

Interview from the Land of the Pharaohs

Recently, Back to Jerusalem had the chance to meet with a church leader from Egypt, whom we shall call Brother Peter. In this exclusive interview, Peter shares about the excitement many Middle East church leaders have for the Back to Jerusalem vision from China, as well as sharing some of the concerns they have that the Chinese believers will come with adequate and effective training.

Back to Jerusalem: Brother Peter, thank you for sharing with us. How much do you know about the Back to Jerusalem mission vision of the Chinese Church?

Peter: For years we have been reading about the revival in China and the commitment of the Christians there despite tremendous pressure and persecution. Recently *The Heavenly Man* and *Back to Jerusalem* books have been produced in Arabic and these have spread far and wide, bringing a great blessing and encouragement to many thousands of Christians in the Middle East. Of course there is much persecution of Christians in the Muslim world, but in many ways we did not really know how to respond to that persecution and so have learnt much by the example of the Chinese Christians.

BTJ: Do you see this vision as a need of today?

Peter: The need of today is for God's people to be sent forth as missionaries, especially to Muslim nations. Coming from a Muslim country, I know how important and effective it is when servants of Christ, operating under the blessing of God, share the Gospel with love and power. We are very proud of the Chinese Church as we have learned how it has boldly withstood the onslaught of persecution. There is much we could learn from them as we think the Chinese Church is a good example

of real Christianity. Our churches need to learn what it means to suffer for Christ, and I can think of no better Christians who can teach us this than the Chinese.

BTJ: What has God been doing in Muslim nations in recent years?

Peter: Every day there are increasing numbers of Muslim people coming to Christ! Even some sheiks have become followers of Jesus in recent years once they understood the Gospel. Most Muslims have a warped view of Christianity, but once it has been presented to them in a direct and honest manner they are often receptive. There is a great, great work

of God currently underway in Muslim countries. The number of people putting their faith in Christ might not be statistically large at this stage compared to the hundreds of millions of Muslims, but we are experiencing a sharp increase. No country in the Muslim world is outside of



this move of God. Even the seemingly-impregnable wall of Saudi Arabia has experienced some cracks, and now significant numbers of Saudis are believing in our Lord Jesus. Perhaps the single most effective tool for evangelism of Muslims has proven to be internet chat rooms, where Christians share the Gospel with Muslims. The enquirers are able to quench their curiosity about the Bible, while at the same time not divulging their identity. I have a friend whose ministry is operating an Arabic-language chat room on the internet. He tells me there are literally thousands of Muslims who daily learn about God's Word and have their questions answered. Many are being born-again into God's kingdom while sitting in front of their computer screens! Of course any advance of the kingdom of God brings great anger from

Satan, so the preaching of the Gospel has two opposite effects among Muslims: some believe and are filled with the joy of God's salvation, while others are filled with fury that the Good News is being proclaimed among the Muslims for the first time in centuries.

BTJ: *Practically speaking, what is the best way for Chinese Christians to work in the Middle East?*

Peter: There are several ways for Chinese believers to be effective for God's Kingdom in our lands. One way is for them to come and work alongside Arab churches. Some traditional churches will not understand this mission, but there are many other churches that do and are very excited by the Back to Jerusalem vision. They could come as professional workers who share the Gospel through their vocation. There is a great need in most Muslim countries for doctors, nurses, engineers, technicians, and numerous jobs such as maids and nannies. There are already many tens of thousands of Chinese working throughout the Muslim world. It would be a great blessing if an increasing number of these were Christians whose hearts are fully dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Chinese have a reputation throughout the Middle East for their entrepreneurial skills, and they can come as businessmen and traders. In all of these there will be ample opportunity to share the Gospel with people they come into contact with and to see the expansion of God's Church. There are many Christians who are willing to extend a helping hand to the Chinese believers.



BTJ: *There has been some rumors that governments in the Middle East are already alerted to the Back to Jerusalem vision and have plans to stop it. Do you have any comment on this?*

Peter: There are numerous Christian things the governments in the Muslim world want to stop, but they cannot do it. They are furious at the impact Arabic-language Christian satellite television and Arabic Christian internet sites are having, but they can do little to prevent the thousands of Muslim people learning about Christ every day. In the same way, as long as specific names and details are not circulated, how can they prevent the Chinese missionaries from coming? As I said previously, there are tens of thousands of Chinese workers already throughout the whole Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa. Christian workers who do come obviously need to be wise and discerning, but they should not be full of fear.

BTJ: *Can you expand on what you mean by "wise and discerning"? How should Chinese Christians prepare themselves for*

service in the Muslim world?

Peter: Of course anyone coming to the Middle East needs some proficiency in the language of the place they will live in. This does not necessarily mean Arabic, but may mean learning Persian dialects for Iran, Turkish, or a multitude of other languages that have little or no relation to Arabic. There are some modern city-states, like Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates, and parts of Jordan, Egypt or Saudi Arabia, where English skills would be of great benefit to the Christian worker. However, I believe that even more than language skills, the Chinese missionaries need to come with a deep understanding and appreciation of Islamic culture and the worldview that permeates the Muslim world. They need to learn all they can about Islam, preferably from an ex-Muslim who is able to give them insights that will prove highly beneficial. A missionary may be fluent in Arabic, but without a thorough understanding of what motivates the hearts and minds of Muslim men and women, his ministry will not prosper. They should study the successes and failures of past missionaries to the Muslim world, and should come with a humble heart that is willing to learn, ask questions, and adapt to the culture where God calls them to serve. I am thrilled to hear there are already good cross-cultural communication and Islamic studies classes being taught to Chinese Christians who are preparing to be Back to Jerusalem missionaries.

BTJ: *Many Western Christians will also read this newsletter. Do you have any words of encouragement for them?*

Peter: Yes. Because of the terrorism that has blighted our world in recent years, there may be a tendency for people, especially in America, to hate Muslims. Please realize that Jesus loves Muslims, and he died for them that they may one day be called children of God. Please love them, and realize they are living in bondage and are deceived. Please be patient, as God was patient with you in showing his salvation. I believe the Lord has already started to reap a great harvest of souls from the Muslim world, and we should pray for their salvation, and take every opportunity to share the Good News with Muslim people.

BTJ: *How can Christians best pray for the Muslim world?*

Peter: Please pray that God's remnant among the Muslim countries will be strong in Christ and not be ashamed of proclaiming the Gospel. Pray that the spiritual blindness that has affected millions will be lifted so that people can see their spiritual need for Christ. And please pray that many people will find the joy, peace and righteousness in the Holy Spirit.