

Prophetic Fulfillment?

Thousands of Christians Flock to Jerusalem for Feast of Tabernacles

Thousands of Christians have come from around the world to Jerusalem to take part this week in the annual Feast of Tabernacles celebration, sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem. For the past 40 years, the Feast has been the largest gathering of Christian visitors in Israel each year, and over 5,000 Christians representing nearly 100 nations are here for Feast 2019.

The weeklong festivities got underway Sunday evening (Oct. 13) with the traditional outdoor meal and concert at the Ein Gedi oasis, along the shores of the Dead Sea. The musical program featured local Hebraic worship artists as well as singers from around the globe.

The evening culminated with an inspirational message from Brother Yun, a leader of the underground Chinese church in the 1980s and '90s who had to flee the country after repeated imprisonments for preaching the gospel. Today, he is a traveling evangelist based out of Germany and is widely known for his book *The Heavenly Man*.

Yun's message recounted his experiences as leader of a large but persecuted church network in China, as well as his current involvement in the Back to Jerusalem movement. Brother Yun shared how, on the day of his miraculous escape from the tightest maximum-security prison in China, God told him: "The prison is the reality, but I am the truth."

He likened his escape from prison to Jesus raising Lazarus from the bondage of death. "If God comes into your

persecutions and your challenges, then everything is possible. ... Every time in the lowest times of my life, God has said, 'Don't be afraid, I still love you.'"

The next morning, Feast pilgrims gathered for a moving communion service in the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. The Communion was served by local Jewish and Arab pastors, who spoke of the dividing wall between them being broken down by the redemptive work of Christ. Rev. R. T. Kendall, a popular Bible teacher, followed up with a message about the importance of having "total forgiveness" toward others.

On Monday evening, the Feast moved into Jerusalem's Pais Arena for the grand opening and colorful Parade of Nations. The traditional procession of flag bearers from countries represented at the Feast ended with a delegation of 17 pilgrims from Egypt being welcomed on stage alongside the Israeli flag.

The new deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Fleur Hassan Nachum opened the night with a warm welcome greeting that stressed the value of Christian support for Israel.

"It's such a pleasure for me to be here with all of you today during the Feast of Tabernacles," said Nachum. "We don't take it for granted that we have so many friends around the world, dedicated to Israel and dedicated to Zion and dedicated to Jerusalem the way you are. So I'm here first of all to say thank you for your support.

"On a personal note, I want to say that a couple of years ago I brought my daughter, who was 13 years old at the time, to one of these gatherings. And she saw the love and support for Israel and for the Jewish people, and she said to me something that almost broke my heart. She said: 'Mom, there are people around the world who like us?' My daughter thought that no one around the world liked us, until she came to one of these gatherings, so thank you for restoring her faith in humanity,

and thank you for your love and your friendship.”

ICEJ President Dr. Jürgen Bühler ended the evening with a powerful message on the biblical theme of “beginnings,” stressing the importance of trusting in a Creator God who still engages with us every day through His Word and Spirit.

The Feast continues through the week of Sukkot and culminates on Thursday with the popular Jerusalem March through the streets of the capital and the traditional Israeli Guest Night, when hundreds of local Israelis join the Feast pilgrims for an evening of music and solidarity. Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog will be on hand to congratulate the ICEJ for assisting more than 150,000 Jews to make *aliyah* to Israel over the past 40 years.

Besides Brother Yun, this year’s Feast features such popular guest speakers as: Rev. R. T. Kendall, for 25 years the pastor of London’s Westminster Chapel, the largest evangelical church in the U.K.; evangelist Angus Buchan from South Africa; Mats Ola Ishkoel, pastor of the Word of Life Church in Moscow, the largest evangelical church in Russia; apostle Rene Terra Nova, a prominent Latin American church leader with over 6 million followers; and Rev. Andrew Kou, pastor of a large church network in Taiwan and a pioneer of Asian Christian television as a founder of the Chinese-language channel GOOD TV.

Meantime, the musical artists at Feast 2019 include local Messianic singers Joshua Aaron, Sarah Liberman and Shiloh Ben-Hod; plus Travis Cottrell, Eddie James, Ray Sidney, Dorothy Bedford and colorful worship teams from Fiji, Ivory Coast and several other nations.

The ICEJ’s Feast of Tabernacles celebration is being broadcast to millions of viewers this year watching by live stream and on television broadcasts worldwide via Vision Norway, GOD TV, Daystar and other international Christian networks.

“Over the past 40 years, we have witnessed thousands of

Christians from nations near and far coming up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles each and every year, in good times as well as difficult times,” said ICEJ President Bühler. “With this record of sustained success, it seems clear that the ancient tradition of Gentiles joining the Jewish people in Jerusalem for Sukkot has been revived in modern times. We are truly excited about hosting all these Christians at this year’s Feast and the positive impact they are having on Israel.”