

— WHICH NATION DOES
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OF THE LAST
DAYS REFER TO?

by **MUSA CERANTONIO**

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by Musa Cerantonio

الحمد لله وصلاة وسلام على رسول الله

All praise belongs to Allah and may His Blessings and Peace be upon His final Messenger Muḥammad

WHY IS THE IDENTITY OF RŪM IMPORTANT TO KNOW?

When reading or discussing Islamic eschatology, it is almost inescapable that at some point the nation known as Rūm will be mentioned. Much debate has taken place as to which exact nation Rūm shall be in the last days and various different opinions have been recorded, showing that there is no consensus on this issue. It is not odd for there to be debate over an issue which is yet to take place, though it is indeed surprising for those researching the issue to find that there is very little discussion regarding the question of Rūm's identity taking place, and it is very rare to find detailed discussion on the topic or any one opinion that is agreed upon by Muslim scholars. The lack of decisive conclusions which appeal to all those who encounter the various opinions of those who have written on this topic shows that the question of the identity of Rūm is one that is yet to be definitively answered, and one that has not been discussed sufficiently, leaving many to wonder if the question itself shall never be answered until the Last Days approach or if the answer can be found and it is only that it has not been looked into enough that has led to the current lack of knowledge on the topic.

I have endeavoured to read and listen to all the opinions on this topic and subsequently to strive to find an answer to this great question myself, and so I have decided after much discussion with those who I have entrusted to advise me upon what is best, they have all suggested that I share my own findings on this issue with the hope of at least bringing about discussion on this pertinent topic and perhaps at most, to adequately prepare the Muslim *ummah* for these events as best we can. I ask Allah the Exalted to bless this work and to allow it to be of benefit to all believers who read it.

UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNS OF THE LAST DAYS

One of the blessings that we have as an *ummah* is that not only do we know about the stories of our past, but Allah has also given us an insight into certain portents of our future. Just as the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ teach us about the stories of previous nations and what became of them, so too we are told about what will happen to our nation in the days ahead of us, all the way up until the Last Day. This is a blessing that helps us to adequately prepare for what will soon occur, however it also requires that we be diligent in understanding the correct meanings and implications of each of the forewarnings and prophecies contained in the Revelation.

When we look at the signs of the coming of the Last Day we should realise that understanding exactly what is being referred to can sometimes be clear and easily understood whereas at other times it is almost impossible to properly comprehend until the foretold events occur. An example of a clearly understood prediction which is mentioned in the Qur'an is in the first few verses of Sūrat Ar-Rūm:

غُلِبَتِ الرُّومُ فِي أَدْنَى الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْدِ غَلِبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ فِي بَعْضِ سِنِينَ

The Romans have been defeated in the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will be victorious within three to nine years. [30:2-4]

The verse is very clear in stating what will happen and when. The Romans who had been defeated by the Persians would soon overcome the mighty Persian Empire and avenge their previous defeat. The time period in which it is stated that it will occur is specified with the Arabic term [fī biḍ'ī sinīn] meaning within a period of 3-9 years. This event was foretold and later occurred as it was described, within the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ and is thus seen as one of the many miracles of the Qur'an. In the instance of this prophecy there was no doubt as to what was expected to occur and when it would occur, thus there could be no misunderstanding as to what the verses meant, and so this is a prophecy that we can consider to have been very clear and precise to those who read it and heard it.

An example of an unclear prophecy that has also come to pass is the following prophecy that was foretold by the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ in the well-known 'ḥadīth of Jibrīl' that one of the signs of the Last Day would be:

وَإِذَا تَطَاوَلَ رُعَاةُ الإِبِلِ الْبُهْمُ فِي الْبُنْيَانِ

"That the shepherds of camels will compete with one another in the construction of tall buildings and will boast about them." [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 50]

This ḥadīth can be said with almost no doubt to refer to the ongoing phenomenon that began in the last decade in which the people of the Arabian Peninsula have begun competing with one another to build the world's tallest tower. In the last 4 years the 2 tallest buildings in the world have been built in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, and a third tower also in Saudi Arabia is set to be built which will become the new tallest building in the world once it is completed, stretching an enormous 1km into the sky. What is amazing about these buildings is that due to the rapid growth of the Arabian nations in the last half a century, many of those involved in the construction of the towers came from poor bedouin families who became overnight billionaires. I met one of the construction managers for the Burj Khalīfah in the UAE in 2010 and he told me that he came from a bedouin family and that one of his earliest memories was playing as a barefooted child in the desert while his family looked after their camels and goats. So we see that the exact words of the prophecy were true and have indeed appeared before our eyes in these days, however due to the fact that the prophecy did not contain specific details such as a precise location or a specified period of time in which it would occur, it would have been impossible for someone in the past to have looked at the ḥadīth and to have been able to understand that it would occur in the places or in these specific years in which they came to be in.

This difference in the specific details of prophecies of future events means that sometimes the meaning of the prophecies will be very clear to those who read or hear them, and that sometimes they will not be clear until the events come to pass, and yet a third category can be defined as being those prophecies which are specific about some matters but unclear regarding other matters mentioned within them. Those which fall into this third category may specify names and places but may be unclear as to who the names specifically refer to, or may mention place names that are somewhat vague such as 'the East', which may refer to any area from 'Iraq all the way to Japan or even further to the New World (the Americas), and so whilst it is clear that 'East' means a land to the east of Arabia, it would not be clear exactly which eastern land is being referred to. This type of category is one that contains some information that can help us prepare for future events, but requires analysis of the prophecy which may not be clear to all who read it due to unfamiliarity with portents of the prophecy, and may not be understood at all until the event itself occurs. With this understanding of the

different types of prophecies, let us begin to look at and analyse the Aḥādīth of the Last Days which make mention of Rūm.

To begin it should be made clear that the only aḥādīth attributed to the Prophet ﷺ that we accept are those that are authentically narrated from him [Ṣaḥīḥ], if a ḥadīth is not proven to be authentic then it cannot be used as an evidence in Islam nor can we attribute it to the Prophet ﷺ as being one of his sayings. Therefore only authentic narrations regarding Rūm and the Last Days will be discussed, as any narration that is not authentic cannot be used as evidence in Islam and must be disregarded by the Believers due to its inauthenticity. Much of the confusion about future events that people have is due to the proliferation of inauthentic and fabricated sayings falsely attributed to the Prophet ﷺ. Once we know that a ḥadīth we have heard is not authentic then we must not narrate it to others claiming that it is authentic nor give the impression that it is authentic, to do so is an error and a sin that we seek to avoid.

WHO IS RŪM THAT IS MENTIONED IN THE QUR'ĀN?

Rūm [الروم], when referred to in the Qur'an as well as in the events contemporary to the lifetime of the Prophet refers to the Eastern Roman Empire which is better known in our days as the 'Byzantine Empire'. This name is taken from the ancient name of the capital city of the Empire which was originally named 'Byzantion', later came to be known as Constantinople, and is today called Istanbul. The Byzantines themselves never called their empire by this name, rather they were referred to as the 'Roman Empire' [Basileia Rōmaiōn]. This was because their empire was by all means a continuation of the Roman Empire which began as a small kingdom in the city of Rome in 753 BC, located in the Italian peninsula. The Roman Empire, which was founded in the city of Rome expanded throughout much of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, and due to its large size was eventually split into 2 separate administrative regions - the Western Roman Empire which was based in Rome whose people predominately spoke Latin, and the Eastern Roman Empire which was based in Constantinople and whose people predominately spoke Greek. The empire at that time was still 1 empire, only split into 2 different sections for the ease of administration. The Western Empire eventually fell into decline and collapsed in 476 AD when it was defeated by Germanic tribes from the north who had invaded their land, and so the Eastern Empire was what remained of the Roman Empire. It continued to call itself the Roman Empire despite the fact that city of Rome itself was no longer part of it, as 'Rome' had come to represent the empire itself and not just the city after which it was named. Historians later began calling this the Eastern Roman Empire to differentiate it from the earlier period of the Roman Empire when it was comprised of both the Latin-speaking West and the Greek-speaking East. In order to clarify it even further, the name 'Byzantine Empire' was later applied to the Eastern Empire by historians even

though this name was never used by the Romans themselves. In Arabic the Empire throughout all periods was simply called *Rūm*. A ḥadīth narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās clarifies the fact that Rūm in Arabic undoubtedly referred to the Roman Empire based in Constantinople which Western historians called the Eastern/Byzantine Empire. The ḥadīth mentions the details of a letter sent by the Prophet ﷺ to the leader of Rūm and the opening portion of the letter begins:

إِلَى هِرَقْلَ عَظِيمِ الرُّومِ

"To Heraclius the leader of Rūm" [Tirmidhī 2717]

It is understood from the words of this letter that what was called Rūm at the time of the Prophet ﷺ was the Byzantine Roman Empire based in Constantinople which had Heraclius as its leader. History records that Heraclius (Flavius Heraclius Augustus) was the ruler of the Roman Empire from 610-641 which corresponds to the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, and so we can be sure that Rūm specifically referred to the Byzantine Empire based in Constantinople. The clarification must be again made that the city of Rome was not always part of the Byzantine Empire yet the Arabs continuously referred to the empire as Rūm (though the city of Rome itself was reconquered by the Byzantines and remained in their power intermittently throughout their rule) and thus Rūm does not refer in any way to the city of Rome in Italy, but rather always referred to nothing other than the Roman Empire based in Constantinople which essentially 'inherited' the title of the Roman Empire upon the fall of the Western Roman Empire to the Germanic invaders. Therefore all of the lands which were under the control of the Byzantine Empire were referred to as Rūm by the Muslims. An example of this is the island of Rhodes which is located in the Mediterranean Sea, and was mentioned in a ḥadīth in which some of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ narrated:

كُنَّا مَعَ فَضَالَةَ بْنِ عُبَيْدٍ بِرُودَسَ مِنْ أَرْضِ الرُّومِ

"We were with Faḍālah bin ‘Ubayd at Rhodes which is in the land of Rūm" [Abū Dāwūd 3219]

The island of Rhodes which is in our times part of modern-day Greece was at the time part of the Byzantine Empire, and therefore was mentioned as being part of Rūm. Similarly, all of the lands which were part of the Byzantine Empire were considered as being part of Rūm by the Muslims. Consequently if such lands were to be lost by the Byzantine Empire then they would no longer be considered to be part of Rūm. When the Muslims began to conquer parts of the Byzantine Empire, the lands that the Muslims gained were no longer classed as being part of Rūm, only those lands which the Byzantines still controlled were called as Rūm. The concept of what Rūm was according to the early Muslims is therefore not to be understood as a set

geographic description, as it neither referred to the city of Rome from which it took its name nor did it permanently apply to any specific land throughout all times. Rather, if a certain land belonged to the Roman Empire then it was called Rūm by the Muslims for as long as the Byzantine Empire controlled it, and if it were lost by the Empire then it would no longer be called Rūm. Therefore the entity of Rūm was understood to be the land that was controlled by the Byzantine Empire. The description of which lands belonged to Rūm according to the Muslims was therefore a political description, it described any land which the Roman Empire governed and maintained political control over.

What we must understand therefore, is that when Allah speaks about Rūm in the Qur'an, what is being referred to is the empire that existed at that specific time (approx. 615 AD). The 'Romans' as mentioned in Surat Ar-Rūm are the people of the Byzantine Empire at the time of the descent of the Revelation. Any time that Rūm would be mentioned one would have to take into account which lands the Byzantine Empire controlled at that time in order to understand what the lands of Rūm being discussed were. For example, in 615 AD Rhodes was considered as a part of Rūm, however throughout history it belonged to different empires and nations and therefore its classification depended on who controlled it. A rough timeline of the political status of Rhodes is as follows:

16th century BC - Minoa
15th century BC - Mycenae
8th century BC - Dorians
490 BC - Persian Empire
478 BC - Athenian League
408 BC - Independent Rhodes
357 BC - Caria
340 BC - Persian Empire
332 BC - Macedonian Kingdom
323 BC - Independent Rhodes
164 AD - Roman Empire
395 AD - Eastern Roman/Byzantine Empire
1309 - Knights Hospitaller
1522 - Ottoman Empire
1912 - Italy
1943 - Germany
1947 - Greece

As can be seen in the timeline, in 164 AD Rhodes became a part of the Roman Empire and when the Empire split into 2 parts it then became part of the Eastern/Byzantine Roman Empire. This means that since its initial settlement by the Minoans in the 16th century BC it was never known as being part of Rūm up until the Roman Empire took

control of it in 164 AD, therefore the only time that Rhodes was referred to as being part of Rūm was when it was under the control of the Romans. Therefore, the moment that Rūm lost control of Rhodes it would no longer have been considered to be a part of Rūm. Other than the 400 year period of control by the Ottomans (the reason why will be pointed out later), it is clear that Rhodes was no longer a part of Rūm after it was lost by the Byzantine Empire. Today we know Rhodes as being a part of Greece, meaning that it has reverted back to Greek rule under the control of the government in Athens like it was from 478 BC - 408 BC, and just as we know that Rhodes was not a part of Rūm during the Athenian rule then, so too it is not a part of Rūm today, rather it was only when Rhodes was controlled by the Roman Empire and its successors that it was identified as being a part of Rūm.

This understanding of how a land becomes a part of Rūm is essential to understanding which lands are to be considered as Rūm at various times. Understanding that a land is a part of Rūm so long as it is controlled by Rūm helps us to identify which lands were part of Rūm at different points in history, as well as helping us to understand what constitutes Rūm itself, and that is all the lands that are under its political control.

THE HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF RŪM ACCORDING TO IBN KATHĪR & ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EDMITES

In his well-known tafsīr (exegesis) of the Qur'an, the scholar Ibn Kathīr spends some time describing who Rūm refers to in the chapter of the Qur'an named after Rūm. Like all others before and after him, he correctly explains that Rūm at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an was the Byzantine Empire. At the time that Ibn Kathīr wrote his tafsīr (1370 AD), the Byzantine Empire mentioned in the Qur'an was still in existence, however it had been significantly reduced to a much weaker state and it possessed only a small area of land in the south-eastern corner of Europe. Despite the fact that the Byzantine Romans' capital was still Constantinople (which was the best defended city in the world at the time) the empire was but a mere shadow of what it used to be. However, despite its weakness and great reduction in size, it managed to protect its capital city from invaders and it was not for almost another century after Ibn Kathīr's time that the Ottomans finally captured the city and their last strongholds from them, effectively bringing the Byzantine Roman Empire to an end.

Ibn Kathīr begins his description of the Romans by quoting from what we refer to as the *isrā'īliyyāt*. These are narrations which are taken from the Jews and the Christians and do not appear in either the Qur'an or the Sunnah. Ibn Kathīr held that when no

evidence is available in the Revelation of Allah about the previous nations, then it is acceptable to look to what Ahlul-Kitāb (ie. the people of the Book - the Jews and the Christians) said about them. This methodology is not accepted as a means of establishing fact, and if one is to only accept that which is authentic then they would no doubt be forced to reject such narrations. It should be noted however that Ibn Kathīr himself did not quote their narrations as decisive proofs, but rather he quoted them merely as reports that may or may not have been true, and he agreed that they could not be used to claim any matter as fact due to the inability to authenticate such narrations. The *isrā'iliyyāt* therefore served as stories and statements mentioned by the Jews and Christians which would be quoted as possibilities only in the absence of any clear Revelation on a matter.

Ibn Kathīr states in his tafsīr speaking about the Romans: "With regard to the Romans (Rūm), they are the descendants of Esau the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham (Al-ʿĪs bin Iṣḥāq bin Ibrāhīm)"

At first this statement may seem odd to those familiar with the history of the Roman Empire, as it is well known that neither the Romans from the Western Roman Empire, nor those of the Byzantine Roman Empire were descended from the Biblical figure Esau who was a Semite from the Middle East. The origins of both the Western Romans and the Byzantines undoubtedly do not go back to Esau nor to any Semitic group, rather the origins of the earliest Romans go back to the tribe of the Latins (Latini) who spoke an Indo-European language (Latin) and had no links whatsoever to the Semites. The Latins had founded a number of states in the central Italian peninsula which fought one another in the Latin wars, until the strongest of the states defeated the rest and established itself as the state of all the Latins, that city-state as we know is none other than Rome. It is therefore established in history that Rome was originally founded by the Latins. So why then did Ibn Kathīr state that the Romans were descended from Esau the Semite from the Middle East? The origin of this statement is found in narrations of the Rabbis and scholars of the Jews, who associated the Romans with the Edomites. In fact, the Roman Empire and even Rome itself was commonly referred to by the Jews as *Edom* (meaning 'red' in Hebrew), a practice which continues up until today. Who then were the Edomites? They were in fact the direct descendants of Esau, who was commonly known by his nickname 'Edom'.

The reason why the Jews associated the Edomites with the Romans was because the Edomites who were located in what is today south-west Jordan as well as parts of the south-east of Palestine had allied themselves with the Romans, and it was from the Edomites that one of the ruling families of Palestine emerged. The ruler from this family that is most well-known from history is Herod the Great, allegedly the ruler of Palestine at the time of the Prophet Jesus. Herod was ethnically an Edomite and ruled on behalf of the Roman Empire which at the time was still based in Rome. The Jews therefore associated the Roman Empire with the Edomites, as the Romans that they

dealt with and knew of were in fact ethnic Edomites who ruled over the Palestinian areas of the Roman Empire. The fact that the Jews viewed the Edomites as Romans further shows that even to the Jews the definition of Rūm was a political one and not an ethnic one. The Jews called the Edomites as Romans because the Edomites had joined the Roman Empire and became governors of the Roman provinces in Palestine. Yet another understanding that can be gained from this is that the Jews viewed the Edomites as Romans even though the Edomites followed the Jewish religion, proving that even though the Edomites did not share the pagan religion of those in Rome, that they were still part of Rūm.

Again, it should be kept in mind that these claims regarding the Edomites are not from the Qur'an or the Sunnah but rather are narrations from the Jews and therefore do not constitute proofs for us, even though they are mentioned by Ibn Kathīr. However the premise that Rūm could be associated with an ethnic group other than the actual Romans from the Italian peninsula is something seen to have been universally accepted and this definition was used by Muslims, Jews and even the Romans themselves.

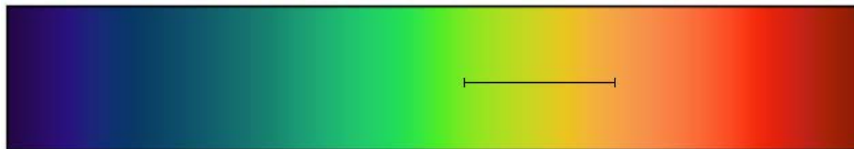
This association mentioned by Ibn Kathīr of Rūm with the Edomites therefore does have a historical basis to it, as the Romans absorbed the Edomite lands and caused the demonym 'Edomite' to effectively disappear, as they had come to be known as Romans and they became governors of the Roman provinces in the Middle East. The Edomites became Romans and lost their identity of Edomites over time until they were no longer recognised as being Edomites but were fully integrated Romans. This is why eventually the name 'Edomites' was dropped and was replaced with 'Romans', much like the descendants of the Aztecs today no longer call themselves Aztecs, but instead call themselves Mexicans, having adopted the name given to the land by the Spanish *conquistadores*. This is how the people that were formerly known as Edomites became known as the Romans of Palestine.

Ibn Kathīr continues, *"They are the cousins of the Children of Isrā'īl, and are also known as Banī Al-Aṣfar"*

The Edomites were closely related to the Jews (Banī Isrā'īl) as they were both descended from the Prophet Iṣḥāq which is why Ibn Kathīr referred to them as being cousins. It is said by the Jews however, that the Edomites turned away from the religion of Iṣḥāq and began to worship the Roman idols alongside Allah, and therefore they were considered to be apostates by the Jewish tribes who shunned the worship of idols. The name 'Edom' itself means 'red' in the Hebrew language and is known to be another name of Esau, as it was said that when he was born that he was reddish in complexion. Therefore, the name 'Edomites' literally means 'the sons of the reddish one'. What is very interesting is that the term used by the Arabs to commonly refer to

the Romans was 'the sons of the yellow one' (ie. *Banī Al-Aṣfar*). At first it may seem that the 2 colours red and yellow are entirely different and could not in fact be referring to the same individual or people, however a deeper knowledge of Ancient Hebrew will quickly show that they are most likely in fact referring to the same colour.

In the Ancient Hebrew language there was no clear way to say 'yellow' as no word for the colour yellow existed in their language at the time. One of the closest words used to describe the color yellow in the Ancient Hebrew language was *yarūq* which actually meant 'green', however at times it was also used to refer to the colour of gold, which we associate with the colour yellow. The fact that yellow as a colour did not exist in the Hebrew language means that there was no way to express that something was yellow, rather a Hebrew speaker would compare the shade of yellow that he saw to the nearest colour available, and in the case of a greenish-yellow he would call it green, and if it were a reddish-yellow he would call it red. This means that the usage of the term *Edom* to describe a 'reddish' newborn may have actually been referring to a colour that we in the English language would more likely associate with the colour yellow, something that is very common in newborns who are jaundiced, especially as a jaundiced baby does often appear to be reddish (the word jaundice itself comes from the French word *jaune* meaning yellow). This is why it is very likely that when the Jews called Esau 'reddish' that they were likely referring to a yellowish shade rather than a deep red.



Colour spectrum showing the transition between green, yellow and red

The name *Banī Al-Aṣfar* is mentioned in the Sunnah and is used to refer to an ethnic group who were allies and subjects of the Byzantine Romans. An example of this is in a ḥadīth narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*:

إِنَّهُ يَخَافُهُ مَلِكُ بَنِي الْأَصْفَرِ

"Verily even the King of *Banī Al-Aṣfar* (referring to Heraclius, the Roman Emperor) fears him." [*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 2978]

Is it possible therefore that the Roman subjects who are referred to as 'the sons of the yellow one' in Arabic are indeed the same 'sons of the red one' referred to in Hebrew? It seems very likely, and the fact that it is stated clearly that both names refer to the

Romans makes it hard to assume that it could be referring to anyone else but the Romans. Banī Al-Aṣfar and the Edomites are most likely one and the same, both referring to the sons of Esau who later became Roman citizens. This explains why Ibn Kathīr described Banī Al-Aṣfar as being a part of the Romans as well as cousins of the Jews, a description that applies only to the Edomites and no other group throughout history.

Ibn Kathīr continues describing Rūm by mentioning that they were later the ones who built the Temple of Jupiter in Damascus, and they eventually embraced Christianity and based themselves in the city of Constantinople. By mentioning this we see clearly that he associates Rūm with none other than the Roman Empire which was founded in the city of Rome, and he does not differentiate between the Western and Eastern Roman Empires, but calls them both Rūm. History shows that it was indeed the Romans who built the Temple of Jupiter in Damascus, and we know that they abandoned paganism in favour of Christianity. His association of Rūm with not only the Romans of his time, who were the Eastern (Byzantine) Romans, but also the earlier Western Romans shows that he accepted that Rūm is not a monolithic state based in one area that does not change, but rather he conceded that the definition Rūm changed over time in very significant ways. 2 of those changes are most important to note - firstly that Rūm formerly worshiped many gods and were pagans, however they later became Christians, meaning that Rūm was not defined by any specific religion, but rather the empire remained as Rūm even when they adopted Christianity as their religion. This implies that Rūm does not have to be Christian (nor any other religion), as there was a time when it was in fact a pagan nation yet was still known as Rūm. The second important point is that Rūm changed in location but still continued to be called Rūm. It went from being based in Rome to being based in Constantinople, and was still called Rūm by Ibn Kathīr even after it lost control of the city of Rome. From Ibn Kathīr's descriptions of Rūm it becomes clear that the only factor that he recognises as defining Rūm over time is that of allegiance and belonging to the political control of the Empire regardless of religion or location.

WHAT DEFINES RŪM?

Since it is known and accepted that Rūm significantly changed in its character over time, as it developed from a small city state based in the city of Rome, to becoming the Kingdom of Rome, then the Roman Empire, and eventually the Byzantine Empire, the question arises, what is it that defines Rūm? It is understood that Rūm, despite being founded in Rome and named after the city still continued to be called Rūm even after the empire lost control of the city of Rome, and so it is essential to understand what it

is that actually defines Rūm and which factors are irrelevant to its definition.

The first factors that we can understand as being irrelevant to defining Rūm, and why they are irrelevant are as follow -

Location - Rūm was founded in the city of Rome and it remained its capital for 8 centuries, until later being transferred to the city of Constantinople (modern day Istanbul) where the capital of the Empire remained for another 11 centuries. The capital of the Western Roman Empire was also located for brief periods in the cities of Milan and Ravenna. The actual area of Rūm changed over time, it began as a small kingdom that controlled only the city of Rome, and then at its peak controlled most of Europe, all of Anatolia, much of the Caucasus as well as the Middle East and large parts of Egypt and North Africa. Control of the actual city of Rome was not always in the hands of Rūm, and by the time of the Byzantine control of Rūm the city of Rome was lost completely in the early 9th century and was never again regained by Rūm up until today. The fact that Rūm has had control over so many areas, and that it was founded in Rome and later ended up only being the city of Constantinople shows that Rūm is not specific to any one area, rather it was always defined as being located in any area that Rūm had control over. The Qur'an and Sunnah confirm this, locating Rūm only in the areas contemporaneously controlled by Rūm, and not permanently in any specific area.

Type of State - Rūm has gone through various stages of existence, beginning as a kingdom (753 BC-509 BC), then a republic (509 BC-27 BC), and then an empire (27BC-1453AD). Since it has existed in many forms, it is understood that Rūm has no specific designation as any specific type of state, rather it has existed in many different forms, and we are not told in the Qur'an or Sunnah that it must be of any of these types.

Ethnicity/Tribe - Rome was first ruled by a king from the Latini (Latins) and had a majority Latin populace, however its second king was from the tribe of the Sabines. As Rome grew it began to absorb many of the surrounding tribes such as the Albans, the Sabines and the rest of the Latins and eventually it absorbed all of the tribes of the Italian peninsula, from the Sicels and Italoites in the south, the Samnites and Umbrians in the central peninsula, to the Etruscans, Umbrians and Celts in the north. As Rome grew it controlled much of Europe and its rulers came from the following tribes and peoples:

Latin, Sabine, Etruscan, Celt, various Italian tribes, Gaulish, Spanish, Dacian, Moesian, Illyrian, Carthaginian, Syrian, Mauretanian, Pannonian & Danubian.

Romans rulers of the early Roman Kingdom, Republic and Empire came from the tribes mentioned, and this shows that Rome was not defined by any one tribe or ethnicity. This is why the Roman Empire eventually continued to be under the control of Greek Byzantines yet was still considered to be Rūm, as the definition of Rūm was never defined by any specific ethnicity. Further to this nowhere in the Qur'an or Sunnah are we told that Rūm is associated with any specific tribe, other than the mention that Banī Al-Aṣfar are one of the Roman tribes.

Language - Rūm had 2 main languages for most of its history, Latin and Greek. Latin was the language of Rome up until the fall of the Western Empire, after which the Eastern Byzantine Empire took control of Rūm and the main language of the Empire became Greek. Along with these 2 official languages, many other languages would have been spoken by the people over whom the Romans ruled, however the 2 main languages that were spread throughout the Empire were Latin and Greek. The fact that Rūm existed with its official language as both Latin and Greek shows that no language is specific to Rūm, nor are we told in the Qur'an or Sunnah that Rūm has a specific language which it speaks.

Religion - Rūm began as a kingdom that worshiped the Greek gods and gave them Latin names, forming what came to be known as the Roman Religion. In its early stages Rūm was therefore a pagan empire. In the year 380 the Roman emperor Constantine became a Christian, and the religion of the empire was changed from paganism to Christianity. Throughout the centuries, various forms of Christianity were present even among the Roman emperors, some were trinitarian, some were Arian (unitarian) and some were between the two and are referred to as semi-Arians. The Eastern Byzantine Empire later followed Orthodox Christianity whilst the Western Empire remained loyal to the Pope in Rome and became known as Catholics. Along with Christianity, many Jews lived in Rūm in the province of Palestine and the Roman Empire regulated their religious affairs and tolerated Judaism. It has also been uncovered by historians that for many centuries a large part of the Roman soldiers followed a religion known as Mithraism which came from Persia. Since all of these religions existed in Rūm and the official religion of Rūm changed often over the centuries, it is clear that no single religion ever defined Rūm, rather religion is not and has never been a decisive factor in the identity of Rūm.

So if Rūm was not defined by location, type of state, ethnicity, language or religion, what was it that defined Rūm over the many centuries? The answer, as alluded to earlier is that Rūm is a political state that is identified by nothing other than political affiliation. Even when the Roman Empire split and the Western Empire collapsed, it continued in the form of the Eastern Empire which had become the political centre of Rūm and was the seat of its capital and seat of its political power. Every definition listed above may be considered to have been specific traits of Rūm at certain times, but they are not what defined Rūm itself and therefore in attempting to identify Rūm in our

times it is only the political identity of Rūm that matters and not any of the above points.

THE IDENTITY OF RŪM AFTER THE FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE AND IN THE LAST DAYS

So the question arises - If in the past Rūm referred only to the Roman Empire in its various stages, then who should Rūm be understood to refer to in prophecies concerning our times and the Last Days?

The remnants of the Byzantine Roman Empire based in Constantinople eventually fell to the hands of the Muslims when Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ conquered the city in 1453, destroying the Roman Empire which had lasted for many centuries. If it were not for the mention of Rūm in the prophecies of the Last Days one would may assume that Rūm effectively ended with the fall of Constantinople and the end of the Empire in 857 AH (1453 CE), however the fact that the Prophet ﷺ mentioned Rūm in future events means that without doubt Rūm will exist in the Last Days and in fact never ceased to exist but rather continued to exist under a new identity. Just as the Western Roman Empire was destroyed and thus the Byzantine Empire inherited the title of Rūm, so too with the fall of the Byzantines, the identity of Rūm was 'inherited' by a new entity, and would continue to be in existence until the Last Days. Since we know that the Roman Empire based in Rome no longer exists, and that the Byzantine Empire who inherited the identity of Rūm also no longer exists - we ask, who then inherited the title of Rūm? Who is Rūm today and will they be the same Rūm mentioned in the prophecies mentioned by the Prophet of Allah ﷺ?

I am not the first to ask these questions nor the first to discuss this matter, in fact I can safely assume that many of you reading this will have asked yourself these same questions in the past and may have even heard various opinions as to whom Rūm refers to from others' opinions on the matter. I am familiar with these various opinions and understandings as to who Rūm refers to in the prophecies, and I am aware that there is much differing on this subject and no agreed conclusion to the question about the identity of Rūm. This is due to the nature of the prophecies being as I described earlier, clear in some areas yet unclear in other areas. The identity of Rūm as we know is never specifically tied to any group or location and due to this many of the classical scholars assumed that Rūm would refer to the same Roman Empire (ie. the Byzantines) that they knew in their times, and this would be the most obvious conclusion to draw so long as one expected the Roman Empire to last until the time of the prophecies, however once the Roman Empire fell and ceased to exist, the identity of Rūm in the future thus became unclear which is why there are no agreed upon understandings of who Rūm will be even among the earlier scholars of Islam, nor is it

entirely clear how we are to know who they are in our times. Before analysing the various existing opinions as to who Rūm is I will first let you know that I do have a very strong personal opinion on whom Rūm is and after looking at the opinions of others I will explain why I hold this opinion and leave you to decide for yourself if you agree or disagree. What must be understood however is that I am not claiming without doubt that I am right and others are wrong as the nature of the prophecies is unclear and thus we can only make conclusions based upon our understandings, and we should not insist that our conclusions are correct as the matters are yet to occur and we should be cautious about claiming to know what will happen in the future and this is why I will state that I have an opinion which I strongly support based upon the evidences which I will present, but in no way do I claim that what I support is going to be correct beyond doubt. Rather we always say about such matters of the future '*Allāhu A 'lam'*' (Allah alone knows best). With that said, here are some of the most common opinions regarding the identity of Rūm, and I will save my own opinion for later on in the piece after these opinions are discussed.

THE MOST COMMONLY ENCOUNTERED OPINIONS REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF RŪM IN OUR TIMES

1. **The Byzantine (Roman) Empire** - This was originally a unanimously held opinion, and was the opinion held by almost all of the scholars of the Ummah up until 857 AH (1453 AD). The opinion was based upon the fact that the Roman Empire was always known as Rūm by the Muslims, it was identified by the Prophet ﷺ and the Companions as Rūm, and was the only entity ever referred to by the Muslims as Rūm.

Why this opinion is incorrect - Despite the fact that it was correct that the Byzantine Empire was indeed Rūm at the time of the Prophet ﷺ, this opinion did not take into account the fact that Rūm could be destroyed and that the title of Rūm would be passed to a new and different entity, like how this occurred when the original Roman Empire based in Rome was destroyed and ceased to exist, and the Byzantines inherited the title from them. Those who held this opinion cannot be held to blame for not assuming that the Roman Empire would be eliminated as this is something that was not available for them to know at their time, and considering that the Roman Empire still existed in their time it would have been the most obvious conclusion to assume that Rūm would still continue to be the Byzantine Empire in the Last Days.

2. **Italy** - This opinion relies on the fact that Italy is where the Roman Empire was founded and its capital city is Rome after which Rūm was named. In an example of synecdoche, 'Rome' in political parlance is understood to refer to the Italian Republic,

just as 'Washington' refers to the government of the USA and thus the entire nation. Therefore it is argued by some that Rūm should be understood to mean Italy, as Rome in our times refers to Italy.

Why this opinion is weak - As mentioned above, the city of Rome itself has nothing to do with defining Rūm. The Byzantine Empire was known as Rūm even when it did not control the city of Rome, and culturally Rūm at the time of the Prophet ﷺ had very little in common with the city of Rome. History shows that the title of Rūm was inherited by the Byzantines from the Western Roman Empire and at no point did it revert back to the city of Rome or to any entity in the Italian peninsula.

3. Russia - This opinion relies on the conclusion that since the majority of Russians belong to the Orthodox church which was the official denomination of the Eastern Roman Empire at the time of its fall, that Russia, having the largest Orthodox population on Earth are therefore the most deserving to inherit the title of Rūm. Another suggestion is that upon the fall of the Roman Empire many Russians began to refer to Moscow as the 'Third Rome', implying that it was the successor of the Roman empires based in Rome and Constantinople (which is called by them the 'second Rome') and therefore as some Russians called Moscow the third Rome that it is a proof that Russia, to which Moscow belongs, is Rūm in our days.

Why this opinion is weak - The definition of Rūm had never been understood to be a religious definition. In fact the Roman Empire was originally pagan and worshiped the Greek and Roman gods, yet none ever claimed that it was necessary to follow the pagan Roman religion to be called Rūm. Further to this, the religious denomination of Rūm at the time of the Prophet ﷺ cannot be described as belonging to the Orthodox Church as the schism between the Western Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox Christians had not yet occurred, and did not take place until the year 1054 CE. This meant that during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, Rūm was still under the patronage of the Pope based in Rome. After the schism between the Western Church and the Eastern Church it is true that the city of Constantinople became the seat of the Orthodox Church which was the state religion of the Byzantine Roman Empire, however the seat of the Orthodox Church until today remains in the Turkish city of Istanbul (the modern name for Constantinople), not in Moscow or any part of Russia. Never at any point in history was the authority of the Orthodox Church transferred to Russia. A further point worth noting is that Russia itself was never a part of the Roman Empire, nor did Russia inherit anything from the Roman Empire in any way. As has already been shown, the title of Rūm is inherited by those who control the domains of Roman Empire and not merely by professing the same religion as the people of Rūm.

4. The Orthodox Christian Nations - The reasoning for this is the same as point number 3, that those who share the religion of the Byzantine Romans are the inheritors

of the title of Rūm, except expanded to include all Orthodox Christian peoples of the world.

Why this opinion is weak - Similar to the opinion on Russia, this opinion relies on the notion that having a shared religion with the Byzantine Romans implies that they should inherit the title of Rūm. Like with the opinion regarding Russia, this definition too is incorrect. If Rūm were to have been defined by the religion of the state, then all Orthodox nations would have been called Rūm by the Muslims throughout time, but this was never the case. The Orthodox Christian people outside of the Roman Empire were never referred to as being part of Rūm by the Muslims throughout history and thus this opinion is not correct.

5. Europe/EU - This opinion relies on the supposition that Europe as a whole is the 'cultural successor' of the Roman Empire. It is suggested also that as predecessor organisation of the EU which was called the EEC was founded in the city of Rome, in what was called the Treaty of Rome, that the EU is essentially a 'Roman' organisation. It is also said that since the Germanic nations of Europe in the past formed an alliance which called itself the 'Holy Roman Empire' in 962, it should be seen that even the Germanic people who live in the heart of Europe can be called the cultural successors of Europe. Some also claim that since the Mediterranean Sea was known to the Arabs as the 'Roman sea' [baḥr Rūm] and the Mediterranean sea lies to the southern borders of Europe that all of the lands of Europe are thus to be considered as being part of Rūm.

Why this opinion is weak - Whilst it is true that the Western Roman Empire was the foundation for much of Europe's culture and identity, we must remember that Rūm was not a European empire. In fact most of the land of Rūm was located outside of Europe, divided mostly between the Middle East and North Africa. Therefore any illusion that Rūm was somehow 'European' is entirely incorrect. The culture of Rūm was very different to that of Europe today and the 2 cultures have very little in common. It is known from history that in no way did Europe ever inherit the title of Rūm, nor does the EU even attempt to claim such a thing. At the time of the Prophet ﷺ the majority of Europe was not part of the Roman Empire and thus Europe had very little to do with Rūm, it is only seen that it did in the minds of those trying to create a European unity based on the myth of a shared culture founded primarily upon the influence of the Western Roman Empire. As for the Germanic-dominated 'Holy Roman Empire', it existed at the same time as the Roman Empire and was an entirely separate entity with no links at all to Rūm, and therefore could in no way be an inheritor of the title of Rūm. Further to this, there was nothing Roman at all about the Holy Roman Empire, it was simply a case of Germans appropriating the name 'Roman' trying to seek legitimacy with the Catholic Church against the Eastern Roman Empire. The reality as described by the European writer Voltaire was that the Holy Roman

Empire was "Neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire."

As for the claim about the Mediterranean sea being known as the 'Roman sea', this is a name that was not used by the Prophet ﷺ or his Companions but rather was applied to the sea later on. The reason why the Muslims later used this name is that what was considered to be Rūm at their time lied on the Mediterranean Sea, even though Rūm at that time only occupied a small part of the entire Mediterranean. Suggesting that all of the lands lying on the Mediterranean should be considered to be part of Rūm simply because some people called the Mediterranean the Roman sea would be like claiming that all of Africa, Asia and Australasia are part of India simply because they are located in the areas of the Indian ocean!

6. The USA & the Western nations - This opinion is similar to the previous one, in that it is suggested that 'Roman culture' did not only influence Europe, but also the USA which was founded by Europeans and therefore it should be said that the USA and the European-influenced Western nations in general are the cultural successors of Rome. It is pointed out by those holding this opinion that the USA often builds its government buildings in Roman styles and that it uses the Latin language for its national and state mottoes.

Why this opinion is weak - Western culture has very little to do with Rūm which was primarily an Eastern and not a Western entity. Even though the USA has some parts of its culture that are taken from the Western Roman Empire, most of its modern culture has nothing to do with neither the Eastern nor Western Roman Empires. Neither the USA nor any Western nation ever claimed to be the successors of Rome, nor did they inherit anything from Rūm in any way. As for the use of the Latin language, this is rather meaningless as the state language as well as the most spoken language of Rūm at the time of the Prophet ﷺ was Greek and not Latin.

7. Christendom - This opinion suggests that since Christianity was the religion of Rūm that therefore Christendom and the Christian nations in general should be seen as being the successors of Rūm in our days.

Why this opinion is weak - As has been established already, the definition of Rūm was never a religious definition, but rather it was defined as being the entity which inherited the political authority of the Roman Empire. The Prophet ﷺ never referred to any Christians that he interacted with as being Romans, nor did he ever infer that Christianity had anything to do with Rūm. Therefore to claim that every Christian somehow belongs to Rūm would be an error. If we were to claim that Roman by its definition meant 'Christian' then the companion of the Prophet ﷺ Şuhayb Al-Rūmī (Suhayb the Roman) would surely not have continued to refer to himself by such a

name as it would have implied that he were not a Muslim but rather a Christian! The definition of Rūmī in his name is that he came from the lands controlled by the Roman Empire, and was therefore a Roman even though he had abandoned their religion.

During the time of the Crusades in which the Christians invaded Palestine and its surrounding areas, the Roman Empire still existed and the European Crusaders were actually opposed to the Eastern Roman Empire and attacked the Roman city of Constantinople. This shows that the European Christians were in fact enemies of Rūm at many times and had little in common with its people and did not consider themselves to be Romans in any way, despite their common religion. In addition to this, the Muslims never referred to the Christian Crusaders as being Romans, rather they called them farānj (Franks), yet again showing that Rūm was only associated with the Roman Empire and not with Christendom in general.

8. Romania - This opinion suggests that since the name of Romania is derived from the name 'Rome' that it qualifies to be called Rūm, especially as the Byzantine Empire was colloquially known as Rōmanīa during its existence.

Why this opinion is weak - There is no evidence to suggest that simply having the name Rome implies that a nation has inherited the title of Rūm. If this were the case then any country could rename itself 'Rome' and claim to be Rūm but this is not at all how the inheritance of the name of Rūm works, as has been explained above.

These above are the eight main opinions as to the identity of Rūm in our times that are commonly encountered and represent the many different reasons given for why some believe that each qualifies to be Rūm. There are other opinions that some hold however they are either inherently weak and flimsy, without any proof or they are very rarely discussed and therefore unfamiliar to most. Some of the opinions even border on being absurd conspiracies, and it seems that the imaginations of certain folk truly run wild and some outrageously absurd opinions as to who Rūm is can be heard. It almost seems that the only conspiracy about Rūm that I have not encountered yet is that Rūm is actually an alien nation who will invade our planet! Due to the absurd nature of such theories there is no reason to mention them especially as each of them is easily debunked using the same lines of reasoning applied to the opinions above. An example of this would be to suggest that the Gypsies of Europe are to be considered as Rūm because the name which they use for themselves is 'Roma' which sounds like Rome. Such reasoning is not correct and is dismissed as weak and baseless.

WHO INHERITED THE TITLE OF RŪM UPON THE FALL OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE?

What should be clear by now regarding the definition of Rūm and which nation may inherit its name is that Rūm (the Byzantine Empire) at the time of the Prophet ﷺ earned the name as it was the political successor of the Roman Empire founded in the city of Rome, therefore political succession of the original Roman Empire is what defines a nation as being Rūm. The first major succession occurred when the Roman Empire transferred its capital to 'New Rome' which was the city of Constantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire was formed. As soon as the Western Empire fell and ceased to exist then the Byzantine Empire became Rūm as they were the political successors of Rome and the holders of the remnants of the land of the Roman Empire. As a reminder, a nation does not need to be Christian to be called Rūm as it has been established that Ṣuhayb, the Muslim companion of the Prophet ﷺ was named Rūmī (Roman) despite being a Muslim, and the Prophet would never have allowed a Muslim to call himself by such a name if it were synonymous with being a Christian. So with the understanding that Rūm is defined by political succession and acquisition of the remaining land of the Roman Empire the answer to who the successor of the Byzantine Empire upon its fall is very clear - The successor to the Byzantine Empire and thus the inheritor of the title Rūm was the Ottoman Empire who defeated the Byzantines and absorbed all of their lands, just like the Byzantine Empire absorbed the lands of the Roman Empire.

With the Muslim conquest of Constantinople and the few remaining Byzantine lands, the Ottoman Empire successfully defeated Rūm and wiped the Byzantine leadership from existence. The line of leadership which led Rūm since the time of the Prophet ﷺ had been defeated, no longer controlling any land nor having any power. The last piece of land which Rūm held had been conquered by the Ottomans, as the rest of their land had been in the decades previous to the fall of Constantinople. Upon the defeat of the Romans the Muslim ruler Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ fully acknowledged that he considered himself to be the inheritor of the nation of Rūm and began to refer to himself as the Caesar of Rome [Qayṣar Al-Rūm], adopting the title used by the Roman rulers for himself, and openly acknowledged that his nation was the 'new Rome' and had thus inherited the title of Rūm from the Byzantines. The land which we refer to as Anatolia (which makes up most of modern-day Turkey) continued to be called Rūm by the Muslims for many centuries afterwards, and some cities within Anatolia still bear the name of Rūm within them until today. The Muslim inhabitants of the newly-conquered Constantinople and Anatolia often called themselves Rūmī and there are numerous examples of famous Islamic figures who carried this name from among the Ottomans. The Ottoman Empire was the only Empire on Earth that could lay claim to being Rūm as it alone conquered the Byzantine Empire and took its lands and power, and only the Ottoman Empire claimed to be the successors of Rūm and used the title of Rūm for itself.

Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ proclaimed that he wished to establish what he saw as the ‘third Rome’, with the first Rome being led by polytheists, the second Rome led by Christians, and the third Rome led by Muslims. It was clear that he not only saw himself as the leader of Rūm, but that he wished to transfer Rūm from being Christian empire into being a Muslim state. This is something that he saw himself to achieved. Just as the Palaeologus dynasty ruled over Rūm as Christian rulers until its fall, so too the Ottomans would be the new Muslim rulers of Rūm.

It should therefore be very clear that the Ottoman Empire became Rūm upon the fall of the Byzantine Empire. The Ottomans were the political successors of the Byzantines, taking over their capital city and conquering all of the land which they controlled. The Ottomans openly considered themselves to be the successors of Rūm, their leader called himself the Caesar of Rūm and the Ottoman people living in Constantinople and Anatolia called themselves Rūmī (Romans). This shows that the Ottomans alone fulfil the criteria as the successors and inheritors of Rūm and no other nation or people can claim what the Ottomans did

After the conquest of Constantinople, Gennadios, the Christian Patriarch of Constantinople who was the leader of the Orthodox Christians and the head of the Orthodox Church openly declared that he on behalf of the Orthodox Church acknowledged Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ as the new Caesar of Rome and that the Ottoman Empire was indeed the inheritor of Rome. This firmly established that the Ottomans were the new Rūm. The fact that even the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church declared that the Ottomans were the successors of Rūm makes the position held by some that Russia or the Orthodox nations are Rūm impossible to hold, as the Orthodox themselves declared that Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ was the new Caesar of Rome and the Ottomans who succeeded him in turn inherited that title. Therefore those who incorrectly claim that the Orthodox Church were the inheritors of the title of Rūm as they shared the same religion as the Byzantines must acknowledge that even the Orthodox Church itself declared that the Ottomans were the successors of Rūm and not the Orthodox Church or any of the Orthodox nations.

To summarise this, the points regarding the reasons why the Ottomans inherited the title of Rūm and not any other nation are as follow -

- The Ottomans were the ones who defeated the Byzantines, took possession of all their lands, their capital city and inherited their political rule.

- The Ottomans conquered the lands of Rūm and conquered all of the areas that Rūm ever controlled in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as almost all of the former Roman lands of Eastern Europe.

- The Ottomans were the only nation that claimed to be the inheritors of the title of Rūm and they openly used this title.

- Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ openly declared himself to be the Caesar of Rome and used that title for himself upon the fall of the Byzantine Empire and he was the only leader to do so. This title continued to be inherited by all of the Ottoman leaders after him.

- The Orthodox Patriarch Gennadius openly declared that Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ was the new Caesar of Rome, and that the Ottomans were the inheritors of the Roman Empire.

As an additional point, despite being shown earlier that ethnicity and bloodline play no part in defining who Rūm is, it may be notable for some that Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ was in fact a descendant of the Byzantine royal family, as were many of the Ottoman sultans. The second Ottoman sultan Orhan married a Byzantine princess named Asporsha who was the daughter of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos III, Sultan Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ was a descendant of Orhan and Asporsha. In addition to this there was also a nephew of one of the Byzantine emperors who was an ancestor of Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ, again adding to the fact that the Sultan was closely related to the Byzantine Roman rulers by blood.

Considering the above points it should be very clear that the Ottomans were in fact the political successors of Rūm and the inheritors of the title of Rūm, a fact that they not only accepted but openly promoted. The Ottomans therefore did not claim that they had destroyed Rūm so that it no longer existed, but rather they boasted of how they had conquered Rūm and had adopted its titles. This is an important point to note, that the Ottomans claimed to be the successors of the Byzantines and the new Rūm. No other nation could lay claim to any of the factors in inheriting the title of Rūm that the Ottomans did, and so the conclusion that the Ottomans were the sole inheritors of Rūm and continued to be Rūm throughout its existence up until its fall in 1923.

THE TRANSFER OF EMPIRE

The concept of how an empire changes hands is something which has been discussed throughout history. Many empires have fallen and been conquered by others or had their leadership change in some way. This concept was known as *translatio imperii*, meaning the transfer of empire. This concept was important as it not only defined how empires could continue to exist despite having a change of leadership, but it also helped to explain how empires were defined by their leadership, the ones who controlled it, not by racial or geographical descriptions.

This concept continues in our days, though it is known simply as ‘succession of state’. Just as empires in the past would collapse or be conquered, so too in recent times we have seen states change, and much debate takes place about the succession of the former state. For example, when the Soviet Union collapsed, it was Russia that declared itself as the successor to the Soviet Union, based upon the fact that the Soviet leadership had effectively handed power to Russia, and that Russia controlled the Soviet capital and was unopposed by the breakaway states as being the sole successor to the Soviet Union. Although Russia is smaller in size than what the Soviet Union was, it was by all means the unopposed and obvious political successor to the Soviet Union.

Occasionally some states collapse and are not succeeded, for example Yugoslavia broke up into many smaller nations, and though Serbia initially claimed to be the successor state to Yugoslavia there was bitter dispute about this, and eventually Serbia relinquished its claim and Yugoslavia ceased to exist with no state succeeding it. This act of conscious voluntary succession is important to understand, as one of the most important factors in defining a successor state is that the state actually considers itself to be a successor. If the state refused to be the successor to the previous state then succession has not truly occurred, as succession is a political matter and not based upon anything else as described earlier.

In this way, it is made clear that the Ottomans voluntarily declared themselves to be the successors of Rūm under the Byzantines, just as Byzantine Rūm were the successors of Roman Rūm.

WHO IS RŪM TODAY?

Since the Ottomans were the political successors and inheritors of Rūm, who then is Rūm in our day? The answer is quite simple, as one only need ask - Who were the political successors and inheritors of the Ottoman Empire once the empire fell? The answer should be very clear, the successor of the Ottoman Empire is well known by all to be the Republic of Turkey, the sole state that claimed to be the successor of the Ottoman Empire.

Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) was a commander in the Ottoman Army in the period in which the empire became severely weakened and was about to fall to the European powers. He successfully defended the Ottoman lands in Anatolia and its surrounding areas ensuring that the lands would not be lost entirely. It was in this period that the Ottoman Empire came to an end at the hands of the Turkish Nationalists who overthrew the empire which had existed for more than 6 centuries and established the Republic of Turkey in its place. The Sultanate was abolished and Mustafa Kemal became the leader of the new republic. Turkey as a new nation succeeded the Ottoman Empire and took control of the former Ottoman lands, including its capital city Istanbul. Despite being a secular state which was opposed to the Islamic Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic adopted many of the symbols of the Ottomans such as the national flag which was red with a white crescent moon and star. This symbol in itself predates its adoption by the Ottomans and was initially used by the Eastern Roman Empire as the flag of the city of Constantinople; it was adopted by the Ottomans when they conquered Rūm and ever since it became associated with the Ottoman Empire and consequently its successor state - Turkey. It is worth noting as well that genetically, the inhabitants of Turkey are more closely related to the Roman/Byzantine inhabitants of Rūm than to the Turks of Central Asia from whence came their name. The Turkish people are essentially the descendants of the Byzantines and are more closely related to Europeans, Circassians and Caucasians than to the Mongols or Turks with whose name they share.

Since the Turkish acquisition of the title of Rūm from the Ottomans, no nation has completely defeated the Turkish nation nor been able to acquire their political power or land. Therefore Rūm in our times continues to be the Republic of Turkey and will have been the only nation of Rūm that most of us have ever known (except for the very few who lived in Ottoman times). It is not foreseeable in the very near future that Turkey should fall to any of the European powers who for the time being are favourable towards Turkey and some wish to see it join the European Union. Rather, the only current threat to Turkey is on its southern borders, and this is where the relevance of Turkey being Rūm in the Last Days becomes clear. Up until this point I have only provided evidence that analyses why Turkey is Rūm according to inheritance of the title from the Byzantine Empire. However, to properly understand why Turkey is Rūm we now must look at the relevant aḥādīth concerning Rūm in the

last days to see how Turkey fits in to our current situation.

One of the first confusions that one may find in looking at the Prophetic aḥādīth is that there are many mentions of 'Turks' and some become confused and incorrectly associate these aḥādīth with the modern Republic of Turkey. In order to understand why these aḥādīth are not relevant to the discussion of Rūm it must be explained lest there remain any misconceptions as to who the Turks are that were mentioned by the Prophet.

WHO ARE THE TURKS MENTIONED IN THE AHĀDĪTH OF THE PROPHET?

The Prophet of Allah said:

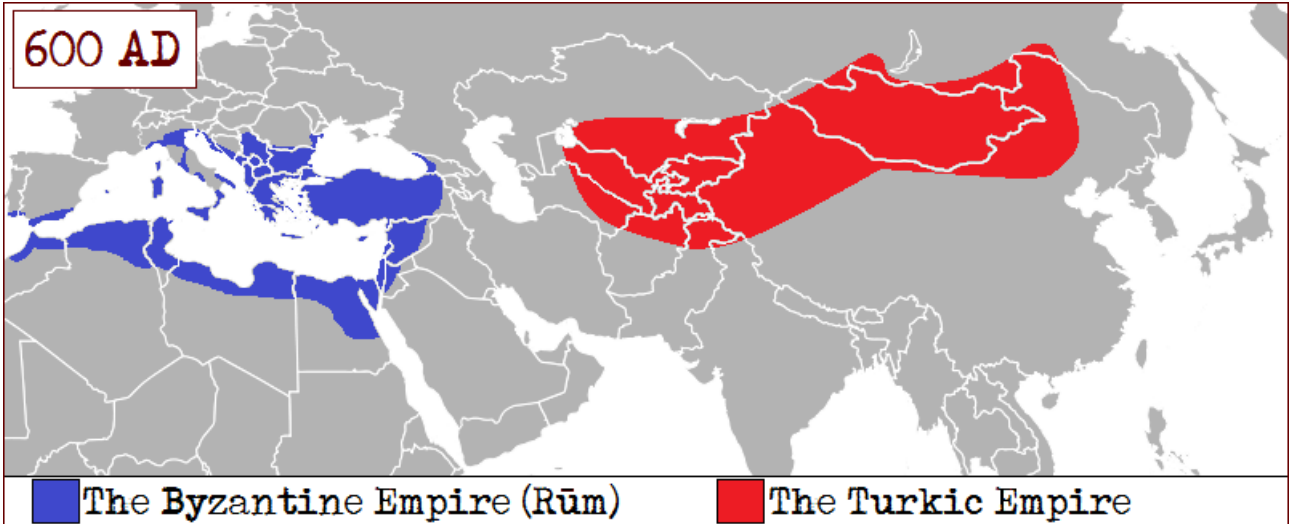
دَعُوا الْحَبَشَةَ مَا وَدَعُوكُمْ وَاتْرُكُوا التُّرُكَ مَا تَرَكَوكُمْ

"Leave the Abyssinians alone as long as they leave you alone, and leave the Turks alone as long as they leave you alone." [Abū Dāwūd 4302]

In this ḥadīth the word 'Turk' is used to identify a specific group of people, and the general identity of this group was known to the Arabs at the time of the Prophet just as the identity of the Abyssinians was known to them. The 'Turks' were a people located to the east of Persia, and to the west of China. They extended all the way up into Northern Siberia and covered most of the areas of Central Asia. The early Muslims referred to the area which they inhabited as *mā warā' an-nahr* [ما وراء النهر] which means 'The land beyond the river', in this case referring to the Oxus river which is located along the border of modern-day Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The people who lived in this land spoke the Turkic language, the oldest known examples of which are found written around Eastern Mongolia as well as East Turkestan which is located in present-day China.

The first Turkic empire to exist was the Göktürk Empire (also referred to as the Turkic Khaganate) whose population spoke the Old Turkic language. The empire existed during the lifetime of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and it was the population of this empire that was known to the Arabs as the Turks, and in fact the Göktürks themselves simply referred to themselves as 'Turks'. During the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ this

empire stretched all the way from Northern Persia to Eastern Mongolia. It must be noted however that at no point did the Turks reach the area of Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) nor did they reach any of the areas close to it. The Göktürk Empire covered almost all of Central Asia and Mongolia as well as large parts of South-Eastern Russia and Northern China.



(A map showing the location of the Turkic Empire and the Byzantine Empire c. 600 AD)

In the year 1206 the Mongol Empire was founded and the Mongols (who were not Turks but spoke a closely related language) quickly conquered the Turks and began to invade the Muslim lands. As the Mongol Empire spread eastwards towards the Muslims the bulk of their soldiers were the Turks who they had recently conquered, and the eventual clash between the Mongol led Turks and the Muslims was described in the prophecy of the Prophet ﷺ:

لَا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حَتَّى تُقَاتِلُوا قَوْمًا كَأَنَّ وُجُوهَهُمُ الْمَجَانُّ الْمُطْرَقَةُ وَلَا تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ حَتَّى
تُقَاتِلُوا قَوْمًا نَعَالُهُمُ الشَّعْرُ

"The Last Hour would not come until the Muslims fight with the Turks, a people whose faces would be like hammered shields wearing clothes of hair and walking with shoes made of hair." [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2912]

This ḥadīth undoubtedly refers to the Mongol-Turkic army that the Muslims fought and defeated in what was the largest assault ever witnessed upon the Muslim lands until today. The ḥadīth is amazing in that it even specifies the specific type of shoes that the Mongols would wear, something that is truly astounding since the Mongol invasion occurred 6 centuries after the life of the Prophet ﷺ, yet he mentioned even down to the finest details how this army would be. The 'Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire' (Atwood, 2004) mentions that the traditional footwear of the

Mongols and their people at the time of the Mongol Empire was made out of the hair of cows, and on some occasions sources mention that also the hair of camels would be used.

So we see that the prophecies of the Turks referred to the Mongols and Turks of Central Asia and therefore are irrelevant to the discussion about Rūm, as the Republic of Turkey has nothing to do with the Turks mentioned in the aḥādīth of the Prophet ﷺ. The reason that the Turkish nation adopted this name is that when the Turkic culture of Central Asia spread along with the Mongol invasion, the Western Turkic languages became spread all the way to Anatolia, and eventually became the primary language of the area. The inhabitants of Anatolia however as discussed previously are not genetically related to the Turks, except for small traces found in some of the eastern villages of Turkey, nor did they have any political link to them whatsoever. The majority of the population of Turkey today are more closely related to the Eastern Europeans, the Kurds and the inhabitants of Syria than the Turks. The similarity in name is only due to a loose linguistic relation and was rarely used even during Ottoman times, when the term 'Turk' was used to refer to villagers, primarily in Eastern Anatolia and was seen as a derogatory term, much like how the term 'Mongol' is used in English. Mustafa Kemal however, upon becoming the leader of Turkey embraced this term and used it for the Turkish Republic in order to distance the nation from Europe to their east and the Arabs to their south, and tried to promote a 'Turkic identity' through the shared linguistic relationship with the Turks of Central Asia. Therefore it should be clear that the Turks referred to in the aḥādīth were in fact the Turks of central Asia who were absorbed by the Mongols and later fought against the Muslims, and that the identity of these Turks is not in any way related to the nation of Turkey, despite the similarity in their names.

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR MUSLIMS TO BE THE INHERITORS OF RŪM?

An issue raised by some upon hearing that the Ottomans were the inheritors of the title of Rūm is that they believe Muslims cannot be Rūm as Rūm is supposed to be a nation that will be at war with the Muslims. This is a misconception which has no basis, and is based upon a misunderstanding.

The first issue is that a Muslim can indeed be from Rūm and this is proven by our knowledge that the Prophet's ﷺ companion Ṣuhayb was from Rūm and was called Rūmī (Roman) and the Prophet ﷺ never objected to this. Since Rūm is a clearly defined political definition, regardless of one's religion, if they live in Rūm then they will be considered as the people of Rūm, whether Muslim, Christian, pagan or anything else.

The next issue with the claim is that it is not correct to say that Rūm is in a constant state of war with the Muslims, rather it is only specified that in the Last Days would Rūm fight with the Muslims, after breaking a treaty formed between both parties. This means that there will be times when the Muslims are not fighting Rūm, and we know that when Rūm was mentioned in the Qur'an that the Muslims at that time were not fighting with Rūm but in fact delighted in seeing Rūm defeat the Persians. Later on the Muslims did fight against Rūm, and this fight continued until the fall of the Byzantine Empire, however it shows that it is not a requirement that the Muslims always be at war with Rūm, rather it is well known that there was and will be times when the 2 sides are not fighting each other.

It is therefore entirely possible that for a long period of time that the Ottoman Empire, who was the successor state of the Byzantine Empire, existed as the inheritors of Rūm despite being Muslims. It is true that the Ottomans were far from being perfect, and some do argue that their later rulers became apostates due to having abandoned ruling completely by Islamic Law, however regardless of these issues there is no conflict at all to say that for many centuries Muslims were the holders of the title of Rūm, especially as the Ottomans themselves boasted of this title and used it often, declaring themselves to be the inheritors of Rūm.

The next issue that is raised is that of the status of the Turkish Republic. This is an issue that confuses some, as they believe that the Turkish Republic is in some way Islamic, yet anyone with a proper understanding of Islam will see that Turkey in its current form is far from being Islamic, but is instead an apostate state founded by one of the most despicable men of recent history - Mustafa Kemal, also known as Atatürk.

Mustafa Kemal was born in the city of Thessaloniki which was then part of the Ottoman Empire. He lived in a time when the empire was severely weakened and was falling apart and stood to collapse completely to be conquered by the European powers. He fought in the Ottoman Army and rose to become a commander, and he served up until the occupation of Constantinople, when the Ottoman Army had surrendered to the European powers. At this time he was known as a brave commander who fought the infidel Europeans, however his intentions were not at all the same of the Ottoman Empire, rather he was a secular nationalist who only hoped to establish a 'Turkish' homeland in Anatolia, ruled not by Islam but by secular laws. The

author Emil Lengyel summarised this aspect of Mustafa Kemal's intentions by writing the following:

"During the early days of Mustafa Kemal's career, many of his followers were under the impression that he was a champion of Islam and that they were fighting the Christians. 'Ghāzī (warrior), Destroyer of Christians' was the name they gave him. Had they been aware of his real intentions, they would have called him 'Ghāzī, Destroyer of Islam.'" [Turkey, pp. 140-141]

Mustafa Kemal turned to politics and led a group of nationalists who refused to see the Anatolian land be occupied, and stood up not only against the European occupiers but also against the Ottoman rulers who opposed his nationalist plans for Anatolia. The Ottoman Empire eventually collapsed, and Mustafa Kemal led the nationalists to establish the Republic of Turkey, a state ruled by secular law. Whilst some have focused on his efforts to replace the alphabet of the Turkish language from Arabic to Latin, or other minor matters, the greatest example of the disbelief of the new Turkish Republic was the 'founding principle' of the nation, as described by Mustafa Kemal himself, and it is encapsulated in the following phrase which he devised and added to the Turkish constitution in 1920:

"Hākimiyyet bilâ kaydü şart milletindir"

Hākimiyyah (legislation/sovereignty) unconditionally belongs to the Nation

This phrase directly contradicts the words of Allah:

إِن الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ

Legislation belongs to none but Allah [12:40]

There is no doubt therefore that the Turkish Republic was founded upon disbelief and its ruler (Mustafa Kemal) was not a Muslim. This fact is disputed by very few, as the disbelief of that man was so extreme that even the most liberal of Muslims agree that he was an apostate. However, as time progressed, so-called 'Islamic parties' began to rise and take power. These parties were seen as being 'Islamic' by the hardcore secularists as they disputed some minor laws such as the headscarf ban in government buildings etc. however other than these token issues they were still staunch secularists when it comes to matters of governance. Today Turkey is ruled by these pseudo-Islamists, Ahmet Davutoğlu and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, both men who are as

dedicated to secular rule as Mustafa Kemal himself was. Indeed, they proudly stand under the same words used by Mustafa Kemal, which are emblazoned above the General Assembly Hall from which they speak - 'Sovereignty unconditionally belongs to the Nation'. The fact that the current rulers of Turkey are hardened secularists can be proven by simply looking at their own words -

Hüseyin Çelik, a minister from the same political party as Davutoğlu and Erdoğan said, "In the Western press, when the AK Party administration – the ruling party of the Turkish Republic – is being named, unfortunately most of the time 'Islamic,' 'Islamist,' 'mildly Islamist,' 'Islamic-oriented,' 'Islamic-based' or 'with an Islamic agenda,' and similar language is being used. These characterisations do not reflect the truth, and they sadden us. The AK Party is a conservative democratic party. The AK Party's conservatism is limited to moral and social issues."

Erdoğan himself said, "**We are not an Islamic party**, and we also refuse labels such as Muslim-democrat."

The status of the rulers of Turkey today is no different to that of Mustafa Kemal the apostate. So the issue of Turkey being an 'Islamic state' is far from being true. Rather it is a secular state whose laws have nothing to do with Islam, but are rather in direct conflict with the Revelation of Allah. So if Turkey, as the Rūm of our times, just as the Byzantine Empire was Rūm at the time of the Prophet ﷺ, fought against the Muslims who rule by Allah's Law, then it is a battle between Muslims and apostates, not one of Muslims against Muslims. Whoever fights to uphold those ruling by secular laws against those who rule by the Law of Allah are no different than their apostate rulers, and so for as long as Turkey remains under the rule of the secularists, they are not at all upon Islam, rather they carry the legacy of their founder who fought the Muslims. So the fact that most of the Turkish population identify as Muslims is irrelevant to the character of the state itself which is one of disbelief. Like the Moghul Empire under Aurangzeb was ruled by Islamic Law yet had a Hindu majority, so too Turkey today is ruled by secularism yet has a nominal Muslim majority. Those who fight for the secularists in a war against Muslims will be secularists, and those who are Muslims will not join the secularists but will join their brothers in faith. As such a confrontation between Turkey and the Muslims in our time is not one of Muslims against Muslims at all.

There is more to this issue in regards to specific events which will occur in the fight between Rūm and the Muslims, as the Prophet of Allah ﷺ told us that they would happen. These instances will be treated separately in the following chapter, however what is written above is enough to establish that the rule of Rūm under the Turkish Republic is not at all one that is Islamic, rather it is anti-Islamic and it will very likely lead Turkey into war against the believers.

RŪM IN THE AHADITH OF THE LAST DAYS

The Prophet of Allah ﷺ informed us of the role that Rūm would play in the Last Days and so being able to prepare for this is something important for the Muslim Ummah. If however, we are not able to properly identify Rūm or if we are unable to correctly interpret the statements of the Prophet ﷺ which speak of the Last Days then we will not be able to make adequate preparations for these times. Therefore we must ensure that we are able to properly understand what has been related to us and to not simply guess what it may mean, lest we end up not benefiting at all from these forewarnings.

The Prophet of Allah ﷺ informed us that the people of Islam will fight Rūm and that the place of this fighting will be in and around the lands of Ash-Shām (the Levant) and Anatolia (ie. Turkey). The proof that the confrontation will take place in Ash-Shām is mentioned in the following ḥadīth:

أَتَقُومُ السَّاعَةَ حَتَّى يَنْزِلَ الرُّومُ بِالْأَعْمَاقِ أَوْ بِدَابِقٍ فَيَخْرُجُ إِلَيْهِمْ جَيْشٌ مِنَ الْمَدِينَةِ مِنْ خِيَارِ أَهْلِ
الْأَرْضِ يَوْمَئِذٍ

"The Last Hour would not come until the Romans would land at Al-A‘māq or in Dābiq. An army consisting of the best soldiers of all the Earth at that time will come from Medina to counteract them." [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2897]

Both Al-A‘māq and Dābiq are located in the north-western part of Ash-Shām. Dābiq is a small town located almost directly to the north of the city of Aleppo and is very close to the current Turkish border. Al-A‘māq is an area which lies mostly in the Hatay province of Turkey (which is geographically part of Ash-Shām) and extends in a north-eastern direction up to the area near Aleppo. It is named Al-A‘māq because it is a flat area surrounded by mountains, and Al-A‘māq (which is the plural of ‘amq) in Arabic refers to areas which are like basins or valleys surrounded by mountainous areas. The original meaning of ‘amq in Arabic is the bottom of a well, as it is a low and flat area surrounded by a higher perimeter. This region has always been known to the Turkish-speaking people of the region as Amuq Valley, showing that the name has remained the same up until today even among the non-Arabs.



A map showing the location of Dābiq and Al-A' māq

Some have suggested that Al-A' māq is actually in Yemen or in some other place, due to there being similar areas around the world which are flat and surrounded by mountains. Sure enough, if we include every such geographical area there could arguably be 1,000's of areas which may be possible candidates for being the area mentioned, however in the context of the ḥadīth it seems quite clear that Al-A' māq is the area almost directly next to Dābiq. It would seem to be very unlikely that Dābiq would be mentioned when it has an area known as Al-A' māq right next to it, yet when Al-A' māq is mentioned that it would refer to any area but the Al-A' māq area right next to it.

We are informed that it will be in this area that Rūm would come to attack the Muslims and this is yet another clear proof that Turkey is Rūm in our times (and most likely at the time of the prophesised fighting) as it is Turkey that controls the areas around the north of Dābiq as well as most of Al-A' māq, and it is not conceivable that any nation would enter into Ash-Shām to fight the Muslims through Turkish land except for Turkey itself. If a Turkish invasion were to take place it is almost certain from a tactical perspective that it would enter through Al-A' māq and Dābiq and Turkey is the only nation in the world who has access to this area. Any military strategist would agree that were Turkey to invade Ash-Shām that the best area to do so would be via the areas in and around Dābiq and Ash-Shām.

The above ḥadīth continues and discusses the army who will fight Rūm:

فَيَقَاتِلُونَهُمْ فَيَنْهَزِمُ ثُلُثٌ لَا يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَبَدًا وَيُقْتَلُ ثُلُثُهُمْ أَفْضَلُ الشُّهَدَاءِ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ
وَيَفْتَحُ الثُّلُثُ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ أَبَدًا فَيَفْتَحُونَ قُسْطَنْطِينِيَّةَ

"They will fight them, and a third of the army will run away, Allah will never forgive them. A third of the army will be killed and they are of the best of martyrs with Allah. A third would be granted victory and they would never be put to trial, and they shall conquer Istanbul." [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2897]

This part of the ḥadīth makes it very clear that the initial fight against Rūm will lead to the conquest of the city of Istanbul, clearly implying that Turkey will be involved in the fighting and will be at war against the Muslims who will defeat them. Whilst the text of ḥadīth itself does not clearly state that Istanbul must be part of Rūm at the time of its conquest, it seems clear from the context that the defeat of Rūm will be the reason for the conquest of Istanbul, hence suggesting that Istanbul will be a part of Rūm, and as is known, in our times Istanbul is the largest and most important city of Turkey and this *status quo* is very unlikely to change up until its fall. Since it is also stated that the Muslims who defeat the army of Rūm which was sent to attack the Islamic State will be the same ones who conquer Istanbul it is again implied that this will all be part of the same one battle between the Islamic State and Rūm. The fact that the army of the Muslims will be based in Ash-Shām is clear from the fact that it is where they will face Rūm and it is also where they will return to after conquering Istanbul.

In a report from Abdullāh bin Mas'ūd, he explained that fighting would take place between the Muslims and Rūm and he said -

لَا تَقُومُ حَتَّى لَا يُفْسَمَ مِيرَاثٌ وَلَا يُفْرَحَ بِغَنِيمَةٍ . ثُمَّ قَالَ بِيَدِهِ هَكَذَا - وَنَحَاهَا نَحْوَ الشَّامِ - فَقَالَ
عَدُوٌّ يَجْمَعُونَ لِأَهْلِ الْإِسْلَامِ وَيَجْمَعُ لَهُمْ أَهْلُ الْإِسْلَامِ . قُلْتُ الرُّومَ تَعْنِي قَالَ نَعَمْ وَتَكُونُ عِنْدَ
ذَاكُمُ الْقِتَالِ رَدَّةٌ شَدِيدَةٌ فَيَشْتَرِطُ الْمُسْلِمُونَ شُرْطَةً لِلْمَوْتِ لَا تَرْجِعُ إِلَّا غَالِبَةً

"Verily the Last Hour will not come until the people neither divide inheritance nor will they rejoice over the spoils of war." Then with his hand pointing towards Ash-Shām he said, "The enemy shall gather against the Muslims and the Muslims gather against them." He was asked, "Do you mean Rūm?" And he said, "Yes, and there would be severe fighting and the Muslims would prepare a detachment prepared to fight to the death which would not return except that they are victorious." [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2899]

The ḥadīth continues and describes the fighting which will take place as being unlike any other fighting ever seen -

يَقْتُلُونَ مَقْتَلَةً لَمْ يَرِ مِثْلَهَا حَتَّى إِنَّ الطَّائِرَ لَيَمُرُّ بِجَنَابَتِهِمْ فَمَا يُخَلِّفُهُمْ حَتَّى يَخِرَّ مَيِّتًا

"They would fight such a fight the like of which would ever be seen, so much so that even if a bird were to pass by their flanks, it would fall down dead before reaching the end of them."

This demonstrates that the fighting would not only affect those directly on the ground but even those in the sky would be harmed, perhaps indicating the use of heavy aerial bombing which has come to characterise much of modern warfare, by which even birds in the sky would be harmed due to the intensity of the fighting.

He continued to explain that this would go on for 4 days, with each day the Muslims sending out more fighters to face the army of Rūm, and that out of those who entered the battle only 1 out of 100 would survive. It is due to this that none shall rejoice in any inheritance or the spoils of war. He then mentioned that after that the false Messiah (Al-Masīḥ ad-Dajjāl) would appear and the Prophet ﷺ said that a group of 10 horsemen from among the Muslims would go forward to scout the situation and he said that they will be of the best horsemen of the entire Earth at that time, and that he knew their names and the colour of their horses. What is important to note is that the earlier ḥadīth in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (number 2897) where it is mentioned that the Muslims would conquer Istanbul, it is stated that as soon as Istanbul is conquered that the false Messiah would appear, meaning that both of these aḥādīth are referring to the same event and it clearly implies that the only fighting which takes place will be between the Islamic State and Rūm, and that it would be an intense fight taking place over a short period of time and that Istanbul would be conquered, meaning that it would be conquered due to the fighting between the 2 parties who are the Islamic State and Rūm.

This chronology of events is clarified in another ḥadīth which discusses what will take place in that time -

سَتَقَاتِلُونَ جَزِيرَةَ الْعَرَبِ فَيَفْتَحُهَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ تَقَاتِلُونَ الرُّومَ فَيَفْتَحُهَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ تَقَاتِلُونَ الدَّجَالَ فَيَفْتَحُهَا اللَّهُ - قَالَ جَابِرٌ فَمَا يَخْرُجُ الدَّجَالُ حَتَّى تَفْتَحَ الرُّومَ

"You will fight the people of the Arabian Peninsula and victory will be granted by Allah. Then you will fight Rūm and victory will be granted by Allah. Then you will fight the false messiah and victory will be granted by Allah." Jābir said about this,

"The false messiah will not appear until you have fought Rūm." [Sunan Ibn Mājah 4091]

This again confirms that the coming of the false Messiah will be preceded by the conquest of Istanbul at the hands of the Muslims.

Something that should be noted when discussing the eventual conquest of Istanbul, is that this is a clear proof that the apostate rulers of Turkey are illegitimate, for if they were legitimate and were defenders of Islam (as some confused individuals believe) then the Muslims would not be fighting them and the Prophet ﷺ would not be praising the Muslims who defeat them. If someone says that maybe the current leadership and those who belong to their school of thought will no longer be in power at the time then this is a proof that they are not guided, as the Prophet of Allah ﷺ told us that after tyranny there would come Khilāfah upon the methodology of Prophethood and never said that tyranny would again replace it, showing that once the people of the Truth establish power it will never be replaced by tyrants. So this is a proof that the current movement which has leadership of Turkey are apostates, and that their days are numbered.

This next ḥadīth explains to us who will be in the army that conquers Istanbul and how they will conquer it.

سَمِعْتُمْ مَدِينَةَ جَانِبٍ مِنْهَا فِي الْبَرِّ وَجَانِبٍ مِنْهَا فِي الْبَحْرِ قَالُوا نَعَمْ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ لَا تَقُومُ
السَّاعَةُ حَتَّى يَغْزَوْهَا سَبْعُونَ أَلْفًا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْحَاقَ فَإِذَا جَاءُوهَا نَزَلُوا فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوا بِسِلَاحٍ وَلَمْ
يَرْمُوا بِسَهْمٍ قَالُوا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ فَيَسْقُطُ أَحَدُ جَانِبَيْهَا قَالَ ثَوْرٌ لَا أَعْلَمُهُ إِلَّا قَالَ الَّذِي
فِي الْبَحْرِ ثُمَّ يَقُولُوا الثَّانِيَةَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ فَيَسْقُطُ جَانِبُهَا الْآخَرَ ثُمَّ يَقُولُوا الثَّلَاثَةَ لَا إِلَهَ
إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ فَيُفْرَجُ لَهُمْ فَيَدْخُلُوهَا فَيَغْنَمُوهَا فَيَبِينَمَا هُمْ يَقْتَسِمُونَ الْمَغَانِمَ إِذْ جَاءَهُمْ
الصَّرِيحُ فَقَالَ إِنَّ الدَّجَالَ قَدْ خَرَجَ فَيَبْرُكُونَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَيَرْجِعُونَ

The Prophet ﷺ asked, "Have you heard of a city, a part of which is land and a part of which is sea?" They replied, "Yes". The Prophet ﷺ said, "The last hour shall not come until 70,000 from the descendants of Iṣḥāq attack it. When they descend upon it they shall not fight with weapons, nor will they launch anything at it. They will say, 'There is no god but Allah, and Allah is the greatest', upon which one of its sides would fall, then they would say it a second time, 'There is no god but Allah, and Allah is the greatest', and it shall be opened for them and they will enter it and they will take ghanīmah (war booty) from it and will be dividing it among themselves when someone will come to them and shout out, 'The false Messiah has appeared', and so they will leave everything and will return back (to ash-Shām)."

We are told that the invading army will consist of 70,000 Muslims from the descendants of Iṣḥāq. Many who hear this have invented fanciful ideas as to who these 70,000 will be. For example some have suggested that they must be Jews who embraced Islam, as the Jews (Banī Isrāʾīl) are descendants of Iṣḥāq. Whilst it is true that the Jews are descended from Iṣḥāq, they are not the only ones who are descended from him. Iṣḥāq had 2 sons, Yaʿqūb (also known as Isrāʾīl) and Esau who was mentioned earlier. As we know, the descendants of Esau lived to the east of Banī Isrāʾīl in what is today Jordan and Syria, and today those descendants live all around the area of Ash-Shām, possibly forming the majority of its inhabitants. Therefore it is most likely that the 70,000 of Banī Iṣḥāq will be the Muslims of Ash-Shām, and this makes obvious sense as they are the ones who are located right next to the borders of Rūm.

The next ḥadīth states:

ثُمَّ هُدْنَهُ تَكُونُ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ بَنِي الْأَصْفَرِ فَيَعْدِرُونَ، فَيَأْتُونَكُمْ تَحْتَ ثَمَانِينَ غَايَةً، تَحْتَ كُلِّ غَايَةٍ
اِثْنَا عَشَرَ أَلْفًا

“There will be a truce between you and Banī Al-Aṣfar but they will betray you. They shall come to you under 80 *ghāyah*, in each *ghāyah* there will be 12,000 people.” [Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 3176]

Many mention this ḥadīth when discussing Rūm, however the first thing to notice about this is that Rūm is not actually mentioned. It is Banī Al-Aṣfar who are mentioned, and as was discussed earlier Banī Al-Aṣfar are an ethnic group made up of the descendants of Esau, and the descendants of Esau are located all around Ash-Shām, though historically they were centred in and around Jordan. It was mentioned earlier on that at the time of the Prophet ʿĪsā (Jesus) ﷺ that Banī Al-Aṣfar were allied with the Romans, however once Rūm was defeated in the area of Palestine/Jordan they were no longer subjects of Rūm and came to be under the rule of the Muslims. Up until today Banī Al-Aṣfar have remained around the same area and so when they are mentioned it is incorrect to equate them with Rūm as Rūm is not an ethnic group, nor did Banī Al-Aṣfar migrate from their area when Rūm was defeated and pushed out of Ash-Shām by the Muslims. It should be kept in mind that the Prophet ﷺ said Banī Al-Aṣfar and not Rūm, and if he wanted to say Rūm he would have said so. To say that Banī Al-Aṣfar must be Rūm is very incorrect, as Banī Al-Aṣfar are a tribe and not a political entity. A similar matter would be the Indian people, at one time they were British as Britain had conquered them and they were made Britons, its people sang ‘God save the Queen’ and flew the Union Jack. However as the British Empire weakened they lost control of India, and today Indians are not British but rather control their own area. In this way, Banī Al-Aṣfar was indeed once a part of Rome, however today they run their own affairs and led their own states. The sons of Esau form a large number of tribes, such as the Amaleq and others, all of whom are known to have settled in and around Ash-Shām.

So, when looking at this ḥadīth there are 2 likely possibilities. Either Banī Al-Aṣfar refers to those living in the heartland of the descendants of Esau, and they are primarily the Jordanians in our time, or it refers to some of Banī Al-Aṣfar who ended up in Turkey and will be part of Rūm. The fact that a truce is mentioned suggests that it may be related to the truce that will be made with Rūm (mentioned in the next ḥadīth), however it would be wrong to assume that the truce must be the same truce, as it is entirely possible that many truces could be made with different parties, and if there is nothing that specifically states that the truce is the same one mentioned then we should not automatically assume that it is.

We are told that the Muslims upon the right way will have a truce (*hudnah*) with Banī Al-Aṣfar. The word *hudnah* can mean anything from a formalised treaty to a mere absence of hostilities, therefore it may simply mean that the Muslims will not be fighting Banī Al-Aṣfar at one point in time, then they will be betrayed by them and fighting shall break out between both sides. We are told that Banī Al-Aṣfar will come to the Muslims under 80 *ghāyah*. The word *ghāyah* has a number of meanings and so we should make sure to consider all of the possibilities. The most likely possibility is that it refers to a flag, as the *ghāyah* in the context of war is known to refer to a flag, and this may refer to a flag of a battalion or to the flag of a nation state. Alternatively it may refer to any type of grouping with an aim or objective, however even in this case it would seem to refer to a military battalion. We are told that in each division there will be 12,000, meaning that in total there will be almost a million people (960,000 to be exact). This shows that it will be a very large force made up of smaller divisions. Some have speculated that this may refer to a coalition force like we see in our times whereby many nations gather, each contributing a section of its armed forces to fight together. What is interesting about this possibility is that we see in our days that these ‘coalitions’ which are led by the USA want to be able to push a fight against the Muslims, however they are unable to find an ally in the region who will spearhead the coalition. The 2 candidates that are most appealing to them are either Jordan or Turkey; however as of this moment both seem unwilling to do so, as they maintain a general state of non-hostility when it comes to fighting. Therefore both Jordan and Turkey are in a state of *hudnah*, although this may soon change.

The next ḥadīth states -

سَتُصَالِحُكُمُ الرُّومُ صُلْحًا آمِنًا ثُمَّ تَعُزُّونَ أَنْتُمْ وَهُمْ عَدُوًّا فَتَنْصَرُونَ وَتَغْنَمُونَ وَتَسْلَمُونَ ثُمَّ تَنْصَرُونَ
 حَتَّى تَنْزِلُوا بِمَرْجٍ ذِي تُلُولٍ فَيَرْفَعُ رَجُلٌ مِنْ أَهْلِ الصَّلِيبِ الصَّلِيبَ فَيَقُولُ غَلَبَ الصَّلِيبُ . فَيَغْضَبُ رَجُلٌ
 مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ فَيَقُومُ إِلَيْهِ فَيَدْفُقُهُ فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ تَغْدِرُ الرُّومُ وَيَجْتَمِعُونَ لِلْمَلْحَمَةِ

“The Romans shall make a peace treaty with you and then you and them will fight against an enemy and you shall be victorious. You will take *ghanimah* and not fight one another, until you come to a grassy area with many hillocks, then a man from the

people of the cross shall raise the cross and shall say ‘the cross has prevailed’. A man from among the Muslims shall become angry at this and will go to the cross and knock it from its place. Due to this, the Romans shall betray you and will gather for the *malḥamah* (the great battle).”

This ḥadīth specifically mentions Rūm and so we can know that it is referring specifically to Turkey, unlike the previous ḥadīth which is ambiguous as to who it refers. We are told that the Muslims upon the right way shall have a treaty (*ṣulḥ*) with Rūm and will fight against a common enemy. Again, like with a *hudnah*, a *ṣulḥ* does not have to be a formal treaty, it may simply be a non-formalised absence of hostilities between both sides. We are told that the common enemy would be defeated and both sides would still not fight one another, until a man from the people of the cross claims that the cross gave victory and so hostilities shall begin between both sides. What is necessary to realise is that the term ‘people of the cross’ is a term never used anywhere else in the Revelation. Normally Christians are called Nazarenes (Naṣārā) however in this ḥadīth the person is not called a Nazarene but rather a person of the cross. This term is cognate with the word ‘Crusader’, or ṣalībī. Just as a man of *ahlul-kitāb* may be called a *kitābī*, so too a ṣalībī (crusader) is said to be from *ahluṣ-ṣalīb*. Therefore it seems to be so that the Messenger of Allah was informing us that this man would not just be any normal Christian, rather he would be a Crusader, a specific subset of Christians who were dedicated to fighting Muslims in an attempt to establish their Religion in the lands of Islam. The fact that the USA are the most dedicated to this in our days, and that their leader Bush openly referred to their wars against Muslims as a Crusade makes it seem most likely that it is either a US soldier or one of their allies who is being referred to here. The Muslim would object to his praise of the cross and will strike it, knocking it out of its place, causing a fight which will lead to hostilities between the Muslims and Rūm.

Some who have read this ḥadīth have incorrectly read it and assumed that the Crusader would be from Rūm, however this is incorrect. If he were from Rūm it would have been said that he was from Rūm, yet despite the fact that the Muslims and Rūm were mentioned in the ḥadīth, it was specified that he was from neither group but rather from a separate category which are the Crusaders/people of the cross. If the ḥadīth had said ‘a man from Rūm’, or ‘a man from them’, then we would say that it would be a Christian from Rūm, however it is not so and we are told that he is a Crusader who is either present at the time for reasons unknown to us, or perhaps more likely he is part of a force that are allied with Rūm. This does not mean that the Muslims would have made a truce with the Crusaders; rather it would simply be that the Muslims will have not been fighting with Rūm who are in an alliance with the Crusaders and due to fighting a common enemy they will not be fighting each other at the time.

One thing to note about the ḥadīth is that it establishes that the people of the cross are a separate group to Rūm as they were not included as being part of Rūm. This again is another proof that Rūm are not Christians as many claim. Rather they will be allies of Rūm.

In our current time we see that the Muslims currently have an informal truce with Rūm, despite being located right next to each other. Even though Rūm and the Muslims have a clear enmity, at the moment they are not fighting due to both having a common enemy, and they are the secular Kurds. Both Rūm and the Muslims are fighting the Kurds and it seems that any hostilities have been shelved, and would presumably continue to be so until that enemy is defeated. Rūm currently belongs to an alliance with the Crusaders as part of NATO and as mentioned earlier, is the top candidate for leading a war against the Muslims and is being pressured by the Crusaders to do so, however due to their local conflict with the Kurds they are currently unwilling to take on the Muslims who are fighting their common enemy. This current scenario may or may not be what is being referred to in the ḥadīth, however it corresponds directly to its meanings and may well be what we were foretold of. Should the Kurds be defeated it will be very likely that Rūm will turn on the Muslims, due to the insistence of the Crusaders. It would ultimately come as no surprise for the Crusaders to delight in seeing Rūm defeat the Kurds as for many years the USA and its allies have stood against the communist-leaning Kurds and classed them as ‘terrorists’. Just as the Christian Crusaders delighted in fighting Communism around the world in the past, so too they would see it as a victory of their beliefs over the godless Communist Kurds should they defeat them.

This scenario may not be exactly how things will go, but it demonstrates how the events in the ḥadīth may happen, and in our times it seems to fit perfectly with the meaning of the ḥadīth. No other scenario in our times fits the ḥadīth so perfectly.

The ḥadīth tells us that once the truce is broken and the Muslims fight Rūm that the great war (malḥamah) will begin, meaning that the conquest of Istanbul will be the peak, if not the culmination of this great war. From there the false Messiah will appear and Rūm as an entity may cease to exist. There is debate as to whether Rūm will still survive after losing Istanbul, however it is clear that they will at least suffer a heavy defeat. The reason for debate about whether or not Rūm will come to an end is this ḥadīth -

تَقُومُ السَّاعَةُ وَالرُّومُ أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ

“The last hour shall come when Rūm constitutes the majority of people.” [Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2898]

This ḥadīth is telling us about the time when the actual last hour would actually occur, after all of the major signs such as the coming of the false Messiah and the sun rising from the west. At that time Rūm will be a majority, meaning that they will either have

significantly increased in number, or the rest of mankind will have been destroyed during the great war, the time of the false Messiah and the onslaught of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. Regardless of how it may come about, we are told clearly that on that last day of existence that Rūm will form a majority. It should be noted that among the major signs of the coming of the last day is that the believers shall be taken (ie. caused to die) by a wind, leaving none but disbelievers. Therefore it should not be seen that Rūm would be victorious over the believers in any way, rather the true believers will die and Rūm will be left as a majority on that last day.

Some who encountered this ḥadīth misunderstood it and thought that it refers to our days, or to the period before the great war, however the ḥadīth clearly states that it will be at the end of times on the last day. In our times today Rūm does not constitute a majority of people, rather the largest groups of mankind in terms of numbers would be Chinese or Indian, and Rūm as well as the Europeans are in fact a minority of mankind. As such, it seems that Rūm will continue to exist in some way, however since it is just before the end of the world and no believers shall be there at that time, we pray that we never see how this will take place, rather we pray to be of the true believers who will be spared from the horror of the last day.

A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS OF THE EVENTS OF THE LAST DAYS

The above aḥādīth give us a general understanding of what will happen between the Muslims and Rūm, and we are able to chart a general timeline of how events will take place. It must be noted that there are some aḥādīth that have not been included above and that is because they are not authentic. It may be that some have heard of a ḥadīth and have been using it to understand these future events whilst they are unaware of its inauthenticity. Therefore what has been mentioned is only from what is authentic and it is only from authentic aḥādīth that we draw our understandings.

A general timeline of events shall be as such:

- The Muslims and Rūm shall have a truce with one another and fight against a common enemy

- The common enemy will be defeated, and then the Muslims and Rūm will fight one another, possibly along with allies of Rūm

- The Muslims at that time shall be located in the areas around Ash-Shām, with Al-Ghutah near Damascus being a Muslim stronghold

- Rūm will attack the Muslims in Dābiq or Al-A‘māq

- After a period of intense fighting, the Muslims will defeat Rūm and will push them back all the way to Istanbul, and the city shall fall to the Muslims

- The false Messiah will appear, and the greatest tribulation to ever to occur to mankind shall begin

POSTSCRIPT

This idea to write this small book was conceived after a series of talks that I gave about the false Messiah. Some brothers had asked that I continue on with the series focusing on other parts of the Last Days, especially the period in which the Muslims would fight with Rūm. Up to that point I had heard various opinions as to who Rūm

would be, ranging from opinions that seemed reasonable to some that were outright absurd. I quizzed those that asked me to speak about this topic as to what their views were, and each of them had their own opinion different to the others. I was amazed at how despite reading from the same texts such different opinions could be held, with each person vehemently defending their views. I decided to look to the works of the scholars on the issue, but found that very little was available from classical scholars due mainly to the fact that in their times the Byzantine Empire was still in existence.

I researched all that there was in the Qur'ān and Sunnah on the matter, and I found that the opinions held by most Muslims were all baseless, and could usually be traced back to a handful of preachers who speak on this topic through ignorance or through error. Being a historian I was able to properly analyse the history of Rūm and understand its origins and defining features, and I was able to see instantly that there was only one possibility for who Rūm could be. I checked to see if others had held this same opinion and I found that many others in our times agreed that Turkey is Rūm in our days, though this opinion is not as well advertised or spoken about (the entire topic is very rarely spoken about) and as such this opinion is not being taught or explained.

After writing this book I spoke to a number of scholars, teachers and trusted companions in order to get their opinions on the matter. I first asked them what their own opinions were as to the identity of Rūm in our times, and not surprisingly most said either that they do not know, or they gave opinions which they readily admitted had no evidence behind them. I then spoke to them explaining my opinion, or gave them this book to read, and I was reassured to find that every one of them that I spoke to agreed that the conclusion is correct and is methodology utilised in reaching this opinion is sound. I found that most of them urged me to not only hasten in releasing the book, but to also endeavour to have it translated into as many languages as possible. I therefore hope that anyone able to accurately translate this book into their language should do so, and to please send me a copy of it for reference.

I sincerely apologise for not making the book easier to read, I still feel that its needs more time to be improved, as I wrote it in a period in which I was not able to dedicate enough attention to it. I will try to revise it and perhaps release it again with a better style which reads easier if Allah wills.

I also must add, that to any person who is living in Anatolia or is of Anatolian heritage who has read this book and has been offended in any way, please understand that the book in no way is meant to denigrate the people of Anatolia nor to suggest anything negative about them. The Anatolian Muslims have historically been great defenders of Islam and from them came many heroes of the ummah. Regrettably in our times due to the aggressive nationalist and secularist agenda forced upon the people of Anatolia, Islam is no longer the source of legislation and the sincere Muslims have been fought and silenced. The goal of Muḥammad Al-Fātiḥ to make the Ottoman Empire into a ‘Muslim Rūm’ was hijacked by the hypocrites and they changed it into a Kemalist secularist state which is the antithesis of an Islamic state. As such, those Anatolian Muslims who desire to rule by the Religion of Allah are not enemies to any other Muslim, rather we are all from the same jamā‘ah, and we are naturally opposed to the Rūm of our times which is ruled by laws of disbelief and is naturally at war with the Monotheists. Therefore each Anatolian Muslim must decide for themselves, if they will be on the side of the apostates who are led by Mustafa Kemal, or to be on the side of the Muslims who worship Allah alone and legislate only with His Laws.

I pray that this work will be beneficial, and that it reaches the hands of those who will benefit most from it. I ask Allah to grant victory to this ummah and to grant victory to the *jamā‘at ul-muslimīn* united under our Imām.

All of my works are free of charge and may be redistributed so long as the work is not changed in any way.

If Allah wills I shall continue to write on topics of history as well as current events and events of the Last Days. I shall endeavour to keep my works free of charge, however I do ask that anyone who is able to contribute financially should contact me via the email supplied below. Such support is important to be able to continue writing and teaching, as well as expanding the scope of the media used in distributing beneficial works. I pray that Allah will reward those who can support with nothing less than a place in Paradise. If you wish to donate please contact me via the email to arrange this.

In addition, any feedback, comments, suggestions, questions or criticism may be sent to the below email. I will strive to respond to each email as best as I can.

The contact email is - **whoisrum@gmail.com**

Musa Cerantonio – 30/4/1436