

Yeshua and His Boys: A Field Trip to the Gates of Hell

Imagine that you wake up one day in the Galilee and Yeshua says to you and the other disciples, "Come on guys—we're going on a field trip!"

In Matthew 16 we see Yeshua and his disciples heading north from Capernaum, His headquarters. By car, it only takes an hour. But by foot, it is a good 12-hour hike. So why would Yeshua take His disciples on such a journey and to where they going?

Would you believe me if I told you, *"To the gates of Hell?"*

Matthew tells us that they visited Caesarea Philippi. Not be confused with the port city of Caesarea on the Mediterranean coast, Caesarea Philippi was an utterly pagan city. It was there that they worshipped Pan, the half goat, half man god of Greek mythology. He is often associated with every kind of perversion one can imagine.

Caesarea Philippi was so steeped in immorality that the rabbis reviled it and taught that no good Jew would ever go there. And yet, Yeshua, the greatest Jew of all, takes His Jewish disciples there on a field trip. But why?

When you come with us to Israel, we like to stop here as well. It is quite an impressive site. There are a few things you will notice.

This city can be found at the foot of Mount Hermon. There is a colossal rock wall, referred to as the 'Rock of the Gods,' as there are many pagan shrines built into the rock. However in the center of the massive rock is a huge cave called the "Cave of the Gods" and inside is a very deep pool and a powerful stream of water flowed. This cave was called the "Gates of

Hells,” and these pagans were convinced that this was the passageway for the gods between earth and the underworld.

Yeshua arrives at this most awful city with His disciples and begins a conversation. Let’s read:

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’ They said, ‘Some say that You are John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’

“Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’

“Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it’” (Matt. 16:13-18).

So Yeshua, standing before this massive rock that was thought many to be the source of immense spiritual power, says to Peter, who would lead the body of believers in its early days, in Me you are far more powerful than this rock. He was saying that powers of Satan and pagan worship are not worthy to be compared to the gospel message in the mouths of His apostles and prophets—whom Paul calls the foundation of the New Testament congregation (Eph. 2:20)

But then he says, “The Gates of Hell” will not prevail against the Messianic community.

Now Gates do not typically go on the attack. Gates do not move. Of course in context He is referring to the Cave of the Gods, which was only a few meters from where they were standing. He was saying all the powers of hell could not overcome the body of believers.

Yeshua was not just another Greek god or mythical figure ... as Peter said, he was the Messiah, the Son of the living God and the Gates of Hell will not overcome his congregation. {eoa}

Ron Cantor is the director of Messiah's Mandate International in Israel, a Messianic ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Cantor also travels internationally teaching on the Jewish roots of the New Testament. He serves on the pastoral team of Tiferet Yeshua, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv. His newest book is Identity Theft. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

Miracle Prayer Slows Down Hurricane Patricia in Its Tracks

In Mexico, Hurricane Patricia swept ashore as the strongest hurricane ever in the western hemisphere. Amazingly, it caused little damage and no loss of life. Some are calling it "The Mexico Miracle."

The weather phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean surprised forecasters and the public alike. In only 30 hours Patricia had grown from a tropical storm into a massive Category 5 hurricane, the most powerful one ever documented in the western hemisphere.

As the news spread, Mexico and the world united in prayer, asking God for a miracle.

The hurricane made landfall with winds up to 200 miles per hour, threatening to devastate important tourist areas on Mexico's Pacific coast.

By that time, the hashtag #prayformexico became a trending topic on social media. Although government officials announced the worst, Patricia weakened almost immediately as soon as it touched land, degrading in a few hours to a tropical depression.

"It is a miracle of the Lord!" María a local resident said.

After the storm passed through, CBN Mexico and Operation Blessing joined forces to bring aid to hurricane victims.

"Operation Blessing and CBN en Malacca, Mexico, where Hurricane Patricia came through with record breaking power, and really damaging a lot of the families that live on the coastal region on Mexico. By the grace of God the hurricane didn't go through the major cities of Manzanillo and Puerto Vallarta. It went through a small community," Scott Hill, from Operation Blessing, said.

Many homes were flooded or lost their roofs. The devastated communities welcomed the meals provided by the Disaster Relief team.

CBN will remain in the area to provide support to those in need.

BREAKING: US Planning to Send

Special Ops to Syria

U.S. officials disclosed plans on Friday to station the first American boots on the ground in Syria in the war against Islamic State fighters, saying dozens of special forces troops would be sent as advisers to groups fighting against the jihadists.

The announcement of the small ground force came as diplomats from more than a dozen countries held talks over Syria, which for the first time in the more than four-year-old civil war were attended by President Bashar al-Assad's ally Iran.

In a rare hint of diplomatic progress, Tehran signaled it would back a six-month political "transition" period in Syria followed by elections to decide Assad's fate, although his foes rejected the proposal as a trick to keep the president in power.

The Vienna talks ended without a specific conclusion apart from an agreement to reconvene in some form next week, delegates said. In addition to Assad's fate, key sticking points have long included the question of which rebel groups should be considered terrorists and who should be involved in the political process.

In Washington, U.S. officials said the small special forces contingent in Syria would work with local "moderate rebel" groups to fight against Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL. Washington has targeted the group with air strikes for more than a year since fighters seized swathes of eastern Syria and northern Iraq and proclaimed a caliphate to rule over all Muslims.

Russia's decision a month ago to join the conflict in Syria by bombing Assad's enemies has upended the strategy of the United States and its allies, who say Assad must go, as his presence makes it harder to fight the jihadists.

A senior U.S. administration official said President Barack Obama had authorized sending fewer than 50 U.S. special forces troops to northern Syria to work with local groups. Washington has acknowledged conducting special forces raids into Syria in the past but has not stationed troops there.

Its main friends in northern Syria are Kurdish forces, who captured a swathe of territory from Islamic State along the border with Turkey over the past year with the aid of U.S. air strikes. Washington has been cautious about publicly committing to helping the Syrian Kurds, who are mistrusted by U.S. ally Turkey.

The measure would be part of a package of other steps to beef up the fight against Islamic State, including sending more warplanes to the region and discussing with Iraq the establishment of a special forces task force there.

For Syria, it is part of what U.S. officials call a two-pronged strategy of increasing aid to groups they describe as "moderate rebels" fighting against Islamic State, while also working on diplomacy to remove Assad from power.

TEHRAN "READY TO MAKE COMPROMISE"

Russia, which started bombing a month ago, says it is targeting only Islamic State. But the overwhelming majority of its strikes have been against other groups fighting against Assad, including some that are supported by U.S. allies.

For four years, Assad's closest ally Iran had been excluded from international peace conferences because it rejected a proposal for a transition of power in Damascus.

However, Tehran appears to be adjusting its stance in ways that could create more ground for compromise with Western countries that are coming to accept that, as long as Assad is backed by Moscow, he cannot be driven from power by force.

“Iran does not insist on keeping Assad in power forever,” Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Amir Abdollahian, a member of Tehran’s delegation at the Syria talks on Friday, was quoted by Iranian media as saying.

A senior official from the Middle East familiar with the Iranian position said that could go as far as ending support for Assad after the transition period.

“Talks are all about compromises and Iran is ready to make a compromise by accepting Assad remaining for six months,” the official told Reuters. “Of course, it will be up to the Syrian people to decide about the country’s fate.”

Assad’s foes said such a proposal amounted to no new concession from Tehran, because a new election could keep Assad in power. His government held an election as recently as last year, which he easily won.

“Who is mad enough to believe that under these circumstances in Syria, anybody can hold elections?” said George Sabra, a member of the Western-backed political opposition, the exiled Syrian National Coalition. “Bashar al-Assad and his regime is the root of the terrorism in Syria.”

Ahmed al-Seoud, commander of the rebel 13th Division which has been fighting in the western Hama province, said: “In the shadow of this anarchy there will not be real elections, therefore we reject them absolutely.”

Abu Ghaith al-Shami, a spokesman for the rebel Alwiyyat Seif al-Sham group which is fighting in the south, said Assad’s participation in an election was unthinkable: “The fate of Assad and all criminals should be in court following the massacres committed by him and those with him, towards the Syrian people.”

SIGNIFICANT UNDERTAKING

Nevertheless, a commitment from Iran to a defined time limit for a transition could be viewed as a significant undertaking, potentially forming a basis for future diplomacy at a time when Assad's position has been strengthened by Russia's decision to join the war on his side.

A senior U.S. official and other delegates said a new round of Syria peace talks could be held as soon as next week.

All previous efforts to find a diplomatic solution to Syria's civil war have collapsed over the insistence of the United States, European powers, Arab states and Turkey that Assad agree to leave power.

Russia's participation in the conflict on Assad's behalf creates a new incentive for a diplomatic push to end a war that has killed more than 250,000 people and driven more than 10 million people from their homes.

In the latest violence from the battlefield, a local rescue group operating in rebel-held areas said more than 45 people were killed by a government missile strike on a marketplace in a town near Damascus.

The group, Syrian Civil Defence, posted a picture on its Facebook page of about a dozen bloodied bodies laid on the ground. It linked to a video showing people tending to survivors in a chaotic scene of blackened rubble and fire.

"Utterly heinous that while world leaders meet for peace in Vienna, attack(s) against civilians continue in Syria," the group said on Twitter. {eoa}

© 2015 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.

Church Reduced to Rubble as Islamic Mosque Rises Behind It

A Christian church sits in ruins today in Omdurman, Sudan, and its congregation is left scrambling to find a makeshift meeting location in time for next Sunday.

Our contact in Sudan reports to us that last week government officials appeared at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Omdurman with bulldozers ready to demolish the building.

The Christian congregants were able to temporarily stop the church's destruction and then met with a city commissioner who promised that nothing would happen to the church building.

Days later, however, the building was reduced to rubble as Sudanese officials returned and bulldozed the church to the ground. The Sudanese government claims that the church, which was built in the 1970s, was destroyed because it was constructed in an area zoned for businesses.

The incongruence of that explanation? A brand new mosque was built directly behind the church and it remains fully intact today.

The demolition of this church is not the first time Sudanese government officials have blatantly targeted Christian churches. In fact, there is a well-documented pattern of church destruction with roots that can be traced back to the country's split from South Sudan and President Omar al-Bashir's subsequent promotion of a stricter version of Shariah law nationwide.

Morning Star News details the systematic destruction of several Christian churches since South Sudan secession:

“Sudan since 2012 has and expelled foreign Christians and bulldozed church buildings, usually on the pretext that they belonged to South Sudanese. They have also raided Christian bookstores and arrested Christians.

“Sudanese authorities on Feb. 17, 2014 demolished a church building in Omdurman without prior notice, area sources said. Bulldozers accompanied by local police and personnel from the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) destroyed the Sudanese Church of Christ building in the Ombada area of Omdurman, they said.

“On Aug. 24, 2014, NISS agents padlocked the building of the 500-member Sudan Pentecostal Church (SPC) in Khartoum, which housed the Khartoum Christian Center (KCC).”

In a similar incident in July 2014, CNN reported that 70 government officials descended upon the Alizba slums near the capital of Khartoum and destroyed a church over the wailing of nearby residents.

And just this week our contact on the ground in Sudan reported to us that yet another church was destroyed, this time by arson in Gadaref, East Sudan. Not only was the building destroyed, but so was the furniture and even the Bibles inside.

These are just a handful of examples. There are many more.

These incidents are as sad as they are unsurprising after the Sudanese minister of religious affairs announced in April 2013 that no licenses would be granted to allow for building new churches.

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom recently released their 2015 report. The chapter on Sudan begins, “The government of Sudan, led by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, continues to engage in systematic, ongoing,

and egregious violations of freedom of religion or belief. These violations are the result of President Bashir's policies of Islamization and Arabization."

The report continues to discuss the destruction and confiscation of Christian churches, concluding that "at least 11 churches have been attacked either by government officials or others" in the last few years. Also troublesome, the report outlines recent legal battles in which the government of Sudan has tried to confiscate church property of both the Bahri Evangelical Church and an Anglican church. This led to the arrest of 37 congregants protesting the action.

In addition to the destruction of their churches, Christians in Sudan have faced an increase in scrutiny and arrests from the Sudanese government. From the imprisonment of Christian mom Mariam Ibraheem, who was on death row in Sudan for her faith, to the arrest and trial of Pastors Michael and Peter this past summer, Christians continue to be targeted in Sudan, facing prison and trumped-up charges that could result in death sentences.

This is why our global engagement is so important. This is why stories like these must be shared far and wide. When the world's attention was focused on Mariam, Michael, and Peter, justice prevailed.

Now, as Christian churches are reduced to rubble, we must continue our advocacy for the persecuted church around the world whose international human rights are being violated by government officials.

We will continue to monitor the situation with our contacts on the ground in Sudan.

Police Release Chilling South Carolina Shooting Details

Police logs released on Thursday revealed a chilling account of the June 17 massacre at a historic black church in Charleston, South Carolina, that killed nine people.

The accounts cited calls made from inside Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, which is the oldest African-American congregation in the southern United States.

“People shot down ... Shot pastor ... Man is still here,” an entry in the police communications log said.

An entry one minute later said, “Young white male ... Male is reloading.

“Shots have been fired. The number of shots fired is: SO MANY.”

According to the report, authorities quickly had a description of the suspect—a 21-year-old male in boots, jeans and a T-shirt—and they knew he had fled out the church’s back door.

Dylann Roof has been charged with murder and state prosecutors are seeking the death penalty. He also faces hate crime and weapons charges in what authorities say was a racially motivated rampage.

The heavily redacted police reports and photographs from the Charleston Police Department make up some of the evidence against Roof. Some media organizations who sued to get the documents made public said police went too far in blacking out names, comments and key details.

A state judge this month lifted a gag order placed on the evidence but decided that graphic crime scene photographs, audio of 911 emergency phone calls and other sensitive

materials would remain sealed to protect the victims.

Charleston police said in a letter to the media that they did not see a public interest in releasing information that could harm their case, nor a benefit in “the release of gory and disturbing videos and photographs.”

After a massive hunt for Roof, a driver in North Carolina called police the morning after the massacre to say she had spotted the suspect in his car, according to the released documents.

Roof was quiet and compliant when officers pulled over his car at about 10:30 a.m., a report said, and acknowledged he was coming from Charleston.

Asked if he knew why he was detained, he nodded his head. A sergeant asked Roof if police should know about anything in his car.

“Yeah, there’s a gun in the backseat,” Roof said, according to the report.

Officers later found with Roof’s driver’s license a movie ticket receipt, from the day before the shootings, for the action thriller “Redemption.” {eoa}

© 2015 Thomson Reuters. All rights reserved.

**Pestilence Rising: Teenage
Girl Hospitalized With**

Bubonic Plague

A teenage girl in Oregon has tested positive for bubonic plague, state health officials said on Thursday.

The girl was believed to have been infected by a flea bite during a hunting trip earlier this month, according to the Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division and the Crook County Public Health Department.

The teen was in an intensive care unit at a hospital in Bend, in central Oregon, health officials said. Her condition was not known.

There were no other known infections in the state from the centuries-old scourge, health officials said.

"Many people think of the plague as a disease of the past, but it's still very much present in our environment, particularly among wildlife," said Emilio DeBess, Oregon state public health veterinarian in the Public Health Division.

"Fortunately, plague remains a rare disease, but people need to take appropriate precautions with wildlife and their pets to keep it that way," he said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the plague was introduced to the United States in 1900 by rat-infested steamships that had sailed from affected areas, mostly in Asia.

In recent years, less than 10 human plague cases have been reported in the U.S. each year, the agency said.

Early symptoms of plague include high fever, chills, nausea, weakness and swollen lymph nodes in the neck, armpit or groin.

Is It Safe to Travel to Israel?

As I was driving home today, I felt that the Lord wanted me to write something about safety and travel to Israel.

When I got home I received a confirmation in a message from an old college friend. She was asking if it was safe to come on our upcoming Living Stones tour. It is a valid question that I wrestled with before moving here.

I used to ask those who lived here if it was safe and they always looked at me as if they didn't understand the question. After getting settled in the Holy Land, I understood how they felt. Thus, I submit the following:

1. I live here 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, along with nearly 7,000,000 other Jewish Israelis. While I know the Lord has given us grace to live here, you should know that I have never seen a stabbing or an attack. My guess is that the international news paints a picture of war in the streets. That is not the case—not even close.

2. Do the math. Out of the nearly 7,000,000 Israeli Jews that live here, a few have been attacked each day recently and a few in total have died as a result. As tragic as each death is, you might, as a tourist, have a better chance of winning the lottery than being attacked. Consider also that virtually all attacks have been against soldiers, police or identifiably Orthodox Jews. My point is that an attack against a Messianic or Christian tourist in a group is not only unlikely, it has never happened (that I know of). I am not making light of those who have been attacked, but simply want to bring a little reality to what is happening in Israel.

3. I consider Israel safer than the U.S. We have alert police, border police and military *everywhere, vigilant*, protecting us. We are not afraid to say "Islamic Terror" and seek to defeat it.

4. As believers we have Psalm 91 that speaks of God's angelic protection, *"there shall be no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your tent; for He shall give His angels charge over you to guard you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone"* (Ps. 91:10-12).

5. Consider the words of Sean K. who was on our most recent tour that ended last week:

"Everybody should go on a tour of Israel at least once. I've been 6 times and each tour has been different, with new things to see, but Ron Cantor's tour stood out to me because it is led by Messianic Jews, who know that Jesus is the Messiah. We also visited some Messianic congregations. That makes a huge difference from being shown round by unbelieving guides, who may know the land and its history, but not its King. I would also urge Christians never to be afraid to go to Israel, even when there is bad news in the media, because it really is safe for tourists. In fact, I have always felt safer there than in England, and so have many others I have spoken to."

So, if you feel that the Lord has called you to visit this amazing country, don't be afraid. Once you are here, you will know what I mean. The truth is, we live in a dangerous world. We must make God our refuge, not a geographical location. Whether on one of our Living Stones Tours or someone else's, Israel will change your life. I have never seen anyone leave Israel without having had an amazing experience.

Ron Cantor *is the director of Messiah's Mandate International in Israel, a Messianic ministry dedicated to taking the message of Jesus from Israel to the ends of the earth (Acts*

1:8). Cantor also travels internationally teaching on the Jewish roots of the New Testament. He serves on the pastoral team of Tiferet Yeshua, a Hebrew-speaking congregation in Tel Aviv. His newest book is Identity Theft. Follow him at @RonSCantor on Twitter.

For the original article, visit .

Printer Who Refused Gay Pride Shirts Draws LGBT Support

The owner of a Christian printing company who refused to print T-shirts for a gay pride event is getting some big support including from some members of the LGBT community.

In 2012, Blaine Adamson of Hands On Originals in Lexington, Kentucky came under fire when he declined to print custom T-shirts for a gay pride festival. Since he did not agree with the message conveyed on the shirts, he offered to connect the customer with a different printer who would produce the shirts at the same price he would have charged.

Unsatisfied with that solution, the Gay and Lesbian Services Organization filed a complaint against Hands on Originals with the Human Rights Commission charging the company with illegal discrimination.

Today, law firms and scholars came to the defense of Adamson, including The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and Professor Douglas Laycock, Professor of Law at the University of Virginia.

“Americans disagree about sex and religion. That’s nothing

new. But this case is about whether the government will allow people who disagree to live side-by-side in peace, or whether the government will instead pick one 'correct' moral view and force everyone to conform," said Luke Goodrich, Deputy General Counsel of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty.

"Fortunately, the Supreme Court has already resolved this question and held that the government can't force people to promote views they disagree with."

Several LGBT-owned businesses, such as BMP T-shirts, have been publically supportive of Mr. Adamson's free speech rights.

"No one should be forced to do something against what they believe in. If we were approached by an organization such as the Westboro Baptist Church, I highly doubt we would be doing business with them, and we would be very angry if we were forced to print anti-gay t-shirts," said Diane DiGeloromo, one owner of BMP T-shirts which is a lesbian-owned business. "This isn't a gay or straight issue. This is a human issue."

Her business partner, Kathy Trautvertter, added, "You put your blood and your sweat and your tears into your business" and "it's very personal. . . . When I put myself in Mr. Adamson's shoes, I could see it from his side."

Tween Goes Toe to Toe With Teacher Who Insists God Is a Myth

The 12-year-old girl made her way to the podium in front of a nearly empty room, the school board before her.

Her seventh-grade teacher challenged Jordan Wooley's faith, and Wooley wasn't about to let the teacher bully her into silence.

"Today I was given an assignment in school that questioned my faith and told me God was not real," Wooley began.

Wooley was far from the only student who was offended, but she was the only one who stood up. Watch the video to see her speech.

Death-Defying Missionary Leads Apostolic Team to ISIS Hot Spot

Victor Marx is an author, speaker, and international child advocate who works with troubled, abused, and trafficked youth all over the world.

He's also a former U.S. Marine and a trained martial arts seventh degree black belt.

Marx takes teams of missionaries and aide workers on what he calls "high-risk missions" trips, going to places where no one else wants to go but where the need is great.

Recently, he led a team to the Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq, where he and his fellow high-risk missionaries spoke with Yazidi men, women, and children who were driven from their homes. Many of them were tortured and their families killed by ISIS.

The Yazidis belong to a religious community that has its own

culture. They are not Muslims, nor are they Christians, but they have been viciously attacked by ISIS and driven out of their homes in Northern Iraq, near the Syrian border.

Huge numbers of Yazidis are now living in IDP (Internally Displaced People) camps in Iraq. Countless Yazidi women and girls have been raped and tortured by ISIS fighters.

Marx and his team ministered the love of Christ to the Yazidi victims of ISIS. They also met with members of the Peshmerga, the Kurdish military, who are trying to stop ISIS from advancing further into Kurdish and Iraqi territory.