

The Prophetic Future of the Middle East

*How The Descendants Of Abraham Will
Affect The Future Of The World*

Gerald Rowlands

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For the past 30 years, my wife Elizabeth and I have lived a rather nomadic lifestyle travelling all over the emerging world and teaching the Bible in more than sixty nations mostly whilst living in Australia, Africa, SE Asia, and spending time in Israel and the Middle East. It is over much of this time, when living out of a briefcase, that I have imbibed knowledge and information from many different sources. As a result of this itinerant role I have not kept a meticulous record of all the sources I have researched and learned from. However, I am truly grateful to everyone who has added to my knowledge and made it possible for me to write this book. I would like to dedicate this book to all the people from whom I have gleaned “handfuls on purpose.” (Ruth 2:8-10) I sincerely trust it will accomplish its sole purpose which is to awaken and inform a church that is largely ignorant of what the prophetic future holds for us.

Gerald Rowlands

The world is currently faced with several possible disasters including global warming, economic collapse and new deadly diseases. However the greatest and most imminent threat is in the Middle East in a war that is about to be unleashed upon Israel which will have the potential to seriously devastate the whole world. This war will undermine the social, political, economic and religious aspects of world society. It is a war that will be conducted by fanatical Islamic forces in their determined ultimate purpose to assume total world domination. Although Islam presents itself publicly as a religion of peace it is actually a religious, political ideology with ambitions to transform the world into an international enclave of Islam. The real power behind this plan is actually a spiritual one and the only power that can withstand and defeat it is also a spiritual power. No political humanistic power can defeat the determined objective of Islam. Only the authority of Jehovah the true God, can achieve victory over the principality of Allah.

Zechariah predicted this war some 2,500 years ago. He also predicted that in its aftermath, the long awaited Jewish Messiah would appear again to Israel. This miraculous appearance will totally transform Israel and subsequently introduce a new era of peace and prosperity for Israel. God’s glorious light will arise over Jerusalem and all the nations will recognize that God’s presence is there. This horrendous clash of ideologies is inevitable yet many people are too fearful to acknowledge this. Political correctness dictates that we should not even speak of such things lest we offend someone. However, it would be absolute foolishness to capitulate to such ideas and leave ourselves totally unprepared for events that will surely happen and will forever change the world in which we live.

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The Threat of Annihilation

At this critical moment in world history what is the most likely major event to happen that will powerfully impact and devastate our world forever? Many will undoubtedly say that it is dramatic global warming. Huge and costly international conferences are being held to urgently discuss this apparent challenge. Other voices will cite the feasible possibility of an international economic collapse. However, the most dangerous possibility is one that the world is largely ignoring. I refer to threats that are being made by Iran regarding an attack to be launched against Israel with the purpose of achieving the complete annihilation of the Jewish State. Such a war while initially aimed at Israel, will definitely affect the whole world in such a devastating manner as is capable of disrupting and destroying civilization as we know it. For the first time in human history mankind has finally obtained the weapons of mass destruction that are capable of annihilating the human race. Unfortunately such weapons are in the hands of rogue nations that will not hesitate to use them. The particular issue that could unleash and initiate such devastation would be a war over the ownership of the land area of Israel. The situation in the Middle East will change extraordinarily following the war forecast in Zechariah 12:10.

The world may presently be standing at the commencement of an apocalyptic event that will introduce a dramatic new era for mankind. Although such an event was predicted some 2,500 years ago by the prophet Zechariah, the people of the book, (Jews and Christians) are strangely silent about the amazing imminent prospect. It is time right now to sound a powerful alarm that will awaken the Church, Israel and the whole world to the implications of this amazing, supernatural prophetic event. We urgently need to know what is about to transpire and to prepare ourselves for this powerful intervention when God dissects time and manifests His real presence in a manner that will even supersede the Exodus intervention.

There is currently much talk about “**Roadmaps To Peace In The Middle East.**” This is occasioned largely by the various political cries to create an independent Palestinian State in the territory that was ceded to Israel by the UN in 1948. However, the plan behind this move is not merely to create a Palestinian State. The real motive behind the scenes is to completely annihilate the Jewish State and create in its place a Muslim State. Even this is merely the first stage of a much larger plan to eventually eliminate the governance of Western nations and replace this with international Islamic rule complete with Shariah religious law.

An underlying plan that hides behind the cry for Palestinian independence is a deeply entrenched historic strategy to re establish Islamic rule and government over a territory that was once for several hundred years an Islamic State. The fact that Israel/Palestine is no longer governed by Islamic rule is seen as blasphemy against

Allah and Islam which demands immediate reversal. The fact that the Dome Of The Rock physically towers above all Judaic and Christians symbols in the Holy City does not satisfy the religious and political requirements of Islam. In Muslim eyes, Mohammed has superseded both Moses and Jesus, relegating both faiths to history, and exalting Islam to a position of world supremacy. In order for this supremacy to be realized it is not only necessary to conquer the Jewish State but also to eradicate all Jews and Christians who will not convert to Islam. Fundamentalist Muslim forces not only have the urgent desire and will to implement their strategy, they believe they will soon have all the necessary weaponry to accomplish their fanatical aims.

It is becoming increasingly obvious to all interested parties that confidence has almost reached the point where such nations as Iran, supported morally, financially and militarily by numerous other nations, believe that potential success is truly attainable and imminent. The decisive moment when success may be achieved appears to have been almost reached. A fierce attack in the imminent future now appears inevitable. However, according to the God of Israel as pronounced by numerous of His prophets, such an attack will utterly fail and instead of achieving victory, the forces and moral fiber of Islam will be shattered. God will inflict a most remarkable supernatural victory upon Israel's enemies, after which the Messiah, who appears as the Angel of the LORD and Commander of Heaven's Armies, will reveal His true identity to the whole nation of Israel. Potential annihilation will turn to powerful salvation not only for Israel but ultimately people of all nations on earth.

Whilst we are not sure of the exact time when this horrific circumstance will occur, the world stage is already set for what appears to be the earliest phase of such a catastrophe. The fearsome events that will ultimately engulf and involve the whole world will commence with a localized war in the Middle East that will initially be focused upon Israel. Islamic prophecy predicts an appearance of the Mahdi (the Islamic "Messiah") into a world scenario of absolute chaos, confusion and destruction. There are already numerous powerful terrorist groups around the world that are capable of eventually creating such conditions. Although the primary target of their violence will be Israel and particularly Jerusalem, their ultimate ambition will be to destroy the infrastructure of the whole non Islamic world. This would be followed by a capitulation of the Western world and a complete conquest and domination by the forces of Islam.

There are presently many potential threats to the future existence of humanity including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, global warming, natural disasters such as storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, new diseases and devastating plagues etc. However, the greatest current threat to world peace and stability is the age old feud between the descendants of Ishmael and those of Isaac (The Islamic world versus the Western world). This dispute that has continued relentlessly from the beginning of human history has finally flared into a torch that through the use of nuclear weapons could ignite an apocalyptic fire capable of destroying the human race. Few people in the West understand that the agenda of Islam, which is the total domination of humanity, has any possibility of achieving its aims. But the program to accomplish that aim, which involves the elimination of all

non-Muslims, and has already been launched internationally, is in itself capable of bringing an end to the world as we now know it. Islamic theology predicts a period of unprecedented chaos and confusion throughout the world and thousands of Muslims are fanatically dedicated to creating such conditions. The Bible predicts that a war to be launched upon Israel in the last days will be like a detonator that could precipitate an explosion that would devastate all humanity. There is only one thing that can avert such disaster and that is a direct overt intervention by Jehovah God the creator of the universe.

The sole solution that will defuse the fierce dispute and produce an era of peace free from the threat of annihilation, lies in a reconciliation between the quarrelling cousins, but how can this be brought about? Only one person can possibly produce such reconciliation and He is aptly named the "Prince of Peace" but when is He likely to appear? His dramatic appearance may happen sooner and be in a manner that is largely unanticipated. His appearance, that was predicted some 2,500 years ago, is finally about to happen. But even the most avid students of Bible prophecy have for the most part failed to recognize the frightening nature and imminence of this world transforming event and its ultimate consequence.

Despite the fact that many prophetic signs accurately predicted thousands of years ago in the Bible are being ominously fulfilled today before our very eyes, the church for the most part is strangely silent regarding End Time events and the ultimate return of Christ. In most churches the subject is rarely spoken of and many Christians know relatively little about this vitally important subject. The same is true regarding the predicted manifestation of the Kingdom of God. It too is a subject rarely mentioned in most churches of our day. Yet there are hundreds of biblical references that speak of the coming King and His worldwide Kingdom on earth.

The most dangerous threat to our world today will be the finale of the age long feud between the various Sons of Abraham. Ironically, relatively few people in our modern world are even aware of the implications of this long standing dispute. Since the Bible contains specific details of the origin of this quarrel, is it not feasible that it may also contain a summary of its ultimate conclusion? We urgently need to understand the reason for this terrifying animosity and how it will reach its ultimate conclusion. The looming violent confrontation between Islam and Israel will precipitate a catastrophe of global proportion. (Matthew 24:22. Luke 13:20)

Dutch legislator Geert Wilders, producer of *Fitna*, a short documentary film exposing the *Koran's* incitement to violence, recently said "Israel is our first line of defense [but] the war against Israel...is actually a war against the West. It is *jihad*. Israel is simply receiving the blows meant for all of us. If there would have been no Israel, Islamic imperialism would have found other venues to release its energy and its desire for conquest. Thanks to Israeli parents who send their children to the army and lay awake at night, parents in Europe and America can sleep well and dream, unaware of the dangers looming." He said, "Let no one fool you about Islam being a religion. Yes, it has a god...but in its essence Islam is a political ideology. If you want to compare Islam to anything, compare it to communism or national socialism, these are all totalitarian ideologies. Now you know why Churchill called Islam 'the

most retrograde force in the world' and why he compared *Mein Kampf* to the *Koran*." (Arutz Sheva. Israel National News 7, 28 Sept. 2008)

Can anyone possibly propose an appropriate solution to this grave dilemma that threatens to annihilate humanity unless a resolution is found? The prospect of a massive world war involving nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction threatens not only Israel but the whole of mankind. A solution to this problem is beyond the reach and grasp of the United Nations Organization, the European Community or any other human institution. God alone knows the strategy that will ultimately deliver mankind from a universal holocaust that would exceed our most fearful expectations.

Could the reconciliation of Isaac and Ishmael at the close of their father Abraham's life (Genesis 24: 7-10) be a prophetic picture of what will ultimately transpire in the Last Days of this Age? Although we are not told in specific detail in the Bible, it would seem clear that Ishmael may have become aware of the impending death of his father Abraham and determined to make the long journey back to Hebron to see his aged and infirm father. It also seems clear that in meeting again with Isaac after so many years apart lived in hatred and separation, the two sons reached a mutual understanding and agreement together regarding their standing and placement as the sons and heirs of Abraham. This is evidenced by the fact that Isaac and Ishmael stood side by side in evident agreement at the burial of their mutual father (Genesis 25:3, 4). Together they buried their father at the cave of Macphelah and significantly Isaac then went to live at Beer Lahai Roi, the well that Hagar, Ishmael's mother had named (Genesis 16:14).

Genesis 25:8 - 11

⁸ *And Abraham expired and died in a good old age, aged and satisfied, and was gathered to his people.*

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

¹⁰ *the field which Abraham bought from the sons of Heth. Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried there.*

¹¹ *And it happened after the death of Abraham, God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac lived by The Well of the Living One, My Beholder.*

Abraham achieved through his death what he could never achieve in his lifetime, the reconciliation of his two sons. Could it not happen at the end of the age, that through the death of another mutual relative, - Jesus the Son of God and Saviour of the world, the warring sons of Abraham might discover a peaceful relationship and mutual respect? Will we witness an intentional action on the part of Ishmael's descendants to form a viable and peaceable relationship with Isaac's descendants that will end the bitter feud that has for millennia separated the offspring of Abraham? Might this then produce the unity which God has intended from the beginning of time? At this prophetic moment in time the Church of Jesus Christ faces two major challenges. The first challenge is to "provoke" Israel to jealousy so that they will recognize and accept their Messiah (Romans 11:11,14). This defining moment will occur as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 12:10.

Zechariah 12:10

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn" (English Standard Version).

Following this amazing victory achieved through the direct and powerful intervention of the Angel of the LORD, (The Lord of Heaven's armies) the Messiah will introduce Himself to the population of Israel. This great revelation will initiate the emergence of the Messianic company that will be neither Jew nor Gentile but a glorious unity of both. (Ephesians 2:14, 15, Revelation 7:4 - 10, 13-15)

The second challenge concerns the Islamic World. There are approximately 1.5 billion people on earth today who claim to be Muslims and follow the teachings of Mohammed and the Koran. This number is increasing daily and with that numerical increase comes a dramatic growth in influence. This brief teaching endeavors to explore the biblical position concerning the peoples who are called in the Bible "The Sons of Abraham" and what their role will be in the imminent purposes of God.

I believe there are many signs in the earth today that indicate that the return of the Messiah is not too far distant. One of the clearest of these is the tumult that is raging in respect of Jerusalem and Israel. The predicted battle for this territory is already enjoined. The Arab nations, led by the Palestinians supported by Iran, are absolutely determined to reclaim Israel and Jerusalem for Islam. For them the die is cast. They will not settle for anything less. Their bloody mindedness regarding terrorism, suicide bombers and weapons of mass destruction clearly indicates their position. They will stop at nothing to attain their objectives. They will sacrifice anything and anyone in order to defeat the Jewish and Christian claims upon the Holy Land.

If a church today has any emphasis on Bible prophecy, it is almost certain to hold a pre-tribulation rapture view in which the Church is conveniently spirited away to heaven whilst the people of Israel experience and suffer the most horrific period of their whole history. However, the eventual and final biblical scenario is not one that evacuates people from earth to heaven but one that brings people from heaven to earth.

Revelation 21:2-3

² *Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

³ *And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." NKJV*

The Kingdom of God and the reign of Messiah will be situated on this earth. Heaven's government will be established on earth even as it is in heaven. All nations that remain on earth following the chaos and confusion that will soon permeate the whole world, will acknowledge the supreme authority of Jehovah God. The renewed

city of Jerusalem will become the dwelling place and headquarters of the King of Kings and Lord of lords.

Sounding The Alarm

It is time for the universal Church of Jesus Christ, and all the nations on earth to wake up and realize that we are literally living on the very edge of predicted apocalyptic events. The threats of Islam are not empty and meaningless. Islam is a real, persistent and apparently irresistible force and the promises of Jehovah constitute an immovable object. The inevitable dramatic collision of these two powers looms large on the world horizon. The obvious determination and strategy of Israel's enemies is such that there may be no man-made defense system that can adequately defend her against their attack. Israel currently faces potential destruction. It will require a supernatural intervention to prevent total annihilation and desolation. This will amount to an unprecedented clash of unimaginable proportions that will drastically affect all nations. The world is presently held to ransom by messianic clerics who cannot be trusted to act logically and rationally in a dangerous position of mutually assured destruction. If Jehovah does not defend and deliver Israel from her sworn enemies, His self acclaimed titles of The Holy One of Israel and Yaweh Sabaoth - The Lord Of Heaven's Armies, will be rendered void and meaningless. The many assurances that God has given concerning the protection of Israel, if not directly fulfilled would render His promises false and unreliable.

Isaiah 44:21-23

²¹ *"Pay attention, O Israel, for you are my servant. I, the LORD, (Jehovah) made you, and I will not forget to help you.*

²² *I have swept away your sins like the morning mists. I have scattered your offenses like the clouds. Oh, return to me, for I have paid the price to set you free."*

²³ *Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done this wondrous thing. Shout, O earth! Break forth into song, O mountains and forests and every tree! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob and is glorified in Israel." NLT*

The attack upon Israel by all her Muslim neighbors that will climax the long standing animosity which has prevailed for centuries, will not only affect Israel and the Middle East. It will powerfully and devastatingly impact the whole world. Life as we presently know and experience it will be dramatically changed forever. Powerful spiritual forces will be unleashed that will destabilize life throughout the world. There will be an End Time scenario that will completely change the economic, political and social climate in a way that will never be reversed. Israel and Jerusalem will become a catalyst that will devastatingly divide the nations.

World opinion will soon dramatically polarize between those who stand with Israel and those who oppose her. The Church worldwide may become split right down the

centre through the catalyst of decision regarding the future of the people and the land that Jehovah calls “Mine.”

I would love to blow the loudest trumpet blast possible to awaken a Church that is for the most part in a deep slumber, utterly oblivious to the significance of events that are presently happening around the world and particularly in the Middle East. Even though many prophetic signs concerning the future are presently being fulfilled before our very eyes, it is strangely obvious that most preachers and churches are remaining very quiet about anything even remotely connected to End Times and the Second Coming of Christ. With regard to Bible prophecy the majority of church leaders are like ostriches with their heads in the sand while their congregations remain in a state of woeful End Time ignorance. However, this state of affairs will soon come to an end when an imminent war in the Middle East breaks out and shatters our deep slumber. The whole world will then change dramatically never to be the same again as it rushes headlong into a confrontation with Almighty God. So called “peace treaties” and roadmaps to peace are worthless. It is futile to appeal to the integrity and good will of Israel’s enemies. These people have no ethics when it comes to dialogues and conferences. They assume that participation in such efforts is a sign of weakness and vulnerability.

It is tragic to see that for the most part only the churches and religious groups that are seen by many to be false cults are blowing a prophetic trumpet of warning concerning impending judgment. Most Evangelical and Pentecostal churches appear to be totally absorbed in self serving teachings that tickle the ears of the carnal man. Most of the preachers that do address any prophetic issues are totally absorbed with the “Rapture” and little else. If the rapture does not occur when they expect it to do so it will leave the Church decidedly off balance and unprepared for what lies ahead.

The greatest single threat to the world’s immediate future is the situation that currently exists concerning Israel’s survival. Numerous agencies have publicly threatened to annihilate Israel and to “wipe it from the face of the earth.” Does the Bible contain any answer and solution to this massive threat? What is the solution and how will this problem possibly be resolved? Since the Bible is the most authoritative historic record of the long existing problem, why should it not also contain the most reliable prediction of its future resolution?

What is in fact the greatest and potentially most explosive problem that the world faces today? Which issue among many has the greatest potential to completely disrupt world peace and to plunge the world into devastation and destruction? Is it global warming and the subsequent climate change? Is it economic mismanagement and international bankruptcy? Is it the threat of disease in some form like AIDS, an influenza virus, or polio? If we carefully consider these possibilities, all of them have the power to make us go warily into an uncertain future. However, the greatest threat must be the fact that in this enlightened, educated and supposedly sophisticated age man has discovered the capacity to destroy every vestige of life on earth through the use of various weapons of mass destruction. Furthermore we have been made aware of a widespread mentality of suicidal madness that is highly capable of using such weapons in a calculated attempt to totally disrupt the fragile peace of our world and to plunge it into the kind of chaos from which there may be

no return. In the light of such a possibility is not the most vital question before us, “How did such a frightening situation happen, and is there any possible resolution to such a frightening scenario?” Is it possible that there is a prophetic solution to this gigantic predicament and if so, where might it be found? This book proposes a solution. Can it possibly be the right one?

When confronted by a book concerning “The Sons of Abraham” the average Christian in the Western world will probably shrug their shoulders and think, “Who cares?” Adding, “Why should it concern me?” The average church in the West is for the most part severely introverted, interested only in its local church program with perhaps some relatively minor interest in some aspects of world missions. Many sincere Christians who believe themselves to be biblically knowledgeable are lamentably ignorant concerning the fact that Jehovah has strong covenantal links to the descendants of both Isaac and Ishmael. They are woefully ignorant about how the Abrahamic covenant will ultimately affect the destiny of millions of Muslim people. However, the question and the topic will soon become of major interest to the whole world and now is the strategic time to make oneself aware of just who the Seed of Abraham are and how they will affect the destiny of all nations. I sincerely trust that this book may help in some small way to dispel such ignorance.

It has often been said in many Christian circles that Israel is God’s prophetic time piece and I believe this to be true. I also believe that Jerusalem is the second’s finger on that clock indicating the prophetic time to an even more precise degree. How strange and tragic it is that the closer the hand moves towards the midnight hour, the less conscious Christians appear to be with regard to the imminence of God’s prophetic purpose. Perhaps we ought not to be surprised because Peter did predict that this would happen. Sadly this attitude exists today within the church as well as in the secular world. Peter was actually addressing believers with these remarks.

2 Peter 3:3-4

³ *First, I want to remind you that in the last days there will be scoffers who will laugh at the truth and do every evil thing they desire.*

⁴ *This will be their argument: “Jesus promised to come back, did he? Then where is he? Why, as far back as anyone can remember, everything has remained exactly the same since the world was first created” (NLT).*

Jesus also expressed a sobering thought in His reference to the days of Noah.

Luke 17:26-30

²⁶ *And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:*

²⁷ *They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*

²⁸ *Likewise as it was also in the days of Lot: They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built.*

²⁹ *but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone*

from heaven and destroyed them all.

³⁰ *Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed. NKJV*

Disregarding for a moment the immoral aspects of Noah's generation we can see that the people of Noah's day completely ignored the activity and message of Noah. Instead of heeding his warning they went on with their everyday lives as though nothing was amiss until the time when it was too late to repent and heed his warning. So too, the people of our generation, including many who profess to be Christians, ignore all the signs around them and live their lives apparently oblivious of the many prophetic warnings.

The prophet Zechariah predicted a catastrophically dramatic event in chapter 12:2-3, which now seems very likely to occur in the immediate foreseeable future,

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).*

All the nations adjacent to Israel who send their armies against Jerusalem will consciously or subconsciously support the cause of Ishmael's descendants in their attempt to restore Israel and Jerusalem to Islamic rule. The other nations who involve themselves are the Gentile nations of the world who will also align their policies against Israel in the guise of political correctness. None of them will escape unscathed. All will reap the divinely pronounced whirlwind. This event will escalate into a battle of gigantic proportions for it will bring about the personal involvement and direct intervention of the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the Holy One of Israel who will fight against and destroy all the enemies ranged against Israel.

Zechariah 12:8-9

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).*

The main purpose of this book is to sound a prophetic alarm to awaken God's people to the urgency of the hour and to rally them to the task before them.

Joel 2:1

Blow the trumpet in Jerusalem! Sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let everyone tremble in fear because the day of the LORD is upon us (NLT).

We must pray and intercede for the leaders of our churches calling upon them to align themselves with the Word of God and not to submit themselves to the spirit of political expediency. This is a time for united prayer and intercession for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). The churches and nations of the world will soon polarize into sheep and goat factions. Matthew draws our attention to this event.

Matthew 25:31-34

³¹ *But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne.*

³² *All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate them as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.*

³³ *He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.*

³⁴ *Then the King will say to those on the right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' (NLT).*

On this occasion Christ will commit the various nations to their destinies but these are already determined before He even brings them before Himself. The inroads and divisions concerning Israel are already being made in the world community and we need to ensure now for our churches and our nations that we are in the sheep category. At this juncture in history, all the nations on earth are rapidly taking sides for and against Israel. Many nations are using the guise of political correctness but underlying their decisions is a virulent anti-God spirit. Sheep churches and nations will stand in solid support of Israel. Goat churches and nations which are aligned against Israel and the God of Israel will vent their frustration and anger against Jerusalem. Through various challenges and circumstances Israel will soon have her back to the wall. It will seem as though the whole world is against her and she will only have one direction left in which to turn – to the Holy One of Israel. God will then recompense Israel's enemies with judgment and vindicate His people who turn to Him in their greatest hour of need.

Numbers 10:9

When you arrive in your own land and go to war against your enemies, you must sound the alarm with these trumpets so the LORD your God will remember you and rescue you from your enemies (NLT).

We are rapidly approaching the culmination of God's purposes and the fulfillment of His predictions. The Seed of Abraham will soon take centre stage in world affairs. The eyes and ears of the world will focus upon them. The drama of the ages will unfold as the powers of darkness clash openly with the awesome power of Almighty God. The stage is now being set for the final act. Anti-God and Anti-Christ forces will attack Israel, and Jehovah will defend them against giant principalities and powers which are battling one another in the heavenly realms. Islam is determined to defeat Israel and reclaim its territory for Allah. This is seen by them as an essential precursor to the return of Al Mahdi who Muslims believe will conquer the whole world for Islam.

Could it be that the last days of Abraham's life (Genesis 25:7-11) equate in some prophetic way with the "Last Days" of these times in which we now live? Does the intentional path trod by Ishmael just prior to the death of his father give some significant clues about what will happen when the present descendants of Ishmael tread a similar prophetic path?

Following the final retreat of Hagar into the wilderness with Ishmael, (Genesis 21:14) little more is heard about them in the Bible. They obviously lived their lives completely separate from Isaac in a state of deep animosity and enmity. Hatred, resentment and bitterness filled the heart and soul of Ishmael and his family. This was more than a matter of geographical distance it was also one of intense alienation and ill will between the two families. However as Jehovah had predicted, Ishmael's family increased greatly during his days in Havilah and he was blessed with many sons (Genesis 25:12-18).

The world is presently facing a new kind of war which threatens the peace and security of all mankind. It is radically different from any war that is recorded in our history books. Indeed, most of the world does not yet even realize that this new war has actually started. It is completely different in every way from the two great world wars. Its participants, tactics and ultimate aim are totally dissimilar. At its core this new war has a religious/political and military motivation, which is the complete conquest and subjugation of all nations.

The historic origins of this war date back to the time of Abraham and began as a family feud between two of his sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Despite a temporary cessation of war at the time of Abraham's burial, this feud has continued down through the centuries until this day. However, it is now much more than a small family feud. In recent years it has become a huge issue with international repercussions. In the foreground the battle rages between the descendants of Ishmael (Islam) and the offspring of Isaac and Jacob (Jews and Christians). Behind this scenario are giant principalities and powers which are battling one another in the heavenly realms. The principality of Islam is determined to defeat Israel and reclaim its territory for Allah. This is seen by them as an essential precursor to the return of Al Mahdi the Muslim Messiah who Muslims believe will conquer and subjugate the whole world for Islam.

The spiritual warfare that is being waged in the heavenly realms is fundamentally a war between Satan, the arch-enemy of mankind, and Jehovah God. Obviously this kind of warfare cannot be conducted with conventional weapons or even with nuclear ones. It is truly a spiritual battle that can only be won with spiritual weapons. We believers need to be constantly alert and diligent in prayer and positive affirmations.

2 Corinthians 10:4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (fleshly and material) but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds (NKJ).

In order to wage such spiritual warfare we must first understand the complexities and dangerous realities of the situation. We must fully realize that although at its core, it is a spiritual war it will explode on earth as a desperate full scale military

battle. Every believer must be awake to the challenge and aware of the ramifications. We must also recognize that God has predicted a certain outcome to this dramatic and gigantic scenario that will ultimately eventuate between the descendants of Isaac and those of Ishmael.

Since Israel features so prominently in God's prophetic plan and is fundamentally the hub of that plan, it is essential and imperative that Christians fully understand God's strong everlasting covenant relationship to Israel. The emergence of the Church has not altered God's plans for Israel. Both Israel and the Church feature together in the final pages of human history. It is therefore essential that the Church universal stands solidly 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 must recognize that they are both of the "seed of Abraham" and that both have divine predictions made over them. For intercessors to be effective they need to clearly understand "Who are the Seed of Abraham?"

Many Christians today feel detached from Abraham's Seed. They do not recognize any relevant and meaningful connection with Abraham or any of his immediate descendants. However, this nonchalance will soon disappear, for God will either bless or curse many people and even entire nations, according to their attitude towards this people. To bless someone is to wish them well and to pronounce good favor upon them. Conversely, to curse someone only requires one to belittle them, think poorly of them, to regard them as unimportant and disregard them. Sadly, there are many Christians who regard themselves as Bible believers yet harbor strong negative feelings and sentiments towards Israel. According to God's Word to hold such negative attitudes towards God's ancient covenant people is to ultimately invite a curse upon oneself. (Genesis 12:1-3)

GOD'S LITMUS TEST

A Litmus Test is a simple procedure to test the chemical constituency of a particular liquid substance to determine whether it is acidic or alkaline. It is a test for chemical acidity using a special paper called litmus paper. When litmus paper is dipped in a liquid chemical substance it will turn either blue or red depending on the chemical composition of the substance.

It may also refer to something which is regarded as a simple and accurate test of a particular thing, such as a person's attitude to a specific issue. I personally believe that part of God's purpose in choosing the Jews to be His special people on earth was to use them as a litmus test for humanity. The Jewish Race today is very much what the nations have made them over many centuries by their various attitudes towards them. To some degree Jewish people are just like any other race. They can be good or bad, nice or nasty depending to some extent on their circumstances and how they are either received or rejected. Reaction to the Jews whether positive or negative, will one day determine whether a particular people are regarded as sheep or goats.

Matthew 25:32-34

³² *All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.*

³³ *And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

³⁴ *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: NKJV*

On a given day in the near future God will arraign the nations before Him to judge the acidity of their souls. The test will be how they have regarded the Jews and the Jewish nation. Those nations that have been positive, receptive and kind towards the Jews will be regarded as “sheep nations.” In complete contrast, those that have harbored negative attitudes towards them will be seen as “goat nations.” With respect to His Kingdom, God will say to the sheep “Come, inherit the Kingdom of My Father.” But to the goat nations He will say, “Depart from Me!” With regard to the attitude of many nations towards Israel today, the world already divided in its attitude, will soon completely polarize dramatically.

The Jewish nation of Israel in natural terms is a democratic, socialistic nation that has successfully re-established itself in its ancient homeland after an absence of some 2,000 years. Its main ambition is to provide an egalitarian society, particularly for Jewish people most of whom are refugees escaping persecution. Its natural growth, development and achievements, whilst surrounded by hostile enemy nations, have been nothing short of incredible and highly commendable. From the ash heap of the Holocaust in Europe, the population of Israel composed of people from more than 100 nations has not only become the most successful democracy in the Middle East. It is still the only democracy in that region. Her sole aim is to provide a haven of safety and security for those who wish to be Jewish. In complete contrast the stated purpose and ambition of all her neighbors is to totally annihilate Israel and to wipe it off the face of the globe. What does God’s Litmus Test reveal about the hearts of these nations?

I definitely believe that the existence of Israel and her current situation today unmistakably places us in the latter days. If this is indeed the case, a correct understanding of the end-time is essential for every believer. The Body of Messiah needs to be prepared for what is about to take place in the world. If the pre and mid-tribulation doctrines prove to be wrong, then many Christians who were expecting to be raptured at any moment may find themselves totally unprepared to survive severe tribulation. The Lord has called us to be His fellow-workers. Therefore we need to know what lies before us, so that we can invest our lives intelligently in the work of the Kingdom. Let us also remember that Jesus rebuked the people of His day for being able to discern the weather from the signs in the sky, but not able to discern the signs of the prophetic times in which they lived.

Matthew 16:2-4

² *He replied, "You know the saying, 'red sky at night means fair weather tomorrow,*

³ *red sky in the morning means foul weather all day.' You are good at*

reading the weather signs in the sky, but you can't read the obvious signs of the times!

⁴ *Only an evil, faithless generation would ask for a miraculous sign, but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah." Then Jesus left them and went away. NLT*

Jesus will not take His bride out of this world until she is complete with Jews and Gentiles. The Jews have been blinded to this truth and have suffered dreadfully for the last 2000 years, so that we Gentiles could be grafted in. That is why Paul also says in Romans 15:27 that it is our duty to bless the Jewish people in every possible way.

Romans 15:27

²⁷ *They were very glad to do this because they feel they owe a real debt to them. Since the Gentiles received the wonderful spiritual blessings of the Good News from the Jewish Christians NLT*

The destiny of Israel and the Church are predicted to be united in the Kingdom of God over which Jesus will be King and David His vice regent. The issue towards which we look with bated breath is just how the descendants of Ishmael will eventually fit into this glorious scheme?

We are all called to be an intercessor on the walls of Jerusalem since the day that we came into the Kingdom. Any other position, or a desire to escape the time of Jacob's Trouble, leaving the Jewish people behind to go through it by themselves, is an un-biblical, selfish and carnal attitude, and in the light of the above scriptural evidence, needs to be seriously re-considered. I sincerely trust that this book will help many such persons to adapt their attitude and begin to bless Abraham and God's ancient covenant people.

Our Present Dilemma

The Bible clearly teaches that ultimately, at the end of the present Age, all the nations on earth will be either blessed or cursed, in the light of their attitude towards Abraham and the “seed (descendants) of Abraham.” This is the pattern and criteria by which God will judge all nations.

Genesis 12:2-3

² *I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation.*

I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing.

³ *I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse those who curse you. And through you I will bless all the nations.” (GNB)*

To bless is the act of declaring or wishing favor and goodness upon others. Blessing is not only the effect of speaking favorable words; it also has the mysterious inherent power to bring them to pass. In the Bible, important persons blessed those with less power or influence. The patriarchs pronounced blessings upon their children, often near their own deaths (Gen. 49:1-28). Even if spoken by mistake, once a blessing was given it could not be taken back (Genesis 27:33, Numbers 23:20).

Conversely, to curse is to hold a negative attitude towards someone and have a desire for injury, harm, or misfortune to befall that person or people. It may however, be simply an absence of positive good will towards someone which constitutes a curse. In Bible times, a curse was considered to be more than a mere desire that evil would befall one’s enemies; it was believed to possess the power to bring about the evil that the curser pronounced.

When a curse is declared upon any person, we are not to understand this as a mere wish, however violent, that disaster should overtake the person in question, any more than we are to understand that a corresponding blessing conveys simply a wish that prosperity should be the lot of the person on whom the blessing is invoked. A curse was considered to possess an inherent power of self fulfillment carrying itself into effect. Pronouncing curses (or blessings) were powers thought to be possessed by supernatural beings in whose existence and authority to do good or inflict harm, primitive man believed implicitly. In a biblical sense to withhold one’s blessing from someone, is actually to curse them. The lack of good will towards them actually becomes a curse towards them. With regard to Israel, God’s peculiar people, some Bible commentators have interpreted Genesis 12:3 in this manner: “The one who treats you despicably, seeking to stop you fulfilling your divine calling, I will curse!”

A recognition of the fact that the “seed of Abraham” actually includes Ishmael and his descendants could radically transform our prophetic perspective on what God

intends to accomplish amongst the nations of the earth. We should be very careful not to hate Muslims but rather to wish them well and to pray God's blessing and favour upon them. It is therefore essential that we clearly understand who the seed of Abraham are. The blessing promised obviously includes redemptive factors, plus the manifestation of the Kingdom of God upon this earth. I believe that there will also be a tremendous spiritual harvest superseding anything the world has ever seen or even dreamed of. This will undoubtedly happen in that bridging period between this present Day of Grace and the emergence of the manifest Kingdom of God. It will also be vastly different from anything we have ever seen or imagined. Included in this great End Time harvest will be myriads of Jews and Muslims as well as multitudes from all other false religions. Almighty God Jehovah is going to manifest and demonstrate the supremacy of His power to such a degree that people of every nation and religion on earth will acknowledge His total superiority. It is therefore essential that we have a clear understanding of just who the seed of Abraham are. We must identify them and set ourselves to thoroughly understand the role that each will play in Almighty God's End Time scenario. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "Your Kingdom come. Your Will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

Now is the time to fully implement this intercessory role that we might, in some miraculous manner, hasten the coming of our Lord to this planet to establish His eternal kingdom rule over the nations. In order to accomplish this we must first, of necessity, trace the life of Abraham and all his descendants. Abraham arises from the virtual obscurity of history as a solitary figure in a vast wilderness. Little did he or any of his contemporaries foresee that one day he would stand upon the world stage as one of the most important figures of all time. None of his family or generation could have imagined that he would one day become such a huge figure of international destiny.

The world will finally realize what a great and important figure Abraham is. Even more important, beyond description, will be the emergence of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God and the sovereign ruler of the universe who in His humanity is also a seed of Abraham. As the scriptures foretell, "Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is (THE) Lord" (Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10).

The saga of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael in the book of Genesis is a validated historical record, but it is also a prophetic paradigm. It briefly outlines both the history and future of these three important persons and their offspring. Within this story lies the predicted future of the Middle East in our generation. In Genesis 12 and 15, Abraham entered into solemn covenant with Jehovah God. The terms of the covenant promised Abraham a lineage, a nation and land, and that through his descendants all nations on earth would ultimately be blessed. However, Abraham and Sarah were too impatient to await God's timing and Abraham sired a son through their Egyptian servant Hagar. In due time, according to God's earlier promise, Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah. When a feast was held to celebrate the weaning of Isaac, who was born thirteen years after Isaac, Ishmael caused trouble by insulting and mocking his little brother (Genesis 21:8-9).

After Sarah, who by then had come to thoroughly 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 loved Ishmael and did not want to see him go.

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 by Jehovah. God appeared and spoke to Hagar personally, assuring her that He would watch over them and see them prosper (Genesis 21:17-19). “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).

If God has promised a specific inheritance to all of Abraham’s Seed, can we not prayerfully believe that He is well able to bring this to pass? After his father’s funeral Ishmael returned to his own people in the East and lived for 137 years (Genesis 25:17). He had twelve sons, who became the founders of Ishmaelite tribes that spread from Egypt to what is today Iraq. Many of the modern-day Arab peoples correctly recognize that they are the descendants of Ishmael, while the Jews are descendants of Isaac - but all are descended from Abraham. The brief scenario that sums up this prophetic picture is as follows. Abraham and Sarah were promised a son and heir. Because the fulfillment of this promise was delayed and to the natural mind became a non-event, Abraham sired a son Ishmael, through their handmaiden Hagar.

Twelve years later, the son whom God originally promised was born to Sarah. Isaac was the son of promise whom God had appointed as the heir to the Abrahamic covenant. The situation caused a domestic crisis and Hagar and Ishmael were banished to the wilderness but God was with them and predicted for them many descendants and great prosperity. However, to inherit this promise they must walk submissively with Jehovah God. Today, the majority of Ishmael’s seed are in submission to Allah. Their beliefs, submission and commitment are obviously sincere and deeply rooted. There is much to admire and commend in respect of their commitment. This book seeks to show that when such commitment and submission is transferred to Jehovah, the descendants of Ishmael will reap their full blessing and inheritance as foretold in scripture. Towards the end of their lives, Isaac and Ishmael were evidently reconciled through the death of their mutual father Abraham. They apparently lived out the remainder of their lifetimes in peace and harmony. Unfortunately this was not true of their descendants who have often been isolated from each other because of deep historic issues and recriminations. God willing, we in our day will see a blessed reconciliation through submission to another mutual blood relative, namely Jesus Christ. This will occur when the Jews finally accept a divine revelation of the true identity of their Messiah and many Muslims finally

enter into this same revelation. Who knows what may be the glorious result of the fact that the descendants of Ishmael have been promised an amazing inheritance by the God of Israel?

Ever since the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the history of mankind has been consistently punctuated with wars and rumors of war. What wonderful news it is for a war weary world to learn that God has predicted a time of universal peace under the benign, gracious and merciful rule of Messiah Jesus. Scripture assures us that “the zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this”. (Isaiah 9:7) Otherwise it would be an impossible dream. In the near future He will bring this glorious phenomenon into being and meanwhile our earnest prayer must be, “Even so come quickly Lord Jesus!”

Finally the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples will be fulfilled.

Matthew 6:9-10

⁹ *Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored.*

¹⁰ *May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done here on earth, just as it is in heaven (NLT).*

The huge question that occurs is how and when might this great miracle transpire? I personally believe that the time of its appearance and transition will eventuate immediately after the amazing events of Zechariah 12:10,11 when in the aftermath of a supernatural victory achieved for Israel, the Messiah will visibly appear to all the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem who are Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Zechariah 12:10-14

"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 pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

11 In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

12 And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves;

13 the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves;

14 all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves. NKJV

There will then transpire a new, dynamic revelation of the true identity and purpose of Messiah which will powerfully affect and transform millions of Jews, Christians, Muslims and vast numbers of people from every religious persuasion on earth.

Introducing Abraham

According to historic tradition, Abraham was born under the name Abram in the city of Ur in Babylonia around the year 1948 BC. He was a son of Terah, a maker and seller of idols, but from his early childhood Abram evidently questioned the faith of his father and sought for further truth. He came to believe that the entire universe was the work of a single Creator and he began to teach this belief to others. Eventually, the one true Creator that Abram sought after called to him and challenged him. If Abram would leave his home and his family and follow God's leading to a land of which Abram was not yet aware, then God would make of him a great nation and greatly bless him. Abram accepted this challenge and the b'rith (covenant) between God and Abraham's Seed was established (Genesis 12 1-3, and Genesis 15:1-5).

Abraham may be looked upon as the initial source of Old Testament religion. From the days of Abraham men began to speak of God as the "God of Abraham." So we have Abraham's servant speaking of "the God of my father Abraham" (Genesis 24:12). Jehovah, in an appearance to Isaac, also speaks of himself as the God of Abraham (Gen. 26:24), and to Jacob he is "the God of my father Abraham" (Genesis 31: 42). This shows that the religion of Israel does not begin with Moses, for God said to Moses: "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham" etc. (Exodus 3:6). Abraham is thus selected as the primary source of the religion of the children of Israel and the origin of its close connection with Jehovah, because of his faith, trust, and obedience to Jehovah and because of Jehovah's promises to him and to his seed. He is the true father of Israel and his life and faith form the paradigm of a pre-New Covenant righteous believer in God. So, in Genesis, 15:6, it is said: "Abram believed in the Lord, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness."

This trust in God was shown by him when he left Haran and journeyed with his family into the unknown country of Canaan. When he was ninety-nine, Abraham entered into an agreement with God whereby he would serve and glorify Jehovah as the one and only God, and God would make him the father of many nations and tribes. God changed Abram's name to Abraham which means "Father of Many Nations."

When he was 100, Abraham was visited by divine messengers who told him that he and his wife would soon have a son. Because of their age (Sarah was ninety), Abraham and Sarah were incredulous. However the angel's message was correct and Sarah eventually gave birth to a son, Isaac, who became the second son of the patriarch of Israel and was the father of Esau and Jacob. After the birth of Isaac, Ishmael and Hagar were banished into the wilderness at Sarah's insistence, because Sarah feared that Isaac might have to share his inheritance from Abraham with

Ishmael. Fortunately, God looked after Ishmael and Hagar, so that Sarah's animosity did not cause them great injury.

God used Isaac to test Abraham's faith by ordering him to kill his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abraham obediently prepared to do this, but was prevented from killing Isaac by an angel who revealed that God had been testing Abraham, and did not really want him to kill his son. Instead, God provided a ram in a nearby thicket and this became a sacrificial offering in the place of Isaac. Through this event, God prophetically foreshadowed how His offering of the Lamb of God would one day make atonement for the sins of the whole world. The idea of a covenant is fundamental to traditional Judaism under which they have certain obligations to God, and God is bound by certain obligations to them. The terms of this covenant became more explicit over time, until the time of the giving of the Law to Moses. Abraham was subjected to numerous tests of faith to prove his worthiness to inherit this covenant. Leaving his home and travelling to an unknown destination was the first of these tests.

Abram, who was raised as a city-dweller, adopted a nomadic lifestyle, traveling through what is now the land of Israel. God promised this land to Abram's descendants forever. Considering the amazing role that Abraham has played in human history and will ultimately play in the destiny of the nations, he is a very much underestimated figure. Given the fact that he is already the ancestor to billions of people and that his progeny will yet increase exponentially, little reference is made to him in contemporary Christian theology. Abram appears on the world stage at an immensely critical stage of human history. His emergence follows the debacle of Genesis 11 where God dealt with a major insurrection against His sovereignty.

Genesis 11:3-9

³ *They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar.*

⁴ *Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."*

⁵ *But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building.*

⁶ *The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.*

⁷ *Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."*

⁸ *So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city.*

⁹ *That is why it was called Babel - because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth (NIV).*

The building of the tower of Babel was the birth of humanism, i.e. - mankind's attempt to form a world civilization that would function without God and in direct defiance of Him. (Humanism may be defined as the belief that mankind can achieve supreme happiness without the need for belief in God). One aspect of their plan was

to “make a great name for ourselves” (V.4). Having scattered the rebellious peoples to the ends of the earth, God brought forth a man of whom He said, “I will make YOUR name great” (Genesis 12:2). He announced that through Abraham, and his descendants, He would powerfully impact the world scene.

Integral to that plan would be the birth of a unique nation (Israel), and through her descendants a Messiah who would ultimately bless every people group on earth. Abraham emerged from the scriptures as a lone, childless figure, who would eventually become a spiritual father and patriarch venerated by three major world religions, i.e. Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, he is best known as the recognized father of Judaism. This was his first and primary role.

ABRAHAM WAS

A Babylonian from Ur of the Chaldees (modern Iraq) Ur, in Abram’s time, was a very significant city, modern and sophisticated for its day. The development of Ur in the time of Abram was at least a hundred years ahead of Babylon at that time. So Abram was initially a city dweller in a very advanced urban society. However, the call of God took him into and through the wilderness as it so often does with all who seek to obey God’s call.

A WORSHIPPER OF FALSE GODS

Joshua 24:2

² *And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, including Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods’ ” (NKJ).*

Abraham, his family, and their ancestors had served other gods in Babylonia, for it was the country in which idolatry had its birth. Abraham, who afterwards was the friend of Jehovah, was brought up in an environment of idolatry until God by his grace snatched him as a brand out of the burning. The citizens of Ur worshipped a virtual pantheon of false gods and idols.

THE FIRST “HEBREW”

The first person in the Bible to be called a Hebrew is Abraham (Genesis 14:13). Thereafter his descendants through Isaac and Jacob also became known as “Hebrews.” The origin of the name “Hebrew” presents a difficult problem. “Abram the Hebrew” (Genesis 14:13) may be “Abram who crossed the river,” that is, the Euphrates (Joshua 24:2-3).

A PRE-MOSAIC BELIEVER IN YAHWEH

From the midst of idol worship in Ur, where his people worshipped a myriad of false gods, Abraham was to become the most renowned monotheist on earth. The amazing thing is that prior to his call, Abraham evidently knew nothing definite about Jehovah yet he obeyed Him implicitly. He also learned how to relate to and worship Jehovah, the one true and living God at a time when the knowledge of Jehovah was extremely rare. So deep and intimate was Abraham’s relationship to Jehovah that he became known as the “friend of God.”

2 Chronicles 20:7

⁷ *O our God, (Elohim) did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? (NIV)*

James 2:22-23

²³ *And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness”, and he was called God’s friend (NIV).*

THE FATHER OF ISAAC AND JACOB, THE JEWISH PATRIARCHS

When Jehovah introduced Himself to Moses in preparation for the Exodus, He presented His calling card with His new eternal name. Thus He identified Himself forever with the people of Israel.

Exodus 3:14-15

¹⁴ *And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’ ”*

¹⁵ *Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations’ (NKJV).*

THE MAJOR FIGURE IN THE MOST IMPORTANT OF COVENANTS

The Abrahamic Covenant is the very foundation of Jewish belief, named in honor of a former idol worshiper whose daring faith brought him into relationship as the “friend” of Jehovah. It was with Abraham that Elohim laid the very foundations of the Jewish Faith. His faith and obedience towards Jehovah and his participation in the making of the Abrahamic Covenant are integral to the origins of Israel’s history.

A RECIPIENT OF DIVINE PROMISES FOR ISRAEL AND THE WORLD

Genesis 12:1-3

¹ *God had told Abram, “Leave your own country behind you, and your own people, and go to the land I will guide you to.*

² *If you do, I will cause you to become the father of a great nation; I will bless you and make your name famous, and you will be a blessing to many others.*

³ *I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and the entire world will be blessed because of you” (TLB).*

Many sincere lovers of Israel have presumed that God said, “I will bless those that bless Israel and curse those that curse her.” However, this promise was actually made to Abraham personally hence it is he that we should “bless.” In a very real sense, the promise does apply to Israel, yet only because of Abraham’s association as the divinely appointed forefather of that nation (Numbers 24:9). Israel inherits this promise because she is a direct descendant of Abraham. The promise was

validated through the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15). For this reason Christians should bless (honor, exalt, respect, revere, admire, be in awe of, and hold in the highest regard) Abraham. We should certainly be very conscious of him and the solemn implications of his covenant at this time in the unfolding of God's prophetic plan. As events unfold in the future and the purposes of God become clear to the nations, the role of Abraham in world affairs will become increasingly more evident.

THE FATHER OF ISHMAEL AND HIS DESCENDANTS

Christians often tend to forget that Jehovah gave promise of future blessings to Ishmael as well as to Isaac.

Genesis 17:18

¹⁸ *And Abraham said unto God, "O that Ishmael might live (prevail) before thee" (KJV)*

Genesis 17:20

²⁰ *I have heard your request about Ishmael, so I will bless him and give him many children and many descendants. He will be the father of twelve princes, and I will make a great nation of his descendants (GNB).*

These promises of enlargement, expansion, and prosperity have been fulfilled to some degree before our eyes particularly since the discovery of huge oil deposits in their ancestral homelands. But God's greatest promises to Ishmael have yet to be fulfilled. This will occur in "the last days" and will bring closure to their estrangement and also to the long feud between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael. Abraham is obviously a very unique and significant person. God plucked him out of obscurity in Iraq and placed him on an international stage. He cared for him when he was childless and brought from his loins a great multitude of descendants. God 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. Abraham is a man honored and revered by millions, yet one who, concerning the finer details of his life remains virtually unknown.

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

This follows immediately after the scattering of the nations in Genesis 11, and it concerns all of those nations. Although it was made with Abraham and carries his name, it was NOT made to be conditional upon Abraham's character, faith, or faithfulness. It is really a unilateral eternal covenant dependant solely upon God's character and faithfulness.

In Genesis 12:1-3, God made the following covenant promises to Abraham, conditional upon his obedient transfer from Haran, "to the land that I will show you."

- a. I will make you into a great nation.
- b. I will bless you.
- c. I will make your name great.
- d. I will make you a blessing.
- e. I will bless those that bless you.
- f. I will curse those that curse you.

g. All nations of the earth will be blessed through you and your seed.

THIS COVENANT ESSENTIALLY INCLUDES "A LAND"

Genesis 12:1

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." NLT

Genesis 15:18

¹⁸ *On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates" (NKJ).*

ABRAHAM AND THE PATRIARCHS

It is difficult to assign an exact beginning to Hebrew history. But if we regard Abraham as the forefather of the Israelites, it is clear that they had their roots in ancient Sumer. Abraham came from Ur, a Sumerian city (Genesis 11:31). Abraham became prosperous in Haran in north western Mesopotamia, then later at Jehovah's command moved to the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:5) where he received God's assurance that he would be the ancestor of a mighty people. God also promised to provide a land for the Hebrews in which they could settle in obedience to God's covenant law as a holy nation (Exodus 19:6) and be witnesses of His existence and power to all the neighboring nations. Throughout their history, God's covenant people were meant to be an example of true spirituality to the whole world. This, rather than political activity or territorial conquest, was to be their true destiny. Unfortunately, much of Israelite history was marked by periodic disobedience of the covenant laws.

The Old Testament is largely an account of how the Hebrew people came into being, their response to the opportunities God gave to them, and the results of their response. It may be succinctly summed up in three phases.

1. GOD'S PURPOSE FOR ISRAEL

God intended Israel to be a model nation in the earth (Exodus 19:3 - A Kingdom of priests), to demonstrate the blessings a people could enjoy under God's rule. God gave her many opportunities to fulfill her potential. Israel was created to be made great and be a blessing to every nation on earth. To a degree this was achieved during the reign of Solomon – which became known as the golden age. Notice the comments of the Queen of Sheba. Viz

1 Kings 10:4-9

⁴ *When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built,*

⁵ *the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed.*

⁶ *She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true.*

⁷ *But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard.*

⁸ *How happy your men must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!*

⁹ *Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, to maintain justice and righteousness" (NIV).*

A CONFIRMATION IN NEHEMIAH

In a brief synopsis of the life of Abraham, God confirms that He chose Abraham and that He will be faithful to him ultimately to give to his descendants the whole land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. This certainly includes the land that is commonly called Palestine today. The biblical name of that land is Israel and it will ever remain that in the sight of God.

Nehemiah 9:7-8

⁷ *You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham (Father of multitudes).*

⁸ *You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Girgashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous (NIV).*

Notice, the promise WILL be fulfilled, not because of Abraham's faith or obedience, nor lack thereof, but because Jehovah God is faithful.

2. ISRAEL'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO GOD

Being a kingdom of priests unto God (Exodus 19:3) involved certain basic responsibilities. God required implicit obedience in all things. Israel's prime responsibilities were outlined in the Torah. Their responsibilities and privileges were further enhanced through the law God gave to Moses and the role of priesthood through Aaron. Their pattern of worship in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple set forth the pathway to God through the medium of worship and vicarious offerings. They were to demonstrate this pattern to the whole world through their priestly ministrations. The pattern of worship they displayed is still the biblical pattern for worshipers even today.

3. ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S CHALLENGE

Sadly, Israel failed to respond fully to her opportunities, temporarily forfeiting her privileged role. They sadly turned the pathway to God into legalistic commandments and behavior patterns. Such lapses in faithfulness to God and His Law brought grievous times upon Israel and actually led to her captivity and enslavement. Fortunately, God's faithfulness to her never failed and Israel, throughout her turbulent history, has never ceased to be a special and unique nation unto God.

Jeremiah 31:35-37

³⁵ *Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for a light by day, the ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, who disturbs the sea, and its waves roar (The LORD of hosts is His name):*

³⁶ *“If those ordinances depart from before Me, says the LORD, then the seed of Israel shall also cease from being a nation before Me forever.”*

³⁷ *Thus says the LORD: “If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done,” says the LORD (NKJ).*

CUTTING THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

The Abrahamic Covenant forms the foundation stone of the Hebrew people and their nation. It is the first intimation from Jehovah God that He will have for Himself a unique nation as a peculiar treasure (Exodus 19:5, Deuteronomy 14:2).

Exodus 19:5. If you carefully obey me and are faithful to the terms of my promise, then out of all the nations you will be my own special possession, even though the whole world is mine.

Deuteronomy 14:12. You are people who are holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the people who live on earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his own special possession.

This nation will not only spring from the loins of Abraham but also from his son Isaac who was born miraculously after both Abraham and his wife were humanly beyond the age of procreation. Such a promise both thrilled and bewildered Abraham and Sarah and caused them to wonder how such a thing could be. In order to reassure Abraham of His intention, God framed His promise in covenantal terms because Jehovah is a “God of covenant and mercy.”

Genesis 15:8-10

⁸ *But Abram replied, “O Lord Jehovah, how can I be sure that you will give it to me?”*

⁹ *Then Jehovah told him to take a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove and a young pigeon,*

¹⁰ *and to slay them and to cut them apart down the middle, and to separate the halves, but not to divide the birds (TLB).*

This unique action that God required of Abraham inevitably reveals the process required for the “cutting” of a solemn covenant. It clearly revealed to Abraham God’s earnest intention to completely fulfill the promise He had made. The covenant included a land grant which would ultimately stretch to the River Euphrates and encompass major portions then occupied by other nations. He specifies the boundaries of the land intended to be granted, v. 18. And then, for the greater certainty, He mentions in whose tenure and occupation these lands then were. Ten nations, or tribes, are here spoken of (v. 19-21) that must be defeated to make room for the seed of Abraham.

Genesis 15:18, 19

¹⁸ *So that day Jehovah made this covenant with Abram: "I have given this land to your descendants from the Wadi-el-Arish to the Euphrates River.*

¹⁹ *And I give to them these nations: Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaim, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, Jebusites" (TLB).*

GOD HIMSELF CUT THE COVENANT

In obedience to God, Abraham gathered all the animals as God had commanded and slew them preparatory to laying them out in the manner prescribed for making a covenant. After toiling laboriously under a blazing sun, Abraham fell into a deep sleep.

- A. Abraham fell asleep, during which time God Himself sealed the covenant.

Genesis 15:12

¹² *Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him (NKJ).*

- B. A smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces. The furnace and lamp were Jehovah and the Word (Logos). The significance of this event is that it was God alone who walked between the covenant pieces. Abram, being fast asleep, took no active part in the cutting of the covenant. It was therefore a unilateral (one sided or independent) covenant which depended entirely on God's faithfulness alone.

Genesis 15:17

¹⁷ *And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces (KJV).*

Hebrews 6:13-16

¹³ *For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,*

¹⁴ *saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you."*

¹⁵ *And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*

¹⁶ *For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute (NKJ).*

- C. God Himself cut and consecrated the covenant while Abraham slept. When Abraham awoke, the covenant was ratified. "By Myself have I sworn it, says the Lord" (Genesis 22:16).

The Abrahamic Covenant is really Jehovah's Covenant which He made while Abraham slept blissfully unaware of what was taking place. Its fulfillment is not therefore dependant on the faith or faithfulness of Abraham or his human descendants nor that of any other human being, but in the unfailing faithfulness of God, who keeps covenant and mercy unto a thousand generations.

Deuteronomy 7:9

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 (NIV).

WHAT DOES THIS BLESSING OF ABRAHAM INCLUDE?

Abraham was a man born before his due time in that God gave to him a revelation of redemption that would be purchased by Christ long after Abraham had lived and died. As a prophet, Abraham looked into the future and foresaw Christ's atoning work. By faith Abraham accepted and rejoiced in that atoning work (John 8:56).

John 8:56

Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced as he looked forward to my coming. He saw it and was glad." NLT

Abraham became known as a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7, James 2:23) centuries before the incarnation of Christ was effected. God confided in His friend Abraham who was the recipient of divine revelation concerning the future Messiah. We are not told just how this revelation was conveyed but it may well have been through Abraham's ability to read the stars (Genesis 15:5), in which were portrayed God's prophetic story of redemption. It might also be associated with the dramatic events that took place on Mount Moriah as outlined in Genesis 22. Suffice to say that the message was so clear that it caused Abraham to rejoice greatly in anticipation of God's promised Redeemer.

There were at least two factors in Abraham's life by which he was enabled to foresee Christ's sacrificial and atoning death. The first is that Abraham was known to be a competent astronomer and that God instructed him to read in the stars the story of redemption from Virgo (the Virgin) to Leo (the Lion).

Genesis 15:5-6

⁵ *And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell (Hebrew "safar" to read) the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.*

⁶ *And he believed in the LORD; and He counted it to him for righteousness. (KJV).*

Someone may ask what have the signs of the zodiac have to do with the Bible? The answer is that God created and named the stars and constellations long before Satanic influences corrupted and distorted their original meanings. Initially God gave the stars and planets as a sign to humanity of His prophetic purposes of redemption.

Genesis 1:14

¹⁴ *Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years" (NKJ).*

Psalm 147:4

⁴ *He counts the number of the stars; he calls them all by name (NKJ).*

Isaiah 40:26-27

²⁶ *Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these {stars} the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.*

²⁷ *Why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God?" (NAU)*

God counselled Israel that her ways could not possibly be hidden from Him because her story was told in the stars. God also spoke to Job about the zodiac (Mazzaroth) obviously knowing that Job had knowledge and understanding of the stars and planets.

Job 38:31-33

³¹ *"Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion?*

³² *Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs?*

³³ *Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?"*

It is generally accepted that Mazzaroth refers to the twelve signs of the zodiac. When God asked Job, "Do you know (understand) the ordinances of the heavens?" He encouraged him to discern the message of God in the stars.

DAVID ALSO REFERS TO GOD'S MESSAGE IN THE STARS

Psalms 19:1-4

¹ *The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display his marvelous craftsmanship.*

² *Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known.*

³ *They speak without a sound or a word; their voice is silent in the skies;*

⁴ *yet their message has gone out to all the earth, and their words to all the world. NLT*

The study of the stars initially constituted the exact science of astronomy, which was later perverted into non scientific astrology.

The second factor was the event at Mount Moriah when God challenged Abraham to offer his one and only son. The quaint wording of the KJV provides a prophetic glimpse of God, providing Himself as a sacrificial lamb.

Genesis 22:8

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself (as) a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together. (Emphasis added.)

THE “BLESSING OF ABRAHAM” INCLUDES:

A. DELIVERANCE FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW

Deliverance from the curse of the law is actually from the frustration of our inability to properly keep God’s Law. Especially from the legalistic maze that man tends to make of God’s Law. Deliverance from the “curse” of the Law comes through faith in God’s appointed redeemer, the Messiah. God’s earnest desire was not for a people slavishly devoted to keeping a set of commandments but rather for a people who would, through God’s grace and strength, live by the spirit of God’s law.

Galatians 3:13-14

¹³ *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”*

¹⁴ *He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit (NIV).*

B. JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Romans 4:3

³ *What does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (NIV).*

Although “Justification by faith” is a major doctrine of the Christian church and perceived as a New Testament revelation, it was actually granted to Abraham. He is the first person in the Bible of whom it is specifically noted that God justified him according to his faith. It is because of this that he later became known as the father of all believers (Romans 4:16).

Romans 4:9

⁹ *Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness (NKJ).*

Hebrews 11:8-9

⁸ *By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

⁹ *By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise (NKJ).*

Hebrews 11:12

Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude - innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore (NKJ).

Romans 4:11

So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.

Romans 4:16

Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring - not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all (NIV).

If God justified Abraham because of his faith, surely he would also justify sincere, ardent followers (faith emulators) of Abraham too.

C. IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

Abraham was not only justified by his faith, he was also accounted righteous before God. This occurred long before the Law and before his own circumcision. This wonderful blessing was granted to Abraham purely in response to his faith in Jehovah.

Galatians 3:6-7

⁶ *just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

⁷ *Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. NKJV*

Romans 4:2-3

³ *For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." NKJV*

Romans 4:9

For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. NKJV

Romans 4:11-13

¹² *and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.*

¹³ *For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. NKJV*

D. RECEIVING THE SPIRIT BY FAITH

Galatians 3:13-14

¹³ *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”*

¹⁴ *He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*

E. A REVELATION OF MESSIAH YESHUA

John 8:56

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (NKJ).

Galatians 3:8-9

⁸ *The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you.”*

⁹ *So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith (NIV).*

F. THE INHERITOR OF GOD’S COVENANT PROMISES

Psalms 105:7-10

⁷ *He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.*

⁸ *He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded, for a thousand generations,*

⁹ *the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac.*

¹⁰ *He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant (NIV).*

G. INHERITING THE WORLD AND THE NATIONS

Romans 4:13

¹³ *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith (KJV).*

Galatians 3:7-9

⁷ *Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.*

⁸ *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”*

⁹ *So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham (NKJ).*

THE REQUIREMENTS THAT GOD MADE OF ABRAHAM

In order to establish the relationship He desired with Abraham, it was necessary that Abraham have several characteristics which were the following.

A. FAITH V6. Abraham believed God. Heb 11:6.

Above all else, Abraham is renowned as a “man of faith.” From the first small step he took on the road from Ur, to his final faltering steps in old age, his whole life is epitomized by faith. It is the outstanding feature of his life. Fortunately, for us lesser beings, his life was not without moments of doubt and times of unbelief. There were occasions when he feared for his life and safety and even resorted to lying in an attempt to protect himself. So, our hero Abraham was not some superhuman being without fault or blemish. He was simply a man who walked by faith. Yet through that same faith, God still has many miracles to perform that will amaze all mankind.

Abraham’s life from beginning to end was truly a life of faith to which The New Testament bears witness.

Romans 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all (KJV).

Gal 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness (KJV).

Galatians 3:9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham (KJV).

Hebrews 11:8 By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went (KJV).

Hebrews 11:17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son (KJV).

B. OBEDIENCE V10. He obeyed God.

Obedience is simply “faith in action.” Faith provides the feet for obedience. Faith without action is not faith at all. It is only mental assent. Thus obedience without appropriate corresponding action has no other way in which to be made manifest.

James 2:14-18

¹⁴ *What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?*

¹⁵ *Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food.*

¹⁶ *If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?*

¹⁷ *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

¹⁸ *But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds."*

Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do (NIV).

C. COVENANT RELATIONSHIP THROUGH SACRIFICE Vs 9-11.

Abraham's covenant relationship was sealed by the death of certain animals that God prescribed. Our relationship with God is attained through the atoning death of the "Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world." Through Christ's death and resurrection we have been brought into covenant relationship with the God of the universe.

D. CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART Romans 4:11, 12. Romans 2:29

The seed of Abraham through both Isaac and Ishmael fulfill the old requirement of circumcision of the foreskin but Paul points out that one may be circumcised in the flesh yet not be a "real Jew." What God truly desires today is a "circumcised" heart that is dedicated and wholly committed to God.

Romans 2:28-29.

²⁸ *For you are not real Jews just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the Jewish initiation ceremony of circumcision.*

²⁹ *No, a real Jew is anyone whose heart is right with God. God is not looking for those who cut their bodies in actual body circumcision, but he is looking for those with changed hearts and minds. Whoever has that kind of change in his life will get his praise from God, even if not from you (TLB).*

E. PRESERVING THE SACRIFICE V 11.

Once Abraham had laid out the animal carcasses, the vultures began to fly around seeking to devour what he was offering to God. Abraham's strong commitment inspired him to drive away the birds of prey and keep his sacrifices intact for God. This is a type, symbolic of maintaining a close watch upon our personal lives and devotion to God. Many vultures will try to spoil our close relationship with God. Our dedicated devotion will motivate us to drive these away.

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ARE ALL ABRAHAM'S SEED

The analogy of sand, as from the sea shore, intimates the gritty, resolute, courageous, and determined nature and characteristics of the Israelites, i.e. descendants of Isaac and Jacob. Genesis 32:12 And (God) said, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude (KJV).

THE UNIQUENESS OF ISRAEL

Israel is the only nation on earth to whom God made the following promise.

Deuteronomy 28:1 *“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth” (NKJ).*

Deuteronomy 26:19 *“and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken” (NKJ).*

God’s Word in this regard has been both a tremendous blessing and a fearful curse throughout their generations. God’s promised blessings upon them when they have walked in His ways, have bestowed great favor upon them.

But when they have been in disobedience, the lack of His favor has been manifestly obvious too. Before we consider in more detail the special link God has with Israel, let us investigate in the next chapter some other aspects of just who the seed of Abraham are.

MERCY AND GRACE

Lamentations 3:22-23

²² *Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.*

²³ *They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. NKJV*

Jeremiah rejoiced that because of God’s unfailing mercies and faithfulness towards Israel they had not been consumed. How true this has proven to be in the history of Israel throughout the ages. How gloriously it will be manifested when God finally spiritually restores them to Himself and promotes them to be the premier nation above all others in the everlasting Kingdom that will be exalted in the earth. Grace is that characteristic that gives us far more than we could ever deserve and mercy is the goodness that delivers us from what we do deserve. Such blessings will finally afford Israel her glorious eternal inheritance.

The Holy One of Israel

The Holy One of Israel is a name that God attributed to Himself. He predicted the ultimate destiny of His chosen people very early in their history. Jehovah promised David in fulfillment of His covenant with Abraham, that from his descendants He would establish an everlasting kingdom.

Exodus 19:5-6

⁵ *Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine.*

⁶ *And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."* NKJV

2 Samuel 5:12 *So David knew that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that He had exalted His kingdom for the sake of His people Israel.* NKJV

2 Samuel 7:12-13

¹² *"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.*

¹³ *He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.* NKJV

2 Samuel 7:16 *And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.* NKJV

One of the many names and titles which God has attributed to Himself and by which He is known, is "The Holy One of Israel." This particular name appears some twenty-seven times in the book of Isaiah and in numerous other parts of the Bible. Here are a few examples,

Isaiah 30:15 *"for I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior."*

Isaiah 43:3 *"for thy maker is thy husband, Jehovah of hosts is his name, and thy redeemer is the holy one of Israel, 'God of all the earth', he is called."*

Isaiah 54:5 - literal translation *"for neither Israel nor Judah has been forsaken by his God, by Jehovah of hosts, though their land was filled with sin against the holy one of Israel."*

Jeremiah 51:5 “*and the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, the Holy One in Israel.*”

It is obviously a name by which Yaweh, the God of the Bible boldly affirms His special interest in and unique relationship with the people and land of Israel. However, there is also a much deeper affirmation too. The word by which God identifies His holiness is *Kadosh*, the word used most frequently to define and describe the purity and absolute integrity of God’s nature, essence and character. E.g.

Lev 20:26 - *You shall be holy (kadosh) to me: for I, the LORD, am holy (kadosh), and have set you apart from the peoples, that you should be mine.*

Kadosh and its various derivatives, is the word that is used most frequently to define the absolute perfection of God’s character. His integrity, honesty, truthfulness, and absolute uprightness is implied in His holiness.

Holiness is a general term used to indicate sanctity or separation from all that is sinful, impure, or morally imperfect; i.e., it is moral wholeness. The term is used with reference to persons, places, and things. Holiness is the essential basic attribute of the divine nature. It is, on the one hand, entire freedom from moral evil and, on the other, absolute moral perfection. The scriptures lay great stress upon this attribute of God (Exodus 15:11; 1 Sam. 2:2; Psalm 71:22; 99:9; 111:9; Isaiah. 6:3; Habakkuk. 1:12; Revelation 15:4; etc.). Of great consequence in this connection is the revelation of God’s holiness in respect of His dependability towards Israel.

By the holiness of God, it is not implied that He is subject to some law or standard of moral excellence external to Himself, but that all moral law and perfection have their eternal and unchangeable basis in His own nature. He is the One in whom these eternal sanctities reside, who is Himself the root and ground of them all. In this sense it is said without qualification, “There is none holy like the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:2); This is repeated in Revelation 15:4

⁴ *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed.” NLT*

This name therefore 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 fulfill every promise He has made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then His character, integrity and holiness are seriously flawed.

OUR WORLD IS PRESENTLY IN A VERY FRAGILE CONDITION

Its peace, security and its very existence are under constant threat from international terrorism and its likely repercussions. Terrorist groups are now operating on every part of our globe and more than 90% of them are Islamically motivated. Fanatical

warriors, in an internationally linked brigade, threaten the security of much of the world.

It is becoming abundantly clear that the Muslim motivated groups all have one ultimate target - Israel and its capital, Jerusalem. Every attack they make is intended to place more pressure on the world's nations to accede to the Islamic demands upon Israel. In order to achieve their ultimate aim, Israel must be conquered along with all its citizens and supporters. The intensity and determination shown by both sides, ensures that neither will relinquish their aims until one or the other is totally overthrown. In a very real sense, the problem is not merely Islam versus the world. Rather it is humanism versus God. It is therefore a truly spiritual battle. The paradigm represents an irresistible force (humanism) versus an immovable object (God). Is there any possible human solution that could positively influence this catastrophic finale?

Could God's "friend" Abraham, from whom the primary contestants are physical descendants, become an effective solution to the situation? God has made firm promises to both Isaac and Ishmael. Both destinies are clearly revealed in the Bible. He has promised land and territory to both heirs. If both sides can be convinced that Jehovah has a prophetic plan that will ultimately bless both lines of descendants, could there not be a mutually acceptable solution and result? And should not the church who are also spiritual descendants of Abraham, with some understanding of God's End Time purposes, become a moderator and guide to the contestants? If this is to happen, the church will need a much greater understanding of the profoundly complex situation and a sincere empathy with both parties.

At the core of this dispute are nations that have a common denominator. That common link is Abraham, as an ancient ancestor, and forefather to Jews, Christians and Muslims. With Abraham as a common predecessor it is imperative that each of these groups go back to their historic roots, acknowledge their common ancestry and behave like brethren instead of enemies. The prophet Isaiah calls all mankind to

"LOOK TO ABRAHAM YOUR FATHER"

Isaiah 51:1-3

¹ *"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the LORD (Jehovah) look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.*

² *Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him."*

³ *For the LORD will comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places; he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody (NKJ). (Emphasis added)*

The command is made, not only to Israel but to all who "follow after righteousness and who seek the Lord." Surely this includes the Jews, Christians and Muslims of our day.

In the midst of Isaiah's powerful prophetic words concerning the End Times, we have this intriguing command, "Look to (regard, think about, focus upon, respect and revere) Abraham your father." In this verse, the context of which obviously refers to Last Days events, Jehovah calls upon Israel to focus their attention on their oldest ancestor, Abraham. Given the prophetic context in which this occurs, there is surely a powerful reason for this call. Could it be that in these chaotic times, prior to the return of Christ and the establishment of His earthly kingdom, Father Abraham has an immense role to fulfill? Could it be that this mysterious figure might hold the vital key to solving the so called "Palestinian Problem?" Might there be a prophetic potential in Father Abraham and his promised inheritance to resolve the long conflict that has prevailed between his descendants?

Abraham, who was "alone" when God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, (modern Iraq) has certainly been greatly increased numerically in fulfillment of significant Bible prophecies. The new name that God gave him, meaning "father of multitudes" has certainly become a reality. He is widely recognized and venerated by three major religions on earth (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), comprised of billions of persons. At the present moment in time it may seem difficult to believe that the outcome the Bible predicts could actually ever happen. Whilst seriously considering the implications of our subject, it is a good idea to remind ourselves of the following statement. It is obviously a rhetorical question to which the answer is clear. There is absolutely nothing too hard for God to accomplish. Every reference to God in this article refers to Yaweh Elohim and vice versa.

Jeremiah 32:27 "I am the Lord, (Yaweh or Jehovah) the God (Elohim) of ALL mankind; is there ANYTHING too hard for me?" (TLB)

The primary meaning of the name Yaweh (English – Jehovah) is the "self existent one." He that was, and is, and is to come. The Eternal One.

In Exodus 3:15, God declared to Moses that His name would be Yaweh forever.

And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shall thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God (Yaweh Elohim) of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever (Hebrew: Ha Olam - for eternity,) and this is my memorial unto all generations (all generations of mankind).

Yahweh or Jehovah is one of the most important names for God in the Old Testament. It is derived from the verb "to be," meaning simply but profoundly, "I am who I am," and "I will be who I will be." The four-letter Hebrew word YHWH was the name by which God revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). This bush was a vivid symbol of God who burns like a fire with love and righteousness, yet remains the same and never diminishes. The divine name Yahweh is usually translated Lord in English versions of the Bible, because it became a practice in late Old Testament Judaism not to pronounce the sacred name YHWH, but to say instead "my Lord" (Adonai or HaShem – the Name) - a practice still used today in the synagogue. When the vowels of Adonai were attached to the consonants YHWH in the medieval period, the word Jehovah resulted. Today, many

Christians use the word Yahweh, the more original pronunciation, not hesitating to name the divine name since Jesus taught believers to speak in a familiar way to God. Some English translations of the Bible translate the word as Jehovah, while others use Yahweh (Nelson's Bible Dictionary).

Elohim is the Hebrew name by which God first reveals Himself in the book of Genesis. Elohim is the plural form of El, but it is usually translated in the singular. Some scholars have held that the plural represents an intensified form for the supreme God; others believe it describes the supreme God and His heavenly court of created beings. Still others hold that the plural form refers to the triune God of who works through Word and Spirit in the creation of the world. All agree that the plural form Elohim does convey the sense of the one Supreme Being who is the only true God (Nelson's Bible Dictionary).

According to the book of Genesis, Elohim is the creator of the whole universe and therefore NOTHING is too hard for Him.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth (NKJ).

We are also told, "This is the history of the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God (Hebrew: Yaweh Elohim) made the earth and the heavens" (Genesis 2:4).

The statement concerning God's omnipotence was also given to Sarah concerning the very son who is the particular subject of our study.

Genesis 18:13-14

¹³ *Then the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'"*

¹⁴ *Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son" (NIV).*

Likewise, Jesus Christ is the only Saviour for ALL mankind, no man can come to God but through Him. And NOTHING is too hard for Him (John 14:6).

Since Abraham is our present subject, let's endeavor to emulate him. When he apparently had no natural hope, in faith he continued to believe in hope.

Romans 4:18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be" (NIV).

When we consider the great chasm that exists today between Islam and the Kingdom of God, there might appear to be little human hope that this could ever be bridged. However, we know that if Yaweh has promised an inheritance for the descendants of Ishmael, it will surely happen. Since the Holy Scriptures forecast a divinely ordained plan for all the seed of Abraham, it will surely come to pass regardless of apparently

contrary circumstances. In a constantly changing world the only unchanging factor is the Bible, the inspired Word of the Living God.

The dawn of the new Millennium (2001) brought with it many new and strange phenomenas that threaten the security and future of all mankind. The whole world is apprehensive and not a little fearful, wondering what lies ahead. In the natural, the indications are far from positive. Were the future destiny of the world's nations dependent upon man's wisdom and efforts, it would be frighteningly bleak.

Jehovah God actually predicted that in the "Last Days" the world's masses would live in a state of consternation and dreadful confusion.

Joel 3:14 *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision (NIV).*

In Hebrew, the word "*hamon*", translated multitudes, implies "a noisy, tumultuous crowd of rumbling disquieted people, or to be in great commotion or tumult, to rage, war, moan, and clamor." One of the meanings of the Hebrew word "*charuts*" translated "decision" is a "threshing instrument having sharp teeth." Both of these words give intimation of the massive and clamorous disquiet that will fill the earth at this time.

JERUSALEM AND ISRAEL ARE THE PRIMARY TARGETS

The current international dilemma, which centers on the Middle East, will eventually draw the whole world into its vortex. Israel is the microcosm, the world the macrocosm. Ultimately all international attention will focus upon Israel, culminating in military action against her which will attract Jehovah's direct and angry personal intervention.

Joel 3:1-2

¹ *"At that time, when I restore the prosperity of Judah and Jerusalem," says the Lord,*

² *"I will gather the armies of the world into the 'Valley Where Jehovah Judges' and punish them there for harming my people, for scattering my inheritance among the nations and dividing up my land" (TLB).*

THREE THINGS FOR WHICH JEHOVAH WILL ULTIMATELY JUDGE THE GENTILE NATIONS

(Joel 3:1-3).

1. Persecuting and harming His covenant people Israel
2. Scattering them among the nations.
3. Presuming to divide the land of Israel (God's land).

GOD WILL DEFEAT THE ENEMIES OF ISRAEL

Joel 3:16-17

¹⁶ *The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the sky will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for his people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.*

¹⁷ *Then you will know that I, the LORD your God, dwell in Zion, my holy hill. Jerusalem will be holy; never again will foreigners invade her (NIV).*

Zechariah 12:1-9

¹ *This is the fate (destiny) of Israel, as pronounced by the Lord, who stretched out the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth, and formed the spirit of man within him:*

² *“I will make Jerusalem and Judah like a cup of poison to all the nearby nations that send their armies to surround Jerusalem.*

³ *Jerusalem will be a heavy stone burdening the world. And though all the nations of the earth unite in an attempt to move her, they will all be crushed.”*

⁴ *“In that day,” says the Lord, “I will bewilder the armies drawn up against her, and make fools of them, for I will watch over the people of Judah, but blind all her enemies.*

⁵ *“And the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, ‘The people of Jerusalem have found strength in the Lord Almighty, their God.’*

⁶ *“In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a little fire that sets the forest aflame - like a burning match among the sheaves; they will burn up all the neighboring nations right and left, while Jerusalem stands unmoved.*

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 won’t be filled with pride at their success.*

⁸ *“The Lord will defend the people of Jerusalem; the weakest among them will be as mighty as King David! And the royal line will be as 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 (TLB).*

THERE IS NO HUMAN SOLUTION

Modern technology, science, politics, and political strategies are worsening the world’s problems rather than solving them. We can clearly see this in such cases as Cambodia, Somalia, Sudan, etc, where the United Nations has failed abysmally. Humanly speaking, the United Nations Organization might appear to be the most obvious entity to produce a solution. Unfortunately, this political body, although the architects of Israel’s statehood, has been hijacked by humanistic political interests that are decidedly and determinedly anti Israel and anti God. Certainly the United Nations Organization, with its political prejudices, could never justly solve this problem.

ONLY GOD HOLDS THE SOLUTION

Thankfully the future will not be left to man’s wisdom or lack of it. God has planned from eternity a program that will usher in His glorious Kingdom rule upon earth. It involves the personal intervention of Messiah in major activities that will ultimately bless the whole world.

This will involve

1. The re-gathering and restoration of Israel, people and land to God (Isaiah 54:7-10).

2. The salvation of Israel through the direct intervention of Messiah (Zechariah 12:10).
3. Messiah will live in Jerusalem. Zechariah 2:10-12

In the time frame in which God will pour forth the spirit of grace and supplication upon Israel, He will also pour out His Spirit copiously upon the Gentile nations across the whole earth. (Joel 2:28-32) The nations will look to the glorious light that will shine from Jerusalem and bring to God their supplication and their wealth. According to Isaiah 60 verses 6 and 7 this company will include many of the sons of Ishmael.

A LIGHT TO THE GENTILE NATIONS TO BRING SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

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 tribes mentioned here (verses 6, 7) are all Arabic and Muslim. How wonderful to realize that one day they will present their rams at the altar of Jehovah!

God clearly intimates that the restoration of Israel to her land and former glory is too small a task in itself to be worthy of Almighty God through His Messiah. He will also (at the same time) bring the light of salvation to the whole Gentile world.

Isaiah 49:6

⁶ *Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'" NKJV*

To understand what will inevitably happen to Jerusalem and Israel, it is essential to be familiar with the prophetic implications of Jehovah's covenant with Abraham, the first Hebrew. God's Messiah will not only save and deliver Israel from her physical

enemies (Zechariah 12:1-9). He will also restore them spiritually to the God of their fathers.

Zechariah 13:1-2

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.*

² *“It shall be in that day” says the LORD of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land (NKJ).*

Immediately after a gigantic war against Israel, in which God will destroy the forces that attack the nation, the Messiah will reveal Himself to Israel (Zechariah 12:10, 13:6). At that time, a nation (Israel) will be spiritually born (again) in a day.

Isaiah 66:8-11

⁸ *Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, She gave birth to her children.*

⁹ *Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?” says the LORD. “Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?” says your God.*

¹⁰ *“Rejoice with Jerusalem, And be glad with her, all you who love her; Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn for her;*

¹¹ *That you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom, that you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her glory” (NKJV).*

WERE OLD TESTAMENTS SAINTS “BORN AGAIN?”

It appears to be generally surmised in Christian theology that Old Testament “saints” were not born again. It is evidently presumed that the Born Again experience is uniquely a New Covenant phenomenon that was not accessible or available prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus. In this sense it is therefore presumed only to be experienced by post crucifixion “New Covenant Believers.” However, Paul makes it clear that the blessing we receive as Christians was firstly given to Abraham. Salvation is received by the grace of God, through having faith in Jesus as your Savior. This was true in the days of the Old Testament saints -- before the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

It is true today. It will remain true in the future. God does not change!

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Eph 2.8-9

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Heb 13.8

OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

We will use the term "Old Testament saints" to refer to all those people who were saved by faith in God prior to Christ's atoning death.

And he (*Abraham*) believed in the Lord, and He (*God*) accounted it to him for righteousness. Gen 15.6

DAVID WAS SAVED BY FAITH IN GOD

(*David wrote...*) Psalms 13:5-6

⁵ *But I have trusted in Your mercy; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.*

⁶ *I will sing to the LORD, Because He has dealt bountifully with me. NKJV*

ISAIAH WAS SAVED BY FAITH IN GOD

(*Isaiah wrote...*) *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation... Isa 61.10a*

Numerous other identities in the Old Testament bore witness to the salvation which was theirs in Jehovah.

THE GOSPEL WAS PREACHED TO ABRAHAM

Paul assures us that the Gospel, the good news of salvation was first preached to Abraham.

Galatians 3:8. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed" (NKJ).

Galatians 3:14. He redeemed us in order that the (same) blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. Abraham had faith (believed) in the Lord, and the Lord accounted it to him for righteousness. Therefore, Abraham was saved.

The clearest message and explanation of the New Birth was originally given to an audience of one person, namely Nicodemus, a "ruler" of the Jews and a doctor of the Law. Jesus obviously invited him to be born again (V.7) giving a clear explanation of what was entailed. This occurred of course before Jesus died.

Nicodemus was an acknowledged ruler and teacher in Israel. He was addressed by Jesus as a teacher (Gk. Didaskalos, i.e. Rabbi, Doctor, Master, Teacher in Israel). Nicodemus also addressed Jesus as "Rabbi." Could not a ruler of the Jews recognize another Rabbi?

John 3:2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him (KJV).

Jesus appears to express surprise that as a teacher of such standing, Nicodemus did not know about being born again (V.10). This implies that it should have been common knowledge to Jewish teachers. It is also clear that Jesus was encouraging Nicodemus to become "born again." This was of course prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

ISRAEL WAS THE “CHURCH” IN THE WILDERNESS

There is clear intimation in the New Testament that the Children of Israel in their deliverance from Egypt and subsequent wilderness wanderings were actually the church of their era.

Acts 7:37-38

³⁷ *This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.*

³⁸ *This is he that was in the church (Ecclesia: Called out company) in the wilderness with the angel which spoke to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us (KJV). (Emphasis added)*

The word for church in the Old Testament Septuagint (Greek) version is “ecclesia” just as in the New Testament. It obviously has the same basic meaning in both.

Although Ecclesia soon became a distinctively Christian word, it has its own pre-Christian history; and to those, whether Jews or Greeks, who first heard it applied to the Christian society, it would come with suggestions of familiar things. Throughout the Greek world and right down to New Testament times (compare Acts 19:39), Ecclesia was the designation of the regular assembly of the whole body of citizens in a free city-state, “called out” (Greek ek, “out,” and kalein, “to call”). The Septuagint translators, again, used the word to translate the Hebrew qahal, which in the Old Testament denotes the “congregation” or community of Israel, especially in its religious aspect as the people of God.

It is also clearly stated in verse 9 that the Israelites tempted Christ while they were in the wilderness. There was obviously interaction between the Israelites and Christ Himself in the wilderness.

Psalm 78:35 And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer (KJV).

The Hebrew word for redeemer (goel) is the word for a savior; and is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, the strong God, the Most High, the Redeemer of a lost world.

GOD’S COVENANT WITH ISRAEL IS ETERNAL

Psalm 105:8-11

⁸ *He remembers His covenant forever (Ha Olam), the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,*

⁹ *The covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac,*

¹⁰ *And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting (Olam) covenant,*

¹¹ *Saying, “To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance.”*

All the major covenants, including the New Covenant, were made initially with Israel. These include the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and the New Covenant. All

these covenants predicted and prefigured the redemptive ministry of Messiah. They were types and shadows of the ministry He would fulfill.

Leviticus 26:44-45

⁴⁴ *And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God.*

⁴⁵ *But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD (KJV).*

JEHOVAH'S ENCOURAGEMENT TO JERUSALEM

Isaiah 66:10-15

¹⁰ *"Rejoice with Jerusalem! Be glad with her, all you who love her and mourn for her.*

¹¹ *Delight in Jerusalem! Drink deeply of her glory even as an infant drinks at its mother's generous breasts.*

¹² *Peace and prosperity will overflow Jerusalem like a river," says the LORD. "The wealth of the nations will flow to her. Her children will be nursed at her breasts, carried in her arms, and treated with love.*

¹³ *I will comfort you there as a child is comforted by its mother."*

¹⁴ *When you see these things, your heart will rejoice. Vigorous health will be yours! Everyone will see the good hand of the LORD on his people — and his anger against his enemies. NLT*

LIVING BY FAITH

Although living by faith is generally seen as a New Testament phenomena by Christian commentators, Habakkuk in the Old Testament also speaks of the just(ified) living by his faith.

Habakkuk 2:4 *"Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but (**on the contrary**) the just shall live by his faith" (NKJ - Emphasis added).*

This verse clearly shows that some people in the Old Testament lived by the faith by which they were also justified by God. If some people did, why not others?

ENOCH'S WALK WITH JEHOVAH

Genesis 5:22. *And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters (KJV).*

How could God walk with Enoch unless Enoch were saved and justified? And how could Enoch possibly walk with God unless he walked by faith?

Amos confirms that it is not possible for one to walk with God unless they are in agreement.

Amos 3:3. *Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? (NKJ)*

ABRAHAM'S FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

Gen 15:6 *And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness (NKJ).*

John 8:56 *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad (KJV).*

Abraham was justified by (his) faith and because of that faith, God declared him righteous. When reference to righteousness is made in the New Testament, exactly the same word is used of believers. Abraham was justified by faith and not by the works of the law; for his faith was imputed to him for righteousness (Romans 4:1-5). David also bears testimony to the same for Abraham's faith (Greek: *diakaiosune*) as is used for the righteousness of New Testament doctrine, Romans 4:6-8.

Romans 4:6 – 8

⁶ *This is what David meant when he spoke of the happiness of the person whom God accepts as righteous, apart from anything that person does:*

⁷ *"Happy are those whose wrongs are forgiven, whose sins are pardoned!*

⁸ *Happy is the person whose sins the Lord will not keep account of!"*

⁹ *Does this happiness that David spoke of belong only to those who are circumcised? No indeed! It belongs also to those who are not circumcised. For we have quoted the scripture, "Abraham believed God, and because of his faith God accepted him as righteous." (GNB)*

Abraham, the father of the Jewish race, was justified by faith, even before he was circumcised; and certainly before the Law came through Moses. Therefore salvation must be of the Jews as well as the Gentiles. The covenant that God made with Abraham was to be applicable to his seed after him.

Genesis 17:7 *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee (KJV).*

ELIJAH WAS TRANSLATED INTO HEAVEN

II Kings 2:11 *Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven (NKJ).*

GOD'S LOVE FOR ISRAEL IS EVERLASTING

Jeremiah 31:1-3

¹ *"At the same time," says the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people."*

² *Thus says the LORD: "The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness - Israel, when I went to give him rest.*

³ *The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you" (NKJ).*

We Christian believers rejoice and revel in the knowledge that we are loved by God with an everlasting love. However, the only place that this phrase actually occurs in the Bible is spoken directly to Israel in this verse (Jeremiah 31:3). This clearly shows that Israel is loved with the very same quality and duration of love that also applies to the Church. The Hebrew word used to describe the everlasting nature of God's love for Israel is Ha Olam, which is the very same word that describes the everlasting nature of God Himself.

Genesis 21:33 Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God (NKJV).

Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable (NKJV).

SALVATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The Hebrew words used most frequently in the Tanaach (O.T) for salvation are various derivatives of "yesha". This is obviously the word from which the name Yeshua or Jesus comes.

Moses and company sang this song of redemption following their deliverance from Egypt. "The LORD (Jehovah) has become my "yesha" – salvation.

Exodus 15:2 The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation (Yesha) he is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him (KJV).

1 Samuel 2:1 And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoices in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation (Yesha) (KJV).

DAVID ALSO SANG ABOUT HIS SALVATION (YESHA)

2 Samuel 22:47 The LORD lives; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation (Yesha) (KJV).

1 Chronicles 16:23 Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; show forth from day to day his Yeshua (KJV).

Psalm 9:14 That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy Yesha (KJV).

Psalm 14:7 Oh that the salvation (Yesha) of Israel were come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad (KJV).

Psalm 13:5-6

⁵ *But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.*

⁶ *I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me (KJV).*

Psalm 18:2 *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, (Yesha) and my high tower (KJV).*

OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

In the Bible, saints are people who have been separated from the world and consecrated to the family, 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. Consecration (setting apart) and purity are the basic meanings of the term. Believers are called “saints” (Rom. 1:7) and “saints in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:1) because they belong to the One who provided their sanctification.

THERE IS EVIDENCE OF SUCH PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Deuteronomy 33:1-3

¹ *Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.*

² *And he said: "The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came with ten thousands of saints; From His right hand came a fiery law for them.*

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

Jesus Is the Seed of Abraham

The Bible shows very clearly that in respect of His humanity Jesus Christ came from the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as did David, king of Israel. He is “of the seed of Abraham.”

Matt 1:1 The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham (NKJ).

Heb 2:16 For verily he (Jesus) took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham (KJV).

Matthew 1:1-17 provides a genealogy of Jesus. The principal intention of this genealogy is to prove that Jesus Christ is truly of the seed and line of Abraham. It is like an ancestry chart given to prove a title and thus make out a claim. The purpose is to prove that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of David and the Son of Abraham and therefore of the nation and family out of which the Messiah was to arise. The promise of the blessing was made to Abraham and his seed, and they who would have an inheritance through Christ as the sons of Abraham. The line of descent is traced not to Mary the mother of our Lord, but to Joseph the husband of Mary (v. 16), for although the Jews always reckoned their genealogies by the paternal side, Mary was also of the same tribe and family with Joseph, so that both by his mother and his supposed father were of the house of David. This shows that the kingdom of the Messiah is not founded in a natural descent from David. It was promised to Abraham that Christ should descend from him (Genesis 12:3; 22:18), and to David that He should descend from him (2 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 89:3, 132:11). Therefore Christ is descended from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob through the righteous line that also produced King David.

Jesus Christ is not merely a seed of Abraham. He is THE seed of Abraham, i.e. the greatest seed that the line of Abraham ever produced. In this respect He is absolutely unique among all of Abraham’s descendants. However, He is not THE seed to the exclusion of all others. Rather, He is the pre-eminent seed above all others. He is the one who is absolutely unique, superior to and greater than all Abraham’s many offspring. It is certainly only through Jesus, the unique and outstanding seed of Abraham, that ultimately all the people groups on earth will be divinely blessed. He will be finally revealed as the King of kings and Lord of lords over all the earth and those upon it. His name will be exalted above all names and every knee will bow before Him. The predicted establishment of the kingdom of God on earth will only be made possible through the redemptive work of Jesus the Son of God. Under the rule of that great kingdom, every person, tribe and nation will be blessed and enriched beyond description. ALL humanity, irrespective of their previous religious beliefs and affiliations will finally understand that Jehovah is truly the one

true and living God and that Jesus Christ is also God. Through Christ and His body of believers, righteousness and justice will reign supreme and God's whole family of humanity will live under His direct benevolent care. In calling Christ the son of David, and the son of Abraham, He shows that God is faithful to his promise, and will make good every word that He has spoken.

JESUS THE SON OF DAVID

In many places in the New Testament Jesus is described as "Jesus as the Son of David." However, the question arises, how could Jesus be the son of David if David lived approximately 1000 years before Jesus? The answer is that Christ (the Messiah) was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the seed of David. He was the one that God had said would come after David's and reign days were fulfilled.

2 Samuel 7:12 *"When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. NKJV*

In other words, Jesus was the promised Messiah, which meant He was of the seed of David and the seed of Abraham. Matthew 1 gives the genealogical proof that Jesus, in His humanity, was a direct descendant of Abraham and David through Joseph, Jesus' legal father. The genealogy in Luke chapter 3 gives Jesus' lineage through His mother, Mary who was also a descendant of the royal house of David. Jesus is a descendant of David, by adoption through Joseph, and by blood through Mary. Primarily though, when Christ was referred to as the Son of David, it was meant to refer to His Messianic title as the Old Testament prophesied concerning Him.

Jesus was frequently addressed as "Lord, thou son of David" several times by people who, by faith, were seeking mercy or healing. The woman whose daughter was being tormented by a demon (Matthew 15:22), the two blind men by the wayside (Matthew 20:30), and blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:47), all cried out to the Son of David for help.

Bartimaeus addressed Him specifically as "Yeshua Ben David" indicating clearly that he had learned from some source the true identity of Jesus

Mark 10:47 *...blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" NKJV*

The titles by which they declared their faith in Him emphasize His true identity and role. Calling Him Lord expressed their sense of His deity, dominion, and power, and by calling Him "son of David," they were professing Him to be the Messiah. Even the Pharisees who were often the greatest critics of Jesus understood what was meant when they heard the people calling Jesus "Son of David." But unlike those who cried out in faith, they were so blinded by their own pride and lack of understanding of the scriptures that they couldn't see what the blind beggars could see – that here was the Messiah they had supposedly been waiting for all their lives. They hated Jesus because He wouldn't give them the honor they thought they

deserved, so when they heard the people hailing Jesus as the Savior, they became enraged (Matthew 21:15) and plotted to destroy Him (Luke 19:47).

The most important fact to realize about Jesus is that He is not merely a prophet, nor teacher or example. He is the promised Saviour and Redeemer, the Messiah of Israel and as such is the sovereign King of the universe.

Luke 2:11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord (KJV).

John 4:42 And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world (KJV).

Acts 5:31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. NKJV

1 Timothy 4:10 For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe. NKJV

2 Timothy 1:1 Greeting Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, NKJV

2 Peter 1:1 Greeting the Faithful Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: NKJV

HE DID NOT SIMPLY COME TO SHOW US THE WAY TO GOD. HE IS THE WAY (John 14:6).

No one can come to God except through Him. There are many people who recognize and acknowledge that Jesus is a prophet and they admire His teachings, but they have no knowledge of His saving grace nor do they personally know Him as a Saviour. For example, this is very true of many sincere Muslims. They acknowledge and revere Jesus (Isa) as a prophet and know something of His teachings but they deny the essential truths concerning His divinity and certainly of His death, resurrection and His atonement for the sins of the world. Knowing and obeying the teachings of Jesus in our own strength and ability can never give us a relationship with God. Only through receiving Him into our heart as Saviour and Lord, can the gap that sin has created be bridged and give us peace with God and the peace of God.

The first prophetic biblical reference to Christ defines him as the “seed of woman.” This is very significant because in the Bible persons are always referred to by their paternal ancestors, i.e. their fathers, therefore being the seed of man. But Jesus, although birthed by Mary, was sired by God, through the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 3:15 *And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (NKJ).*

Paul makes it abundantly clear that Jesus, who is the only Savior of mankind, is a direct descendant of Abraham and David, and continues the line of Abraham through all who are in Christ by faith. It is imperatively important that every Christian recognize and acknowledge the authentic Jewishness of Jesus. The prophetic purposes of God have Israel at their very centre and it is impossible to fully understand and comprehend what God is about to perform in the earth without a keen awareness of Israel’s centrality to that purpose. The Church has not eclipsed the role of Israel. It has been grafted into that same purpose.

However, the result of that redemptive work achieved only through Christ’s atoning death and resurrection, is that the blessing of redemption might come to all mankind both Jews and Gentiles. Yes, all the promises to Abraham are ultimately fulfilled through Abraham’s greatest Son, Jesus, but those blessings spoken of in Genesis, are going to come upon all the peoples of the world also through Jesus. Paul summarizes this so decisively,

Galatians 3:14 *That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith (NKJ).*

Galatians 3:29 *And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (NKJ).*

The seed of Abraham denotes not only those who descend from him by natural issue but those who inherit relationship to him through faith in Jesus Christ and imitate his character, independent of natural descent. In this sense the NIV usually translates seed as “offspring.”

Romans 4:16. *Therefore the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring – not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all (NIV).*

The Church Of Jesus Christ

Because Jesus is of the seed of Abraham, all those who are “in Christ” through faith in His atonement are also said to be of the seed of Abraham. Thus the Church of Jesus Christ is spiritually a descendant of Abraham.

The analogy of the stars of heaven refers to the Church of Jesus Christ - The Heavenly Company.

Genesis 22:17-18

¹⁷ *That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;*

¹⁸ *And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice (KJV).*

Galatians 3:8-9

⁸ *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.”*

⁹ *So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham (NKJ).*

THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL IS THE SEED OF ABRAHAM

All the members of Christ’s Body are the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Rom 4:16-17

¹⁶ *Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham’s offspring - not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.*

¹⁷ *As it is written: “I have made you a father of many nations.” He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed - the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were (NIV).*

Seed is biological, genealogical and spiritual. Our life is in Christ who is of the seed of Abraham. We have been impregnated with the seed (and DNA) of Christ and of Abraham as His forefather. Genetic components such as chromosomes and DNA pass from generation to generation. Therefore, whoever possesses Christ and is possessed by Him has His eternal life; whoever does not have Christ does not have that life, for the life resides in God’s Son.

John 3:36 *He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*"
NKJV

The eternal life that God offers is (transmitted to us) in Christ

John 5:39-40

39 *You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me,*
40 *yet you refuse to come to me to have life* (NIV).

1 Peter 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word (Logos = Christ) of God* (NIV).

EVERY BORN AGAIN BELIEVER IS A SPIRITUAL DESCENDANT OF ABRAHAM

Gal 3:8-9

⁸ *The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."*

⁹ *So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith* (NIV).

Romans 4:11 *So then, he (Abraham) is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them* (NIV).

Every Christian, whether they realize it or not, owes an enormous debt to Abraham for they are among his spiritual descendants. Paul says, "Abraham is the father of all who believe." It is my firm belief that at this critical time in prophetic history, every Christian, Pastor and Church, should seek to acquaint themselves thoroughly with their forefather Abraham and discover the prophetic implications of our relationship to him and to all his descendants. Such knowledge and understanding will enable us to prepare for what is about to happen in the prophetic plan and purpose of God. Unless we are conscious and mindful of the prophetic strategy that God has set in motion, we cannot hope to be prepared for the alarming events that will sweep the world prior to the manifestation and emergence of God's sovereign rule over the earth and all its inhabitants.

Islam has in its theological agenda, a strategy whereby it plans to subdue all nations and establish Islamic Sharia law across the whole earth. That deceptive objective is on a confrontational course with the Kingdom of God whose ruler is Messiah Jesus. The whole earth will rock and shake when this mighty confrontation takes place. The power of God will be made manifest in a dimension that will strike fear and awe into the hearts of all mankind. It will also cause God's enemies to capitulate to Him and submit to His Will. This will be a prelude to the submissive spirit which will characterize the hearts and minds of the citizens of God's Kingdom. All mankind

will gladly surrender and joyfully yield to the righteous and merciful rule of God's sovereign King.

THE JEWISH ORIGINS OF OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH

The Bible, which is the foundation stone of our Faith, the source of all our knowledge of God, doctrines and Christian lifestyle, came to us from and through the Jewish people.

Romans 9:4-5

⁴ *who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;*

⁵ *of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen (NKJ).*

Two thirds of the Bible is dedicated to the history and prophetic future of Israel. The Bible opens with the twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis) and closes with twelve tribes (Revelation 21:12). Our holy scriptures were written and preserved by Jewish scribes. They guaranteed the accuracy of our Bible through their dedicated methods of transcribing.

Jewish "saints" are the patriarchs and fathers of our Faith. (See Romans 9:4, 5).

Jewish believers wrote the New Testament.

Jesus, the Lord of the Church, was and is a Jew according to the flesh.

His original name was Yeshua - Hebrew for Jehovah's Salvation

JESUS, THE FOUNDER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH WAS BORN A JEW

Matthew 1:18

¹⁸ *Now this is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. NLT*

Romans 1:3 *It is the Good News about his Son, Jesus, who came as a man, born into King David's royal family line (NLT).*

Revelation 5:5 *But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, "Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne, has conquered. He is worthy to open the scroll and break its seven seals" (NLT).*

YESHUA LIVED BY THE SPIRIT OF THE TORAH

Yeshua clearly stated that He had not come to destroy (Greek: *kataluo* – undermine or demolish) the Law but rather to fulfill it. During His life here He did not break the Law of Moses but He interpreted the spirit of it in His teachings and lifestyle.

Matt 5:17-19

¹⁷ *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy (them) but to fulfill.*

¹⁸ *“For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

¹⁹ *“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (NKJ).*

He lived His whole life as a Jew always observing the spirit of the Torah and fulfilling the sacred principles of the Law by the Spirit.

Jesus also observed all the Jewish Festivals. At twelve years of age He became a son of the Commandments according to Biblical and Jewish tradition.

Luke 2:41-43.

⁴¹ *Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival.*

⁴² *When Jesus was twelve years old, they attended the festival as usual.*

⁴³ *After the celebration was over, they started home to Nazareth, but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem (NLT).*

YESHUA WAS A RABBI

It is a sad fact that the majority of Christians today give little credence or emphasis to the reality of Christ’s Jewishness and His unending relationship to the Jewish people and their land. In the days of His flesh living in a tightly knit Jewish community, He was commonly recognized as a Jewish Rabbi.

John 1:38 *Jesus looked around and saw them following. “What do you want?” he asked them. They replied, “Rabbi” (which means Teacher), “where are you staying?”*

When addressed as “Rabbi”, Jesus did not correct the person nor remonstrate with them. He obviously accepted that title without objection.

Nicodemus, a ruler in Israel said, (John 3:2)

“Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (NKJ).

Jesus died as a Jew. Even though He died as one crucified according to Roman law and custom after His death He was buried according to Jewish custom.

John 19:40 *Together they wrapped Jesus’ body in a long linen cloth with the spices, as is the Jewish custom of burial (NLT).*

When Christ returns to this earth He will return as a Jew to a sacred Jewish location on the Mount of Olives.

Zechariah 14:4-5

4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives will split apart,

making a wide valley running from east to west, for half the mountain will move toward the north and half toward the south. NLT

When He ascended to His father He rose from a Jewish location watched by a company of His Jewish associates and the angelic messengers said that He would one day return in like manner as you have seen Him go.

Acts 1:10-11

¹⁰ *And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,*

¹¹ *who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." NKJV*

THE PROMISE OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION WAS MADE TO ABRAHAM

Gen 22:17-18

¹⁷ *"blessing I will bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.*

¹⁸ *"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (NKJ).*

GENTILES WERE "GRAFTED INTO" THE JEWISH TREE

Romans 11:24 *For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? (NKJ)*

We Gentiles have been grafted into God's tree as branches to bear fruit, but the roots and trunk of the tree are Israel. The Church itself has no "roots." It is a branch grafted on to a tree. Israel is the root and trunk. Without Israel, we Gentiles would have no standing or foundation before God. So obviously we have no reason to boast. Any branch once detached from its trunk and stem withers and dies. It is cut off from the very source of its life and cannot exist alone. The Church is incomplete and withered when detached from its original trunk.

Romans 11:18 *... do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you (NKJ).*

Romans 11:24 *For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree (NKJ).*

The origins of the Church of Jesus Christ are indisputably Jewish and its ultimate destiny will be conjoined to Israel. After the first three centuries of the church's history, largely due to the Gentiles fathers, its Jewish roots and affinities were largely deserted. The departure from Hebraic roots was clearly confirmed through the influence of Constantine. But the plan of God has always been to have a

redeemed community that is neither Jew nor Gentile but a synergy of both. In the midst of the great challenges that both Israel and the Church will face in the Last Days of this era there will be a convergence of Israel and the Church. This unity will occur as Satanic forces and Anti Christ influences attack both Israel and Christian believers. The evil principalities that make war upon Israel will be recognized as a common enemy of both Israel and the Church and will be met with a common resistance that unites them both. This new manifestation of Jew and Gentile together will form the culture of those who rule and reign with the Messiah in His established Kingdom. It will be manifested as the ONE NEW MAN.

Ishmael's Descendants Are Abraham's Seed Too

The love that Jehovah 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, i.e. 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.

Genesis 16:11-12

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.*

¹² *He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" (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 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 Yaweh 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 has become 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 Jehovah would hear his prayer. This link will be seen again shortly when massive numbers of Ishmael's descendants cry out to Jehovah. Had it not been for Yaweh'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 Jehovah who quickly responded to her.

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).*

Yaweh, because of His love for Ishmael, 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.

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 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 *Hadad, 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

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 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 a child 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:

Genesis 16:11-12

“Behold, you are with child, and shall bear a son; you shall call his name Ishmael; because The Lord has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen” (RSV).

When a feast was held to celebrate the weaning of Isaac, who was born thirteen years later, Ishmael caused trouble by 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 loved him and did not want to see him go. God however 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). “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 little is known about this period of his life. 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 today is known as the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, where the conflict for control of it still rages between the descendants of Ishmael and Isaac.

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.” 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 – in the Book of Jubilees – a Jewish apocryphal book written between the Old Testament and the New Testament – in it 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

The sons of Keturah (Abraham's second wife following the death of Sarah) and their descendants are also of the seed (sperm) of Abraham. According to the flesh they, like Ishmael, are authentic members of the family of Abraham's seed. As such they are also in line to receive the promises made to his seed.

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 is 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.

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 (NKJ).*

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 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. Skeptics 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

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 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 unknown to many.

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 descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael. The term is probably sometimes used as a general name for all the 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 16:1-6
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” (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 his 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 tells us that

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 IshamEL.

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 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 Yaweh as a sign that they were part of Yaweh’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.

HIS CHARACTER AND LIFESTYLE DESCRIBED

Genesis 16:8-12

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 fulfill 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

Gal 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 centering 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. Nevertheless, 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.*

They lived in the wilderness. 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

As we have previously mentioned 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 possibly 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 (goyim = Gentiles). 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 *he 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”.

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.)

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

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).*

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 not 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 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

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

Jeremiah 47:4

⁴ *"The time has come for the Philistines to be destroyed, along with their allies from Tyre and Sidon. Yes, the LORD is destroying the Philistines, those colonists from Crete. NLT*

It should be noticed that the name only occurs four 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 (JEHOVAH) 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.*

Israel at that time will be allotted a share of the land, TOGETHER with the tribes of Israel...

God has decreed that the family feud between Arabs and Jews shall one day be ended.

In that day, Ishmael and Isaac shall at last embrace. And Esau and Jacob shall 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 uncleannesses. 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.” 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

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: “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” (Deuteronomy 7:2).

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 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. 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. And a bastard (people) shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. 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 35:1-2

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 fulfillment 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 25:16-17 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 through 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: 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 (verses 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.

V 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 succor 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."

THE EXODUS OF MOSES

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).*

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 honored 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 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.

Ishmael's Wonderful Inheritance!

In many cultures and societies around the world, names are immensely important and very significant. 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 (Yaweh) 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" which is an expression frequently used in scripture for God Himself in physical appearance. It usually refers to a physical manifestation of God in a form appropriate to visiting man. 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 as 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 appears to convey 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 (Yaweh) 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 Yaweh. 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 – 14

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?"*

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 Yaweh who had appeared to her.
2. She expressed and verbalized her faith in the promise of Yaweh 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 (Heb: Shma) 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 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

Yod, which means hand

Shin, which means consume or destroy

Mem, which signifies nations/waters

Ayin, which means to see

Aleph which means God

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.

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.

CIRCUMCISION – THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT

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.

Gen 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.

Gen 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 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 wished 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.

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.

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).*

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 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 Yaweh the God of Abraham and to His Messiah!

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 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.

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 submit to their ordained place in God's purposes.

Genesis 25:8-10

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 excellence of character, integrity and hospitality. They have clearly 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 Isaac and Ishmael. Once Ishmael's descendants are brought into harmony with Yaweh'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 favorite 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).*

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 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 will 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 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 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 favorites, 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".

Genesis 16:12

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".

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 world-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 4:29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now (NKJ).

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 in the home which must have gone on 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 media headlines and the nations lined up against Israel in Psalm 83 inhabited the ancient lands of Israel's current neighbors. 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 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 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."*

Asaph, the writer of the Psalm, cannot resist telling the Lord exactly how he'd like Israel's enemies to be dealt with. 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 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 favor, 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.

Zechariah 12:10-11 "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. Please note that Zechariah says that the Holy Spirit with grace and supplications will be poured out on the family of David AND on the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The inhabitants of Jerusalem currently are not only Jewish, there are also Christians and Muslims living in Jerusalem. Grace and prayers will be poured out on them too causing a unity to evolve between all three parties. They will together be formed into a Messianic brotherhood.

This will amazing revelation of the Messiah to His brethren will be a prophetic fulfillment 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 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 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

ISAIAH REITERATES GOD'S THREATS AGAINST THE 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 neighboring enemies decisively defeating and humiliating them, Jehovah now offers amnesty and peace to those same nations.

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 headlines from the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz recently proclaimed, "Palestinian Authority Is Looking for Regional Crisis." The article states, "Israeli Defense Force believes that the Palestinians have no intention of stopping the violence, and that they actually want the hostilities to heat up even further, prompting a devastating regional crisis." This very crisis, which will soon erupt into war, is described in great detail in the Bible.

The Israeli-Arab conflict will ultimately culminate in an amazing victory for Israel. The prayer of Psalm 83, Joel 3 and Zech 12:10 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 19 – 21

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 83:11 *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*

IN ANOTHER PART OF THE BIBLE THE PROPHET OBADIAH SAYS,

Obadiah 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 salt pits, 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 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 ALL OF THE ABOVE, THE FOLLOWING CONCLUSIONS CAN BE DRAWN:

PROPOSED POLITICAL PEACE INITIATIVES WILL ALL FAIL

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, 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. (Joel 2:23, 24; 26-29)

THE PROMISED "SAVIOUR" 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 true sons of Ishmael to assume their God assigned place among the descendants of Abraham. Despite all their deviousness and intrigues, Yaweh 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 fulfill His prophetic promise to Isaac. Meanwhile every lover of Yaweh 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 12:1-3

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*

MESSIAH WILL VISIT ISRAEL TO REVEAL TO THEM 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 neighboring 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 this 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 presently partially and temporarily spiritually blind 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.

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 venue. Thus there were no Egyptians (Gentiles) present when he revealed his identity to his brothers. The eyes to which he unveiled His 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

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 the 144,000 is a meticulously accurate count but that the number 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 be raptured i.e. snatched away from the earth before the beginning of the tribulation that will overtake humanity. One of the main proofs of 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 Heb. *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 and example 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 a 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

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

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*

In the manifest Kingdom of God, when Jehovah will reign over all the nations on earth from the throne of David in Jerusalem, Israel will be very definitely a Jewish State. Those sons of Ishmael who have then recognized and acknowledged that Jehovah is the true God and that Yeshua the Messiah is also God will be settled in the newly arranged territories adjacent to the enlarged region that will be Eretz Israel. They will live happily together with the citizens of Israel as did the Jebusites after David's conquest of Salem. (1 Chronicles 11:4-9) At that time Israel will also enjoy good relationships with both Syria and Egypt.

Isaiah 19:23 In that day Egypt and Assyria will be connected by a highway. The Egyptians and Assyrians will move freely between their lands, and they will worship the same God.

24 And Israel will be their ally. The three will be together, and Israel will be a blessing to them.

25 For the LORD Almighty will say, "Blessed be Egypt, my people. Blessed be Assyria, the land I have made. Blessed be Israel, my special possession!" NLT

A Modern Anti Christ?

The basic meaning of “Anti Christ” is not primarily “against Christ” but rather “in 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 the deity of Jesus and every aspect of His vicarious redemptive role as the Lamb of God, the sin bearer. Islam 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 spiritual 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 Jesus 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 by 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. Abram submitted to God's call.

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 Yaweh, he unhesitatingly obeyed Him. In truth he submitted to Yaweh, 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 *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.

Gen 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

Genesis 22:1-2

"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' ". (R.S.V.)

Hebrews 11:17 *"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 ..."* (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.) This is evidently a rhetorical question to which the answer is "Yes", because according to Hebrews 11:17, Isaac was offered by faith.

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 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). Ishmael was never a promised child.

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.

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.

Genesis 17:23-26

²³ *So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s*

house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him.

²⁴ *Abraham was ninety-nine years old 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 *That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael (NKJV).*

Thus Ishmael received in his body the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant on the same day that his father did, which was 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 Il Alah 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.

Yaweh, 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*
- 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 DEFENSE 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 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, ISRAEL AND ISLAM

Zech 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.*

The prophet Zechariah does not say “on the House of David **even the people** (inhabitants) of Jerusalem” but specifically “**AND ON the inhabitants of Jerusalem.**” This intimates two separate groups of people. The inhabitants of Jerusalem today are not only Jewish there are also Christians and Muslims residing there. Is God declaring that He will also pour out the Holy Spirit in grace, supplications and revelation to Jews Christians and Muslims in Jerusalem? I believe this may well be so and it will constitute a new era and fresh outpouring as predicted by the prophet Joel that will encompass these three people groups who are all seed of Abraham. In a world in which the greatest current danger is the animosity between Muslim and non Muslim nations, how brilliant is a strategy through which God will produce a unity in Jerusalem that may quickly spread throughout the whole earth? As a direct result of this amazing event, I believe that millions of Muslims will come to faith in Yeshua HaMashiach, the promised Messiah of Israel. So too will a massive multitude of people from every other religion on earth.

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).

Revelation 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 Palestinians 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 an esoteric 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 governed from 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 present 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. (Hebrews 12:27).

A WORLD IN TRAVAIL

Travail speaks of the pains of labor (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*

Rom 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 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.

Haggai 2:7 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 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.

Let me try to paraphrase what I believe God is saying. “I am going to so 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 smoldering 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 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.

“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” (Isaiah 2:19,21).

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” (Philippians 2:10,11).

“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” (Zechariah 2:11).

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).*

Psalms 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).*

Psalms 72:11 *Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him (KJV).*

Psalms 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).*

Psalms 82:8 *Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations (KJV).*

Psalms 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).

“And all men shall be blessed in Him: and all nations shall call Him blessed” (Psalm.72:17).

THE KINGDOM EMERGES IN MUCH TRIBULATION

“That we must, through much tribulation enter the Kingdom of God” (Acts14:22).

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 kindred's 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 in the near future will radically affect millions of Muslim people. 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 ETERNAL 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. As the prophecies of Revelation unfold, Jehovah God will reap a harvest larger and more spectacular than anyone has previously envisaged. 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 for the sons of Ishmael to understand is what we have emphasized throughout this book, that Jehovah has prepared a specific and blessed destiny for them too. When they can 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 END OF THE STORY

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 symbolizes 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 21:12-16

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 united 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.

What Can Christians Do?

Most Churches and their members need to repent of wrong attitudes in 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 fulfill 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 fulfill 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 distorted religion and embracing true salvation through the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

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