

The Holy Land



Gordon Lindsay

It had long been my ambition to visit the Holy Land. Following the 1952 World Pentecostal Convention, Jack Moore, a number of other ministers, and I made a trip to the land of Israel.

We landed at the Beirut airport, and after passing through the immigration control, were directed to a waiting auto caravan which had previously been arranged for us. Our route lay through the city, and we saw many curious and interesting sights – such as the minarets and other familiar landmarks of a Mohammedan city. We made the tortuous ascent of the adjacent mountains and then dropped down into one of the world's most historic valleys, where great armies have marched and where the famous ruins of Baalbeh are located, which required generations to build.

At one of the border stations, we had a little excitement. The officials found something wrong with one of our driver's identification papers. Angry voices arose to a crescendo, and peering cautiously through one of the windows, we saw blows being exchanged.

While all this was going on, a faithful Mohammedan, ignoring the commotion, rolled out his mat and facing Mecca, knelt for a space of ten or fifteen minutes, saying his prayers.

While we were halted at the Jordanian border for vise and custom inspection, the Hashemite king drove up. He jumped out of his Cadillac and with apparent affection, kissed several of the officials.

The thing that most attracted our attention and sympathy was the pitiful and squalid condition of the refugees. The flight of these unfortunate people was occasioned by a miscalculation on the part of the Arab leaders, who were confident they could defeat the Jews and push them into the sea. To their dismay, they found themselves being counter-invaded. Only a truce negotiated by the Untied Nations enabled them to retain even a part of Palestine. While we believe that it is prophetic that Israel should return to her land, one can only feel sympathy and compassion for these Arabs who have been displaced from their homes.

We came into the City of Jerusalem, arriving late in the day. The following morning, we arose early and went to Gordon's Calvary. The tomb of Christ is below Calvary, and on the side of the hill. Around the elevation, a space of fifty yards from the Tomb, is the figure of a skull, which is a remarkable identification of the true site of the crucifixion. (Matt. 27:33)

As we went up the hillside, we followed the path the Savior trod, as He walked that lonely road to Calvary. It is impossible to describe my feelings as I realized that right at that very spot, the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross. The very ground below us had received the precious blood of the Son of God, which had been shed for the sins of the human race!

There is no doubt about the location of Gethsemane. The window of our hotel overlooked the Garden which lies at the foot of the Mount of Olives. We drove over to the Garden and walked among the olive trees. These, however, may not be the original tree that grew in the Garden in the days of Christ, since olive trees live between 1,200-2,000 years.

The climaxing event of our tour was the visit to the Tomb, itself. Awed, we stood at the door of the sepulcher and looked in. It was empty! How many tombs of the great have we visited, but in every instance their bones were still there! Other religious leaders have made their claims, yet their bones lie in their own dust. But the Tomb of Christ is empty! He is not there! He is risen!

We visited Bethlehem, the city that marks the birthplace of Christ. Later, we drove north to Nazareth and saw the city where Jesus spent His boyhood days.

Everywhere, we witnessed the results of the Jew's industry—deserts blossoming as a rose, villages springing up, and hundreds of thousands of Jews pouring into the country. The hour of the resurrection of national Israel is surely at hand! I cannot describe the many experiences we had during that memorable visit to the Holy Land. (They are described in my book, *Thunder Over Palestine*.) But even as we prepared to leave that land, I had a feeling that God would open the way for us to do something substantial for Israel. However, seven years were to pass before this was to be. Then, God began to deal with me in a special way about the Holy Land Crusade.

In the spring of 1959, I felt definitely led to go to Israel. God showed me that the time had drawn near for the dry bones of Ezekiel's vision to arise. But before this could be, they must have the breath of the prophets. They must see the nail-scarred hands of Christ. They must look on the thorn-crowned head of Christ and behold the glory of the Lord. That though their eyes were blinded in the past, they must now perceive that the words of the prophets were God's blueprints to them in the future.

Leaving New York on June 26, 1959, I arrived the following day at the Lydda airport. The purpose of this mission to Israel was to set in to motion a definite program for reaching the Jews with the Messianic message. Our purpose was to explore the situation in Israel in anticipation of initiating a feasible program to reach God's ancient people with the message of salvation.

My immediate plan was to tour the country, and to make observations of conditions as they existed at the present hour. I had hoped that a photographer might accompany me on the tour to take motion pictures of the scenes which have significance in relation to the fulfillment of prophecy. By a strange providence, whom should I meet in an elevator in the Y.M.C.A., but Evangelist Paul Kopp, who had been touring Asia for several months, holding campaigns in different countries. It was a million-to-one chance that I should meet him just at that time. We chartered a car and driver and drove through the whole country, visiting Dan to the North, Beersheba to the South, and Brother Kopp took movies as we went.

Our observations in Israel showed that several evangelical denominations had established centers in Israel, but they were not doing much. None of them had more than a dozen or two in attendance. After careful study of the situation, we felt that there was a reason for their efforts being rewarded so little.

So far, most attempts to reach the Jews had been largely through the regular Church approach. We believe that both prophetically and dispensationally this has been a mistake. Traditionally, the Jew has never received the Church message. That door is practically closed, and it is futile to approach him in the same manner as we would the Gentiles. But the door is open to the Messianic message.

Another obvious lack of the Christian Church in reaching the Jews has been the absence of the ministry of the miraculous. How did the Early Church reach the people? Through the ministry of miracles! The ministry must be restored in Israel.

So we laid our plans. We set up an office in Jerusalem. Then we made arrangements to print tens of thousands of thirty-two page booklets, containing four or five strong Messianic articles. These books would be distributed the length and breadth of Israel. Brother Kopp agreed to return and take oversight of the work. He and his workers went from one part of Israel to the other, praying for the sick and giving the people the literature. On the last page of each booklet was an invitation to the reader, if his interest had been aroused, to write to our office in Jerusalem for a New Testament Bible. Since that time, over 11,000 Bibles have been sent out by mail, or given away directly, in answer to the inquiries.

Because of the peculiar laws of Israel, new missionaries cannot remain indefinitely in the country. However, the Kaarbys, who have been there for many years are one of the few families who can remain there permanently. In co-operation with a Norwegian missionary society, we helped him establish a chapel, a prayer center, and a reading room in Jerusalem.

God gave us another remarkable young man by the name of Shlomo Hizak. He was the favorite guard of David Ben-Gurion, the former prime-minister of Israel. But the Lord got a hold of his heart, and we believe that he is now the outstanding evangelist of Israel. We have purchased equipment for him, including a car, so that he can go throughout the land preaching the Messianic message and establishing small centers in the towns and villages. Recently, we have added to his staff a young, Arab Christian, Fahed Akel, who will help him to reach the Arabs of Palestine.

During the month of March, 1963, we visited Israel again. One of the high points of our visit was a tour we made in a chartered bus that took forty or fifty Jewish and Arab Christians up to the Sea of Galilee. There we baptized several young men in its waters. The happy passengers actually sang all the way. Jew and Arab embraced each other and praised the Lord together! Surely, Christ is the answer to the Jewish-Arab problem. In the evening, we stopped at the village of Kfar Joseph and preached at one of the new centers that had been established. There was nearly one hundred persons altogether, including those who had come on the bus.

Early, in the year 1964, we returned again to set up a small printing and distribution center, so that we can keep in touch each month with the rapidly increasing number of secret believers. An order of 50,000 copies of a new Messianic book was placed. And when these are printed, they will be distributed from city-to-city and from door-to-door by our team.

And so the work of Israel goes forward. But we need the prayers of God's people for a real break-through in that land. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love thee."

As most everyone knows, the City of Jerusalem is divided in the center by high walls and a no-man's land. The old city of Jerusalem and the temple site with the Mosque of Omar, is in the hands of the Arabs. Israel on the West has built a new city. Actually, a state of war still exists between the two countries. Hostilities are suspended only by the virtue of a truce enforced by the United Nations. The sole passageway between the two cities is by the Mandelbaum Gate. Tourists are permitted to pass through, provided they have no Israel visa in their passports.

In the year 1960, I went to Jordan in the interest of World Friendships, an enterprise developed by Dr. Walter Parr, to send food, tools, equipment, and first aid to impoverished countries directly from people to people. Several ships and supplies have been sent overseas through the efforts of Dr. Parr. In 1960, it was on his heart to send a ship to Jordan. I had been asked to serve as president on the board of World Friendships, and in my trip to Jordan, I was to meet with the officials regarding the proposed shipment.

Evangelist Sam Todd was with me at the time. We met with the governor, the mayor, and other officials of Jerusalem. They showed extreme interest in the projected plan to send a ship to that country, and called to our attention the dire circumstances of the refugees that filled the camps of their land.

The following day, we drove to Amman to meet with the Prime Minister, Hazza Majah. He was very cordial to us. He took us into his office where he served us coffee, and then discussed the details of the plan. As we left the office, little did we realize that the man we had just met had only a few more days to live. Even then, Communist-inspired agents from Syria were planning to put a bomb in the very room where we had been sitting! They skillfully concealed it from view, and set its diabolical mechanism to explode when the entire staff of officials would be there in conference. I was scarcely back in America, when the front pages of the newspapers told how the bomb had exploded, killing eleven persons including the Prime Minister, and injuring forty others. The king escaped by reason of the fact that he had changed his place about attending the conference.

We might add that the following year the World Friendship's shipment reached Jordan amidst much celebration. On that ship, The Voice of Healing sent a refrigerator and an electric organ to Mr. Matter, warden of the Garden Tomb for the Mount of Olives Chapel.

While Sam Todd and I had been in Jerusalem the year before, Mr. Matter presented a plan to build a chapel on top of the Mount of Olives. It was to be a place of worship where people from all nations, including tourists, pilgrims, notables, and common folk could come to worship. Would the Voice of Healing raise the money for the chapel? After some consideration, we decided that such a chapel

would have strategic importance. There were all sorts of shrines of other religions on the Mount of Olives, but there was no evangelical place of worship on the historic mountain. We, therefore, felt that our friends would be interested in helping us raise the funds for this project.

Brother Mattar had secured a site on top of the Mount. This alone was remarkable answer to prayer, for almost no property there is available for purchase. On this piece of ground stood the residence of the Turkish official, who was the governor of Jerusalem at the time the city was taken from the Turks by the British.

After the chapel was completed, various evangelical groups would come in and hold services. Famous persons from all over the world would drop in to the chapel to hear the Gospel story. Such a moment was the most propitious time to get the message to them. Few people can visit Calvary, the Garden Tomb, Gethsemane, and the Mount of Olives, without being greatly impressed.

We felt, however, that in addition to this we wanted to get an active program of evangelism into Jordan. Brother Ayoub Rihany seemed to be the man most actively interested in the evangelization of his country. For that reason he was chosen to supervise our activities in the various cities of Jordan. At the time of writing, we have just finished the building of an evangelistic center in Zerka, a city located near the place where Jacob wrestled with an angel at Peniel. We are also supporting a team which is establishing missions in the various cities of Jordan, including a small church in the suburbs of the City of Bethlehem.

The Holy Land project has been major undertaking. We are convinced that it has been ordained of God. We are sowing the seed and already we are reaping the first-fruits of the harvest. The hour is at hand when God's promise to pour out His Spirit in the land where the Holy Spirit first fell, will be fulfilled. Jerusalem was the first city to have the Gospel preached in it. Strangely enough, it will be among the cities of the Earth to be visited again. When God's Spirit falls in copious waves upon the people of Israel, we shall know that the end of the Church Age has come.

Resource: Lindsay, Gordon. *The Gordon Lindsay Story*, CFN Publishing, 2008 Reprint, Pages 239-245.

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