

A Christian's Guide to the Koran, Lesson 4, Isaac and Ishmael, in the Bible and the Koran

The book of Genesis records a delightful story of one who is the father of all the faithful ones of all time. This man, Abraham, is promised a son who will carry on his line and be a blessing to all humanity. Trying to help God out, Abraham manipulates the situation and fathers a child through his servant Hagar. The son's name is Ishmael.

Fourteen years later God keeps His promise to Abraham, and a child is born to his legal wife Sarah. Tension develops immediately between the two mothers and the two sons. To this day, Isaac and Ishmael have a tense relationship, and for the last 1,400 years their struggle has been set in stone by a world-class religion. But that religion, Islam is Arabian in origin. And Arabia is Ishmaelite by history. A great nation was promised to Ishmael. And a great nation he received. His twelve sons fathered twelve tribes, much like his younger half brother Isaac.

To be more specific, it is believed that the Nabateans, called Arabs in the writings of early historians, populating as they did much of first-century Arabia, came from Ishmael's first son, Nebajoth. Similarly sons Kedar, Massa, Hadad, and Tema have been traced to that location.

Though other sons went to Egypt or the Sinai Peninsula, it is a known fact that none came to old Canaan. That land had been promised specifically to the sons of Israel.

Before I move on, a word about that blessing of Ishmael. Yes, he is promised a great nation. A great material blessing. Surely much of the fulfillment can be documented in the pages of the Bible, as mention of Ishmael, Ishmaelites, and a number of his sons, indicate how the family grew and prospered. History itself then picks up the story, and God is found to be true in the carrying out of His promise.

Nevertheless, we are not bound to conclude that all that has come from Ishmael is to be blessed. When unbelief comes on the scene, blessings are thwarted and reversed. What we say of Ishmael we say also of Isaac. The physical sons of the Abrahamic family are blessed only inasmuch as they are in the same line of faith as is Abraham. It is the Christ who came from Abraham that is the one who will bless all nations. Many of Ishmael and of Isaac will enter that blessing, not because of the ancestor but because of the Descendant.

It is understandable but of course not justifiable, that a book would come along to challenge the millennia-old pledge to Isaac, the son of promise whose birth was a factor in the salvation of the entire world. That book is the Koran. The Koran is a strangely mixed statement of faith in the Hebrew-Christian revelation coupled with gross denials of all the major truths therein. The characters look familiar, but we hear them saying different things, see them doing different activities, than in the Bible. The Koran makes Ishmael the son of promise, putting God's stamp of approval on the entire Islamic people and the things they do to bring this world under their sway.

Reminds me of the curious documents that appeared in Medieval church history, showing "conclusively" that certain lands formerly under Constantine's rule totally belonged to the church. Those who

disbelieved these decretals were punished severely. They were found to be forgeries when the light of the Reformation broke upon the world. The "church" recanted, but too late for souls they had sent into eternity a bit early.

How many have died an early death because of the Koran's changes of the facts of history?

The denials of the Koran next to the original truths of the Bible will keep the fires of conflict burning wherever Muslims appear, until Jesus comes. But He will come. Isaac's Descendant will go to the land of Canaan, now known as Israel, and set up there a Kingdom that shall never be destroyed. Then will peace come to the planet.

Meanwhile, it is believers in the Jewish Messiah who must put those Biblical truths and those Islamic refutations side by side, conflict or no. We must never stop showing that Islam is false. We must never accept the Koran as a companion book to the Bible. God has spoken through the prophets in the Old Testament, through Jesus in the New, and Jesus is the final Word from God.