

## Islam in Prophecy

### Note from Steve Wohlberg:

In this compelling article, Dr. Daniel Botkin proves that many historic Christian interpreters have applied the 5th and 6th trumpets of Revelation 9 to the rise of Islam, instead of to literal locusts (as most Futurists do today). In light of September 11 and America's current war with Islamic terrorists, this article makes worthy reading! No attempt is made to judge individual Muslims, but rather to examine history in the light of prophecy.

In Revelation chapter 9 John saw an army of locusts come out of the smoke that issued out of the bottomless pit. This army of locusts had power, but their power was limited. They were not to hurt the grass or trees; they were allowed to harm only those men who did not have the seal of God in their foreheads; they had the power to torment like a scorpion; they were allowed to hurt men for "five months." John described their appearance with these words:

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.

### Describing Visions and Interpreting Prophecy

The Book of Revelation is called a "prophecy" (Rev. 1:3). Sometimes prophecy is something that the prophet just intuitively senses as a result of his spiritual sensitivity and receptivity. Other times prophecy is given in the form of a vision, something the prophet sees. When prophecy takes the form of a vision, as it did for John, it is often not intended to be understood in a literal, simplistic way. God showed the prophets visions and they recorded what they saw, perhaps without even fully understanding exactly what their visions meant.

Some visions were difficult to describe. The prophets sometimes lacked the vocabulary to tell exactly what it was that they saw. This is why the prophets' descriptions of their visions are sprinkled with words such as like, as, as if, as it were, like unto, the likeness of, the appearance of, etc. Look at how often such words appear in John's description of the army of locusts, or in Ezekiel's description of the cherubim. Prophets were forced to use this language of ambiguity and impression, a "reverential vagueness," because earthly languages cannot fully describe heavenly visions. The best that prophets can do with earthly languages is to describe their heavenly visions by comparing them to earthly things with which their readers or listeners are familiar.

### The Army of Locusts: What Are They?

So, what was John talking about when he described the army of locusts? A fleet of 21st-century military helicopters? Some modern-day teachers who promote trendy, pop interpretations of prophecy see nothing more than helicopters in these verses. Christians of the past, who know history better than most of us do, saw this army of locusts as a prophecy of the rise and spread of Islam. Writer Robert Wieland states that the Reformers "clearly recognized Islam" in this passage.<sup>[1]</sup> John Foxe, author of Foxe's Book of Martyrs, said that it is "clearer than light itself" that this a prophecy of the Muslim conquests.<sup>[2]</sup>

“Well into the nineteenth century a chorus of Protestant prophetic scholars identified Islam’s niche in prophecy as being these fifth and sixth trumpets,” Wieland says.<sup>[3]</sup> Commentator Albert Barnes wrote: “With surprising unanimity, commentators have agreed in regarding this to the empire of the Saracens [Arab Muslims –DB], or to the rise and the progress of the religion and the empire set up by Muhammed.”<sup>[4]</sup>

Commentators may not agree with unanimity anymore, but many of the older commentators agree. W.B. Godbey began his comments on Revelation 9 by stating, “This chapter is a thrilling description of the rise and progress of the Mohammedan wars.”<sup>[5]</sup> Adam Clarke said that John’s description of the army of locusts “certainly agrees better with the Saracens than with any other people or nation” and “agrees very well with the troops of Mohammed.”<sup>[6]</sup> Matthew Henry referred to the army of locusts as “the armies of the Mohamedan empire.”<sup>[7]</sup> John Wesley said, “All this agrees with the slaughter which the Saracens made for a long time after Mahomet’s [Mohammed’s] death.”<sup>[8]</sup>

Let’s look at some of the details of John’s vision and see how it describes the rise and spread of Islam.

## Out of the Abyss

The army of locusts came forth from a dark cloud of smoke that rolled out of the bottomless pit. The “bottomless pit” in Greek is abussos (abussoß), the source of our English word abyss. Some English Bibles simply translate it as “the abyss.” It is remarkable that Abul A’la Mawdudi, one of Islam’s most prominent scholars of the 20th century, used the very word abyss when writing about the beginnings of Islam. In a book written to introduce English-speaking people to the basics of Islam, Mawdudi tells his readers that Muhammed and his message came out of “Arabia – the Abyss of Darkness.”<sup>[9]</sup> These are his exact words, and they appear in bold print as a sub-heading in his book. It is no mere coincidence that this outstanding Islamic author unwittingly identified Islam’s source, in bold print no less, as “the Abyss of Darkness,” using the very same word that appears in Revelation.

## Locusts in Arab Literature

Why an army of locusts to represent an army of Arabs? About 900 years before John’s Revelation, the Prophet Joel has symbolically described an invading, attacking army as a swarm of locusts. Any large, invading army might be compared to a swarm of locusts, but the Arabs and Muhammed have a unique connection to the locust: “In the Bedoween romance Antar, the locust is introduced as the national emblem of the Ishmaelites [one of the ancestors of the Arabs –DB]. And it is a remarkable coincidence that Muslim tradition speaks of locusts having dropped into the hands of Muhammed, bearing on their wings this inscription – ‘We are the army of the Great God.’”<sup>[10]</sup>

As we saw a Muslim writer unwittingly connect Islam’s beginnings to the Abyss, here we see Muslim writers unwittingly connect Islam to the locusts that come from the Abyss.

## The Restrictions

As stated at the beginning of this article, the army of locusts had certain restrictions placed upon them. “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” (Rev. 9:4).

Once again Islam connects itself to these prophecies by the words of its own literature. Concerning trees and vegetation, the Koran says: “When you fight the battles of the Lord...[d]estroy no palm trees, nor burn any fields of grain. Cut down no fruit trees...”<sup>[11]</sup> Commentator Albert Barnes wrote: “This precept is the more remarkable because it has been the usual custom in war, and particularly among barbarians and semi-barbarians, to destroy grain and fruit, and especially to cut down fruit trees, in order to do the greater injury to an enemy.”<sup>[12]</sup> Those with “the seal of God” were not to be killed, according to Revelation 9:4. Muslim armies were instructed by the Caliph Aboubekir, Muhammed’s successor, to not kill the humble, pious Christians who lived in monasteries. Concerning such Christians, the Muslim armies were told to “let them alone, and neither kill them, nor destroy their monasteries.”<sup>[13]</sup> It is a well-known fact that the Muslims had deep respect for St. Francis of

Assisi. They likewise had respect for humble, sincere Christians in earlier centuries. Apparently these were the Christians who (at least in the minds of Muslims) had “the seal of God” to protect them.

The locusts in John’s vision were not allowed to “kill them,” but they were to torment them like scorpions for a period of “five months.” Commentator Albert Barnes understood this to mean that Islam was “not to cut off and destroy the church, but it was to bring upon it various calamities to continue for a definite period [i.e., ‘five months’ –DB].”<sup>[14]</sup>

The “five months” is understood by most commentators to mean five prophetic months, that is 150 years. This figure is based on the “one day = one year” principle suggested in Numbers 14:34, Ezekiel 4:6, and Daniel 9:24ff. Muslims did, indeed, vex and afflict the Christian world for five prophetic months. After a century and a half of war and conquest, “an important change came over the followers of the prophet of Mecca, turning them from the love of conquest to the pursuits of literature and science.”<sup>[15]</sup> Barnes says, “From that period they ceased to be formidable to the church; their limits were gradually contracted; their power was diminished; and the Christian world, in regard to them, was substantially at peace.”<sup>[16]</sup>

## Their Appearance

John’s descriptions of the locusts’ appearance sounds very much like history’s description of the Muslim armies of Mohammed’s day. The first thing John notes is that “the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle.” The locusts were not just horses, but something more, “like unto horses.” Adam Clarke wrote: “The Arabs are the most expert horsemen in the world: they live so much on horseback that the horse and his rider seem to make but one animal.”<sup>[17]</sup> This would account for John’s description of the horse and rider as if they were one single being, rather than two separate beings.

John describes the locusts as wearing “as it were crowns like gold” – not actual crowns, but “as it were crowns, like gold.” In the Arab story Antar, cited earlier, it is written that God intended for Arabs “that their turbans should be unto them instead of diadems.”<sup>[18]</sup> Godbey points out that yellow turbans were worn by Muslims.<sup>[19]</sup>

John’s locusts had faces of men and hair of women. Historical references from the 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries mention that Arabs wore beards (“faces of men”) and long, uncut hair (“as the hair of women”).<sup>[20]</sup> Quoting again from the Arab poem Antar, we see a reference to beards, shoulder-length hair, and turbans on Arab men: “He adjusted himself properly, twisted his whiskers, and folded up his hair under his turban, drawing it from off his shoulders.”<sup>[21]</sup>

The “teeth as the teeth of lions,” a phrase borrowed from Joel 1:6, speaks of the ferociousness and violence of the army. The “breastplates of iron” speak of the Arabs’ armor. The poem Antar makes at least four references to a warrior’s cuirass or breastplate.<sup>[22]</sup> The Koran says, “God hath given you coats of mail to defend you in your wars.”<sup>[23]</sup>

The locusts’ “tails like unto scorpions” may be understood refer to either 1) the Muslims’ ability “to shoot backward with unerring precision” while retreating at full gallop<sup>[24]</sup>; or, 2) the face that victorious Muslims “infected the conquered with their pernicious doctrines” by forcing them to convert to Islam.<sup>[25]</sup>

## God’s Purpose for the Plague of Locusts

The reason God allowed this plague was to bring His people to repentance. This can be seen in the final two verses of Revelation 9: “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. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.”

Anyone who knows anything about Church history knows that these were the very sins in which the Church was steeped with the false prophet Muhammed was raised up. Just as God used the heathen kings of Assyria and Babylon as a rod of correction to chasten and correct and purify His people in olden times, so He used the heathen Muhammed as “the scourge of God for the castigation of fallen religion.”<sup>[26]</sup> After a century and a half

of war and conquest, Islam had supplanted Christianity in much of the eastern empire. Adam Clarke points out that the part of the Church which survived the Islamic wars “was not at all corrected by the judgments which fell upon the eastern church, but continued its senseless adoration of angels, saints, relics, etc., and does so to the present day.”<sup>[27]</sup>

## The Plague of Locusts: Past, Present, and Future

Christians of the past believed that Revelation 9 was a prophecy of the rise of Islam and the Muslim invasion of the Christian world. If this view is correct, does this mean that Revelation 9 can have no further fulfillment in events of the present or future? Not at all. The nature of prophecy is such that a prophetic word may find its fulfillment more than one time, in more than one single event. Consider the prophecies in Matthew 24. Some found their fulfillment in the destruction of the Temple in AD 70, and they will also find further fulfillment in events just prior to the Second Coming.

Whether we agree with those who saw Revelation 9 as a reference to Islam or not, one thing is certain. The Islamic armies are rising again and setting out once more to vex the world like a plague of locusts. Centuries ago they abandoned their lust for conquest and world domination in order to pursue literature and the sciences. Now they have abandoned their love for literature and the sciences and returned to their lust for conquest and world domination.

## What Are We to Do?

Some people’s response to the current threat of Islamic terrorism is to pack their bags and head for the hills, to move to some remote wilderness location which will hopefully be safe from any effects of terrorism. This reaction is understandable, but it ignores God’s purpose in allowing the plague of terrorism. God’s purpose is to get His people to wake up and repent of their sins, so that they can call others to repentance and faith and righteous living.

The desired effect of the plague is national repentance and revival. We will not help to bring this about by fear-inspired seclusion and isolation from the masses of people who need to hear the call to repentance. A light hidden under an agricultural bushel basket will not serve its purpose of helping those who are in darkness.

In addition to calling our nation to repentance, we need to educate people. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge,” God said (Hos. 4:6). Most Americans’ knowledge of the Scriptures is very superficial and shallow or totally non-existent. Sadly, this is often true even among church people. As a result, people are ripe for deception. One deceptive lie that is currently making great headway among many Americans is the notion that Islam is “a fine, noble religion.” Unfortunately, even our President has used these words to describe Islam. Where there are some fine, noble Muslim people, the religion of Islam is a counterfeit faith that has its source the bottomless pit, the Abyss of Darkness.

The Israelis have dealt with the spirit of Islam longer than we have. They may not understand everything about the spiritual nature of Islam, its source, and the spirit behind it, but many Israelis understand enough to know that Allah, the god of Islam, is not the same as Yahweh, the God of Jews and Christians. In a recent article in The Jewish Press, Moshe Feiglin writes about his visit to the U.S. Feiglin happened to be in New York the week of September 11. He was in a small grocery store when he heard President Bush announce on the radio that there would be a national day of prayer.

“Go to church, to the synagogue, to the mosque, and pray,” the President said. Feiglin describes his reaction:

“Did I hear right?” I ask the storekeeper. “Did he say mosque?” She nodded.

“At this very moment you’ve lost the war,” I say to the astonished storekeeper.

Feiglin explains: “They slaughtered you in the name of Allah, and now the President calls on you to pray to him.”<sup>[28]</sup>

It is not popular to say that Islam is a counterfeit faith that should be renounced, rejected, and abandoned by Muslim people. The spirit of this age is pushing for an all-inclusive, New Age view that sees all religions – even Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism – as legitimate faiths. Our proclaiming that all non-Biblical faiths are illegitimate will not make us popular, but we are not in a popularity contest. The Scripture speaks of only “one faith” (Eph. 4:5), “the faith that was once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Our proclaiming this one faith, the faith described in the Holy Scriptures, will set us apart from the mainstream, but it is the only hope for our nation.

For more information on how Protestants of the past interpreted prophecy, read [End Time Delusions](http://www.anym.org/pdf/prophecy/Endtime-Delusions_Steve-Wohlberg.pdf) by Steve Wohlberg. [http://www.anym.org/pdf/prophecy/Endtime-Delusions\\_Steve-Wohlberg.pdf](http://www.anym.org/pdf/prophecy/Endtime-Delusions_Steve-Wohlberg.pdf)

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