

23 September 2005

Greetings from Jerusalem!

Every letter we send receives prayer concerning its contents, even more so this letter, because I will talk about issues that are not fun. The first subject is one we have been asked to comment about several months ago and are now doing so. I have been hesitant to get into this subject, as it will violate an unwritten code of the HOLY Land. Everything is supposed to be so very OK and perfect because Israel is the Chosen Land.

But, there are many problems and this one is, "Unity of Christian Organizations and Messianic Congregations both in and outside of Israel". Naming the issue in-itself begins definition. One, Christian Organizations, is Gentile and the other claims to be Jewish (Messianic Congregations). I say "claims" because we have found that the greater percent of Messianic attendee's are not Jewish by birth, anywhere. They are Gentile's who by attending a Messianic Congregation very much feel the "grafted-in" aspect of being a "Believer". Problem is this does not make them "Jewish", even if they wear Kippa, Talit and "do" Jewish "things". The determination of being Jewish has two criteria. The first is having a Jewish mother and the second is "walking the walk" or doing all that is Jewish.

In Israel there are Messianic groups who, partly in reaction to this issue, make Hebrew mandatory in their meetings, at times reinforcing this by requiring membership with agreement not to attend outside their circle. This then limits fellowship and guest speakers. The issues are then compounded by arguments over the "deity" of Christ, (there are those who flatly do not accept anything but the humanity of Christ). Following this are arguments over a "Third Temple Era Restoration", (many do not believe anything further prophetically has to happen except the coming of Messiah and "keeping" the tenets of Judaism, which is keeping the Law, not Grace). The above issues are valid concerns one way or another but the reaction then by many Denominational settings is to not allow anything "Jewish" into the "church".

In Israel the above "conflict attitude" runs deep because most often it is then asked, "How long have you been here in Israel?" It is not an issue of did the Lord send you or why are you here, so much as how long have you been here. The longevity is supposed to give the individual the wisdom of how to speak or not speak. We lost count how many times we have been told, "Israel does not need "new" ministries, we just need you to support us financially".

Then there is an overall attitude of pride involved in "being" in Israel and/or specifically "in Jerusalem". This is often a larger hurdle when coupled with longevity. For those who are new to Israel or Jerusalem it comes across as an attitude of "I am better than you because I have more points accrued than you". This also is linked to then the issues of "who" ministry is among or with. There are those who will have nothing to do with Arab peoples and take great pride in ministering to the Jewish only and there are those who do the same the other way around. In other countries it would be the same as living in the seedier part of town and ministering to the down and out versus doing the same in the richer side of town.

Compound all this with the furthering arguments of "Post", "Pre", "Mid", "Millennial" and Traditional values of Denominational settings makes a crusted melting pot, especially in Israel. Then there is the competition of those outside Israel trying to be either "**less**" or "**more**" Jewish than those in Israel. We have seen evidence of this by insistence of pronouncing Hebrew "their way" but not as Israeli's do **or then the** keeping to traditional, old established methods and ways very much removed from anything "Jewish".

If all this is not enough we also then have seen over and over the "separatism" of groups in competition to each other, i.e. fear of losing a member to another group or being accused of taking a member. All of the above tend to cause any and all organizations here in Israel to mostly keep to them-selves. There is one positive occurrence in that on occasion a "community" gathering occurs for prayer. This has helped gender a feeling of at least there is a beginning of sharing in a "together" sort of way. But even this has limitations because we do not see Pastoral leadership setting a foundation of fellowship by being pastors. By that it is meant, in our opinion, a true Pastor checks on the sheep. We do not know of even one leader here in Israel who calls or visits the members of

the congregation, i.e. we think it is a Pastors responsibility to check on the flock and ask how are things going and are there any issues that we can pray together about? (An example is we have been called once in 16 years, but at least we have been called!)

All of this is to then say there are needs worldwide but in Israel there is a difference due to the fact that Christ said, “as you have done to the least of these my Brethren, you have done it to me”. Current statistics indicate almost one-fourth of Israel’s population live under the poverty level with one-third of the children in Israel living below the poverty line. This means over 700,000 children go hungry each day and it is getting worse. Because of the Gaza pull out there are now whole families that are homeless, jobless, without schools, and shuffled from place to place because there is no place for them. We have had sent to us a suggestion for the reason why housing was not pre-established. We have the pictures to go along with this. If anyone wishes copies please request and we will send them with an article. The pictures and article show a USA military base that has been built beside the old Ben Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv with multitudes of barrack housing that is suggested was to be used for those arrested for fighting against disengagement. The thing is violent fighting did not occur so the arrests did not occur.

And now there is “Rita”. We suggest that such weather occurrences will not only continue but increase because of what has been done to Israel. One of God's do not cross lines has been crossed. Remedy: Pray, repent, and give financially to the Land God calls His, Israel. As the Scripture says, “I will bless those that bless you (Israel) and curse those that curse you (Israel). Israel tried to send relief teams to help after Katrina but were rejected as they would have flown the Israeli flag or shown Israeli insignia and it was more important to not offend those who dislike Israel than to help the needy. Whose side are we on?