

“From Hostile To Hopeful” Genesis 25:1-18

Today’s message will be unlike any that I have done before. Just in case you’re wondering that does not mean it will be shorter. So, take your Bibles and turn to **Genesis 25**. We will be looking at **verses 1-18**. I want to give a quick overview and then focus in on one verse.

There are two primary themes in this passage. The first centers on the twilight years of Abraham’s life. It’s been suggested that with Sarah’s death and Isaac’s marriage to Rebekah, Abraham, who is now old, was lonely and so married Keturah for companionship. Her name comes from the root word for perfume and means incense, something that gives a sweet aroma. We know very little about her like where she came from. It’s believed that the marriage was more out of devotion than romance indicated by the kind of care she would provide for him in his waning years. She bore him six sons and fulfill the prophecy that he would be the father of many nations. They became the ancestral line to six Arabian tribes in the southern and eastern regions of Palestine. Ancient Israelites considered them distant relatives.

It’s clear from the passage that they would not share in the inheritance that was Isaac’s alone, but they were well cared for. To ensure that there would be no dispute about the rights of inheritance, Abraham gave them gifts and sent them away to the east, much in the same way he did with Ishmael decades earlier. In time, at the “good old age” of 175, Abraham died. Both Isaac and Ishmael came together and buried their father in the same place as Sarah. God continued to bless Isaac for the sake of the promise made to Abraham and he lived near the place Hagar had called “the God who sees”. So ends the life of the first patriarch, Abraham. But we would learn later that this was merely a physical parting as God is God of the living and we can expect to see this man of faith among the many who will be gathered around the throne of grace among all the saints of God.

In **verses 12-18** we find a brief genealogy of

Ishmael listing his 12 sons who would become princes and tribal leaders. These verses also describe for us the place where they lived. In the text it refers to the location from the Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt. Havilah means sandy and refers to the desert area of Northern Arabia. Shur was on the doorstep of Egypt so essentially, they encompassed what now is much of the Saudi Peninsula.

My focus this morning will be on the last half of **verse 18**. Let me say that there are two very different interpretations to this passage. The KJV and some other translations interpret it to say that at Ishmael’s death he **“died in the presence of all his brethren”** meaning he had his people around him at the time of his death.

Other translations like the NIV interpret the Hebrew to read **“And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers.”**

Translations are pretty well split, about half reading it one way while the other half taking it to mean the other. Given the prophecy that God made about Ishmael back in **16:11-12** I believe it to mean that there was hostility toward their other half-relatives. Let’s refresh our memories regarding the prophecy. **Genesis 16:11-12**

In their commentary, Keil and Delitzsch explain that the translation of Genesis 25:18 means to “throw off or to settle down with the subordinate idea of keeping by force the place they had taken.”

So while Isaac and Ishmael came together to bury dear old dad, you have to believe that Ishmael may have had some bad blood toward half-brother Isaac regarding the inheritance.

As I said at the beginning, this will be unlike any other message I have done before because I want to focus on Islam and their hostility. While they have been in the news from time to time for decades, it’s really been since 9/11 that Islam and terrorism has really taken center stage on the world scene.

Let first look at the people and past of Islam.

I. THE PEOPLE AND PAST OF ISLAM

Hostility has not existed for just the past 20 or 30 or even 50 years. It began with God's prophecy. When we look at the various people groups that came from the descendants of Ishmael and the sons of Keturah who settled this vast land, we can trace through the Old Testament a path of hostility in fulfillment of this prophecy. For example, when Moses fled Egypt he found himself in the land of Midian where he married his wife. Midian was one of the sons born to Abraham by Keturah. 40 years later the Midianites would oppose the Israelites in passing through their land. On different occasions in the Old Testament the Midianites joined with the descendants of the Ishmaelites to oppose Israel. Along with the Moabites and Amalekites living in the same region they all worked together at different times to fight against Israel. They have been doing so ever since.

But it wasn't until the 6th century that Islam rose to political and religious power under the leadership of Muhammed. At an early age he lived with tragedy. His father died before he was born, and his mother died when he was six. His grandfather became his care giver but then died two years later. His uncle then raised him until he was an adult.

He appears to have lived a normal Arab life with the exception that he did not practice the pagan rituals in his hometown of Mecca. He eventually met and married a woman 15 years his senior and together they had 6 children. The two boys died in infancy. The four daughters would follow their father's faith. Two would marry future Islamic leaders.

His wife played a significant role in the formation of the Islamic faith. When he was 40, he was sitting in a cave outside Mecca where he claims to have had his first vision. Supposedly he was visited by the archangel Gabriel who demanded that he recite the words of Allah. He claimed that the encounter was so violent he thought Gabriel was going to kill him. He returned home and shared the vision with his wife who assured him that the vision was authentic. She affirmed his first revelation, which set him on the course of writing the Qur'an and

giving birth to the Islamic faith.

Two political events in the next 23 years would provide significant power and give rise to the Islamic faith. The first occurred in his hometown. He had gained quite a group of zealous followers, which resulted in authorities planning his assassination. Secretly escaping he traveled about 200 miles to the town of Medina. He was able to rally the city under his leadership and secure a strong base for his fledgling religion. From there he strategized how to spread the Islamic faith.

The second political event was his rise as a warrior-prophet. He approved raids on passing caravans to gather resources and supplies for his growing cause. He defended his action from the Qur'an (2:216) where it reads "Fighting is prescribed upon you, and you dislike it. But is it possible that you dislike a thing which is good for you?" He believed that war was a religious event and killed anyone who did not believe in Allah (Qur'an 9:29). The Jews were eliminated from Medina and he eventually returned to and overthrew Mecca. Once it was captured, he destroyed hundreds of idols and made Islam the official religion in the Arabian Peninsula.

After his death, Islam began to wane both as a political and religious force until Abu Bakr became its new leader and squelched any who desired to leave the faith. He put an end to the civil unrest in the Peninsula and retained a hold on the Islamic faith there. The clear lesson was that once you became a Muslim you could not defect.

For the next 1,000 years there was rapid growth and expansion in political Islam. **Dr. Emir Canir writes "The conquest of Christian lands by Muslims was swift and stunning."**

British historian Bernard Lewis, who taught at Princeton, adds: "for the first thousand years Islam was advancing, Christendom was in retreat and under threat. The new faith conquered the old Christian lands of the Eastern Mediterranean region and North Africa, and Europe, ruling for a while in Sicily, Spain, Portugal, and even parts of France." Syria was conquered in 634

Egypt was conquered in 639
 Persia was conquered in 642
 Afghanistan was conquered in 670
 North Africa was conquered in 700
 Spain was conquered in 711
 Turkmenistan was conquered in 715
 Morocco was conquered in 722
 Rome was conquered in 845
 West Africa was conquered in the late 900's
 Under the Ottomans, the city of Constantinople in Turkey was conquered in 1453

For the next 450 years these Turks would rule much of the civilized world. By the middle of the 17th century they ruled as far into northern Europe as the border of Poland and as far west as Hungary. In time as their power waned in Europe, the people they had once conquered would take back their land. By the 18th century they had been driven back by European colonization. A final defeat came in World War I. But after the war a new day of Islamic independence would emerge that would stop the British and French from establishing permanent control in the Middle East. In the middle of the 20th century many of these countries would gain independence and self-governance. It was during this timeframe of political deployment that Emir Canir describes the religion as “**experiencing a cultural renaissance and theological reformation.**” It was a time when Western influence waned and Islamic law as described in both the Qur'an and sharia took root again. **Canir states that “the more literally a Muslim read the Qur'an, the more political his faith became.”** Many Muslim countries operate without any separation between their politics and religion. To them they are one and the same. They do not allow freedom of speech, or freedom of religion, nor is proselytizing allowed. Countries with the most extreme views make such crimes punishable by death.

Historically, going even as far back as the prophecy of Scripture we see its fulfillment in being a people of hostility. The reach of Islam continues to spread. Outside the Middle East, Indonesia is the largest populated country of Islamic followers. Dearborn is the most populated Muslim city in the US. A

Yemeni legend says that Henry Ford once met a Yemeni sailor who told him of a great opportunity to work in his booming car factories in Detroit. Many immigrated to Dearborn to get a job working for Ford who was the most open to hiring these immigrants.

What we are most familiar with about Islam stems from the last 20 years of terrorist activity among the most radical adherents to their faith. Most want peace, are conservative, don't believe in jihad, want good jobs, good schools and the right to practice their faith alongside other religions. Unfortunately, there is a growing number of those who want to see the spread of Islam through what is called Islamization. Such radical adherents follow the strict teachings of the Qur'an in passages like Sura 9:5 “Fight and slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and seize them, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them.”

Sura 5:51 states that Muslims are not to have any friends who are Jews or Christians because they lie and don't believe in Allah.

Underscoring our text in **Genesis 25:18**, Sura 60:4 states: “And there has arisen between us and you hostility and hate forever until you believe in Allah only.”

Islamization is the effort by Muslims living in that country to push it toward Islam. It's moving that country toward Islamic rule and we have seen that effort in our own country and even in the city of Dearborn where they are pushing for Sharia law.

Bishop E.C. Okoye of Nigeria states that the reason Islam is on the rise is because of their very proactive missionary efforts. They use monetary resources to build up the nation's infrastructure. But make no mistake it is a religion who's past and present are birthed and bathed in blood. Pew Research reports that when a country's Muslim population reaches 10%, they increase lawlessness as a way of complaining about their conditions. At 20% there will be rioting including the burning of Christian churches and Jewish synagogues. At 40% there will be massacres, terror attacks and militia warfare.

At 60% persecution of non-believers begins through extensive taxation, ethnic cleansing, sharia law.

At 80% there is daily intimidation in order to drive out the infidels or non-believers or force them to convert.

Their aim is 100% of the population becoming Muslim. That is when they consider that country to be an Islamic House of Peace. All schools are Islamic and they only teach the Qur'an.

We could take a month of Sundays and talk more about their history and how they got to where they are today. So, let me shift from talking about the people and past of Islam, a history filled with hostility to talking about the precepts of Islam.

What is it they believe? Some take their roots back before Abraham to the Semitic people groups who came from the line of Shem, Noah's son, who settled in this area after the flood. They also include some of the descendants of Ham who also settled there mingling with and marrying some of the Shemite people. Most take their lineage directly back to Ishmael and specifically to Abraham as the father and founder of their people.

My intent isn't to lay out the whole of their beliefs but merely give you a snapshot. In order to engage them with the gospel we need to know at least a few basic ideas of what they believe. We will conclude with talking about a proclamation to Islam. With an increasing Muslim population in our own country, our state and even our communities, it's likely we will all encounter someone who is a practicing Muslim. There is an Islamic Mosque in the Grand Blanc area. We need to remember that they aren't people to fear, they are people for whom Christ also died. People who need to hear the gospel proclaimed to them. So what are their precepts?

II. THE PRECEPTS OF ISLAM

Islam is a word that means surrender or submission. An adherent of Islam has totally surrendered to the will of Allah, which was revealed through his prophet Muhammed written down in the Qur'an.

First, let's consider six of their fundamental doctrines.

A. Their Six Fundamental Doctrines

John MacArthur gives us a nice summary of their beliefs or what he calls an Islamic doctrinal statement. Just like we have doctrinal statement in what we believe, so do they.

They believe that Allah is the one true deity, which they believe is the God of all humanity. They do not believe in the Trinity, which to them would be idolatrous and polytheistic.

They believe that Allah sent thousands of prophets of which Jesus was one, but that Muhammed was his greatest prophet.

They believe that the Qur'an is the most holy book. They believe that the Bible in its original form or manuscript was also a holy book but has become corrupt over time and through translation errors. They believe that only the Qur'an is pure. Every word was given by Allah to Muhammed.

They believe in angels who are created beings and have no needs. They are inferior to Allah but superior to humans. They believe angels are neither good nor evil.

Ravi Zaccharias in an interview with Lee Strobel stated "Virtually every Muslim who has come to follow Christ has done so, first, because of the love of Christ expressed through a Christian, or second, because of a vision, a dream, or some other supernatural intervention. Now, no religion has a more intricate doctrine of angels and visions than Islam, and I think it's extraordinary that God uses that sensitivity to the supernatural world in which he speaks in visions and dreams and reveals Himself."

They believe in a coming day of judgment and that the dead will be resurrected to stand trial before Allah. Everyone will be judged according to their works. They believe that salvation, heaven or paradise can only be achieved by good deeds, so they hope their good deeds will outweigh their bad deeds so that Allah will let them enter paradise instead of being sent to hell. They have no eternal security in their works. Their eternal destiny is

solely at the mercy of Allah. They don't believe in atonement as a payment for sin nor do they have any promise of forgiveness by Allah. Only those who die in jihad are guaranteed eternal life in paradise. Jihad is any armed struggle against unbelievers. Some teach that jihad is a spiritual or moral warfare rather than a physical warfare against unbelievers.

They believe in the timeless knowledge and power of Allah to execute his will. Where Christianity teaches that all things work for good to those who love Him, Islam teaches a fatalistic belief that everything good and bad happens directly from the hand of God.

That's a look at six of their fundamental doctrines. Now let's consider five of their fundamental duties or what they call the five pillars of Islam.

B. Their Five Fundamental Duties

First is the duty or pillar to recite the Islamic declaration of faith or the Shahadah, a word that means testimony, which declares their belief in the oneness of Allah and acceptance of Muhammed as his prophet.

"There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger [or prophet] of Allah."

They believe that if you repeat that three times you become a Muslim.

The second pillar is to pray five times a day toward Mecca. [I was talking once with a friend in California who was HR director. One day she was walking down the hall and saw something sticking out from under the janitor's closet door. She tugged on it and there was some resistance. It was a worker who was using the closet for prayer.](#)

[Years ago I was working out at the Y in Flint and was passing by the lounge in the fitness center. Another guy stopped his workout because it was time to pray. He was using the lounge for that purpose.](#)

Prayer is a pillar they religiously adhere to.

The third pillar of their faith is charity or the act of being benevolent, giving to others.

The fourth pillar is the annual fast known as Ramadan. It is a month-long time of fasting, prayer, and reflection. It's a time to avoid impure thoughts or activities. They neither eat or drink anything from dawn to dusk after which they can eat.

[Our neighbor is the Grand Blanc HS soccer coach. A number of his players are Muslim. He says that Ramadan is a challenge for those players because they can't hydrate during practices.](#)

The fifth pillar of Islam is required of every able-bodied Muslim. At least once in their lifetime they must take a pilgrimage or hajj to Mecca.

Islam has two sources of authority. They are the Qur'an and the example of Muhammed. But while the Qur'an is said to be unchangeable (6:34; 10:64), Allah can remove verses as he pleases (13:39).

The Qur'an is said to be preserved (85:22), yet Allah allows Muhammed to forget some passages (87:6-7).

The Qur'an says it has been preserved from corruption (15:9), yet there were varying copies of the Qur'an in the early days before settling on one version. Early leaders of the Qur'an admitted that they didn't have the whole writings of Allah. Instead they say they have what has survived.

Understand that Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God, even they both claim their roots of faith in Abraham.

[In an article by Al Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, he began an article on the topic this way: "A statement made by a professor at a leading evangelical college has become a flashpoint in a controversy that really matters. In explaining why she intended to wear a traditional Muslim hijab over the holiday season in order to symbolize solidarity with her Muslim neighbors, the professor asserted that Christians and Muslims worship the same God."](#)

There is a fundamental difference in our view of God. [Whenever we attended the Mennonite church](#)

in town, my Mom always wore a head covering out of respect for the women in the church, but then, we worshipped the same God although differed on some minor theological points.

Don't be misled by thinking we worship the same God as Muslims. There are two very important and fundamental differences in our view of God. First, they don't believe in the Trinity and while it is a word that does not appear in the Bible, the concept or idea of the Trinity is evident throughout. For example, at Jesus's baptism the Father spoke about His beloved Son while the Holy Spirit descended on Him as a dove. Or in the Great Commission given in **Matthew 28:19** we are to baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – one God but distinct in their essence or being.

A second and very fundamental difference has to do with the person of Jesus. They believe He is merely one of many prophets while we believe that He is God in the flesh. If Jesus is not God then we are still dead in our sin and doomed to eternity in hell. Jesus had to be God and man in order to be our payment for sin, something they don't believe in, because they believe you must work your way to heaven. They don't believe what Jesus said about He and the Father being one. They don't believe that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and that the Word, Jesus, was God.

As with the people and past of Islam we could spend a lot of time talking about the precepts of Islam, both in similarities to Christianity and Judaism and in our differences, but I want to close with what really matters.

Unfortunately, even among Christians, we have taken our viewpoint about Muslims from recent events like 9/11 or the Boston Marathon bombings or attacks in Paris or their perpetual attack on Israel. But instead, we need to see that they are in just as much need of salvation in Christ as anyone else and worthy to have the gospel proclaimed to them.

III. THE PROCLAMATION TO ISLAM

With a growing population of Muslims in our own

country and in fact in our own backyard, how do we share the gospel with them?

We need to remember that they are people like us who also need salvation. Like us they have days with both joy and sorrow. They have the same fears, the same failures, the same sins. We need to pray for them rather than look at them with suspicion or disdain. **I Peter 3:15** says we are to set apart Christ in our hearts and be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is in us with gentleness and respect. If Christ is not first set apart in our heart, then we will be like much of the world and stand in condemnation rather than having a heart burdened for their lost condition without Christ.

That verse says that instead of being argumentative we need speak to them and treat them with respect. Gain an audience through demonstrating Christ's character. In predominantly Muslim countries thousands are coming to Christ because they see the emptiness of their religion and the genuineness of Christianity demonstrated by believers even in persecution.

Missionary Samuel Zwimmer, known as the Apostle to Islam practiced what he called "A ministry of friendship." Demonstrate the love of Christ to them. They get in car accidents, get sick, need help with yard work. Offer to help. Take them a meal but respect their dietary laws. Be the hands and feet of Jesus to them.

Of all the things we can know about the Bible to share with Muslims, three stand out. The first is to know about the nature of God. To the Muslim Allah is harsh and uncaring. Show from Scripture God's love and compassion.

John 3:16

Second, know about the deity of Jesus, that He is God who came in the flesh. Show them that He is more than just a prophet, a good and moral man or good teacher. They respect Jesus as a prophet so talk about Him from Scripture, especially about His great love and how He came to save us from sin. But show them how Jesus is God, not just a man.

John 1:1, 14

The third truth to know and show them from the Bible is that salvation is by grace given by God not because we merit it by good works. Jesus took our place and paid our debt so that by faith, not works, we can have eternal life. A Muslim is trying to earn salvation, so show them that Christ died for our sin to give us salvation and faith alone in Christ that secures heaven.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Titus 3:5

I Peter 3:18

The Qur'an teaches in Sura 10:94-95 that if any Muslim doubts his faith he is commanded to find out more from those who read the Scriptures that came before Islam. Sura 4:163 says they are not to reject the books of God and the Qur'an affirms three books that were written before it - the Torah or five books of Moses, the Psalms and the gospel of Jesus. Even though they are considered to be tainted they are respected by Muslims and can be used in sharing Christ with them.

Our task, then, as Christians is to know the Bible, so that no matter who we are talking to, we can guide them from Scripture to what it says. One suggestion is that when you are using a Bible, use one that is not written in because they believe that it is offensive to mark God's Word. Never let it drop below your waist and if you are carrying it with a stack of books, make sure it is always on top.

Be an example of Christlikeness – live for Jesus because that is how many Muslims come to faith in Christ.

We can't allow the hostility of some to create in us a hatred that refuses to approach them with the gospel. We cannot be like the religious leaders in the story Jesus told about the good Samaritan who crossed over to the other side to avoid contact or responsibility of helping them find the truth of eternal life through Christ alone.

We cannot view them as the enemy because we were once the enemies of God as well, but He loved us and sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us so we can have a personal relationship with Him through

Christ.

Romans 5:8

There is hope for the hostile.