

**Charisma 199**

**BONUS zu den Seiten 35-36: Back to Jerusalem**

**Back to Jerusalem**

**The call of the Church of China**

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## **I. The vision of the Church of China**

### **A. Chinese Back to Jerusalem Evangelistic Band**

On the eve of Easter in 1943, James Hudson Taylor II, the Principal of Northwest Bible Institute sent teachers and students to the churches throughout Shaanxi. Pastor Mark Ma, the vice president of Northwest Bible Institute led missionary Grace Ho and Brother Zheng Guang En to Baoji city, to conduct the Easter service at Baoji Church. Upon arriving at Baoji, Pastor Mark said, "Let's get up early tomorrow, we will go to the riverbank and pray at dawn, to welcome the resurrection of the Lord."

The next day, on Easter morning, April 25, 1943, they went to the river. While praying by the river, Pastor Mark Ma shared a vision he had in his first year (the night of November 25, 1942):

*The Lord showed him a large pool of water; there were many surrounding inlets where people from all over the world were sending good news to China. People from America, England, France, Sweden and Norway kept pouring water into the pool which couldn't be filled. Pastor Mark asked, "What does this mean, oh Lord? The pool should be full and overflow! Why is it not filled?" The Lord said, "This is the Church of China!" He continued, "You have received freely but have given nothing. Therefore, know that you should give out the Gospel!"*

Upon receiving this vision, Pastor Mark felt a heavy burden and he prayed to the Lord, "Oh Lord! How can I take on this responsibility?" The Lord answered, "My power is revealed amongst the weak." "But Muslims are the most hardened people group," pastor Mark emphasised. The Lord said, "The most hardened people are not the Muslims, but the Israelites. In fact, the Chinese including yourself are one of the most hardened people groups, but didn't the Gospel triumph?" The Lord continued, "Their hearts are not unusually hardened, but I have planned for this inheritance to be kept for the Church of China. In this way, the Church of China will not be poor when I return."

When Pastor Mark Ma shared that God had called him to evangelise in Xinjiang, Grace Ho added that 10 years ago when she was 17 years old, she had also received God's calling to go to Xinjiang to spread the Gospel.

This sharing gave Mark a surprise. When they returned to the Bible Institute, to their greater surprise many students responded to president James Hudson Taylor II on the same Easter morning. His encouragement coupled with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, many stepped forward and were willing to travel to the Northwest region to evangelise, including eight who decided to go to Xinjiang. Pastor Mark could sense a great confirmation from God.

Since then, the Bible Institute has agreed for Pastor Mark to lead the students in prayer specifically for this Evangelistic Movement every Tuesday evening. After several "Fast and Pray" meetings, on May 23, 1943, everyone agreed unanimously to name the evangelistic organization as "*Chinese Back to Jerusalem Evangelistic Band*", whose members were mainly teachers and students of the Northwest Bible Institute. The *Back to Jerusalem (BTJ) Evangelistic Band* hoped to carry the Gospel starting from Northwest China, passing through the hard-core central Asian states and finally back to Jerusalem.

## **B. Northwest Spiritual Band**

The Courtyard of the Happy Way in Weixian (current Weifang), Shandong Province, was the largest mission base established by the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America which comprised a church, a hospital, two middle schools and a University.

During World War II, the missionary kids of the Western missionaries in China would study and live here. When the Japanese occupied Shandong, this mission base was turned into a concentration camp.

In the fall of 1946, the leaders of Weifang Church in Shandong decided to convert the former mission base into a Devotion and Prayer School. At that time, World War II had just ended and China was caught in the civil war. In the same year, the North China Theological Seminary in Shandong was forced to relocate to the south; remaining students from the Seminary were eager to join the newly established Devotion and Prayer School.

During a prayer meeting in the Devotion and Prayer School, the Holy Spirit called this group of seminary students specifically to go to Xinjiang to evangelise until the Gospel returns to Jerusalem.

The Holy Spirit impressed upon pastor Zhang Guquan to preach on the title "Back to Jerusalem" to the students multiple times. Although these seminary students knew nothing about Xinjiang, they were certain that the call of "Back to Jerusalem" came

from the Holy Spirit. At the same time, they came across “Back to Jerusalem News” edited by pastor Mark, in which he talked about the call of “Back to Jerusalem” by the BTJ Evangelistic Band.

## **II. The way of mission is the way of the cross**

### **A. The vision of the BTJ *Evangelistic Band* not supported by the China Inland Mission**

According to Pastor Mark and Missionary Grace Ho, the parent agency of China Inland Mission (CIM) had strongly opposed the mission plan of the Evangelistic Band; funds withdrawal was used as a threat. Principal James Hudson Taylor II was in a dilemma, so he held a mutual position of neither supporting it nor against it. It was for this reason that the BTJ Evangelistic Band had to delay their departure again.

The Northwest Spiritual Band received the same vision three and a half years later than the Evangelistic Band, yet the team arrived in Xinjiang one year earlier than the Evangelistic Band to build the church.

The reason for the opposition from the higher authorities of CIM was unknown. It was possible that the CIM office previously set up at Urumqi, Xinjiang had been persecuted, or there was a plan to send British missionaries back to work in Xinjiang again. The way Western churches work tend to be rigorous in administration and planning, and unwilling to set foot in the mission field of other mission agencies.

### **B. The evangelistic results of two teams with the vision**

During the period of 1946 to the autumn of 1948, Weixian Devotion and Prayer School and The Courtyard of the Happy Way successively sent six groups of seminary students, a total of 62 students to spread the gospel in Xinjiang. In 1948, Zhang Guquan led the teachers, students and their families of Weixian Devotion and Prayer School to Hami, Xinjiang, and formed a Christian group who practiced communal lifestyle. The group was called “House of Workers” which was later renamed as “Northwest Spiritual Band” officially.

On June 5, 1949, the Northwest Spiritual Fellowship was registered with seven departments: general affairs, writing, medicine, labour, women and children, spiritual education and evangelism. Pastor Zhang Guquan was the leader, assisted by Li Shiyong and the group decided to move towards Jerusalem. Subsequently, workers were sent to Kashgar and other places to set up the guest house of outgoing missionaries. There were more than 100 co-workers when founded.

The Northwest Spiritual Band began to evangelise in Urumqi, Qiquan Lake, Balikun, Shimsar, Turpan, Yanqi, Hetian, Aksu, Kashgar and other places. 16 "local churches" were built and the numbers of followers climbed up to 300, making it the largest

missionary organization in Xinjiang.

BTJ Evangelistic Band has also built several churches in Southern Xinjiang, including Missionary Ho's church in Kashgar.

According to various historical records, these two groups in Xinjiang were mainly reaching out to the Han Chinese, with only a fraction of Uyghur followers.

### **C. Two teams suffered persecutions**

Based on multiple sources of information, I found that the Northwest Spiritual Band was the first to face persecution.

In the spring of 1947, the first group of missionaries entered Xinjiang. In 1951, a large number of their leaders and co-workers were arrested and put into prison. The main leader, Pastor Zhang Guquan died in prison in 1956.

Of the five leaders who were sentenced heavily, only one was released alive. He was Simon Zhao who spent 31 years in prison and labour camps, yet it was 31 years of miracles and signs that Jesus had revealed His presence. Since his release, Simon Zhao has strengthened many churches with his testimonies, especially churches with the call of carrying the Gospel back to Jerusalem.

According to the documents, the BTJ Evangelistic Band in Southern Xinjiang began to face some persecutions from 1957, but they were still able to meet with Han Christians until the Cultural Revolution, when their church was shut.

## **III. The prayers, tears and blood shed of the missionaries and martyrs in Xinjiang will not be in vain**

Most information in part 3 is extracted from the third chapter of 《The History of Christianity in Xinjiang》 and a small part is based on Wikipedia.

[https://www.ccaa2009.com/2013/06/blog-post\\_1720.html](https://www.ccaa2009.com/2013/06/blog-post_1720.html)

(Chinese only, English translation not available at this website)

### **A. The most successful Mission team to The Uyghurs in Xinjiang is the Swedish Mission Covenant Church.**

'British Inland Mission' was the first missionary organization to enter Xinjiang, mainly engaging in mission work in Urumqi at Northeast of Xinjiang. Since 1876, when Dr Henry Lansdell from the Church of England and George Parker from the Inland Mission stepped foot in Xinjiang to begin evangelisation until 1938 when the last three British missionaries were expelled from the Urumqi office, missionary work had been difficult and made little progress for half a century.

From 1892 until the last three missionaries were forced to leave in 1938, the missionaries from the Swedish Mission Covenant Church worked relentlessly for 46 years in the Kashgar region of Southwest Xinjiang. They led more than 300 local Uyghurs to become Christians and built the first Uyghur church. More than 30 local Uyghur and Han church workers were trained, one of whom was a Uyghur evangelist named Alimujiang.

## **B. Two great persecutions and bloodshed of the Xinjiang Church**

In the early days of the founding of the Republic of China, many young Han Chinese in the Mainland studied abroad in Europe, and the Uyghur young people were no exception. A portion of the young Uyghurs went to the former Soviet Union and some went to Turkey to study.

### **1. Young Uyghur students returned from Turkey brought back Pan-Turkism**

Young Uyghurs who had returned from studying in Turkey brought Pan-Turkism back to Xinjiang. They believed that a great Turkic empire must be established from Gansu, Ningxia and Xinjiang in China to Turkey, the whole of Central Asia. Uyghur student Masud Sabri was an influential figure.

While Western missionaries arrived at Xinjiang to build hospitals and schools, Masud brought back a Turkish Muslim team. His team set up many schools and hospitals in Xinjiang; the school taught and trained thousands of students using Turkish, promoting Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism in the classroom. "Our ancestors were Turkish," Masud taught his students in school. In fact, the Uyghur people, the ancestors of the Uyghurs fought against the Turks for a long time from AD 605 to AD 742. Reference: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uyghur\\_Khaganate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uyghur_Khaganate)

In 1933, Uyghur Muslims who were under the influence of Pan-Islamism launched an Islamic revolutionary jihad against the government soldiers and Han Chinese of the Republic of China in Xinjiang, killing thousands at many places.

On the night of November 12 in the same year, The Turkic Islamic Republic of East Turkestan (IRET) was formed. Although this fanatic Islamic political power was overthrown by the Kuomintang in a short time, during the Islamic militants' occupancy in Southern Xinjiang, none of the 300 Uyghur Christians were spared. All were martyred under the command of Amir Abdullah, the leader of the fanatic Uyghur Muslim Military Forces from Hotan.

Abdullah was the youngest brother of Muhammad Amin Bughra, the chief founder of the Islamic Republic of East Turkestan. The two men advocated jihad (holy war) against the infidel. They upheld the motto of anti-Han, anti-Hui, anti-Christian and aimed to build an Islamic state. Muhammad Amin worked closely with Masud.

Among the first to be martyred during Abdullah's bloody massacre was young Abel.

Abel was a Uyghur Christian; both his sister Eve and himself were orphans who grew up in an orphanage run by the Swedish missionaries. Abel knew that danger was coming, and he was afraid but he encouraged a younger Christian, Maimaiti saying, "The cross must come before the crown." Abel became the first martyr of the church in Southern Xinjiang, the first Christian to be put to death publicly. Before the execution, Abel knelt on the ground and looked up at the sky like Stephen in the Bible. There was no fear in Abel's face, as if he saw heaven opened. He did not die immediately after the gun shot, Abdullah, the leader of the Muslim rebels ordered his body to be chopped up and dumped in the field to feed dogs. Three days passed, no dog had touched Abel's body, therefore some Muslims were surprised and believed that Allah had intervened, his body was then buried.

Churches, printing houses and orphanages in Kashgar were destroyed. The Swedish missionaries were detained, boys in the orphanage were killed while girls were forcibly married to Muslims. Schools and other facilities were occupied or destroyed.

## **2. The Three Districts Revolution led by Uyghur students returned from the Soviet Union**

Uyghur students who returned from the Soviet Union took the lead of the Three Districts Revolution to fight against the Kuomintang and founded the "Second East Turkestan Republic". This was a bloody war backed by the Soviet armed forces. The Kuomintang had to use the independence of Outer Mongolia as a bargain to gain Stalin's support over the Three Districts Revolution, in order to overthrow the "Second East Turkestan Republic". Saifuddin Azizi, a Uyghur youth who studied in the Soviet Union became an iconic leader of the Three Districts Revolution.

Between 1933 and 1937, the Islamic Revolutionary jihad in Xinjiang was suppressed by the Soviet Red Army and the provisional president, Sheng Shicai of the Republic of China in Xinjiang. At that time Sheng activated a second wave of persecution and execution against the churches leading to the martyrdom of many church leaders and saints. In 1938, almost all the Western missionaries were forced to leave Xinjiang.

The Pan-Islamists in contrast, were not only more bloody in their persecutions of the church, but have also created a number of Uyghur-language magazines and journals. The chief leaders who fled overseas continued to lead the Uyghurs in exile and published many books. Muhammad Amin Bughra published a well-known Uyghur book *Modern History of Xinjiang* in India. The influence of these Uyghur's writings far outweighed those of the Red Uyghurs who studied in the Soviet Union.

### **C. The divine mystery of martyrs opening the door for Gospel**

It seems that the mission of the Swedish "Covenant Missionary Church" and the Inland Mission in Xinjiang over half a century had failed, in particular when the door

to the Uyghurs had been shut. Subsequent missions of the BTJ Evangelistic Band and the Northwest Spiritual Band failed to regain the pre-1933 Christian status in Uyghur.

Biblical history and church history had repeatedly taught us that Satan assumed Jesus was defeated on the cross; the fact was that only Jesus is worthy to open the scroll and break the seals. The sacrifice and forgiveness of the martyrs are the authority and key that the devil and the world do not understand. The prayers, tears, and blood shed by the missionaries and martyrs of all ages have powerfully softened the hard soil of Xinjiang, just as the sacrifices of the martyrs of the Roman Empire opened the door of Gospel to the gentiles.

#### **D. Why can't the Western missionaries return to Xinjiang? Who stops them from going back?**

Most of the Swedish missionaries chose to work in the border areas of India in the face of devastating persecution of the Church in Xinjiang, so that they could conveniently return to Xinjiang when opportunities arose in the future. While waiting in India, they completed the translation and publication of the New Testament in Kashgar dialect.

In the summer of 1946, when the Swedish mission headquarter learned that the situation in Xinjiang had improved, they immediately sent Swedish missionaries Moen and Roberntz to Xinjiang to explore the possibility of returning to Xinjiang. The exploration ended in the summer of 1947.

The administrator of Kashgar at that time was a Uyghur who had been in power for 20 years. He was completely hostile to Christian missionary work and rejected the request of the two Swedish missionaries to return to Kashgar; in addition he brought false accusations of the two to the provincial government, and threatened to expel them from the region.

It is hard for the missionaries to accept the fact that half a century of missionary work was uprooted in this manner. They could not understand nor comprehend God's plan and arrangement, the Swedish Mission Organisation asked in sorrow, "Oh Lord, why?"

The Lord showed them the answer soon. Just before the two missionaries left Kashgar in the spring of 1947, they received a letter from "Northwest Bible Institute" in Fengxiang County, Shaanxi Province. On the envelope was written: "To the head of the Swedish Mission Organization in Kashgar".

The letter wrote:

*Dear friends, some teachers and students of our Institute have received the call of the Lord and founded the 'BTJ Evangelistic Band' with the aim of spreading the Gospel to Xinjiang and other parts of western China. We realized the moment to send our first missionaries was ripe after a few years of prayer and preparation. This summer*

*(referring to 1946), two young brothers departed and have now arrived in Qinghai Province. We hope to send some young sisters after the New Year, and a group is expected to arrive in Kashgar in June next year (referring to 1947)."*

You can imagine how encouraging this letter was to the two downcast Swedish missionaries. In this way, the baton of Christian mission in Xinjiang was passed to the Han Chinese churches.

Isn't it clear that Lord Jesus took over the torch of mission from the hands of the Swedish missionaries and gave it to the Chinese church? This happened so that the Chinese church will not be poor when she meets the Lord.

As we look back, Jesus has entrusted the mission in Xinjiang to the Chinese church and poured forth the spirit of dedication of the missionaries from Sweden and Inland Mission to the BTJ Evangelist Band and the Northwest Spiritual Band. They have sacrificed their lives to Xinjiang and we can now see the names of a generation of Missionaries from the Chinese church amidst the tombstones of the missionaries in Xinjiang.

#### **IV. Gospel in the unreached land, harvest in the end time**

The world's largest mission field (gospel in the unreached land) is the vast area between China and Jerusalem known as the "10/40 window."

(a) This region is the birthplace and base area of the three major religions (Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam).

(b) 90% of the unreached people groups in the world are located here.

(c) 50 countries to be taken are gathered here.

In Asia, the country with the largest population and the largest number of Christians is China. The Chinese have convenient access to these countries.

Many overseas and domestic mission organisations are wondering how the Chinese church will finish the journey of bringing the Gospel back to Jerusalem.

From the experience of the Chinese churches, the best way to help the churches in Muslim countries is to provide what they need, to be there when they need it, and not to appear when they don't. It is better to help them build their own church than to send a thousand missionaries.

## **V. A Church model suitable for China, and also for the Muslim countries**

### **A. Many pastors among Chinese churches once dreamed of megachurch**

Since 2010, churches in China have been able to obtain visas to attend International Christian conferences. Within a decade, the participants of Chinese churches became the largest group in many large-scale international gatherings.

Churches in China saw many megachurches overseas when they had the chance to travel out, which caused many Chinese pastors to begin to dream of building a megachurch. But is this the will of God? Looking back today, we can say with certainty: "Megachurch is never the Heart of God for the Church of China!"

### **B. Churches in China became small fellowships prior to the outbreak**

The church registered with the government is called the Three Self Church. The Three Self Church has churches in every city where they can meet for Sunday service in the church.

The church not registered with the government is called The House Church (in Chinese called Family Church, in Western called House Church). Most house churches do not have a church building; their meetings are usually held in the houses where believers live, and the number of attendees is kept below 50 people.

Some house churches may rent large premises for their meetings but since 2018, such large house churches were ordered by the authority to keep to small groups of not more than 30 members.

When pandemic broke out in 2020, small group meetings became the default mode of operation amongst Chinese churches and this model is running very well. A group of young leaders and preachers rose up in the small fellowships within a short time; many couples would bring their children to attend these groups. They became a real testimony of the saving of the household, growing up in the fellowship and experiencing the revival of the household.

I have personally witnessed such testimonies within the small fellowships of which many involved overcoming the "old self" – broken marriages restored, wounded relationships healed, and sick bodies healed as a result of forgiveness. These testimonies that bring glory to the name of Jesus are constantly shared on social media, touching more believers to overcome the "old self".

### **C. Big Internet connection**

Even before the outbreak, Chinese churches had become proficient in the use of the Internet, holding daily morning prayers with local churches from 5:00 to 7:00, as well as various training and Bible study courses.

After the outbreak, joint prayer meetings for the epidemic are appearing all over the Internet, and the epidemic caused Internet prayer meetings, healing and deliverance sessions, Bible training sessions, personal testimony sharing sessions, etc. to progress faster and better.

Pastor Peter Tsukahira wrote in his new book *Equip: Your Personal Journey to the Kingdom*:

“Online prayer meetings with dozens and sometimes thousands of participants logging in from locations around the globe became commonplace. This is progress and spiritual “territory” that should not be given up by the church after the crisis subsides.” The model of small fellowship (family gathering), combined with the model of big Internet connection, is very suitable for the churches in Muslim countries in the 10/40 window area. What is suitable for churches in China, is also suitable for churches in Muslim countries.

#### **D. The model of the first church is also the model of the last church**

In his visionary book *Houses that Change the World*, Christian author Wolfgang Simson addresses what he calls a reformation of structure in the church today. Simson writes, “The church has to become small in order to grow large. Most churches of today are simply too big to provide real fellowship. They have too often become ‘Fellowships without fellowship.’ The New Testament church was made up of small groups typically between 10 and 15 people.”

Pastor Peter Tsukahira mentioned in his new book *Equip: Your Personal Journey to the Kingdom*:

“Fruitful leaders create other leaders through friendship, love, wisdom, solving problems together, and prayer. Big crowds are not the place for this. The most critical aspect of God’s kingdom always takes place in informal groups among friends, in homes, and not in public. Spiritual neighbourhoods are the optimal environment for making disciples. Neighbourhood fellowships that met in homes had a vital role in the formation of the earliest church.”

What the two authors emphasize is that the small fellowship of the first church, in which the disciples impacted lives with their own lives, created other leaders and true disciples, whereas big crowds are not the place for this. As the first church did, the end times church will need the same kind of neighbourhood fellowships that meet at home.

## **VI. Churches in China no longer receive only, but to give**

### **A. Intercession (including onsite prayer walk)**

In 2006, the Holy Spirit prompted a group of leaders from the churches in China to send an intercessory team to Jerusalem. The team started the journey from Xi 'an in a Jeep, praying for each country along the way from China to Jerusalem. Upon receiving this vision, many churches started to pray for this mission. After two years of prayer and getting various confirmation, 15 leaders of the Chinese church set out on September 8, 2008, travelled 40 days through Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, and arrived in Jerusalem on October 17.

During the prayer trip, the team visited Grace Ho who is a member of the BTJ Evangelistic Band still living in Xinjiang, and Mrs Zhang, the wife of pastor Zhang Guquan, a martyr of the Northwest Spiritual Band. When the hands of the old generation missionaries were laid on the new, it signified the handover of the baton of evangelism from the old generation to the new. The young Chinese missionaries began their long journey westward by prayer walk. Subsequently, many intercessory prayer groups drove into these countries for prayer walks, and I believe the Holy Spirit is still moving more prayer groups to go to the countries in the 10/40 window to pray for the great revival at the end times.

### **B. Building orphanages and providing disaster relief assistance**

I have heard of churches in China as well as overseas Chinese churches sending missionaries to the countries in the 10/40 window; I do not have written records, therefore these missionaries are not included in the scope of this article.

According to reliable sources of information, orphanages were built in Pakistan by the Shandong Churches many years ago; some Chinese missionary agencies have also provided technical and scientific assistance to these countries in the 10/40 window.

In particular, when natural disasters strike, churches in China will immediately offer financial assistance to the Christians in the affected countries.

### **C. The Church of China loves Israel very much**

It is now 14 years since I received the call to intercede for Israel. Since 2011, my team has been meeting over the internet six days a week, from 5 am to 7 am for morning prayer as well as for training to be intercessors for Israel.

Prior COVID-19 outbreak, we had sent intercessory teams to Israel for altar building and prayer over 3 consecutive years. Our team also participated in 24/7 prayer duty at the House of Prayer in Israel.

During the pandemic, we continue to receive offerings to the Synagogue of the Messianic believers and the Arabic Church in Israel, asking us to transfer the offerings

to the Israeli body connected to us.

Similar teams like ours are everywhere in the Church of China because the Holy Spirit has ignited the fire to pray for Israel in the hearts of intercessors from the Church of China.

The intercessors for Israel in the Western churches are generally older, whereas many of the Chinese intercessors are young people. This, too, is the work of the Holy Spirit.

### ***Our prayer***

*Heavenly Father, we have witnessed how you raised up generations after generations of true disciples – faithful missionaries in the long river of history. They presented themselves as the light and salt in their era, reflecting the self-denial radiance of your cross. The world was not worthy of them (Hebrews 11:38), it was your gift and mercy to each era.*

*Dear Lord, mould us to be like them, that this generation may see your great love and grace. Through our prayers, tears and bloodshed, the Holy Way shall be opened for the souls of the 10/40 Window, it will be for those who walk on the way [the redeemed]; and fools will not wander on it (Isaiah 35:8 AMP)*

*Lord, reveal to us the model of the church in the final days, so that we may carry a new vision and a new direction to go into the unexplored mission path, not by experience, but by the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfil the great commission!*

*In the name of our Lord Jesus we pray. Amen!*