

Archibald Forder 1863-1934

Pioneer in Moab, Edom and Arabia

He was born on September 2, 1863 in Salisbury, England. His parents were George and Sophia Forder. His father was clerk to a firm of solicitors. He was also a local preacher of the Methodist Free Church. The joy of the Lord was very real to George. Theirs was a keen Christian household. Family prayers and private prayers were daily habits. His father died peacefully in his sleep aged 84.

To Archibald's mother worship was very real. Her days were spent helping others. She was brought up in the Church of England, but on marriage joined her husband's church. Archibald comments that she often wept for joy as she worshipped.

Archibald had two brothers and two younger sisters. Sophia had dedicated all her children to the Lord. She fully supported Archibald going to the mission field. Until her last days she prayed fervently for him. She also passed away peacefully and is buried together with her husband in Salisbury Cemetery.

As a young boy of 8 years, Archibald heard Robert Moffat speak of his experiences as a pioneer worker in Africa. This lit a spark in his heart never to be extinguished. Looking back years later he saw this incident as the beginning of God's call to him to pioneer into places the Gospel had not yet reached.

Soon after Dr Moffat's visit a worker from China spoke at their church and the young Archibald decided that was where he should go if doors opened. In the meantime he went door-to-door collecting money for missions. Most people gave one penny or half a penny per week!

Archibald left school at 15 and was apprenticed for three years to a grocer and baker in Longham near Wimborne in Dorset. His employer was a keen Christian and Archibald joined in church activities. He later confessed that at this time he didn't have a real faith and hadn't made a personal commitment to follow Jesus. After his apprenticeship, while spending a short time at home, he made a definite decision to follow Jesus.

His next move was to Wandsworth in Surrey. This was the home of his eldest brother who sadly died soon after Archibald's arrival. Here Archibald set up home and got a business going. He married in 1888 and settled down. It seemed unlikely he would leave England. He spoke to a church leader about his earlier desire to serve God overseas. The response was that this wasn't likely as there were a number of things against him:

- He had no college training
- He was already married
- He didn't come from 'ministerial stock'

Three years after this discouraging meeting he was reading an article on mission work in Moab being done by Mr and Mrs Lethaby and Miss Mary Arnold. They were looking for a young married man to join them. This stuck in Archibald's mind. It was as if he heard a voice saying, "That is for you!" He wrote to the General Secretary of the Kerak Mission – Rev. George Piercy. Since the Lethabys were visiting England they went to see Archibald. They pointed out the dangers and difficulties as well as the sacrifice in disposing of a thriving business and breaking up their home.

The committee felt they should refuse his application, but four months later Mr Piercy contacted him to say that if he was still resolved to go, they would accept his application. Home and business were soon disposed of. Both Archibald and his wife had a few months of practical medical training in hospitals and they were ready to go.

On Wednesday, Sept. 2, 1891 they were commissioned by the Bow Road Wesleyan Church. Rev Piercy explained to the congregation that no salaries were paid and each worker relied on God alone to supply their needs. Many were stirred to pray for the Arabs and the work in Moab.



Kerak Castle

On Thursday, Sept. 3, 1891 Archibald and his wife left England. On reaching Jaffa they were met by Mrs Lethaby. Mr Lethaby had joined them in Port Said. They made their way to Jerusalem and from there a further 4 days journey to Kerak the capital of Moab and their future home.

It was almost eleven years since Archibald's heart had first been stirred concerning missions. Many things had come into his life in those years that he found hard to understand. He was reminded of two verses that had earlier made a great impression on him and that he would think about many times in the years ahead.

"Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him and He will do this." Ps. 37:4-5

" 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are My ways your ways', declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts'." Is. 55:8-9

Later God would call Archibald to leave Kerak, but he always recalled with joy all their experiences there and how he had proved that when God calls to a place or a task He always goes before and when one door closes another opens leading to even greater usefulness.

In a letter to Mr Piercy dated October 8, 1891, Archibald described their journey to Moab. They left Jerusalem in a camel train with Mr and Mrs Lethaby on one camel and the Forders on another. The first night was spent in a Russian hotel near Jericho. Next day they crossed the River Jordan that was very swollen. After 15 hours they arrived in Medeba. After a night spent at some desert tents they pressed on to Kerak. There were some unpleasant encounters with different tribes and on one occasion they had to pay a bribe, but they arrived safe and sound on Sunday, October 4. Archibald was very proud of how his wife handled all the difficulties of the journey. They were both very pleased with their one-room accommodation next door to the Lethabys.

So their work started in Kerak in the Boy's School and also medical help to those in the town and to the warring tribes injured in various battles. This pattern was suddenly halted on May 7, 1892. Archibald wrote, "**Six months had passed quickly and pleasantly when the daily routine of our life was abruptly broken by the sudden home calling of Mrs Forder. Without any warning and without time even for a word of farewell, my wife fell dead in our room before me.**" She was buried in Moab the next day and Archibald went to Jerusalem to send news back to England.

In January 1893 the report on the work in Kerak for the year 1892 clearly showed God's blessing even though things had happened that they couldn't understand.

Here are a few points from that report:

God's presence was very real to them through troubles and bereavement. They experienced the truth of, ***"Lo, I am with you always…"*** Mt. 28:20

- Mr Lethaby had to return to England due to ill-health.
- The ruling chiefs were against them.
- They were cut off from the civilised world.
- In March Mrs Lethaby left to join her husband.
- In May Mrs Forder died.

Commenting on these events Archibald said, "**I believe that out of it will come glory to God**".

Arab Muslim friends had helped Archibald bury his wife. The comment of the local chief was, "**Now you have buried your dead in our midst, you have become a son of the land, one of ourselves, you must not think of leaving us.**"

From then on they showed a much greater interest in the Gospel.

Encouragements followed:

- As Archibald's language improved he began to be accepted by the tribal chiefs. He was fully occupied in the city and in the tents. In a medical capacity he visited all the encampments around Kerak and three nearby villages – Kunzera, Arraq and Kathrubbah.
- Archibald was welcomed as a friend through doing little jobs for the chiefs like mending a saddle, a boot or a wooden bowl.
- Miss Bowyer arrived to join their team and was warmly welcomed due to the fact that she made riding trousers for a chief with some material he procured.

Many times the chiefs and their families listened to the reading of the Bible which was completely unknown to them.

The chiefs asked for a schoolmaster who could live among them and teach their children. They would supply food, accommodation and protection.

In the city 12 boys were registered in the school and were reading the Bible regularly. Before going to the school they couldn't read or write a word of their own language. Their fathers were seeing the benefit of the school and they were expecting many more boys for the next year.

In the evenings the boys read Bible stories to their parents and friends. When needs occurred they prayed and gave thanks for the answers. They were just 8 or 9-year-olds. Nothing had been happening for the girls since Mrs Lethaby left.

Medical work also proved very important. In the past year 5,920 patients had received medicine and 88 teeth had been extracted. There were many cases of severe wounds in tribal fights. Archibald had experienced supernatural help from God in treating these. The chiefs were beginning to believe in medicine from the mission rather than being burnt or bled or some other local practice!

From August Archibald decided to read the Bible to those who came for medicine. Most of them were Muslims. If he didn't read, then the people asked for a reading! He began a gathering of men on Sundays to read and talk with them and about 20 came. He wrote, **"The way is open. We have no opposition. What we need are suitable buildings, more workers, a Christian native schoolmaster. I feel constrained to exclaim with Charles Wesley, 'O for a trumpet voice!' so that I might lay the needs of this place before the Christian world. Of course Satan is always busy, but our blessings and mercies far outnumber the other things".**

Archibald was delighted that his sister could visit in June 1893. In November 1893 the Turkish Government established a garrison in Kerak. The school was closed and all medical work stopped. The committee of the Kerak Mission decided to hand over the work to the C.M.S. Archibald stayed and continued his work through 2 years of strong opposition from the Turks.

In 1894, while in Jerusalem, Archibald met his second wife. He commented that her willingness to hold the fort at home and let him go to 'regions unknown' was vital in him being able to pursue the call God had placed on his life. He quoted 1 Sam. 30:24, ***"The share of the man who stayed with the supplies is to be the same as that of him who went down to the battle. All shall share alike."***

To Archibald's great joy first a son, George, and then twins – a boy and a girl – were born to them. Sadly, their twin boy died aged 9 from typhoid. According to Arab culture, Archibald was known as Abu Jerius (father of George).

Under C.M.S. work was done on new buildings for a Medical Mission. A question arose because Archibald was not Church of England. Was he willing to become Church of England? In all good conscience he felt that he could not do this. He wrote, **"It was decided that I must be disconnected with the work I had helped to build up in the land of Moab. So with many regrets at having to leave my Kerak friends and the work I had given my life to, we – my wife and children along with that valuable worker Miss Arnold – turned our backs on Kerak and set out to face the world, not alone however, for we had God and the promises to rely on."**

Miss Arnold returned to her native Australia and was lost to the missionary cause in a difficult field. The secretary of the C.M.S. Palestine Mission, J. R Longley Hall, gave Archibald the following letter dated February 17, 1897:



The 2nd Mrs. Archibald Forder

"Mr Archibald Forder has been engaged in mission work at Kerak on the East of the Jordan for 5½ years three of which have been spent in connection with the C.M.S. Mr Forder is a very earnest Christian and a most energetic worker and the present promising position of the mission work at Kerak is due largely to his zeal and his enterprise under God.

During the first 2 or 3 years Mr Forder was at Kerak. The work was especially difficult and full of danger on account of the wild and uncivilised state of the people. They were at that time beyond the control of even the Turkish Government and every man did what was right in his own eyes. The greatest credit is due to Mr Forder for the tact with which he dealt with people. This was used by God to open doors for the proclamation of the Gospel in very many ways.

We are very sorry to lose Mr Forder from our mission band, but we trust and pray that the Lord will speedily thrust him forth into other work for Him and own and bless him even more than whilst he was at Kerak. Wherever he may take up work, the C.M.S. Palestine Mission will always regard him as one of their number."

Archibald went to Jerusalem with his wife, his son and their twins. There he met the Christian and Missionary Alliance. They were dedicated to reaching the whole world with the Gospel. They were looking for a man who would go to "Arabia's desert Rangers and the descendants of Ishmael". They had money set aside but they had no one to go.

They invited Archibald to go to the States and put the needs of Arabs and Arabia before the people of the C & MA. Thousands responded showing great interest and being led by God to pray and support a movement into Arabia – one of the lands most firmly closed to the Gospel. Archibald put together a booklet entitled, **Arabia: its people and their need**. This gave a detailed history of Arabia linking it to Adam and his descendants.

In February 1898 Archibald was back in Jerusalem. He wanted to set up a home for his wife and family while he undertook journeys into Arabia. Once this was done, he went to Damascus to try and arrange a start into Arabia. He found Arabs from Central Arabia (Nejd) willing to go with him. The third day out he was kicked by a horse and his left leg was broken. He had to return to Jerusalem. It took him a long time to recover after surgery. At last he was ready to set out again. The Board in the States thought he should have a companion. Two men volunteered but in the end were unable to come.

In 1899 he set out again going south. He hoped to get Arabs from Ma'an to go with him. He was sitting in a guest tent talking with the Arabs when 6 Turkish soldiers came looking for him. He was arrested and taken to the governor of the nearest place – about 6 hours away. They decided there was no harm in him, but he must be returned to Jerusalem under escort. He had to wait a week in that place and was able to distribute all the Scriptures he had with him. So his second attempt to enter Arabia failed!

In the spring of 1899 he set out again with a traveller visiting Edom and Ma'an for geographical purposes. After a short time in Ma'an his companion left. Archibald set up house in a simple way. All was well for 3 days and many Scriptures were distributed. On the evening of the third day soldiers arrived under orders to take him to the local governor. He was a hard man who had taken a leading part in the earlier massacre of Armenians by the Turkish Government. As a reward for his services, he had been made Governor of Ma'an. After some argument, Archibald was locked up overnight and returned to Jerusalem under escort the next day. This was his third failed attempt to enter Arabia. He was determined not to be discouraged. He concluded it was not yet God's time. He had gained valuable experience and many Scriptures had been distributed.

There was much to do in Jerusalem. Thousands of Arabs there had never heard the Gospel. Trips to Hebron and other places filled his time. In 1900 he made a trip to "Druze country" in Eastern Palestine. He had previously met with Druze and been encouraged at their eagerness to buy Scriptures. As he sat with a group of Druze men they were discussing making up a party to go to a place called Kaf.

Archibald looked it up on the map. It was the first stopping place for caravans between Damascus and Mecca. It seemed to Archibald that this was his opening into Arabia.

He talked with the two brothers he had made friends with years before. They thought such a journey was dangerous for him as a Christian, but possible. They promised they would help him if he could get to their home town on the edge of the desert. He wanted to make the best of this opportunity. Once again he packed Scriptures and other necessities. He negotiated for a man and two animals and he was ready for his fourth attempt to enter Arabia – a journey of 750 miles.

No companion came forward to go with him, so Archibald set out alone on Dec. 13, 1900. A few friends gathered at his home in Jerusalem. They committed each other to God's safe-keeping not knowing when they would meet again. Archibald found it hardest to say goodbye to his four-year-old son.

On this first part of the journey there were many difficulties but whether it was the weather or hostile officials or veering off track time and again, Archibald saw God's hand in the way they took. They arrived at the Druze town of Orman on Dec. 20 and Archibald lodged with the two brothers he had met two years earlier in Damascus. In Orman he was able to sell many Scriptures and share the Gospel personally with many men. He found a number of older boys who could read well.

Archibald discovered that Kaf was about 6 days journey south east over a waterless desert. Eventually a caravan party on its way to Kaf to trade dates for salt was persuaded to let Archibald go with them. t was a dreadful journey – 38 hours with only a half-hour stop!

Finding lodging in Kaf proved very difficult as Archibald was a Christian! Most felt they would be killed if they offered him hospitality. Eventually the chief agreed to give him a guest room. He discovered a caravan passing by on the way to Jowf the next day. Jowf was the largest town in northern Arabia about 11 days journey to the south-east. No one was willing to take Archibald because he was a Christian. Eventually his host agreed to go with him to the next town of Ithera. Just as they were starting out 12 chiefs from a nearby tribe arrived to see the chief. It was agreed that Archibald should journey on to Ithera with two of the chief's servants.

The servants left him at the Chief of Ithera's guestroom. No one greeted him. He was not handed over to anyone in particular. He was just left standing there! His time in Ithera was very difficult. At first the chief took pity on him, but later he was afraid to give him hospitality or even let him sleep in his palm grove less the date harvest fail as a punishment for housing a Christian. He was taken to a tent outside the city walls where a very sick old man was waiting to die. Archibald learned that the chief was setting out on a trip to Jowf the next day to collect annual taxes. After much negotiation a price of four gold pieces was agreed for a camel, water and food to journey with them to Jowf. They eventually arrived after an arduous desert journey. They were soon lodged in the guest room of the three sons of the chief whose name was Johar.

Jowf was a beautiful oasis in the desert about 2 miles long and a quarter of a mile wide. There were many thriving palms. About 40,000 people lived there. All the buildings except the castle were made of mud and sand brick dried in the sun. Archibald found men and boys who could read. The government of Jowf – as that of Ithera and Kaf – was in the hands of Abdel Aziz Ibn Rasheed in Hail six days' journey from Jowf.

Chief Johar received Archibald with some degree of hospitality, but he was fearful what it would mean to welcome an infidel. He isolated him in a small private room. He tried hard to convince him to convert to Islam. Despite the suspicions surrounding his visit he was able to give Chief Johar a Bible and many other Scriptures were distributed. Chief Johar's son, Faleh, was very attentive. He told Archibald three men had arrived from Hail and each wanted a Bible to take back with them. Archibald gave them 3 nicely bound Bibles. He was very glad to see these Bibles go to Hail – the seat of the government of Central Arabia. He commented, **"Someday we may hear what was done or caused by these three books taken into the stronghold of Islam."**

Archibald was alone in his room one morning when he heard shrieking and saw people rushing towards the castle. There had been rain and a strong wind from the east had caused one wall of the



Al-Jowf Castle

castle to fall in and crush the apartment where Chief Johar was reading his Quran. The chief was pulled out cut and bruised with a broken leg. There was an uproar. They said it was the doing of 'the Christian'. The cry was raised, "Kill the Christian".

They had almost reached Archibald's room when 3 men blocked the entrance. They had revolvers and forbade them to come any nearer. The crowd melted away. Archibald thanked them and asked why they had intervened. They said they had been in India and seen the good work done by Christians. They said they always helped Christians and the actions of the people of Jowf were just due to their ignorance.

The next day a group of men tried to lure Archibald away to do him harm, but one of his helpers came looking for him and harm was averted. They had been in Jowf eight days. On arriving back at his room, Archibald found all the Scriptures distributed had been returned and piled up in a heap. Faleh told him that Johar had said they must be returned as they contained something bad. On enquiring what it was, Faleh quoted Ps. 22:7, ***"You are My Son. Today have I become your Father."***

Archibald asked why Johar hadn't returned his Bible. Faleh said he wanted to keep it and read it. The next day people came and asked for their Scriptures back. Archibald asked them, **"What about Johar?"** They replied, **"We've done as we were told and returned the books. We were not ordered not to take them a second time. Give them back to us and we will hide them until you have gone away."**

After thirteen days in Jowf, Archibald left to join Chief Khy Khwan, the Chief of Ithera, and his caravan at the northern edge of the town. They travelled four days without finding water. The fifth day Archibald's camel collapsed and nothing could get it to stand up. Water was pouring from its eyes. The men told him it had eaten herbs that made it drunk! They made a remedy of date syrup with flour and salt. This was poured down the camel's throat and half an hour later it was able to stand. The journey continued and they reached Ithera after ten days.

Chief Khy Khwan had fulfilled his obligation to Archibald to get him to Jowf and back for four gold pieces. Now he treated him badly refusing him a decent place to sleep and refusing to give him a man or a beast to go on his onward journey. He was looking for more money, but by now most of Archibald's goods and all his money had been stolen at various points of his journey. On the eleventh day after his return to Ithera, Archibald was finally given a man and a poor skinny donkey that could barely carry his almost empty saddlebags. Archibald had to walk. The man had been told to leave him with the first Arabs they found. After some hours they came to a single tent. The owner welcomed Archibald and cursed the man who had treated him so badly. He was able to rest in a corner of the tent. The man's four wives and his children were also there. They gave Archibald some dates and treated him very kindly for the five days he was there.

On the fifth day a party of men arrived en route to Damascus. Archibald had hoped to go due west and reach Jerusalem, but it was impossible. For payment of half a sovereign they offered to take Archibald to Orman. But he had no money! Eventually he was allowed to ride on top of one of the loads. After six days he asked when they would get to Orman. He discovered they were not going there as the leader had killed a man there and was afraid to go. They left Archibald at Umm-Rowman about two hours from Orman.

The hamlet of Umm-Rowman was home to Muslims, Druze and a few Catholics. Archibald stayed with a man known to the leader of his journey to Umm-Rowman. Arrangements were made to take him to Orman and bring back money in payment for his journey with them.

In Orman Archibald was warmly welcomed by the people he had left many weeks before. They said, **"We have never let a day pass without asking God to keep you and bring you back to us safe and well."** Archibald told them about all his journeys. The man he had left his money with on his earlier journey gave it back to him just as it had been given. They pleaded with him for Scriptures, but he had sold out.

The night before he left for Damascus, a soldier came to the guest room asking for the Christian who had come from Jowf. The official at Salkhad, a castle town they had passed, had heard of him and wanted to see him. He also wanted a Bible. Archibald had just one left that he was able to give him.



Lepers at Hansen's Hospital on the outskirts of Jerusalem ~1900

Finally Archibald reached the home of one of his local friends in Damascus. His friends, Mr and Mrs Richards in the British Consulate, were very relieved to see him. After a few days rest he headed for his home in Jerusalem. He reached home after nine days riding. It was three and a half months since he had left Jerusalem.

In this first move into Arabia from the North, Archibald had travelled 1500 miles and about 250 Arabic Scriptures had been sold or distributed as well as hundreds of leaflets and booklets given away all explaining the plan of salvation. Hundreds had heard the spoken word that without faith in Jesus, the Son of God, there could be no forgiveness of sin or eternal life.

Archibald pondered what would the harvest be and how long it would be before the Kings (Chiefs) of Sheba and Seba offered gifts and fell down and worshipped.

"The desert tribes will bow before Him and His enemies will lick the dust. The Kings of Tarshish and of distant shores will bring tribute to Him. The Kings of Sheba and Seba will present Him gifts. All kings will bow down to Him and all nations will serve Him." (Ps. 72:9-11)

As he reflected on this journey, Archibald took encouragement from the verses:

"God reigns over the nations!" (Ps. 47:8) and ***"I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth."*** (Ps. 46:10)

He commented, **"Remember that 'Well Done!' is not promised to the good and successful worker, but to the good and faithful servant who is to enter into the joy of his Lord."**

On Archibald's return from Arabia C & MA asked him to stay in Jerusalem for six months to strengthen the work. There was a Sunday School for locals with an average attendance of 60 Christians from many creeds. This was held at the Mission House where they lived, but there was not enough space. After the Sunday School, a service in English along Free Church lines was held again in the sitting room of their house.

A suggestion was put forward to try and reach the 'outcasts' of Jerusalem – beggars, lame, blind etc. No one cared about them. An effort was made to talk to them and see if they would come to a meeting. They said the only possible time was sunrise. So a gathering was arranged for 6 am on Thursdays. At the first meeting there were only 3 people. Later 80 came and they had to divide into women on Tuesdays and men on Thursdays. It was sad to watch them arriving helping each other because of their various disabilities. They were dirty due to no washing possibilities. Almost all were Muslims. The meeting lasted an hour. They sat on the floor. A prayer was offered and then the Lord's Prayer was said with those who knew it joining in. A short Scripture portion was read and expounded very simply with one truth being pressed home. Then a Scripture verse was taught to them and the meeting ended with a prayer that God would bless the spoken word. They were given a cup of coffee and a halfpenny to compensate them for any loss through coming to the meeting. Archibald was also involved in the work among those in the leper colony isolated in the Kidron Valley.

With the outbreak of the First World War many missions sent their personnel home. Others who were independent – such as Archibald – preferred to remain. Initially they were assured of safety. But all of a sudden news came that Turkey had entered the war. Many residents of Jerusalem were detained. Archibald was arrested on November 6, 1914. By now he had been in the Middle East for a quarter of a century and the German officers were suspicious of his friendship with the Arabs in towns and cities as well as with the Bedouin.

He was locked in a small stable about 15 ft. sq. in which a horse was stabled. It had neither a door nor a window. There were iron bars where the window would have been. He remained practically in



David's Tower Jerusalem where Archibald was first imprisoned

solitary confinement for 2 months. His wife was allowed to visit him once in the presence of an officer who spoke perfect English and listened to their whole conversation.

After 2 months he was moved to the prison for criminals. There were 15 men in his small cell as well as rats and other vermin.

After about 6 weeks, Archibald was moved to a smaller cell with walls soaked by running water. It was impossible to keep dry and not one ray of sunlight ever entered. One night there was a riot in the prison because they had had neither bread nor water for 36 hours. It was believed that the prison governor had sold the bread and pocketed the money. After the riot all the prisoners were paraded before the Chief of Police. He was amazed to see Archibald in their midst. He had had orders from Damascus some time earlier to find him and send him there for court-martial. Since he couldn't find him, he had told the authorities in Damascus that he must have died or fled the country.

Seeing how badly Archibald had been treated, he said he would let him go home to his family and would keep silent about him unless he received another telegram from Damascus. A week later an urgent message came from Damascus. Now there was nothing for the Chief of Police to do but send him to Damascus under escort. Once again he said goodbye to his family.

In Damascus he was taken before the court-martial accompanied by the American Consul who was acting for British interests at that time. It was agreed that he could be free to live in Damascus under the supervision of the American Consul. But the next day a police officer arrived saying he must go to the court-martial at once. All the proceedings took place in Arabic and Archibald chose his words very carefully. He realised they were insulting him and his family to provoke him to say something on which a charge could be founded.

Since they couldn't find anything against him, they told him he could be free if he paid £200 in English gold. He had no money and couldn't get any money so they took him to the common prison with orders to confine him in the worst place possible. He was put in a cell 30 ft. sq. with about 75 men. He commented, **"I needed all my faith, all my nerve at that time."**

One morning the governor came to tell him he had been condemned to death by the court-martial and was to be put in the condemned cell. In this cell there were 16 men heavily chained awaiting death by hanging or shooting. Archibald saw each one executed. He was forced to watch and each time told he would be next. He was in this cell for 7 months. All he could do was pray and hope. Finally the prison governor told him the death sentence had been revoked and he was to be confined in a dungeon for 3 years.

He was taken to a vault some 50 ft. underground where there were 150 men all condemned to life imprisonment. He lived there for 9 months only allowed out one hour every third day for exercise. The prison refused to feed him saying it was the responsibility of the American Consul. Since he couldn't contact the consul he would have starved except for the sympathy of prisoners giving him a few scraps of their food. After 9 months he was taken up to ground level and put in a cell with 30 men – all murderers. They made complaints against Archibald designed to reach the Governor's ears such as, he was abusing the Sultan and cursing their religion. These complaints were investigated and no witnesses could be found. Those who had made the complaints were flogged.

During all this time Archibald had no news of the outside world. Turkish soldiers would sometimes boast to him of a great victory of the Germans or the Turks over the British forces. He could not receive any communications from his wife in Jerusalem or his children.

One day a man visiting another prisoner caught sight of Archibald and enquired who he was. He remembered the court-martial and believed that the sentence was simply 3 years in Damascus under the supervision of the American Consul. An investigation was made. Archibald appealed to Jamal

Pasha, Turkish Commander-in-Chief of the 4th Army Corps. He had absolute power from Constantinople right down to the Suez Canal.

After investigation and further threats and harassment from the court-martial officials, Archibald was given a free pardon and in January 1917 he was released. What was he to do now? He was the only European left in Damascus – a marked man among half a million people. He had only European clothes. There was no way to find lodging. If he approached any of his friends in Damascus he would put them in danger and they would almost certainly be hanged. As he wandered around the streets he met a man he had seen in the prison who had also been detained under a false charge. This man took him to his house until he could find lodging. Wandering in the Christian quarter of Damascus he was recognised by someone who had known him in another part of the country. On hearing his situation this person suggested he go to a small room connected with the church of the Irish Presbyterian Mission. All mission personnel had left. He was grateful to be able to stay in this small room. Archibald had received kindness from the Turkish Commander-in-Chief and he found an opportunity to thank him personally. As a result of this, permission was given for his wife to join him in Damascus.

His wife was worn out from constant anxiety and lack of nourishing food. Her body was unable to withstand an attack of cholera and very soon after joining Archibald she died. His son was serving with the Canadian forces and his daughter had found her way to England and was with kind friends.

For the next 14 months the Turks harassed Archibald mercilessly. He was hauled off to the courts at midnight. All his possessions were stolen. He was on the edge of starvation. The Spanish Consul had replaced the American Consul and Archibald had only an allowance of 3 shillings per week when a small loaf of black bread cost 3 shillings and sixpence. He begged a few vegetables growing in gardens that he passed by. It was too dangerous for any of his friends in Damascus to help him. Towards the end of his time there he made friends with a young German soldier who had lived in America. In return for a small loaf of bread, Archibald gave him English lessons. He worked on the staff of a German general and so could give Archibald progress about the war.

One day he told of the collapse of the Turkish and German forces near Nablus in southern Palestine. He said he had to leave in 24 hours and so would probably not see Archibald again. Soon after this an Assyrian police officer visited him telling him he had orders to arrest Archibald at midnight. He was to be sent to the interior the following morning. The officer said, **"I have told you what I have to do. Now you know what you have to do."**

The officers came for Archibald at midnight, but they found his room empty. Archibald went into hiding and the police were too afraid for their own safety to bother looking for him. He moved from place to place where he thought he would be safe. On October 1, Archibald learned that Allied soldiers had entered Damascus. He set out for the main bazaar where he met two British officers accompanied by an Arab interpreter. On learning he was Archibald Forder they said they had orders from General Allenby to search for him and hand him over to General Clayton. For the next 6 weeks he was very well cared for and finally he was allowed to go to Jerusalem. He was busy with the work of the Syria and Palestine Relief Fund for the next year until he left for England.

Back in England, as his health improved his goal was to address meetings and present the claims of the Ishmaelites among whom he had spent so many years of his life. He said, **"Those of us who have suffered in the war – and how few have not – cannot afford to grieve over the past. God knows and cares. He never fails us. There is work to be done. We must look forward with fresh hope and courage trusting in Him."**

Archibald was often asked how he spent his time in prison. He said that he had spent part of it writing of his experiences. Friends of other prisoners had managed to bring him paper. A good deal of the time spent holding Bible classes for the prisoners. The average attendance was about 30 or 40. They were mostly Muslims with one Jewish rabbi. The prison governor was a strict Muslim. He knew of these classes but he didn't interfere. Archibald had been allowed to keep his English Bible which he read every day.

Commenting on how he survived through these four years he said, **"Looking back on my four years of suffering and trial, I realise my deliverance was due to the persistent prayers of Christian friends in all parts of the world."**

Reflecting on his time since 1891 seeking to share the good news about Jesus in the Arab Muslim world Archibald wrote, **"Mission work of every kind in all lands is always accompanied by times of discouragement. That such times are allowed by God cannot be doubted. ... They are often blessings in disguise although this is not always discerned in the moment. Without such times coming into our lives, there might be a danger of pride or self-exaltation over any little success attending our work. So perhaps these discouragements are sometimes needed to remind us that it is, *"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord"*. This is the only way that any success in our labours is brought about.**

Discouragement may teach us many lessons and enable us to gain valuable experience which otherwise we would not have gained. Thus temporary discouragement may result in lasting blessing not only to individuals but also to communities."

What are some of the lessons we can glean from the life and witness of Archibald Forder?

Here are a few. You may think of more.

1. When God speaks we need to take action.

As a small boy of 8-10 yrs. after hearing Dr. Moffat speak about China, Archibald was so stirred by what he had heard that he began knocking on doors and taking up a collection for missions. Most people donated 1 penny or ½ a penny. Archibald didn't understand much about Jesus at this time. He hadn't yet made a commitment to follow Him. Still he acted on what he did understand.

2. The world changes but not God.

The methods appropriate today aren't the same as those used a few decades ago or a century ago. In today's world communication methods are changing fast! Still the principles of getting the Word of God and the news of salvation to all peoples everywhere haven't changed. God can show us the best way for today, just as He showed Archibald at the end of the 1800s.

3. Take opportunities as they occur because things can change rapidly.

In all his travels Archibald saw any frustrations and delays as God-given opportunities to share the Gospel by personal testimony or by distributing Scriptures. Even in the dreadful prison in Damascus he held Bible Classes for the other prisoners!

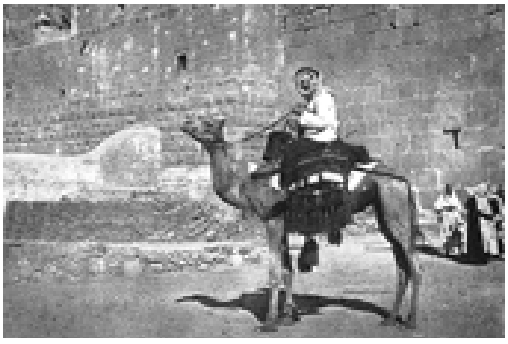
4. Keep our role in God's work in perspective.

Back in Jerusalem after his first journey into Arabia, Archibald commented,

"Remember that 'Well Done' is not promised to the good and successful worker, but to the good and faithful servant who is to enter into the joy of his Lord."



Jerusalem 1900



Forder by St Catherine's Monastery often used as his base for reaching Bedouin in Sinai