

Pushing the Turks out of Jerusalem in 1917

Nigel Bernard

In Daniel 11:40 the king of the south pushes against the latter-day equivalent of “the king” of verse 36. The campaign by British forces to push the Turks out of Palestine during the First World War was a fulfilment of this prophecy. The capture of Jerusalem by Allenby in 1917 was a key event of this campaign. A book written by a soldier involved in the British campaign in Palestine provides an interesting insight into the events of 1917.

IN DANIEL 11:40 it is written, “And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over”. It is the Turkish power which is referred to as “him” in this verse.

The “him” relates to “the king” in verse 36: “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done”. The king in this verse refers to the Roman power. In the context of Daniel 11, with its theme of the conflict in the eastern Mediterranean between the king of the north and the king of the south, this verse in particular concerns the development of Roman power in the east, centred around the eastern capital of the Roman Empire, Constantinople. In 1453 the Turks captured Constantinople and became the “him” in verse 40.

There are two distinct phases in this verse. Firstly, Turkey is ‘pushed’ by the king of the south. Secondly, the king of the north comes “against him”. Whilst the second phase is yet to be fulfilled, we would suggest that the first of these phases occurred towards the end of the First World War when Britain, as the king of the south, pushed the Turks out of Palestine.

Pushing the Turks

As Turkey was an ally of Germany in the First World War, Britain sought to defend her interests in the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf oil fields

against possible Turkish attack. In 1917 and 1918 the British forces, including soldiers from other parts of the British Empire, such as Australia, India and New Zealand, moved north and east against the Turks in Egypt and Palestine. Britain also sought to encourage Arab revolt against the Turks.

An interesting account of the advance into Palestine was written by a soldier, Antony Bluett, who was in the British Army as part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. He had belonged to the Camel Transport Corps, and also the “A” Battery of the Honourable Artillery Company. He wrote: “During the days immediately following the capture of Beersheba the mounted troops were kept exceedingly busy, for our position was yet by no means secure. Every day the Turks in the hills made an attempt to drive us eastwards into the desert and every day we strove to push them back on to their defences at Sheria”.¹ Notice how his language unwittingly matches the sense of Daniel 11. He characterises the role of the British as striving “to push” the Turks back. As Daniel wrote, “at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him”.

Allenby

This month marks the ninetieth anniversary of General Allenby entering Jerusalem. In commenting upon this event Bluett wrote:

“the deliverance of the Holy City after four centuries of Turkish tyranny and oppression was the signal for extraordinary rejoicing amongst the Jews not only in Jerusalem but all over Egypt. General Allenby’s unassuming entry, on foot, into the Holy City and his assurance that every man might worship without let or hindrance according to the tenets of the religion in which he believed, whether Christian or Mussulman [Muslim], profoundly

1. Bluett, A. (1919), *With Our Army in Palestine*, London, Andrew Melrose, p. 196. The text is also available online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19941/19941-h/19941-h.htm>.



The Jaffa Gate of the Old City of Jerusalem, looking outwards. It was through this gate, then much narrower, that General Allenby entered on 8 December 1917.

Picture: www.HolyLandPhotos.org

impressed the inhabitants and made the whole proceedings a triumph for British diplomacy and love of freedom".²

It is clear from Bluett's account that the capture of Jerusalem from the Turks was a key event, indicated not least by the joyful reaction of the Jews. From a Biblical perspective, also, there is no doubting, together with the Balfour Declaration, the significance of this event. It was a key event in the pushing of the Turk out of Palestine in relation to Daniel 11.

The year 1917 figures prominently in Bible time periods. In Daniel 4:16 we read of the "seven times". This corresponds to 2,520 years and spans the time from Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the image in 603 B.C. to 1917. In Daniel 12:11 it is written, "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days". The time period represents 1,290 years. One aspect of the abomination was the presence of the Ottoman power in Palestine. This Islamic power was a product of the Islamic era which began around 622-30 A.D. and ended with the First World War and its aftermath, 1,290 years later.

No concessions

Ninety years on from the capture of Jerusalem, the city remains at the heart of the Middle East problem. It is fast becoming "a burdensome stone for all people" (Zech. 12:3). Israel does not at present seem willing to compromise over its possession of the city. In November the BBC reported that "Israel's parliament [the Knesset] has given initial

approval to draft legislation making it harder to change Jerusalem's status in any peace deal with the Palestinians".³ There is currently an Israeli law which says that all Jerusalem is Israeli territory. To help protect this law, Gideon Saar, a member of the Likud party, has put forward a bill which stipulates that a two-thirds majority would be required before this law concerning Jerusalem could be altered.

The bill proposed by Gideon Saar still requires the parliament to vote on it a further three times before it becomes law. However, the initial vote has been interpreted by Saar as indicating that Israel is against making concessions over Jerusalem. At the time of writing, the United States is intending to host a Middle East peace conference before the end of 2007. The initial vote by the Knesset sends out a strong message in the build-up to this proposed conference.

Conclusion

Although Antony Bluett does not seem from his writing to have been particularly religious, like many of his era he was very knowledgeable about the Bible. In reflecting upon what lay in store for Palestine he wrote in 1919:

"Whether the Jews as a nation will ever settle in Palestine is a question the future alone will solve; certainly the wise policy of the British and French governments offers them every inducement, if they really wish to become a

2. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

3. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7095023.stm.

nation again in their own ancient land. If the prophets are to be believed Jerusalem will one day be the capital of the world—but it will not be in our day”.⁴

Less than thirty years later the Jews did indeed form a nation in Palestine. But the prophecies concerning Jerusalem as the capital of the world

have yet to be fulfilled. As we remember the remarkable events of 1917 we should be encouraged by the signs in the earth that show that the second phase of Daniel 11:40 is soon to begin.

4. *Op. cit.*, p. 288.

The significance of the resurrection*

R. Storer

The details given in Scripture of the burial of Jesus and the empty tomb are very exact, and when carefully considered give remarkable testimony to the reality of the resurrection.

THE VICTORY over death must be regarded as the greatest and most joyous of triumphs, for death severs the life-connection between God and man, means the end of human aspirations, and ceases the activities of mind and heart. It takes away what life has given and living has enabled it to become. It takes our all, even our love.

To return from the dust of death, to re-establish the connection and contact with God, to restore aspiration and activity, to recommence the activities of heart and mind, to give back what life gave and what living has made us, to re-awaken love—this is resurrection.

Nature seems to suggest this joy. The breaking of leaf bud after the winter fall, the flowering almond, the springing blade of corn, the resplendent emergence of the butterfly from the chrysalis; all these show transformation and renewal. By these the species is restored, but not the individual; for in lower nature no conscious connection with God is apparent, no aspiration other than instinctive fulfilment of the species' destiny, no activity of mind and heart save in the present, no character developed or love awakened and centred on its object.

Restoration of these, the highest human values, constitutes the greatest human longing. It is therefore to the resurrection of a man, and he the fullest expression of human living, that God directs our attention.

Jesus in the tomb

Jesus was dead, so dead that love could find no other thing to do save bury him with lavish care, and broken-heartedly leave him in the cold cavern, enwrapped in spotless spice-scented linen. Hate had done its worst and wished to do no more than guard the entrance.

Never had death taken so much. He who was so divine was now so utterly asleep. He who was so active was so still. He who was so full of character was now so expressionless. He who loved so had now no power to love. The searching eyes were glazed in death, the blessing hands were rigid, the virtue-invested body lay inert in death.

Human despair and hopeless love remained, and prepared for one further sad task; to come and anoint his face, to try to capture once more in the seeing of his dead face what that face had become to them in life, and to try to keep that memory with them. This was the measure of human love and sorrow.

Before the women who witnessed the death of Jesus could accomplish this, something happened. The situation they expected to find may be expressed thus: a cave; the spice-enwrapped body; the napkin-wound head; the face of Jesus; where his body was laid; how his body was laid. (The sealed stone and the guard, though present, were forgotten till their arrival.)

The situation they found was very different. The guard was gone; the stone was out of its slot

* An abbreviated and slightly amended version of an article first published in June 1948.