

Asia Harvest



Swing the Sickle for the Harvest is Ripe! (Joel 3:13)

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Back to Jerusalem

God's Call to the Chinese Church

Message from a Chinese Prison

by Peng Ming



In 2004, a 52-year-old Chinese Christian named Peng Ming (pictured) travelled to Thailand to visit his elderly parents. He was lured into the neighboring country of Myanmar (Burma), where he was kidnapped at gunpoint by eight Chinese special agents. After being taken back to China, Peng was falsely charged with engaging in terrorist activities, and sentenced to life in prison in October 2005. All of this took place even though the United States government had granted Peng Ming refugee status in the U.S. For more than three years he has been held in a heavily guarded prison cell in Hanyang, Hubei Province. Peng has suffered terrible health problems, including a severe case of kidney stones and a massive heart attack. His

medical needs have been ignored by the prison officials, who continue to punish him with sleep deprivation and malnourishment.

On 22 January 2009, Peng Ming wrote a letter to his parents and friends. He had heard about the economic meltdown going on around the world and alluded to it in his letter. We hope the words of this faithful servant of God will encourage you, as it comes from someone deep in the furnace of affliction because of his faith. We thank the China Aid Association for making this letter available.

Dear Dad, Mom, and friends,

How are you doing? I am so glad to say “Happy Chinese New Year” with Spring Festival on the way. I hope you have good health, happiness and great faith. God has always been blessing you and me.

My dear parents requested that I should possess a positive attitude to deal with my current situation. I have completely eliminated anxiety and loneliness from my heart, and I am now enriched to spend every day peacefully. As my father



said, this is a learning opportunity, a special school, to study hard in order to learn lessons and to ultimately choose the right path for my future.

As for my suffering, in fact, God put me to the test.... I firmly believe that He will use me.

Regarding the current economic crisis in the United States, I read an article a few days ago, entitled "The more intense the economic recession, the more Americans believe in Jesus." This confirmed my point of view: God is giving a wake-up call to the world through the economic crisis, especially to Americans. An extravagant lifestyle is not pleasing to God, and it is not sustainable. God's authority is in charge of the entire world. People may be enriched to a small degree by material possessions, but we must never forget God's will and His work on the earth....

God be with us,

Peng Ming

Please pray for Peng Ming as he continues to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in a Chinese prison. Pray God's will be done in his life, and that his spiritual life will continue to be enriched even as his body suffers injustice.

BACK TO JERUSALEM

God's Call to the Chinese Church to Complete the Great Commission

A Quick Reminder of what "Back to Jerusalem" is About



Back to Jerusalem is the name given to the Chinese church's vision to send missionaries outside their borders to fulfill the Great Commission. The vision was first given to the Chinese in the

1930s, when small groups of brave evangelists headed into the Muslim areas of northwest China with plans to establish churches along the Silk Road in a westward direction, all the way "back to Jerusalem." Their efforts were delayed when the Communists took over China in 1949, and slammed the borders shut. Many of the original Back to Jerusalem missionaries (including some pictured above) were imprisoned for many years, and the vision went into hibernation for the next three decades.

In the 1980s the vision was renewed among the Chinese house churches, as believers read their Bibles and realized that they too must obey the command of Jesus to "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). They realized missionary work was not just for Westerners, but for all followers of the Lord. Their Bibles contain the exact same command as ours.

Today there is an ever-increasing awareness of the Back to Jerusalem vision among China's Christians, and a growing number are volunteering to go as missionaries. Training schools are operating both inside and outside China, and exciting reports of what God is doing through the Chinese missionaries have begun to emerge from the nations where God sent them.

What Back to Jerusalem is Not

Firstly, Back to Jerusalem should *never* be seen as an organization or particular church or mission group. It is not an organization, but a vision that God has given the whole Chinese Church. There may be different missions and individuals involved with serving that vision, but they should never claim any kind of ownership of it.

Some have presumed that 'Back to Jerusalem' must be something to do with the Chinese wanting to rush to Jerusalem and preach the Gospel. This is not what it means at all.

Back to Jerusalem refers to the Chinese church's vision to reach all the nations located **between** China and Jerusalem. This should be exciting news to all of us, because that region is home to all of the unreached spiritual "giants" in the world today— Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. This region is also known as the "10/40 Window," meaning it lies between 10 and 40 degrees north of the Equator (as indicated by the red lines on the map below). In this window, stretching from North Africa to China, live 95% of the

remaining unreached people groups in the world, and more than two billion people who have yet to hear a clear presentation of the Gospel.

The Chinese church desire to obey the command of Jesus by sending missionaries to these areas and groups that many Western Christians consider too difficult to penetrate with the Gospel.

A Chorus of Criticism

Whenever someone in the Bible received a God-given vision to do something, criticism and mockery was not far behind. Think of Noah, Moses and Aaron, David, and Nehemiah to name just a few. The Apostle Paul wrote, ***"A great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me."*** (1 Cor. 16:9)

In September 2002, I (Paul) was asked by a number of senior house church leaders in China to attend a meeting where they discussed their plans for "Back to Jerusalem." They wanted to share their vision with Christians around the world, and asked if I would write it down in a book.





In 2003 *Back to Jerusalem: Called to Complete the Great Commission* was published. The book was appreciated by many Christians, who realized God had used the last 50 years of persecution in China to train and prepare believers to reach into the hardest areas on earth with the Gospel. Others mocked and ridiculed the vision, including many mission leaders who were quick to point out the Chinese Christians are “uneducated peasants,” forgetting that the Bible is full of examples of God using simple people to accomplish His purposes throughout the earth.

Some mission groups felt threatened by the book. When the vision was shared with the mission leader of one major denomination in America, a concerned look came across his face, and he asked, “If the Chinese are going to reach the Muslims and Buddhists, what will be left for us to do?” Those people who think that missions is “The West to the Rest” are unable to accept that things have changed, and God is using whomever He wants to expand His kingdom.

While the book continued to bless and inspire “normal” Christians, a number of

people attacked the Back to Jerusalem vision, because they felt threatened by its core message. These organizations are still trying to send foreign missionaries IN to China, so the announcement that the Chinese church was planning to send large numbers of missionaries OUT of China challenged their existence, and threatened to hurt their funding.

In the intervening years we have watched with bemusement as many of the “experts” in the West continue to ridicule the Chinese church and their missionary vision, giving lots of reasons why they can never do it, while at the same time the Chinese have been doing it, quietly continued on their way, training and sending out more workers and seeing their vision begin to come to fruition!

The good news is that Back to Jerusalem is not a man-made vision at all! It was given by God to the Chinese Church nearly 70 years ago. What critics or supporters have to say about it in the end will bear no relevance on whether or not the Chinese Church obeys the call of God. In fact, it could be said that God has used the critics to keep the real Back to Jerusalem movement undiluted from too many

harmful Western influences. For that the Chinese house churches are thankful.

We are reminded of the classic quote by the 26th President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt: *"It is not the critic who counts. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."*

What's Happening Now?

The missionary vision of the Chinese house churches has continued to grow steadily over the last several years. While the number of workers and the scope of their labors is still just a small stream, that stream is slowly increasing in velocity and promises to become a mighty river in the future.

Although the sensitive nature of the Back to Jerusalem work means we are not permitted to provide specific information with names or exact locations, we are able to share a general overview and some testimonies. One report that came across our desk is from a Chinese evangelist serving in a Muslim country as part of the Back to Jerusalem vision. He wrote:

"During the month of Ramadan, when all Muslims fast between sunrise

and sunset, two of us also felt that Jesus wanted us to fast, but unto Him. We fasted for 40 days, and many wonderful things occurred during this time. I met a woman who had breast cancer, and was fearful of dying. I prayed for her, and the next day she went to her doctor and he said he could not believe the results! She went back for further testing and the doctor pronounced her completely free of all cancer! She has now begun to follow Jesus. Praise the Lord.

In this country there are a small number of Christians, but most of them live in fear of persecution and never share the Gospel with anyone. We have been praying that they would stand up and be bold like Jesus told us to, and not to hide their lights under a bushel. Please pray with us that this would happen."

The following testimony was told to us by an American evangelical missionary who has spent many years living and working in the Middle East:

"While visiting Jerusalem, I attended a small church one Sunday morning. After the service I chatted with the pastor, who mentioned that I should talk to a new Israeli



believer and get the story of how he had come to know Jesus Christ. I went over and introduced myself to this man, and he began by telling me a remarkable story....

This man was a shop owner. He was working one day when a Chinese Christian entered the shop and told the Israeli that he had a message from God for him. The two had never met before. The Chinese Christian then proceeded to tell the Israeli man, by word of knowledge, several things in his life that he was struggling with, things even his own wife didn't know. The shop owner was shocked and a little afraid. He realized there was no other way the Chinese visitor could have known these facts unless God had revealed them to him. The Chinese believer also told him that he had a disease, and that God wanted to heal it. Even as the Chinese man spoke, this Israeli felt the healing power of God flow through him.

Before leaving, the Chinese visitor told the shop owner to go to a nearby church and ask the pastor to explain the salvation and healing that Jesus Christ brings. In utter astonishment, the Israeli man did just that, and the pastor led him to Christ.

When I heard this incredible story, I realized that if Chinese missionaries able to hear the Lord like this were released in the Middle East, the impact would be beyond what we could imagine."

Many Back to Jerusalem missionaries are beginning to see God move through them and fruit is being produced for the kingdom of God. The workers have overcome many obstacles, and are learning to be excellent witnesses in the cultures they have been sent to.

At the same time there is an awareness that the workers need more thorough training in both the Bible and cross-cultural and language skills to enable them to be more effective on the mission field. This training has become a priority for many church groups, and there are now many training centers inside China and a few in other countries.

In addition, materials have been produced on DVD, books, and even by shortwave radio broadcasts that specifically help train the Chinese church for missionary work.

The Chinese believers have always seen the task of reaching Muslim and Buddhist minority groups inside China as a crucial part of the Back to Jerusalem vision. Not only do they want to see those groups in relationship with the Lord, but they realize there is no better place for hands-on training before they head outside China.

There is also a growing awareness that the most effective way to reach many ethnic groups may be to win some of their people to the Lord in China, and then equip them to cross the border and share the Gospel with their cousins in a neighboring country. Instead of a Chinese evangelist going directly to reach people in Kazakhstan, for example, it would be more effective to send a Kazak Christian from China across the border to Kazakhstan, where he will already understand the language and culture of the target group. This type of strategy is bearing much good fruit. While we were preparing to write this newsletter, a coworker in China sent us a report that through his ministry 320 new believers were baptized in 2008, and churches were planted among 13 different ethnic groups!

How Asia Harvest is Helping

We consider the Back to Jerusalem vision as being at the heart of what we do as a ministry, and how we want to help see the unreached people groups of Asia and beyond come to a saving knowledge of God's grace.

Asia Harvest is serving the Chinese house churches in several ways in relation to the Back to Jerusalem vision. For example, we have provided the funds for a strategic training program, which is operating right now. This program is training more than 30 believers from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds, providing them with a solid Biblical base for their faith as well as imparting vision for them to return home with a plan to reach out both to their own tribes and people from other unreached groups.

We have also formed a partnership with a Chinese-led organization that is specifically targeting Muslims with the Good News of Jesus Christ. They have seen many Muslims come to know the True God. We recently received pictures of the first ever known church fellowship among a Muslim group considered one of the hardest to reach in the world. The sight of these once hard Muslim men, now children of the Living God, sitting in a circle on the floor intently studying the Bible together brought tears to our eyes.

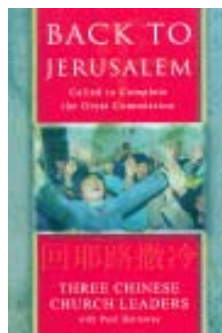
Asia Harvest has been providing support for this ministry and its workers, so that they can serve God more freely and fulfill the call God has placed on their lives. God has honored their faith. This ministry is

growing quickly, and now many of its leaders are themselves former Muslims!

Similarly, we are supporting evangelists as they reach into Buddhist people groups both inside China and across its borders. There are many exciting testimonies from this work also.

The support for these projects has been provided through gifts we receive marked for "Back to Jerusalem" on the yellow response forms in our newsletters, and through donations placed over our website. If you would like to participate in this important and strategic work, either by prayer or giving, it would be greatly appreciated.

Please pray the Back to Jerusalem vision would continue to flourish into a mighty movement that will flood the darkest nations on earth with the glorious light of Jesus Christ, so that His great salvation would be known to all mankind.



If you have never read the 'Back to Jerusalem' book we believe it will encourage and inspire you as you learn what God is doing today through the Chinese church. If you send a donation to any Asia Harvest project, please note that you would like a copy of Back to Jerusalem and we will send you one. If you can not afford to send a gift, please let us know and we will send you a complimentary copy anyway.

CHINA BIBLE PRINTING



Current Total: 2,502,537 Bibles printed and delivered.

We are partnering with house churches in China in a long-term goal to print Bibles for Christians. We receive countless requests from house church leaders throughout the country, requesting God's Word for their congregations. These Bibles are distributed free of charge to all parts of China, equipping the believers and helping add fuel to the fires of revival that are burning brightly. **Each full Bible costs just \$1.80 to print and deliver.**

ASIAN WORKERS' FUND

Thanks to your gifts we are currently able to support 397 Asian evangelists working among 98 unreached tribes and ethnic groups.



The **Asian Workers Fund** assists church-planting evangelists who are involved in strategic ministry in Asia. These servants of the Lord have committed their whole lives to the Gospel but are hindered by lack of finances. We only support evangelists/missionaries and not pastors, as we believe pastors should be supported by the flocks they shepherd. Please pray about whether you or your church could help support these dedicated workers, at **\$25 per month** each. A prayer card is sent to all regular donors.

SOUTHEAST ASIA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 140,369 Bibles Printed in 22 languages

The Communist nations of Laos and Vietnam are home to more than 250 different tribes, dozens of which had full Bibles or New Testaments translated into their languages prior to the arrival of Communism in 1975. Since then, these believers have been deprived of Bibles by the authorities. We are also providing God's Word to tribes in Myanmar (Burma) and other Southeast Asian nations as the need arises. **Each Bible costs an average of \$2.70 to print and deliver.**

CHINA LIVING MARTYRS' FUND

Because of your partnership we are supporting 926 living martyrs.



"A martyr is a Christian who chooses to suffer death rather than deny Christ or His work... One who sacrifices something very important to further the Kingdom of God and endures great suffering for Christian witness."

(The Voice of the Martyrs)

The **China Living Martyrs Fund** assists pastors and evangelists who are unable to work because of injuries or illness caused by persecution. They and their families face extreme poverty and hardship. Through an occasional or monthly gift of \$25 you can help support one or more of these living martyrs. A prayer card is sent to every regular supporter of this project.

PROJECT SMILE



Your generous gifts have so far helped bring a smile to the faces of 6,859 children in Vietnam.

Project Smile helps children from poor families in Vietnam who were born with disabilities such as cleft palates, cleft lips and club feet, as well as others who need operations for burns, cancerous growths and other conditions. The cost of helping a child varies depending on the kind of surgery required, but each gift received of \$60 helps a child have a better life. A laminated prayer card of a child helped through Project Smile is sent to all donors.

ASIA DISASTER RELIEF FUND



Transforming lives from ashes to beauty with God's love.

Over the years Asia Harvest has provided relief assistance to the victims of natural disasters such as the 2008 earthquake in China and cyclone in Myanmar (Burma); the 2004 Tsunami, and a host of other disasters in India, Afghanistan, Vietnam, and elsewhere. In addition to providing aid through medicine, tents, blankets, food and water, rebuilding homes etc., the Christians we partner with take every opportunity to share the Gospel, and thousands of people have come to know Jesus Christ. This long-term fund helps us respond immediately whenever a disaster strikes.