

Eternity Past

Eternity Future

The LandBetween

M I N I S T R I E S

The mission of the LandBetween Ministries is to equip leaders to fulfill Christ's Great Commission of heart-focused discipleship in a broken world.

Newsletter

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"Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind." - 1 Peter 3:8

God recently blessed a group of us to go on a study tour of Israel from June 4-20, 2014. Our study guide is a believer in Yeshua (Jesus) and has lived in Israel for 67 years. He was a military commander during many wars in Israel. He knows God's Word and His land.

ISRAEL: The Land of War

Explosions could be heard in the distance. It was a dark Friday night on June 13, 2014. After an intense day of a study tour in Israel, I was 10.5 miles west of Jerusalem, taking photos of the moon, when loud "booms" echoed through the night air. These were not your local July 4th fireworks type of explosions; these were heavy, military-grade munitions that went off non-stop for over an hour.

I said to a friend, "Those explosions sound like they are coming from Ramallah." The city of Ramallah is 13 miles north of Jerusalem.

The next morning it was confirmed that the explosions we heard in Ramallah were people celebrating the kidnapping, and subsequent murders, of three Israeli teens the day before on June 12, 2014.

KING OF THE HILL

A few days after the murder of the three teens, we were studying on top of the "Herodium" (or, "Herodyon"), which juts up 2,487 feet above sea level and is the

highest peak in the Judean Wilderness. The Herodium is ten miles south of Jerusalem and is where Herod the Great built himself a large, elaborate palace.

Herod was also buried on this hill that is only 3.5 miles southwest of Bethlehem. Herod could have easily seen the star from the east that hovered over the town of Bethlehem and signified Jesus' birth. Seeing this star and hearing that Jesus was prophesied to be the King, would have incited seething jealousy in Herod's self-absorbed, hardened heart.



Suddenly, while on top of Herod's stony hill, there was a loud "Kaboom!" from the west towards Gaza and the hill shook. For an instant it was a jolt of reality that our lives are in God's hands. God may give us a certain amount of freedom in how we respond to His sovereignty, but foremost He is the One who in charge of hills that shake beneath our feet.

Since Jesus is the sovereign King, the Herodium hill we were standing on was not King Herod's, nor does it truly belong to any government of this world. All of the Middle East is land that was created and belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, there are a fast-growing number of Middle Easterners that are coming to know Jesus. These believers are like rare, peaceful, lights shining in the spiritually dark Middle East. Pray for these believers.

But, the sad reality is that the vast majority of people in the Middle East reject Jesus as the sovereign King of souls and lands. Since most, if not all, of leaders in the Middle East reject Jesus as Messiah, I am very concerned for the citizens on all sides who are stuck in the middle of the conflicts. The Bible is replete with examples of horrible outcomes when leaders fail to inquire of God and obey Him (Joshua 9:14-15; Jeremiah 37:6-8).

LUNCH IN HEBRON

Within a few hours of feeling Herodium's hill shake, our study leader took us to Hebron. While having lunch in Hebron, we heard loud explosions nearby. Right next to us, soldiers were... *(Continue Over)*

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...calmly eating lunch on plastic chairs under the warm sun with their large machine guns on their laps.

After asking some locals why the explosions were going off, they said it was due to parts of Hebron celebrating the kidnappings and disappearance of the three religious students four days prior. However, not everyone in Hebron was celebrating the kidnappings, as some volunteered to find the teens; not all hearts in Hebron are engulfed in hatred.

Even with the high tension in the Hebron area, it was surprising that I felt rather safe. It felt safer in Hebron than where I've been in parts of Chicago or Dallas. The main reason I felt safe was because my life is in God's sovereign hands; and, there were those God had near us who were trained and equipped to engage anyone who may have attacked.

In our spiritual journey, we have access to the Holy Spirit, who is able to engage and defeat any destructive thoughts or other attacks from our enemy, as long as we stay close to the LORD in prayer and listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

When I counsel or disciple others, I tell them my ultimate goal is not that they will listen to me; but, I am like an arrow, pointing them to Jesus. It's up to them to go to Jesus and to find the freedom or healing that only Jesus can give. I'm limited; Jesus is not. The approach of being an arrow pointing others to Jesus is beneficial because what people need to know is how they can personally go to Christ to fill their hearts.

All of Israel is a place that needs Christ to fill empty hearts. Israel's largest city, Tel Aviv, is spiritually dark mainly due to its highly secular and atheistic population. The area of Hebron is also spiritually dark, but mainly due to fiercely strong and passionate religious beliefs that reject the true light found only in Christ.

Hebron is about 17.5 miles south of Jerusalem. Founded in 1700 BC, Hebron

became the home and burial place to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebecca, and Jacob. From the top of Hebron's hill, Abraham had a clear view down to the southeast as he witnessed God judge the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:23-25). To this day nothing grows on the salty, swamp-like area covering these buried cities under the Dead Sea, exactly as God judged millennia ago (Genesis 19:25). It is true: God will not be mocked.

ENDURING CONFLICT: HEBRON

Hebron is where God had Joshua and Caleb conquer and take out all of the Anakim people, including Hebron's King Hoham (Joshua 10). The Anakim were wicked giants in the Canaanite region that included Hebron. The Anakim were intimidating and struck fear in all of



God's spies except Joshua and Caleb. Hebron was a valuable area due to its hillside and fortified city, which made it advantageous against enemies. After God's people took Hebron, Caleb requested this valued city be given to him and his family; Caleb's request was granted because he fully followed the LORD (Joshua 14:14).

Hebron is where David was anointed King of Judah and where David's son Absalom failed in leading a rebellion against his father. Hebron has been home to false "Christians" who brought strife and did not know Christ in a real way. In short, Hebron is like many cities in Israel that have a long history of intense strife and conflict. God's Word proves through the lives of people like Abraham, Caleb, Paul, and Mary Magdalene, that personal faith in Jesus (Yeshua) is the only path to lasting peace in hearts, cities, and nations.

Joshua and Caleb knew that the land God wanted them to conquer was ultimately owned by God and for there to be true peace the land had to be operated by God's standards. When God's people failed in their duties to steward His land, He allowed foreign pagan nations like the

Babylonians to take it over until His people repented and "cried out" to the LORD and returned to God's ways.

TRUE LOVE DOES NOT FORCE

One of the points I was reminded of in Hebron was that God is love and He does not force us to follow Him. If God wanted to, He could easily force the people who live in Hebron to love Him and receive Christ into their hearts, resulting in the violence and hatred to stop. Stores could reopen that have been closed. Crime rates would fall along with the need for armored cars on the streets. But, God's love does not force itself into one's heart.

DEFEAT ALL YOUR GIANTS

Another point I was reminded of from Hebron is that God was serious in telling Joshua to take out all of the pagan giants living there; no piecemeal job would be sufficient. God had granted the land of promise to Joshua and Caleb, starting with Jericho's falling walls that no doubt shook the ground. But, though the land was given to them, God's people were told to conquer it and destroy all its idols like the Asherah poles. In a similar way, when we receive Christ's forgiveness of sin, we have salvation; but, we have areas of our lives we are to conquer. We have no excuses if we fail to engage our spiritual enemy and defeat him by the power of Christ. James 4:7 was written to believers, and it tells us to resist the enemy, the devil. Our enemy may be a "giant" but in Christ we can defeat him.

Today, you might have "giants" in your life like worry or other sins. Max Lucado writes: "Focus on giants — you stumble. Focus on God — your giants tumble." So, be like like Joshua, Caleb, and David: Trust. Obey. Then watch your giants fall.

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