

Bible Truth for Seniors
September 5, 1965

Missions

The Arab World

Shirley Madany

When you live in a country the size of the United States or Canada, you have to put your imagination to work if you would understand the other peoples of the world. For instance – when you hear the expression “Arab world,” what comes to your mind? Is it an Arab on a camel, or the Sahara desert, or an oasis, oil wells, sheiks and mosques?

Did you know that the Arab world is a group of very nationalistic countries stretching from Morocco in North Africa all the way to Iraq in the Middle East? Besides having the religion of Islam in common, all these countries have but one language – Arabic. This means that to 80 million people living in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, the English language is something foreign and Arabic is the language of their heart.

In the first centuries after the birth of our Lord there was a strong Christian church in North Africa. You will notice this when you study the history of the church. Tunisia was the land of Augustine. Now this Christian witness has disappeared completely and is replaced by a fanatical religion. The Muslims have a holy book known as the Koran, which they guard jealously from all criticism. Their reverence for this book includes a reverence for the Arabic language in which it is written.

Imagine, then, the emotions that are stirred up when anyone in these countries is tuning in their shortwave set and suddenly hears the good news of Jesus Christ – in Arabic! They hear the words of the Bible for the first time. What a discovery!

Those who can and do write, sometimes find it hard to express the depth of their feeling at this discovery. They sense something “sublime,” a “nobility and height” that is entirely new to them. They often quote lines of Scripture that have touched them.

In many of these Arabic countries missionaries are not free to preach the gospel. Radio is the only means of penetrating the Muslim home, along with the follow-up literature. There is a spirit of revolt and inquiry among the young people. As one Moroccan youth put it: he is a “free Moroccan” and therefore wants to listen and to read everything he can about the Christian religion.

A devout Muslim in Somalia declared that, though he was a Muslim, he is listening eagerly to the broadcasts and “learning how Jesus was guiding mankind in the right paths to

God.” He said that his heart is being “inclined toward the Messiah.” When we hear such news we should feel a great joy in our own hearts. Praise the Lord for every sheep that is found!

Did you know that this broadcast, which is being listened to every evening of the year by families in more than fourteen countries, is a broadcast from your church? It is the Arabic broadcast of the “Back to God Hour.” It is beamed twice daily from a missionary station, ELWA, in Monrovia, Liberia. The messages are prepared by Rev. Bassam Madany at the Back to God Hour office in Chicago and then mailed to Liberia as tape recordings. The listeners are invited to write to an address in Khartoum, Sudan, as it would be too difficult to write to an American address. Packets of letters are then sent by air from Khartoum to Chicago and arrive usually in four days time. Then their names are placed on file and the follow-up work begins.

Now you need to use your imagination again. Imagine faraway villages and towns, tall apartments in cities in Morocco, humble dwellings in villages along the Nile River, an oasis in Libya, forbidden cities in Saudi Arabia, homes where mail is seldom received and where books are very precious. First they have discovered the program on the radio, then they have taken the next step and written their thanks and their requests. They wait patiently for the answer, and when it comes they become aware of a Christian fellowship. Someone, somewhere, is concerned about their spiritual welfare.

Whenever we have a new Arabic publication they automatically receive it, and each time it is a new and wonderful surprise. Then follow letters of thanks and gratitude from those who are seeking and growing in the faith. Many offer to distribute literature to their friends. Once a mayor wrote that he would like enough sermons for his whole village. There are more than 3,400 on the mailing list now, and the recent shipment of a Bible-study booklet on The Epistle to the Hebrews required 8,000 copies to meet their demands.

Often a listener will say that he is praying for God’s blessing upon the Church that has begun this work now so precious to their hearts. Won’t you remember these Arabs in your daily prayers also? Pray that they may come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.