

## **BIBLICAL BACKGROUNDS OF THE TROUBLED MIDDLE EAST (Part 2)**

### Introduction

- 1) This lesson continues a study of the Bible backgrounds of the troubled Middle East, especially as it relates to the Jewish and Arab peoples
- 2) Being familiar with these Bible backgrounds helps one understand what God has done in the past and how it affects our world and God's plan of redemption for man today (Rom. 15:4)

### **I) ABRAHAM – Father of Many Nations**

- A) Promise of many descendants (Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 22:17)
- B) Ishmael born to Abram by Hagar (Gen. 16:1-16; promise of many descendants – v. 10)
- C) Abram's name changed to Abraham – “father of many nations” (Gen. 17:1-6)
- D) Ishmael *not* the promised heir, though he would be a great nation (Gen. 17:19-20)
- E) Hagar and Ishmael sent away after Isaac's birth (Gen. 21:8-21)
- F) Isaac chosen by God through whom to bring messianic promise (17:21)
  - 1) Ishmael, along with all other peoples, would continue under God's sovereign patriarchal rule and blessings
- G) Ishmael's family (Gen. 25:7-9, 12-18)
  - 1) The beginning of a major branch of the **Arab family tree**

### **II) OTHER BRANCHES of ARAB FAMILY TREE**

- A) Earliest historical beginning was Joktan and his descendants (Gen. 10:25-30)
- B) Moabites and Ammonites descended from Lot (Gen. 19:36-38)
- C) Sons of Abraham and Keturah (Gen. 25:1-6)
- D) Esau married into Ishmael's family; father of Edomites (Gen. 28:8-9; ch. 36)

### **III) HISTORY of ARAB PEOPLES**

- A) Little information in Bible about early history and spread of Arab peoples
  - 1) Ishmaelites/Midianites (Gen. 37:25-28; caravan travelers and traders)
  - 2) Midianites (Ex. 2:16, 21; 3:1)
  - 3) Ishmaelites (Judg. 8:24; Psa. 83:6)
  - 4) Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs. 10:1-13)
  - 5) Kings of Arabia (2 Chron. 9:14; 21:16)
  - 6) Geshem the Arab (Neh. 6:1)
- B) Later history – continued nomadic, Bedouin, desert-dwelling existence (cf. Isa. 13:20; Jer. 3:2)
  - 1) Religiously, an idolatrous people until AD 609
    - a) Changed with Mohammed (570-632) and the religion of Islam (see info on back)
      - i) Islam advocated monotheism – one God “Allah” (Jewish and Catholic influences)
  - 2) Islamic teaching changed the focus of Abraham's story to his son Ishmael instead of Isaac
    - a) Koran implies that Ishmael was nearly sacrificed by Abraham (surah 37:99-113)
    - b) Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael travel to Mecca to build the Kabah (surah 2:124-130; 14:35-40)
    - c) Islam becomes a means to spread the influence, culture, and power of Arab peoples
  - 3) Arab peoples and Palestine
    - a) Roman/Byzantine rule over Palestine from first century AD to 637 AD
    - b) 637 – 16<sup>th</sup> century AD – Islamic Arab rule (several caliphates and dynasties)
      - i) Crusades (1096-1291) = eight major wars between Catholic and Muslims for control of the Holy Land)
    - c) 16<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> century (WWI) – Ottoman empire (Turkish Muslims)

- d) 1917-18 (WWI) to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (WWII) – British rule of Palestine and its Arab/Palestinian population
- e) 1948 to early 21<sup>st</sup> century – establishment of the nation of Israel and the immigration of Jews, followed by constant tension and conflict with the nearby Palestinian populations and surrounding Arab nations

#### IV) JEWS, ARABS, and GOD’S PLAN OF REDEMPTION

- A) Jews and all non-Jews were separated by the Mosaic covenant (Eph. 2:11-12)
- B) The seed promise to Abraham would bless all the families of the earth (Gen. 12:3)
- C) Fulfilled in Jesus and accessed by faith in Christ (Gal. 3:7-18, 26-29; Rom. 4:11-12, 16)
- D) All men, Jew and Gentile, can now come to God in Christ, the way (Rom. 1:16; 10:9-13)

#### Conclusion

Men and nations today argue and fight over earthly lands and boundaries. Abraham of old embraced God’s promises and awaited a heavenly city and homeland (Heb. 11:8-16). Only through Jesus today can all men inherit the heavenly reward as the seed of Abraham and heirs of the promise (Gal. 3:26-29; Col. 3:9-11). May we seek peace with God and with one another in Christ.

#### *Additional Information about the Religion of Islam*

##### I) Definitions

- A) **Islam** = to submit, surrender, commit oneself
- B) **Muslim** = one who submits; a follower of Islam
- C) **Qur’an (Koran)** = recitation, recital; holy book of Islam; considered as final revelation
- D) **Holy Sites** = (1) Mecca, (2) Medina, (3) Jerusalem
- E) **Major Branches** = Sunni (90%), Shia (10%)
- F) **Shari’ah Law** = Islamic codified law applied in life and society

##### II) The Fundamental Doctrines of Islam

###### A) *Six Fundamental Articles of Faith*

- 1) *God* (the one God to which all must submit; “Allah” – *Arabic* word for “God”)
- 2) *The Prophets* (messengers of God, such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad)
- 3) *Holy Books* (early ones corrupted; last authentic revelation is Quran)
- 4) *Angels* (spiritual beings that serve God)
- 5) *Predestination* (Qadar; all events happen according to God’s exact knowledge)
- 6) *Day of Judgment* (judge between good and evil, and deliver reward or punishment)

###### B) *Five Pillars* (religious duties)

- 1) *Creed* (“There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his Prophet”)
- 2) *Prayer* (five daily prayers facing Mecca: *morning, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, evening*)
- 3) *Giving* (giving of alms to assist those who are in need; usually 2.5% minimum)
- 4) *Ramadan* (ninth month of Islamic calendar; fast daily from dawn to dusk)
- 5) *Pilgrimage* (trip to Mecca at least once in lifetime, if able, to visit the Ka’aba)

###### C) *Jihad* (struggle, striving; *internal* – overcome evil desires; *external* – holy war)

##### III) Muhammad and the Quran

###### A) *Muhammad*

- 1) Born in AD 570 into the leading tribe of the town of Mecca; name means “highly praised”
- 2) Traveled with trading caravans as youth; exposed to Judaism and Catholicism
- 3) At age 25 he married a widow, Khadija, who was fifteen years his senior
- 4) Claimed to receive vision from angel Gabriel in 609; spent rest of life revealing Koran
- 5) Not received well in Mecca; persecuted; fled to Medina (622, *hijarah*, start of calendar)
- 6) Began violent period of life – war and pillage; defeated army of Mecca (624 Battle of Badr)
- 7) Died in AD 632 (approx. 62 years old) in Medina; his tomb is located there

###### B) *Quran/Koran*

- 1) Claims to have been revealed from God (surah 10:37; its purpose – 18:1)
- 2) Revealed to Muhammad over 23-year period (AD 609-632); agency of angel Gabriel
- 3) Muhammad illiterate – recited while others memorized or wrote words
- 4) Compiled and codified ca. AD 650 (114 surahs [chapters])
- 5) Considered as the final, definitive word of God superseding all others (5:44-48)
- 6) Must accept and follow Islam/Koran to be accepted by God (3:85; 5:66)
  - a) Those who reject the Koran are condemned as infidels (2:89-90)