

HOPE

HOPE Outreach of Canada



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Our Website

HOPE Outreach has a new website at our same address:

www.hopeoutreach.ca

Please come by and watch our new videos and reports.

SAVE THE DATE!

“Christ At The Checkpoint”

Conference for 2018 is scheduled in Bethlehem for May 28 – June 1.

A great time of year to visit the Holy Land.

We can cut expenses by sending you this newsletter by e-mail. Please send us your email address. office@hopeoutreach.ca

O Little Town of Bethlehem

A westerner living in Bethlehem writes this impression of the city at Christmas time

I stand here and try to take it all in. Bethlehem! Encompassing the spectrum from disheartened to jubilant, Bethlehem is still perhaps the perfect place to acknowledge and prepare for the “here” and “not yet” Kingdom of God.

Celebrations, bazaars, parades and ceremonies are held to commemorate this time of advent in Bethlehem. Fireworks and sparklers light up across the city throughout the month of December and into early January. Shouts and songs arise from the ancient streets as children run along with balloons and sweet treats. Church bells ring, and choirs sing as the time of Jesus’ birth draws near. City folk gather in Manger Square for the annual tree lighting with applause and joyful cheering. Scouts march playing the bagpipes, trumpet and drums while waving flags of Palestine. Tourists and pilgrims from around the world enter and exit the Nativity Church as Manger Street bustles with visitors.

As a Westerner living in Bethlehem, especially during the time of Christmas, I can’t help but think that perhaps not a lot has changed. The journey I walked home from Jerusalem the other night would have been similar to the route that Joseph brought Mary as they entered Bethlehem for the census that was issued by Caesar Augustus. A level of uncertainty graced their journey as well.



Manger Square
Christmas Eve

But it was in this place two thousand years ago, that there was heard again this voice of mirth and gladness (Jeremiah 33:10-11). In the midst of Roman occupation and difficulty, the One who would bring wholeness to all mankind was born. It was at the

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Timeless Teachings – The Word of God Across The Middle East

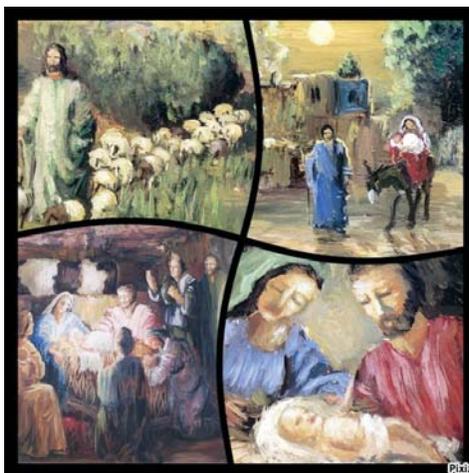
From the pyramids in Cairo to the House of Wisdom in Baghdad, the Middle East overflows with tales that tell of a time we have not lived, but are connected to. Ancient stories are made real as one walks the dusty roads connecting villages in rural country-sides to time-worn urban cathedrals. These monuments, sites and cities speak to a time before that has lent us what we experience now in our present.

From Bethlehem, the humble yet beautiful story of our Prince of Peace coming to join us in life on earth, is another one that rises from the past and carries us into today. This story, this man called Jesus, had a message for the people of His time, but that message has spread far beyond the Holy Land or the Middle East. Now the words of Jesus dwell in the lives of countless people around the world who know it is not just a story, but truth!

A God that waited to burn me

In the expanse of all of this, a humble man resides as a refugee in a city not yet captured by ISIS. His faith journey from a hardline, conservative religious person to life in Jesus has been amazing. The story of this man, Abu Ayman, is one that comes from the same soil as those wonders of the world and could fill a book. His experience growing up within a fundamentalist religious community left him confused and terrified. “A God that waited to burn me,” he said, “did not make me feel his loving presence with me.” He left religion and lived as an atheist for nearly thirteen years.

In 2010, after many years of listening to a Christian radio program followed by a



powerful dream where Jesus appeared to him, he decided that the way of Jesus was the way of life. His journey is laden with discouragements in finding a Christian community and rejection and persecution from his family, in addition to the suffering of his people under oppressive regimes, wars and isolation. His pursuit of knowledge about Jesus and the Scriptures led him to the Online Biblical Studies Program from Bethlehem Bible College.

I learn so I can teach

Abu Ayman has taken what he has learned from his studies at Bethlehem Bible College and shared them with those around him. He states, “I learn so I can teach.” His vitality for life and eagerness to see Jesus in the lives of those around him pushes him forward. Opposition has met him at nearly every turn, but not without some joys of blessing as well.

“I have learned how to serve with the glory of the Lord. Studying, for me, is the light I walk under in the way of serving the Kingdom of God. It grows and deepens my faith life, and it trains me to minister.”

Abu Ayman’s testament of growing in his faith and the impact on his community is a beacon of hope in the midst of a difficult and heartbreaking reality of brokenness. He compares his desire to study the Scriptures to the need for food in order for people to grow, become stronger and develop.

Love with no hatred

One of Abu Ayman’s most recent conversations with a man in his city via

private messages on Facebook is a living testament to the power of life in the Kingdom of God. While the man that was messaging was hostile and cursing him, Abu Ayman responded with blessings and words of love. In one message, the man sent the following:

“May God curse you, you magician. It dishonors me to continue a conversation with a dirty person like you. You are my enemy.”

Abu Ayman responded, “I am only your enemy from your point of view. You are my brother, and I love you. I pray that the Lord may preserve and protect you, bless you and your family and protect you from the wicked. I will bow before the throne of grace, and I will lift you up in prayer. I ask that the Lord opens your heart.”



After several days of no response, Abu Ayman received a message from the man asking why Abu Ayman would bless him when he was cursing him. Abu Ayman’s words in response are perhaps ones that should be recited and lived more often by all of us:

“The Lord Jesus commanded us to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and to pray for all who harm us. Believing in Jesus means love with no hatred.”

The man wrote back, “Is it possible to communicate everyday so that you can introduce me to these teachings?”

A robust message

It is indeed stories like this that come from the heart of the region. A place that is uniquely diverse, full of life and history, but simultaneously stricken with war, suffering and turmoil. Out of humble origins Jesus



*Anton Deik, Director of On-line
Biblical Studies Program*

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BethBC Graduates Exhibit The Christmas Spirit

The Dean of Students challenged a group of Bethlehem Bible College graduates to brainstorm ideas of how to help others in need.

Berta Shomali, a Biblical Studies graduate of the College says, "We came up with several suggestions of outreaches we could do. Among them was the idea of distributing school bags to needy students. There are some children from nearby villages who do not have school bags, and they carry their school books in plastic bags."

Berta added, "We thought a lot about how and where we could collect used school bags. Three of us prayed to the Lord Jesus to help us, and then decided to print flyers to hand out to people in Bethlehem. The flyer asked those who had school bags in good condition to communicate with us. We allocated a place where we could receive the bags.

"Indeed, the Lord Jesus blessed us, and opened the doors. We did not anticipate the number of messages we received from people who wanted to help. Within a week, we



collected about 60 bags, which we washed and then distributed. We cannot describe the students' joy when receiving these bags.

"We remembered the Lord's Word in Galatians 6:9: *'Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.'*"

These are the values that Bethlehem Bible College seeks to instill in the hearts of their students: to reach

out to the marginalized and needy groups, and to embody Christ in actions and love for His people. What joy to see them graduate and leave the College to serve the community with such passion! May the Lord bless them and open doors for them, so that they may be light and salt in their land and society.

This Christmas our Canadian project through HOPE Outreach is to raise at least \$20,000 for scholarships for ten worthy students at Bethlehem Bible College. Will you help us?

O Little Town of Bethlehem from page 1
height of the Roman empire that a revolutionary unlike any other was born to a small, unsuspecting village.

Positioned in a place of humble upbringing, this small child grew into a man who counterintuitively restructured the way authority was manifested. Leading by serving, elevating the outcast, giving a voice to the marginalized, situating Himself next to the despised and discarded members of society, Jesus brought life to those that He encountered. He joined those on the edges of society and brought them into a place where they were shown value, care and worth. The

power of life was brought through the giving of His life to ensure that humanity understood that they were cared for beyond anything else. Further, it wasn't just reconciling man to God, but all of creation to God!

It was many years before that the prophet Micah said, *"But you, Oh Bethlehem, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days."* (Micah 5:2) And so it would seem it is in the unlikely places that God brings forth redemption and salvation.

In today's little town of Bethlehem, there is still this fragrance of hope that

emanates from the hearts of the people dwelling here. Faced with adversity, this small clan, still carries the story of the Kingdom of God inaugurated by the birth of its King, Jesus.



Timeless Teachings from page 2

came with a robust message that would change the state of the world. Should we choose to implement them into our own lives, we will see the change in the world of those around us.

It is with great joy that the Online Biblical Studies Program at Bethlehem Bible College has the opportunity to help facilitate this kind of interaction. The deep connectivity of humanity across the globe is now made easier by technology. The Bethlehem story is now one that is transient and mobile. It is easily shared

and passed along. There is such beauty in time and progress, but such deep joy in the same, simple truth of 2000 years ago. The message stays the same, but the means becomes more expansive.

That sounds something like the Kingdom of God after all!

HOPE Ministry Trip Reflections

From October 27 to November 12, 2017, the twelve members of our HOPE Outreach ministry team visited the Holy Land. Here are some of their reflections:

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie...well it is far from still today.

The separation wall (pictured right) is etched into my mind. Oh, how this must grieve our Saviour's heart. He came to free the captives not entrap them. It sits heavy on my heart to have briefly walked through the AIDA refugee camp and hear the thoughts of some of the young people.

Yet overlooking the fields of Boaz came the announcement of a Saviour to the shepherds. Oh, what Good News indeed! To see what perhaps was the cave in which our Saviour came into this world. Deep, dark and hard. Yet the light of the world was birthed in a cavern.

O little town of Bethlehem, we pray for the Saviour's peace to be upon you.

"I was very touched by this statement of Sami Awad, head of Holy Land Trust in Bethlehem:

'How does all this fit into our faith? If Jesus were here, would He stand with the marginalized, and against the occupiers? No, Jesus never stands against anyone. Jesus calls us to love. The concept



of loving one's enemy only exists in Christianity. How many of us really do so? Loving one's enemy is a command.

Think of Jesus' life and the oppression in His society? It was probably even more difficult for Him."

Watch for more detailed reports coming. And plan to join us next October for our ensuing HOPE Outreach mission trip to the Holy Land. Contact us at office@hopeoutreach.ca.



2017 HOPE Outreach Ministry Team at BBC with Dr. Bishara Awad

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- Pray for faculty, staff and students at BBC and for the need of scholarship funds.
- Pray for Musalaha and their many-faceted reconciliation programs including women and youth.
- Pray for significant spiritual impact at BethBC's annual Christmas dinner outreach.
- Pray for HOPE Outreach of Canada's need for a new board member.
- Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6) and the peace of Bethlehem.

Donate securely through our new website: www.hopeoutreach.ca. While there you can learn more about our ministry through partners in the Holy Land. Be sure to see the video of graduate Ronza Saba, "I Am a Light in my Country!"



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