

34. A NARROW ESCAPE FROM GREAT DANGER

Regrettably, after the death of Mohammed, Islam did not disappear. On the contrary! His followers continued the 'Holy War' unabated. These followers are also called 'caliphs.' Those caliphs continued to strive for Mohammed's aim



Islam would not allow images of their Caliphs, that was considered blasphemous. Instead they struck a coin in remembrance of an famous Caliph. Wikipedia

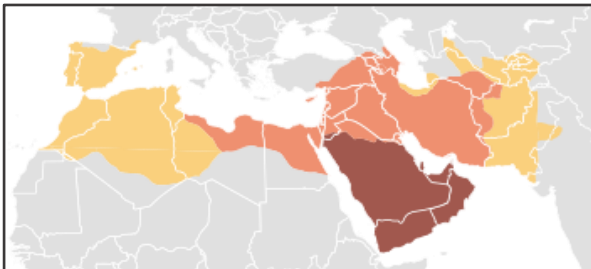
in life, that 'the whole world must believe in him and accept his religion'. They did this by force, with a sword in hand. They did not fear death because the braver they fought, the greater glory would be theirs.

THE RAPID ADVANCE OF THE MUSLIMS

The Muslims quickly conquered one country after another. It seemed as if nothing could stop their victorious march. After they subdued Arabia, the Muslim armies marched further north. They conquered and suppressed Palestine, Syria, and the Persian Empire. The Muslim military pushed on even *further*. They trampled underfoot and subdued Asia Minor.

Those were dark days for God's people.

In Asia Minor, God had richly shown His gospel of grace. There, God's church had flourished and grown. Just think of Ephesus, where the apostle John had preached for many years, and Smyrna, where the godly Polycarp laboured fruitfully while very old. Seven flourishing Christian churches had



Islamic expansion:

- under Muhammad, 622–632
- under Rashidun caliphs, 632–661
- under Umayyad caliphs, 661–750

been there, as we can learn from the first chapters of the book of Revelation. All those churches disappeared.

The pure doctrine of salvation had vanished from those places long ago. Those churches had believed the lie and left the foundation the apostles had laid.

Also there, abominable errors had crept in. God's warnings had not helped! So God punished those unfaithful, straying churches. He sent the judgment He had revealed to the apostle John in Revelation 2:5. God had said: "Repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place."

A lampstand spreads light. With "that lampstand", God meant "the Light of Truth." God would remove His Word from those places. Faithful men would no longer preach the gospel there. And that would not happen gradually. No, God said: "quickly." That means 'suddenly, taken by surprise!' Quickly! When no one suspects anything or expects it anymore, it will happen.

God now fulfilled His promise of terrible judgment. The Muslim armies suddenly came, and wherever those disobedient churches were, they were made to profess the Muslim religion. They are still Muslim today.

But we must read God's Word carefully. God says He will *remove* the lampstand, which means: *take it away!* The Lord did *not* say He would *extinguish* the lampstand!

For example, when I remove a burning candle from one room and take it into another room, the first room becomes dark, and it lights the second room instead. I have *transferred* the light but have not *extinguished* it.

God's Word also uses this example. God *transferred* His church. It disappeared from the east, and it became dark there. The false religion of Mohammed took its place. God moved His lampstand to the west, establishing His church

throughout Western Europe and bringing the light of the gospel there. After a lengthy struggle, paganism had to yield and make room for Christianity.

The victorious Muslim armies didn't only march east and north but also west. They conquered Egypt in Africa. Flourishing Christian churches had also been there. Wasn't the God-fearing Athanasius bishop of Alexandria in Egypt? The battle did not stay in Egypt; the Muslims conquered the entire north coast of Africa. Remember Augustine, the bishop of Hippo? God had caused His light to shine brightly there. But the lampstand was removed from there as well. To this day, the Muslim religion rules there too. In 711, a Muslim commander called Tariq crossed the Strait of Gibraltar into Europe. He landed in the south of Spain.

A multitude of troops followed and reinforced Tariq's army.

They quickly overpowered all of Spain.

From Spain, the soldiers marched over the Pyrenees into France. The Franks lived there. At that time, the Franks were already a Christian nation.

The Muslims penetrated the centre of France. We see Satan on a rampage here. We see the conflict between the "seed of the woman" and the "seed of the serpent."

The devil tried hard to destroy the young church in the west.

The church in the east had perished. Satan wanted the same to happen to the church in the west.

That young church had to be swept away by the tidal wave of the Muslims.

Then the devil would be victorious. Will he succeed?

No, for God reigns!

CHARLES MARTEL

At the time, a brave king reigned in France. His name was Charles Martel. When the Muslims had penetrated the centre of France, he assembled his army and marched out to battle. He would try to hold back the almost unconquerable

Muslims. If they defeated him, all would be lost. Then France, the Netherlands, and all Western European countries would also become Muslim. Then it would be all over for the church of God! Then the lampstand would be extinguished!

Charles Martel and his army march off to do battle. Anxious care fills their hearts.

On a Sunday, the armies clash.

Swiftly, the Muslims rush into the fight. They do not fear death. Aren't they fighting the Holy War?

Their cry of: "Allah is great! Allah is great!" is frightening. With it, they try to make the Christians flee. They have always been successful with that fearsome chant, and they count on that success again. They already rely on being victorious.



*Charles Martel 686 (?) -741
Quora*



Battle of Tours, France 732 AD. <https://halfarsedhistory.net/>

The struggle is dreadful and horrific.
 But this time, the Christians do not flee.
 They stand immovable and firm and repulse all
 the attacks of the Mohammedans. There is much
 bloodshed. At dusk, the battle's outcome is not
 yet clear, and the fighting, with all its
 accompanying noise, continues with undiminished
 severity. Who shall win?



Battle of Tours where Martel took his stand.

Charles Martel makes a last attempt to bring the
 struggle to a good end. With a roaring voice, he
 cries out:
 "Forward, my brave men!"

The Christian Frankish soldiers, who have
 desperately fought a *defensive* battle all day, hear
 that command. With the courage of despair, they
 march on. With irresistible force, they now mount
 an *attack*. The Muslims did not expect such a
 surprise attack. For a while, the fighting is intense
 and terrible, but then? How wonderful!

The Muslims become confused and flee!
 The warriors of Charles Martel have defeated
 them!
 The Franks pursue the fleeing invaders and
 successfully drive the Muslim army out of France.
 The Christians have won a brilliant victory!
 And?
 God has again shown that He reigns and is the
 Almighty One. God has saved His church in
 Western Europe! Satan's attempt to wipe out and
 destroy God's church has failed. You may be sure
 that many have thanked the Lord that night for
 delivering them from such a great danger!

Later, the Muslims were driven even further back,
 and eventually, they were even forced out of
 Spain and expelled to Africa.
 God graciously averted that dangerous threat.

THE MUSLIMS TRY AGAIN

We told you previously that the mighty Roman
 Empire had split into two sections. Those parts
 were the Western Roman Empire, with *Rome* as
 its capital and the Eastern Roman Empire, with
Constantinople as its capital. We know that the
 West Roman Empire had fallen during the great
 migration of nations. At that time, the Vandals
 plundered Rome. (Chapter 31)

However, the East Roman Empire continued to
 exist. Emperor Leo III reigned in Constantinople.
 When the Muslims' attempt to conquer Europe
 from the west through Spain failed, they tried
 from the east.
 Now the Eastern Roman Empire had to deal with
 their fierce attacks.

For many years, the emperor of the Eastern
 Roman Empire had to fight fiercely against the
 dangerous and intrusive Muslims. The emperor
 had to yield large sections of the Eastern Roman
 Empire to them. The Muslim armies continually
 repulsed the imperial troops. Finally, the Muslims
 reached the gates of Constantinople. Time and
 again, they tried to conquer that ancient capital.
 The Muslims would have conquered Europe from
 the east if Constantinople had fallen. But
 thankfully, Constantinople did not fall. The city
 stood firm against the tidal wave of Muslim
 soldiers. The Muslims fiercely attacked
 Constantinople

twice, but both
 times, the imperial
 armies repulsed
 the enemy with
 much bloodshed.
 The emperor set
 fire to the ships
 the
 Mohammedans
 had used to cross
 the Bosphorus
 River. This act
 caused thousands



Emperor Leo III.

<https://thehistoryofbyzantium.com>

of deaths. No matter how stubbornly the Muslim soldiers fought, they failed to conquer Constantinople.

God averted that dangerous threat for the second time by helping Constantinople continue to stand firm.

True, later, the Eastern Roman Empire fell, and then the Muslims conquered Constantinople. Then (ages later), they even came to the gates of Vienna, but those times were different. We shall tell you about that later.

God's church would have perished if Constantinople had fallen at this time.

We again see the golden thread of God's providence and reigning hand in this history! The Lord preserved His church!

The Bible records many miracles. But throughout church history, God showed that He is the King of His church. That's why I told you about these events: so that we do not forget God's miracles.

5. To which countries did God transfer the lampstand of His Word?
6. What inroads did Muslims make into Africa?
7. Who invaded Europe, and where did this invasion occur?
8. Who challenged Tariq? Where did the armies meet?
9. How did God aid Charles Martel?
10. What was the next attempt of the Muslims?
11. Were they successful in their efforts?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. List the warnings God gave to the various churches in Revelation 2 and 3. Which warnings did God fulfil in time?

QUESTIONS

1. Who are the caliphs?
2. Which areas did the Muslims conquer?
3. Why did the churches of Asia Minor flourish during Roman persecution but fall so quickly to Muslims later?
4. What does 'removing the lampstand' mean for a church?



Constantinople prepares for siege. Weapons and Warfare