

# The Arabs In Prophecy

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THE ARABS are to be found in most Bible lands, and the Bible alone tells us just who these remarkable people are. They occupied Palestine over a thousand years ago and have been there for a longer period than any other people. Let us look for a moment at these distinctive people. With the Jews, they are the only people who have existed as a distinct race since the days of Abraham. They are descended from Ishmael, the first-born son of Abraham and they are proud of this fact.

Before Ishmael was born God sent a message to Hagar, his mother, detailing in an uncanny way the future of her son and his proud descendants. It should be noted that Ishmael was the first man whose name was selected by God before his birth. God named him Ishmael which means "God shall hear." The reason was that God had heard his mother's prayer. Although she was but a slave girl, she became the mother of a mighty people.

In thought, stand by the side of Ishmael, a lad who lived more than thirty centuries ago. What man of that day would have ventured to predict the history of Ishmael? There were thousands of other lads in those lands but we do not know anything of their history. Not a thing.

But Abraham, "the friend of God," had prayed that God's care would be over this lad and his descendants. His prayer was: "Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee." Genesis 17:18.

And here he is, in his direct descendants, living today. The identity of his people has been preserved through all the changing centuries. In Genesis 16:10 it was foretold of him, "I will multiply thy seed exceedingly."

## "A Great Nation"

Ishmael married an Egyptian, and the divine prediction was soon fulfilled, so much so that in Genesis 37 we find the Ishmaelites as a nation trading with Egypt.

Arabian conquests have extended from the borders of India to the shores of the Atlantic (Gibbon, Volume 9, page 501) and they embraced a wider range of territory than was ever possessed by the Romans, those boasted masters of the world. The Saracens' conquests are well known and their jurisdiction was of greater duration than that of the Caesars.

The learned Dr. Horn, reviewing items in the prophecy, wrote: "They might, indeed, be emphatically styled 'a great nation,' when the Saracens made their rapid and extensive conquests during the Middle Ages, and erected one of the largest empires that ever was in the world."-"An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures," Volume 1.

The historian Gibbon, no friend of divine revelation and yet a constant witness to its fulfillment, wrote that "the perpetual independence of the Arabs" was a common theme of strangers who wrote of their ways. Others, he says, may "exult in their national independence; but the Arab is.

## A Divine Interposition?

Dr. Thomas Newton reviews their ancient history in conflict with the ruling powers: "It is still more wonderful, that, with these dispositions, and this enmity to the world, they should still subsist in spite of the world an independent and free people. Alexander was preparing an expedition against the Arabs for refusing to acknowledge his sovereignty, but his sudden death intervened. When an

inflammatory fever cut him off in the flower of his age. Pompey was in the career of his conquests, when urgent affairs called him elsewhere.

Aelius Gallus had penetrated far into the country, when a fatal disease destroyed great numbers of his men, and obliged him to return. Trajan besieged their capital city, but was defeated by thunder and lightning, whirlwinds and other prodigies and that as often as he renewed his assaults. Severus besieged the same city twice and was twice repelled from before it; and the historian Dion, a man of rank and character, though an heathen, plainly ascribes the defeat of these two emperors to the interposition of a divine Power.

We who know the prophecies, may be more assured of the reality of a divine interposition: and indeed otherwise how could a single nation stand out against the enmity of the whole world for any length of time, and much more for near four thousand years together? The great empires round them have all in their turn fallen to ruin, while they have continued the same from the beginning, and are likely to continue the same to the end. These are the only people besides the Jews who have subsisted as a distinct people from the beginning." "Dissertations," Dis. 2.

The history of the Arab has been written in war and strife. Even their 'great prophet, Mohammed, the originator of the religion of the majority of the Arabs, did not bring peace. Rather, his writings increased strife, as Milman, the historian, declares: "The Koran was a declaration of war against mankind. The world must prepare at once for a new barbarian invasion and for its first great universal religious war." - "Latin Christianity," Book 4, chapter 1, page 194.

#### In the Presence of Their Brethren

Milman goes on to say the Arab had been trained in a terrible school, for his whole life had been one of war and adventure. How accurately has been fulfilled the divine prophecy which was made before the first Arab was born. Yet in spite of this wildness God declares: "He shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." Right in the heart of the earth the Arabs have always dwelt, although a nomad people; a people that love to wander, they have not wandered out of their own territory. Of Ishmael, the father of the Arabs, we read that he lived and "he died in the presence of all his brethren." Genesis 25:17, 18.

Now nearly forty centuries have slipped by since the divine forecast was made. Since then great and mighty changes have taken place. The world has been turned upside down. Many nations not then in existence have come into being, flourished and gone into the grave of oblivion. The once rich plains of Babylon have become a desert. Babylon's warlike people have become extinct. Surely it was too much to expect that the nomad Arabs would maintain their existence, yet that is what the Word of God foretold.

Today we see the black tents of Ishmael's sons on the same sand as he once trod. The nations that were once masters of the world have perished, yet the Arabs are still numerous, powerful and independent. They abide as a monument to the truthfulness of our infallible Bible. Had the Book of Genesis no other argument to confirm its divine origin, the account of Ishmael and the prophecies concerning his descendants for over thirty centuries would be sufficient.

The record is plain, clear and irrefutable. Truly the Bible is the word of the Living God, for how else could its prophecies be so amazingly fulfilled? And among them is the prophecy of the "wild man" of the Middle East.

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