhammad started to write of vision he had received from the Angel Gabriel. Accepting Jesus as an inspired prophet and not God, the subsequent collection of writing called the Quran expanded on both Jesus and Jewish scholarship to create its own movement that has blossomed into a number of modern religious societies, the most notable of which being Islam. The word 'Islam' has overtaken the more academic term 'Mohammedanism' as not all of the groups that the Quran produced could be accurately included in the word 'Islam', but this is beyond the scope of our discussion here.

Muhammad's claim was that, through the Angel Gabriel, he completed the work started by Abraham and Jesus to relay to the world the third and final great testament and revelation about God and God's plan for the world. This placed the Prophet – Muhammad's regular title in Islam – in a superior position to all other, earlier messengers and that his words are the actual words of God while previous works are interpretive. In this form, the Quran explains away contradictions with earlier scriptures as the earlier documents been inappropriately translated or collated, while his work came from the Angel Gabriel himself, dictated by Allah.

## **A counterfeit Jesus in Islam**

In Islam, 'Īsā ibn Maryam, Arabic for 'Jesus, son of Mary'), is a prophet and messenger of God, and acknowledged as the Messiah, sent to guide the Children of Israel with a Revelation: Injil, Arabic for "gospel". The Quran describes Jesus messiah, born of a virgin, performing six miracles, accompanied by disciples, rejected by the Jewish establishment, and being raised to heaven. Jesus was said to have been born a "pure boy", meaning without sin, to "Maryam", Mary, as the result of virginal conception, similar to the event of the Annunciation in Christianity.

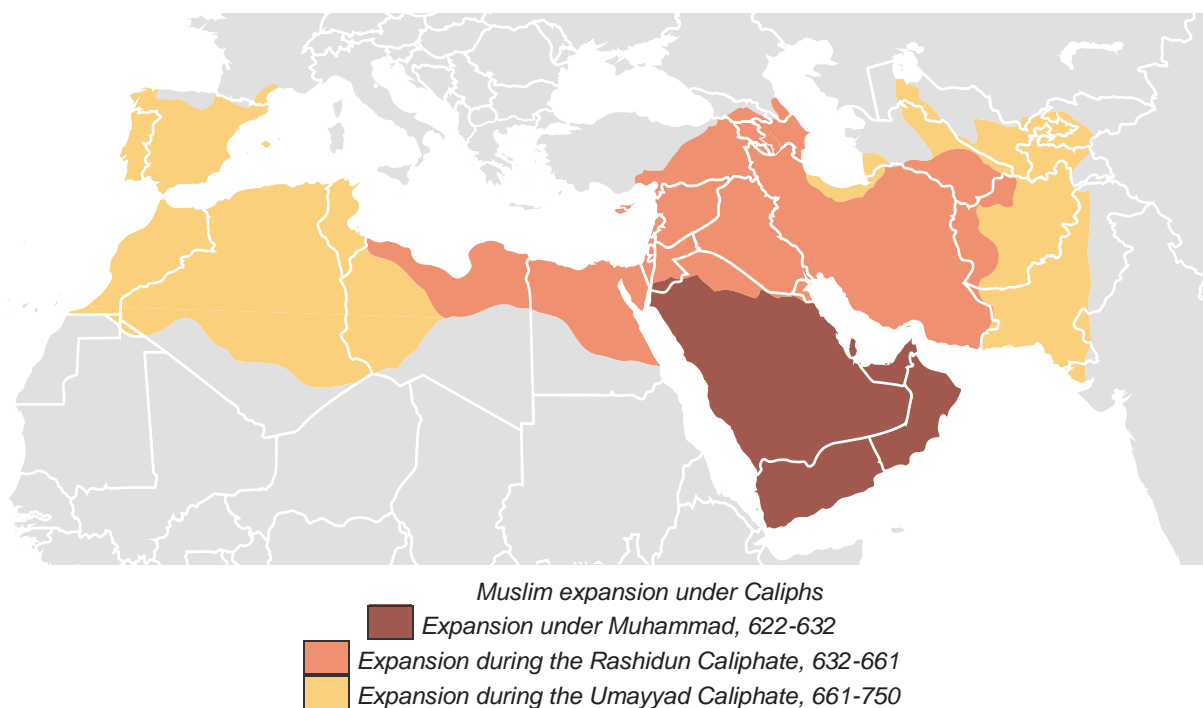
The Quran differs from the New Testament in proclaiming that Jesus was neither crucified nor died on the cross, and especially rejects the divinity of Jesus as God incarnate, or the literal Son of God. The Quran denies Jesus as a deity in several verses, including one that mentions that Jesus did not claim to be divine (Q5:116). According to the Quran, he was not crucified, but was rather saved by God. Earliest Islamic traditions and exegesis quote somewhat conflicting reports regarding a death and its length, but this seems to have been early attempts at Christian apologetics/adoption and is no longer Islamic doctrine.

The significance of Jesus in Islam is reflected in his being mentioned in the Quran in 93 verses and other relational titles, mentioned directly and indirectly, over 187 times. He is one of the most mentioned people in the Quran by reference; 25 times by the name Isa, third-person 48 times, first-person 35 times and the rest as titles.

In Islam, Jesus is believed to have been the precursor to the Prophet Muhammad. According to the Quran, the coming of Muhammad was predicted by Jesus in As-Saff 61:6. Through this verse, early Arab Muslims claimed legitimacy for their new faith in the existing religious traditions and the alleged predictions of Jesus. Like all prophets in Islam, Jesus is also called a Muslim, as he preached that his followers should adopt the "straight path". In Islamic eschatology, Jesus will return in a Second Coming to fight Al-Masih ad-Dajjal or the "False Messiah" as well as Gog and Magog and establish peace and justice on earth.

## The Christian Church's Response to Islam

It did not take long – as we discussed in Daniel 11 – for Islam to come into conflict with the Christian Church. The unifying force of Islam on the Arabs encouraged strong armies to combine and gave a purpose to conquest. By 750, the majority of the old Babylonian, Persian and Carthaginian empires had been conquered, and the Iberian Peninsula, modern Spain, had also been colonised. The Umayyad Caliphate launched an invasion of France in both 719 and 732, securing areas up to the Loire and Rhône valleys, encompassing the South-Western third of France but were beaten back both times. Muslim occupation of Spain would remain until the Nasrid dynasty's defeat and destruction of the Emirate of Granada in 1491.



Of course, the much better-known conflict between Islam and Christianity is the Crusades. In 1095, Pope Urban II called for a reconquest of the Holy Land after the Byzantine Emperor, Alexios I Komnenos, had written to him asking for help in his war with the Seljuk Turks. Hundreds of thousands of people 'took the cross', not the expected several hundred knights Alexios was expecting, and moved into the Holy Land, ultimately capturing Jerusalem but suffering huge losses. What is important to note is that the Muslim forces did nothing to start or encourage the Crusades, and their reaction to the invasion was slow, to say the least, even if ultimately victorious.

Having already restricted access to the Scriptures to all but Priests, its not surprising that intellectual distractions from the Crusades came thick and fast. Relics, such as the 'Holy Lance' "discovered" during the Siege of Antioch in 1098, or the 'True Cross' which was lost at the Battle of Hattin, 1187 and last seen in Damascus in 1219 under Saladin's control were common articles that could be made the focus of the conflict, ignoring and/or distracting the people from the lack of a broader political necessity in the conflict. The tomb of Jesus and the site of Solomon's temple became especially important conflict locations.

Copies of Islamic, Christian and Jewish texts were highly sought after by the Christian crusade leaders, for their monetary value if nothing else, and large swathes of documents ended up in the Vatican archives, still unavailable to scholars. Some sources did, however, escape the Church clutches and formed the basis of some translations of the bible – most notably the Tyndale Bible first printed in 1526 and reprinted in 1536, the first English translation to work directly from Hebrew and Greek texts. 1536, Tyndale was defrocked in an elaborate public ceremony and turned over to the civil authorities to be strangled to death and burned at the stake for heresy.

The lack of public access to documents did not stop the Church from following its habit of adopting foreign traditions, namely the Rosary Beads introduced by Peter the Hermit, an early and unauthorised Crusade Leader who also led the Rhineland Massacres of Jews during 1096 by forces on their way to the Crusades. In Islam, prayer beads contain 99 beads to refer to the 99 names of God and permit the bearer to remember each and its meaning while the Roman Church uses them for the veneration of Mary through reciting the Rosary.

The perceived threat from Islam encouraged Church Leaders to lash out in pure ignorance and repress thought through military and ritualistic distractions rather than attempt to have an open conversation about Religious subjects that might have come forth. The Crusades and reconquest of Europe from the Muslims directly encouraged the Crusades against Christian Heretics including the Waldenses who were propagandised with the same rhetoric of the Muslims.

The Angel that fell from heaven – Satan – therefore opened a pit of falsehood and false doctrine that spread across the entire world. It started to darken through the false ideas like Sunday worship, Christmas and Easter, but quickly took root in the counterfeit testaments of the Quran which permitted a further retaliatory darkening through distraction and deception.

It was not until the fall of the Roman Church, which enlightenment returned to the world, that the true scope of this repression could be glimpsed.

<sup>3</sup> Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. <sup>4</sup> They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

The Locusts that come out of this smoke can clearly be related to the Mohammedan forces that swept through the Middle East and Africa as we saw. The Eastern Christian Church was an early target, while the Jews that still lived in and around Israel and Palestine profited much in the Muslim conquests. Anti-Semitic feelings in Islam are very modern; at this time Islam and Judaism were seen as brother races, especially by Muslims who conquered the Middle East. In the areas conquered, Jewish rights and privileges were widely reinstated and extended. For example, when the Rashidun Caliphate sieged Jerusalem between 636–637AD, as part of the Muslim conquest of the Levant, Jews were once again allowed to live inside Jerusalem for the first time in almost 500 years of oppressive Roman rule.

The command here is given that they should not harm the grass which we established in the 1<sup>st</sup> trumpet relates to Israel and the Jewish groups. Clearly the Muslims fit this, attacking the apostate Christian Church, through the Byzantine Empire, and empowering the Jews.

4 clear groups can be deduced here;

- The green grass
- The locusts
- Those with the seal of God in their foreheads and
- Those without

The target of the Locusts is clearly those without the seal of God, but no protection is offered to those with God's seal. At this time they are far too mixed for it to be safe to encourage any protection on them. It is clear that the Sealing work mentioned in Chapter 7 was something of an ongoing concern. If we remember the command to the restraining angels was "<sup>3</sup> Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." The language used was present-continuous tense indicating that an ongoing duty was not completed.

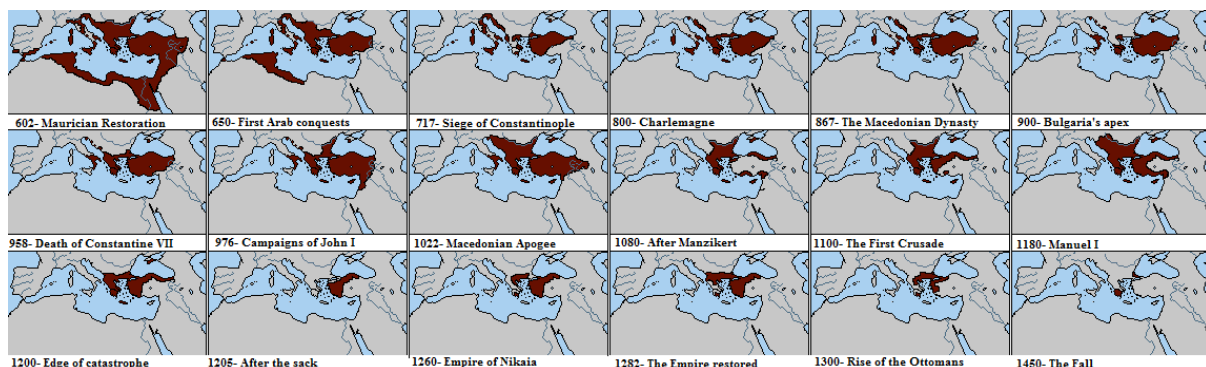
While these locusts torment those without God's seal, they are only instructed to protect the green grass, not those with God's Seal. The Judgement here is clear – the torture should force them to introspection and review to see where they had gone wrong. Following the same pattern that Israel had with the Canaanite, Assyrians and Babylonians, external pressure should bring about some meditation on where things have gone wrong so that a restoration and reconciliation could be done. Fortunately, however, this will be limited.

<sup>5</sup> And they were not given *authority* to kill them, but to torment them *for* five months. Their torment *was* like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. <sup>6</sup> In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

Although the Trumpets concern spiritual matters, the martial language here clearly moves that into the realm of military combat. This is reinforced in Vs 7 with the statement that *"7 The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle."* As we saw with the 1<sup>st</sup> Trumpet, military power can be used to inspire re-examination of perspective and doctrine, so this is not unusual either.

The venom of a scorpion is extremely painful, the neurotoxins that cause the pain are so severe that begging for death is not exactly unusual. The effects are similarly long lasting and can be debilitating. Similar effects were seen by the results of the Muslim attacks on the Byzantine Empire. Yet the Byzantine Empire held out until 1453, despite many internal and external attempts to make the empire collapse.

The Muslims were clearly given authority to torment the Christian World for a period of 5 months. As we have discussed, 1 Prophetic Month is 30 Prophetic Days, which means 5 prophetic months totals to 150 literal years. The Byzantine Empire when through several periods of impact and resurgence, fighting Arabs, Macedonians and even Christians before its final collapse.



## Uriah Smith's 5 Months – 1299-1449

The time frame of 150 years is near explicit. Uriah Smith connects this time to the fall and final breakup of the empire in 1453. Starting when Osman I (whom he and Mrs White call Othman, an archaic name) invaded Nicomedia on 27 July, 1299 as expounded in Edward Gibbon's expansive study on the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire first published between 1776 and 1789. The 150 years therefore ended on July 27, 1449. Historians, however, have disagreements with these dates, as Smith acknowledged.

Osman I was the founder of the Ottoman Empire, however the Battle of Bapheus that is used for the date in Gibbon actually occurred on 27 July 1302. Add 150 years to this, and we arrive in 1452, the year before the fall of Constantinople and the breakup of the Byzantine Empire. If we refer back to the prophecy, we find something of a problem with the 6<sup>th</sup> Verse: “[6 In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.](#)” Taking the new, historically accurate date into account, the Ottoman Empire explicitly lead to and caused the fall of the Byzantine Empire. In other words, death came to the empire, it did not flee from them. This would seem counter to the specific language of the prophecy.

The best support for this form of the prophecy is its connection to the 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet but we will discuss that shortly.

### **Alternative View – 630–780AD**

If we consider a time at the beginning of the Arabic rise, we find several periods between 629 and the 1050s that matches the 5 month/150 year prophecy much better. In the text, no definite start date is given for the 5 Months, nor any definite end period, so any selection of time within this portion can be considered. I propose that from 630 to 780 fits much better.

- In 629, the Muslim forces massed on the edge of Syria, raiding in 630 and invading fully in 634, annexing the Levant by 638 from the Byzantine Empire.
- Between 638 and 698 the Muslim forces progressively conquered Byzantine holdings in North Africa, removing their highly lucrative Egyptian provinces. The loss of the ‘African Food Bowl’ caused food shortages across the empire.
- Between 656 and 661 there was a civil war amongst Muslim leaders which gave some breathing space to the Byzantine Empire.
- Sometime between 674–678 Constantinople itself came under attack but the Byzantine forces were able to push their enemy back using “Greek Fire” a very sticky substance that is highly flammable and burns exceptionally hot.
- A second Muslim Civil War broke out as a result of the loss and after it was concluded another siege of Constantinople was attempted between 717–718.
- The border stabilised after this point, although raids and counter-raids continued until 780.

The newly minted Muslims and Byzantine groups were in constant conflict the period between 630 and 780 – 150 years. No formal declarations of war were made, rather the Arabs wanted to secure themselves a living space. Despite attacks directly on Constantinople, the Byzantine Empire was able to pull itself out of the mess and secure a border before going on the offensive in 780.

3 important facts that are key to this interpretation need to be considered:

- Between the 750s and 820s, the Byzantine Church went through a period of examining its use of images, relics and icons, known as the iconoclasm. The debate

was especially fervent through the Isaurian or Syrian dynasty from 717 to 802 during which an attempt was made to restore divine favour by purifying the Christian faith from excessive adoration of icons. This resulted in considerable internal turmoil. This can be seen as the trumpet working, causing people to consider if they were breaking the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment and reviewing their position on the use of Idols.

- As this preceded the East-West Schism of 1054, the Roman Church was heavily influenced by this debate, and it led to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nicaean Council of 787. This council reaffirmed that images are to be venerated but not worshipped.
- This period led directly to the East-West confrontation of the Crusades, during which it was advantageous for the Western Christians to support the Eastern Church even after the Schism. Although they came into direct conflict during the 4<sup>th</sup> Crusade, the calling of the 1<sup>st</sup> Crusade was directly related to Alexios I Komnenos request to Pope Urban II for aid and military support. Although heavily weakened during the 639-1050 period, the Byzantine Empire – through Western support – was maintained until 1453, which again better fits the timeframe of the Prophecy being ‘tormented’ but not, ultimately, killed.
- The 630-780 Period fits the prophetic time much better than the later, Uriah Smith, dates because Byzantium was able to feel the effects of the conquest and loss for centuries rather than a few months the other way.

### **Ok, so which fits the 5 Months?**

I would argue that the period between 630 and 780AD fits this connection much better than Uriah Smith’s timeframe, if for no other reason that he is not supported by the Historic record. 300 years of history lie between Gibbon’s writing which Smith based himself on and today and we have learned much in the intervening centuries that give a new understanding to time periods and intentions. In the 1840s, access to Muslim primary sources and scholarship was heavily limited while today it is much more freely accessible by comparison.

Pressing beyond both of these, almost any 150 years between 630 and 1050 and then again between 1260 and 1453 could easily be said to fit the 5 months here. With the exception of the Macedonian Wars and the Crusades – where matters were more or less run by the Western Christians – the Byzantine and Arab groups were in near continuous conflict on a variety of different scales.

2 things are, however, important to note when considering who fits the 5 Months;

- Firstly, Uriah Smith’s conclusion is VERY close to the destruction of the Byzantine Empire, leaving little time for that power to “[seek death and will not find it... desire to die, and death will flee from them.](#)”.

Smith’s intention was to connect this prophecy to the next one which he, rightly, connected with the Ottoman Empire. However a plaintext reading of the 5<sup>th</sup> Trumpet needed no such connection and implied no such connection.

- Secondly, it can be argued that there was almost no 'spiritual' revisionism/repentance in connection to Smith's dates while the iconography debates that precipitated the East-West Schism clearly would fit into that.

It must also be known that Jewish Toleration was practised by the Muslim forces, for the most part, which matched the green grass not being touched. The 'sealed' Christians, being in the part of Northern Italy – the Waldensian Valley – were just out of reach of the Muslim invasion of Europe. Both these groups were, however, heavily persecuted by Christian forces. This matches what is referenced in this Trumpet.

<sup>7</sup>The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces *were* like the faces of men. <sup>8</sup>They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' *teeth*. <sup>9</sup>And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings *was* like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. <sup>10</sup>They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power *was* to hurt men five months. <sup>11</sup>And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew *is* Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon.

<sup>12</sup>One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

John's language in these 6 verses is specific but where he would have been highly definite before, in this form he is displaying counterfeit qualities. The word 'like' is used 8 times here to demonstrate pale comparisons that do not stand up to scrutiny.

shape of the locusts	<b>like</b>	horses prepared for battle
crowns on their heads	<b>like</b>	gold
faces	<b>like</b>	the faces of men
hair	<b>like</b>	women's hair
teeth	<b>like</b>	lions' teeth
breastplates	<b>like</b>	breastplates of iron
sound of their wings	<b>like</b>	sound of chariots with many horses
tails	<b>Like</b>	Scorpions with stings

We saw 2 of these symbols before; the Horse prepared for battle and Gold a crown were both emblematic in the 1<sup>st</sup> Horseman of the 1<sup>st</sup> Seal. The rider was clearly prepared on a horse to go and fight, and to conquer, given a golden Crown to demonstrate his position. John is drawing comparisons between the counterfeit forces that had power for these 5 months and his Church who they tried to have power over.

The 8 connections here, however, display counterfeit or false connections to their Christian counterparts. There are a myriad ways to examine most of these so we won't go into great detail here, but let's look at the first 2.

The “[shape of the locusts](#)” is said to be “[like horses prepared for battle](#)” meaning that they are demonstrating a preparation for war and conquest. However, at this time, Islam is not a unified group. Early Islamic history demonstrates a fractured nature that continues today with the three major sects being Sunni, Khawarij and Shī'ah. Sunnis make up about 90% of the overall Muslim population with Shi'as making up the majority of the remaining 10%. The split began almost immediately after the death of the prophet Muhammad in 632, when one faction who would come to be known as the Sunnis, believed that his successor should be Abu Bakr. Bakr was a close friend of Muhammad and took over his duties when the prophet was nearing his death, so was considered the natural successor. Another group, the Shia, believed that his successor should have been Ali. Ali was a cousin, son-in-law and companion of the Islamic prophet Muhammad and was seen as an heir due to their close relationship. The divisions between these two factions led to civil war and sectarian conflicts that have lasted to this day in both the Iran/Iraq war of 1980-88 and the various insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq since American invasion in both countries.

The crown, therefore, is as much a counterfeit as the preparation of the horse as, while both intended to conquer and defeat military armies, they were unable to sustain the conquest. Empires and Monarchies must be able to stabilise their power yet the Muslims were unable to hold onto a lot of their conquests for a great deal of time. The Rashidun Caliphate was replaced by the Umayyad Caliphate, then the Abbasid Caliphate before the Ottoman Empire just in this period. Although they are said to have power to “[torment](#)” or “[hurt](#)” men for “[five months](#)”, they cannot kill and we find the historic reasons in the fractured nature of the Islamic forces. Until the Ottoman Empire was properly established, there was not sufficient unity amongst Muslim factions for a proper, unified attack to properly take place on the Christians or for the Muslims to secure their holdings.

As a point of contrast, when one considers English History, we discuss the individual monarchs and use ‘dynasties’ in terms of mere surnames and as larger timeframe explanations. When one discusses the different ‘califates’ in Islam, we are generally discussing the differences in both politics, leaders and leadership styles. The only unifying factor, indeed, was the prophet.

## **Spiritual Connection**

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

[Abaddon](#) and [Apollyon](#) both mean the same thing in Hebrew and Greek respectively; “destruction”. They both relate to destruction and death. In other places, the word is usually connected to the Grave:

- Job 26:6: “[the grave \(Sheol\) is naked before Him, and destruction \(Abaddon\) has no covering.](#)”
- Job 28:22: “[destruction \(Abaddon\) and death say.](#)”
- Job 31:12: “[it is a fire that consumes to destruction \(Abaddon\).](#)”

- Psalm 88:11: "Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave (Sheol) or thy faithfulness in destruction (Abaddon)?"
- Proverbs 15:11: "Hell (Sheol) and Destruction (Abaddon) are before the LORD, how much more the hearts of the children of men?"
- Proverbs 27:20: "Hell (Sheol) and Destruction (Abaddon) are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied."

Here, however, such destruction is personified in the form of the same angel that opened the bottomless pit in the previous chapter – who we identified with Satan. Satan is described as "king over them" which makes a lot of sense when we redefine this back into the spiritual realm. As explained above, the counterfeit nature of Islam is designed to have appeal to the intellectuals in Christianity, trying to make the claim that they are the Third Testament and that their explanation of Jesus is more reasonable than the Christian view of His divinity.

The conflict was not always military. In October of 631, the Islamic prophet Muhammad and a Christian delegation from Najran (present-day Saudi Arabia) debated the prophet's viewpoints on Christian theology in what is commonly called the event of Mubahala. When the concept of Jesus' divinity arose, the division of perspectives arose and Muhammad offered the chance to pray at "Mubahala" – a curse on whichever side was being untruthful. The Christians accepted at first but were convinced by wiser members of their own group that both sides held truly heart-felt views and that a curse would fail as neither side was being untruthful to their own perspective. The Quran itself says that high respect should be given to those who are Christians and Jews;

"Do not dispute with the People of the Book save in the fairest way; Except for those who are evil doers." And say: "We believe in what has been sent down to us and what has been sent to you. Our God and your God are one and to Him we are submissive."  
Quran, 29:46

The intention is clearly that Muslims view themselves, and their text views itself, as the third testament of writings to the earth, yet to accept this spiritual view would lead to the destruction of all as it would require the rejection of Christ's divinity. Even though they accept him as 'Messiah', the tale of his death and his position as creator is rejected, which rejects both this sacrifice and his authority. The angel-King is clearly Satan, attempting to establish both a counterfeit and anti-Christ.

## Sixth Trumpet: The Angels from the Euphrates

<sup>13</sup> Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, <sup>14</sup> saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." <sup>15</sup> So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind.

On the Altar of Incense in the old temple there were 4 horns where sacrificial blood was sprinkled whenever incense was presented. Indeed, one important factor of the incense was to disguise the smell of the blood. The voice that comes from the four horns here comes from the very furniture of the temple, not from the incense.

The symbolism here is that the temple furniture itself has heard the Saints prayers and where they have degenerated too, and it is then crying out to release the restraining winds. The restraint has been the reason that the locusts could not kill men in the previous Trumpet. They were given permission to torment, not to slaughter. They could not bring down the Eastern Christian Church. But now, the furniture of the Temple has heard how self-obsessed the Church has become and is begging that they be released to inspire a return to God's law.

Its interesting to note here how prophetic time is used. The angles are prepared "for the hour and day and month and year" not "for a hour". They are prepared so that when the winds are released, when the Locusts are given free reign, they can then reign and slaughter at will for a "hour and day and month and year".

Some quick maths reveals this to be 391 literal years, 14 days.

1 prophetic year = 360 prophetic days  
1 prophetic month = 30 prophetic days  
1 day = 1 day

1 hour = 2 literal weeks.

$360 + 30 + 1 = 391$  Literal years, plus 2 literal weeks.

We will evaluate how this matches with history as we look at the conflict.

<sup>16</sup> Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. <sup>17</sup> And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. <sup>18</sup> By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. <sup>19</sup> For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm.

Like the 144,000, the number of "two hundred million" is symbolic and represents overwhelming force and as a contrast to the 144,000. This force is unassailable and completely unimaginable in John's time. The number is there to represent the sheer power of the force that would destroy the Eastern Christian empire when released. This was best demonstrated at the Conquest of Constantinople when the Byzantine Empire was finally destroyed.



The colours here can be interpreted a few different ways too. Firstly, many flags flown during the Siege of Constantinople and all through the Ottoman Empire were Red with Golden Writing and senior leaders generally had blue clothing.

Additionally, according to Salahaldeen Mohammad Al Bzour, Ministry of Education, Jordan, Allah is closely and primarily associated with the colours Red, Blue and Yellow, as he wrote in *Connotations of the Straightforward Colours in the Holy Quran: An Analytical Study*, the American Journal of Humanities and Social

Sciences, Vo1. 3, No. 4, 2015, 90-102.

Also, Ottoman uniforms included both Red, Blue and Yellow colours strongly, combining the English Red and French Blue.

Either way, these three colours are demonstrations of wealth and power. Red was the most difficult and expensive colour to dye, Blue was usually analogous with silk and very fine cloth and Gold is, of course, expensive. The inclusion here is a clear connection to wealth and its subsequent influence.

"and the heads of the horses *were* like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. <sup>18</sup> By these three *plagues* a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. <sup>19</sup> For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails *are* like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm."



Brimstone can better be translated 'sulphur' and this is the best connection we have to the siege of Constantinople. This was the first time Gunpowder had been used in Europe on such a large scale and as a primary weapon. Earlier cannons were small, slow and were seen more as a nuisance than a serious weapon.

Preparations were being made for the Siege of Constantinople in 1452 when Orban, a Hungarian offered his services to the Byzantines, one year before the Ottomans attacked the city. The Byzantine emperor Constantine XI could not afford Orban's high salary nor did the Byzantines possess the materials necessary for constructing such large siege cannon as Orban was offering. He then left Constantinople and approached the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II, who was preparing to besiege the city. Claiming that his weapon could blast 'the walls of Babylon itself', Orban was given abundant funds and materials by the sultan. Orban managed to build the giant size gun within three months at Adrianople, from which it was dragged by sixty oxen to Constantinople. In the meantime, Orban also produced other smaller cannons used by the Turkish siege forces.

The specific cannon from the siege does not survive, but similar ones made around the time, such as the 'Basilica' or 'Great Turkish Bombard' pictured above are based on the same style. Usually these were made highly decorated with Lions, Snakes and whatever other creatures are important to the particular user embellishing the sides to make them look more fierce.

It was these cannon that made the Siege of Constantinople so quick an affair. Gunpowder used at that time is a mixture of Charcoal, Sulphur and Salt-Peter (potassium nitrate). The result, as anyone who has fired a black-powder weapon knows, is a thick, black smoke and a sickening sulphur smell which matches the description in the verse.

What also reenforces this is the description in verse <sup>19</sup>["For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm."](#) Cannon are rarely brought to the front of battle – rather they are kept at the back of the force and fire over the attacking troops. The mention of artillery at the 'tail' of the attacking army being like serpents with heads that have teeth and can spit venom being able to do harm certainly fits with a use of Cannon. At the siege of Constantinople, the Muslim forces had 70 cannon of varying sizes but all very large.

## **The Historiography and 391 Years**

Both Uriah Smith and I are agreed that this demonstrates the fall of Constantinople. The fall of Constantinople saw the destruction of half of Christendom and the loss of the holy sites through to the modern world. Christian England evolved influence in that area but never, properly, recaptured them. Owing to infighting, constant attacks from outside and political intrigues, the Byzantine Empire was in sharp decline before the Sultan Mehmed II lead the newly created Ottoman Empire to attack and move to strike the city itself. Because of their access to heavy cannon, and an overwhelming force of as many as 80,000 attackers, the pitifully weak 7,000 Byzantine defenders never stood a real chance but put up a stout defence and held out for 53 days. Finally, on 29 May 1453, a weak north part of the wall – built during the 1100's, fell and the Ottomans sacked the city. Venetian trading ships that were in port reported, as they fled, that blood flowed in the city "like rainwater in the gutters after a sudden storm".

The Ottoman Empire made the city their new capital and held it until the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and replacement with the Republic of Turkey following the Turkish War of Independence (1919–1923), a direct result of the loss of WW1. At first, the Ottoman Empire was extremely strong, expanding into south East Europe as far as Hungary and Romania, threatening Austria before its slow decline.

By the 1820s, much of the Empire was clamouring for independence, with Europe supporting the moves of such as Greece in battle. During the Battle of Navarino in 1827, the Ottoman Fleet was destroyed by a combined English, Russian and French fleet in the Ionian Sea; a feat repeated in 1839 by the Egyptians after the Battle of Nezib. The Ottoman Sultan, Abdulmejid I, had to appeal to Europe for help and on 15 July 1840, The Convention of London of 1840 was signed between the United Kingdom, Austria, Prussia, Russia on one hand and the

Ottoman Empire on the other. This put the Ottoman Empire under the supremacy of Europe, sacrificing the Empire's independence.

In this light, the Ottoman Empire could not remain Anti-Christian, and on 21 March 1844, the Sublime Porte of the Ottoman Empire, the major government institution under the Sultan, submitted a note to the British and French embassies promising to cease the executions of apostates from Islam. The Bahá'í Faith call this the Edict of Toleration. 29 May 1453 + 391 years, 14 days = 12 June, 1844. The specific importance of this date is difficult to be exact with considering the calendar change between the Old and New and some other factors and needs slightly more research, but nevertheless, 391 years is extremely close to this date.

Again, the 1/3<sup>rd</sup> element we discussed before has been maintained as specific; this time, the city of Constantinople.

### **What about everyone else?**

<sup>20</sup> But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. <sup>21</sup> And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

The remainder of the world – those who were outside the Byzantine Empire; i.e. the Roman Christians, we are told here did not repent and did not make changes so that they could be returned to the good faith. In effect, the 6<sup>th</sup> Trumpet displays that it is a failure. It has not succeeded in its effort to reform the world, inside or outside the Church. This Trumpet continues through the next few phases before we get to the 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet, before the Close of Probation.