

Isaac and Ishmael: The Origin of Middle East Conflict and the Foundation for Understanding Eschatology

By [p2alm](#) 10.04.2014 ([17](#))

The Middle East is swelling with violence and turmoil. Christian persecution is on the rise and all the while the enemies of Israel are closing ranks around her borders. Our current Western leadership views religion as an archaic coping mechanism unfit for the modern-day world and so denies that any kind of religious theology could possibly be the reason for these things. Western thinking is that the peoples of the Middle East only need a little freedom from oppressive regimes and then they'll voluntarily want to shed their religious dogma and join the rest of the enlightened global community. Of course, as a show of good faith it's necessary for the West to be somewhat disassembled and reorganized to create a sort of equilibrium while we welcome our brothers and sisters into the 21st century. Does it seem to you this approach is working? Why is our Western leadership under a sort of delusion concerning Islam? How are we to make sense of these things from our biblical worldview? There are answers in God's Word.

The biblical origin of the modern-day conflict in the Middle East



What do Isaac and Ishmael have to do with the conflict in the Middle East? What does the conflict in the Middle East have to do

with eschatology, or end-time Bible prophecy? Let's begin in Genesis chapters 12-21. Most of you probably know the story. God promised Abraham a son through whom He would make a great nation and redeem the earth. (Drawing: The Family of Abraham by RT Radke)

The promise of the redemption of the peoples of the earth:

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." [Genesis 12:1-3 NASB]

The promise of a son:

And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." [Genesis 15:3-5 NASB]

The promise of the land of Israel:

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: [Genesis 15:18 NASB]

The promise of the land of Israel and the redemption of the peoples of the earth through his son with Sarah:

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her." [Genesis 17:15-16 NASB]

This is important. God's promise to Abraham was directly connected to the land of Israel. It was to be fulfilled through his son, Isaac, the firstborn of Sarah through who came the nation of Israel, the Jewish people and the redeeming Savior of the peoples of the earth, Jesus Christ. But what had Abraham and Sarah already done before Isaac was born?

The birth of Ishmael



Back in chapter 16, Sarah, lamenting her barrenness, told Abraham to go in to her maid, Hagar, and conceive by her. Perhaps because he doubted, perhaps he became impatient, Abraham, after listening to the voice of God for so many years, took things into his own hands and listened to the voice of his wife. (Painting: Hagar and Ishmael by Abel Pan)

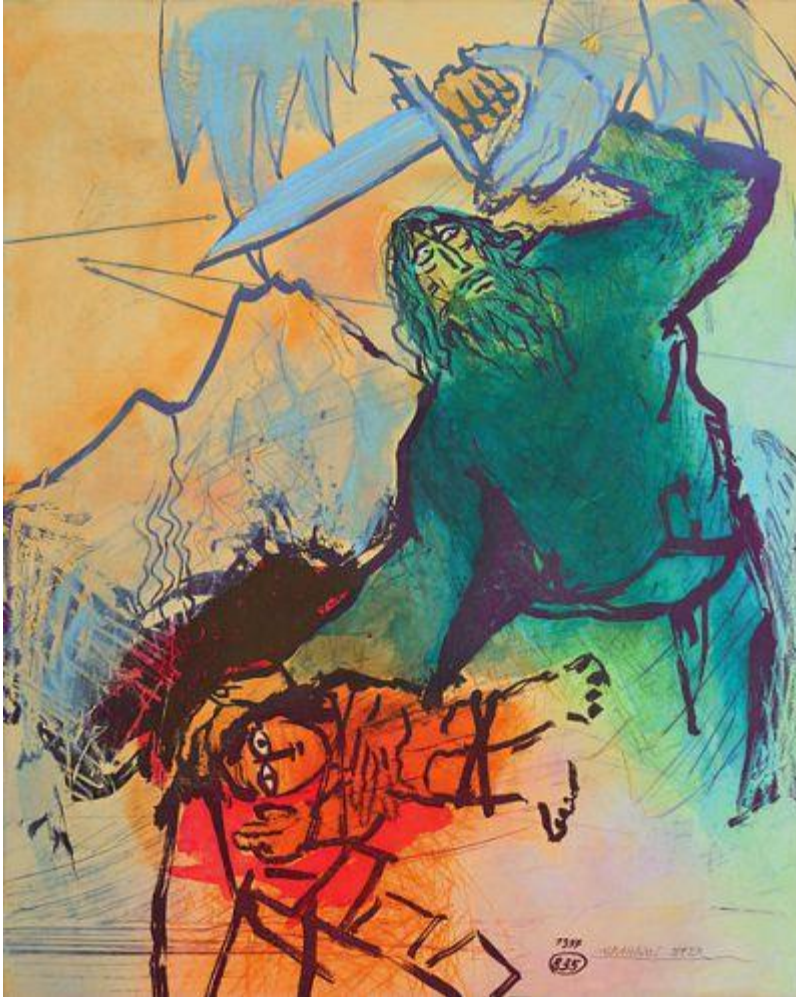
Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. [Genesis 16:1-2 NASB]

This is important, too. This child was Ishmael through who came the nations of the Arab peoples and, eventually, Islam and the greater Islamic world.

Moreover, the angel of the Lord said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count." The angel of the Lord said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the Lord has given heed to your affliction. "He will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, And everyone's hand will be against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers." [Genesis 16:10-12]

Hagar conceived Ishmael and, immediately after this, we read that she began to despise Sarah [Genesis 16:5]. Sarah, also, despised Hagar because she had conceived a child [Genesis 16:6]. After this, Sarah treated her so badly that Hagar attempted to flee. This enmity between Hagar and Sarah because of Abraham's very bad decision is the beginning of all the enmity that exists to this day between their descendants.

The birth of Isaac



Fourteen years after the birth of Ishmael, Isaac is born fulfilling God's promise to Abraham through Sarah [Genesis 21:1-3]. Ishmael begins mocking Isaac's birth so Sarah tells Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. (Painting: The Sacrifice of Isaac by Adi Holzer)

Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac." [Genesis 21:10]

Abraham was greatly troubled by this but God told him not to worry and to do what Sarah said reminding him the promise was to be through Isaac [Genesis 21:12]. Ishmael was not to be heir with Isaac, however, out of His mercy, God also promised to make Ishmael a great nation because he was a son of Abraham. And it is from this nation that Islam eventually came.

And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant." [Genesis 21:13]

The biblical definition of Islam

I'm going to refer you to a respected scholar to pull this all together because I simply can't state it any better. Joel Richardson, author and teacher of eschatology, describes it this way:

“So now we have this story: Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael is a fourteen year old boy. He’s kicked out into the desert but the Lord is faithful. He preserves him. He promises to make him into a great nation. So we read these things and they’re interesting Bible stories but what I’m asking you to do is to put yourself in the position and recognize the fact that in history, in real time, this was a real boy... with real emotions, with a real life. This happened to a little kid named Ishmael. And so what we need to understand is you have this little boy and... he had a dad. He had a mother. He had a family. He had a life. He had an inheritance. And in one day he loses all of these things. He loses his dad. He loses his inheritance. He’s out in the desert. He’s on his own. And that brokenness, that woundedness, that rejection that took place in this little child, today, has been passed on into the religion of Islam.

What do I mean? ... Mohammed, the founder of Islam... claims to be a direct descendant of Ishmael and Muslims, today, view themselves as both the physical and the spiritual descendants of Ishmael. And so here you have this story, this incredible event that took place in this child’s life. Two thousand six hundred years after these events took place, a direct descendant of Ishmael named Mohammed birthed forth a new religion into the world. And what does the religion teach? ... It teaches God is not a father. God has no Son. And, thirdly, Ishmael, not Isaac, is the heir with regard to the promises of God to the earth. The very things that those issues of rejection and woundedness and brokenness that took place in Ishmael’s life were preserved in that line and two thousand six hundred years later, a man named Mohammed goes into a cave, has an incredibly dark encounter with some sort of spiritual being. It literally chokes the life out of him to where he feels as though he’s going to die, three times this presence comes over him and it demands of him to recite... On the third time, the words of the Qur’an begin to flow forth from his mouth.

Mohammed, himself, literally believed that he was demon-possessed. He was suicidal. He was terrified.”¹

After this, he runs home to his wife who eventually convinced him he was a prophet of God. This is the origin of Islam.

“In a spiritual sense, Islam is the broken, bitter cry of Ishmael.”²

Did you notice the compassion in his definition of Islam? This is how we as the Church should approach Muslims who God also desires to be saved [1 Timothy 2:4]. These are people just as lost as you and I once were. I don’t want you to miss this because the implications of this original conflict in Genesis when played out through Scripture to the time of the end is shocking and may be considered by some as quite harsh especially in a day when we are taught that Christians and Muslims both worship the same God and a redefining of Christian love as powerless, non-judgmental tolerance is pervading the Church. We are to love Muslims but this doesn’t mean we don’t, also, let the truth be known. Rather, it is against this backdrop of compassion, of Christian love, that we must tell the truth and warn others. In other words, we must love people enough to tell them the truth about Islam.

*“You have in Islam the greatest anti-Christ religion that the world will ever know... And, in fact, the greatest spiritual challenge the Church will ever face particularly in the days ahead. The Church, today, is still in denial.”*³

I echo these last sentiments and, with the exception of Adam’s sin necessitating the death and resurrection of Christ for the salvation of all mankind, I don’t think there has been any one sin in the Bible that has been so felt around the world as Abraham’s. The consequences rage on to this very day between the descendants of Isaac and Ishmael and it will only be resolved upon Christ’s return.

What is anti-Christ? How does the Bible define it?

Although the world system can generally be defined as anti-Christ, what we’re looking for is a uniting religion that will sweep over the world eventually bringing people together under the authority of one man. That hasn’t been the end result of all the various factions (and factions within factions) of religious beliefs today. In this day of relativism, one might successfully argue that people are only becoming more divided through their individual, specialized beliefs. The fact of the matter is the Bible says there will be a time when the religion of the Antichrist will sweep over the world unifying people *before* the man called the Antichrist will come to power and seize his kingdom [Daniel 7:24]. How do we recognize it? Thankfully, John tells us:

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. [1 John 2:22-23 NASB]

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. [2 John 1:7 NASB]

Someone who is anti-Christ denies Jesus is the Savior, denies God is His Father and denies Jesus came in the flesh. The religion of the Antichrist will do the same.

Now, compare these Bible verses with verses from the Qur’an:

They say: “(Allah) Most Gracious has begotten a son!” Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous! At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin. That they should invoke a son for (Allah) Most Gracious. For it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious that He should beget a son. [Surah 19:88-92]

The Jews call Uzayr a son of Allah and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouths; (in this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah’s curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth! [Surah 9:30]

In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ, the son of Mary. Say: “Who then hath the least power against Allah, if His Will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary, his mother, and all— everyone that is on the earth? For to Allah belongeth the dominion of the

heavens and the earth and all that is between. He createth what He pleaseth. For Allah hath power over all things.” [Surah 5:17]

They disbelieve who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them. [Surah 5:73]

That they said (in boast), “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah”;— but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not.— Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise. [Surah 4:157-158]

Remember, we’re looking for specific answers not general ones. The adamant specificity within these verses from the Qur’an goes way beyond any kind of general denying of Christ as the Son of God as all other religions outside of Christianity do (in which I include Atheism). Islam is teaching over two billion people around the globe what the Bible says are the specific doctrines of the Antichrist.

Consider, also, what’s inscribed encircling the inside of the Islamic Dome of the Rock. It’s known as the Shahada:

“There is no god but Allah and Mohammed is his prophet.”

Let’s not forget the Dome of the Rock sits right at the spot where it is believed the Jewish Temple was, the very place where Abraham was prepared to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God [Genesis 22]. It’s a land grab.

With the promise of the land comes the promise of a savior



I've endeavored to be as thorough as your attention might allow simply for this reason: the Church needs to wake up and recognize what it's dealing with. You see, the longer Islam doesn't occupy the Promised Land, the more it's proven untrue. And, if Islam teaches that the promise to the land is theirs then with that comes the promise of a savior, a deliverer, through Islam as well. (Art: Imam Mahdi 2010 by Amwag)

Did you know Muslims are, in fact, waiting for a savior? They call him the Mahdi, or Imam Mahdi. Who might this Islamic savior be that will embody all of this anti-Christian enmity toward Jews and Christians? Who might this Islamic savior be that he might be willing to lead armies against Israel to claim the promise of the land upon which it sits and, thereby, legitimize Islam as the only true religion? I'm sure by now you have a very good idea and I'm sure you can see why it is entirely necessary to start at the beginning to know the end.

"Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'; [Isaiah 46:9-10 NASB]

Just as God's chosen people are the Jews, Satan's chosen people are the Middle Eastern gentiles. Just as Jesus came through the Jews, the Antichrist will come through the Middle Eastern gentiles. This conflict has been highlighted throughout the Bible starting in the Book of Genesis and continues to this day [Genesis 3:15].