Study Guide for Healing the Open Wounds of Islam

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Chapter 1

SADDAM HUSSEIN AT THE WHITE HOUSE: A Meeting that Should Have Happened

Section I.

An imaginary conversation that would have changed history for the better. The proposed conversation takes place between U.S. President George W. Bush and Iraq's President Saddam Hussein in 2002. Rather than escalating towards war, the two leaders discuss law, leadership, reconciliation, and deeply prophetic visions of a just, free and united Middle East.

These questions arise from that conversation

- Can power be wielded for service rather than domination?
- Is reconciliation possible in a world marred by history, ambition, and division?
- How can leaders retire gracefully and foster nations that are stronger than their rulers?

Section II.

Servant leadership, as divinely inspired by biblical principles, demonstrates the concept of the "Good Shepherd," a phrase often referring to Christ. The "Good Shepherd" is a servant leader. It contrasts with typical Arab rulers. The concept of servant leadership in the Western tradition is an important contribution of the church.

However, Western Christianity frequently fails to recognize its critical importance in the political sphere. Western democracies allow their leader to be questioned, held accountable, and removed by the people.

Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 19:22-25) foretells the unity of Egypt, Assyria, and Israel. A modern example of this is the post-WWII reconciliation between France and Germany. These were aided by important figures like Robert Schuman and Rev. Frank Buchman.

The Shia-Sunni conflict, on the other hand, has faced obstacles to unity due to a history of corruption, betrayals, and colonial divisions.

- Corruption: Unchecked greed drains national strength and undermines trust.
- Regime Change vs. Moral Transformation: The flawed assumption that democracy alone would stabilize Iraq after the U.S. invasion.
- Education and Intellectual Renaissance: Lessons from the European Renaissance and the Abbasid-era House of Wisdom.

Section III.

<u>1. Biblical References</u>

- Daniel's prophecy: The sequence of empires (Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome) and the coming of God's "humane kingdom."
- David vs. Saul: The balance between personal ambition and divine accountability.
- Isaiah's vision: A future where Egypt, Assyria, and Israel unite, despite their historical conflicts.

2. Modern Political Parallels

- Marshall Plan: Why the U.S. rebuilt Germany instead of colonizing it.
- The 2003 Iraq invasion: The failure to establish lasting peace through regime change.
- European Union formation: Overcoming war through diplomacy and shared moral responsibility.

1. How can leaders transition from ruling by fear to ruling with trust?

2. What allowed France and Germany to reconcile after WWII?

3. Can nations like Iraq achieve similar unity, or are cultural and religious divisions too deep?

4. How does institutional accountability (courts, media, elections) shape governance?

5. What are the risks of unchecked power in a leader's hands?

6. Is Isaiah's vision of Egypt, Assyria, and Israel uniting a realistic model for peace or purely spiritual?

7. Can moral rearmament (such as Frank Buchman's approach) succeed in the Middle East today?

8. Comparative Analysis

- Compare King David's leadership with modern political figures who struggled with balancing power and morality.
- Study how post-war Europe fostered reconciliation, and propose similar steps for the Middle East.

9. Rewrite the 2002 Bush-Hussein meeting as a policy proposal for peace.

Deeper Exploration

1. How do Biblical leaders (David, Saul, Daniel) compare to modern political figures in terms of accountability?

2. What does it mean to retire gracefully from leadership, and why is it rare among authoritarian rulers?

3. How might the House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikmah) serve as a model for political and intellectual renewal?

4. How did France and Germany overcome centuries of conflict to forge the EU, and could such reconciliation happen in the Middle East?

5. What specific steps might Middle Eastern nations take toward rebuilding trust between opposing factions?

6. What are the barriers to forgiveness in regions where historical wounds run deep?

7. How do Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 19:22-25) and Malachi's vision (Malachi 4:2) relate to modern geopolitical hopes for peace?