

## Islam, Christianity and Prophecy, Pt. 1 - Sibling Rivalry

Date: 2016-10-15 Scripture: Genesis 28:14, Genesis 12:1-3

We're beginning a new series on something I've prayed and thought about discussing for, literally, years. And I never have because I just wanted to make sure that the truths were jelled in my own mind before I had the confidence to share them with others. You know, I feel a great responsibility as your pastor and the Bible talks about the book of James, don't be anxious to be many masters knowing you'll receive a more severe judgment or fiercer condemnation. And so, when you teach, you want to make sure you're teaching the truth because you're accountable for that. And I have been studying for a few years and reading what others have written about the subject of Islam and, with things happening in the world today, it's been prominent and in the news and we are wondering, as Christians, does this factor somehow in prophecy? And so, I've chosen to speak on this subject and the message today dealing with Islam, Christianity, and prophecy, is going to be part 1 in the series and it's called Sibling Rivalry. The Bible is full of stories of sibling rivalry and there's quite a few that go through the span of history too. Prominent brothers and sisters who had some rivalry or some battles. You know, it was one of the Ptolemys that he decided that his two children would co-rule. One of them was called Cleopatra and then his younger son Ptolemy - Cleopatra didn't care for that and she got Caesar on her side and he ended up drowning in a battle in the Nile. You've probably heard about Elizabeth and Mary I in England and one put the other in the Tower of London. One interesting story is about Artexerxes II and Cyrus the Younger, when the king of Persia was ailing, these two brothers both thought that they had a right to the throne. And you think brothers, you know, they'd just love each other but, I guess, when it comes to power - you've never known of any cases of sibling rivalry.

Any of you fight with your siblings? Yes. Well, they ended up both raising armies and Cyrus came and he joined an army against his brother Artexerxes II. Now these are not the same Artexerxes and Cyrus that you read about in the Bible - that name appears several times. And, in this battle, Cyrus ended up bringing 30,000 men. He came to battle with his brother who had 60,000 men and he was actually winning with 30,000 men - with 90,000 men on the battlefield, wouldn't you know, they actually got to the point where the two brothers were face to face in battle and Cyrus succeeded in wounding his brother with a spear, but the soldiers around his brother threw several darts at Cyrus and wounded him and he died later that day and the kingdom fell, then, to Artexerxes II. Sibling rivalry. All the way back from Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau - you can read about Jesus and his brothers and David and his brothers and Joseph and his brothers and you've got a lot of examples in the Bible, even among the girls - Rachel and Leah - you ever read about the arguments they had fighting over the same husband? But one of the great examples of what has become a sibling rivalry deals with the two oldest sons of Abraham, the oldest being Ishmael and the second being Isaac, and who was the rightful heir for that patriarchal blessing? And the contest that begins in the book of Genesis continues today in the world. We're going to be looking at that in just a moment. First I'd like to just state some of what is obvious.

Right now there are about 7.4 billion people - the nation of Islam, or the people of Islam, is a great nation of people. There are about 7.4 billion people in the world today Christianity is, by far, the biggest religion at present with about 2.2 or 31% of all the people on earth. Islam is in second place with 1.7 adherents - that's 23%. Now, what's interesting is, according to a Pew Research study, Muslims are growing much faster and it is estimated that by the year 2050, while the world population's only going to grow about 35%, the population of the Muslims in the world is going to grow 73%. And it will be the largest religious group in the world, if present trends continue, by 2050 there'll be 2.8 billion Muslims in the world. Now this is something that - and it's a religious belief that has some similarities in their history with Christianity that we'll talk about. Some of you are wondering, is the Christian God and the god of Muslims the same? You've got to come next week. I'm not answering that question today. (Laughter) and if you want to know more about the history of Muhammad then I'm going to be dealing more about that and if you want to know about Daniel 11 we're going to delve into that a little bit. You've got to keep coming. But, you know, when you look at the headlines today we hear about terrorism and it's often in connection with Islam and people wonder, you know, we hear about ISIS and ISIL and is. What does all

that mean? Well, ISIS has come to be an acronym for the 'Islamic State of Iraq and Syria'.

Sometimes you'll hear president Obama use the word 'ISIL' and it's similar. That means the 'Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant'. Now that's an interesting phrase because - and I've got a map here that I think is on the screen. Why don't you put that up, Sherle? I see it on my monitor; I want folks to be able to look at that. The territory of the Levant not only includes Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, but it includes Israel. It's an ancient territory that really claimed all the land right to the Mediterranean. And so, some use that phrase because they're sort of taking Israel out of the picture. They're wanting to form, out of all these fragments of the Islamic countries, one mighty central power. That's what Saddam Hussein was after and he hoped that he could recapture the glory of the days of Nebuchadnezzar - a world empire. Of course, the religion of Nebuchadnezzar was nothing like Islam, but since it was some of the same territory around Baghdad, he was claiming Nebuchadnezzar as his ancestor because he wanted to be the one who would unite all these fragments of Islam and the Arab countries. Now, we've got to be very careful because, while there are 1.7 billion Muslims in the world today, a few things need to be clear. Most Arabs are Muslims, but not most Muslims are Arabs. The majority of Muslims are not Arabs. Most Arabs are Muslims and the Muslim religion did spring from Saudi Arabia and Muhammad and it largely - it's got Arab roots that are connected with Ishmael. We'll get to that in just a minute. But the religion spread and so today, most Muslims are not Arabs.

The largest Muslim country - I've been there - Indonesia - they're not Arabs. And you go to Pakistan and North India - North Africa - and you're going to find that there's a whole lot of Muslim people in the world that are not Arabs. And so, we've got to be very careful and we also have to be careful to understand that we do see that there's a lot of terrorism in the world and a lot of it - a lot of the suicide bombings are connected with the religion Islam. Matter of fact, a couple of studies that I read - and there's others you can find - 2013 study by the Brookings Institute found that 77% of terror attack plots in the United States were motivated by Islam. A 2015 study from the Institute for National Security Studies - and that's based in Israel, so - to give you fair perspective - found that 99.5% of all suicide attacks globally were motivated by Islam. They found that out of 452 suicide terror attacks in 2015 - of course the data's not all in on 2016 yet - this is just last year, out of 452, 450 were perpetrated by Muslim extremists. So people think about these things and you read it in the headlines and it's - people become frightened. They say, 'Do I have to be afraid of the religion of Islam?' Keep in mind that out of 1.7 billion, the vast majority are nice, peaceful people; but there is something that is definitely going on. You cannot deny that the terrorism is springing from a religious foundation. Those who are extremists, there's religious reasons for it.

That's why we have not been able to achieve peace in the Middle East and the recent Secretary of State basically threw his hands in the air and walked away, not only dealing with Syria but in what's going on in Israel because the problems are so deeply rooted because the religious issues and, as long as the Jews and the Christians and the Muslims base their faith on different books - of course Jews and Christians have pretty much the same book. We have the New Testament but the Muslims put the Quran as a priority. They also claim some value in the Bible, but not the same way that we do. So there's - there are documents of constitution - their religions are different and they can't change that. You just don't see it going away unless they change their book. It's entrenched and the battles that you're going to see going on in the world today go way back. Recently CIA Director John Brennan and, in a similar meeting where also the FBI both addressed the problems with ISIS and ISIL - according to Director Brennan he said, 'Iraq and Syria have been so thoroughly damaged by warfare, sectarian conflict, and killing, it is unclear that they can ever be put back together again. Those nations we once knew as Syria and Iraq - and it may spill over into Jordan and Lebanon and some of these other countries - Tunisia, Africa, Yemen, they're unraveling and the borders are changing. And he says he doesn't think they'll ever be put back together again the way we know them now. He went on to say he believes that ISIS will remain a presence inside Syria and Iraq for quite - "Quite a while to come.

I do not think a number of them are going to remain a challenge for the United States as well as other governments" - he says, "I do think" - I'm sorry - "I do think a number of them are going to remain a challenge for the United States, as well as other governments, for a number of years to come." James Comey, Director of the FBI made a similar assertion - same day - he said, "The threat, I think, will dominate the next five years for the FBI. And the impact of the crushing of the caliphate will happen" - he

said, adding, though "through the fingers of that crush are going to come hundreds of hardened killers who are not going to die on the battlefield, they're going to flow out." So these are issues that are not going to go away quickly. Now, as I mentioned before, while it is true that most Arabs are Muslim, most Muslims are not Arabs. Judaism - or, rather, Christianity is rooted in Judaism, but most Christians are not Jews.

You see what I'm saying? So, to understand this, and when you consider that the two primary religions in the world today are Christianity and Islam - more than 50% and they are growing faster than Buddhism and Hinduism, which are the other prominent religions, there are only about 16 million Jews in the world - compared to the other religions they're very small, but they're an amazing people in that they have a great deal of influence on the finances of the world and media. I'm just stating a fact and I'm a Jew. But - and it's a small country - got a lot of technology, a lot of brainpower, a lot of influence - but when you think about the numbers, Judaism is a very small number compared to the billions you find in Christianity and Islam. So, to think last-day prophecy is not going to factor in these religions, I think, is reckless. So we're going to go into that, but before we do you've got to go back in order to understand it because these ancient stories have a bearing on future events. We're going to go way back. We're going to go to the book of Genesis and I think you'll find, in this study - go to Genesis 12 if you have your Bibles.

I won't have all the scriptures on the screen because I think you still bring your Bibles to church. I will have a few pictures and comments - go to Genesis 12 and we're going to be reading verses 1 to 3. Now after the Tower of Babel fell, God then calls someone by the name of Abraham and God says to Abraham, 'Get out of your country, from your family, from your father's house to a land I will show you. I will make a great nation' - don't miss that phrase 'great nation', it's coming up again - 'I'll make a great nation of you and I will bless you and make your name great and you will be a blessing and I'll bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you, and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.' This is a messianic promise. This is a promise that Abraham would be the family - the tribe - through which the Messianic line - the line of Jesus would come through Abraham But there was a problem, so you've got to go now to Genesis chapter 16. And if you read in Genesis 16, verse 1, Abraham is, you know, God calls him at 75 years old to come out of Ur of the Chaldees, says, 'I'm going to make you a great nation.'

He's married his half-sister Sarah, evidently a very beautiful woman because he lies twice and says it's his sister because she's so beautiful he's afraid that the Philistines and the Egyptians are going to kill him and take his wife and she's already like over 60 years of age the first time. But it is a problem. So they've had no children. God even renames Abraham - gives him the name from Abram to Abraham which means 'Father of a Multitude' so it's, 'What's your name?' 'Father of a Multitude.' 'Oh, really, how many kids do you have?' 'None yet, but I'm optimistic.' So that must have been embarrassing. And Sarah didn't want him to be forever embarrassed and so you read in chapter 16, verse 1, "Now Sarai Abraham's wife, had borne him no children. She had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar." Now, you might wonder where'd he get her, because Abraham came from the East - that's not where - Egypt was west of the Promised Land. Well, before chapter 16, you've got chapter 12 - there was a famine and Abraham after he went into the Promised Land, he had to go down to Egypt during the time of famine and the Pharaoh there sent him out of the country and he gave him a lot of gifts. And you can read in Genesis 16 - I'm sorry, Genesis 12:16, "He treated Abraham well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants..." and so the Pharaoh gave a lot of gifts, including female servants. Among the female servants that were given to Abraham and Sarah in chapter 12 was one by the name of Hagar and Hagar's name means 'fugitive; immigrant'.

Isn't that interesting? 'The sojourner' - it also has been used in another context to mean 'ensnaring'. And so, going back to Genesis 16, Sarah has this idea. She says to Abraham 'Look, I can't have children, but I don't want you to be childless. Since Hagar is my maidservant, I'll have her work as a surrogate, you know, she can bear children for me.' She said, "Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And you thought that was a modern phenomenon. And so Abraham he just goes along. He heeds the voice of his wife Sarah and he "took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abraham" - that must have been tough - "to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan." - They still had no children - "So he went in to Hagar and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes." Now I've underlined that. Right here you see - now keep in mind, Hagar is going to be the mother of Ishmael who ends up being the first Arab -

father of the Arabs. Sarah, the mother of Isaac - can you imagine now, Sarah, who she's the wealthy one - she's the real wife - Hagar is a surrogate; she's bearing children for Sarah but she's having her own baby.

Sarah can't have any, Hagar's conceived, she's beginning to have her tummy show, and as they get together around the campfire at night with all the other servants - Abraham had a large household - he's got 300 men in his household and the closest number we can get - he's got 300 men that are part of an army, so you figure how many more sustain that group and, you know, it's like 2,000 people-plus in his household - and they gather around the campfire and he offers sacrifice for everybody and they tell stories and - and there's Hagar strutting around, rubbing her belly, and she's looking at Sarah saying, 'Tsk, tsk, tsk, too bad you can't have any children. God must have cursed you.' Do you remember how Peninnah, the wife of Elkanah - Elkanah is the father of Samuel - Peninnah persecuted Hannah because Hannah couldn't have any children. Boy, women can be vicious (Laughter) when it comes to rivalry, for a man. Can I get an "Amen" on that? See what I'm saying? You see it in the Bible. Look at Rachel and Leah. They're fighting with each other. And so, Hagar starts to despise - 'You've got the money. You're the real wife.' and she starts - there's this animosity - this rivalry because the attitudes of the mothers get transferred to the children. So the rivalry between the two - wait, I'm not done - 'Her mistress became despised in her eyes.' Matter of fact, I've been reading out of my notes.

I've got to jump to Genesis 16 and I'm going to look at this with you. And then Sarah says to Abraham - I'm in verse 5, 'My wrong be upon you. I know I gave you my maid, but it's your fault.' "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me." Doesn't that sound like a marriage? (Laughter) and Abraham said, 'Look, it was your idea.' 'But you should have known better.' That's the way I'm reading it, I'm sorry. So Abraham said to Sarai 'Look, she's your maid. She's in your hand' - I mean, here he is, first he complies and he says, 'Okay, I'll marry her.' then he says - he complies and says, 'Okay, do what you want. She's your maid. You're the mistress, she's the servant - do as you please.' "And when Sarai dealt harshly with her," - so now the animosity is not just coming from Hagar towards Sarah, it's coming from Sarah towards Hagar. You see, it's going both ways. When Sarah dealt harshly with her she runs. I don't know if that means she beat her or what happened. "She fled from her presence." Hagar takes off and she heads for the hills. "Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water...on the way to Shur. And he said, 'Hagar Sarai's maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?'"

That's a question we all ought to ask. "She said, I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai" - Sarai back then - "The angel of the Lord said to her, 'Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.'" - Boy, that must have been tough - "Then the angel of the Lord said to her, I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude." You might make a note of that because that's what God had promised about Isaac. "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 word 'el' in the Bible means God - Dani-el, Rach-el, Micha-el - and some draw - there's a connection between Allah and Elohim, but I'll talk about that more next week. Ishmael means 'God hears' - 'I've heard your cry'. She's, you know, you can't blame Hagar. She said, I was a servant in Egypt, I got handed over by the Pharaoh to this guy named Abraham speaks a different language - I've struggled with the language - then she hands me over to Abraham and says, 'You're supposed to have a baby for me and so, here I have a baby and I'm thinking maybe I'll get a promotion - I won't, you know, I won't just be a slave, I'll be at least a concubine. And Sarah gets all upset and she beats me and what have I done?'

You know, you can understand Hagar's not feeling good about it. And Sarah's thinking, you know, 'What have I done that I can't have a child?' 'You're with child. You'll bear a son and call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction.' Notice, verse 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." That sounds like a conflict. There would be some animosity between Ishmael and other people - and he'd dwell in the midst of his brethren, but they would have a hard time assimilating with other people. And there she called the name of the place - because God spoke to her - "You-are-the-God-who-sees; for she said, 'Have I also here seen Him who sees me?' Therefore the well" - where God appeared to her - "was called Beer Lahai Roi...between Kadesh and Bered." Anyway, so you see there's this conflict between Hagar and Sarah. Now, if you go to chapter 21 of Genesis and you see that it continues to increase. "So the child (Isaac) grew and was weaned." Oh wait, I left a very important point about -

you've got to go back where Abraham then has a vision where God appears to him and he says, 'I'm going to give you a son.' and Abraham's going, 'Well, you did give me a son, his name's Ishmael.' and God is saying, 'No, I'm going to give you a son by your wife.'

I never told you to take another wife. I told you I was going to make you a father of a multitude and you lost faith and thought you were going to help Me out. And you accomplished, by works, what was supposed to happen by faith. You accomplished by carnal means, what was supposed to happen by spiritual miraculous means.' He says, 'I'm going to give you a son through Sarah.' I don't know if you've known anyone like this, but I've known two or three people that - a couple - they tried to have children, they tried to have children, they couldn't have children so they adopt; and guess what happens? They get pregnant. Then they have children. Anyone know anyone like that? They just didn't wait long enough. But God, evidently, wanted that child adopted and so He worked it all out. But God said 'You know, you ran ahead of Me. This was not My plan.' Which also reminds us that polygamy is not God's plan. It did not work well for Abraham or Jacob. I've always wondered, you know, Abraham had several wives - we'll get to that Keturah later - Jacob had four wives, Isaac had one wife. And even though Isaac was younger, he's the son of Abraham Isaac lived longer than Jacob or - it's just a fact - he lived 180 years - he lived longer than his father lived and he lived longer than Jacob lived.

It's not God's plan. It'll shorten your life span. (Laughter) makes sense to me. So Abraham then prays to God. God says, 'You know, I'm going to give you this promised son.' He prays and he says, 'Lord, I wish that Ishmael might live before You.' And God said, 'He is going to live before Me and I'll bless him, but I'm going to give you a child by Sarah.' and so, God blesses Sarah, she gets pregnant - 90 years old - has a baby. Now 90 then was not like 90 now because 175 is how long Abraham lived. Obviously you haven't met anybody 175 lately. I've just read an article on aging and with all the progress that they're making in genetics, they did a study - some - I can't remember, I just read it on the plane - some reputable organization and they said they've come to the conclusion that the maximum life span for man - that with all of our technology, he's still not going to get beyond 115 years, because even though you might do things that will improve his lungs and improve his heart, there are just so many systems that all begin to fail, that is sort of like the max of what a human, right now, with our genes, can hope for. Now, I know they're all hoping for a magic pill and Google and people have invested all this in trying to extend the life span but, you know, it says back in the Bible, 'The days of our years will be three score and ten and if, by reason of strength, they're four score, there's much sorrow and aches and pains.' Abraham lived 175, Isaac lived 180, the last really old person in the Bible was Jehoiada, a high priest, lived to 130. Remember the high priest in the days of Joash the king? That's the last real long liver in the Bible.

Rumor is he had a liver about that long. No. (Laughter) you know what I mean - dumb joke, sorry. So when it says that Sarah was 90, 90 back then probably looked like 60 now, which would still be pretty amazing. And so, they were just astounded. Now, of course, you've got Elizabeth in the New Testament who also has a baby in her old age. So she has this son and they're all celebrating and finally, when the boy is weaned - Isaac is weaned - they have a party. And now - I'm in Genesis 21, verse 8, "and Sarah saw" - they're having a family party and everybody's celebrating except - how do you think Hagar feels? She had 'The Boy' but Sarah now gets pregnant and her boy, who she thought was going to inherit everything, suddenly he gets - he becomes a little more than the servant's kid and can you just see all of her ideas of the prosperity of Ishmael and his being the firstborn and his getting the inheritance are dashed. And everybody at the party that Abraham throws for the weaning of Isaac - and they weaned them later then - it may have been four or five years old. You remember when Samuel was weaned he was brought to the temple? Had to be a little older than we wean them now. And everybody's celebrating and they're clapping and they're, you know, woo - what do you call it? They're gushing over the baby and Hagar is folding her arms and she's stomping around and Ishmael sees how mom feels and he says, "I was the spoiled prince and now it's Isaac." and he can't contain himself and he begins to taunt and mock Isaac. Sarah saw - I'm in Genesis 21:9, "and Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham scoffing.

Therefore she said to Abraham - boy, they just had a blow-up - "Cast out" - you know what that [phrase] 'cast out' means? Divorce - "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac." and the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son." Ishmael's his son - the father loves his son. Remember when Abraham prayed, 'Lord,

what about Ishmael?' he cared about him. "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;" - now that's not a scripture you're supposed to take too far - (Laughter) "Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called." So you see right away what the difference is? The promised seed - the Messiah - was going to come, not through Ishmael, but through Isaac. And we're going to go to the New Testament in a minute and look at that. "Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman (Ishmael), because he is your seed.' So Abraham rose early in the morning," - he had to do something very difficult - "and took bread and a skin of water;" - now, I just want to stop right here and mention something about Abraham you're going to notice: when God told Abraham to do something, he did it right away. Abraham obeyed. God said, "I want you to circumcise as a covenant" - that day - he doesn't wait - everybody, including himself and his son are circumcised. Ishmael was 13 and Abraham it was just before he was like 90-something, are circumcised. God says, I want you to offer your son.' He does it right away. And God said, 'I want you to cast out the bondwoman.' He doesn't say, 'Alright' then 90 days later - boy, the next day he saddles her up and he says, 'You've got to go.'

As soon as he knows something is God's will, he does it, even though it's difficult. We could all learn something from Abraham. When you know something's God's will, the longer you dilly-dally, the devil will give you rationalizations to not do it. I was talking with a friend this week who used to go to church and has been missing church. And he confessed to me - he said, 'You know, I haven't been there in a while, so you pray for me Pastor Doug.' I said, 'I'll pray for you, but what about tomorrow?' I said, 'How about going tomorrow?' I said, I can pray for you, but you can change - tomorrow.' and, in other words, 'right away', because that was the first sabbath. Anyway - so he sent her away - he rose up early the next morning and he took bread and a skin of water; he put it on her shoulders, he gave her the boy - to Hagar - and sent her away. He gave her some finances but instead of going to a town, she's all broken hearted. She goes out into the wilderness. She departed and she wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. She knew how to get back to Egypt. "and the water in the skin was used up," - and they became dehydrated - it may have been a dry part of the year - there's no rain, the springs are going dry - and it got so bad that they're dying of thirst. Now that can happen quickly. I did an amazing fact, I think it was this year, about a father and a mother from France with their 8-year-old boy decided they were going to walk across the White Sands National Monument in Alamogordo, New Mexico. And it's only about a 10-mile walk, but it was a very hot day and they didn't take enough water with them and along the way they began running out of water, they became extremely thirsty - and they kept giving their water to the boy. Well, finally, when they were found, the boy was alive and both parents had died. One day out in the desert.

So, it can happen. So she wandered and maybe she got lost and she ran out of water and she thought, 'We're done for. We're going to die.' but God promised that that boy was going to be a great nation. He wasn't going to die. And she put him under a bush - looking for shade, I expect - and she went and - she said, 'I don't want to sit here and watch him die.' She went and sat about a bow's distance from him - didn't want to hear him cry and die. She said, "Let me not see the death of the boy." Nobody should have to watch their child die. She sat opposite of him and she lifted up her voice and she wept. She sat across the hill from him - "and God heard the voice of the lad." now that means, not only - he's 13 years old. He's intelligent. She's not only crying and praying, he is praying - Ishmael - and crying. Because it's not - God didn't just hear her voice, he 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 - did God know? - "What ails you Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.' Then God opened her eyes. And she saw a well of water." Isn't it amazing how God helps you find water at the last minute? I remember being lost in the desert and - on two occasions - once I actually called Karen. I was out in Nevada with my friends and we ran out of gas and we ran out of water and we were in the desert.

It was very hot and I had Stephen with me and we were worried because we thought we were going to take a short cut back to where we knew water was and it ended up being a long way around and we realized we're not going to get back without running out of gas. I called her - I got to the top of a hill - I got a signal and I said, 'Well, Karen, we're okay but we're out of water and we're out of gas.' And we're lost. 'And we're lost.' And we found a spring way up in this mountain - we found a spring and we started

digging. And cows had also found the spring and so we had to dig and try and clean it out. When we first filled - our first little empty plastic water bottles, you know, Stephen said, 'I'm not drinking that!' (Laughter) because it was cloudy and he saw us all drinking it going, 'Oh, it's so cold.' We got it right where it came out of the ground - tried to get it as clean as we could, but it still had clay in it. 'Oh, it's so good!' Stephen said, 'I'm not drinking that!' We were all, 'This is so good.' He said, 'Okay, give it to me!' And so - when I hear about God showed him the water - remember when Samson - he won that battle and he was dying of thirst, he said, 'What good is it? I've won the battle - I'm dying.' and God all of a sudden made a spring come up out of the ground. So when we're at our wits' end, can God take care of our needs? Can He bring water out of the desert? God opened her eyes and she saw a well. It was there, but she finally saw it. "And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.

So God was with the lad;" - she never went back to Egypt. He was in the wilderness and he became an archer - he became a skilled hunter - "and he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt." Don't miss that. So, going back to our message here, I want you to notice now that there's a persecution that happens between Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael ends up being the father of the Arabs which, of course, is where you get Islam. And Isaac becomes the father of the Jews and, subsequently, the Christians, through which Christ came. One persecutes the other. This is where it starts relating to what's going on in the world today. Now, you might be thinking, 'Well, that 13-year-old boy taunting baby Isaac' - I guess he was more than 13 at that point, because he was 13 when he was circumcised, he must have been 17 or so at that point - 'How can that be persecution?' Well, listen to what Paul says in Galatians 4, speaking of Isaac and Ishmael, Paul says, "But, as he who was born according to the flesh (Ishmael) persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, even so it is now." Paul says what happened there between Ishmael and Isaac was a persecution of one against the other. I also want you to notice - you go to Genesis 37:28 - when Joseph was sold, now Simeon wanted to just kill Joseph; Ruben wanted to save Joseph; Judah wanted to sell Joseph.

You wonder why Joseph ended up putting Simeon in jail until the brothers came back; he was probably the chief instigator that wanted him murdered. Reuben tried to sneak him away but Judah said, 'Hey, why kill him? He's our brother, let's sell him and make a profit.' Who did he sell him to? Let's read it: Genesis 37:28, "Then Midianite traders" - what are they called? Midianite traders. "Midianite traders passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites" - Midian was another son of Abraham by the wife he married after Sarah died, named Keturah - he had several sons with her - so there was never a problem with the virility of Abraham because he had children pretty late in life. Midian and - I want you to know that the Ishmaelites, because they were traders, they circulated - they intermarried a lot with the other sons of Abraham. So among the Arabs you're not only going to find the descendants of Ishmael, who was the oldest, but there's some intermarriage going on with Midian and the other sons by Keturah that happens, and I'll prove that in just a moment. Something I want you to notice: now, let me tell you what I'm going to say in concluding this message - I'm not quite done, but the point I'm trying to wrap up: these two sons of Isaac and Ishmael are, in some respects, parallel - it's almost like they're polar opposites, but I want you to notice twelve princes. You know what the odds are of having twelve sons? I was looking that up today - or this week, rather - and I read about Jay and Kateri Schwandt of Rockford, Michigan - they had twelve sons; no girls. And they calculated the odds of that happening are one in 4,000 - it's just like really a jackpot.

I was on the airplane this last week coming back from Maryland - I sat between two brothers and I was kind of hoping for an aisle or window seat - one of them wanted the aisle and one of them wanted the window so I had to sit between them. And I looked at them - suspected they were brothers - started talking to them - two boys - home schooled - Christians - coming back from a convention. I told them I was a Christian. They were happy to talk to me. And they said, 'Yeah, we're two of seven brothers - no girls.' I said, 'well, that's really something.' I said, I actually know another family in our church where they have seven boys, no girls.' This family had twelve boys - I think the picture of them on the screen - since the report I read, I looked - checked up online - she got pregnant. Everyone was so excited - she had one more. What do you think? Boy. Another boy. Thirteen boys. So it's not that common, but it does happen. But how common would it be in one family, for two boys - to have twelve sons and at least one daughter? Do the math on that. You know, that's what happened with Ishmael and Jacob. I'm not talking about Ishmael and Isaac, but Jacob is the son of Isaac. Notice here: they have twelve sons - Genesis 17:20, "and

as for Ishmael," - we're reversing - or we're backtracking a little to repeat and emphasize something - "as for Ishmael, I have heard you.

Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful," - Abraham prayed for Ishmael - "and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation." now I want you to notice what it says here about Ishmael again - Genesis 25:16, "These were the sons of Ishmael and these were their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations." So nations came out of Ishmael. You go to Genesis 35 and it says, 'Now these are the sons of Jacob - twelve.' But wait, there's more: "and Esau" - you know who Esau is - I know - some of you ladies are having no problem following this - the guys, when you start talking about they're related to him by this person and that person, they go, 'Well, I can't figure that out.' But Jacob and Esau are brothers. Jacob and Esau are the sons of Isaac. Esau, he was the son of the flesh; Isaac the son of the spirit. The promise came through Jacob, but Esau, when he saw that Rebekah and Isaac were upset that he had married Canaanite girls and they had sent Jacob all the way back to Haran to get a girl who believed in Yahweh, he said, 'Well, alright, if it'll make you happy, I'll marry one.' And it says Esau married Ishmael's daughter. So not only did Ishmael have twelve boys, he had at least one girl. You with me? Yes. And that's in Genesis 28:9, "So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son," - the sister of the firstborn of Ishmael - to be his wife in addition to the wives he had." Did Jacob also have one daughter and twelve sons?

You're seeing, in these two nations, because the Jews came, principally, through Jacob, and the Arabs came, principally, through Ishmael, almost polar opposites - there's a parallel happening here. And what are the two great religions in the world today? They spring from these two families that you see. And the same persecution and estrangement that you saw way back in the days around the campfire with Sarah, Abraham, Ishmael, Hagar and Isaac, are going to play out in final prophecy. That's my theory that I've become convinced of. I'm not the only one who believes that, by the way. So, notice a few statements: it says of Ishmael, 'I'm going to make you a great nation.' Look at some of these parallels: Genesis 21:17, 'God heard the voice of the lad' - heard him cry - I will make him a great nation.' It also says, regarding Isaac, I am the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt. I will make of you a great nation.' Actually he said that to Jacob. So you've got two great nations have come out of Abraham springing from twelve sons. The number twelve in the Bible represents church - it's a religion - religious leadership - twelve apostles - Jesus used that number. He could have picked eleven, fourteen - so you've got a religion that comes from Ishmael and you've got a religion that comes from Isaac - it says 'Your offspring will be innumerable' - I'll multiply your descendants - Genesis 16:9 and 10 - and there's - you've got a map on the screen. You can see the dark green colors on the map represent the concentrations of the world where 99-percent up to a hundred percent are Islamic - and these are the countries that flowed out from Saudi Arabia that kind of engulfed some of these great empires.

You read also in Genesis 26 - to Isaac he said, I will make your descendants multiply like the stars of Heaven. I will give your descendants all these lands.' But what he says to Isaac he does not say to Ishmael. Here's the difference: to Abraham he says, 'In your seed all the nations of the world will be blessed' to Isaac he says here in Genesis 26:4, 'and in your seed all the nations of the world will be blessed - the blessing would come - the truth - because if you don't have truth you don't have blessing - the truth - the Messiah who is the truth - are you with me? - the truth that the Jews were the guardians of the word. Paul says God committed to the children of Israel the oracles of truth. It doesn't mean they always kept it, but they had it. Genesis 28:14 - then God repeats the promise to Jacob: 'Also, to your descendants they'll be like the dust of the earth and you'll spread around and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed.' So he only says this to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now it's interesting, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all three had wives that had trouble getting pregnant. You know about Sarah - we just read that. The Bible says Rebekah was barren and Isaac prayed and God opened her womb and she had twins. And the Bible says Rachel had problems having a child. And Jacob prayed and eventually she had Joseph and later Benjamin - died giving birth to Benjamin. They all had problems having children. The other thing is, because their children were born as the result of prayer and intercession and promises - spiritual births - you got that? Amen. There's something about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - these promised children are spiritual births.

There's a lesson for us there. The other thing is, where'd they get their wives? They kept bringing their

wives out of Mesopotamia to the Promised Land. Abraham said, 'Don't take a wife for Isaac from the local girls, she must be a believer in the true God. He said to Eliezer the servant, 'Go get a wife from my people and bring her to the Promised Land.' It's important because Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all got their wives out of Mesopotamia and brought them to the Promised Land and then God said, 'Babylon is fallen. Come out of her My people.' God calls His church out of Babylon - spiritual Mesopotamia - to the Promised Land - the New Jerusalem. See what I'm saying? And the children of Israel were carried away captive to Babylon and they came out of Babylon in the days of Cyrus and came back to the Promised Land. That's the whole story of Ezra and Nehemiah. So this is carrying on through history. It's going to happen in last-day prophecy as well. Now, I want you to notice there's a number of parallels between Isaac and Ishmael. Isaac comes into the world as a result of faith. Ishmael comes into the world by natural means as a result of works. God had promised a promised, miraculous child to Abraham and Sarah. They couldn't wait. They said, 'We're going to help God out. We're going to do it by works.' It represents the carnal son, whereas you've got Isaac is the spiritual son. The interesting thing is, Isaac then has two boys and Esau is the carnal son - he's willing to sell his birthright for a pot of beans. But Jacob is the one through whom the truth comes. He is the spiritual son. He wants the blessing. He tells Esau, he said, 'You can take all of dad's possessions - you can get the inheritance.' Matter of fact, when Jacob came back into the Promised Land he gave things to Esau and he said, 'You keep it. I want the spiritual blessing.' And he got that, didn't he?

The father put his hands on him and he blessed him. And so, there's a big debate because, I don't know if you're aware of this, only Isaac is called the only son. When Abraham is called to sacrifice Isaac, God says, 'Take your son, your only son.' What about Ishmael? Is 'God so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son' - It's because Isaac was a type. When he went up on the mountain as a sacrifice, he was a type of Christ. It's like Moses was never supposed to strike the rock twice. He messed up the symbol. Abraham was not supposed to have a child of the flesh. He was just supposed to have the child of the promise. Something else that's interesting is in Islam they refuse to accept that Abraham offered Isaac. They say Abraham offered Ishmael. Now you can't believe both the Quran and the Bible because there's major conflicts in the teachings there. You read the book of James 2:21, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac" - you have to reject the Old and the New Testaments to believe the Quran. It says it was Isaac - it was not Ishmael that was the son. Look at some of the differences: one is a hunter, the other is a farmer and a shepherd. Isaac planted and God gave him a hundred-fold. There's a couple more parallels here and we're going to wrap this up. God names Isaac and Ishmael - they both were named by God, but the name of one comes from the father and the name of the other comes through the mother. Ishmael dies surrounded by family.

Jacob and Isaac died surrounded by family. Isaac goes east to get his wife; Ishmael goes west to Egypt to get his wife. They're opposites. Isaac's wife is chosen by the father. Ishmael's wife is chosen by the mother. You know, maybe I'll close by taking you to Galatians 4 - listen to what Paul says - we're jumping to the New Testament. Paul says what happened to Ishmael and Isaac is an allegory that applies to us today. Paul says, "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham - and, of course, Genesis was called part of the law - "Abraham had two sons, one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman (Ishmael) was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman (Isaac) through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants:" - one true, one false - "the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar - is anyone saved under the bondage of Hagar? Well, I'm telling you what Paul says - it's bondage - "For this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia," - where? Arabia. Where does Mohammed have his vision? Where is Islam born?

It's Arabia - "and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children - but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written: 'Rejoice, o barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband.' Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But as he who was born according to the flesh (Ishmael) then persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.' So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free." What does this mean? Well, in our day and age, I think, as we near the end

of time, you're going to see an increasing polarization in the world between these two great ideas - these two great families.

Now, if you're a Christian, your faith springs from Isaac and Jacob. If you're an Arab, your faith is springing - has its roots in Ishmael and Mohammed. And you can see in the world today these are the two principle religions that are being very aggressive about sharing their faith, and I believe things are going to reach critical mass in the end of time and it's going to result in the final events - but I don't want to get ahead of myself now because - wait, there's more. And we're hoping that you'll be praying for me as you come and you participate in this series. You know, if you read in the book of Genesis chapter 25, it talks about the last time that Isaac and Ishmael saw each other - just going to close with this: "Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah." And it goes through the genealogy and it says, "This" - in verse 7 - "is the sum of...Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years.

Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people." It's interesting, that's what it says about Ishmael; when he dies he is gathered to his people. "and his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him..." That was the last time we know of that they came together - to bury their father in the cave of Machpelah where he had buried Sarah, not Hagar. And then you jump ahead here, it says, 'Now this is the' - verse 12 - "Now this is the genealogy of Ishmael," - and it says Ishmael died and was gathered to his people - and these are the sons - the people of the east. And then it goes into the genealogy of Isaac.

So here in Genesis, at the end of Abraham's life, it immediately creates two pillars: it's got the genealogy of Ishmael and then it says the genealogy of Isaac - it's basically saying 'These are going to be the two strands that you can follow - even here we are at the end of time and they're still at odds - and I think that - I think you're going to be amazed as you see how these things will affect us today and learn more about these two religions and what the differences are. I hope you'll be praying with me as we proceed. As we close, I just want to say there's only one name under heaven whereby we must be saved and that's the name of Jesus.