

1919 Bible Conference – Questions on the Woes

The following is a transcript of the meeting where the issue of the fifth and sixth trumpet was discussed. *The Great Controversy* (page 334) identifies the five month prophecy of the fifth trumpet as referring to the Ottoman power from July 27, 1299 to July 27, 1449 connecting it with the 391 year, 15 day prophecy of the sixth trumpet, taking us up to August 11, 1840. “In the year 1840 *another remarkable fulfillment of prophecy* excited widespread interest.” *The Great Controversy*, p. 334 - emphasis supplied.

Because they could not reconcile this to what they understood of history they discarded this view as erroneous and thus many of our theologians today do not believe what Ellen White wrote regarding the sixth trumpet in her book. If they had simply believed the prophet, God would have brought light to them. They were right to see the five month prophecy applying to the dates 612 – 762. However, they couldn't see that there were two five month time prophecies in the fifth trumpet: 612 – 762 and July 27, 1299 – July 27, 1449.

They also discarded the 1299 date because some historians said the date was 1301. Subsequent research has proven the date 1299. The 1944 June and July Ministry magazine proves this date beyond doubt. Here are the links to this two part study:

http://docs.adventistarchives.org/docs/MIN/MIN19440601-V17-06_B.pdf#view=fit (page 15)

http://docs.adventistarchives.org/docs/MIN/MIN19440701-V17-07_B.pdf#view=fit (page 12)

PRESCOTT: There is one question in the minds of some that really vitiates the whole question that was brought out in the paper* read this morning, and other papers that may be presented on the same line. May I state the question?

PRESCOTT: It is simply this. That is, that our interpretation of the fifth trumpet of Revelation 9, in harmony with the view that has been held by Protestantism for centuries, is that this is a symbol of the Saracens the rise and work of the Saracens, but on the basis of the paper this morning, and any other discussion of the same thought, we take the time that in the prophecy belongs to the Saracens and give it to the Ottomans. Now it is of little value to me to try to establish any date with reference to the Ottoman Empire, when I am dealing with a symbol applied to the Saracen power. It appears to me an inconsistency to take a symbol and saying this belongs to the Saracens that had their rise in Arabia, Mohammed was their leader, and that they applied the instruction that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only such men as had not the seal of God on their foreheads. Then we attempt to take that fifth month period from the period of the rise and work of the Saracens, and carry it forward to the very end of the thirteenth century, centuries after the Saracens had ceased to be an aggressive power at all. So I don't see that I can get much out of the matter if it is presented in that way. Now if we are to apply the time for the fifth trumpet to the Ottoman Empire, let's apply the symbol to the Ottoman Empire. But so long as we apply the symbol to the Saracens, how can we carry the period describing their work five or six centuries after they ceased to be an aggressive power? Until that is out of the way, any paper that attempts to establish dates with regard to the Ottoman Empire doesn't help me any about the matter.

WAKEHAM: I have not been able to see how we could interpose a great interregnum of six hundred years between the fourth and fifth verses of chapter 9, when there is nothing in the prophecy to indicate that. It seems to me that we are presenting a false exegesis, interposing a great hiatus of six hundred years between one verse and the next, when there is absolutely nothing there to indicate it. The two reasons usually given are absolutely without historical confirmation. I have not been able to find any history that will substantiate the statement made so much, that there was no king over the Mohammadens until the time of Othman. Gibbon says, “By the end of the first century of the Hejira, the

Saracen Caliphs were the most absolute and powerful monarchs on the face of the globe.” Now with that statement and others of similar character I don’t see how anyone can maintain there was no king ever the Mohammadens until the end of the thirteenth century. The second reason is that the Mohammedan world was never united under one head until the time of Othman. When as a matter of fact the only time it was under one head was under the Saracen Caliphs. Freeman's history has for the heading of his first chapter, "The Undivided Caliph" in the seventh and eighth chapters.

PRESCOTT: Perhaps I could explain how this came around. In looking up the difficulty, I found this, that previous to 1844 in the exposition of this prophecy both symbols, the locust symbol and the later symbol were given to the Ottoman Empire, and that there was no effort to separate them or show that anything happened at the close of this 150 years, or at the beginning of the hour, day, month, and year period. The two were added together and made 541 years, and five [*sic* 15] days, and reckoned from July 27, 1299, right straight on. Well now, that was inconsistent in itself, because it gave the time to the symbol interpreting both symbols of one power, and gave both periods of time to one power. When Thoughts on Revelation was written a separation was made of the first symbol, taking it to represent the Saracens, yet the time was still all given to the Ottoman power, and that is where we find ourselves. I think we should separate the time as we have done the symbols and give the time to the power that we interpret as fulfilling the symbol, therefore give it the five months or 150 years to the Saracens during their period of actual aggressive power as tormentors.

That application of the period to the symbol gets away from two difficulties. First, it gets us away from what appears to be a very strange inconsistency of applying a symbol to some power, and the time period of that to another power. And second, it gets away from the necessity of establishing a date that has been discredited. Lay aside everything else and ask yourself, now how you are going to establish a definite day for the beginning of this period. The paper this morning I suppose was seeking for evidence for 1299. Now grant any weight to the historical evidence submitted that you please, yet you haven't established a day. We must find a definite day to date from if we are to take a prophecy and interpret it as meaning so many years and so many days. It must have a day to commence it, and it must have a day to end it, otherwise we don't have any proper interpretation or application of the prophecy.

Now the day July 27, 1299 is absolutely discredited. I had the original Greek history out of the Congressional library for quite a long time, and went over the whole matter. It is a history in Greek with a parallel column translated into Latin, and accompanied by a chronological table, and the author put that event that Gibbon refers to as occurring in 1302. Von Hamer puts it in 1301. Somebody else in 1300, I believe. From my standpoint it doesn't make any difference which it is, and there is no occasion to attempt to prove which it is, because just so long as we interpret the symbols as applying to the Saracens, we certainly must give the time to the Saracens and not to the Ottoman power, and what was presented this morning was simply to show in a general way the beginning of the Ottoman power here at the end of the 13th century. But the same authority said that from these small beginnings rose a power that was established in 1453. Now we don't date our interpretation of the prophecy of the Roman power from 754 B.C., and yet Rome had its beginning in 754. Now all I ask for is that we shall be consistent with ourselves so that when we stand up before an audience or appear in print we don't expose ourselves any longer to that shocking inconsistency of applying the symbols to two powers, and then turn right around and give the time that belongs right in that prophecy and date it five centuries at least after the power has ceased to be aggressive as a tormentory.

Before 1844 in William Miller's lectures he gives both symbols to the Ottoman power. He adds the periods together, makes 514 years and 15 days date from July 27, 1299 and follows it straight through. Now when you go further you say we will start from July 27, 1299 and we come to 1449. What happened then? We must have something on a day. What happened July 27, 1449, that both marked

the ending of one period and the beginning of another, because you must not begin the next day. That is, when we are trying to arrive at August 11, 1840 you can't say this period ends July 27, 1449, and the next began July 28. You have got to make them lap one day or else you are thrown out when you get to the end. That question must be answered. What marked the close of the 150 years on July 27, 1449? What event on that day marked the beginning of the next period? What marked the close of the next period? Until that is out of the way I don't see that we shall be helped very much by any papers seeking to establish a date for something relating to the Ottoman Empire.

W G WIRTH: What dates do you give for the 150-year period?

PRESCOTT: According to the best light I can get, and I am not alone - I suppose it is more or less known here that this whole matter came up several years ago, and the Review and Herald Board appointed a committee to study the question. This committee was composed of F. M. Wilcox, Chairman, W. A. Spicer, M. E. Kern, C. S. Longacre, O. L. Benson, S. M. Butler, and myself. We took up this question, went into it quite thoroughly, and that committee, which I think you will regard as not a very extreme or wild committee, came to the conclusion that we could not apply this 150 years beginning July 27, 1299, for the double reason, first, it didn't belong to that power, and second, the date itself could not be established. Then there were further things brought in, so that all the committee came to the conclusion that there was not sufficient evidence to establish the date August 11, 1840. Therefore it was recommended that since it was too large a question for us, it be presented to the General Conference Committee in Council. The board adopted the recommendation presented. Brother Spicer was to present one phase, Brother Benson another, and I was to present a third phase. We prepared our matter and presented it at the Spring Council, and our papers, working together, set forth these suggestions, not as established orthodoxy, but as suggestions for the Committee for consideration.

PRESCOTT: That the 150 years commenced in 612 A.D. when Mohammed made his first public proclamation of his message, and that it ended in 762 at Bagdad when the Saracen as a tormenting power ceased and they waned from that time on. I would like to ask, Brother Chairman, if anyone can explain to us how we shall get by what appears to be an absolute inconsistency in Biblical interpretation.

WILKINSON: Would the assembly here like to withdraw its vote? There have several questions been raised; the question of whether the trumpet is Saracen or Turkish, the question whether it begins in 1299. Even if we can bring in some evidence, and I think we can, very strong evidence, then the question has been raised of July 27, 1449 and of August 11, 1840. For one man to take all that up and give a satisfactory presentation in one day, is a little too much, I think, and should prefer to decline, but if it is desired, I shall be very glad to throw my ideas into the melting pot along with the rest and let it stew.

PRESCOTT: I didn't intend, Brother Wilkinson, to lay that burden on you in 45 minutes, but I would like in this hour of discussion on the paper this morning, to have someone deal with this direct point and let all the rest go now and deal with them later. Our published position, and the only one I have known to be published or spoken in this country, — I didn't know about the other matter, and there are other questions also that are printed across the water in a different way than we do here, we are not dealing with that. But will anyone tell us how we shall consistently go on with our official, recognized position that the 5th trumpet indicates the Saracens?

DANIELLS: Let us have a symposium now of one minute speeches from these teachers and here their explanation.

WIRTH: It can't be done. That is my answer. I agree with Prof. Prescott.

DANIELLS: Then you are through.

LACEY: I have agreed to, substantially, and I think the 150 years applies to the Saracens. I have in my notebook the dates 612 and 762.

WAKEHAM: I taught this very thing six years ago and have held it ever since.

SORENSEN: It is a most perplexing question, I find, because we deal with the past. When it comes to the 11th of Daniel, we are dealing with unfulfilled prophecy, and we might differ, even when we use all the facts available, but when it comes to dealing with past prophecy dealing with past facts, we must have the facts that took place; we are not able to invent events to fit the occasion, and that is the most perplexing thing about the whole prophetic proposition. All the dates that have been introduced are out of joint and the events proposed to fit the dates took place on some other day.

M. C. WILCOX: I had the same difficulty for years, but I have also placed the 150 years 612 to 762. It seems to me to be very clear, and that a later date can be established without any regard to the 150 years.

WALDORF: Before I came here, I heard of a new book issued called the history of the Huns. I haven't seen it, but that deals with the question of 1299 etc. It is a good work and worth looking up, but I don't know where to find it.

ANDERSON: It doesn't seem to me that this idea of applying it to the Saracens is so compelling after all. Why should we say it applies to the Saracens? Why shouldn't it apply to the Mohammedans? The idea seems to be that it must refer to the Saracens as distinguished from all the other Mohammedans. Why couldn't it apply to the Mohammedans as a religious movement?

PRESCOTT: You are getting onto the same ground as our two-horned beast going off into an "ism".

DANIELS: Let's send the King of the North and the two-horned beast together up in a balloon.

FRENCH: It seems to me the phraseology makes it very plain. It has reference to the Eastern division of the Roman Empire. There are tormentors who torment the third part of men, and then destroyers. Their part was to hurt men five months, and they had a king over them. The same ones that tormented men five months had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, etc. Now the same ones that tormented are the ones that destroyed. Those who tormented five months had a king over them whose name was the destroyer, and it is the same power that tormented that finally destroyed. That is true of the Ottoman Turks. For 150 years they tormented Eastern Rome, and they finally destroyed the last vestige of Rome*

http://docs.adventistarchives.org/docs/RBC/RBC19190717_B.pdf#view=fit (pages 987-996)

* The paper that was presented at this 1919 Bible Conference on the rise of the Ottoman Empire can be read at this site:

http://docs.adventistarchives.org/docs/RBC/RBC19190717_B.pdf#view=fit (pages 964 - 978)

John Witcombe

pastorjcw@gmail.com

<http://www.daniel1145.com>

<http://prophecywaymarks.com>