

ISHMAEL

is a Son of

ABRAHAM

CONTENTS

Chapter One - ISHMAEL'S DESCENDANTS ARE ABRAHAM'S SEED	3
Chapter Two - ISHMAEL'S WONDERFUL INHERITANCE!.....	38
Chapter Three - THE RELATIONSHIP OF ISAAC AND ISHMAEL.....	46
Chapter Four - A MODERN ANTI CHRIST?.....	68
Chapter Five - WHAT CAN CHRISTIANS DO?.....	92

Gerald Rowlands
PO Box 5262 SCMC
Nambour, Queensland 4560
Australia

www.israelspropheticfuture.org

ISHMAEL

is a Son of

ABRAHAM

Points To Ponder?

1. What may be the final implication of the fact that Ishmael is a direct descendant of Abraham?
1. What is inherent in the name that God gave to Ishmael?
2. If the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael finally embrace each other in the Last days, how might that come about?
3. What is the most significant promise that God gave to Ishmael and his descendants?
4. How significant is it that Abraham himself circumcised Ishmael.
5. Which prophetic scriptures indicate that some Islamic nations will ultimately worship Yahweh?
6. How do we know that much Islamic wealth will be brought to Yahweh?

©Gerald Rowlands
www.israelspropheticfuture.org

Ishmael's Descendants Are Abraham's Seed

With a constantly expanding population of 1.6 billion adherents, the future of Islam in the world should be on the mind of every person, and particularly the minds of Christians everywhere. We should be seriously and urgently asking ourselves "What will be the future for Islam and how will it impact on the world and on the Church?" Islam's presence and influence in the world is growing daily. Its ultimate intention is to dominate the whole world, establishing Islam as the most powerful force on earth. The prophetic belief of Islamic fundamentalist pictures an Islamic kingdom that will rule the world. The extremists that fiercely believe this, are active already planning the initiatives that will prepare the way for such a world rule. Islamic belief proposes that the world into which the Mahdi will make his entrance will be one of international chaos, confusion, terror and destruction. If we do not give close attention to what the Bible predicts about this serious issue we will never know the answer to such threats. Islam is purposefully increasing its presence and influence through planned natural reproduction, migration, and terrorism. Surely the Bible must have something to say about this remarkable predicted phenomena.

Elementary logic proposes that if the ultimate aim of radical Islamic leaders to conquer and dominate the whole world is successful, this would produce the most radical changes that have ever occurred in human history. The future of every nation would be dramatically altered in every aspect of life. Islam is not only a religion in the manner that we perceive religion. It is also a form of government that would establish an iron clad rule over the lives of every person on earth. History shows us the nature such a rule to be powerfully detrimental. It is certainly not an ideal for the betterment of earth's populations. In many ways the world would be dragged back into the dark ages. Our question must be, is it feasible and possible that such a transformation could be achieved and if so, how and when could it happen? What could possibly transpire to allow this to happen and what can we do about this possibility? I personally believe that an event will soon happen that will instigate tremendous changes that will definitely affect the entire future of mankind.

The book of Revelation is that part of the Bible which predicts what will happen in the End Times. Although there will obviously be many horrific events in the near future as portrayed in Revelation, there will also be many glorious events too. These events will include the spiritual harvests as represented for example in Revelation 7:9-10

9 After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white and held palm branches in their hands.

10 And they were shouting with a mighty shout, "Salvation comes from our God on the throne and from the Lamb!" NLT

Within this huge innumerable company from EVERY nation, tribe, people and language there will obviously be many who were formerly Muslim adherents who will have submitted to Christ. Isaiah clearly intimates that numerous Arabic and Muslim nations will be redeemed. Isaiah 60:5-7

6 Vast caravans of camels will converge on you, the camels of Midian and Ephah. From Sheba they will bring gold and incense for the worship of the LORD.

7 The flocks of Kedar will be given to you, and the rams of Nebaioth will be brought for my altars. In that day I will make my Temple glorious. NLT

A WAR LIKE NO OTHER

It is becoming increasingly more obvious with every day that passes that a war is soon going to break out in the Middle East between Iran and Israel. It is equally clear that the war on Israel will be launched with the fanatical Islamic intention of utterly destroying the Jewish presence in Israel and re establishing an Islamic government functioning according to the shariah law of Islam. Most of the world wonders what the war is all about and do not even realise that such a war is inevitable. There is a feeling throughout the West that the world has had enough of war and why do we need another one? Certainly Israel saw enough of war in the 1940's when six million Jews were executed in a most barbaric manner. Now a new Jewish state has been established in their ancient homeland. It was meant to be a land where every Jew who wished to do so, could live there minus any kind of intolerance, persecution or reprisals. Now, approximately 60 years after its initial founding in 1948, the future of Israel is now under a serious threat of total annihilation. Not many people truly understand why this should be so and millions of people, including many Christians are sitting tight hoping that the threat will simply go away. Unfortunately that is just not going to happen for two reasons. Firstly, because the fanatical belief of fundamental Muslims is that this narrow strip of land in the Middle East, legally belongs to Islam, having once been under Islamic rule. The second reason is that the Bible graphically predicts such a war, not because God wants a war, but because His enemies under the instigation of the anti Christ, are determined to wage such a war.

It is widely recognized by both Jews and Christians that Abraham is the "father" or founder of their faiths. However what is not acknowledged by most Jews and Christians is that Ishmael also is a seed (son) of Abraham. In the beginnings of the Last Days scenario it is essential that Jews and Christians become freshly aware of this fact and of its ongoing consequences for the world. Without such an awareness it may be impossible to predict what the result of the current dilemma may be.

The love that Jehovah, the God of the Bible has for Ishmael and his descendants is very clearly seen in the Bible, the sacred book of the Jews and Christians. The Angel of the LORD was keenly interested in Ishmael even before he was born. The title "Angel of the Lord" is frequently used in the Bible to denote a theophany which is an earthly manifestation of God in human appearance. Therefore, it is a very real probability that this was a direct appearance and intervention of Jehovah Himself, even the Logos/Messiah on behalf of Hagar.

In the earliest chapters of the Bible it quickly becomes clear that Almighty God, the creator of the universe, had a special sovereign plan for mankind. Part of that plan needed a particular nation through which would come a redeemer. The nation that God sovereignly chose was Israel, of which nation a man named Abraham would be the central figure. Abraham would become the father and founder of a specific nation called Israel, which would be unique among all nations on earth.

Genesis 12:1-3

1 Then the LORD told Abram, "Leave your country, your relatives, and your father's house, and go to the land that I will show you.

2 I will cause you to become the father of a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and I will make you a blessing to others.

3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth will be blessed through you." NLT

The great nation of which God spoke was Israel. God would bless this nation greatly and through it all the nations on earth would ultimately be blessed. Amongst those nations would be the sons or descendants of Abraham through both Isaac and Ishmael. Not only are Muslim nations included in the "all Nations" they also have a special link with God because of the specific name He gave to Ishmael which was a guarantee that Elohim would hear his prayer. This is the very reason why it is currently essential that the whole of humanity and particularly the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael should become fully aware of God's sovereign purpose.

Since Israel features so prominently in God's prophetic plan and is fundamentally the heart of that plan, it is essential and imperative that Christians fully understand God's strong covenant relationship to Israel. It is also essential that the Church universal stands together with Israel especially in the chaotic and crucial days that lie immediately ahead. Without such an understanding the Church cannot possibly prepare itself for the prophetic events that lie in the immediate future leading to the unveiling of God's glorious government on planet earth.

In order for God's purpose to be attained, the present descendants of Isaac and Ishmael they must recognize that they are both of the "seed of Abraham" and that both have divine predictions made over them. The son that God initially promised would come through the womb of Sarah, the wife of Abraham. However, when his birth was delayed, Sarah conceived instead a plan that would produce a child through Hagar, an Egyptian maid of Sarah's. The resultant son for whom God chose the name Ishmael, pre-empted the birth of Isaac by thirteen years. For intercessors to be effective, they need to clearly understand "Who are the Seed of Abraham?" I trust that this brief book will go towards helping attain such a perspective.

For a reason that only God understands, His promise to Abraham was delayed for much longer than Abraham had expected. Both he and Sarah were evidently perplexed and frustrated about the delay. Sarah had passed the age when she could conceive.

Genesis 18:10-12

11 And since Abraham and Sarah were both very old, and Sarah was long past the age of having children,

12 she laughed silently to herself. "How could a worn-out woman like me have a baby?" she thought. "And when my master — my husband — is also so old?" NLT

In spite of God's promise to Abraham that he would become the father of a chosen nation, Sarah remained barren. When she was 75, she decided that the only way to realize God's promise was to present to Abraham her Egyptian maidservant Hagar, through whom he could father a child. Hagar eventually bore a son named Ishmael.

Genesis 16:11-12 *And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the LORD has heard your affliction. (NKJV).*

Upon the birth of Ishmael, Abraham gave to him the significant name that God had chosen for him. Thus Ishmael and his descendants were forever blessed with a name of tremendous significance which forever links them with Elohim, the God of the Bible. Though Jehovah is not the god they presently worship, their destiny will be eventually linked to Him.

Genesis 16:15 *And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael (KJV).*

When the birth of the promised son (Isaac) was delayed, Abraham pled with Yahweh that Ishmael might be recognized instead of the son who had been promised to Sarah. Over the years that followed the birth of Ishmael, Abraham had become very closely attached to Ishmael. They evidently had so much in common that Abraham's affections became very strongly attached to Ishmael

Genesis 17:18 *And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee (KJV).*

Ishmael's name had within it a guarantee that Elohim would always hear his prayer. This link will be seen again very soon when massive numbers of Ishmael's descendants cry out to Elohim. Had it not been for Elohim's intervention when Hagar called upon Him in the wilderness, Hagar would have perished, and with her death a premature end would have come to Ishmael and his offspring. In her time of despair Sarah cried out to Elohim who quickly responded to her. In the Last Days, many of the sons of Ishmael will cry out to Elohim and he will hear and answer their prayers. There will be a great harvest of Muslims into God's kingdom.

Genesis 16:13-14

¹³ *Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?"*

¹⁴ *Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered (NKJV).*

Because of His great love for Ishmael, Elohim declared that He would multiply and prosper him and his offspring exceedingly. The boy whom He had saved from death in the burning desert, would grow into manhood and produce numerous offspring and ultimately a great nation. That nation

today consists of all the descendants of Ishmael who are currently united under the banner of the Arabic Alliance of nations.

Genesis 17:20 *And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation (KJV).*

During his life time Ishmael's sons were extremely numerous and after his death they proliferated throughout the Middle East. These families became the predecessors of the large company of descendants that Jehovah had predicted. Our modern world has in recent years observed the tremendous wealth and prosperity they have acquired from massive oil reserves discovered in their historic native desert environment.

Genesis 25:12-17

¹² *Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:*

¹³ *And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,*

¹⁴ *And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,*

¹⁵ *Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:*

¹⁶ *These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations.*

¹⁷ *And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people (KJV).*

The name Ishmael comes from the Hebrew word "Yishma-el" meaning "God (El) hears." He was the son of Abraham and Hagar, the Egyptian maid of his wife Sarah. It is closely connected to the Hebrew "Shma" in Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

⁴ *"Hear, (Shma) O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!*

⁵ *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. NKJV*

It is interesting to notice that the name also comes from the same Hebrew root word for Samuel, which means "God (El) hears and answers." When Sarah had found herself not able to bear children, she arranged to have a child through Abraham, by Hagar acting as a surrogate mother (Genesis 16:1-4) even though God had specifically stated that the child of promise would be born to Sarah in due time. The result was bitter conflict between Ishmael and Isaac and their descendants that has continued even to the present day.

Ishmael was born at Mamre, when Abraham was eighty-six, - eleven years after Abraham's arrival in what would become the land of Israel (Genesis 16:3). He was Abraham's eldest son by his Egyptian concubine Hagar. Ishmael grew up to be a man of the desert wilderness, with a wild and hostile attitude toward people, exactly as God described him to his mother before he was born:

When a feast was held to celebrate the weaning of Isaac, who was born thirteen years later, Ishmael caused trouble by evidently insulting and mocking his little brother (Genesis 21:8-9). After Sarah, who by then had come to dislike both Hagar and Ishmael, saw what he was doing, she said to Abraham, “cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac” (Genesis 21:10 RSV).

Abraham at first resisted Sarah's demand. Abraham greatly loved Ishmael and did not want to see him go. However God settled the matter. “But God said to Abraham, ‘Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendants be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring’ ” (Genesis 21:12-13 RSV).

Hagar and Ishmael were sent away, but they were not abandoned. God appeared and spoke to Hagar, assuring her that He would watch over them and see them prosper (Genesis 21:17-19). Hagar also found an Egyptian wife for her son.

“And God was with the lad, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt” (Genesis 21:20-21 RSV).

Ishmael settled in the land of Paran, which lies between Canaan and the mountains of Sinai. He became a desert chief and a great archer, though very little is known about this period of his life. Isaac and Ishmael apparently did not meet again until just before Abraham died. The scripture informs us that “Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, the field which Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife” (Genesis 25:9-10 RSV). The place today is known as the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, where the conflict for control of it still rages between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael.

Ishmael lived 137 years (Genesis 25:17). He had twelve sons, and became the founder of Ishmaelite tribes that spread from Egypt to what is today Iraq. The Ishmaelites, his descendants, spread over the wild desert places from Northern Arabia and from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River (Genesis 37: 25, 27, 28. 39:1). Many of the modern-day Arab peoples correctly recognize that they are the descendants of Ishmael, while the Jews, and the rest of the Israelites, are descendants of Isaac - but all are descended from Abraham.

The analogy of “the dust of the earth” evidently refers to a people of the desert. Dust is much lighter than sand and is extremely mobile, easily carried by the wind. It may well symbolize the nomadic Arab peoples of the great deserts of the Middle East.

Genesis 13:16 *And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered (KJV).*

The Old Testament sees Ishmael as the founding father of the Ishmaelites –also in the Book of Jubilees – which is a Jewish apocryphal book written between the Old Testament and the New Testament, you will find Ishmael cited as the founder of the Ishmaelite or Arab race.

“And Ishmael and his sons, and the sons of Keturah and their sons, went together and dwelt from Paran to the entering in of Babylon in all the land which is towards the East facing the desert. And these mingled with each other, and their name was called Arabs, and Ishmaelites” (Jubilees 20:12).

And so it was that Mohammed came to trace the spiritual ancestry of Islam back to Abraham via Ishmael. And if you look at the family tree of the Judeo-Christian religions, you will find a common root in Abraham, dividing between Islam and Judaism/Christianity with his two sons.

ISHMAEL AND HIS DESCENDANTS ARE ALSO THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

Genesis 21:12 - 21

¹² *But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.*

¹³ *Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed."*

¹⁴ *So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba.*

¹⁵ *And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs.*

¹⁶ *Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, "Let me not see the death of the boy." So she sat opposite him, and lifted her voice and wept.*

¹⁷ *And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.*

¹⁸ *Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation."*

¹⁹ *Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.*

²⁰ *So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.*

²¹ *He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. NKJV*

Genesis 17:19-21

¹⁹ *Then God said, "Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.*

²⁰ *And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.*

²¹ *But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year” (NIV).*

Genesis 16:11-15

¹¹ And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shall bear a son, and shall call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

¹² And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

¹³ And she called the name of the LORD that spoke unto her, Thou God see me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that sees me?

¹⁴ Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

¹⁵ And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael (KJV) (Shma'El =El shall hear).

Genesis 17:20-21

²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation.

²¹ But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year (KJV).

Genesis 17:24-26

²⁴ And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

²⁵ And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old, when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

²⁶ In the selfsame day was Abraham circumcised, and Ishmael his son (KJV).

THE SONS OF KETURAH

Keturah was the woman that Abraham married after the death of his beloved Sarah. The sons of Keturah and their descendants, are also therefore of the seed (sperm) of Abraham. According to the flesh they like Ishmael, are authentic physical members of the family of Abraham's seed. As such they are also in line to receive the promises made to his seed. Keturah whose name means fragrance - a wife of Abraham (Genesis 25:1,4), also called Abraham's concubine (1 Chronicles 1:32-33). Some suggest that Keturah had been Abraham's "concubine-wife," before the death of Sarah. After Sarah died, Keturah was then elevated to the full status of Abraham's wife. Keturah bore to Abraham six sons: Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah (Genesis 25:1-4). These men were the founders or ancestors of six Arabian tribes in southern and eastern Palestine. Late Arabian genealogies mention a tribe by the name of Katura dwelling near Mecca. Abraham was already advanced in years when he married Keturah. She brought him both companionship and children in his old age. Keturah apparently outlived Abraham.

(from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Genesis 25:1-4

¹ Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.

² And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah.

³ And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim.

⁴ And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

GOD MADE COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM CONCERNING ISAAC - HE GAVE PROMISES TO ISHMAEL

Following the burial of their mutual father Abraham, his inheritance was divided between his two sons. The major portion was given to Isaac as the son of promise. A lesser portion was given to Ishmael. Nevertheless, both sons and their ensuing descendants were blessed by God as the seed of His servant Abraham. The Abrahamic Covenant which was to be inherited by Isaac and Jacob included the promise of a land. However, to Ishmael's descendants God promised many offspring and great prosperity. However, Ishmael's offspring must realise that Isaac was the true son of promise and that they have a different inheritance to him. When they acknowledge and accept this fact they will inherit the full blessing of what God promised to them.

GENESIS 25: 5 AND ABRAHAM GAVE ALL THAT HE HAD TO ISAAC

Genesis 25:5-6

⁵ Abraham left everything he owned to his son Isaac.

⁶ But before he died, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them off to the east, away from Isaac. NLT

From this scripture we see again that Isaac, the son of promise was given precedence of inheritance over Ishmael even though in a physical sense Ishmael was Abraham's first born son. This principle of the greater and lesser inheritance is illustrated in

Genesis 17:18-21

¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before You."

¹⁹ Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.

²⁰ "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make (of) him a great nation.

²¹ "But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year" (NKJ).

Although Abraham pled with God at this time that Ishmael might be recognized as the son of promise, the Lord emphasized again that Isaac was the son through whom the original promise would proceed.

GOD MADE TWO PROMISES CONCERNING TERRITORY

The land promises outlined in scripture obviously differ considerably. Sceptics will even claim that they are contradictory. However, closer examination reveals that one statement relates to Father Abraham and ALL his seed, (including Ishmael) while the second was given to Moses and relates specifically to the line of descendants through Isaac and Jacob.

FIRST TO ABRAHAM AND (ALL) HIS SEED

Genesis 13:15-17

¹⁵ *“for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.*

¹⁶ *“And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.*

¹⁷ *“Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you” (NKJ).*

Genesis 17:8 *“Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” (NKJ).*

SECONDLY TO MOSES AND HIS DESCENDANTS

Deuteronomy 34:1-4

¹ *Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land of Gilead as far as Dan,*

² *all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea,*

³ *the South, and the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.*

⁴ *Then the LORD said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’. I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there” (NKJ).*

Deuteronomy 1:7-8

⁷ *‘Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates.*

⁸ *‘See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers - to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - to give to them and their descendants after them’ (NKJ).*

Abraham is obviously a very unique and extremely significant person. God plucked him out of obscurity in Iraq and placed him on an international stage. He fostered him when he was childless and brought from his loins a great multitude of descendants. He took a man who was very human, morally vulnerable, prone to errors, a nomadic wanderer, and shaped him into a man with an eternal

destiny. He was a man honored and revered by millions, yet one who remains virtually overlooked to most people other than Jews and Muslims.

The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3) initially refers to Israel, (the great nation) and to the land (territory) ceded by Yahweh to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac. However, it also promises great blessing to ALL nations (ethnos) and families of earth (V.12). This blessing is to be passed on through Israel, Jesus and the Church.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ISHMAEL

Many Christians tend to overlook the fact that Ishmael is also “of the seed of Abraham.” Yet the Bible declares very clearly that both Isaac and Ishmael are both the sons (seed) of Abraham.

1 Chronicles 1:28 The sons (seed) of Abraham were Isaac and Ishmael (NKJV).

Ishmaelites are certainly descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael. The term is probably sometimes used as a general name for all the non Jewish, Abrahamic peoples from Egypt to the Euphrates and perhaps to the Persian Gulf, their headquarters being in Western Arabia.

As the promise of an heir did not now seem likely to be fulfilled, Sarah resolved, ten years after their entrance into Canaan, to give her Egyptian maid Hagar to her husband, that if possible she might “be built up by her,” i.e. obtain children, who might found a family line (Genesis 16:1-6). Abraham consented because he sought the seed promised by God. This appeared to be the natural solution to achieve the promised seed now that he and Sarah were so advanced in age.

Genesis 16:1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

Ishmael, was a “son of the flesh” born through natural procreation (Genesis 16:1-14, Galatians 4:22-29). He was sired by the seed (semen) of Abraham. He was not the “son of promise” nevertheless he is without doubt a legitimate son of Abraham according to the flesh. Abraham is his biological father, imparting to Ishmael his DNA, stamping upon him the undoubted evidence of physical kinship.

Genesis 16:2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

Eastern women have always displayed a passionate desire for a family. It is the result of their social condition in countries where the honor, influence, and strength of a household depend as much on the number of the sons as of the armed retainers belonging to it. The eagerness for offspring however, displayed by Sarah, is directly traceable to a special cause: it arose from the hope of being an ancestress of the promised Messiah (the seed of God, Malachi 2:15).

Having continued so long in that barren condition, and having no longer any natural hope that she would become a mother, she embarked on a course common to the culture of the Middle East in those days. She advised her husband to cohabit with her maid Hagar who became to him as a

concubine. Through this union Ishmael was born. Ishmael was a legitimate son of Abraham but not through the line that Jehovah had promised.

It was not long after Ishmael's birth that Abraham and Sarah realized the problem they had created for themselves. Hagar began to despise Sarah and conflict erupted within the home (Genesis 16:3-6). The solution seemed to be to evict Hagar and Ishmael, who then fled into the wilderness.

Genesis 16:7 *The angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.*

“The Angel of the Lord” is a term frequently used in scripture to denote a physical appearance of God Himself, very probably of the Logos who would later be manifested as the Son of man. The significance of this possibility is that the Messiah Himself, in His pre-incarnate form, was guiding, encouraging and protecting Hagar, and the seed of Abraham. His admonition to Hagar is also extremely significant -

Genesis 16:9 *And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.*

The Angel urged Hagar to return to Abraham and Sarah and submit (Hebrew “anan” meaning to humble and abase oneself; to submit to a superior person) herself and her son to the authority of Sarah and to the prophetic purpose that Elohim had ordained for them. Had Hagar obeyed His admonition, submitting herself and her son to the authority of Sarah and Abraham, the friction between her and Sarah may well have been resolved and Ishmael could have taken his proper place in the household of Abraham. The conflict that was sadly to characterize the lifetimes of Isaac and Ishmael could have been avoided and the prophetic future of mankind would have been vastly different. It is extremely interesting to note that the emphasis of Islam is submission, for submission was the very thing that God required of Hagar and Ishmael.

THE NAMING OF ISHMAEL

Genesis 16:10 *And the Angel (messenger) of Jehovah said to her, I will exceedingly multiply your seed, so that it shall not be numbered for multitude.*

Genesis 16:11 *And the Angel of Jehovah said to her, Behold! You are with child and shall bear a son; and you shall call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah has listened to your affliction.*

Throughout the first seventeen chapters of Genesis, Almighty God reveals Himself as Elohim. The actual name He uses is “El” (Elohim is its plural form signifying His tripartite being). However the name by which He chooses to introduce Himself is El, a masculine Hebrew word for God. The letters El occur many times within the names of various persons and places. In each occurrence it signifies the direct involvement with God. Of course, the prime example of this appears in the name IsraEL that God gave to Jacob. However another example that expresses God's affinity is IshamaEL.

Genesis 32:28 *And He said, your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, because you have wrestled with God and with men, and have prevailed.*
Genesis 16:11 *And the Angel of the LORD said to her: "Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction. NKJV*

ABRAHAM'S LOVE AND CONCERN FOR ISHMAEL

Although Sarah soon began to regret what she had suggested to Abraham, he himself developed a very powerful affinity with Ishmael. Ishmael had grown to be a strong, outdoor type of youth, evidently skilled in archery and other manly arts. It is easy to understand that Abraham and his youthful son Ishmael would have much in common. They had both grown up in desert surroundings and developed a love of the outdoors. At Abraham's advanced age, the loving companionship of a strong youthful son would have appeared much more attractive than the idea of a baby in the house once again. So strong was this affinity that Abraham would happily have counted Ishmael as his "son of promise." He pled with God that Ishmael's descendants be the line through which God would fulfill His promises. When God reiterated His intention to give he and Sarah a son, Abraham pleaded that God would bless Ishmael instead. Had Abraham's prayer that day been answered, Ishmael would have become the son of promise through whose descendants God's covenant people would have come forth.

Genesis 17:17-19

¹⁷ *Then Abraham threw himself down in worship before the Lord, but inside he was laughing in disbelief! "Me, be a father?" he said in amusement. "Me - 100 years old? And Sarah, to have a baby at 90?"*

¹⁸ *And Abraham said to God, "Yes, do bless Ishmael."*

¹⁹ *"No," God replied, "that isn't what I said. Sarah shall bear you a son; and you are to name him Isaac ('Laughter'), and I will sign my covenant with him forever, and with his descendants (TLB).*

Nevertheless God did give assurance that a secondary covenant was in place regarding Ishmael's lineage.

Genesis 17:20-21

²⁰ *As for Ishmael, all right, I will bless him also, just as you have asked me to. I will cause him to multiply and become a great nation. Twelve princes shall be among his lineage.*

²¹ *But my contract is with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah next year at about this time" (TLB).*

THE CIRCUMCISION OF ISHMAEL

When God again appeared to Abraham to introduce to him circumcision the sacred sign of their covenant, Abraham responded quickly to the need to be circumcised. Ishmael was also circumcised the very same day that his father was circumcised, both at the command of Yahweh as a sign that they were part of Yahweh's covenant promises.

Genesis 17:23 *And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him (KJV).*

Genesis 17 tells the fascinating story of Ishmael's circumcision by the hand of his father Abraham. In verse 9, Jehovah introduces to Abraham the importance of circumcision as a physical requirement and sign for all males in respect of His covenant (Genesis 17:9-14). Jehovah insists that as a sign of adherence to His covenant, Abraham and all the males in his household were to be circumcised.

Consequently, Abraham soon took all the males of his household through a circumcision ceremony. Abraham himself at the age of ninety-nine, was the first to undergo the act of circumcision and it would seem evident that Ishmael was the second male to be circumcised, followed by all the male members of the household. Surely this action has great significance in respect of the manner in which Abraham regarded Ishmael in respect of the covenant with Jehovah.

ISHMAEL'S CHARACTER AND LIFESTYLE DESCRIBED

Genesis 16:10-12

¹⁰ *The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count."*

¹¹ *The angel of the LORD also said to her: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery.*

¹² *He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility towards all his brothers" (NIV).*

Once again it is highly significant that the "Angel of the Lord" gave Ishmael his name which means "God hears" because God had "heard of his misery" and stepped in to deliver and save him. God's direct intervention saved his life and thus preserved his lineage. God also predicted his temperament and consequent hostility that this would be provocative. This description has usually been used to imply that Ishmael would be perennially at enmity with his own brothers and all others. However there is possibly another interpretation of this prophecy that implied that Ishmael would be as strong and free as an untamed donkey in the deserts. The wild, free roaming existence of nomadic Arabs might aptly fulfil such a picture. Whatever the case we must realize and affirm that although Ishmael came on to the scene because of Abraham's temporary lack of faith, he was definitely inducted into Jehovah's legacy through the act of circumcision ordained by Jehovah as a physical sign of the covenant.

ISHMAEL WAS OPPOSED TO ISAAC FROM HIS EARLIEST YEARS

Galatians 4:29 *At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now (NIV).*

The animosity between Ishmael and Isaac was first manifested when Isaac was but a baby (Genesis 21:8,9), and continued throughout most of their lifetimes. Their lives were evidently lived in a state of "cold war" until the death of their mutual father (Genesis 25:1) finally brought them

together at his burial. Sadly, this same animosity has continued throughout human history and is the basic cause of the continuing problems in the Middle East today centring on the issue of Palestine versus Israel and the right to Jerusalem.

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL WERE DRIVEN FROM ABRAHAM'S HOUSEHOLD

Genesis 21:9-13

⁹ *But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking,*

¹⁰ *and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."*

¹¹ *The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.*

¹² *But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.*

¹³ *I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring"* (NIV).

Once again Hagar and Ishmael were expelled from Abraham's house. This was specifically at the will of Sarah and caused great distress to Abraham (V.11). However God comforted Abraham, reminding him that the initial covenant promise would be fulfilled through Isaac and his subsequent descendants. God also reiterated that Ishmael would not be forgotten or discarded. He too as a seed of Abraham, would flourish and ultimately produce a strong nation.

Genesis 21:17-19

¹⁷ *God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.*

¹⁸ *Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."*

¹⁹ *Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.*

Hagar and Ishmael lived together in the wilderness during which time Hagar secured for her son a bride from Egypt.

Genesis 21:20-21

²⁰ *God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.*

²¹ *While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt* (NIV).

Since the days of Ishmael, his descendants have been largely desert dwellers. They are the ancestors of the modern Arab nations. They became known as Arabs and were mostly nomadic herders of sheep and goats. This life style afforded them considerable wealth as they faithfully followed their chosen vocation.

2 Chronicles 17:11 *Some Philistines brought Jehoshaphat gifts and silver as tribute, and the Arabs brought him flocks: seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred goats (NIV).*

The word Arabah means desert or wilderness. It is probably because of the desert life style of Ishmael and his descendant Ishmaelites that they inherited the name Arab or Arabians. The “country of the east” (Genesis 25:6) is probably a reference to Arabia. The earliest history of many of these peoples is unknown. Israel’s earliest contacts with the inhabitants of Arabia probably came through their camel caravans. Some of them oppressed the Israelites during the time of the judges, but God delivered Israel from them by raising up the judge Gideon (Judges 6:11).

Most of the tribes of southern and eastern Arabia were not well-known to Israel. Joel referred to the slave-trading Sabeans (Shebaites) as a people who lived far away (Joel 3:8). Isaiah pictured the Arabians wandering as far east as Babylon (Isaiah 13:19,20). Tribes which lived closer - those at Tema, Dedan, and Kedar - were included in Isaiah’s prophecies of judgment against the foreign nations (Isaiah 21:13-17). Jeremiah also announced God’s judgment upon Dedan, Tema, Buz, Kedar, Hazor, and all the kings of Arabia (Jeremiah 25:23-24; 49:28-33).

GOD’S COVENANT CONCERNING ISHMAEL’S DESCENDANTS

Ishmael’s descendants remained in continuing conflict with Isaac’s until the death and burial of Abraham, when they stood side by side, at their father’s grave (Genesis 25:7-11). This is a prophetic picture of a day when Ishmael’s descendants will finally acknowledge God’s sovereign Will concerning Isaac’s descendants and will then stand side by side in fraternal fellowship and right relationship according to God’s purpose. Prophetic statements concerning them will then be fulfilled (Genesis 21:13b,18b). Both Lines of Abraham’s Descendants will then inherit their respective destinies.

Genesis 21:12-13

¹² *And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

¹³ *And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed (KJV).*

Genesis 21:17, 18

¹⁷ *God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.*

¹⁸ *Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation” (NIV).*

a. Isaac’s Descendants and their Promised Inheritance

Genesis 13:14-17

¹⁴ *After Lot was gone, the LORD said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction.*

¹⁵ *I am going to give all this land to you and your offspring as a permanent possession.*

¹⁶ *And I am going to give you so many descendants that, like dust, they cannot be counted!*

¹⁷ *Take a walk in every direction and explore the new possessions I am giving you” (NLT).*

b. The Descendants of Ishmael and Their Inheritance

The mission of Messiah is ultimately to all nations. This obviously includes Arab nations who constitute a considerable percentage of the gentiles in our world.

Isaiah 42:1 A Messianic description:

“Look at my servant, whom I strengthen. He is my chosen one, and I am pleased with him. I have put my Spirit upon him. He will reveal justice to the nations” (Goyim = Gentiles) (NLT).

FUTURE GLORY FOR JERUSALEM

Isaiah makes it clear that in the future glory that awaits Jerusalem. Many kings and nations will come to her in willing submission. Among these nations are numerous names that indicate descendants of Ishmael.

Isaiah 60:1 – 7

¹ *“Arise, Jerusalem! Let your light shine for all the nations to see! For the glory of the LORD is shining upon you.*

² *Darkness as black as night will cover all the nations of the earth, but the glory of the LORD will shine over you.*

³ *All nations will come to your light. Mighty kings will come to see your radiance. ⁴*

“Look and see, for everyone is coming home! Your sons are coming from distant lands; your little daughters will be carried home.

⁵ *Your eyes will shine, and your hearts will thrill with joy, for merchants from around the world will come to you. They will bring you the wealth of many lands. ⁶ Vast caravans of camels will converge on you, the camels of Midian and Ephah. From Sheba they will bring gold and incense for the worship of the LORD.*

⁷ *The flocks of Kedar will be given to you, and the rams of Nebaioth will be brought for my altars. In that day I will make my Temple glorious (NLT).*

The prophet specifically mentions the villages of Kedar and the people of Sela. Kedar whose name means “to be swarthy in appearance” but also means “to be able or mighty” is,

1. The second son of Ishmael and father of the tribe bearing his name (Gen. 25:13; 1 Chronicles. 1:29). Little is known of Kedar, but his descendants are frequently mentioned (see no. 2).
2. Kedar, in the stricter sense, was a nomadic tribe of Ishmaelites that wandered as far as the Elamitic gulf. But this term is usually used in scripture as the collective name of the Arab tribes (Bedouin) in general (Song of Solomon 1:5; Isaiah 21:16-17; 42:11; 60:7; Jeremiah 2:10; 49:28; Ezekiel 27:21)). In Psalm. 120:5 Kedar and Meshech represent uncivilized tribes. (From New Unger’s Bible Dictionary.)

Both Sela and Kedar are recognized Arabic names clearly reflecting that Arabs will ultimately present offerings of praise to Yahweh.

Isaiah 42:10-11

¹⁰ *Sing a new song to the LORD! Sing his praises from the ends of the earth! Sing, all you who sail the seas, all you who live in distant coastlands.*

¹¹ *Join in the chorus, you desert towns; let the villages of Kedar rejoice! Let the people of Sela sing for joy; shout praises from the mountaintops (NLT).*

Nebaioth was the eldest son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13; 1 Chr. 1:29) and father of a pastoral tribe named after him (Isa. 60:7; cf. Gen. 17:20). This Arabian clan was a neighbour to the people of Kedar, and its name occurs in the records of Ashurbanipal (669-626 B.C.). They seem to be the forerunners of the later Nabataeans. (From New Unger's Bible Dictionary).

King David speaks prophetically concerning the realm of Christ's dominion which he describes as "from sea to sea" i.e. all encompassing. He includes within that dominion His (former) enemies in the wilderness (referring to desert dwellers) who will first lick the dust and then bring Him presents and gifts.

Psalms 72:8-11

⁸ *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.*

⁹ *Those who dwell in the wilderness will bow before Him, and His enemies will lick the dust.*

¹⁰ *The kings of Tarshish and of the isles will bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba will offer gifts.*

¹¹ *Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him. (NKJV).*

Isaiah makes it clear that the Gentiles will seek after the banner (flag) that God raises up and actually names some of those gentile nations which are obviously descendants of Ishmael.

Isaiah 11:10-11

¹⁰ *"And in that day there shall be a Root (out) of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious."*

¹¹ *It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea (NKJV).*

Once again God specifies that among the Gentiles who will finally seek Jehovah (v11) will be those from many nations associated with Ishmael's descendants. Whilst it is true that God has restored many Jewish families to their historic homeland in Eretz Israel, this scripture mentions that it is also "the gentiles" who will seek Messiah in Jerusalem (V.11b).

The land that God promised to Israel is very much larger than what they presently occupy. It stretches from the Mediterranean to the River Euphrates and includes much of modern Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Genesis 15:18 *In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.*

THE DESCENDANTS OF ISHMAEL

As Jehovah had predicted, Ishmael's descendants became very numerous eventually occupying vast areas of Arabia. Ishmael died at the age of a hundred and thirty-seven. Verse 18 describes the area in which he had settled prior to his death. "From Havilah," on the borders of Arabia, Petraea and Felix. "Unto Shur," on the borders of Arabia and Egypt. This was the original seat of the Ishmaelites, from which they wandered far into Arabia. "In the presence of all his brethren" - the descendants of Abraham by Sarah and Keturah, those of Lot, and the Egyptians, who were his brethren or near kindred by his mother and wife. "He had fallen" into the lot of his inheritance. Thus was fulfilled the prediction uttered before his birth.

ISHMAEL'S DESCENDANTS SETTLED IN THE AREA FROM HAVILAH TO SHUR (East Of Egypt)

Genesis 25:18 His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers.

This is the area that we refer to as the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran)

ESAU MARRIED ONE OF ISHMAEL'S DAUGHTERS

Genesis 28:8-9 Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac; so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.

ESAU BECAME THE FATHER OF THE EDMITES

Genesis 36:1-3 This is the account of Esau (that is, Edom). Esau took his wives from the women of Canaan: Adah daughter of Elon the Hittite, and Oholibamah daughter of Anah and granddaughter of Zibeon the Hivite--also Basemath daughter of Ishmael and sister of Nebaioth.

Genesis 36:4 Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau, Basemath bore Reuel,

Genesis 36:13 The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.

Genesis 36:17 The sons of Esau's son Reuel: Chiefs Nahath, Zerah, Shammah and Mizzah. These were the chiefs descended from Reuel in Edom; they were grandsons of Esau's wife Basemath.

ISHMAEL AND ISAAC REMAINED AT ENMITY UNTIL THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM

Genesis 25:7-9

⁷ *Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years.*

⁸ *Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.*

⁹ *His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite (NIV).*

Following the funeral, Isaac remained in Israel until his death, after which he was buried with his father and mother. Ishmael returned to his own territory and his descendants.

Genesis 25:17-18

¹⁷ *Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people.*

¹⁸ *His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers (NIV).*

ISHMAEL'S HONORABLE JOURNEY TO HEBRON (Genesis 25:9)

Although the scripture does not specifically mention this, it seems obvious that Ishmael began his journey to Hebron while his father was still alive. Abraham was obviously advanced in years and probably becoming physically frail and showing signs that he was drawing close to death. Ishmael was also now more advanced in years too and the journey from Paran and the mountains of Sinai to Hebron would be long and arduous. However, to his great credit, he took the initiative to return to see and honor his father and to be reconciled to his brother. Although Ishmael had been earlier described in terms less than complimentary (Genesis 16:12), this journey reveals him in a much different and more positive light. It was a journey of faith in that he had no inkling or guarantee as to what his reception might be when he finally reached Hebron. It was also an honorable journey of humility and obedience that was well rewarded and blessed by God. Ishmael is to be highly commended for his action.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABRAHAM'S BURIAL Genesis 25:7-11.

Though Isaac and Ishmael had evidently been in a state of antagonism throughout their respective lifetimes and had remained socially and geographically separate from each other, the death of their mutual father brought them together once more. The recognition and acknowledgement of their mutual brotherhood despite differences and conflicts, overcame their long alienation. It is both interesting and challenging to see that they were both eventually reconciled through the death of a mutual relative. They may in fact have come together before Abraham's actual demise. Perhaps during a period of ill health that eventually led to his death? Whatever the immediate circumstances, they stood together, side by side in mutual respectful cooperation at the burial. It is not actually stated in the biblical text but it would seem likely that mutual discussion had led to an agreement regarding the God-intended status in respect of each other. Ishmael may well have finally acknowledged that Isaac was truly "the son of promise" and expressed his own willingness to accept his own position accordingly. The ultimate key to the resolution of the bitter division between sons of Isaac and those of Ishmael will only take place when Ishmael's descendants recognize and acknowledge that Isaac is the true son of promise.

ISHMAEL AND ISAAC WERE RECONCILED AT ABRAHAM'S BURIAL

Isaac and Ishmael apparently did not meet again until Abraham died. "Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, the field which Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife" (Genesis 25:9-10 RSV). The place is known today as the Tomb of the Patriarchs in

Hebron, where the conflict for control of it still rages between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael. This is a prophetic picture of the reconciliation that God desires today.

ISHMAEL RETURNED TO HIS OWN FAMILY AND LIVED PEACEABLY

Following the burial of Abraham, Ishmael returned again to his own land east of the Jordan and to his descendants. Ishmael lived 137 years (Genesis 25:17). From the time of Ishmael's return to Paran until his death in advanced years, there is no Biblical intimation of any further animosity or bitterness between Ishmael and Isaac.

Ishmael had twelve sons, and became the founder of Ishmaelite tribes that spread from Egypt to what is today Iraq. The Ishmaelites, his descendants, spread over the wild desert places from Northern Arabia and from the Red Sea to the Euphrates River (Genesis 37: 25, 27, 28. 39:1).

Genesis 25:12-17

¹² *Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:*

¹³ *And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,*

¹⁴ *And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa,*

¹⁵ *Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:*

¹⁶ *These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations.*

¹⁷ *And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people (KJV).*

RECONCILIATION THROUGH THE DEATH OF A MUTUAL RELATIVE

The long and bitter feud between Isaac and Ishmael was finally resolved at the burial of their mutual father Abraham (Genesis 22). It took the impending death of Abraham to bring together his two sons. After years of hatred and animosity they finally stood side by side together to bury their father. It is not only a historic fact that their bitter hatred was evidently resolved. I believe it is also a prophetic type of a time when the sons of Isaac and those of Ishmael will also find a resolution of their estrangement. Just as this occurred through the death of a mutual relative –Abraham, so they will also come together through a divine revelation concerning the death of Jesus who is also a mutual relative through Abraham.

The birth of Isaac occurred about 2061 B.C. when Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah ninety (Genesis 21:5). He was circumcised when he was eight days old, and his mother's sceptical laughter was turned into great joy. The next event recorded of Isaac is his weaning, probably when he was two years old (21:8). Ishmael was about thirteen years of age at that time. In honour of the occasion Abraham gave a great feast, as an expression of his joy. This happiness was naturally shared by Sarah and the friends of the parents. But Ishmael saw no occasion for gladness, having been supplanted in the honour of the household by this younger brother. He mocked Isaac and so angered Sarah that she insisted upon his being sent away (vv. 9-14).

Nevertheless, God did not forsake Hagar and Ishmael. He actually promised that they would be greatly blessed, saying - "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count" (Genesis 16:10). The Arab nations of today are the descendants of Ishmael. Both the Jews and Arabs are descendants of Abraham. That is why they struggle, with often bloody and tragic results, over control of the Tomb of The Patriarchs in Hebron, in which Abraham is buried, right to this very day. Both correctly claim descent from him - the Jews through Isaac, the Arabs through Ishmael.

The Covenant promise did not go through Ishmael because the promise had already been made with Abraham, and with a yet-unborn Isaac the designated heir, long before Ishmael was born (Genesis 15:2-6). While God is no respecter of persons, His promise was always intended to be fulfilled through Isaac. The emergence of Ishmael did nothing to change that arrangement. Abraham loved Ishmael just as much as he loved Isaac (Genesis 21:9-13) but the major covenant was always meant to find fulfilment in Isaac. Ishmael (the ancestor of the Arab people) and all his descendants were loved and blessed by God (Genesis 21:13,18) but in a different way, and for a different purpose.

THE FUTURE OF "PALESTINE"

Palestine is actually (within) the land promised by God to Abraham and his descendants and the region where the Hebrew people lived for so many generations. Palestine (or Palestina) is a tiny land bridge between the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. The word itself originally identified the region as "the land of the Philistines," a war-like tribe that inhabited much of the region alongside the Hebrew people. But the older name for Palestine was Canaan, the term most frequently used in the Old Testament. The Amarna Letters of the 14th century B. C. referred to "the land of Canaan," applying the term to the coastal region inhabited by the Phoenicians. After the Israelites took the land from the Canaanites, the entire country became known as the "land of Israel" (1 Sam. 13:19; Matthew 2:20) and the "land of promise" (Hebrews 11:9. Zech 9:7b).

The name Palestine was never validated by Jehovah. It was the name given to the land of Israel by the Romans as part of their strategy to disassociate the Jews from the land of Israel. The name Palestine does not even occur in most modern translations of the Bible, one exception being the King James or the Authorised Version.

e.g. Isaiah 14:29-15:1

²⁹ *Rejoice not thou, whole Palestina, because the rod of him that smote thee is broken: for out of the serpent's root shall come forth a cockatrice, and his fruit shall be a fiery flying serpent.*

³⁰ *And the firstborn of the poor shall feed, and the needy shall lie down in safety: and I will kill thy root with famine, and he shall slay thy remnant.*

³¹ *Howl, O gate; cry, O city; thou, whole Palestina, art dissolved: for there shall come from the north a smoke, and none shall be alone in his appointed times.*

³² *What shall one then answer the messengers of the nation? That the LORD hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it (KJV).*

Exodus 15:14 The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina (KJV).

It should be noticed that the name only occurs three times and each of these references predict Divine judgment and vengeance upon it. However, the prophetic predictions respecting the so called Palestinians are not all negative. God has also made positive predictions regarding the ultimate favorable destiny of many of the “Palestinian” people who will become as Jebusites who continued to live in Salem (Jerusalem) together with the Israelites (Joshua 15:63, Zechariah 9:7b).

Joshua 15:63 As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day (NKJ).

Zechariah 9:7 I will take away the blood from his mouth, and the abominations from between his teeth. But he who remains, even he shall be for our God, and shall be like a leader in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite (NKJ).

In the conquest of Jebus (Jerusalem) the lives of many of the inhabitants were spared and they lived on in the city together with the Israelites. In a similar manner, in the great battles that will ensue between Ishmael’s and Isaac’s descendants, many Ishmaelite lives will be spared and will live together with Israelis in peace and harmony.

Jeremiah 12:14-17

¹⁴ *This is what I, the LORD, say about all my evil neighbors who take the inheritance that I gave my people Israel: I am going to uproot those neighbors from their lands. I will also uproot the people of Judah from among them.*

¹⁵ *After I've uprooted them, I will have compassion on them again. I will return them to their inheritance and to their lands.*

¹⁶ *Suppose they learn carefully the ways of my people. Suppose they take an oath in my name, 'As the LORD lives...' as they taught my people to take an oath in {the name of} Baal. Then they will build homes among my people.*

¹⁷ *But suppose they don't listen. Then I will uproot that nation and destroy it," declares the LORD.*

- God has decreed that the family feud between Arabs and Jews shall one day end.
- Esau and Jacob will embrace.
- And Arab and Jew -- as brothers shall at long last EMBRACE one another.

No, God will NOT "wipe out" the Arabs. Neither will He allow ANY nation or force to wipe out the Jews.

DIVIDING GOD’S LAND

The return and restoration of the Jews to the land of Israel in modern times is no accident of history. Jeremiah puts it so plainly: “I am with you to save you, says the LORD; I will make a full end of all the nations among whom I scattered you, but of you I will not make a full end” (Jeremiah

30:11). How true are those words! The Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Romans, who scattered Israel, have disappeared, but the Jews survive. “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” the prophet goes on, “therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you” (Jeremiah 31:1-3).

Ezekiel also said, “I will take you from the nations, and gather you from all the countries, and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness’s. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you . . . and the land that was desolate shall be tilled, instead of being the desolation that it was in the sight of all who passed by” (36:24-26,34).

ERETZ ISRAEL IS GOD’S LAND

In the Bible God makes it clear that He regards the land of Israel as uniquely His own land. Of course the God of creation owns the whole universe. However, He has given planet earth to humanity as their dwelling place but in some mysterious manner He regards a tiny strip of land in the centre of the world as His own land. In Ezekiel 38 God warns Gog that He will draw them down into HIS land (Israel) in order to demonstrate His power before all Gentile nations.

***Ezekiel 38:16** And thou shall come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes (KJV).*

In the book of Joel, God once again predicts judgment upon the nations because of the manner in which they scattered and persecuted God’s people Israel and divided the land.

***Joel 3:2** I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land (KJV).*

However, God gave the right of inheritance to His ancient covenant people Israel. In other words, the Jewish right to occupy the land was given by God Himself. These rights are eternal and unconditional. God promised Abraham, “I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession.” God also covenanted with Ishmael, regarded as the father of the Arab people. However, that promise was for nationhood, not land. But the land of Israel was not just a Divine promise for the future. It was also the historic home of our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and their wives, Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah.

God also declared that Israel would be His “own possession among all the peoples.
***Deuteronomy 12:10** You will soon cross the Jordan River and live in the land the LORD your God is giving you as a special possession . When he gives you rest and security from all your enemies, NLT”*

This requires Israel to “obey My (God’s) voice and keep My (God’s) covenant” (Exodus 19:5). Because of this, many people mistakenly believe that because Israel disobeyed God, He removed them from the land permanently. They say that Israel no longer has a valid claim to the land, according to God’s Word. Some even go so far as to say that God has cast off His people

permanently. However, scripture does not bear this out. In fact, it states just the opposite. God promised He would restore Israel to His chosen land. Following their restoration God would never again allow them to be removed from the land nor for the land to be divided between Israel and any other people.

DIVIDING THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Several nations, including the USA, UK and European Union are currently insisting that the land of Israel be divided between Israel and “Palestine.” They insist that such a division is essential to attaining peace in the Middle East. But God will never allow “His Land” to be divided and a portion of it given to the ‘Palestinians’, or to anybody else other than the Jewish people. He will not allow anyone to do such a thing without severe repercussions. In addition to the scriptures listed above, there are many more detailing God’s promise of the restoration of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. Is it possible then that God would want to share His land with other nations? God is very concerned about His land, especially Judea and Samaria. He is especially concerned for His holy city Jerusalem. God spoke of the judgment against the nations for dividing His land: “I will gather all the nations, and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of my people and my inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and they have divided up my land” (Joel 3:2) The issue then of whether to divide Israel becomes clear. The land bordered by the Nile and Euphrates Rivers and the Mediterranean Sea and the wilderness of Jordan belongs to God, who, in turn gave it to the Jewish people for an eternal possession. It cannot be shared nor given away. God gave Israel a clear command regarding making covenants with their enemies:

Deuteronomy 7:2 “and when the Lord your God shall deliver them before you, and you shall defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them”.

For the past 3,000 years there was always a Jewish presence in the Holy Land. Israel is at the core of Jewish identity and culture; the land shapes the Jews’ self image and character as a community covenanted with God. Indeed, to repudiate the link between the Jews and the land of Israel is to repudiate the Bible itself. To denigrate the centrality of Israel for God’s people is to severely distort God’s Word.

Throughout the long years of Jewish exile the Jewish people never forgot their links to their ancient homeland. To fulfill their vow never to forget the Holy Land during their exile, the Jews introduced the theme of Israel into virtually every aspect of daily life and routine. To this day, Jews everywhere face toward Israel when reciting their daily prayers. A prayer for return to Zion is part of the standard Jewish blessing over meals. The Passover Seder meal as well as the High Holy Day Services, are always concluded with the fervent hope and promise of, “next year in Jerusalem!”

Understanding of the situation in Israel is very complicated because of so many different beliefs and attitudes regarding among other things, the validity of Divine Rights. Misunderstandings abound even among followers of the God of Israel regarding the reasons for the fighting. In its simplest terms, the “conflict” in Israel is being waged by those who are fighting against the God of Israel, the Creator of the universe and His Word. It is a battle, for the most part, between those who

believe the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and those who, for whatever reasons, would prefer that Israel (i.e., the Jews) did not live on the land bordered by the Nile and Euphrates Rivers and the Mediterranean Sea and the wilderness of Jordan. The faithful in Israel are obeying a direct commandment from God to “inhabit the land.” Those, on the other hand, who are fighting against God (whether intentionally or not) are trying to remove the Jewish people from the land given to them by God, especially Judea and Samaria — the very heart of Israel. When looked at from a spiritual viewpoint, it’s easy to see the reason for wanting Jews out of the land of Israel. The existence of the Jewish people in the land of Israel, after 2,000 years of dispersion, proves beyond a doubt that the God of Israel does exist, that man will one day have to give an account of his deeds before Him, and that man’s autonomous reign on this earth is soon coming to an end.

Most religions of the world do not recognize God’s covenant over the land of Israel. Some believe that the Jews had a covenant, but that this covenant is no longer in effect. God is using Israel to now show the literal reality of His word. The rebirth of Israel confronts false teaching, doctrine and prophets. Islam does not recognize the covenant with Isaac and Jacob, but instead believes God made a covenant with Abraham and Ishmael. Islam believes the Koran and not the Bible is the word of God. The Koran fails to mention Jerusalem even once, and it does not mention the rebirth of the nation of Israel. Jerusalem is mentioned 811 times in the Bible. The rebirth of Israel is on page after page in the Bible while the Koran is silent on the subject.

The rebirth of Israel confirms the authority of the Bible as the word of God. God’s everlasting covenant and the rebirth of Israel are like a hammer against the Koran. Israel is proof the Koran and Mohammed are wrong. This tension between Israel and the Koran can never be peacefully resolved. For Islam to recognize the nation of Israel would be an admission that the Koran and Islam are wrong. Moslem fundamentalists refer to Israel as the “Zionist entity.” They will not even recognize the nation of Israel. There is a huge confrontation on the horizon between the God of the Bible and Islam. The heart of the confrontation will be the Jewish control of Jerusalem. When the Islamic nations come against Israel and Jerusalem, they will be destroyed. Only a remnant of those who come against Jerusalem will survive.

ZECHARIAH’S PREDICTION

The book of Zechariah is a powerful apocalyptic vision encompassing both the first and second advents of Messiah. He makes some interesting statements that are obviously applicable to the “End Times.” I personally believe that these references throw some light upon what will happen to the Palestinians who were linked with the P.L.O. Hamas, Hizbollah and various terrorist movements.

Zechariah 9:5-7.

⁵ *Ashkelon shall see and fear; Gaza also shall writhe in great pain; and Ekron shall be ashamed for her hope. And the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.*

⁶ *And a bastard (people) shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.*

⁷ *And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth. But the remnant, even he, shall be for our God. And he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron, like a Jebusite.*

Zechariah speaks of “Gaza writhing in great pain” and that the “king” of Gaza will perish. Gaza has never been a monarchy but the role of Yasser Arafat exalted him to become the virtual king and I believe that it is he to whom Zechariah refers. It is also said that a “bastard race” will dwell in Ashdod. This surely refers to the “Philistines” who came originally from Cyprus and settled in a land which was not their own. They are invaders and usurpers, occupiers of a land that was not their original homeland.

Zechariah predicts in the latter part of verse 7, that a remnant of Palestinians, “shall be for our God (Jehovah) and shall be as Ekron the Jebusite. When David conquered Salem many of the citizens were spared and lived on with the Israelites in Jerusalem which became the capital city of David’s kingdom.

Joshua 15:63 As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day (KJV).

God, through Zechariah, says that He will “take the blood out of his mouth and the abominations (lies) from between his teeth.” How apt a description of Yasser Arafat whose orders caused the shedding of so much innocent blood and through whose lips so many abominable lies flowed in the cause of terrorism. It is well known that Arafat spoke soothing words in English to Western ears and the very same day poured forth vitriolic words of hatred and destruction in Arabic.

GOD’S PLAN FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

Isaiah 35:1-

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be gladdened; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

² It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and shouting: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of Jehovah, the excellency of our God (Darby).

As far as the Bible is concerned, the Middle East is the centre of the earth. Ancient maps of the world depicted earth’s landmass like a three leaf clover representing the territories of Japheth, Shem and Ham, with Israel as the very central core of the three leaves. Most of the Middle East is desert and wilderness appearing to be completely bare and totally inhospitable. Only the fertile crescent along the Mediterranean was described as “flowing with milk and honey.” The remainder of the area constituted a vast, empty wilderness with mile upon mile of nothingness. However, the Bible predicts that in the last days it will blossom, i.e. become abundantly productive and prosperous.

This has already reached a partial fulfilment in Israel where the kibbutzim and moshavim have turned the land into one of the most productive agricultural areas in the Middle East and in the world, exporting its crops to much of Europe. Amazingly in the past few years, in the regions occupied by Arab nations, the sandy wastelands have also become super productive with the discovery of the world’s greatest sources of oil. Much of the Western world has become totally dependent upon the vast petroleum product of the previous barren and worthless Arabian deserts. How greatly has God blessed Ishmael’s descendants in a material sense!

The Arabic nations, as descendants of Ishmael a son (and heir) of Abraham were promised a blessing for Abraham's sake. As God promised, Ishmael became the father of 12 princes (Genesis 25:16), as well as a daughter, Mahalath, who later married Esau, son of Isaac (Genesis 28:9). Ishmael died at the age of 137 (Genesis 25:17).

Genesis 17:20 *And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. NKJV*

Genesis 21:13 *Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed."*

Genesis 25:16 *These were the sons of Ishmael and these were their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations. NKJV*

Blessing always includes prosperity, abundance and well being and so it will ultimately be for Ishmael's descendants. They have inherited tremendous prosperity beyond their wildest dreams. But the greatest miracle of this inherited prosperity will be that ultimately the wealth it procures will be presented to Israel.

Isaiah 60:6-7

⁶ *The multitude of camels shall cover your land, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come; they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.*

⁷ *All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together to you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall ascend with acceptance on My altar, And I will glorify the house of My glory. NKJV*

THE GREAT MIDDLE EAST MIRACLE

An even greater miracle will occur when God forges a new alliance in the Middle East that will involve Israel, Syria and Egypt.

Isaiah 19:24-25

²⁴ *In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria — a blessing in the midst of the land,*

²⁵ *whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance." NKJV*

Sadly, before this comes to pass, the Middle East will become the scene of great indescribable disasters as nations that would seek to conquer Israel and annihilate her Jewish population will come face to face with Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of heavens armies. Those nations, including Iran, Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Russia who though having massively greater armies and many high tech weapons of mass destruction will be routed and utterly defeated by the intervention of God's mighty arm stretched forth to deliver His ancient people Israel. The mountains and plains of Israel and the Middle East will be littered with the evidences of mass destruction. The very face and

contours of the land will be transformed and out of the resulting chaos God will bring forth a totally and radically new scenario where peace and prosperity will be in evidence.

CONFRONTATION AND CAPITULATION

From so many of these prophetic scriptures we may identify a pattern to which God will work. His ultimate aim is to redeem these sons of Ishmael but in order to do this He will first need to conquer them. Egypt appears as a prime example of this strategy. In Isaiah 19:1-16 we find a vivid description of the disasters that will come upon Egypt for her complicity with the nations that have sought to destroy Israel. Then from v17 we discover a catalogue of blessings that He will heap upon the nation in response to her repentance and remorse. We will see this pattern enacted in all of these nations that defy the God of Israel by seeking to totally destroy His people and their land. In each case, in the aftermath we will see a remnant of these enemy nations turning to Jehovah.

One of the amazing results of this devastating display of the awesome power of God will be that all the nations on earth will be humbled and become fearfully in awe of Jehovah. This will include Israel itself who will be totally humbled by the awesome mercy of God as He intervenes so convincingly on behalf of His chosen people.

God's intention to make the Middle East the fulcrum of His prophetic plan relates wholly to His promise to Abraham that ALL his seed (descendants) would be ultimately blessed. In God's prophetic plan the Middle East is the epicenter of the earth. It is the cradle of humanity. It is the place where mankind first drew breath. It is also the very place where God confronted Satan in Christ in the redemptive struggle to free mankind from the enemies grip. It is also the site where the most amazing military victory of all time will take place when God meets head on with the nations who will fiercely endeavor to conquer Israel and rid it of the presence of God's ancient covenant people. Finally, it is the place to which the Messiah will return in order to establish His physical, visible, personal presence as King of kings and Lord of lords from the throne of David.

The Bible contains many thrilling and amazing promises made to Israel in the Last Days. Ironically, many Christian commentators have related them solely to the (Gentile) church rather than to Israel. It is true that these exciting promises may also concern the church but only inasmuch as the church aligns itself with Israel in the context of God's End Time purposes. The fulfillment of these promises is dependent upon Israel receiving and embracing her Messiah who is THE light of the world.

ISAIAH PROPHETICALLY SPEAKS OF THIS TIME

Isaiah 60:1-7 & 19: 23-25

¹ *Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.*

² *For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you.*

³ *The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.*

⁴ *“Lift up your eyes all around, and see: they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be nursed at your side.*

⁵ *Then you shall see and become radiant, and your heart shall swell with joy; because the*

abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth (abundance) of the Gentiles shall come to you.

⁶ The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.

⁷ All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory (KJV).

Isaiah 19:23-25

²³ *In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians.*

²⁴ *In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land:*

²⁵ *Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance (KJV).*

EGYPT'S PROPHETIC DESTINY

As predicted by God, the seed of Abraham will ultimately bless every nation throughout the world. One example of such blessing is recorded in respect of Egypt. In Isaiah 19 amazing statements are made regarding a dramatic period in Egypt's future in which God will first strike Egypt and then gloriously heal her. The day will surely come when Jehovah God will say "Blessed be Egypt My people" (19:25).

The chapter opens with a statement by Isaiah, "This message came to me concerning Egypt." He goes on to reveal that great disasters will overtake Egypt (vs 1-16). The waters of the Nile will fail, making irrigation of the land impossible. There will be no flax for the weavers and all such trade will grind to a halt. All the workers in that industry will be sick at heart. Food harvests will also be dealt a severe blow. The fishing industry will also grind to a halt and fishermen will lament for lack of work. The political leadership of the nation will engage in costly foolishness and the nation will flounder. In addition to all these problems and more, the nation will cower in fear as Jehovah Sabaoth (The Lord of Heaven's Armies) demonstrates His plans for them. Just the mention of the name of Israel will strike fear into Egyptian hearts (v.16).

There follows in verses 17-25 a most remarkable prophecy concerning the ultimate destiny of Egypt. It predicts a time when Jehovah will be worshipped in Egypt from the very heart of the nation to its borders (v.19). It should also be noted that three times the phrase "in that day" occurs in relation to these prophecies. This is a biblical term that refers to the End Times and the period associated with the emerging manifestation of the earthly kingdom of God (Isaiah 16:5).

The term Jehovah Sabaoth (The Lord of Heaven's Armies) occurs many times in Isaiah's prophecy including six times in this chapter. It is a title that has special application to the End Times when God will reveal Himself against numerous armies that will come against His people Israel. The Lord of Armies designates Him as the supreme head and commander of all the heavenly

forces. In the New Testament it is transliterated twice, both in the Greek and English as “armies” (Rom 9:29; James 5:4). The passage in Romans is a quotation from Isaiah 1:9. It is used of both heavenly bodies and earthly forces (Genesis 2:1); and of the army of Israel.

Modern Egypt is presently a moderate Muslim nation but great changes are predicted that will ultimately cause the population to worship Jehovah as the true and living God.

Isaiah 19:19. Public worship to Jehovah will be established in the land. An altar (place of worship) will be erected in the heart of Egypt, for the worship of Jehovah (v.19) and memorials will be placed at the borders of the land. Everyone entering the land will know immediately that Jehovah is the God of this nation. This will be a sign that Jehovah Sabaoth is recognized, revered, honored and worshipped as the national God of Egypt. One of the cities in which Jehovah will be worshipped will be Heliopolis (the Greek name for the Egyptian city of On) where the sun was worshipped and which was one of the most infamous cities of Egypt for idolatry.

Isaiah 19:18. The Hebrew language will be heard in Egypt for the Bible indicates that this language will be restored not only to Israel but also to the nations of the world.

Zephaniah 3:9 *For then will I turn to the people a pure language that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent (KJV).*

Isaiah 19: 21b. The nation will swear allegiance to the Lord of Hosts and worship Him, bringing offerings and sacrifices to Him. They shall swear to cleave to him with purpose of heart, and they will worship him, not occasionally, but constantly. They shall swear allegiance to Christ as their King.

Isaiah 19: 20. God will send them a Savior and deliverer who will rescue them naturally and spiritually when the nation calls upon God for help. The Hebrew word here for Savior is “yesha”, the root word from which the name Yeshua comes. The name and person of Yeshua Ha Mashiach (Jesus the Messiah) will be known and revered throughout Egypt.

Isaiah 19:21. They shall know the Lord and be known by Him. It is predicted not only that the Lord shall be known to Egypt, but that the Egyptians shall know the Lord intimately and thoroughly. They shall receive revelation and knowledge of Him. At this current time the knowledge of Jehovah is only found in a limited number of nations, but the promise of the new covenant is that all shall know the Lord, from the least even to the greatest, which promise is sure to all the seed. The effect of this knowledge of God is that they shall vow a vow to the Lord and perform it.

The information in verses 23-25 describes amazing developments that are truly awesome. All enmity between Syria, Egypt and Israel will cease, and peace and prosperity will prevail over these nations. Throughout history these two nations have been regularly seen as mortal enemies of Israel. It was in Egypt that the Israelites were held captives as slaves for 400 years until their deliverance under the leadership of Moses.

Assyria was a kingdom between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that dominated the ancient world from the ninth century to the seventh century B.C. After defeating the northern kingdom of Israel in

722 B.C., the Assyrians carried away thousands of Israelites and resettled them in other parts of the Assyrian Empire. This was a blow from which the nation of Israel never fully recovered. There were many other occasions when Assyria was a thorn in the flesh of Israel and a continuing enemy of the nation. All such enmity will finally cease and Israel and Assyria will be allies. A pact of friendship between Israel, Egypt and Assyria will be made and Israel will become a tremendous blessing to this union. They will all worship the Lord of Hosts and His Redeemer and they will also be united in social and commercial enterprises. A giant highway will be constructed which will afford easy access from Egypt to Syria passing through Israel.

Jew and Gentile will be united together in harmony and cooperation that will prove to be a blessing to the whole world. The seed of both Isaac and Ishmael will finally live together in harmony and cooperation.

Ezekiel 19:25. For the LORD of heaven's armies will say, Blessed be Egypt my people. Blessed be Assyria, the land I have made. Blessed be Israel, my special possession.

THE TWO EXODUSES FROM EGYPT

Many Christians have forgotten that Moses was involved in TWO flights from Egypt. Initially he personally was forced to flee from Egypt and from before Pharaoh's face following the death of an Egyptian (Exodus 2:15). He then crossed the Gulf of Aqaba (Strait of Tiran) and went to Midian. Although this is so plainly stated in the Bible, it is amazing how many Christians have not recognized this fact or its significance. During his forty years there he married a daughter of "Jethro the Midianite" and integrated into that family. Midian (part of modern Saudi Arabia) therefore became his adopted country until God called him to return to Egypt and the captive Israelites. When he was forced to flee from Egypt a second time, to where would he obviously go but to Midian where his father-in-law a Gentile named Jethro, met him in the wilderness again (Exodus 18:1,5).

My purpose in mentioning the two exoduses and their probable routes is mainly to show that the route that Israel took towards Canaan their promised land included a sojourn in Midian which is in modern Saudi Arabia. My point is that the journey of the Israelites included time spent in territory that is presently the region where the descendants of Ishmael live. It is also the general area in which both Medina and Mecca are now to be found. During this time Israel were evidently afforded some measure of succour and sustenance from the Midianites, i.e. Jethro and his community. Therefore, there is an amicable and helpful merging of the two communities, i.e. Israel (Isaac's seed) and that of Ishmael.

In Numbers 10:29 we are introduced to Hobab which means "beloved."

29 Now Moses said to Hobab the son of Reuel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, "We are setting out for the place of which the LORD said, 'I will give it to you.' Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the LORD has promised good things to Israel."

This name occurs only twice in the Bible, (Numbers 10:29; Judges 4:11). The direct statement of Numbers 10:29 is that Hobab was "the son of Reuel" (the King James Version "Raguel"). Muslim traditions favor the view that Hobab was another name for Jethro. The service he rendered to the

leader of the hosts of Israel was most valuable and beautiful. Hobab was an experienced sheikh of the desert whose counsel and companionship Moses desired in the unfamiliar regions through which he was to journey. His knowledge of the wilderness and of its possible dangers would enable him to be to the Israelites “instead of eyes.” Thus, one who lived in the land that would become sacred to Islam was extremely kind to Moses during his isolation for forty years. Many years later, when Moses became a refugee once again he took flight through the very territory in which he had sheltered in his previous exile. It is surely interesting that this was evidently the same territory through which Moses ultimately led his people en route to the Promised Land.

1. MOSES' EXODUS

Exodus 2:15 When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well (NKJ).

Exodus 2:21-22

²¹ Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses.

²² And she bore him a son, and he called his name Gershom; for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land” (NKJ).

2. THE EXODUS OF ISRAEL

The scriptures are very clear that the children of Israel were taken “out of” the land of Egypt. To where? Obviously they would go to Midian, where Moses had previously sought refuge.

Exodus 19:1-2

¹ In the third month after the children of Israel had gone “out of” the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.

² For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain (NKJ).

Exodus 20:1-2

¹ And God spoke all these words, saying:

² “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (NKJ).

It was here that Jethro, his father in law, met with Moses again. Is it not obvious that this meeting took place in Midian?

Exodus 18:1 And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people - that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt (NKJ).

Exodus 18:5 And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness, where he was encamped at the mountain of God (NKJ).

THE CALL OF MOSES OCCURRED IN MIDIAN

Exodus 3:1-2

¹ Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

² And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed (NKJ).

Exodus 4:19-21

19 And the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go, return to Egypt; for all the men are dead who sought your life."

20 Then Moses took his wife and his sons and set them on a donkey, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

21 And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand" (NKJ).

It was also in Midian, (at Mount Jabal al Lawz?) that Moses received the ten commandments.

It is rather amazing that when the scriptures clearly say that Sinai is in Arabia, millions of pilgrims over the years have honoured a site in Egypt.

Galatians 4:25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children (NKJ).

The journey of the Israelites evidently took them through the Western side of Midian (modern Saudi Arabia) north (through what became modern Jordan) to Jericho and into Canaan. Surely it is highly significant that the children of Israel marched through part of Ishmael's territory in order to reach their own promised land. It would also seem that they also passed through or close to the area that later became Mecca which is also extremely interesting from a prophetic perspective. It is interesting too that Israel received The Law, which became the foundation stone of Judaism, in Midian. This may prophetically indicate that the sons of Ishmael will one day embrace and live by the Torah.

Second, converts identified "the power of God in answered prayers and healing." For instance, in North Africa, a Muslim family asked Christian neighbors to pray for a sick daughter; and then the girl recovered. Some converts "noted deliverance from demonic power as another reason they were attracted to Jesus." Converts also mentioned unhappiness with Islam itself, especially the Koran's emphasis on God's punishment and the uncertainty of salvation. By contrast, Woodberry notes, the biblical teaching that God loved us so much that "He sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins" is deeply attractive to Muslims.

Converts are also attracted to "the love expressed through the life and teachings of Christ." Ironically, Muslims first learn about Christ through the Koran, but then read the Gospels to find out

more about Him. Finally—and this is the key—“When Christ’s love transforms committed Christians into a loving community, many Muslims [identified] a desire to join such a fellowship.” Woodberry’s research shows that when the Church is being the Church—witnessing to the love of Christ and of His transforming power—Muslims are drawn both to us and to Him. Even though we are in the midst of a worldwide war against Islamo-fascism, we must never forget Christ’s command to witness to our neighbors—to all of our neighbors—including Muslims, of His redeeming love. Ultimately, at the end of this age, we will undoubtedly witness a great multitude of former worshippers of false gods drawn into the Kingdom of Yahweh. This company will obviously include many former Muslims.

CHAPTER TWO

Ishmael's Wonderful Inheritance!

In many cultures and societies around the world, names are immensely important and very significant, even prophetic. They often describe the nature and character and even the destiny of the person or place. Nowhere is this truer than in the Middle East, the ancestral homeland of Ishmael, a son of the great prophet Abraham. Ishmael's name contains and predicts a wonderful heritage over his life.

GOD'S REMARKABLE VISITATION TO HAGAR

Genesis 16:11 The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are with child, and will bear a son. You shall call his name Yishma'el, because the LORD has heard your affliction."

When Hagar was fleeing from Sarah's presence, Yahweh spoke to her words of promise and comfort in the wilderness of Shur. The encounter that Hagar had with God at that time is remarkable for several important reasons.

Firstly because it is the first mention in the Bible of the title "The Angel of the Lord." The title "The Angel of the Lord" is an expression frequently used in scripture for God Himself. It refers to a physical manifestation of God in a form appropriate to visiting a human. God says of this angel, "Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in his inmost" (Exodus 23:21); which means, "My nature is in his being." He who is called the angel of the Lord in one place is also called the Lord or God in the immediate context.

This incident is important because there is a principle in Bible interpretation which is commonly called the law of first mention. It means that the first time a subject is mentioned in the scriptures gives vital clues to the deeper significance of this topic throughout the whole Bible. It is therefore interesting that the first time God appeared as the "angel of the Lord" was to Hagar and in a sense to Ishmael who was in her womb. (It is a very interesting fact that at this present time in history, literally thousands of Muslims are testifying to receiving supernatural appearances of angels appearing as men in white clothing).

The second remarkable thing is revealed in the name that God gave to Hagar's as yet unborn child. As we shall soon see, the name Ishmael literally means, "El, the Almighty One shall hear him." This conveys a promise that Jehovah's ear will ever be open to Ishmael's prayer.

The third remarkable thing in this incident is that Hagar called upon the LORD (Yahweh) who responded and spoke to her. In answer to His intervention, Hagar calls Him El Ro'i, - "the God who sees me and watches over me." It is therefore Hagar who actually gives this name to God and this is the only time that this particular name is used throughout the whole Bible. How interesting that it

occurs in respect of Hagar and Ishmael! Perhaps this intimates that the angel of the Lord has a special affinity to Hagar, Ishmael and his descendants? This name has a special meaning for Hagar for she obviously received it by divine revelation from Yahweh. Hagar saw the God who watches over her and named Him accordingly. In this manner Jehovah promised to watch over Hagar and her son Ishmael. Thus in verse 13 He reveals Himself as the God who will watch over Hagar and in verse 11 He is the God who hears her. Thus God pledges to both watch over and hear her prayers.

Genesis 16:13 *She called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, El Ro'i "You are a God who sees," for she said, "Have I even stayed alive after seeing him?"*

Genesis 16:14 *Therefore the well was called Be'er-Lachai-Ro'i. Behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.*

Hagar also appears to express amazement that having seen God, she remains alive. She said in effect, "Have I actually seen Him and continued to live after having seen God?" She evidently knew in her spirit that to see God and live was an issue contrary to expectation. This was later revealed to Moses.

Exodus 33:20 *But He said, (to Moses) "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live" (NKJ).*

Hagar had sat down by a fountain or well of water in the wilderness of Shur, at which the Angel of the Lord (God) found her, and to commemorate the wonderful revelation which God had given of Himself, she called the name of the well Beer-lachai-roi (The well of the Living One who sees me and whom I have seen).

TWO THINGS SEEM IMPLIED HERE:

1. Hagar named the well to and dedicated it to Yahweh who had appeared to her.
2. She expressed and verbalized her faith in the promise of Yahweh the Ever Living One, who exists throughout all generations, and has the authority to accomplish His promises and plans throughout all of time and despite all contrary circumstances. It recognizes the One who gives living water to all who thirst after Him and submit to His ways.

GOD'S PROMISE CONCERNING ISHMAEL

Genesis 17:20 *As for Yishma'el, I have heard (Shama) you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.*

God says that He "has blessed" Ishmael and the scriptures say that what God has blessed, man cannot reverse. Therefore the promise of God remains upon Ishmael.

Numbers 23:19-20

¹⁹ *God is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not make it good?*

²⁰ *Behold, I have received a command to bless. He has blessed, and I can't reverse it.*

ISHMAEL - A NAME GIVEN BY GOD

Therefore the name Ishmael was chosen by Jehovah for the son that Hagar bore. Who would not wish for a name that was chosen by God and for a destiny determined by Him? How significant might that name prove to be in the final analysis of history when El ultimately fulfils ALL His covenant promises?

THE MEANING OF HIS NAME

Though God had promised a child to Abraham and Sarah, when that child did not appear for some years, Sarah arranged for Abraham to cohabit with her maid. When Hagar had conceived a child however, instead of remembering the circumstances in which she was able to bear it, she looked upon Sarah with contempt and Sarah, grieved by this betrayal of trust, drove Hagar away into the wilderness (Genesis 16.6). Nevertheless the Lord, in his perfect justice and mercy, commanded Hagar to return to Sarah and at the same time promised that her descendants would be multiplied into a great nation as well. Then the Lord said to Hagar,

Genesis 16:11 The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Behold, you are with child, and will bear a son. You shall call his name Yishma'el, because the LORD has heard your affliction."

When the child was born, Abraham did as the Lord had commanded and called his son Ishmael (meaning "God hears") and, as far as Abraham was concerned at that time, this was the fulfillment of the promise God had given him. Accordingly he temporarily abandoned his belief that the promised son would be born of his wife Sarah. He looked on Ishmael with extreme favor, persuaded that he was now the child of the promise.

The name Israel obviously implies, "One who wrestles with El (God) and prevails." The name was later applied to the descendants of Jacob, i.e. "Israelites." The inclusion of the name EL into the name of Jacob's descendants, forever links this people to God. How significant therefore is the name that was divinely chosen for the son of Hagar? For within his name God implanted His own name, IshmaEL. Even more significant is the implied meaning, "EL shall hear his prayer." Of further interest is the "Shma" from the same root as Deuteronomy 6:4. "Hear (Shma) O Israel." In naming Ishmael, God prophetically linked Himself with the ultimate destiny of Ishmael and his descendants and with the fact that He will listen to their prayer. Who would not wish for such a name? How significant might that name prove to be in the final analysis when El ultimately fulfils ALL His covenant promises?

THE HEBREW MEANING OF ISHMAEL

The name Ishmael in Hebrew basically means "God hears me" or "my God (El) hears." However the meaning is deeper and much more significant than just that. It is initially a composition of the Hebrew words "shema" (hear) and "El" (God). The "EE" sound at the beginning of the word Yishmael, is made by the Hebrew letter Yod, the equivalent of our "Y" or "I". When the letter Yod is included at the beginning or end of a word, it most often means "my." Thus, Ishmael is literally

"my God (El) hears me." When the angel of the Lord told Hagar to name her child Ishmael, he explained this.

The beauty and symbolism of "Yishmael" goes much deeper however. The ancient Hebrew alphabet was comprised of pictographs, and each pictograph represented a letter, a number, and a symbolic meaning. In essence, the pictures of the alphabet told stories, and the words made up by those letters are stories in themselves. "Yishmael" is no exception.

The Name In Hebrew Is Comprised Of Six Letters

1. Yod, which means hand
2. Shin, which means consume or destroy
3. Mem, which signifies nations/waters
4. Ayin, which means to see
5. Aleph which means God
6. Lamed, which signifies shepherd

Together these letters comprise a prophecy that says of Ishmael "His hand will be against every nation and every nation against him. But Jehovah the great shepherd will watch over him and hear his prayer."

The story told by the ancient Hebrew pictographs in "Ishmael" is the story of this present scenario, "his hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him...but you (El) are the God who hears me, as a shepherd would hear his despairing sheep. It is a prophetic proclamation that Jehovah Ra'ah will hear the cry of Ishmael's descendants. How powerfully significant this is in the present context involving the descendants of Ishmael. Jehovah has promised to hear the prayer of Ishmael as a kindly shepherd would hear the despairing cry of his sheep. The whole world will ultimately witness the faithfulness of God as He keeps this promise, hearing the fervent prayers of a multitude of Ishmael's descendants.

Inherent within the name of Ishmael is the solemn, irrevocable promise that EL (Jehovah) will always hear the earnest prayer of Ishmael and his descendants if that prayer is sincerely directed to Him. God clearly made this promise and it is impossible for Him to lie or to renege on His promise. While the Bible does declare that whoever calls on the Lord will be saved, surely someone whose God given name means that "Yahweh will hear him" will surely be saved.

Romans 10:13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. KJV

CIRCUMCISION - SIGN OF THE COVENANT

In Genesis 17, God confirmed His covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 17:1-2

¹ *When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; serve me faithfully and live a blameless life.*

² *I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to make you into a mighty nation" (NLT).*

God then proceeded to outline what would be the physical sign of the covenant.

Genesis 17:9-11

⁹ *“Your part of the agreement” God told Abraham, “is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility.*

¹⁰ *This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised;*

¹¹ *the flesh of his foreskin must be cut off. This will be a sign that you and they have accepted this covenant” (NLT).*

When Abraham proceeded to keep his part of the covenant, Ishmael was also initiated into the covenant on the very same day. The descendants of both Isaac and Ishmael have uniquely kept this ritual as an essential part of their culture to this day.

Genesis 17:23 *On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and every other male in his household and circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, exactly as God had told him (NLT).*

GOD’S CALL FOR SUBMISSION

God commanded Hagar to submit herself to Sarah as a servant to her mistress and promised great blessing to her descendants, but sadly she did not do so.

Genesis 16:9-10

⁹ *The Angel of the LORD said to Hagar, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.”*

¹⁰ *Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude” (NKJ).*

The initial call that Hagar and Ishmael received was to submit to Abraham and Sarah and the family structure they were building in the light of God’s covenant. In Islam, submission is a foundation of the Faith. One can only speculate as to how the path of history may have been altered if Hagar and Ishmael had submitted to Sarah.

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL SENT INTO THE DESERT

Sometime later, animosity again arose between Sarah and Hagar, and Sarah demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be banished from the household.

Genesis 21:10 *Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.*

Genesis 21:14 *And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba (KJV).*

GOD WAS WITH ISHMAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

Genesis 21:20 And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness of Paran. He became an expert archer (NLT).

It was never God's desire or intention that Ishmael should remain in the wilderness. Once again, as the Angel of the LORD, God had instructed Hagar to submit herself and her son to the hand and authority of her mistress Sarah.

Genesis 16:9 The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands" (to her authority, wishes and family structure).

When Hagar declined to do so, she and her son were banished to the wilderness. However, it would seem feasible, prior to the birth of Isaac, that if at some time Hagar might choose to reverse her decision she would have been accepted back into the household of Abraham and Sarah. Sarah's desire from the beginning was that she and her household should acquire children through Hagar. Sarah had momentarily lost hope that she would ever bear the son of promise. She therefore sought to build her family through the womb of her maid. This plan was a common practice in the culture of that day.

Genesis 16:2 Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing. Please go in to my handmaid. It may be that I will obtain children by her." Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

Although it was not God's desire that Ishmael should settle in the wilderness, nevertheless, God was with him throughout his lifetime in the desert regions.

GOD CAUSED THEM TO SURVIVE IN THE WILDERNESS

Genesis 16:13-14

¹³ Thereafter, Hagar referred to the LORD, who had spoken to her, as El Ro'i "the God who sees me," for she said, "I have seen the One who sees me!"

¹⁴ Later that well was named Beer-lahairoi, and it can still be found between Kadesh and Bered (NLT).

It is obvious that both Hagar and Ishmael would have perished in the arid wilderness from grievous thirst. But God cared for them, revealing a well of water that saved them from extinction. God's presence remained with Hagar and her son, constantly watching over them and preserving their life. It seems clear that God preserved Ishmael so that one day he might return to his father Abraham and also to his brother Isaac.

ISHMAEL WAS MULTIPLIED AND PROSPERED

Genesis 17:20 As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will cause him to multiply and become a great nation. Twelve princes will be among his descendants.

The last few years, during which vast oil deposits have been discovered in the Middle East, which have produced immense and almost unimaginable wealth, illustrate how greatly God has blessed and prospered Ishmael's descendants. It is almost as though the sand of their desert has been turned into gold through the discovery of the world's major oil deposits. The whole world has become dependent upon the oil that streams from the deserts of Arabia. However, the day will surely soon come when they will praise Jehovah God for these blessings and present the wealth accrued from them to Him.

Isaiah 42:10-12

10 Praise to the LORD Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise from the ends of the earth, You who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, You coastlands and you inhabitants of them!

11 Let the wilderness and its cities lift up their voice, The villages that Kedar inhabits. Let the inhabitants of Sela sing, Let them shout from the top of the mountains.

12 Let them give glory to the LORD, (Jehovah) and declare His praise in the coastlands.
NKJV

ABRAHAM'S GREAT LOVE FOR ISHMAEL

Genesis 17:18-21

18 And Abraham said to God, "Yes, may Ishmael enjoy your special blessing!"

19 But God replied, "Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my everlasting covenant with him and his descendants.

20 As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will cause him to multiply and become a great nation. Twelve princes will be among his descendants.

21 But my covenant is with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year" (NLT).

Abraham came to love Ishmael so greatly that he desired that he might be recognised by God as the son of promise. He begged God that Ishmael might enjoy the special blessing reserved for the son of promise. However, having assured Abraham that He would care for Ishmael's future and well being, God reiterated that the major covenant would be fulfilled through a son who would soon be born to Sarah.

ISHMAEL'S ESTRANGEMENT FROM ABRAHAM AND ISAAC

Hagar and Ishmael were sent away from Abraham's household, but they were not abandoned by Jehovah. God appeared and spoke to Hagar, assuring her that He would watch over them and see them prosper. Ishmael settled in the land of Paran, which lies between Canaan and the mountains of Sinai. He became a desert chief and a great archer, though relatively little is known about this period of his life. However, Hagar arranged a marriage for him with a young woman from Egypt. Ishmael and his wife then evidently lived together in Paran.

Many of the modern-day Arab peoples correctly recognize that they are the descendants of Ishmael, while the Jews are descended from Isaac - but all are descended from Abraham. After many years of painful hostility and separation, Ishmael made a determined effort to honor his father

and be reconciled to his brother. His long journey was wonderfully successful, healing the hurt of decades and producing a blessed reconciliation which was pleasing to Ishmael, Isaac, Abraham, and to the God of Abraham. Isaac and Ishmael were blood brothers and it was fitting and highly desirable that they should live without animosity and bitterness. How wonderful it will be when, in our modern generation, their descendants finally recognize their God ordained relationship one with the other and their place in God's great prophetic purpose! Such a recognition and acknowledgement will heal the hurtful abyss that has separated them for so long and cause them both to inherit what God has intended for them from the beginning. However, it will definitely be necessary for Ishmael's descendants to recognize and take their proper place with regard to Israel the descendants of Isaac.

The very word Islam means submission, (i.e. surrender, capitulation, compliance, obedience, giving in, assent, deference). The submission demonstrated by so many Muslims to Allah and the Koran, is remarkable and something to be commended and admired. How wonderful it will be when Ishmael's descendants finally submit to Jehovah's command and submit fully to Abraham and to Yahweh the God of Abraham and to His seed! The Last Days will reveal God's ultimate purpose for the descendants of Ishmael. Their intense and bitter hatred towards Isaac's offspring will catapult them into a gigantic attack upon Israel. Initially it will appear that Israel will be massively defeated to the point of extinction. Suddenly the tide will turn and glorious victory will be the order of the day. In the aftermath Israel will surrender to her Messiah and great numbers of former Muslims will submit to the Jewish Messiah. In a context of a highly volatile world in which Jehovah has revealed Himself in tremendous power and authority there will be remarkable spiritual harvest. Multitudes of humanity will flow into the Kingdom of God pledging full allegiance to Yeshua the Son of David (Zechariah 12:10).

As Isaac and Ishmael stood together in the last days of their father, so they will stand together again in the ultimate "Last Days." The sons of Ishmael will inherit their divinely appointed birthright when they finally surrender to their ordained place in God's purposes.

Genesis 25:9 *And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, NKJV*

Genesis 25:5-6

⁵ *And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.*

⁶ *But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east. NKJV*

In our travels over the past several years we have met and lived among many Muslim people at close quarters in their various nations in the Middle East. So many of these people have been extremely welcoming and exemplified an excellence of character, integrity and hospitality. They have demonstrated their love of family and their fellow man. Even their submission to Allah has been inspiring and impressive. We have so often imagined what will happen when they receive a true revelation of Jehovah and His Son Yeshua. I believe that their impressive devotion and submission when rendered to Jehovah will become an amazingly powerful message to all the nations. The harvest they reap will be their true inheritance.

The Relationship of Isaac And Ishmael

There is a principle of interpretation throughout the Bible whereby certain events are not only a historic record but also a prophetic paradigm. According to this principle an historic Biblical event may foretell a future prophetic event. Such prophecies are sometimes even capable of multiple fulfillments, i.e. the predicted event may happen more than once. An illustration of this might be prophecies concerning the destruction of Babylon which was destroyed in the days of Cyrus and will be destroyed in the End Times, according to the book of Revelation.

In the Old Testament, the prophetic books of Isaiah and Jeremiah predicted the downfall of the city of Babylon. This would happen as God's punishment of the Babylonians because of their destruction of Jerusalem and their deportation of the citizens of Judah (Isaiah 14:22; 21:9; 43:14; Jeremiah 50:9; 51:37). Today, the ruins of this ancient city stand as an eloquent testimony to the passing of proud empires and to the providential hand of God in history.

In the New Testament Book of Revelation the world in rebellion against God is called "Babylon." The Old Testament prophets often prophesied the fall of Babylon, the capital of an empire that destroyed God's city, Jerusalem, and carried His people away as captives. So in Revelation Babylon is a word-picture for a society which persecuted God's people but which God will eventually destroy.

In a similar manner the story of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael told in Genesis is a historical record that also has a prophetic element. It foretells how the relationship between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael will eventually transpire. Just as the conflict between Isaac and Ishmael appears to have been resolved through the death and burial of Abraham, God will bring together in the last days the warring factions of Israel and Ishmael. Once Ishmael's descendants are brought into harmony with Yahweh's redemptive plan, they will also accept their God ordained role in the family structure.

What God has done in the past is an indication of what He will yet do in the future. Take for example the events in the life of the patriarch Jacob as related to the land of Canaan. Initially he was settled in the land; then through the anger of Esau he had to flee to Mesopotamia; however, he later returned to the promised land. This is a pattern of his descendants, Israel, who lived in the land for centuries, then were exiled for many centuries and have now been restored to their own land.

THE ELDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER

Rebekah the wife of Isaac bore twins. The eldest twin Esau, was Isaac's favourite son, although God had declared that the older should serve the younger. In this respect God ordained a principle which would later affect Isaac and Ishmael too, i.e. the older would be required to serve the younger.

Genesis 25:23 *And the LORD told her, “The sons in your womb will become two rival nations. One nation will be stronger than the other; the descendants of your older son will serve the descendants of your younger son” (NLT).*

The same principle of the elder son serving the younger, applied in the case of Ephraim and Manasseh when Jacob in blessing his sons, crossed his hands so that his blessing was imparted to Ephraim his younger son.

Genesis 48:12-14

¹² *Joseph took the boys from their grandfather’s knees, and he bowed low to him.*

¹³ *Then he positioned the boys so Ephraim was at Jacob’s left hand and Manasseh was at his right hand.*

¹⁴ *But Jacob crossed his arms as he reached out to lay his hands on the boys’ heads. So his right hand was on the head of Ephraim, the younger boy, and his left hand was on the head of Manasseh, the older (NLT).*

It is an indisputable fact that Ishmael was the first child sired by the sperm of Abraham. Thus Ishmael was undoubtedly Abraham’s first born, eldest son.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF ISHMAEL AND ISAAC

Because Ishmael and Isaac had the same father, it does not necessarily follow that they were promised the same inheritance. Isaac, who was the true son of promise (i.e. whom God had promised to Abraham and Sarah) was conceived supernaturally and was destined to inherit the major portion of Abraham’s possessions. Ishmael, who was a son of the flesh was conceived and birthed by the sperm of Abraham. Though he was certainly a well beloved child of Abraham, yet he was not the son promised by God. Ishmael was sired from the flesh (Galatians 4:23,29).

An important point to remember about Abraham is that although all bloodline Jews of today are descended from him, Abraham himself was not originally a Jew. Abraham’s son Isaac had a son Jacob (who was later renamed Israel), who had twelve sons (from whom came The Tribes of Israel), one of which was Judah, from whom came the Jews. The first “Jew” was Judah, Abraham’s great-grandson (see Hebrews). Both Jews and Arabs are descended from Abraham, but Abraham himself was initially neither “Jew” nor “Arab.”

The promise did not however go through Ishmael because the covenant had already been made with Abraham, with a yet-unborn Isaac the designated heir, before Ishmael was conceived (Genesis 15:2-6). While God does not play favourites, He was also not bound to any other arrangements for children that Abraham and Sarah had taken upon themselves to bring about after the matter had been firmly decided by God.

Abraham loved Ishmael just as much as he loved Isaac (Genesis 21:9-13). Ishmael, the ancestor of the Arab people, and his descendants were loved and blessed by God (Genesis 21:13,18), just as were the descendants of Isaac, the ancestor of the Jews, but in a different way, for a different purpose. When Abraham and Sarah would not wait for God’s timing for the promised child, then Abraham listened to the fleshly arrangements of his wife in order to have a child by her handmaid. From this union have come those who have been the persistent enemies of the Gospel of Christ

through the centuries, namely, the seed of Ishmael. Isaac, on the other hand, the son of Sarah, was the child of promise.

Genesis 17:15-21

¹⁵ Then God added, “Regarding Sarai, your wife - her name will no longer be Sarai; from now on you will call her Sarah.

¹⁶ And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings will be among her descendants!”

¹⁷ Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of one hundred?” he wondered. “Besides, Sarah is ninety; how could she have a baby?”

¹⁸ And Abraham said to God, “Yes, may Ishmael enjoy your special blessing!”

¹⁹ But God replied, “Sarah, your wife, will bear you a son. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my everlasting covenant with him and his descendants.

²⁰ As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will cause him to multiply and become a great nation. Twelve princes will be among his descendants.

²¹ But my covenant is with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year” (NLT).

Paul states clearly that “the son by the freewoman is born through the promise of God” (Galatians 4:23). Isaac was the predecessor of the coming Messiah in whom all God’s redemptive purposes were focused. The promise stated that “through your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:3). That this is definitely predictive of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, is confirmed by the word of the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul in,

Galatians 3:16 *God gave the promise to Abraham and his child. And notice that it doesn’t say the promise was to his children, as if it meant many descendants. But the promise was to his child - and that, of course, means Christ (NLT).*

According to the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, Isaac was in the line that produced Jesus the Messiah. Moreover, it was to Isaac that the land of promise was given with all the blessings accrued upon occupation of that land. Note these passages among a number of others.

Genesis 12:7 *Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “I am going to give this land to your offspring.” And Abram built an altar there to commemorate the LORD’s visit.*

Genesis 13:14-15

¹⁴ After Lot was gone, the LORD said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction.

¹⁵ I am going to give all this land to you and your offspring as a permanent possession” (NLT).

Please notice the recurring words “land” and “offspring”. Isaac was the child of promise and by virtue of that was related to all the blessings in the land of promise. It is an incontrovertible fact of the Bible that the land of promise and the offspring of promise are inseparably linked. At this point one may be inclined to ask why then was Ishmael the firstborn? The Bible principle is that the

natural ever comes first and is superseded by the spiritual. First it is the natural Adam, then it is the spiritual Last Adam; first Ishmael, then Isaac; first Esau, then Jacob; first the natural birth, then the spiritual birth; first the natural body in this life, then the spiritual body in the resurrection (I Corinthians 15:44-45).

I Corinthians 15:44, 45

⁴⁴ *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

⁴⁵ *And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. NKJV*

THE PORTIONS OF ISHMAEL AND ISAAC

What portions were allotted to these respective children of Abraham?

With respect to Ishmael God had promised:

Genesis 17:20 *"And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation"*

The descendants of Ishmael are extremely fruitful and populous. A further word was spoken concerning this son: "And he shall be as a wild ass among men; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his brethren" (Genesis 16:12).

This brief passage is filled with revelation concerning Ishmael and contains very important details. It informs us that Ishmael as a wild ass among men will be of an unbridled and unrestrained nature. His will be a rough and very basic existence. Just as the wild ass makes his home in the desert (Job 39:5-8), so the sons of Ishmael have become known as the sons of the desert. Furthermore, he will be in conflict with all men and all men will be in conflict with him. He will be a hostile and belligerent nation. And he was to dwell eastward (see Genesis 25:18) of his brethren, where his stronghold has been ever since that time. In contrast, the portion of Isaac was a blessed one indeed. He was in the line of promise with all the spiritual blessings promised to Abraham descending directly to him.

Subsequent history shows that Isaac was drawn to the spiritual life. It is true that the experiences of Genesis 22 were meant to test and prove the faith of Abraham but we must also understand that Isaac was not without thought or emotions during those tremendous events of that hour. He willingly submitted himself to the altar of sacrifice when he saw that preparation was being made for his own offering up. The scriptures pass over that phase in silence, it is true, but neither do they record any word of drawing back or rebellion on the part of Isaac. He definitely was mindful of the higher things of life, the spiritual aspects. On the contrary, Ishmael was ever attracted to temporal things of time and sense. When we first read of the Ishmaelites they were merchants going down to Egypt (see Genesis 37:25; 39:1). The world and its commerce loomed all important for Ishmael and his descendants. But with Isaac were the great and exceeding promises of God which were and are of a comprehensive character. His was a blessed and fullest portion.

Galatians 4:28-31, tells us that Ishmael had been “born according to the flesh” while Isaac had been “born according to the promise.” Isaac replaced Ishmael as the favored son and heir. This, of course, made Ishmael jealous and bitter. As a result, he mocked and disdained his half-brother. Eventually the situation became so intolerable that Abraham’s wife Sarah demanded that Ishmael and his Egyptian concubine mother Hagar, be expelled permanently from Abraham’s family. But the Lord loved Hagar and her son, and had mercy upon them. God promised Hagar that her son would beget twelve princes who would become a great nation. Ishmael then went to live in the wilderness region of Hejaz in what became known as the Arabian Peninsula. He indeed had twelve patriarchal sons who became associated with the peoples known as Midianites, Edomites, Egyptians and Assyrians. The Bible and Islamic tradition both agree that Ishmael became the leader of all the great desert peoples of the Middle East. The descendants of Ishmael occupy a vast territory today (i.e. all of the Arab nations) in the Middle East, about 150 times larger (and including vast oil reserves) than the descendants of Isaac have in Israel.

THE PERSECUTION OF ISAAC BY ISHMAEL

If it should be considered that we have used too strong a word in using the word persecution, turn to Galatians 4:29 where you will find the word “persecuted” used too.

Galatians 4:28-31

²⁸ *And you, dear brothers and sisters, are children of the promise, just like Isaac.*

²⁹ *And we who are born of the Holy Spirit are persecuted by those who want us to keep the law, just as Isaac, the child of promise, was persecuted by Ishmael, the son of the slave-wife.*

³⁰ *But what do the Scriptures say about that? "Get rid of the slave and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the family inheritance with the free woman's son."*

³¹ *So, dear brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, obligated to the law. We are children of the free woman, acceptable to God because of our faith. NLT*

It is the Holy Spirit’s own word. And the more we consider the details of the Biblical narrative in the Genesis chapters, the better we shall understand the full meaning of the persecution indicated. Consider the situation in the household of Abraham with the elder son displaced from the heir-ship. In the Orient this is no small matter. The firstborn was to have a double portion of the inheritance. In this instance it belongs not to Ishmael but Isaac. Would the natural man find any delight in such an arrangement which set aside his fleshly claims? Then pause for a moment to consider the contention which must have gone on in the home between Hagar and Sarah. It appears that the climax to all this conflict and disharmony was reached at the weaning of Isaac. In the East this stage in the life of a child is reached when he is between three and five years of age. It is a time of particular joy because the early hardships and dangers of infant life have been successfully passed through. For that reason Abraham made a joyous feast for his heir according to the promise. It was more than Ishmael could bear, and he made a mockery of the whole affair. The patience of Sarah was exhausted and she demanded the expulsion of the handmaid Hagar and her son.

God provided many opportunities in this story for the redemption of bad situations created mostly through disobedience and lack of faith. Abraham had agreed to cohabit with Hagar at the request of his wife Sarah, even though God had told Abraham and Sarah that they would one day

have their own son. The jealousy and resentment which ensued created an unparalleled hatred which has initiated wars and atrocities for four thousand years. It was the title deed to the land of Israel, which God promised to Abraham's lineage that has been the source of the friction between the Jews and the Arabs right up to the present day.

Muslims believe the Jews changed and distorted the Bible in order to establish themselves as the heirs of Abraham's Covenant blessings. However, they fail to explain how the New Testament clearly teaches that the covenant was made with Isaac and his descendants. According to Islamic tradition, Abraham had eight sons who were reared in Mecca, not Hebron. They insist that it was Ishmael, not Isaac, whom Abraham was about to sacrifice on Mount Moriah when an angel stopped him. According to the Koran, the Abrahamic covenant, with its promises - including the title deed to the land of Israel - was passed down to the Arabs through Ishmael, rather than to the Jews through Isaac.

What is the attitude of Ishmael's seed toward that of Isaac's seed through the years? The Psalmist Asaph gives us the whole picture in concise terms and a prophetic prediction of the ultimate events of this feud:

Psalms 83:1-12

1 O God, don't sit idly by, silent and inactive!

2 Don't you hear the tumult of your enemies? Don't you see what your arrogant enemies are doing?

3 They devise crafty schemes against your people, laying plans against your precious ones.

4 "Come," they say, "let us wipe out Israel as a nation. We will destroy the very memory of its existence."

5 This was their unanimous decision. They signed a treaty as allies against you —

6 these Edomites and Ishmaelites, Moabites and Hagrites,

7 Gebalites, Ammonites, and Amalekites, and people from Philistia and Tyre.

8 Assyria has joined them, too, and is allied with the descendants of Lot.

9 Do to them as you did to the Midianites or as you did to Sisera and Jabin at the Kishon River.

10 They were destroyed at Endor, and their decaying corpses fertilized the soil.

11 Let their mighty nobles die as Oreb and Zeeb did. Let all their princes die like Zebah and Zalmunna,

12 for they said, "Let us seize for our own use these pasturelands of God!" NLT

The Arabs and the Israelis have been fighting since time immemorial over that tiny plot of land called Israel. Their battle is not one of flesh and blood, but of spiritual forces and principalities. The Bible states that a great war in the Last Days will pit Israel against the rest of the Middle East and its allies. How did it all begin and why have they remained mortal enemies for thousands of years?

As expressed in this psalm the militant agenda of modern Islam calls for nothing less than the complete extinction and annihilation of God's people Israel. During the Middle Ages the sons of Ishmael subjugated large portions of Europe and the countries to the east. And today these sons of Ishmael are among the greatest adversaries of both Jews and Christians. What of Ishmael's

descendants in the twenty-first century? What are the events of the present day in Palestine if not an horrific continuation of that struggle and conflict which occurred in the home of Abraham in the centuries long ago? And is this the conclusion of the matter? No, it is not! Asaph the psalmist in Psalm 83 presents a prophetic paradigm of the last days. He pictures all the ancient enemies of Israel joining together in an unholy alliance against her. They devise cunning and devious schemes against Israel plotting her complete annihilation and purposing to literally “wipe her off the map.” The prophetic prediction contained in the psalm in great detail has yet to be fulfilled. But in the Last days it will be fulfilled in every detail as Israel’s enemy neighbors attack Israel and suffer a massive defeat. This defeat will be so amazing as Israel thoroughly routs and overwhelms her enemies that the whole world will stand in reverent awe before the deliverer who comes from Zion to save His covenant people.

LET’S TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THIS AMAZING PSALM:

Psalms 83:1

¹ *Do not keep silent, O God! (Elohim) Do not hold Your peace, and do not be still, O God!*

² *For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; and those who hate You have lifted up their head. (Signifying arrogance and pride)*

Initially it will appear that God is completely detached and indifferent to the plans and strategies of the alliance that threatens the destruction of Israel but His apparent disinterest belies His true intentions. These vicious yet cowardly nations are violent enemies of Jehovah God. In the New International Version of the Bible, the translation reads, “See how your enemies are astir, (active, busy, frenetic) how your foes raise their heads (in arrogant defiance).

The language is straight out of today's headlines and the nations lined up against Israel in Psalm 83 inhabited the ancient lands of Israel's current neighbours. Edom and the Ishmaelites were in the land occupied by southern Jordan today while the territories of Moab and Ammon make up the rest of that country. (While the government of Jordan presently has a peace treaty with Israel, we should remember that some 70% of Jordan's population is "Palestinian" and in fact the country was formed to be the Palestinian home land).

So here we have all of Israel's next door neighbors united by a grim determination to totally eradicate Israel. They are not simply haters of Israel and the Jewish State they are also dedicated haters of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel and of His son Yeshua. They fervently hate all Jews and Christians viewing them as infidels fit only for conversion to Islam or death by execution. Islam is directly and fanatically opposed to Israel, Jehovah, all Christians and the Kingdom of God that Messiah will establish. Their statements are not empty threats. They fully mean what they say. They are absolutely determined to obliterate Israel.

Psalm 83:3 *They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, and consulted together against Your sheltered ones.*

Through crafty counsel they pretend to want peace, but at the same time they fanatically and frantically recruit and train terrorists. All their talk about “Peace Agreements are actually “*hudnas*” i.e. time to recoup and re arm. Asaph said “With cunning, they conspire against your people; they plot and make evil plans against those you cherish.” An aspect of Islamic belief and culture that the Western world still fails to comprehend is that all lies and deceit are acceptable if those deceitful lies further the ultimate cause of Islam. Fanatical Muslims will lie and misinform without

hesitation to further their cause. It is therefore impossible to reach a true peace agreement with them because they can relent on their word at any time that best suits their purpose.

Psalm 83:4 They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more."

The frequently declared aim of all these Middle Eastern nations is to conquer Israel in the name of Islam. This is the sole purpose that unites them. (All Arabic maps now show Palestine, but not the nation of Israel). These constant declarations and statements are not to be taken lightly. The perpetrators fervently believe what they say and are sufficiently dedicated to Allah to carry out every plan and atrocity they can devise.

Psalm 83:5 For they have consulted together with one consent; They form a confederacy against You:

The Arab Alliance of nations conspire (secretly plot) together. Although some Muslim nations pretend to stand aloof from the more radical and fanatical elements in Islam, ultimately when the lines are drawn they will all stand together against those they perceive to be their common enemies.

*Psalm 83:6-7 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagrites;
7 Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre;*

This consortium of nations includes Palestinians, (Philistines) and many citizens of Southern Lebanon (Tyre) who are inspired by terrorist organizations like Hamas and Hizballah. (Their united determined purpose is to possess Eretz Israel)

Psalm 83:8 Assyria also has joined with them; They have helped the children of Lot. (Descendants of Hagar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia or Arab-Muslim world including Syria, Iraq, Iran)

ASAPH THE PROPHET PLEADS,

Psalm 83:9-12

⁹ *Deal with them as with Midian, as with Sisera, as with Jabin at the Brook Kishon,*

¹⁰ *Who perished at En Dor, Who became as refuse on the earth.*

¹¹ *Make their nobles like Oreb and like Zeeb, Yes, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,*

¹² *Who said, "Let us take for ourselves The pastures of God for a possession."*

Verse 12 intimates that Israel's enemies knew exactly to whom the pastures belonged which they sought to capture. Asaph, the writer of the Psalm, cannot resist telling the Lord exactly how he would like Israel's enemies to be dealt with. This was not merely an historic record but a prophetic paradigm. What Asaph prayed for will be enacted in the Last days. Midian was defeated by a much smaller army under the command of Gideon against a force which vastly outnumbered Israel. It was a case of the Lord turning Israel's enemies against each other and thus defeating themselves (Judges 8). Oreb, Zeeb Zebah, and Zalmunna were all leaders of the Midianite army defeated by Gideon.

Asaph's prophetic prayer was that Israel's current enemies will be just as soundly defeated as were the Midianites and the Canaanites, when their armies were scattered and their leaders executed. When this prayer is answered, Israel will become much larger geographically, with the contention over the ownership of Gaza, the West bank and the Golan finally brought to an end. Israel will become

stronger, not weaker, its military reputation restored and even enhanced. The divided land will be divided no more, and Jerusalem will remain a unified city. The controversial security fence will come down, since the borders on all three sides will be safe and the threat of terrorist attacks eliminated. Meanwhile, the Russians and Iranians, who will have fought this battle by proxy, will study the defeat and learn from the mistakes, lying in wait for the next opportunity to strike.

Psalms 83:13-15

¹³ *O my God, make them like the whirling dust, like the chaff before the wind!*

¹⁴ *As the fire burns the woods, and as the flame sets the mountains on fire,*

¹⁵ *So pursue them with Your tempest, And frighten them with Your storm. NKJV*

The question arises as to whether Psalm 83 is linked to Zechariah 12 or whether that applies to some other scenario? Let's look at

Zechariah 12:2-3

² *"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem.*

³ *And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. NKJV*

The enemies of Israel when they launch their attack will begin to act irrationally like drunken men. Their tactics and strategies will be thrown into confusion. In their drunken like stupor and bewilderment they will begin to kill their own allies.

Zechariah 12:6 *"On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a brazier that sets a woodpile ablaze or like a burning torch among sheaves of grain. They will burn up all the neighboring nations right and left, while the people living in Jerusalem remain secure. NLT*

This verse refers to the "neighboring nations" of Israel, right and left. God vows to destroy these while Jerusalem remains secure. Surely this statement concurs with the scene in Psalm 83:13-15.

What triggers this response from Jehovah? The answer is found in

Zechariah 12:4, 5.

⁴ *"On that day, says the LORD, I will cause every horse to panic and every rider to lose his nerve. I will watch over the people of Judah, but I will blind the horses of her enemies.*

⁵ *And the clans of Judah will say to themselves, 'The people of Jerusalem have found strength in the LORD Almighty, their God.'*

Zechariah clearly declares that THE LORD (Jehovah) will personally intervene to defend the citizens of Jerusalem when they are faced with apparent destruction. He will make the Israeli army extraordinarily powerful in battle giving them the amazing assistance of His heavenly angelic forces. Messiah Himself (the Angel of the Lord) will fight on their behalf.

Zechariah 12:7-9

⁷ *The LORD will give victory to the rest of Judah first, before Jerusalem, so that the people of Jerusalem and the royal line of David will not have greater honor than the rest of Judah.*

⁸ *On that day the LORD will defend the people of Jerusalem; the weakest among them will*

be as mighty as King David! And the royal descendants will be like God, like the angel of the LORD who goes before them!

⁹ *For my plan is to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. NLT*

Could this mention of tempest, storm and fire refer to the use of nuclear weapons? Certain scriptures seem to intimate that nuclear weapons may be used in at least one of the wars predicted in the Bible. E.g

Zechariah 14:12-13

¹² *And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.*

¹³ *It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor's hand; NKJV*

These symptoms of eyes and flesh dissolving, will closely resemble what happened to the citizens of Nagasaki and Hiroshima in Japan at the close of World War 2 when the eyes of those who watched these horrific explosions dissolved in the sockets. However, God Himself is fully capable of producing such fearful results without man made weapons of destruction. The end result of this terrible conflict will be that world attention will be focused upon Jehovah. Devotees of all false religions will be filled with shame and will earnestly seek the face of Jehovah.

In the aftermath of this amazing battle, when the tide is suddenly and supernaturally changed in Israel's favour, a bewildered Israel will look around to see who has achieved this supernatural victory on their behalf. It is then that they will recognize their deliverer as Yeshua HaMashiach whose hands and side were pierced and they will mourn over Him in great sorrow and bitterness of soul.

AN ISLAMIC ALLIANCE OF NATIONS

This is obviously an Islamic inspired attempt to destroy the modern State of Israel. Through the direct, supernatural power of God Israel is protected and saved. However through this degrading defeat, the powers and influences of Islam are greatly diminished though not totally destroyed. From the remaining system of Islam will eventually arise the Anti Christ, but that beast will be spoiled and damaged. Millions of people will have been rescued from the grip of Islam and brought into the Kingdom of God. However a remnant of Muslims will survive as indicated in Revelation 20 where reference is made to souls beheaded for their testimony about Jesus.

Revelation 20:4

4 Then I saw thrones, and the people sitting on them had been given the authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus, for proclaiming the word of God. And I saw the souls of those who had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their forehead or their hands. They came to life again, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. NLT

A GLORIOUS SPIRITUAL OUTPOURING

Zechariah 12:10-11

¹⁰ *"Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on all the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died. NLT*

This appearance is NOT the "Second Coming." Rather it is a special intimate appearance of the Messiah to Israel at which time their national spiritual blindness will be sovereignly healed and they will finally see and recognize that the pierced One is their promised Messiah and the (firstborn) Son of Jehovah. This will be a prophetic fulfilment of the moment when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

Genesis 45:1 *Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers. NKJV*

This event will usher in a period of Messianic recognition for Israel and a people who will minister in the period of peace and expansion which is the direct result of the victory of Psalm 83:15-17. I personally believe that this will be the time that Israel's spiritual blindness will be healed, when they gaze on the face of their Messiah Yeshua. Israel will become a Messianic nation with a powerful and authoritative influence throughout the whole earth. I believe that it will also be the time when the true church will align itself with the Messianic believers of Israel and become the ONE NEW MAN to which Paul referred in Ephesians 2;15-18. I further believe that it will be this company that John saw in Revelation 7: 4-8 and 13-17. It will comprise a redeemed community that visual appraisal could not estimate the number of.

JEHOVAH WILL INAUGURATE A TIME OF CLEANSING IN JERUSALEM

Zechariah 13:1-2

¹ *"On that day a fountain will be opened for the dynasty of David and for the people of Jerusalem, a fountain to cleanse them from all their sins and defilement.*

² *"And on that day, says the LORD Almighty, I will get rid of every trace of idol worship throughout the land, so that even the names of the idols will be forgotten. I will remove from the land all false prophets and the unclean spirits that inspire them. NLT*

As in the days of Cyrus, when God raised him up for Israel's sake so God will send a Saviour in the person of the Angel of the Lord.

Isaiah 45:4-8

⁴ *"And why have I called you for this work? It is for the sake of Jacob my servant, Israel my chosen one. I called you by name when you did not know me.*

⁵ *I am the LORD; there is no other God. I have prepared you, even though you do not know me,*

⁶ *so all the world from east to west will know there is no other God. I am the LORD, and there is no other.*

⁷ *I am the one who creates the light and makes the darkness. I am the one who sends good times and bad times. I, the LORD, am the one who does these things.*

⁸ ***Open up, O heavens, and pour out your righteousness. Let the earth open wide so salvation and righteousness can sprout up together. I, the LORD, created them. NLT***

As surely as Israel's (and Jehovah's) enemies are marked for destruction so is the outpouring of salvation and righteousness from heaven upon all nations that fear God.

Isaiah 45:9 "Destruction is certain for those who argue with their Creator. Does a clay pot ever argue with its maker? Does the clay dispute with the one who shapes it, saying, 'Stop, you are doing it wrong!' Does the pot exclaim, 'How clumsy can you be!' NLT

I personally believe that as this prophetic word to Cyrus was amazingly fulfilled, so it will be fulfilled again to Israel in her present challenging situation.

Isaiah 45:11-13

¹¹ *This is what the LORD, the Creator and Holy One of Israel, says: "Do you question what I do? Do you give me orders about the work of my hands?"*

¹² *I am the one who made the earth and created people to live on it. With my hands I stretched out the heavens. All the millions of stars are at my command.*

¹³ *I will raise up Cyrus to fulfill my righteous purpose, and I will guide all his actions. He will restore my city and free my captive people — and not for a reward! I, the LORD Almighty, have spoken!" NLT*

JEHOVAH'S ENEMIES WILL BE TOTALLY HUMILIATED

Psalm 83:16 *Fill their faces with shame, that they may seek Your name, O JEHOVAH.*

Loss of face is a dreadful and painful issue of embarrassment and shame in Arabic culture as in many Asian cultures. It is the root cause of so called "honor killings." The name that they will now begin to call upon is that of Jehovah. They will have realized that Allah cannot save them and will turn to the true and living God.

Psalm 83:17-18

¹⁷ *Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; Yes, let them be put to shame and perish, (Faces filled with shame: Let them lose face).*

¹⁸ *That they may know that You, whose name alone is Jehovah, are the Most High over all the earth. NKJV*

GOD'S THREATS AGAINST PAGAN RELIGIONS AND THEIR DEVOTEES

Isaiah 46:1-4

¹ *The idols of Babylon, Bel and Nebo, are being hauled away on ox carts. But look! The beasts are staggering under the weight!*

² *Both the idols and the ones carrying them are bowed down. The gods cannot protect the people, and the people cannot protect the gods. They go off into captivity together.*

³ *"Listen to me, all you who are left in Israel. I created you and have cared for you since before you were born.*

⁴ *I will be your God throughout your lifetime — until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you. NLT*

FALSE GODS DIMINISHED

In the wake of this astonishing victory which Jehovah inflicts on the enemies of Israel, the gods of the earth will be shown to be false. Their apparent power will be reduced to nothing, their devotees and followers completely disillusioned. Their influence on millions of devotees will be eliminated and huge numbers of them will acknowledge Jehovah and His Son Yeshua.

The Hebrew prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah declared approximately 2600 years ago, that their God Jehovah would someday destroy “all the gods of the earth.” Perched atop a lofty god-list inclusive of Satan, Shiva, Vishnu, and hundreds of other imposters sits Allah. In essence we will discover how Allah surrenders his Akbar (i.e.- greatness).

Zephaniah 2:10-11

¹⁰ *This they shall have for their pride, because they have reproached and made arrogant threats against the people of the LORD of hosts.*

¹¹ *The LORD will be awesome to them, For **He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth;** People shall worship Him,(Jehovah) Each one from his place, Indeed all the shores of the nations. NKJV*

Jeremiah 10:10-12

¹⁰ *But the LORD (Jehovah) is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble, and the nations will not be able to endure His indignation.*

¹¹ *Thus you shall say to them:" **The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under these heavens.**"*

¹² *He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and has stretched out the heavens at His discretion. NKJV*

The point the prophet makes is that his God Jehovah, is far greater than the Arab god Allah and all other false gods. In ancient times a god was said to bless his worshippers in battle, and (Akbar) or “greatness” was awarded to the god of the victor. The gods of Zephaniah’s prophecy were, Chemosh and Milcom. These gods, along with numerous others, were abandoned prior to, or forfeited later, in favor of Allah. By the time the 7th century AD rolled around, Allah presided as the undisputed god of these Psalm 83 Arab populations. Hence, in accordance with historical Hebrew precedence comes the understanding that in bitter defeat Allah will have failed to deliver his victory to the Arabs.

Isaiah 45:15-19

¹⁵ *Truly, O God of Israel, our Savior, you work in strange and mysterious ways.*

¹⁶ *All who make idols will be humiliated and disgraced.*

¹⁷ *But the LORD will save the people of Israel with eternal salvation. They will never again be humiliated and disgraced throughout everlasting ages.*

¹⁸ *For the LORD is God, and he created the heavens and earth and put everything in place. He made the world to be lived in, not to be a place of empty chaos. "I am the*

LORD," he says, "and there is no other.

¹⁹ *I publicly proclaim bold promises. I do not whisper obscurities in some dark corner so no one can understand what I mean. And I did not tell the people of Israel to ask me for something I did not plan to give. I, the LORD, speak only what is true and right. NLT*

Having dispensed His judgment on Israel's neighbouring enemies decisively defeating and humiliating them, Jehovah now offers amnesty and peace to those same nations.

Isaiah 45:20-25

²⁰ *"Gather together and come, you fugitives from surrounding nations. What fools they are who carry around their wooden idols and pray to gods that cannot save!*

²¹ ***Consult together, argue your case, and state your proofs that idol worship pays. Who made these things known long ago? What idol ever told you they would happen? Was it not I, the LORD? For there is no other God but me — a just God and a Savior — no, not one!***

²² ***Let all the world look to me for salvation! For I am God; there is no other.***

²³ ***I have sworn by my own name, and I will never go back on my word: Every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will confess allegiance to my name."***

²⁴ *The people will declare, "The LORD (Jehovah) is the source of all my righteousness and strength." And all who were angry with him will come to him and be ashamed.*

²⁵ *In the LORD all the generations of Israel will be justified, and in him they will boast. NLT*

(The looming war will publicly demonstrate that Jehovah is the one true Creator/Ruler of the Universe).

The Israeli-Arab conflict will ultimately culminate in an amazing victory for Israel. The prayer of Psalm 83 will be answered by Jehovah the Lord. Israel will take back any land previously surrendered including Gaza. Additionally, she will acquire parts of Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and all of Gaza. Isaiah 11:14; Zephaniah 2:3-10; Zechariah 10:10;

Obadiah 18-21

¹⁸ *The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame; But the house of Esau shall be stubble; They shall kindle them and devour them, and no survivor shall remain of the house of Esau," For the LORD has spoken.*

¹⁹ *The South shall possess the mountains of Esau, and the Lowland shall possess Philistia. They shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria. Benjamin shall possess Gilead.*

²⁰ *And the captives of this host of the children of Israel Shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the South.*

²¹ *Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion To judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD's. NKJV*

This threat has been building up for many years now, in fact ever since the first few days following the official announcement of modern Israel's statehood. Actually the roots of it go back many more centuries to the days of Isaac and Ishmael.

Psalm 83 predicts a massive defeat for those armies attacking Israel. It will be similar to many defeats that Israel's enemies have suffered which are recorded in the Bible. One such defeat that is particularly significant is that of Zebah and Zalmunna described in Judges 8.

***Psalm 83:1** Let their mighty nobles die as Oreb and Zeeb did. Let all their princes die like Zebah and Zalmunna*

This historic battle is prophetically significant because Gideon, when defeating Israel's Midianite enemies, took the "crescent ornaments" from around their camel's necks as trophies of his victory. These (moon) crescent ornaments later became the insignia of Islam. Thus Gideon's victory spoke prophetically of the ultimate defeat of the moon god, Il Allah.

***Judges 8:21** So Zebah and Zalmunna said, "Rise yourself, and kill us; for as a man is, so is his strength." So Gideon arose and killed Zebah and Zalmunna, and took the crescent ornaments that were on their camels' necks. NKJV*

Judges 8:25-26

²⁵ So they answered, "We will gladly give them." And they spread out a garment, and each man threw into it the earrings from his plunder.

*²⁶ Now the weight of the gold earrings that he requested was one thousand seven hundred shekels of gold, besides **the crescent ornaments**, pendants, and purple robes which were on the kings of Midian, and besides the chains that were around their camels' necks. NKJV*

DESTRUCTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The prayer for deliverance and victory for Israel in the face of her near neighbors' attack is made to Jehovah by Asaph in Psalm 83 but the ultimate answer to that fervent prayer is recorded in numerous other parts of the Bible, e.g. Jeremiah 49 and Obadiah. One segment of Jeremiah 49 says, e.g

Jeremiah 12:14-17

¹⁴ Thus says the LORD: "Against all My evil neighbors who touch the inheritance which I have caused My people Israel to inherit — behold, I will pluck them out of their land and pluck out the house of Judah from among them.

¹⁵ Then it shall be, after I have plucked them out, that I will return and have compassion on them and bring them back, everyone to his heritage and everyone to his land.

¹⁶ And it shall be, if they will learn carefully the ways of My people, to swear by My name, 'As the LORD lives,' as they taught My people to swear by Baal, then they shall be established in the midst of My people.

¹⁷ But if they do not obey, I will utterly pluck up and destroy that nation," says the LORD. NKJV

THE PROPHET OBADIAH SAYS,

V 18. The house of Jacob (The Jews) shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph (Jews) a flame; but the house of Esau (Palestineans) shall be stubble. They (The Jews) shall kindle and devour them and no (Palestinian) survivor shall remain in the house of Esau. For the word of the Lord has spoken.

THE DESTRUCTION OF GAZA

Universal political pressure recently forced Israel to evacuate the Gaza strip and that area so adjacent to Israel has become a hotbed of terrorism through agencies dedicated to Israel's destruction. But the Bible gives a severe warning of what the repercussions of such terrorism will eventually reap.

Zephaniah 2:4-13

⁴ ***For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon made desolate; They shall drive out Ashdod at noonday, and Ekron shall be uprooted.***

⁵ ***Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines: "I will destroy you; So there shall be no inhabitant."***

⁶ *The seacoast shall be pastures, with shelters for shepherds and folds for flocks.*

⁷ *The coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; They shall feed their flocks there; In the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For the LORD their God will intervene for them, and return their captives.*

⁸ *"I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the insults of the people of Ammon, With which they have reproached My people, And made arrogant threats against their borders.*

⁹ ***Therefore, as I live, "Says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Surely Moab shall be like Sodom, and the people of Ammon like Gomorrah — Overrun with weeds and saltpits, And a perpetual desolation. The residue of My people shall plunder them, And the remnant of My people shall possess them."***

¹⁰ *This they shall have for their pride, because they have reproached and made arrogant threats against the people of the LORD of hosts.*

¹¹ ***The LORD Jehovah will be awesome to them, For He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth; People shall worship Him, Each one from his place, Indeed all the shores of the nations.***

¹² *"You Ethiopians also, You shall be slain by My sword."*

¹³ *And He will stretch out His hand against the north, Destroy Assyria, And make Nineveh a desolation, as dry as the wilderness. NKJV*

The prophet Obadiah describes God's judgment upon Esau's descendants. It is the evil spirit of Esau that inspires the fundamentalist terrorists in their attacks on Israel.

Obadiah 10 *For violence (Heb: Hamas) against your brother Jacob, shame shall cover you and you shall be cut off forever.*

It is interesting and very significant to notice that the Hebrew word translated "violence" is **hamas**, the very name of the group that it presently threatening Israel with violence. So what the prophet is saying to the Edomites is "because of "Hamas violence" towards Israel, you will be cut off forever.

Further verses in this chapter predict a time when Israel will "possess" many areas of land presently in the hands of their enemies.

Obadiah 19-20

¹⁹ *The south shall possess the mountains of Esau and the lowland shall possess Philistia. (The Gaza strip) They shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria. (The West Bank)*

²⁰ *And the captives of this host of the children of Israel shall possess the land of the Canaanites as far as Zarephath. The captives of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad shall possess the cities of the South.*

GOD'S ROADMAP TO PEACE

God's plan calls for the Palestinians to leave Israel and resettle in the lands of their ancestry. He promises a fertile future to those Arabs who obediently adhere to this plan. His roadmap plan further clearly requires that the Palestinians, and their Arab cohorts support Israel, abandon their worship of Allah, and turn their affections toward Him, Jeremiah's God, Jehovah. If they fail to do all the above, then a severe reprisal will be levied for their national disobedience: "But any nation who refuses to obey me [Jeremiah's Jehovah] will be uprooted and destroyed. I, the LORD, (Jehovah) have spoken!" (Jeremiah 12:17, NLT; emphasis added)

FROM THE ABOVE, THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN:

All the nations enumerated in Psalm 83 will make a concerted attack upon Israel.

Jehovah God will judge these nations for their persistent hatred of Israel.

The Israeli Defense Force, energized by Jehovah Sabaoth and the Angel of the Lord, will shock the whole world with their amazing accomplishments in thoroughly overcoming their enemies.

The Jewish State will expand its sovereignty over captured territory.

A period of peace will be attained by Israel through military victory.

In this period of time a glorious spiritual harvest will be reaped throughout the whole world. (Joel 2:23,24; 26-29)

THE PROMISED "SAVIOR" WILL REIGN FROM MOUNT ZION

Obadiah 21 *Then saviors shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD's. NKJV*

Zechariah 8:1-3

¹ *Again the word of the LORD of hosts came, saying,*

² *"Thus says the LORD of hosts: 'I am zealous for Zion with great zeal; With great fervor I am zealous for her.'*

³ *"Thus says the LORD: 'I will return to Zion, and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain.' NKJV*

God in His own good time will cause the sons of Ishmael to assume their God assigned place among the descendants of Abraham. Despite all their deceitfulness and intrigue, Yahweh will cause the sons of Ishmael to come to terms with their destiny. In spite of their loud protests and cries for help to the nations of the world, God will exact His prophetic promise to Isaac. Meanwhile every lover of Yahweh should earnestly intercede for the descendants of Ishmael, that they will soon come to recognize and understand the true plan for their destiny according to the Word of God. Only then will the Middle East and the whole world experience true peace.

Zechariah affords another prophetic glimpse into the future and what will transpire in respect of the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael. We are told in Zechariah

Zechariah 12:2-3

² *I will make Jerusalem and Judah like an intoxicating drink to all the nearby nations that send their armies to besiege Jerusalem.*

³ *On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone, a burden for the world. None of the nations who try to lift it will escape unscathed. NLT*

Zechariah here predicts that “all the nearby nations” (which today are all Muslim nations) will besiege Jerusalem. The reference to intoxicating drink strongly infers an irrationality and senselessness of behavior and action. They will act with recklessness and unruliness without reasonable and logical restraint. But Jehovah will make Jerusalem like a huge rock so that all who seek to remove her will only succeed in rupturing themselves. He further predicts that God will make the clans of Judah like a “brazier that ignites a wood pile or a burning torch among sheaves of grain.” He will give an astounding victory to Israel in the process of which He will “destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”

Zechariah 12:6-9

⁶ *"On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a brazier that sets a woodpile ablaze or like a burning torch among sheaves of grain. They will burn up all the neighboring nations right and left, while the people living in Jerusalem remain secure.*

⁷ *The LORD will give victory to the rest of Judah first, before Jerusalem, so that the people of Jerusalem and the royal line of David will not have greater honor than the rest of Judah.*

⁸ *On that day the LORD will defend the people of Jerusalem; the weakest among them will be as mighty as King David! And the royal descendants will be like God, like the angel of the LORD who goes before them!*

⁹ *For my plan is to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. NLT*

THIS MESSIAH WILL VISIT ISRAEL TO REVEAL HIS TRUE IDENTITY.

Zechariah 12:10

*"Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on all the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died.
NLT*

Imagine for a moment this graphic scene. Initially it will appear that Israel faces complete destruction. The neighbouring nations will bring massive destructive power against tiny Israel. But when all seems lost, suddenly the tide of the battle will turn. Israel will take the offensive initiative and her enemies will turn upon one another and destroy their own armies. Following the astounding and miraculous victory, Israel will turn to see who or what caused that astonishing and extraordinary intervention on her behalf. Immediately they will look directly on the face of their Messiah. They will recognize Him as the one who was pierced when crucified in Jerusalem and they will begin to mourn as one bitterly grieves over the death of one's first born son.

The Bible tells us that Israel is partially and temporarily blind spiritually and that her blindness will one day be healed.

Romans 11:25-27

²⁵ *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.*

²⁶ *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;*

²⁷ *For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins." NKJV*

Paul says that partial and temporary blindness will afflict Israel until the "times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (completed). Then her blindness will be healed in a moment and she will suddenly recognize her Messiah. I personally believe that this could be that prophetic moment! Many discussions have focused upon this intriguing event. Some have suggested that this is the Second Coming of Christ but I do not agree with that. Firstly because concerning the Second Coming John says that "every eye will see Him and ALL the tribes of earth" will mourn for Him.

Revelation 1:7 *Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. NKJV*

I believe that the appearance of Christ the Messiah in Zechariah 12:10 is a private unveiling to Israel alone. I believe it to be a prophetic fulfillment of the scene in

Genesis 45:1-2

¹ *Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!" So no one stood with him while **Joseph made himself known to his brothers.***

² *And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it. NKJV*

On this occasion Joseph demanded that all those other than his brothers leave the site. There were no Egyptians (Gentiles) present when he revealed his identity to his brothers. The eyes to which he unveiled his true identity were Jewish only, in contrast to the Second Coming of Messiah Jesus when "every eye (in all the world) will see Him.

Revelation 1:7 Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen. NKJV

Could this scene in Zechariah represent the time when Israel will be spiritually reborn as a nation? When the major part of the population becomes Messianic or fulfilled Jews? Could this be the birthing of the 144,000 Israelis that John saw in

Revelation 7:4 And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: NKJV

I do not believe that 144,000 is meant to be a meticulously accurate count but that the number is symbolic and represents the fullness of Israeli representation i.e. the House of Judah and the House of Israel. Twelve is the number that represents ALL the tribes of Israel and it is also the number of government. So this scenario pictures ALL Israel exercising governmental authority. Later in the chapter, this company merges with a great company (of Gentiles) that no man could visually approximate and they together form the ONE NEW MAN of whom Paul spoke in Ephesians 2:14-18.

WHEN IS A SAINT NOT A SAINT?

Many Christians are convinced that they will soon be Raptured, i.e. snatched away from the earth before the beginning of the tribulation that will overtake humanity. One of the main proofs given for this concept is the fact that after Revelation 4:1 when a voice from heaven said to John "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this" there is no further mention in Revelation of the word church. This is (mistakenly) accepted as proof that the Church is no longer on earth after the recorded events of Revelation 4 and 5. However there are several references to persons called saints in the remainder of the book and some of the descriptions of them make them sound very much like bone fide "New Testament saints." It is also interesting to note that the word church does not occur in the gospels of Mark, Luke and John. How foolish would it be to suggest that the church was therefore not on earth during the period that these men wrote!

According to the Bible, saints are people who have been separated from the world and consecrated to the worship and service of God. Followers of the Lord are referred to by this phrase throughout the Bible, although its meaning is developed more fully in the New Testament. However there are many verses in the Old Testament that speak of saints of God, e.g. here are a few. In several of these there is mention of Jehovah's salvation and His saints.

The term saint in the NASB and NIV is always the translation of either Hebrew *qadosh* or Greek *hagios*; both the Hebrew and Greek terms are frequently translated "holy" in those translations. KJV "saint" is sometimes replaced in the NASB by "holy one." The KJV similarly translates *qadosh* and *hagios*, as well as Hebrew *qodesh* and *hasid*. They are not primarily words of character, but express a relationship to God as being set apart for His own. The same meaning is conveyed in both the Old and New Testaments.

Deuteronomy 33:3 Yes, He loves the people; All His saints are in Your hand; They sit down at Your feet; everyone receives Your words. NKJV

2 Chronicles 6:41 *"Now therefore, Arise, O LORD God, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength. Let Your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, And let Your saints rejoice in goodness. NKJV*

Psalms 16:3 *As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." NKJV*

Psalms 30:4 *Sing praise to the LORD, you saints of His, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name. NKJV*

Psalms 37:28 *For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His saints They are preserved forever, But the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off. NKJV*

Psalms 145:10-11

¹⁰ *All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your saints shall bless You.*

¹¹ *They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power, NKJV*

In the same manner Christian believers in the Gospels era, i.e. the times of Christ's ministry on earth are also designated as saints.

Matthew 27:52 *and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; NKJV*

The story of the early church recorded in Acts and the epistles also refer to Christian believers as saints.

Romans 1:7 *To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints. NKJV*

Thus we find "saints" throughout the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible refutes the idea of a special class of "saints." Although it is true that in experience some believers are more "holy" than others, yet in their position before God all believers are "sanctified," i.e., saints by virtue of what they are "in Christ." The Christian's perfect position (Rom. 6:1-10) is made a normal experience of Christ by faith (v. 11); positively confessing themselves to be what they are before God according to His Word, they became such in their everyday experience. Whilst it is true that the word church is not mentioned in Revelation after chapter 4 there are many people and groups mentioned that bear remarkable resemblance to those of the early church. For example John refers to some who exhibited the patience and faith of the saints.

Revelation 13:10 *Here is the patience and the faith of the saints. NKJV*

John also introduced some who were described as those who "keep the commandments and the faith of Jesus." Whether John is referring to the commandments given by Moses or those given by Jesus matters but little the main point is that they had the faith of Jesus. In our generation they would surely be called "Messianic Jews!"

Revelation 14:12 *Here is the patience of the saints, here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. NKJV*

Revelation 12:17 *And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. NKJV*

When the elder was asked by John to identify the persons he saw dressed in white robes he defined them a people who had “washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.” Which sound uniquely like those in Revelation 5:9

Revelation 5:9- 10

⁹ *And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, **And have redeemed us to God by Your blood** Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,*

¹⁰ *And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."*
NKJV

Revelation 7:13-15

¹³ *Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"*

¹⁴ *And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

¹⁵ *Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. NKJV*

We read further of the people in the same era who overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 12:11 *And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. NKJV*

When Christ returns, the saints will be clothed in white garments which are their "righteous acts" (Rev. 19:8). They will have continued to live in faith through God's redemptive power.

A Modern Anti Christ?

The basic meaning of “Anti Christ” is not primarily “against Christ” but rather “in the place of Christ.” It signifies someone who would usurp the place of Christ. This is precisely the underlying premise of Islam. Islamic writings do not deny the historic reality of Jesus. In fact, to some extent, the Koran eulogizes Jesus and His teachings. However, the Muslim Faith asserts that the teachings of Muhammad have superseded and surpassed the teachings of Jesus, relegating them to obscurity. Islam also vehemently denies His deity and every aspect of His vicarious redemptive role as the Lamb of God, the sin bearer. It also acknowledges and venerates the prophet Moses and his teachings whilst claiming that his teachings too have also been superseded by those of Mohammed.

About fourteen centuries ago (approximately 622 AD) a new religion which became known as Islam, sprang up in Arabia. It began in Mecca when Allah (the Muslim concept of God) is said to have revealed himself to Muhammad. Muslims believe that Allah revealed to Muhammad the sayings that were recorded in the Koran, which became the Muslim equivalent of the Holy Bible. The Koran proclaims that Islam is the same religion practised by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus in their respective periods of history. Muhammad who was born in 570 A.D. is said to be a descendant of Abraham and Ishmael. Muslims are children of Ishmael and a major difference between the Koran and the Bible is that Ishmael is exalted above Isaac. Also, many of its stories about Abraham are said to have taken place in Arabia.

ISLAM, THE ACT OF SUBMISSION

The basic meaning of the word Islam is submission. The English dictionary gives a variety of interpretations to this word, namely surrender, capitulation, compliance, obedience, giving in, acquiescence, assent. In Arabic, Islām derives from the three-letter root S-L-M, which means “to be in peaceful submission; to surrender; to obey peacefully.” (It is also the root of the Hebrew word shalom). Islām is a verbal abstract to this root, and literally means “submission/obedience”, referring primarily to submission to God. In Arabic the truest rendering of the word Islam is “the submission to God.”

According to Muslim scholars, one of the prevalent myths about Islam is that Muhammad was not the founder of Islam. Muslims believe that Abraham was the true founder of Islam rather than Muhammad. Islam is often called “Millat Ibrahim” (The Religion of Abraham) throughout the Quran (2:130, 135; 3:95; 4:125; 6:161; 12:37-38; 16:123; 21:73; 22:78). Moreover, the Quran informs us that Muhammad was a follower of Abraham (16:123).

WHAT IS ISLAM?

Islam is often defined as a religion, but this does not give the clearest and fullest meaning of the word. Literally and in practice, it is self-surrender, submission, absolute surrender to the will, service and the commands of Allah. It is said to be a type of submission that will enable one to have

a sense of peace within and to be free from all fears, to feel completely safe and protected. It is a submission and surrender that is to be given wholeheartedly without any doubt, and supposedly will make one readily obedient to the commands of the One True God. Therefore, Islam is not just some religion based on a simple belief or faith in something, but a total submission that is given to Allah alone. Islam also carries a very strong political connotation in which it literally becomes a ruling Kingdom.

SUBMITTERS AND SUBMISSION

Although the word “submitter” is the English equivalent of the Arabic word “Muslim,” and the word “submission” is the English equivalent of the Arabic word “Islam,” the underlying implication of these words is very profound, and far from the superficial meanings that are traditionally understood or used. A submitter can be defined as a person who submits to the will of God. The state of submission, which can only take place between the person and God Almighty, is considered to be the only acceptable form of worship of God (Allah) (3:19, 85). Therefore, submission is not just a name of a religion; rather it describes one’s total (religious, social and political) devotion to Allah alone.

According to Muslim commentators, Islam is a religion whereby one recognizes God’s absolute authority and reaches a conviction that only Allah possesses all power; no other entity possesses any power that is independent of Him. The natural result of such a realization is to devote one’s life and one’s worship absolutely to God alone. This is the First Commandment in all the scriptures, including the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Final Testament (The Quran).

Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is One God! Therefore you shall adore the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, Mark 12:29-30, Quran 3:18).

SUBMISSION TO GOD

In the strictest sense submission for a Muslim is total submission to Allah and the teachings of Islam the Koran and Hadith. “Submission” is the religion whereby we recognize God’s absolute authority, and reach an unshakeable conviction that God ALONE possesses all power; no other entity possesses any power that is independent of Him. The natural result of such a realization is to devote our lives and our worship absolutely to God ALONE. This is the First Commandment in all the scriptures, including the Old Testament, the New Testament, and this Final Testament.

ABRAHAM, OUR FINEST EXAMPLE OF SUBMISSION

Abraham is undoubtedly the first and finest example of submission. From the earliest stages of his life this is abundantly clear. Abraham was born in Ur in Babylon among pagan worshippers of the moon, when Jehovah first spoke to him, and commanded him to leave his country and journey to a land that God would show him.

Genesis 12:1 Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family and from your father's house, To a land that I will show you. NKJV

Although at this stage of his life Abraham did not truly know Yahweh, he unhesitatingly obeyed Him. In truth he submitted to Yahweh, surrendering his life and future wholly to God. The scripture records, “God said, ‘get out of your country’... so Abraham departed.” Abraham therefore initially demonstrated his submission to God through the faith and obedience required to depart for a land about which he as yet knew nothing.

Genesis 12:4 *So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.*

Abraham further demonstrated his submission to God through his willing and obedient response to God’s instruction to sacrifice his son Isaac. This incident was undoubtedly the greatest test of Abraham’s life and therefore the greatest demonstration of his submission. He had waited so long for his “son of promise” and now it appeared that God was demanding that he give him back again. Nevertheless, Abraham was determined to obey God whatever the cost.

Genesis 22: 1-3

¹ *Now after these things, God put Abraham to the test, and said to him, Abraham; and he said, Here am I.*

² *And he said to him, Take your son, your dearly loved only son Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah and give him as a burned offering on one of the mountains of which I will give you knowledge.*

³ *And Abraham got up early in the morning, and made ready his ass, and took with him two of his young men and Isaac, his son, and after the wood for the burned offering had been cut, he went on his way to the place of which God had given him word (BBE).*

At an early stage in Hagar’s life, while she was carrying Ishmael before she even realized that she was pregnant with him, God appeared to her and commanded her to submit herself to Sarah.

Genesis 16:9 *The Angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand” (NKJ).*

The Basic English Bible renders this, “put yourself under her authority.”

Genesis 16:9 *And the angel said to her, Go back, and put yourself under her authority.*

The “Angel of the Lord” is a name that is frequently used to designate a physical appearance of God in bodily form. The first command therefore that God ever gave to Hagar was to submit. It is interesting to speculate what might have been the eventual result if she had done so! The subsequent alienation that Hagar and Ishmael experienced might never have occurred. The great chasm that has existed ever since between the seed of Isaac and that of Ishmael might never have transpired.

Muslims believe that Muhammad is a direct descendant of Ishmael. They also believe that Ishmael, being the first son from Abraham’s loins, is the preferred son. To validate such a claim they place Ishmael in the role of the son that Abraham offered to God.

“Jews, Christians and Muslims agree; Abraham, the friend of God, is an example of pure and unconditional righteousness and faith. The love that Abraham displayed towards God is clearly seen

in Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only beloved son. All three religions do not dispute this fact. What they do disagree on, however, is the identity of the sacrificial child. The Bible states that this child was Isaac whereas Islam contends that it was Ishmael. The Bible declares,

“After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘here am I.’ He said, ‘take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you’ ” (Genesis 22:1-2, R.S.V.).

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son ...” (Hebrews 11:17, R.S.V.).

“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up his son Isaac upon the altar” (James 2:21, R.S.V.).

Muslims on the other hand believe that Ishmael was the one offered up by Abraham. They believe that the Holy Bible supports this by its declaration that Abraham offered his only son (see above verses). Ishmael was initially Abraham's only son for over thirteen years, which from an Islamic perspective, would make it impossible for Isaac to be the child of sacrifice (Cf. Genesis 16:16, 21:5).

Muslims believe that scribes later corrupted the original reading from Ishmael to Isaac. Since this idea stems from the Muslim misunderstanding of the phrase “only son” it becomes necessary to explain what this phrase exactly means in relation to Isaac. A careful reading of the Holy Bible shows that the phrase is used to affirm Isaac's unique status, a status based on the following:

Isaac was the only promised child of Abraham, a fact which the Quran agrees with (cf. Genesis 17:15-21; Surah 11:69-73, 37:112-113, 51:24-30). Isaac was conceived miraculously to a barren mother and a very aging father, with the Quran likewise agreeing (cf. Genesis 17:15-17, 18:9-15, 21:1-7; Galatians 4:28-29; Surah 11:69-73, 51:24-30). Ishmael was conceived normally without the need of any miraculous intervention.

God promised that it would be Isaac's descendants who would inherit the land given to Abraham (Genesis 13:14-18, 15:18-21, 28:13-14). Ishmael had no part in the inheritance and promise given to Isaac through Abraham. It is for these reasons that Isaac is called Abraham's only son since God himself reckoned him as the true authentic child of promise and blessings, an honor never bestowed upon Ishmael. Even more amazing is the fact that the Quran never mentions the name of the sacrificial child; amazing indeed considering how overzealous some Muslims have been in their attempts to prove that Ishmael, not Isaac, was that son.

ISLAMIC BELIEF IN THE PROPHETS

Belief in the prophets, an aspect of Islamic theology, involves all the prophets in the Koran and identifies them thus,

Adam, the chosen one of God

Noah, the prophet of God

Abraham, the friend of God
Ishmael, the sacrifice of God
Moses, the converser with God
Jesus, the Word of God
Muhammad, the final and greatest messenger of God.

The Koran claims that its message is none other than a repetition of the one contained in the “previous scriptures” (a Muslim euphemism for the writings of Moses). It therefore claims that Islam is a new facet of Judaism and Christianity, but a later, superior, final revelation of God.

The Koran validates the life and teachings of both Moses and of Jesus to some degree. (It also introduces some false evidence about them both). Sadly, it denies the most important redemptive aspects such as the death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus which is the central, indispensable core of true Christianity. However, the basic premise of Islam is that with the coming of Muhammad and the Koran, this “new revelation from God” supersedes and renders obsolete the teachings of both Moses and Jesus. Anyone who does not abandon faith and submission to the teachings of either Moses or Jesus is regarded as an infidel. As such, they are worthy of only one of two things, i.e. conversion to Islam, or death.

Islam ascribes more honor to Abraham than does Judaism or Christianity. As Moses is to the Jews and Jesus to the Christian, so is Abraham to the Muslims. He is the pillar of their Faith. Initially Muhammad saw himself as an instrument to bring back attention and veneration to Abraham. In his personal contact with both Jews and Christians, he was disappointed to discover that neither subscribed due honor to Abraham. Both, in his opinion, had dishonored and abandoned the Faith of Abraham and Muhammad saw as his mission in life the task of renewing the model of Abraham’s life and faith. Abraham therefore figures largely in Islamic thought and writings though the accounts differ considerably from those of the Bible. These differences emerge from the fact that Ishmael is seen as the favored son of Abraham rather than Isaac. This is mostly a result of the oriental view regarding the first born son. God Himself made a special claim upon the firstborn. The first born of both man and beast was considered as belonging to the Lord. The firstborn son could be redeemed (Exodus 13:13,15, 34:20).

Exodus 22:29 *You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me (NKJV).*

The Law of Moses appears to support the position of Ishmael, being the first son of a “lesser” loved wife.

Deuteronomy 21:15-17

¹⁵ *If a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other, and both bear him sons but the firstborn is the son of the wife he does not love,*

¹⁶ *when he wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to the son of the wife he loves in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the wife he does not love.*

¹⁷ *He must acknowledge the son of his unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a*

double share of all he has. That son is the first sign of his father's strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him (NIV).

Another incident that seems to strengthen the idea that Ishmael was the rightful heir, concerns the circumcision of both Abraham and Ishmael. Once again, God appears to Abraham, this time revealing Himself as “El Shaddai” the Almighty God. He changes the name of Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (Father of multitudes). He confirms again His intention to fulfill His covenant with Abraham and introduces the rite of circumcision as its physical sign. Ishmael was circumcised at the same time that Abraham was.

Genesis 17:22-27

*23 On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and every other male in his household and circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, exactly as God had told him.
24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old at that time,
25 and Ishmael his son was thirteen.
26 Both were circumcised the same day,
27 along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. NLT*

Genesis 17:9-11

⁹ *And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.*

¹⁰ *This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised;*

¹¹ *and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you” (NKJV).*

Once again, Abraham responds to God immediately in faith and obedience. At the ripe age of ninety-nine, Abraham submits to the ritual together with Ishmael who is only thirteen. That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael. They two were the first males to be circumcised as a sign of their submission to God and His commandment.

Thus Ishmael received in his body the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant on the same day that his father did, before Isaac was even conceived. The Muslim writings about Abraham constantly link his life with that of Ishmael. They tell of Abraham's supposed numerous visits to Arabia sometimes in the company of Ishmael. On other occasions he is supposed to have visited Ishmael and his wife who resided there. The Koran declares that Adam built the Ka'ba and Abraham later rebuilt it. This religious icon at Mecca is still one of the most venerated items in Islamic worship.

The Arab world into which Muhammad was born used to worship myriads of gods, stone idols and spirits (jinns). Although they acknowledged a deity whom they called Al-Ilah or Allah, as the Supreme Being, they did not worship him. They worshipped some 360 hand-made idols as Allah's daughters. It was amidst these conditions that Muhammad is said to have been called by Allah to warn the Arabs around Mecca that they should worship Allah and his prophet Muhammad. Thus Muhammad sought to bring the Arab nations from the worship of a pantheon of gods to a monotheistic form of religion in which they worshipped Al-ilah or Allah.

WHO IS ALLAH?

The religion of Islam has as its focus of worship a supposed supreme deity by the name of “Allah.” The Muslims claim that Allah in pre-Islamic times was the Biblical God of the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. The issue is thus one of continuity. Was “Allah” the biblical God or a pagan god in Arabia during pre-Islamic times? The Muslims’ claim of continuity is essential to their attempt to convert Jews and Christians, for if “Allah” is part of the flow of divine revelation in scripture, then Islam is the next step in biblical religion. Thus we should all become Muslims. But, on the other hand, if Allah was a pre-Islamic pagan deity, then its core claim is refuted. Religious claims often fall before the results of hard sciences such as archaeology. We can endlessly speculate about the past or go and dig it up and see what the evidence reveals. This is the only way to find out the truth concerning the origins of Allah.

As we shall see, the hard evidence demonstrates that the god Allah was a pagan deity. In fact, he was the Moon-god who was married to the sun goddess and the stars were his daughters. Muhammad was deceived into thinking that Allah was not only the supreme god of the Arabic pantheon but that he was in fact Jehovah, the God of the Bible. In effect he said, “Look, you already believe that the Moon-god Allah is the greatest of all gods. All I want you to do is to accept the idea that he is the supreme god. I am not taking away the Allah you already worship. I am only taking away his wife and his daughters and all the other gods.” This is seen from the fact that the first point of the Muslim creed is not, “Allah is great” but “Allah is the greatest,” i.e., he is the greatest among the gods. Why would Muhammad say that Allah is the “greatest” except in a polytheistic context? The Arabic word is used to contrast the greater from the lesser. That this is true is seen from the fact that the pagan Arabs never accused Muhammad of preaching a different Allah than the one they already worshipped. Muhammad thus attempted to have it both ways. To the pagans, he said that he still believed in the Moon-god Allah. To the Jews and the Christians, he said that Allah was their God too. But both the Jews and the Christians knew better and that is why they rejected his god Allah as a false god.

According to the Encyclopedia of Religion, Allah corresponded to the Babylonian god Baal, and Arabs knew of him long before Mohammed worshipped him as the supreme God. The spirit of Baal is still evident in many aspects of Islamic practice today. Before Islam the Arabs recognized many gods and goddesses; each tribe had their own deity. There were also nature deities. Allah was the god of the local Quarish tribe, which was Mohammed’s tribe before he invented Islam to lead his people out of their polytheism. Allah was then known as the Moon God, who had three daughters who were viewed as intercessors for the people into Allah. Their names were Al-at, Al-uzza, and Al-Manat, which were three goddesses; the first two daughters of Allah had names which were feminine forms of Allah. Hubal was the chief God of the Kaaba among the other 360 deities. Hubal was a statue likeness of a man whose body was made of red precious stones and whose arms were made of gold. (Reference: Islam George Braswell Jr.)

The Encyclopedia of Religion also states that Allah is a pre Islamic name corresponding to the Babylonian Bel (Baal). In the Old Testament, the followers of Baal constantly opposed and challenged Jehovah and His people. They were a constant thorn in the side of Israel. It is also interesting to observe how frequently the Israelites in times of apostasy turned to the worship of Baal and adopted many of their practices. Baal was a common name for god among the Phoenicians

and Babylonians and also the name of their chief male god. Characteristics of Baal worship may be identified in many aspects of modern Islam. Many rituals practised by Muslims are somewhat similar to aspects of Baal worship. Some commentators have suggested that the spirit that birthed Baal worship in Canaan and later in Babylon is the same spirit that birthed Islam.

The city of Mecca, birth-place of Muhammad, is the main centre for Islamic pilgrimage and worship. The ka'bah (black stone) which is also called Beit Ullah (the house of God) is said to have been built by Abraham and Ishmael. The Arabs used to worship this stone and even modern Muslims venerate it as a mark of respect to their ancestor Abraham.

From childhood Muhammad devoted much of his time to quiet meditation in pursuit of truth and guidance. At such times he often devoted himself so deeply to prayer and meditation that at times he would go into a trance and even into convulsions. He was initially reticent to accept the call to be Allah's prophet, fearing that he may become mad or become possessed by an evil spirit. In such times of pressure he frequently considered committing suicide. Some of his relatives reassured him and convinced him to accept the task before him. Muhammad's keen sense of vocation constantly drove him to spread his message far and wide throughout his homeland. He eventually died in 632 A.D. at the age of 62. By this time he had conquered most of Arabia. The small army of followers he had amassed continued his mission after his death. Islam began to spread throughout the earth. Today there are more than 1,500 million Muslims around the world and they constitute one of the world's fastest growing religions.

ARE ALLAH AND JEHOVAH ONE AND THE SAME?

Many people, including many sincere Christians, believe that Allah and Jehovah are the same God. Because Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all monotheistic religions, they assume that the three Faiths are very similar, each worshipping the One True God. They conclude that Islam and Christianity are two pathways to the same destination. The fact is that they are radically and essentially different. I personally believe that closer examination will demonstrate that they are in fact vastly different beings.

Yahweh, the God of Israel is a personal God who is known and loved by millions. The very covenant name of God, Yahweh, describes the God who enters into personal relationships and covenants with individuals and with groups. Allah is a very different kind of god altogether, being impersonal and remote from man. He is neither close nor personal with man. Consequently one of the major features of Islam is fatalism. "InShallah" - if God wills it - is a catchword of Islam. It is used in a sense of fatalistic acceptance that whatever is ordained will inevitably happen and there is nothing that we or anyone else can do to change it. In absolute contrast Christianity proclaims a God of transformation who specializes in changing persons and circumstances. The Gospel of Jesus Christ offers a total life change through faith in the grace and mercy of God. Instead of encouraging fatalistic acceptance the Bible declares that:

***Matthew 19:26** But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible (KJV).*

Mark 9:23 Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth (KJV).

Luke 18:27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (KJV).

AL MAHDI – THE MUSLIM MESSIAH

Throughout the history of Islam, since the death of Muhammad, eleven Imams have reigned over Islam. According to common Sunni tradition, when the eleventh Imam died at a young age, he is said to have left no heir. This dilemma threw Islam into great confusion and caused his followers to divide into numerous sects, one of which was the Shi'ite tradition which today comprises the majority of the citizens of Iran. This sect claimed that the eleventh Imam actually did have a son named Muhammad born in 869 A.D. who was hidden by his father. He is believed to still be somewhere on earth and will one day reappear to take his place at the head of Islam. Belief in the existence of the hidden twelfth Imam and his future return became one of the distinguishing features of the Shi'ite sect. It is significant that his name was Muhammad because his prophetic task is to fulfill the work begun by his forefather of the same name.

The title of the hidden one is "Al Mahdi" or the "rightly guided one." He is the Islamic equivalent of our Messiah, an Anti Christ, usurping the place of Christ and His coming Kingdom. According to a statement by the fifth Imam it is known what Al Mahdi will look like. "He is a young man of medium stature, with a handsome face and beautiful hair which flows to his shoulders. The hair of his beard and head are black. A light rises on his face." The similarities between him and Jesus Christ are obvious.

The idea of the coming of a Mahdi (the rightly guided one) has its roots in Islamic traditions, both Shiia and Sunni, even though the Mahdi is not mentioned in the Qur'an. The Mahdi prepares the way for the second coming of the Prophet Isa (Jesus) and the impending end of the world. Eventually the awaited Imam will appear, and the Divine Aim will reach its fulfillment. The Qur'an explicitly declares the return of Jesus to earth. Surah Al Imran 55 is one of the verses indicating that Jesus will come back. But in many verses of the Quran, Allah states that those having faith in the trinity certainly are disbelievers. Those who say that the Messiah, son of Maryam, is the third of three are disbelievers. There is no god but One God (Surat al-Ma'idah: 73).

In anticipation of Judgment Day, it was essential that the people return to a simple and rigorous, even puritanical Islam. The Islamic belief in the second coming of Christ is the creed of Sunni and Shi'i Islam in its generality. For Muslims, there is no question about the forthcoming Armageddon, following which war technology shall become unusable. The Mahdi will defeat the remaining third of the Jews (the other two thirds having already perished at Armageddon); this will be followed by a Christian versus Muslim war, called al-Malhama al-Kubra ("Great Slaughter of the Intercessor" ie, the Prophet) in Muslim texts.

When the Mahdi's Army receives word of the Antichrist, they will go to fight the Antichrist, but he will besiege them in Jerusalem. Jesus will descend, and perform the dawn prayer behind the Mahdi, then Jesus will go out and kill the Antichrist. After that, he will take over the Caliphate. Upon the return of Jesus, he will not accept that Christians and Jews live with any other religion than Islam, and so will unite all the believers as Muslims.

The present government of Iran is seen to be only temporary until the public emergence of Al Mahdi who is recognized as the only legitimate ruler of all Muslims. He will one day return to "fill the earth with justice and establish universal Islamic rule over the nations." His kingdom of justice is described as "paradise on earth." "In his time injustice will be completely removed from the earth. No person of any religion other than Islam will remain without being shown the truth of Islam and confessing belief in it." The concept that Muhammad Al Mahdi will soon appear as the savior and renewer of Islam is held throughout the entire Islamic world though it is the Shi'ites that have grasped this concept with the greatest fervor. They believe in the inevitable conquest of the world by Islam, largely through Jihad (holy war) and the return of Al Mahdi to rule the earth."

We can clearly see that Al Mahdi is actually a substitute or replacement for the true Christ. The Islamic rule he is supposed to establish on earth would be a worldwide rule, usurping and replacing the role of the Kingdom of Jehovah God. It is also clear that the spiritual war raging today in heavenly places and causing the great fear and unrest that fills our world is actually a battle between the spiritual armies of Jehovah God and the principalities and powers of darkness. In this great battle Jerusalem is the major prize and ultimately only Jehovah will be capable of defending it and securing it for His people Israel. Following a conviction that Al Mahdi is the Anti Christ, might it not be that Muhammad is the False Prophet? One thing is certain. If Jesus is a true prophet, then Muhammad is certainly a false prophet because Muhammad's teachings clearly contradict many of the statements that Christ made of Himself, therefore Christ and Muhammad cannot both be true prophets. One of them is a false prophet.

Radical Islamicists, in the Last Days, are pursuing the path of Ishmael's rebellion against Isaac, but they will find themselves fighting against Jehovah, the God of Isaac. It is essential that Christians recognize the difference between Islam and Muslims. Whilst radical Islam with its international territorial ambitions has initiated a state of jihad (holy war) there are millions of Muslims around the world who definitely do not support such ambitions but sincerely desire to live in peace, material progress and security. The fanatical zeal of Islamic radicals does not by any means represent the views and desires of the majority of Muslim people.

Nevertheless, Islam is by nature and philosophy an expansionist force dedicated to conquering and subduing all non-Islamic nations. A foundational belief of Islam does involve world domination by Allah and the introduction of Shariah law over all nations. Islam is essentially both a religion and a political power. This hunger for conquest and domination has made its powerful imprint upon history. Islamic forces have at various times conquered and dominated many nations from which they were afterwards made to withdraw. There is a wide spread belief in Islam that any territory that has once been ruled by Islam remains the property of Islam. It is considered a blasphemy against Allah for any land or territory once ruled by Islam to return to the rule and government of non-Islamic powers. This is particularly true of Israel and especially of Jerusalem. Although Jerusalem was never mentioned in the Koran, the fact that Muslims once conquered it and built Mosques

there, means that it is an abomination for it to be under any other rule but Islamic. Muslim mythology concerning the supposed visit of Muhammad to Jerusalem has exalted Jerusalem to the status of the third holiest city in the world. Fanatical extremist Muslims will never rest until the infidel Jews and Gentiles in Israel have been overthrown and completely annihilated. In order to conquer the Jews, the Muslims would not only have to defeat the Israeli military, they would need to defeat Jehovah Sabaoth, The Lord of Armies. Jerusalem does not ultimately belong to the Jews; it is actually God's city. He has chosen Zion (Jerusalem) for His habitation. Psalm 48 expresses so exquisitely God's relationship to Jerusalem. It uncovers the deepest sentiments of His heart towards her.

Psalm 48:1-14

¹ *How great is the Lord! How much we should praise him. He lives upon Mount Zion in Jerusalem.*

² *What a glorious sight! See Mount Zion rising north of the city high above the plains for all to see - Mount Zion, joy of all the earth, the residence of the great King.*

³ *God himself is the defender of Jerusalem.*

⁴ *The kings of the earth have arrived together to inspect the city.*

⁵ *They marvel at the sight and hurry home again,*

⁶ *afraid of what they have seen; they are filled with panic like a woman in travail!*

⁷ *For God destroys the mightiest warships with a breath of wind.*

⁸ ***We have heard of the city's glory - the city of our God, the Commander of the armies of heaven. And now we see it for ourselves! God has established Jerusalem forever.***

⁹ *Lord, here in your Temple we meditate upon your kindness and your love.*

¹⁰ *Your name is known throughout the earth, O God. You are praised everywhere for the salvation you have scattered throughout the world.*

¹¹ *O Jerusalem, rejoice! O people of Judah, rejoice! For God will see to it that you are finally treated fairly.*

¹² *Go, inspect the city! Walk around and count her many towers!*

¹³ *Note her walls and tour her palaces so that you can tell your children.*

¹⁴ *For this great God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide until we die (TLB).*

JEHOVAH'S DEFENCE OF ISRAEL

Isaiah 31:4-6

4 This is what the LORD says to me: "As a lion growls, a great lion over his prey - and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamor - so the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights, like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will pass over it and will rescue it" (NIV).

The Shi'ite Muslims today constantly attract the attention of the world media because they are the most virulently anti-Western of all Muslims. They are also a particularly brutal, war-like people.

In addition to observing the five pillars of Islam, they add a sixth - jihad or holy war. Their utmost purpose is to spread the Koran and Islamic law throughout the whole world whether through the tongue, the pen or the sword. Anything that opposes or threatens to hinder this purpose is fit only for destruction and annihilation. This includes Judaism and Christianity and all who hold those beliefs.

THE FUTURE OF JERUSALEM AND ISRAEL

Zechariah 12:8-10

⁸ *In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.*

⁹ *It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.*

¹⁰ *And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.*

Zechariah 13:1 *In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.*

FULFILLING THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Psalm 2:8 *(Jehovah to Yeshua) Ask of me, and I will make the nations (Goyim) your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession (NIV).*

The Book of Revelation portrays among many other things, the great End Time Harvest of the nations.

Revelation 11:15 *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever" (NKJ)!*

Another of the glorious images of that ingathering is in Revelation 7, where we see Jew and Gentile united before God's throne (Rev 7:9-12).

Revelations 7:9-12

⁹ *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*

¹⁰ *and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God (Yahweh) who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (Yeshua).*

¹¹ *All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,*

¹² saying: “amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen” (NKJ).

The continuing present conflict between the PLO and Israel concerning the Promised Land has its beginnings in the ancient conflict between Ishmael and Isaac. It is therefore an ancient family feud relating to two lines of Abrahamic seed. This is NOT a political issue that might be resolved by diplomacy or military conflict. It is a complex issue that has only a spiritual solution. It must be determined among the family members, i.e. the seed of Abraham. All roads lead to Jerusalem because Almighty God has ordained His Kingdom to be established there. His King will sit upon the throne of David in Jerusalem and rule all the nations on earth.

THE DESTINY OF THE NATIONS

In Genesis 10 we see the origin of the nations as the descendants of the three sons of Noah.

Genesis 10:1 *This is the family tree of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. After the flood, they themselves had sons (The Message Version).*

Noah’s descendants, as the primary members of the various races, spoke one language and held a united vision to establish and consolidate their presence in the earth. Sadly, it is clearly evident that the human society they planned to build did not include God in their plans. In fact their strategy was to build a humanistic society without reference to God. They would devise a philosophy and lifestyle which would function entirely by the will of man and thoroughly despise God’s Will. To this end they determined to build a tower that would epitomize their dream. The birth of humanism was conceived in direct rebellion against God.

Genesis 11:4 *And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.*

Their open rebellion attracted the anger and action of God who confused their languages and scattered them across the earth. It was from this scattering that the various nations developed.

Genesis 11:8 *So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off (the building of) the city.*

Since this time the nations have lived in rebellion against Jehovah God, seeking to build their utopias whilst excluding Him from their lives. It is largely because of their enmity against God that they have also hated and misused His covenant people, the Jews. The whole history of the human race has become a profound illustration of man’s total inability to live with its creator. Mankind has blundered its way through history from one tragedy to the next. As we rapidly approach the climax of this present phase of God’s purpose, we are about to see the final tragedies unfold as an international confrontation occurs between God and humanity. Almighty God will shake the world and the nations upon it to the degree that everything created by man will collapse and disintegrate and only those things which are part of God’s eternal purpose will prevail.

A WORLD IN TRAVAIL

Travail speaks of the pains of labour (muscular contractions) experienced prior to birth. The whole of creation today is experiencing birth pains, prior to the “birthing” of the Kingdom of God in glory.

Isaiah 13:6-8

⁶ *Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.*

⁷ *Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man's heart will melt,*

⁸ *And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; They will be amazed at one another; Their faces will be like flames. NKJV*

Romans 8:18-23

¹⁸ *Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later.*

¹⁹ *For all creation is waiting patiently and hopefully for that future day when God will resurrect his children.*

²⁰ *For on that day thorns and thistles, sin, death, and decay - the things that overcame the world against its will at God's command - will all disappear, and the world around us will share in the glorious freedom from sin which God's children enjoy.*

²² *For we know that even the things of nature, like animals and plants, suffer in sickness and death as they await this great event.*

²³ *And even we Christians, although we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, also groan to be released from pain and suffering (TLB).*

All of creation, animate and inanimate, is groaning together, longing for the time when God will manifest His rule over the world and the nations again. The consternation of the nations today is part of God's plan for the unveiling of His Kingdom. Every government on earth is experiencing grave problems, many of which have no human solution. God did not initiate these problems. Man has brought them on himself by ignoring and flouting God's law. Humanism is about to reveal its fatal flaws. Creation is soon to witness the irrefutable proof that man cannot successfully run this world without God's Kingdom rule.

MULTITUDES IN CONFUSION AND CONSTERNATION

Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision (consternation) for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision (NKJV).

Humanistic society is headed for disintegration and destruction. The world wide problems of economic inflation, political unrest, international terrorism, disease and starvation will never be solved by politics, religion or diplomacy. Mankind is confronted with a myriad of problems for which there is no human solution. It is a situation that demands the intervention of Almighty God.

THE SHAKING OF ALL THINGS

Haggai 2:6-7

⁶ *For so says Jehovah of Hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.*

⁷ *And I will shake all the nations; and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, says Jehovah of Hosts.*

Here God speaks prophetically of His intention to shake all nations in the last days, before the coming of His Son. The phrase “yet once” signifies the uniqueness of this period, in that its intensity will only occur once in history on such a large scale. “For a little while” indicates that it will happen for a relatively short, not a prolonged period. Yet the intensity of it will be so great that it will affect all the nations on earth. It is a period of time that will culminate in the earthly advent of God’s Messiah. So great will be the shaking that entire earthly kingdoms will be overthrown to clear the world stage for the establishment of God’s great Kingdom (Revelation 11:15).

The great shaking will be the necessary step to clear the stage entirely prior to the unveiling of God’s visible presence and rule over the earth.

This predicted “shaking” has already begun and will spread and intensify progressively before the return of the Lord Messiah. The shaking will soon encompass every aspect of life throughout the whole earth. Every nation on our planet will experience the impact, severity and intensity of it. The political structures, philosophies and false religious ideologies of men are about to be overthrown in preparation for the manifestation of God’s Sovereign rule. This gigantic transition will not be accomplished without enormous stress. All the humanistic ideologies and societies of mankind will be broken in pieces and swept aside to clear the world stage for the appearance and presence of God’s Messiah, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Every nation on earth will feel the aftershocks of this unprecedented event. So, when we witness sweeping changes and the sudden overthrow of humanistic structures of politics and religions, those who are in Christ have no need to fear, for all these things must happen before Christ’s return to earth.

THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS

Many different interpretations have been given to this statement but careful reading of the biblical prophecies will convince an open mind that it clearly refers to the biblical Messiah. The events surrounding this verse are obviously a prelude to Messiah’s Coming. When God speaks of “The Desire of all nations” (Haggai 2:7), we Christians should know to whom He refers. He is obviously speaking of Christ the Messiah. But can we honestly say at this point in time, that Christ IS the desire of all nations? Is He truly the desire of the Communist nations? Is He the desire of the Islamic nations? Is He truly the desire of the capitalist Western World? The honest answer to these questions is NO. Christ is not presently the desire of these nations. They are not looking for Him and longing for His appearance. This title, the “Desire of all Nations,” must be understood in its context. We must also recognize that the “Desire of all nations” is associated with the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem.

Haggai 2:6-7

6 "For this is what the LORD Almighty says: In just a little while I will again shake the heavens and the earth. I will shake the oceans and the dry land, too.

7 I will shake all the nations, and the treasures of all the nations will come to this Temple. I will fill this place with glory, says the LORD Almighty. NLT

Let me try to paraphrase what I believe God is saying. "I am going to thoroughly shake all the nations on earth, and when I get through with shaking them, Christ will be the desire of those nations." For God will shake their confidence, their pride, and resources. They will be broken, and helpless. God will bring them face to face with reality of their ultimate inability to run this world. The pride of the United Nations Organization will be in the dust. The strength of Godless Communism will be smashed. The fervency of militant Islam will be exhausted. The wealth of Babylon will be bankrupted. Every humanistic institution will be dissolved. From the smouldering ruins of humanism, the Kingdom of God will arise with great authority and glory. God says, "*I will overthrow the throne of Kingdoms and I will destroy the strength of the Kingdoms of the Heathen*" (Haggai 2:22).

God also says, "Yet once more will I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word 'yet once more' signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved (shaken,) let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear" (Hebrews 12:26-28).

This is a direct reference to Haggai 2:6,7 It refers to the shaking of the kingdoms (nations). God is predicting a time when He will shake the earth so vigorously and violently that every man-made thing (Heb.12:27) - as of things that are made - will be smashed. The only things that will survive this testing are those things that are the "established by the Lord." Earthly kings, rulers, dictators, presidents and governments will be brought to the ground. All earthly rule will be smashed. Law and order will disintegrate. Anarchy will prevail. So fearful will be the result that men everywhere will begin to cry out fervently for the government of God to come.

Isaiah 2:19,21 "And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth. To go into the cleft of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake terribly the earth"

Philippians 2:10, 11 Christ, as the true King of the Universe, will become the Desire of ALL Nations (Haggai 2:7). "Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"

Zechariah 2:11 "Many nations shall be joined unto the Lord in that day and shall be my people and I will dwell in the midst of them"

THE END TIMES HARVEST

The prophetic scriptures concerning the End Times predict a tremendous final harvest of worldwide proportions. From the earliest predictions in Genesis to the final prophecies in Revelation, frequent reference is made to ALL Nations. Since the Bible is a historical and prophetic statement concerning all humanity, this must of necessity include all nations on earth. Whilst no person can say precisely when this will happen, it will obviously occur within the context of dramatic events that will shake the very fabric of humanity. Startling events will occur that will terrify mankind, filling them with a genuine fear of God. The nations will be made to see that Jehovah God, the creator of the universe, is indeed all powerful above all other powers. Into this environment of trepidation and fear, God will present His credentials as the Saviour, Ruler and Lord of all creation and every nation. This great harvest will reap multitudes of people from every false religion. In their new born fear of Jehovah they will surrender to the claims of the Lord of Hosts. Instrumental in the reaping of this tremendous harvest under the mighty hand of God will be the Seed of Abraham.

Here are a few of the scriptures that indicate the impact that God will make upon ALL nations.

Genesis 17:5-6

⁵ *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.*

⁶ *And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee (KJV).*

Genesis 17:16 *And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her (KJV).*

Genesis 18:18 *Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him (KJV).*

Genesis 22:18 *And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice (KJV).*

Genesis 26:4 *And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (KJV).*

Psalm 67:4 *O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth (KJV).*

Psalm 72:11 *Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. (KJV).*

Psalm 72:17 *His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed (KJV).*

Psalm 82:8 *Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations (KJV).*

Psalm 86:9 *All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name (KJV).*

Isaiah 52:10 *The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God (KJV).*

Isaiah 61:11 *For as the earth brings forth her bud, and as the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations (KJV).*

Isaiah 64:1-2

¹ *Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence -*

² *As fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil - to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence (NKJ)!*

Jeremiah 33:9 *And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it (KJV).*

Haggai 2:6-7

⁶ *For thus says the LORD of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;*

⁷ *And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts (KJV).*

Zechariah 2:11-12

¹¹ *And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.*

¹² *And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again (KJV).*

Zechariah 8:22 *Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD (KJV).*

Revelation 7:9-10

⁹ *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands,*

¹⁰ *and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (NKJ).*

Revelation 15:4 *Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest (KJV).*

Revelation 21:24 *And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it (KJV).*

Who shall not fear Thee, O King of the nations? The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation” (Jeremiah.10:7A, 10).

Psalm.72:17 *“And all men shall be blessed in Him: and all nations shall call Him blessed”*

THE KINGDOM EMERGES IN MUCH TRIBULATION

Acts14:22 *“That we must, through much tribulation enter the Kingdom of God”*

In this statement Paul shares a principle of the Kingdom, that it is through much “testing” that we ‘enter’ the Kingdom. The implication of this statement is consistent throughout the scriptures. The word that is most frequently translated tribulation is the Greek word “thlipsis.” It occurs frequently in the Bible and is variously translated, testing, trial, tribulation. It usually refers to a time or condition of trial that becomes a test for God’s people to reveal how they will act and respond under such adverse circumstances. It also refers to times of tribulation that serve to refine and purify God’s people as they are pushed to seek Him more diligently and more fervently because of the difficult times in which they find themselves.

We Christians should not imagine that we will escape the effects of this shaking. As God shakes the world, its institutions, politics, and the economy, millions of lives will be affected, including those of many Christians. The Church itself will experience many severe shakings too. It will seem as though everything in life is being shaken and tested. Our Christian institutions will be turned upside down. Our faith in God will be tried and tested. Our perception of the Church will be tested. Our belief system, the doctrines we hold so dear, everything will be subjected to trial and testing. God is seeking to show us what is really in our hearts. In the midst of this great upheaval the true Kingdom company will be birthed. Perception and attitude towards Israel will be the corner stone of this great body that will encompass both Jews and Gentiles. Mutually shared resistance to the nations that seek Israel’s destruction will produce a spiritual army that will manifest the characteristics of the One New Man of which the apostle Paul spoke.

Ephesians 2:15-16

¹⁵ *having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,*
¹⁶ *and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. NKJV*

JEHOVAH GOD IS OUR LEADER

Deuteronomy 8:2 *And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. NKJV*

God would like His people to enter the Kingdom in the easy way. “Fear not,” He says, “it is the Father’s good pleasure to ‘give’ you the Kingdom” (Luke 12:32). But the perversity of human nature usually refuses the opportunity to come the easy way and chooses instead to come the hard way, entering the Kingdom through much tribulation.

God wants to make the Kingdom a gift to His people. He wishes for them to receive it simply and easily by surrendering completely to His Will. Unfortunately we often make it difficult for Him to do so. I have often observed that we can come into the purposes of God in either of two ways:

Firstly, God seeks to bring us in the easy way. He seeks to DRAW us into His purpose. But if we will not allow Him to draw us into His plans, then He will allow circumstances to develop, that will DRIVE us into them. This is so often the case that He says, “You will enter the Kingdom through times of great tribulation and testing” (Acts 14:22). This is true of us individually and it is true of the Church collectively. This principle also pertains to the nations, that will ultimately come under His rule (Revelation 11:15). They elect to come the hard way.

THE BATTLE OF THE KINGDOMS

In Revelation 11:15 we read a very exciting statement, great voices in heaven saying, “The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.”

In contrast to this, in Rev.13:7 is a chilling statement concerning Anti Christ, “and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues, and nations.”

Throughout the book of Revelation we witness the two greatest spiritual forces in the universe battling for control of the nations. On one hand, Satan gives power and authority to the Anti Christ, that he might rule the world. On the other hand the statement of God’s eternal purpose is again declared, that all the earthly kingdoms are ultimately to become the Kingdoms of the Lord. These two great opposing forces are confronting each other today. The demonic forces of Satan are battling against the Army of the Lord.

Happily the outcome is already known. John saw it prophetically and wrote, “These, (the earthly rulers) have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings, and they that are with Him are called, and chosen and faithful” (Revelation 17:13,14).

We are witnesses of this great battle today. The struggle for power, in evidence throughout the earth, is really the result of a gigantic battle that is being fought in the heavenly realms. We are witnessing the effects of that battle here on earth. The real conflict today is not Communism versus Capitalism. It is not Black versus White. It is not ultimately political, social, economic or religious. Unregenerate man is merely a pawn or puppet in the hands of a greater, diabolical power. The wicked principalities that occupy strongholds in the heavens are waging their fiercest battle in order to delay the manifestation of God’s righteous rule over the earth. A tremendous battle is being waged in the heavenly realms and is having fearful repercussions here on planet earth.

WHAT ABOUT IRAQ?

An event has recently occurred which will have a profound effect on future world events particularly as they relate to the destiny of millions of Muslim people. I refer to the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. led coalition. This attack may have been originally motivated by the determination to destroy the weapons of mass destruction that were being amassed by Saddam Hussein. When those weapons could not be found because they had been stealthily removed to Syria, then the purpose of the attack was modified to the establishment of a democracy but this aim will never be achieved. After the allied coalition is forced to retire from Iraq the nation will revert to being a more dangerous centre for international terrorism than ever before. A militant Iran will assume a proxy control over Iraq and subjugate it to its own purposes. Prophetically, Babylon will play a major role in a determined effort to annihilate the Jewish presence in Israel. Ultimately it will require God Himself to defeat the efforts of Iraq, Iran, Syria and Russia. Modern Iraq (biblical Babylon) has a far greater bearing on future world events than any nation has yet realized. It is also a far more significant nation than most Christians have yet realized perhaps because in the Bible it is not known as "Iraq." It is known as Mesopotamia or Babylonia.

Israel is the nation most frequently mentioned in the Bible. But do you know which nation is second? It is Iraq! However, that is not the name that is used in the Bible. The names used in the Bible are Babylon, Land of Shinar, and Mesopotamia. The word Mesopotamia means between the two rivers, more exactly between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The name Iraq means country with deep roots. Indeed Iraq is a country with deep roots and is a very significant country in the Bible.

It is certainly clear from the number of times that Iraq is mentioned in scripture that Iraq is extremely significant from a biblical perspective. For many centuries it has been a cauldron of mischief and a thorn in the side of God's people Israel. In recent years, Saddam Hussein rose to power and sought to perpetuate the evil of Babylon. An evil and deranged psychopath, he imagined himself to be a modern Nebuchadnezzar. In his pathological desire to emulate his alter ego, he determined to unite the Arab world, attack Israel and annihilate the nation, exterminating its Jewish citizens and restoring a Muslim governance to the land. Obviously God has other plans for Israel this special land which He calls "My land."

Many centuries ago, God "stirred the spirit" of a deliverer named Cyrus in a plan to bring relief to His people Israel.

***Ezra 1:1** Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing.*

I believe that events in Iraq and Iran in the near future will radically affect millions of Muslim people. Many of these people are already greatly saddened and disillusioned by horrific events of terrorism performed in the name of Islam. They are particularly distressed by the sight of Muslim killing Muslim. Further such events in the near future in Iraq and other nations will have the effect of polarizing Muslim people between the militant terrorist oriented minority and the great masses of Muslims who long for a more peaceful future. This giant swing will push millions of Muslims into a

new and deeper search for spiritual truth and reality and their search will lead them to consider Jesus in an entirely new light. I have personally met many sincere Muslims who just need a slight nudge in their perception and theology of Jesus and they will see Him for who He truly is - the Son of the living God and the Messiah of mankind. This will precipitate a massive spiritual harvest amongst Muslims who will then acknowledge that Jehovah is the one true and living God and that Yeshua Ha Mashiach is His Son.

JEHOVAH IS THE GOD OF HISTORY

Human history has its origins in God, the eternal creator. It will also find its climax in Him. Just as Genesis tells the story of humanity's beginning, the book of Revelation tells the story of its earthly climax. While much of man's history is a tale of rebellion against Him, and the tragic consequences thereof, its climax under the sovereign rule of Messiah Jesus will herald a bright new eternity.

HE IS THE GOD OF COVENANT

One of the numerous things that God has promised is that He will never renege upon any of His covenants. Whatever He has promised in covenant bond, He will surely honor and bring to pass. This is true whether positively for obedience or negatively for disobedience.

Deuteronomy 7:9-11

⁹ *Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.*

¹⁰ *But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him.*

¹¹ *Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today (NIV).*

HE IS THE GOD OF MERCY Read Psalm 89:1-5. Psalm 85:10 -12

Psalms 89:1-5

¹ *I will sing of the tender mercies of the LORD forever! Young and old will hear of your faithfulness.*

² *Your unfailing love will last forever. Your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens.*

³ *The LORD said, "I have made a solemn agreement with David, my chosen servant.*

I have sworn this oath to him:

⁴ *"I will establish your descendants as kings forever; they will sit on your throne from now until eternity."*

⁵ *All heaven will praise your miracles, LORD; myriads of angels will praise you for your faithfulness. NLT*

Psalm 85:10-12

¹⁰ *Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.*

¹¹ *Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.*

¹² *The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest (NIV).*

HE IS THE GOD OF BLESSING

Blessing is the act of declaring and bestowing favor and goodness upon others. The blessing is not only the good effect of words. It has the inherent power to bring it to pass. One of the many persons that God promised to bless is Abraham (Genesis 12:3). The results of this promise have been witnessed throughout human history, particularly in respect of Israel and the church of Jesus Christ. However, I believe that the greatest manifestation of God's blessing upon Abraham is yet to be seen. I trust that it will be evidenced in the manner in which his seed, through both Isaac and Ishmael, will encounter and experience the promised blessings of Jehovah.

HE IS THE GOD OF UNIVERSAL MISSION

In Whom ALL Families of Earth Will Be Blessed. God's closest ties and commitments relate to his own seed and offspring, but through them He has also promised to bless all ethnos, i.e. every people group on earth. Mankind is soon to see the amazing results of this promise. It will not be accomplished solely through missionary type endeavors. God will reap a gigantic harvest of human souls through the cataclysmic days that will characterize the End Times.

***Psalms 2:8** Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession. NLT*

Genesis 18:18-19

¹⁸ *"For Abraham will become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him.*

¹⁹ *I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD and do what is right and just. Then I will do for him all that I have promised." NLT*

Genesis 26:4-5

⁴ *I will cause your descendants to become as numerous as the stars, and I will give them all these lands. And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed.*

⁵ *I will do this because Abraham listened to me and obeyed all my requirements, commands, regulations, and laws." NLT*

***Psalms 22:28** For the LORD is king! He rules all the nations. NLT*

As the prophecies of Revelation unfold, Jehovah God will reap a harvest larger and more spectacular than anyone has previously envisaged. This harvest will certainly include the sons of Ishmael. They will turn their submission towards Yahweh and Isa. The conduit that will convey this tremendous blessing will be The Seed Of Abraham.

HOW MAY THIS CONFLICT BE RESOLVED?

At the time of writing it appears evident that there is still much conflict ahead regarding the possession of Israel and Jerusalem. This seems to be confirmed by many prophetic scriptures. Unfortunately it would seem that numerous battles will be fought and many lives forfeited before the issue is finally resolved. However, there is also clear intimation that prayer can hasten the day

of eventual deliverance. Jesus commissioned His followers to pray, “Your Kingdom Come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). If such a prayer, prayed with genuine faith, cannot influence the time when this will happen, then the prayer is a waste of time.

One of the ways to hasten the earthly enactment of God’s Will is to pray and work towards the acknowledgement of Jehovah’s sovereign Will by the descendants of Ishmael.

The second requirement will be for children of Ishmael to understand that Jehovah has prepared a specific destiny for them too. When they can be helped to recognize the true pattern of Jehovah’s purpose, to bless the seed of both Isaac and Ishmael, peace will be within sight. There are numerous parallels between Abraham and Jesus. Perhaps the most poignant one relates to what was accomplished through their deaths. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus broke down the wall of hostility that separated Jew and Gentile. He opened the way for Jew and Gentile to live in peace and harmony. In a similar manner, at the burial of Abraham their mutual father, Isaac and Ishmael came together. Nothing is said in scripture about how this reconciliation was accomplished but the fact is that, finally, they stood side by side in mutual respect for their father. They had obviously reached a mutual understanding of each one’s place in the family tree of Abraham. After the burial, each returned to their own places but there is no further intimation of continuing hostility between them. Could it possibly be that out of mutual respect for Abraham the contemporary warring factions might come together once again? Or might it be that through the death of another mutual relative, Jesus the Jew, the warring sons of Abraham might discover a peaceful relationship and mutual respect? The last book in the Bible tells the final story of God’s glorious universal redemptive plan. In Revelation 21, John sees the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven to the earth. This vision pictures the Kingdom of God coming to earth. It is highly significant that the foundations and gates of the city bear testimony to all the tribes of Israel and also the twelve apostles of Christ.

Revelation 21:12-15

¹² Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

¹³ three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

¹⁴ Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

¹⁵ And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.
NKJV

In these verses we see the unity and synergy of Israel and the Church in the finale of the ages. They constitute the ONE NEW MAN that Paul had predicted (Ephesians 2:14-18) who is neither Jew nor Gentile but a redeemed company of both. This redeemed community will rule with Christ over all the nations that remain on earth after the cataclysmic events that accompanied the great final battles of human history.

CHAPTER FIVE

What Can Christians Do?

Most Churches and their members need to repent of wrong attitudes of the church towards both Jews and Muslims. It is particularly sad that so many churches and Christians have such a negative attitude towards Israel. One of the names by which the God of the Bible has designated Himself is “The Holy One of Israel.” As I mentioned previously, this name not only closely relates Jehovah to the people of Israel, it actually declares that God’s holiness (truth, integrity and righteousness) is in this instance, predicated upon His faithfulness to Israel. If God does not fulfil every promise He has made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then His character, integrity and holiness are seriously flawed. It is absolutely imperative that every Christian should recognize and acknowledge God’s determination to fulfil every promise He has made, particularly to those who are of Abraham’s seed. Every Christian, church and preacher must realize that God has a unique relationship with ALL who are descendants of Abraham. The eternal God has a specific plan and purpose for these people and for the land which is their traditional homeland. Bible prophecies concerning the End Times reveal this fact. In order for us to align ourselves with God’s declared purposes, we must seek to share His heart and mind towards these people.

As we study the signs which Jesus predicted as indicators of the end of this age and the intervention of His presence again upon the earth, it becomes increasingly evident that we are now entering that period preceding His return. We are witnessing in an ever increasing manner the shaking of the heavens and earth. I believe God will use these calamities to draw multitudes to Himself, but we should be aware they will probably grow in severity.

It is also becoming increasingly evident that there is indeed a “war in heaven” (Revelation 12:7). The powers that rule the universe are truly being shaken as God predicted.

Hebrews 12:27-29

²⁷ *This {expression} “Yet once more,” denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

²⁸ *Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;*

²⁹ *for our God is a consuming fire (NAU).*

The shaking of these powers denotes the “removing” of their powers of influence and rule. In other words, every demonic stronghold that hinders the emergence of the kingdom of God on earth is ultimately going to be confronted by the power and authority of God!

The spiritual powers ruling Islam are going to be brought down. There will be unexpected but significant breakthroughs, and millions of Muslims will become open and receptive to the gospel. The result will be that hundreds of millions of Muslims will come to find Christ as their Saviour and Lord. If we commit ourselves to faithfully pray and intercede, particularly for all who are of the seed of Abraham, we will see tremendous changes unfold before our eyes.

Finally, let us remember that, even while things on earth and in heaven are wobbling, we have received “a kingdom which cannot be shaken.” God has an unshakable kingdom to which He calls us. This kingdom is destined to triumph over every adversary and every obstacle as the true King of the universe is enthroned in Jerusalem.

Christians need to change their attitude towards Jewish people because they are direct descendants of Abraham and are under the covenant blessings that accrue through that relationship. They are also the forefathers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Anti Semitism in respect of hatred towards Jewish people is not racial, cultural or political. It is, at its roots, spiritual. Only God, through a revelation of Himself, can cure the disease of anti Semitism.

We must carefully and prayerfully consider the implications of the fact that Ishmael’s descendants are of the seed of Abraham and that Jehovah God has a unique and special plan for their destiny. We need to repent of bitterness and recrimination against Muslim people, who are also descendants of Abraham. We must continually remind ourselves that God SO loves the whole world that He gave His only begotten Son for their salvation. In the same manner that we are to “love the sinner but not their sin”, we are also to love the Muslims but not Islam. We all need to begin praying positively for all these people, descendants of Abraham who is also our own spiritual father. We need to pray for them, not as though they were our enemies, but rather members of our own ancestry. We should adopt a positive faith attitude towards the resolution of the acrimony and bitterness that so often pertains towards both Jews and Muslims. Finally, we should believe for a tremendous spiritual harvest and ingathering that will sweep millions of these people into the Kingdom of God.

Two factors that I believe will greatly affect the harvest of Muslim people will be:

1. The evidence through thousands of testimonies that Jesus Christ Himself is currently evangelizing amongst Muslim communities. Thousands of former Muslims are testifying to having met with Jesus through supernatural dreams, visions and spiritual encounters.

2. The fact is that so many Muslims are becoming embarrassed and ashamed of the reign of terrorism that is being waged today by so many in the name of Islam. They are beginning to question the ethics and beliefs of their faith and to question their authenticity. Pray that as they search for truth they will discover that Isa the Prophet is truly the Son of God and the Saviour of ALL who believe. Paul said, concerning the Jews, that we Christians should provoke them to jealousy. We also need to begin living and behaving in such a manner that we will make Muslims jealous and desirous of forsaking their own religion and embracing true salvation through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Jehovah Sabaoth (The Lord of heaven’s armies) will miraculously intervene to defend and save His people and their land, inflicting a devastating defeat on her attackers. At the close of the battle, when Israel turns aside to discover who or what turned the tide and gave them this amazing victory, they will “look upon Him whom they pierced” (Zechariah 12:10). Messiah will then reveal His identity to them. The appearance of Messiah at this time will not be the Second Coming or the Rapture but a personal visitation of the Messiah to His brethren just as Joseph unveiled His identity to his brethren (Genesis 45:1-5).

Genesis 45:1-5

1 Joseph could stand it no longer. "Out, all of you!" he cried out to his attendants. He wanted to be alone with his brothers when he told them who he was.

2 Then he broke down and wept aloud. His sobs could be heard throughout the palace, and the news was quickly carried to Pharaoh's palace.

3 "I am Joseph!" he said to his brothers. "Is my father still alive?" But his brothers were speechless! They were stunned to realize that Joseph was standing there in front of them.

4 "Come over here," he said. So they came closer. And he said again, "I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold into Egypt.

5 But don't be angry with yourselves that you did this to me, for God did it. He sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. NLT

The ultimate recognition of Messiah and the subsequent national mourning for Him will cause the Israeli people to finally receive Him as their national deliverer and promised Messiah. Their national blindness will be healed and their subsequent transformation will be "as life from the dead." (Romans 11:15)

During the time period following this appearance, the nations on earth will live in a new sense of reverential fear and awe towards Jehovah. The false gods of the earth will be humbled, humiliated and diminished and millions of their former devotees will come to a saving knowledge of Jehovah and His Messiah. The Church, augmented by a great number of Messianic Jews will reap a tremendous spiritual harvest throughout the world. A massive number of Gentiles, including huge numbers of Muslims will heed the Gospel of the Kingdom proclamation and be brought into the Kingdom. Beyond this date, at some time in the future God will draw the rebellious army of Ezekiel 38-39 towards their devastating destruction.

According to reliable sources, more Muslims and Jews are turning to God now than has been the case in all of Church history. Many are receiving supernatural dreams and visions with appearances of Jesus and or angels. The recipients are opening their hearts to the overflowing love, compassion and patience of God and entering into a personal relationship with Him. An End Time harvest has begun and it will continue gathering momentum until literally millions of former Muslims and Rabbinic Jews are brought into a personal relationship with the Messiah. Tensions are constantly mounting in the Middle East and throughout the Islamic world and many precious Muslim people are reaching out to Yahweh.

But does the Bible tell of a day when Muslims will turn to Christ? Certainly there are a number of passages such as Joel 2:28-32, that speak of the Holy Spirit falling on all flesh, and this would apply to Muslims. However, there appears to be one verse that specifically addresses Muslim conversion and it's found in the book of Amos.

"In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David and wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old;

That they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations that are called by my name,' declares the Lord who does this." (Amos 9:11, 12 NASV)

When God promised Abraham many nations this was partly fulfilled through Ishmael and Esau. Even the Moabites could be included in this group since they are descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew (Genesis 19:37).

Today, many of the people who make up the nations surrounding Israel are descendants of the Moabites, Edomites and Ishmaelites. The Arabs, as did Mohammad, claim to be the natural descendants of Ishmael. It wasn't until centuries later -- after the birth of Mohammad 571 AD -- did these groups embrace the Muslim faith. Nevertheless, these people groups are rooted in the Abrahamic covenant and it appears God is calling forth a remnant and bringing them into the covenant of the Messiah. Fulfilling a promise he made to them centuries earlier.

Our God passionately loves the Muslim people. Because He so passionately loves them, we also ought to love them with a similar love. We must begin to pray passionately for Muslim people and see what doors of opportunity God will open for us to partner with Him in some way to reap a great harvest of Muslims into the Kingdom of God. Although there are various scriptures that would seem to intimate that a vast number of Muslims will enter the Kingdom of God in the Last Days, I cannot substantiate this definitely will happen. However, in my heart I fully believe that this will come to pass. However, we Christians need to genuinely live out our Faith in Jesus. In the past century Muslims have grown from being 12% of the world's population to 21%. Islam is growing at a rate of 1.81% as compared to Christianity with a 1.23% rate. Thirty-three percent of the world population is Christian. In some parts of the world significantly large groups of Muslims are turning to Christ. We can all play our part in bringing this to pass. Several things have played their part in bringing many Muslims to faith in Christ.

Why Many Muslims Convert to Christ

1. **The lifestyle of Christians** – the love exhibited by Christians toward non-Christians and their treatment of women.
2. **The power of God in answered prayers and healing** – the supernatural power of God reported in the lives of Muslims converted to Christians.
3. **Dissatisfaction with the type of Islam they had experienced**- Example is that the Qur'an emphasizes God's punishment over his love.
4. **The spiritual truth in the Bible** – the truth of God found in scripture became compelling for them and a key to their understanding of God's true character.
5. **Biblical teachings about the love of God**- In the Qur'an, God's love is conditional. God's love for all people is eye opening for Muslims. The next step for many Muslims was to become part of a fellowship of loving Christians.

<http://royalfarris.wordpress.com/2008/02/07/why-muslims-convert-to-christ/>

FAIR USE NOTICE: This article may contain some material the use of which has not been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available in an effort to advance the understanding of environmental, political, human rights, social justice and democracy issues. We believe this constitutes a "fair use" of any copyrighted material in section 107 of the Copyright Law.

