The Patriarchs from the book of Genesis Part 8 – August 26, 2023

With input from https://www.bibleref.com/Genesis/16/Genesis-16-12; https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-240A/a-biblical-perspective-on-death-terrorism-and-the-middle-east-pt-1

**Last week we ended with Genesis 15:18-19**

*18 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:*

When God created, He put Adam and Eve in a garden called the garden of Eden. That garden was located in the Tigris-Euphrates valley, which is the Mesopotamian valley, the heart of the Middle East. That is the original paradise of God, the very place where God walked and talked with Adam in the cool of the day, the very place where God put the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Today that is the center of the Arabic-Muslim world, the very place of Eden. It was there that the Tower of Babel was built, which invented world religions. It was there that later on the city of Babylon was built, which is today in modern Iraq. It was there that Noah lived; it was there that Noah preached. It’s very historic land.

In Genesis 10 and 11 we have what we call the table of nations. You see all kinds of names of people and families and nations, tribes. In chapter 11, starting in verse 10, and you find more genealogies of individuals who fathered families and people groups. This is early society as it developed from Noah. Remember God drowned the entire world, as recorded in chapters 6 through 9 of Genesis, and only saved eight people: Noah, his wife, his three sons and their three wives. Eight people came off the ark, repopulated the world. So you have in chapter 10 the generations that flowed from Noah through his three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Japheth, the oldest son, fathered what are now known as the Indo-European people. From Japheth came those who live in Europe and all the way across to India, and even across Russia and across the Bering Sea, and into North America and South America, the native peoples. And then Ham, we learned, fathered families in Africa and the Far East, the Asian world, as well as some regions of the Middle East. And then that most well-known of the sons of Noah, Shem, from whom came the Semitic people of the Mesopotamian valley, the Middle East as we know it, the Jewish people, and the Arabic people. Shem’s people lived north, south, east of the land of Israel.

**Why Do The Nations Rage?**

**Psalm 2:1-6**

*Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing?*

*2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together,*

*Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying,*

*3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces*

*And cast away Their cords from us.”*

*4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.*

*5 Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, And distress them in His deep displeasure:*

*6 “Yet I have set My King*

*On My holy hill of Zion.”*

**James 4:1-4**

*What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is the source not your pleasures that wage war in your body’s parts? 2 You lust and do not have, so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.*

*3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, so that you may spend what you request on your pleasures. 4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

**John MacArthur:** The answer comes: “Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?” Members simply refers to your person, your body, your nature. It is the pleasures inside of you that generate war. What is the source of quarrels? That’s the Greek word polemos. It means a prolonged state of conflict. What is the source of conflict? That’s machē, separate individual fights. What causes wars? What causes those separate fights and conflicts?

It comes down to this. It is your pleasures. The word hēdonē in the Greek, from which we get Hedonism. What is Hedonism? It is the yearning of self-love, it is the yearning to fulfill what you want. A hedonist is someone who lives for the fulfillment of his own self-love. He lives to satisfy himself, to get what he wants, to take what fulfills him. That’s why wars happen, because people want things and somebody stands in the way.

Verse 2 further develops it: “You lust and you don’t have.” That’s the problem; you want it. You have this hedonistic compulsion, this drive; and it’s thwarted. You want it. It’s a war inside of you, that’s how much you want it; and something is in the way, and that something is a someone, and because you want it so badly and you can’t have it, you commit murder. That’s the reason, that’s the natural reason: personal gratification, out of control, unsatisfied; so you commit murder.

**Genesis 16:1-16**

*Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not borne him a child, but she had an Egyptian slave woman whose name was Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, “See now, the Lord has prevented me from bearing children. Please have relations with my slave woman; perhaps I will obtain children through her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. 3 And so after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram’s wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her slave woman, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife.*

*4 Then he had relations with Hagar, and she conceived; and when Hagar became aware that she had conceived, her mistress was insignificant in her sight. 5 So Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be upon you! I put my slave woman into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was insignificant in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me.” 6 But Abram said to Sarai, “Look, your slave woman is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.*

*Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. 8 He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s slave woman, from where have you come, and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” 9 So the angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority.”*

 *10 The angel of the Lord also said to her, “I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count.” 11 The angel of the Lord said to her further,*

*“Behold, you are pregnant,*

*And you will give birth to a son;*

*And you shall name him Ishmael,*

*Because the Lord has heard your affliction.*

*12 But 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 in defiance of all his brothers.”*

Verse 12 is both a description of Ishmael and his descendants. He won't be a people person. His hand will be against everyone and everyone will be against him. He will live in hostility to his kinsmen.

Eventually, we will learn that Ishmael's descendants become the Arabic people. These cultures have been at odds with the Jewish people for millennia. The descendants of Ishmael soon take on a bedouin lifestyle, on the fringes of society, committed to their personal freedom above the need to be accepted by others. But they are at odds with each other just as prophesied “*And he will live in defiance of all his brothers.”*

*13 Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, “You are a God who sees me”; for she said, “Have I even seen Him here and lived after He saw me?” 14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.*

*15 So Hagar bore a son to Abram; and Abram named his son, to whom Hagar gave birth, Ishmael. 16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.*

God gave to Abraham all the land from the Mediterranean coast through the depths of the Babylonian valley, gave it all to them, the entire Mesopotamian region. Abraham’s father was Terah, who was a moon god worshiper, and the worship of the moon god was the most popular form of idolatry apparently in the day of Abraham. There were two great centers of the worship of the moon god: one was a place called Ur, down in the Persian Gulf in what is now Kuwait; and the other was Heron, way up in the north in the area of Iraq. Abraham was born into a family of worshipers of the moon god in the place called Ur. This is a historical area, the land of the Middle East, the land of the Mesopotamian valley, the land of the twenty-one Arab states, is the land of the beginnings of human history.



Muhammad, a direct descendant of Ishmael, grew up in Mecca with three hundred and sixty gods, but Satan was working on him to invent a religion that would end the division and pull everyone together in one great, powerful, massive effort to undo the covenant promise of God. And Muhammad would be the agent.

The main idol, however, of the three hundred sixty was Allah, the god, Al Elah. Guess what? Allah was the moon god. If you see any Islamic symbols you will see a crescent moon. Allah was the moon god, some form of the very god that Abraham’s family worshiped, that Abraham’s father who was an idolater worshiped, the children in the family were named after. Even Terah is a name that connects with the name of the moon god. So, what Muhammad did under the influence of the powers of darkness was take all the elements from the three hundred and sixty different forms of idol worship, piece them all together into a form of religion, making only one change: he demanded that there was only one god, Allah the moon god.

Abraham’s lineage makes him the patriarch of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

**Future importance:** The prophets of the Bible tell us that the world is going to come to an end in a vast gathering and great battle in that same place. Powers from the north are going to come. Powers from the south are going to come. A vast army coming from the east, and the power from the west, all converging under the rule of Antichrist on the land of Israel. The starting point, the valley of Megiddo; but blood spills clear across the entire land of Israel until Jesus comes and establishes His own kingdom, and destroys all the wicked, and takes the righteous into His kingdom. That is a very important piece of earth; none is more strategic.

Abraham fathered the Jewish people. Chapter 12 noted that God said to Abram, *“Go forth from your country, from your relatives, from your father’s house, to the land that I’ll show you. I’ll make you a great nation. I’ll bless you, make your name great; so shall you be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I’ll curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

God gave to Abraham the promise that He would give him the land. By divine right from the mouth of God Himself, the region belongs to Abraham and his seed. Unfortunately, unfortunately Abraham brought massive confusion into that promise by having a legitimate son, Isaac, and an illegitimate son, Ishmael.

At the time of Abraham, people were already existing in that land. They already occupied that land. So even though God gave it to Abraham, it was in the possession of those people. And in chapter 10, there are all kinds of other people who were the sons of Shem, starting in chapter 10, verse 21. You have a whole listing of people and family groups and tribes and nations that existed as descendants of Shem that would have been around as well. So there were tribes and families and groups of people all over that part of the world. That was the most densely populated part of the world. In fact, at first it was the only populated part of the world, because when the flood was over there were only eight people, and they started populating right there.

It wasn’t long before Mizraim – it’s an old name for Egypt – came into existence; before Aram, an old name for Syria, came into existence; before Asher, an old name for Assyria, came into existence. So there were all these tribes and families and clans and groups of people. They were all idolatrous. They were all rejecters of the true and living God, the Creator God. And when God gave the promise to Abraham that all of this land was his, there was a collision course established.

In order for that land to belong to Abraham, God was going to have to give it to him; and Abraham was going to have to be true to God. And if Abraham was true to God and obedient, God would give him the land. But if the descendants of Abraham were disobedient to God, they were going to have an endless battle trying to claim what was really theirs.

Was it just to judge those nations that had the land? Yes, because God is just in judging idol worship. The commandments begin, “You shall have no other” – what? – “gods before Me.” Idolatry is to be judged by God always in every era. It is a just judgment for God to take away that precious land from those who turned their backs on Him and give it to a people who would love Him and serve Him.

It just so happens, too, that the Middle East region is the richest land on the face of the earth. If you take it all together from the coastal riches of the Sharon Valley in Israel through to their immense riches that go right down the very spine of Israel, on into the riches of the Dead Sea, on into the massive riches of the oil treasures of the Middle East, the great riches to the north in the mountains of Lebanon – valuable timber, fertile plains of the Jordan Valley, unequalled productivity, incredible chemical wealth, as I said, of the Dead Sea, vast black gold of oil that stretches across the sands in the Babylonian valley – God gave it all to them. If they would be obedient to Him they would have that land.

So, the idolatrous people, as I said, of that land were set on a collision course with Israel; and the reason Israel has never really been able to possess the land they were given is because Israel has not been faithful to God. Someday they will be. Someday they will look on Him whom they’ve pierced. They’ll mourn for Him as an only Son. They’ll embrace Jesus as their Messiah. They will come to salvation; and in the day they come to salvation, the Messiah Himself will come and give them the land. But in the meantime, they continue to lay claim to that land; and they were given that by God. And because they lay claim to that land, the Egyptians and the Syrians and the Assyrians, everybody else is their avowed enemy, to one degree or another.

And then Abraham did such a terrible thing. God said, “I’m going to give you a son. Trust Me, I’m going to give you a son.” He was a hundred, Sarah was ninety, they were barren. He said, “How can I have a whole nation? How can I be the father of people? How can I be the father of a nation if I don’t even have a son, if I’m barren?”

And so, his wife came to him, and she had a really great idea. She said, “Well, I can’t bear you a son, so here’s my servant named Hagar. You go in and have relationships with her, and she’ll be like a surrogate wife to you, and she’ll produce a son.” And in an act of distrust toward God, he did that; and she became pregnant, and she brought forth a son whose name is Ishmael – an illegitimate son, not the son of God’s promise, not the son of the covenant.

And God said in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, “I will make out of Ishmael’s family a great nation. But” – verse 21 – “My covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this time next year. Ishmael is not the son of My covenant, Isaac is through Sarah, and she will bear a son.” And she did, and through Isaac came the Jewish people; but through Ishmael came more enemies. Out of Ishmael came the Hagarites, mentioned in 1 Chronicles chapter 5. And to make matters worse, there was a rejected son of Isaac by the name of Esau; and out of Esau came more people who were not in the covenant, producing more enemies, more enemies.

See, the Middle East is just filled with the descendants of all of these people who are in conflict with Israel’s stated right to the Abrahamic promise. God wanted to remove those people, those wicked, idolatrous, adulterous people. He wanted to do it when He led Israel out of Egypt. They had been four hundred years in the captivity in Egypt.

Do you remember, God raised up Moses to lead them out? He led them out into the wilderness. They were faithless. The whole generation had to die in the wilderness because they committed idolatry. When there finally was a new generation raised up and God took them into the Promised Land, into the land of Canaan, He said, “It’s all going to be yours, I want to give it all to you. Now go in there and destroy those inhabitants, those idolaters.” God had already demonstrated in history that He would destroy the ungodly; He drowned the whole world in the flood. And now not water, but Israel was to be His weapon to rid the earth of idolatry.

They saw victory over Egypt, the whole Egyptian army drowned, and the great plagues that came on Egypt caused a massive amount of death. They conquered the tribes on the other side of the Jordan, according to Deuteronomy chapter 3, and they stood ready to go into the land of Canaan and conquer. Instead, they went into the land of Canaan and were defeated. Remember that? At a place called Ai, they were defeated, because there was sin in the camp. And they never did do what God told them to do. They never became that sword of Jehovah, as it were. And so, there they sit in the middle of the conflict, endlessly threatened by the neighbors around them.

There should be a warning, however. God’s covenant with Israel has not been broken. And it is still true that the nation that blesses Israel is blessed, and a nation that curses Israel is cursed. Any nation that threatens the existence of Israel will come under God’s judgment: repeated in Psalm 121, Psalm 125, Psalm 129, and Isaiah 43.

Conflict goes way back between Arabic people, descendants who today speak Arabic, who accept Arab culture – two hundred and fifty million of them surrounding five million Jews. The Jews believe it is a divine right to have the land; but they can’t take the land, they can’t have the land, because God won’t give them the land until they turn from their sin and embrace their Messiah. But everybody is against Israel in the Middle East, even Satan. If you question that, read Revelation chapter 12 where you’ll see a description of Satan trying to destroy Israel. He works on the side of those who would destroy Israel.

So Genesis 16:12 “*And he will live in defiance of all his brother”* says Ishmael’s descendants will, *-* dwell in the presence of all his brethren. They’re all trying to co-exist in the Middle East. And little Israel, the covenant people, unbelieving, apostate, but still the covenant people, unsaved but still the covenant people, surrounded; and everybody around them has destruction on their minds.