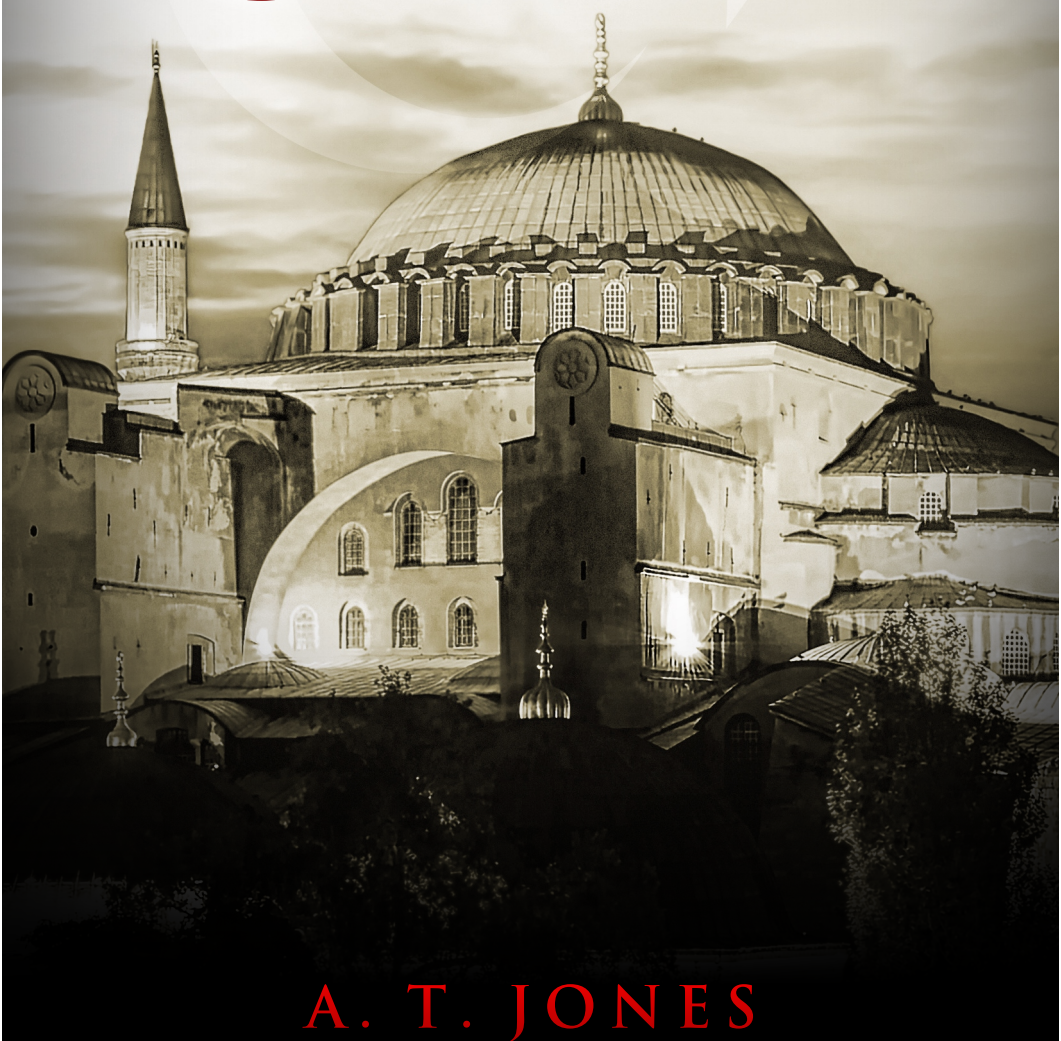


THE EASTERN --- QUESTION



A. T. JONES

THE EASTERN QUESTION

GOD dealt personally with the nations of old, and it is unreasonable to suppose that He has nothing to do with the nations now. His ways have not changed; but people have forgotten or will not believe that the Most High still rules in the kingdoms of men, and works out through them His own deep counsels and wondrous purpose.

Three distinct portions of Scripture are devoted to the Turkish power, and it is the object of this tract carefully and candidly to examine these passages, and gather from them what word the Lord has for us in our day.

The only organized nation within the bounds of history when the Bible record was closed—A.D. 98—was the Roman Empire. It constituted, moreover, in a sense, the very center and pivot of God's work and purpose concerning the whole world for all time. The Roman Cæsar Augustus had decreed that "all the world should be taxed," when Christ, the Saviour of the world, was born. By the authority of Rome, vested in the Roman governor of Judea, Christ was delivered to be crucified, and Roman soldiers watched the tomb, which was sealed with the Roman seal. Rome, therefore, being the great power of the world, and being also the center of God's cause and purpose in the world for all time, it is fitting that it should be the first world-power to be dealt with in New Testament prophecy; and, in the nature of things, after it would be considered the nations which should follow it to the end of time.

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

GOD had in old time foretold the fall of Babylon, and the succession of Medo-Persia to her place of power in the world. He had told of the passing of this power from Persia and Media to Grecia, and from Grecia to Rome. And now, before closing the book of His counsels, He would tell of the fall of Rome, and the passing of power from her to others who should succeed. This is done in the series of the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation, which mark important events in the breaking up of the mighty empire of Rome.

The trumpet itself is a symbol of war. In this fact alone is a suggestion that the seven trumpets announce wars, and as the Roman power was the center of all, they would have to announce wars beginning with Rome. The first four trumpets give the fall of the Western Empire of

Rome. The fifth and sixth trumpets give the fall of the Eastern Empire of Rome. And the seventh trumpet gives the fall of all nations and of the world itself. Any one reading the eighth and ninth chapters of Revelation, together with verses 15-19 of the eleventh and 18-20 of the sixteenth chapter, can easily determine that the seventh trumpet ends all things of earth.

The best exposition of the first six of the seven trumpets is Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," in its descriptions of the careers of the Goths, Vandals, Huns, Turks, and Mohammedan Arabs. By reading of the first trumpets in the eighth chapter, it will be seen that a dreadful state of things is contemplated. Yet the last three are so much worse than the first ones that "woe" is their chief characteristic. "I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound!" Revelation 8:13.

THE RISE OF THE TURKISH POWER IN PROPHECY & HISTORY

THE fifth trumpet, the first woe, marks the rise and spread of the Mohammedan power; and the historical utterances that most clearly show the fulfilment of this prophecy are found in chapters 50 and 51 of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Any one reading together Revelation 9:1-4, 7, 8, in connection with these two chapters of the history, can not fail to see that the one is but the complement of the other, this being especially true of Revelation 9:4 and Gibbon, chapter 51, par. 10. The scripture just mentioned, it will be seen, refers to the rise of Mohammedanism. In the fifth verse of the same chapter there is appointed a period of "five months"—one hundred and fifty days, or, counting each day a year (according to the rule in symbolic prophecy, Ezekiel 4:6), one hundred and fifty years—in which they were to hurt men. And from the time when they had a king over them, they take on a specially destructive character, for the Word says, "They had a king over them, . . . whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon." Revelation 9:11. The margin of the verse gives the meaning of this name in both tongues, which is "a destroyer." As the Roman Empire is the leading thing contemplated in the prophecy, it is this, or what remained of it, which was to suffer at the hands of this destroyer.

In speaking of the events preceding the time when these men "had a king over them," the historian says:

“In this shipwreck of nations, some surprise may be excited by the escape of the Roman Empire, whose relics . . . were dismembered by the Greeks and Latins.” — Chap. 64, par. 13.

But when they came to have a king over them, and took upon themselves more than ever the character of a destroyer, the empire could no longer escape. Consequently, in the very next paragraph, the historian continues in the following significant words:

“It was on the twenty-seventh day of July, in the year 1299, of the Christian era, that Othman first invaded the territory of Nicomedia, and the singular accuracy of the date seems to disclose some foresight of the rapid and destructive growth of the monster.” — Chap. 64, par. 14.

Several points in this quotation must be noticed.

1. Othman was the man who succeeded in bringing the disjointed elements of the Mohammedan power into a compact and distinctly organized governmental shape. From him consequently comes the term which still attaches to the government of the Turks, namely, the Ottoman Empire. From him dates the time when, as never before, “they had a king over them.”
2. Note the expression of the historian — “the destructive growth of this monster.” Thus he distinguishes the very characteristic which is predicted of it in the Scriptures.
3. The historian emphasizes “the singular accuracy of the date.” In the original documents from which he drew his material, he found this date made so specific that he himself is forced to remark its “singular accuracy.” Yet to those who recognize God’s dealings with the nations and kingdoms, and who consider that from the time when these had a king over them a period of a hundred and fifty years is given in which to do a certain work, it is not surprising that the date should be indicated with such singular accuracy.

Fulfilled to the Day

THE period of “woe” began, then, July 27, 1299. One hundred and fifty years from this singularly accurate date extends to July 27, 1449. Then the word continues, “One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.” And now still other elements of destruction are to be let loose. “And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. And the four angels were loosed, which were

prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.”

An hour, and a day, and a month, and a year. Counting 30 days to the month, according to the scriptural mode of computing time, a year is 360 days, and taking “each day for a year,” we have 360 years. A month—30 days—is 30 years. A day is 1 year. These added together give 391 years. From July 27, 1449, the 391 years reach to July 27, 1840. But there is “an hour” yet. An hour is the twenty-fourth part of a day. And (a day for a year) this would be the twenty-fourth part of a year, or 15 days. Fifteen days from July 27 extends to August 11. Therefore, on August 11, 1840, this period of an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, would expire. For this length of time, and to this date, the power of the Ottoman Empire was to continue. And on that very day¹ the actual power of the Turkish Government passed into the hands of the great powers of Europe, and from that day to this the very existence of the Ottoman Empire has been, and is now, solely dependent on the support of these great powers. Several times since 1840 the Turkish Government would have ceased to be, had it not been upheld in this way. In a little pamphlet on the Turkish-Armenian question, lately published by the Armenian Society in London, statement is made concerning England’s connection with this matter:

“We are responsible for Turkey. We saved the Turk twice at least from the doom which he richly merited. The Duke of Wellington sixty years ago lamented that the Russians had not entered Constantinople in 1829 and brought the Ottoman Empire to an end. We have much more reason to lament that it was not destroyed in 1853, and again in 1878. On both of these occasions we interfered to save it. But for us there would be no sultan on the Bosphorus.” —Page 17.

On the same page is a quotation from an article by the Duke of Argyle, in the Times, in which the duke says:

“It is not too much to say that England has twice saved Turkey from complete subjection since 1853. It is largely—mainly—due to our action that she now exists at all as an independent power. On both these occasions we dragged the powers of Europe along with us in maintaining the Ottoman Government.”

We do not reproduce these statements for the purpose of attaching blame to England or to any other power, but solely for the purpose of making clear the fact that the Ottoman Empire since 1840 has not existed by its

1 The reader who desires full information in regard to the circumstances under which this was done, and an elaborate exposition of the other prophetic passages referred to in this tract, will do well to consult the book “Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation,” by Uriah Smith

own power, but wholly by the action of the other powers. In accordance with this fact the pamphlet truly says:

“It is impossible to talk of the Ottoman Empire as if it were a nation like the United States or like Holland. It is an artificial . . . creation of treaties, that is kept in existence by the powers for their own convenience.”

Thus on the eleventh day of August, 1840, the time set by the Scripture for the existence and work of the Ottoman Empire, as such, expired;² on that day the sixth trumpet ceased to sound, and the second woe ended; and of the seventh trumpet—the third woe—we read: “The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded: and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”

Every expression in this record of the sounding of the seventh trumpet proclaims the end of all things of this world. Look at them again in detail:

1. The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of Christ; His reign begins, in His own kingdom, upon His own throne, by His own power, of which kingdom and reign there shall be no end.
2. “The nations are angry.” Rulers admit this, and each, fearful of some hostile move on the part of the others, is continually trying to make himself stronger against the time when war will begin, which all are sure

2 In 1840 the hostilities which for some years had been progressing between Turkey and her vassal kingdom, Egypt, being about to end in the defeat of the sultan, four of the great European powers interposed to save him. Fearing the consequences of the dismemberment of Turkey, the governments of England, Prussia, Austria, and Russia united in an agreement to maintain her autonomy. At the dictation of these powers, the sultan sent an ultimatum to the Egyptian pasha, and the four powers assumed the responsibility of seeing that it was accepted. This occurred on the 11th of August, 1840, and from that date Turkey, as a government, has existed only by the sufferance of those powers.

must be soon. But they all dread the slightest step that might involve actual hostilities, because of the danger that, if war is begun in earnest at any spot, it will suddenly spread, and involve all in one horrible and universal conflict.

Indeed, it is plainly stated by one of the leading authorities of the world that it is as a bulwark against this great danger of universal war that the Ottoman Government has been maintained these last fifty years. Read the following lines from the speech of Lord Salisbury, at the Mansion House, November 9, 1895:

“Turkey is in that remarkable condition that it has now stood for half a century, mainly because the great powers of the world have resolved that for the peace of Christendom it is necessary that the Ottoman Empire should stand. They came to that conclusion nearly half a century ago. I do not think they have altered it now. The danger, if the Ottoman Empire fall, would not merely be the danger that would threaten the territories of which that empire consists; it would be the danger that the fire there lit should spread to other nations, and should involve all that is most powerful and civilised in Europe in a dangerous and calamitous contest. That was a danger that was present to the minds of our fathers when they resolved to make the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire a matter of European treaty, and that is a danger which has not passed away.”

These words are in plain fulfilment of prophecy, and clearly indicate that the world stands trembling in the times of the seventh trumpet, when “the nations are angry.” And while, in the presence of this appalling danger, rulers, kings, and emperors are earnestly endeavoring by every possible means to maintain the peace of the world, what blundering and fatuous blindness it is that the churches and the pulpits and the religious press should be exciting and stirring up the spirit and elements of war, calling for armies and navies to wipe out suddenly and without further consideration the Ottoman Government, and thus break down the bulwark which the powers have set up against the horrible flood of a universal war. The president of Robert College, at Constantinople, well sets forth the critical character of the present situation in Europe in the following words:

“I believe that there is a general impression among thinking men in Europe that we are approaching a great crisis in the world’s history. It is certainly within the bounds of possibility that this year may see the great Christian nations engaged in a universal war. I am by nature and choice an optimist [one who looks for good]. I like to find out the good rather than the evil in men and nations; but a man must either shut his eyes or fall back upon an unwarranted faith in God to be an optimist in Europe today—so far as the immediate future is concerned. . . . It is perfectly plain that the civilization of Europe is rotten to the core; and if

we can learn anything from the lessons of history, it must pass through the throes of death before it can rise again to a new and higher life. If it were only the governments which were corrupt, the people might rise in their strength and overthrow them, but with a degenerate people there is no hope." — New York Independent, February 6, 1896, pp. 9, 10.

THE WORLD'S CRISIS

3. "Thy wrath is come." The wrath of God is to be poured out in "the seven last plagues." Revelation 15:1. The nature and effects of these terrible visitations are recorded in Revelation 16:1-21; and they end precisely at the point and in the very things that are marked in chapter 11:19 as the ending of the seventh trumpet, and which, indeed, are nothing less than the ending of all things.

4. "And the time of the dead, that they should be judged." Therefore in this time the proclamation, not of war, but of the "everlasting gospel" of peace is to be made "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:6, 7.

5. "And that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." It is at the resurrection of the just that the saints are to be rewarded, and this takes place at the coming of the Lord in glory. For He says, "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12. And them that are wicked will be "destroyed by the brightness of His coming." 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

All these things which we have mentioned by number were by the word of God to "come quickly" after August 11, 1840; quickly after the date when the rule of the Ottoman Empire by its own power passed away; quickly after that empire was by the great powers set as a bulwark against the anger of the nations breaking out in an "appalling" and universal war. Half a century has passed since that time; and how much nearer now is the time when these solemn and important events will take place!

Holding in view now the field which we have so far surveyed, let us turn to another portion of the Word of God and inquire concerning the present time, and the place of Turkey and the nations.

DANIEL'S VISION

IN the eleventh chapter of the book of Daniel the angel reveals to the prophet the events which should befall the nations of the earth "in the latter days." He naturally begins at the time where he and Daniel then were, and follows events straight through to the end of the world and the resurrection of the dead. The eleventh chapter of Daniel is all in the words of the angel, who says:

"Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia [Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspes]; and the fourth [Xerxes, the Ahasuerus of the book of Esther] shall be far richer than they all; and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia."

Xerxes led an army of five millions across the Hellespont and against Greece.

As soon as the angel mentions Grecia, he skips the remaining history of Persia, and sketches Greece, saying: "And a mighty king shall stand up [Alexander the Great], that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will [see also Daniel 8:20, 21]. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven [see Daniel 8:22]; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides those."

At Alexander's death there was confusion for about twenty years among the many able governors and generals of his great dominion. Finally a fourfold division was accomplished, in harmony with the words of the angel, "toward the four winds of heaven." Seleucus secured the eastern portion, extending from Syria to the river Indus. Cassander obtained Macedon and other Greek territory on the west. Lysimachus held Thrace and Bithynia on the north, territory of which Byzantium was then, and Constantinople is now, the center. And Ptolemy had Egypt, on the south.

"AT THE TIME OF THE END"

AFTER stating how Alexander's dominion should thus be divided into its four parts, the angel turns his attention to the two kingdoms,— "the king of the south" and "the king of the north." And in verses 5 to 14 he treats solely of the succession of principal events occurring between these two powers. At verse 14 the Roman power—"the children of robbers," margin—enters the field and occupies the angel's attention for a long time. Finally, in verse 40, he comes to speak of "the time of the

end," and again mentions "the king of the south" and "the king of the north." The territories of the northern and of the southern division of Alexander's dominion remain respectively the kingdoms of the north and the south unto the end, and from beginning to end, whatever powers might occupy these respective territories, would be the kings of the north and of the south. The power therefore which, at the time of the end, occupies the territory of Thrace and Bithynia, originally held by Lysimachus, will be the king of the north as certainly as was the power of Lysimachus itself. And as Constantinople is the center of the territory originally held by Lysimachus, the first "king of the north," and as the power (Turkey) that now reigns in Constantinople holds the identical territory held by Lysimachus himself, it is plain enough that this power is "the king of the north" of the last verses of the eleventh chapter of Daniel, and of our own day.

THE KING OF THE NORTH & HIS END

IN the forty-fourth verse the angel says of this king of the north,—the Turkish power, —"Tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many." This was accomplished in the Crimean War, when Russia from the north and east warred against the Ottoman Empire, and the latter was saved only by the support and power of Great Britain and other allies.

And now the last verse of Daniel ii tells of the two events that all Europe is constantly expecting to see, and which are certain soon to take place, namely, the expulsion of the Turkish power from Constantinople and the wiping out of the Ottoman Empire. These are the words of the angel as to this looked-for event, "And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

Constantinople itself is "between the seas." But this does not meet the word of the angel. No, but he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas "in the glorious holy mountain." This can be no other place than Jerusalem; even now Jerusalem is called in the Turkish and Arabic "The Holy." It is certain, therefore, that the seat of the Ottoman power will be removed from Constantinople, and will finally be planted in Jerusalem, and then it is just as certain that power comes to an end.

WHEN HE COMES TO HIS END

YET this is not all. The angel continues: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great Prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." Daniel 12:1, 2.

Whether the Turkish power shall leave Constantinople, and when; whether it shall be wiped out, and, if so, when,—these are great and interesting questions, and multitudes are anxiously studying them. But of far greater consequence is the question, What will happen when these things are accomplished?

The Word of God is that "at that time" there shall be such a time of trouble upon the earth as never was since there has been a nation. This we have seen by positive proofs is the very thing which the great nations are dreading; and against this universal woe of world-wide war and tumult the great powers are holding the Ottoman power as long as possible as a bulwark, knowing that, when this bulwark shall have been broken down, the appalling torrent must spread over all. In this matter the Word of God and the word of the great powers of the world are in exact and perfect accord.

Who is ready for this "time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation"? Who? Whoever on the earth is not ready for the spreading over all nations of such a time of trouble as never was since there was a nation—whoever on earth is not ready for this is not ready for the wiping out of the Ottoman power. Therefore, instead of churches and pulpits and religious papers calling for war, and urging the wiping of the Turkish power off the earth, they would better, far better, be preaching the gospel of peace, which they profess, and which they are so basely perverting, and by the sincere preaching of the gospel of peace be preparing to stand in peace and quietness in God when this time of trouble shall break upon the world at the time of the ending of the Ottoman Empire. Who is doing this work? Who is ready for the time of trouble?

For this is not simply a time of great trouble by war amongst the nations. It is a time of trouble caused also by the judgments of God upon the earth, followed quickly by His coming, the resurrection of the dead, and the end of all things. This phase of the question is emphasized by the third portion of Scripture which treats of the Ottoman power. The sixteenth chapter of Revelation contains a record of the seven last

plagues, in which “is filled up the wrath of God,” to be poured upon the earth.

THE PLAGUES OF GOD’S WRATH

IN this chapter the story of the sixth plague is given in these words, “And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared.”

Now as for the real flowing river Euphrates, which rises in the mountains of Armenia and empties into the Persian Gulf, kings both of East and West have crossed and recrossed it at will from the days of Chedorlaomer until now, without its ever having to be dried up that they might pass. This expression therefore can not refer to the water of the literal river. What, then? In the next chapter, verse 15, it is stated that “waters are peoples.” Then the drying up of the water of the Euphrates that the way of the kings of the East may be prepared is clearly the ending of the power that occupies the country of the Euphrates. What power is this? — The Turkish power alone.

This, then, is another plain declaration of the Word of God announcing the certain ending of the Turkish power. And, according to this scripture, what comes at the ending of that power? What are the kings of the East going to do when the way for them shall be thus prepared? Read on.

“And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.”

NEED FOR WATCHING & PRAYING

WE have now considered the three portions of Scripture which treat of the Turkish power. We have seen that in all three of them the end of that power is announced by the sure Word of God. We also see that in all three places not only is the end of that power marked, but with this, and following swiftly upon it, there is also marked in unmistakable language

universal woe, world-destroying trouble, the coming of the Lord in glory, and the end of all things of this world.

No man, therefore, is ready for the ending of the Ottoman Empire who is not ready for the end of the world. And who is ready for this? Oh, let every one who names the name of Christ turn his whole attention to doing His will! Let Christians be sure that they themselves are ready for these things, and then let them never rest, let them never hold their peace, till the warning message is sounded to all people, that whosoever will may come; whosoever will may be ready also, and that all may be continually watching and praying so that they “may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke 21:36.

We see that the sure Word of God announces that the ending of the Ottoman Empire is followed by a time of universal war, woe, and trouble, such as never was before since there was a nation. We see also the great powers of earth—the very ones which have this question constantly to deal with—expecting and dreading the “appalling danger” of this very thing, and in their uneasy expectancy doing everything in their power to hold back as long as possible the tide of woe which they know must come.

There is yet one other element to be noticed in this connection. It is that the Turks themselves look for this very thing. They expect to be driven out from Constantinople, and that the seat of their power will then be Jerusalem. They expect, too, that the nations will come even there to war against them, and that then the end of all things will come.³

When the Word of God three times declares it, and when the Turks themselves, as well as all the other powers concerned, are expecting and dreading it, is it not high time that all the people should believe it? May the Lord in His mercy help all to hear it, to believe it, and then to proclaim it to earth’s remotest limits, that the world may be prepared and fully ready for those fearful evils, which, according to every evidence, are ready to burst in fury upon it.

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3 In Constantinople, in September and October last, I met a reliable Christian man, who told me that, in a conversation which he had with a Turkish judge, the judge told him that they expected as the outcome of the dealings of the powers, that they would be dispossessed of Constantinople; that after that their capital would be Jerusalem; that against them there at last they expected the “Christian nations” to come to fight; and that then Messiah and Mahomet would come. With the expectation of Mahomet, this explanation as stated by the Turkish judge is precisely the thing that is predicted of this same time in the Scripture of truth.

SEVENTH-DAY CHURCH OF REVELATION
P.O. BOX 525
YOKUTS VALLEY, CALIFORNIA
93675

SDCREVELATION.ORG

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