

'The Chinese Church Loves Jesus, Israel and Arabs'

At our recent Israel-China Kingdom Destiny Conference (co-sponsored by Maoz and Revive Israel), we had the honor of meeting Zhang Fuheng, one of the five "fathers" of the house church in China. Here are some excerpts of his sharing:

Part 1-Testimony

In 1979, I became quite ill. I could not move except for my mouth. I wept almost every day; I even cursed my own birthday and considered suicide.

There were very few Christians in China at this time. One Christian man who lived in a village at some distance had his twin daughters taken away from him and sold into servitude. When he came searching for his daughters (but did not find them), he heard about my illness and came to share the "good news" of salvation with me. At that time, I received new hope in my heart.

I began to pray to be healed. I prayed day and night for a week. Nothing seemed to happen. One morning I woke and saw the blanket was on the floor and realized I must have moved. I sat up, got out of bed and went downstairs. Everyone was shocked. Everyone in the house received the Lord.

The next week we opened the house to tell people about what happened. 200 people showed up including Christians from the surrounding villages. Of that group, 60 people from our village received the Lord, and a house church was started overnight in our home.

We had no Bibles at all. Someone from another village lent me his "Bible" for one month, which was only part of the New Testament, with several books missing. I didn't know what to

do, so I copied by hand the Scriptures that had been given me, before I had to return it.

(Just recently, 40 years later, the two daughters of the man who first shared the gospel with me were located, and their family reunited.)

Part 2-House Churches

In 1949, Mao Tse Tung ordered all foreign missionaries and businessmen to leave the country. Local Christian leaders were jailed. The years 1949 to 1979 were a dark period with much suffering. People wept and prayed. In 1979, the new Chairman, Deng Xiaoping, started the "Open Door Policy," allowing some business and trade to return.

At that time there were two types of churches: those registered with the government (the "three self" churches) and those unregistered, mostly in the villages. We in the villages could not relate to the registered churches. Their structure seemed foreign and Western to us, and unbiblical. We did not know what to do; so we just started reading the book of Acts. There we found all the answers. We felt the new house church movement was restoring the original apostolic tradition. (In recent years there has been much reconciliation between the registered and unregistered churches.)

We believed in Acts 1:8 to receive power and be witnesses from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. We had spiritual fire, healings and deliverance from demons. I traveled to many villages, sharing my testimony. Within seven years, I started 200 churches with some 30,000 members.

In 1983 came a new wave of intense persecution. I could not live in my home village for five years, only occasionally slipping in at night to visit my parents. The elder Chinese believers were scattered and persecuted. Suffering became so much a part of their lives that some of the younger Christians who had not yet gone to jail began to pray, "God, why have I

not gone to jail? Have I sinned? Is there something wrong?"

Christian leaders in the villages were beaten, shot or hanged; many were jailed repeatedly; women were stripped. My wife used to say of me, "My husband has the spiritual gift of being jailed." Most of the pastors had no Bible or training.

As the gospel spread in the wake of the persecution surrounding the death of Stephen the first martyr (Acts 8:1), so did it with us. In 1979, there were 700,000 Christians in China. Our house church movement has grown to 70 million believers. That's a 100-fold growth.

Part 3-Back to Jerusalem

The Chinese church is the largest in the world; the Israeli Messianic remnant is the smallest. Yet we see you as our "elder brother." The original apostles were the root that sprang out to all the branches. We have come back to you. We are not "without hope" because we are one in the family of Jesus.

Why did the Jews suffer so much in history? You are a miracle. The restoration of Israel is an act of God; and so is the restoration of the Messianic remnant. Many Chinese tourists come to Israel, and when they see what has happened, they become believers in Jesus.

There was an early revival in China in the 1920s. Those early Christians had a vision to bring the gospel "back" from the ends of the earth (China) to Israel. They dedicated themselves to the "back to Jerusalem" movement. They felt they had received eternal life from the Jews and wanted to return to them the same grace.

So a large group of them started out on foot to walk toward Jerusalem, first into the far west of China. But in 1949, after the Communists came to power, the borders of China were shut tight. Since they could not leave, they set up a

community in Xin Jiang Province near the border.

These young Christians prayed for decades with this vision. They grew older. When our pastors received the same vision, we traveled out to see them. Many had died. We told the elders who met us, "Take heart. We will go to Arabia and to Jerusalem." They wept and hugged us saying, "Now, Lord, Your servants may depart."

The Chinese church loves Jesus, loves Israel and loves the Arabs. Today we are here, hugging you. Just as the sun rises in the East, so will this revival return to Jerusalem.

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