



KINGDOM WORD MISSIONS



A MISSION REPORT

From Paphos to Laodicea

Cyprus, Constantinople and the Seven Churches of Asia

13–26 AUGUST 2026

By Ekaba Bisong & Chidera Bisong

AUGUST 2026



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Summary of the Mission

FROM 13 TO 26 AUGUST 2026 we, Ekaba Bisong of Calgary and Chidera Bisong of Winnipeg, travelled on a mission of the gospel under Kingdom Word Missions to the island of Cyprus and to Türkiye: to the land of Barnabas, where Paul and Barnabas first carried the gospel beyond Syria, and to the land of the seven churches to which the risen Christ wrote in the book of the Revelation.

In Cyprus we preached and gave out the word on the streets of Nicosia, beside the line that has divided the island's capital since 1974, and on the shore of the Mediterranean at Ayia Napa. We went to Paphos, where Paul and Barnabas confronted the sorcerer Elymas and the Roman proconsul believed, and prayed at the pillar where, by local tradition, the apostle was scourged. In the rock-cut tombs of Paphos we raised an altar of prayer and declared that the land belongs to Jesus Christ. We saw how far the island has been given over to Aphrodite, its ancient goddess, and to sensuality, to a degree we have not met in any other land; and we saw the wound of its division, which kept us from Salamis, where the apostles first landed.

In Istanbul, ancient Constantinople, the city of the second ecumenical council, we could not preach on the streets, for public evangelism there is treated as a threat. We went into Hagia Sophia, once the greatest church in Christendom and now a mosque, and saw the mosaics of Christ looking out from walls that no longer belong to Him. We saw Hagia Irene, prayed over Sultanahmet, and made connections with two people, with a view to returning for quieter work.

Then we drove the circuit of the seven churches of Asia, praying over each: Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Smyrna, Ephesus and Laodicea, whose lampstands were removed long ago. In the ruined church of Laodicea, one of the oldest church buildings in the world, Ekaba prayed at the altar.

We came home with one conviction, the anthem of this report: *The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever.*

This account is written as a plain record of what was done and said, so that all who read it may give glory to God, pray for Cyprus and Türkiye, and give themselves to the Great Commission until Christ returns.

Kingdom Word Missions was formerly Canada Interior Mission.



AUGUST 2026

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THE JOURNEY

At a Glance

14

days, 13–26 August 2026

2

lands: the Republic of
Cyprus and Türkiye

7

churches of the Rev-
elation, prayed over

2 000

kilometres by road,
approximately



Out by Montreal and Athens to Larnaca, 13–14 August; from Cyprus to Istanbul by Athens, 19 August; home from Istanbul, 26 August. Lines show great-circle distances, not flight paths.

THU 13 – FRI 14

Calgary and Winnipeg to Montreal, Athens and Larnaca; the drive to Limassol.

SUN 16

Nicosia, Eleftheria Square; the shore at Ayia Napa.

MON 17

Paphos: the church of Chrysopolitissa and the Pillar of St Paul.

TUE 18

Paphos: the rock-cut tombs; prayer in the catacombs.

WED 19

Larnaca to Athens to Istanbul.

THU 20

Hagia Sophia, Hagia Irene, Sultanahmet, Galata.

SAT 22

Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia.

SUN 23

Smyrna, Ephesus and Laodicea.

WED 26

Istanbul to Canada.

PART I

The Call





THURSDAY 13 – FRIDAY 14 AUGUST 2026

The Land of Barnabas

THIS JOURNEY had been before us for months. In July, when we returned to Northumberland, we wrote that August would take us to Türkiye and to Cyprus for the work of the Lord and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Like all our missions, it was paid for out of our own wages, and it came in a hard season: Ekaba's third child was not yet two months old.

We went for two reasons. Cyprus is the land of Barnabas, “a Levite of the country of Cyprus”, and it was to Cyprus that the Holy Spirit first sent Barnabas and Saul when the church at Antioch laid hands on them. It was the first land of the first missionary journey, the island where Saul, “who also is called Paul”, is first called by the name the world knows him by. And across the water lies Asia, where the risen Christ walked among seven golden lampstands and wrote to seven churches, and where, one after another, those lampstands have gone out.



As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

ACTS 13:2–4

THE LONG ROAD EAST



We left on Thursday 13 August, Ekaba from Calgary and Chidera from Winnipeg, and met in Montreal. From there it was a night flight of some nine hours across the Atlantic to Athens, a wait, and a short flight across the eastern Mediterranean to Larnaca. We arrived in Cyprus on Friday 14 August, collected a hired car at Larnaca, and drove west along the south coast to Limassol, which was to be our base on the island and our starting point for the work.



*The God who came and took their candlesticks can build it, plant it
back again.*

EKABA, ON THE ROAD TO PERGAMUM

PART II

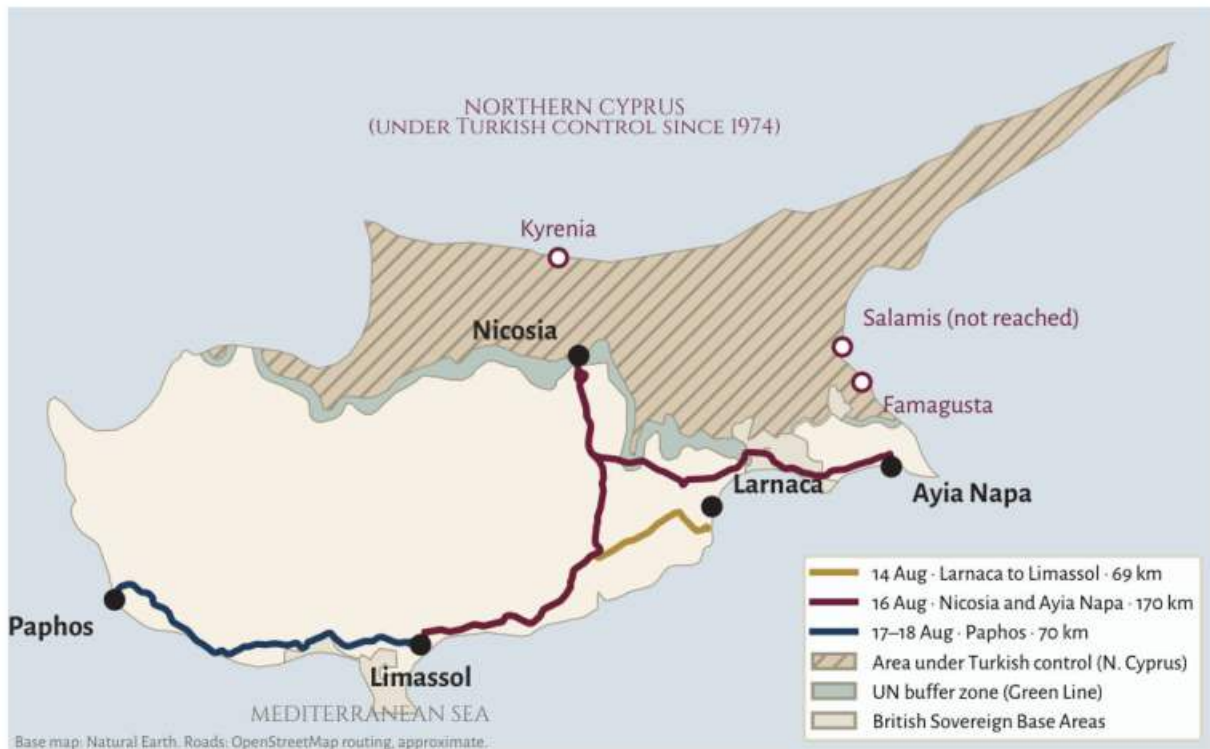
Cyprus



THE ISLAND

An Island Between Two Altars

CYPRUS LIES at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, closer to Syria and Lebanon than to Greece, a long island of mountains and dry plains of some 9 250 square kilometres. It has been Phoenician, Greek, Assyrian, Egyptian, Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Frankish, Venetian, Ottoman and British, and it has been Christian longer almost than any land on earth. It was the first place the gospel was carried by men sent out as missionaries. And it was, long before that, the island of Aphrodite.



Cyprus in August 2026: our road journeys in the Republic of Cyprus; the area under Turkish control since 1974, the United Nations buffer zone, and the British Sovereign Base Areas. Salamis, where Paul and Barnabas first landed, lies in the north, near Famagusta.

BARNABAS, PAUL AND MARK



The church of Christ came to Cyprus very early. When the believers were scattered by the persecution that followed the death of Stephen, some went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, and men of Cyprus were among those who first preached the Lord Jesus to Greeks at Antioch. One of the most loved men of the early church was a Cypriot: Joseph, a Levite of Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas, *Son of Encouragement*, who sold his field and laid the money at the apostles' feet.



And Josès, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

ACTS 4:36–37

It was Barnabas who brought Saul of Tarsus to Antioch, and it was with Barnabas that Saul was sent out. They sailed, with John Mark, from Seleucia to **Salamis** on the east coast of Cyprus, preached in the synagogues there, and went through the whole island as far as **Paphos** in the west, the Roman capital. There they met the island's two powers face to face.

PAPHOS, ABOUT AD 45–46

At Paphos the proconsul of the island, Sergius Paulus, “an intelligent man”, sent for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet named Bar-Jesus, also called Elymas, withstood them, “seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith”. Then Saul, “who also is called Paul”, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?” The sorcerer was struck blind for a season, and the proconsul, “when he saw what had been done, believed, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (Acts 13:6–12).

It was the first recorded confrontation of the gospel with sorcery, the first Roman ruler to believe, and the first time Saul is called Paul. From Paphos he sailed to Asia Minor; and Barnabas, after the sharp contention between them, took Mark and sailed again to Cyprus (Acts 15:39). By the tradition of the island, Barnabas was martyred at Salamis, and his tomb is shown there still.

THE ISLAND OF APHRODITE



The other altar on Cyprus is older than the gospel. The Greeks told that Aphrodite, the goddess of love and desire, was born from the foam of the sea and came ashore on the coast near Paphos; for a thousand years and more her great sanctuary at Old Paphos drew pilgrims from the whole Mediterranean world, and her worship was bound up with ritual sensuality. When Paul and Barnabas walked into Paphos, they walked into her city.

Her name has never left the island. Cyprus sells itself to the world as “the island of Aphrodite”: her rock, her baths, her trails and her image are on its roads and in its shops. And we saw what we have not seen in any other land in all our missions. In ordinary tourist shops, openly on the shelves, were teacups, mugs, bottle openers and keepsakes made in the shape of the male and female sexual organs, sold as souvenirs of the island. We have never seen such travesty. It told us something of the spiritual state of the land and of the people.



PLATE 1

Souvenir mugs for sale in a tourist shop in Cyprus.



PLATE 2

Keepsakes on the same shop's shelves.



PLATE 3

A souvenir cup, “I love” the island.



Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man.

ROMANS 1:22–23

Ayia Napa, where we went out on the Sunday, is known across Europe for its nightlife; it is a town that sleeps by day and wakes at night. The Christian name of the island has not kept its people from the goddess.

AN ISLAND DIVIDED



The deepest wound of modern Cyprus is political. The island became independent from Britain in 1960 with a Greek Cypriot majority and a Turkish Cypriot minority, and the two communities were soon in conflict; United Nations peacekeepers have been on the island since 1964. In July 1974 a coup backed by the military government then ruling Greece overthrew the Cypriot president, Archbishop Makarios, with the aim of uniting the island with Greece. Within days Turkey invaded the north. By the end of August 1974 Turkish forces held more than a third of the island. Some two hundred thousand Greek Cypriots fled or were driven from the north, and tens of thousands of Turkish Cypriots moved north from the south.

THE GREEN LINE

In 1983 the Turkish Cypriot leadership declared the north a separate state, the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus”; no country in the world recognises it except Türkiye, which keeps a large army there. A United Nations buffer zone, the Green Line, runs the width of the island and cuts its capital, Nicosia, in two, the last divided capital in Europe. On the east coast the old resort of Varosha, outside Famagusta, has stood fenced and empty since 1974. The Republic of Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, but the north remains outside its control, and every attempt to reunite the island has so far failed. The north is predominantly Muslim; the south predominantly Greek Orthodox.

Salamis, where Paul and Barnabas first set foot on Cyprus, lies in the north, a few kilometres from Famagusta. The division of the island, and all that crossing the line would have involved for two foreign travellers with a hired car, kept us from going there. We went as near to it as Ayia Napa, a short distance south of the line, and prayed over the whole island from there.



The land belongs to Jesus Christ. Wherever the soles of our feet step on, it is Yours.

IN THE CATACOMBS AT PAPHOS

SUNDAY 16 AUGUST 2026 · NICOSIA AND AYIA NAPA

On the Streets of a Divided City

ON THE LORD'S DAY we drove up from Limassol to Nicosia, the capital, in the middle of the island. We went out at Eleftheria Square, Liberty Square, beside the great Venetian walls that ring the old city: a modern square of white concrete, sweeping canopies and fountains, a stone's throw from the line that has cut the city in two for more than half a century.



PLATE 4
Eleftheria Square, Nicosia, under its white concrete canopy, Sunday 16 August, early afternoon.



PLATE 5
The Venetian walls of Nicosia above the square.

We had printed invitations headed *Looking for a fresh start?*, with a picture of light falling through a dark forest, and we went to the people sitting at the café tables along the street and in the shade of the square. We gave out the paper, and where anyone would stop, we spoke to them about Jesus Christ.



PLATE 6
Ekaba with the invitation at a café table in Nicosia.



PLATE 7
Speaking with young people outside a café.

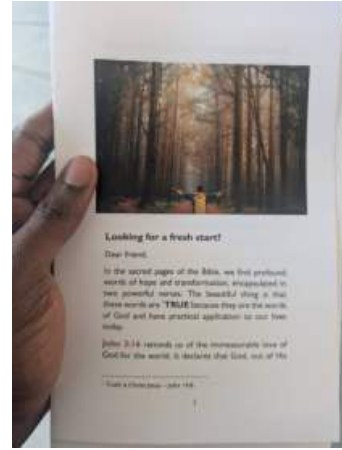


PLATE 8
The invitation: "Looking for a fresh start?"



PLATE 9
In the shade of the canopy, Eleftheria Square.



PLATE 10
On the square beside the walls.

THE GREAT SEA



In the afternoon we drove east, past Larnaca and along the coast towards Famagusta, and came to Ayia Napa, at the south-eastern corner of the island, a few kilometres from the Green Line. We went down to the rocks above the sea. Chidera recorded the moment:

So this is the Mediterranean Sea. This is directly the Mediterranean. This is what, when you see in Scripture the Great Sea, it is referring to: the great Mediterranean Sea. This is in Ayia Napa, in Cyprus, at the banks of the Mediterranean. And we are right here, and we are doing evangelism, furnishing the people with the word of life. This is Sunday, August 16th, 2026, Ayia Napa, Cyprus, at the bank of the Mediterranean. We give God the praise. As ministry continues to these lands, God's name will be praised and highly exalted. Amen.



PLATE 11

Driving into Ayia Napa, Sunday 16 August.



PLATE 12

On the rocks above the sea at Ayia Napa.



PLATE 13

Chidera on the shore of the Mediterranean.



Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and all its fullness; ... for He is coming to judge the earth.

PSALM 96:11–13



PLATE 14

The Great Sea, from the rocks at Ayia Napa.



PLATE 15

Chidera on the shore.

FROM TOWN TO TOWN



Over our days in Cyprus we went out on the streets of the towns where we stayed and through which we passed, Limassol and Larnaca as well as Nicosia, Ayia Napa and Paphos, giving out the word and speaking to those who would listen; and in every place we prayed over the land.



PLATE 16
Speaking with passers-by on a
seafront promenade.

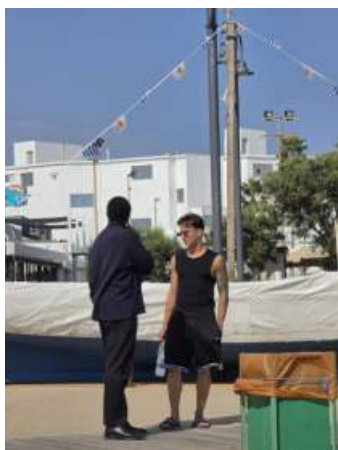
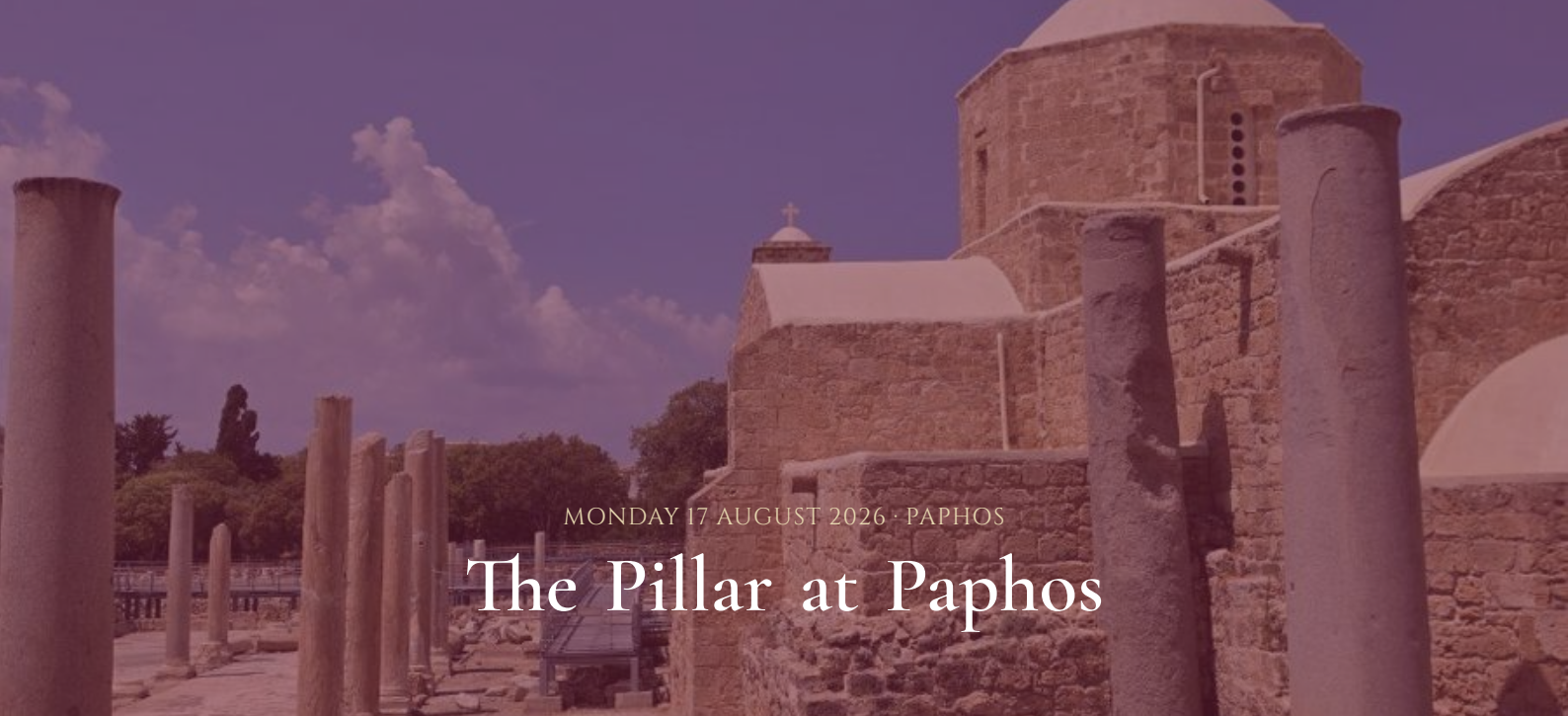


PLATE 17
Ministering on the street.



PLATE 18
On the streets of a Cypriot town.



MONDAY 17 AUGUST 2026 · PAPHOS

The Pillar at Paphos

ON MONDAY we drove west from Limassol along the motorway that climbs over the dry southern hills to Paphos, the city of Sergius Paulus and of Elymas the sorcerer, the city where Saul first became Paul.



PLATE 19

A church above the road, Monday morning.



PLATE 20

The road west, over the hills to Paphos.



PLATE 21

The southern hills of Cyprus.

CHRYSOPLITISSA



In the lower town, below the modern streets, lies a field of ruins: the remains of one of the largest early Christian basilicas on the island, built in the fourth century, with its broken columns and fragments of mosaic floor, and standing within it the small stone church of Agia Kyriaki Chrysopolitissa, built in the thirteenth century and still in use. Walkways carry the visitor over the stones.



PLATE 22
The church of Agia Kyriaki Chrysopolitissa, Paphos.



PLATE 23
The church among the columns of the early basilica.

THE PILLAR OF ST PAUL



In the atrium of the basilica stands a single short column of white marble, fenced and marked. The board beside it gives the tradition of the place:

To the north of the atrium there is a pillar where, according to local tradition, the people from Paphos tied St Paul and whipped him thirty-nine times. According to the Acts of the Apostles, Barnabas, Paul and Mark visited Paphos in AD 45 during their first missionary journey to Cyprus. In Paphos, then the capital of the island and the seat of the Roman governor, St Paul preached Christianity. The Roman governor Sergius Paulus converted to this new religion, triggering the Christianisation of Cyprus.

The scourging at Paphos is a tradition, not a record of Scripture, though Paul did write that five times he received from the Jews forty stripes minus one. We stood at the pillar and prayed, for the island that first received the gospel from his mouth, and for its people, that the God who opened the eyes of the proconsul would open theirs.



PLATE 24
The Pillar of St Paul, Paphos,
Monday 17 August.



PLATE 25
The board beside the pillar.



PLATE 26
The basilica field, Paphos.



From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked.

2 CORINTHIANS 11:24–25



PLATE 27
The columns of the basilica of Chrysopolitissa.



PLATE 28
The ruins of the early basilica.



PLATE 29
Agia Kyriaki among the
ruins.

TUESDAY 18 AUGUST 2026 · PAPHOS

An Altar in the Catacombs

ON TUESDAY we went to the rock-cut tombs on the edge of Paphos by the sea, the great necropolis called the Tombs of the Kings: chambers and courts carved deep into the rock for the leading families of Hellenistic and Roman Paphos, some of them with stairs leading down into the dark and colonnades cut from the living stone. Christians of the early centuries are said to have hidden and worshipped in places like these.



PLATE 30

The rock-cut tombs of Paphos,
Tuesday 18 August.



PLATE 31

The entrance to a tomb.



PLATE 32

Within a tomb court.

THE LAND BELONGS TO JESUS CHRIST



Down in the rock, in the cool of the catacombs, we prayed, and Chidera recorded it.

The land belongs to Jesus Christ. The land belongs to Jesus Christ. Wherever the soles of our feet step on, it is Yours. You brought Your servant Paul, and Barnabas, Joseph of Cyprus, and John Mark, and the other brothers known and unknown to us, on this land; so there is an intention: it belongs to You, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

But in the mighty name of Jesus, the kingdom of this world belongs to our God, in the name of Jesus, and the land, forever and ever. Amen. And He must reign. He must reign. Yes, Lord. He must reign in the lives of men and women. He must reign in the land, forever and ever, in the name of Jesus. Amen.

So we raise an altar in the catacombs, in the name of Jesus, for the glory of our God and of our King. Amen.



PLATE 33

Steps cut down into the rock.



PLATE 34

Chidera and Ekaba in the catacombs.



PLATE 35

Light from above, in a tomb chamber.



Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.

JOSHUA 1:3



PLATE 36
Praying in the rock.



PLATE 37
A passage into the tombs.

LEAVING THE ISLAND



On Wednesday 19 August we left Cyprus. We had walked where Barnabas and Paul walked, from the eastern shore to Paphos in the west, and had not reached Salamis. We had preached on the streets, prayed in every place, and seen the two altars of the island: the altar of Aphrodite, older than the gospel and still honoured on its shelves, and the altar raised by the apostles, which no one has been able to pull down.



PLATES

Cyprus



PLATE 38
The volcanic rock of the shore at Ayia Napa.



PLATE 39
A parasail over the bay, Ayia Napa.



PLATE 40
The Mediterranean from Ayia Napa.



PLATE 41
A street in Nicosia.



PLATE 42
By the boats on a Cypriot seafront.



PLATE 43
Handing out the word on a pavement.



PLATE 44
The basilica field and the church of Chrysopolitissa.



PLATE 45
The information board at the Pillar of St Paul, in Greek and English.



PLATE 46
The sign to Chrysopolitissa and St Paul's Pillar.



PLATE 47
Chidera among the columns at Paphos.



PLATE 48
The church of Agia Kyriaki from the walkway.



PLATE 49
A street in Limassol.

PART III

Constantinople





ISTANBUL · CONSTANTINOPLE

The City of Constantine

ISTANBUL STANDS on both sides of the Bosphorus, the narrow strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, with one foot in Europe and one in Asia. It was a Greek town called Byzantium for a thousand years before the emperor Constantine chose it for his new capital and dedicated it in AD 330 as Constantinople. For more than eleven centuries it was the capital of the Christian Roman Empire, the greatest city of Christendom, until the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II took it on 29 May 1453. It was renamed Istanbul, and it is today the largest city of a nation that is almost wholly Muslim.



Old Istanbul: Hagia Sophia, Hagia Irene and the Sultan Ahmed Mosque on the first hill of the city, and Galata across the Golden Horn.

THE COUNCILS



Some of the great councils of the early church met in this city. In AD 381 the emperor Theodosius I summoned the bishops to Constantinople, and the council that met there, the second of the ecumenical councils, confirmed the faith of Nicaea and completed the creed that most of Christendom still confesses, declaring the Holy Spirit to be “the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified”. By tradition it met in the church of Hagia Irene, Holy Peace. A later council, the second of Constantinople, met at Hagia Sophia in 553.

HAGIA SOPHIA



THE CHURCH OF HOLY WISDOM

The first great church on this site was dedicated in 360 and burned in 404; the second, built by Theodosius II, was dedicated in 415 and burned in the Nika riots of 532. The emperor Justinian then raised the building that stands today. His architects, Anthemius of Tralles and Isidore of Miletus, built it in under six years, and it was dedicated on 27 December 537: a dome some thirty-one metres across, floating on a ring of forty windows above the nave, the largest church in the world for nearly a thousand years. A later Byzantine story tells that when Justinian entered it for the first time, he cried out, “Solomon, I have surpassed you.” For more than nine hundred years it was the cathedral of Constantinople. It was sacked by the crusaders in 1204. When the city fell in 1453, Mehmed II turned it into a mosque, and minarets rose around it; its mosaics were plastered over. In 1934 the Turkish republic made it a museum, and the mosaics were uncovered. In July 2020 a Turkish court annulled that decision, and Hagia Sophia became a mosque once more.

The guide who took us through the building told us that some fifty thousand pounds of gold had gone into its making, worth about ten billion US dollars today. We cannot confirm that figure. Accounts of the cost differ widely, and the legends of the building are many. But no one who stands under that dome, and sees the gold of its mosaics still catching the light, doubts that it was built to be the most glorious house of God on earth.

A NATION WITHOUT A WITNESS



Türkiye is a nation of some eighty-five million people. Official figures put Muslims at about ninety-nine percent of the population, almost all of them Sunni. The Christians who remain, Armenian, Greek and Syriac Orthodox, Catholic and a small number of Protestants, are a fraction of one percent, perhaps a few hundred thousand people in all. In the lands where the apostles planted the first churches of the Gentile world, the name of Christ is all but unknown.

We could not preach on the streets of Istanbul as we had on the streets of Cyprus. We were told, and everything we saw confirmed it, that to try to win a Turk away from Islam is treated as a crime. Strictly, the Turkish constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and changing one's religion is not itself against the law. But in practice open evangelism is treated as a threat to public order and to the nation, and speaking against Islam can be prosecuted as insulting religious values. In recent years many foreign Christian workers have been expelled from the country or refused re-entry as security risks, and in 2007 three Christians were murdered at a Bible publishing house in Malatya. Many Turks have never once heard the gospel. The place is locked down.



Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

REVELATION 2:5

This is the tragedy of a people who forget God. When a church steps out of the Spirit and begins to walk in the flesh, when it becomes carnal and proud, declension sets in, and in the end the lampstand is removed. Constantinople was once the light of the Christian world. Its greatest church is a mosque. Yet the God who removed the lampstand can set it in its place again.

WEDNESDAY 19 – THURSDAY 20 AUGUST 2026 · ISTANBUL

Under the Dome of Holy Wisdom

EARLY ON WEDNESDAY 19 August we flew out of Larnaca. We crossed Cyprus at dawn, changed planes at Athens, and in the afternoon came down over the Sea of Marmara into Istanbul, the city spread for miles along the water below us.

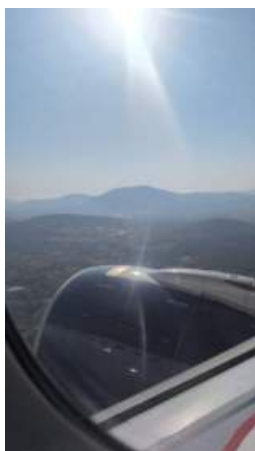


PLATE 50

Leaving Cyprus,
Wednesday 19 August.



PLATE 51

Over Greece, on the way to Athens.

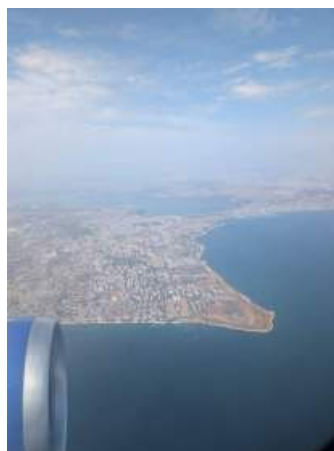


PLATE 52

Coming in over the Sea of Marmara
to Istanbul.

A SONG IN THE NIGHT



That first night in Istanbul, in the land of Constantinople, Ekaba was given a dream. In the dream he was among a company of people whom he came to understand were saints, and they were singing, over and over, one song:

Jesus, all I want, Jesus, all I want, is to suffer for You,
and I lay down my life at the altar for You.
Jesus, all I need is to suffer for You,
and I lay down my life at the altar for You.

He woke with the song still on him, and sang it as soon as he was awake. The understanding he received on waking was this: *this is the cry of the saints in this land*. It was this cry that led the brothers and sisters of these lands, in Asia Minor and in Constantinople, to bear persecution and to lay down their lives for the gospel. We record it as a ministration received from the Holy Spirit: a song given in a dream, in Istanbul, in the land of Asia Minor, on the night of 19 to 20 August 2026.



I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

REVELATION 6:9

HAGIA SOPHIA



On Thursday 20 August we went to Sultanahmet, the old heart of the city on its first hill, and joined the crowds going into Hagia Sophia. Inside, the building is overwhelming even now, half in shadow and half in gold, its great piers and galleries wrapped in scaffolding where restorers are at work, its floor covered with the carpets of a mosque.



PLATE 53

Hagia Sophia, Thursday 20 August.



PLATE 54

Inside: the gallery arches and their mosaics.

But Christianity has not been scrubbed from its walls. High in the upper galleries the mosaics have been uncovered, and Christ still looks out from them. In the Deesis panel He stands between His mother and John the Baptist, His hand raised in blessing. In another, the Virgin holds the child Christ between the emperor John II Komnenos and the empress Irene; in another, Christ is enthroned between the emperor Constantine IX and the empress Zoe. Over the doors, the Virgin and child receive the city from Constantine and the church from Justinian. And in the dome and on the piers hang the great roundels of Arabic calligraphy bearing the names of God, the Prophet and his companions.



PLATE 55

The Virgin and child between John II Komnenos and the empress Irene, twelfth century.



PLATE 56

Christ enthroned between Constantine IX and the empress Zoe, eleventh century.



PLATE 57

Before the Deesis mosaic in the upper gallery.



PLATE 58

The Virgin and child, with Constantine offering the city and Justinian offering the church.



PLATE 59

A calligraphic roundel among the restorers' scaffolding.

We walked through it slowly, and grieved. Here the creed was confessed and the emperors were crowned; here the light of the gospel shone over the whole east; and here, now, the name of Christ may not be preached. We prayed there, quietly, for the land and for its people.



PLATE 60

The great piers and galleries.



PLATE 61

Light from the windows of the upper gallery.



PLATE 62

Ekaba in the nave.

HAGIA IRENE AND SULTANAHMET



From Hagia Sophia we passed the Fountain of Sultan Ahmed III to the Imperial Gate of the Topkapı Palace, within whose first court stands Hagia Irene, the church of Holy Peace, where the council of 381 met. It was never made into a mosque. We prayed over these places too, and over Sultanahmet, where the blue domes and six minarets of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque face Hagia Sophia across the old Hippodrome.



PLATE 63

The Imperial Gate of the Topkapı Palace, within which stands Hagia Irene.



PLATE 64

The Fountain of Sultan Ahmed III.



PLATE 65

The Sultan Ahmed Mosque, Sultanahmet.



PLATE 66
Old walls in Sultanahmet.



PLATE 67
The waterfront, Istanbul.

In the evening we crossed the Golden Horn to the Galata Tower, built by the Genoese in the fourteenth century, and walked among the crowds.



PLATE 68
The Galata Tower, Thursday evening.



PLATE 69
Galata by night.

CONNECTIONS



Because the streets were closed to us, we gave ourselves to people. Over our days in Istanbul we sat with two individuals at coffee shops and spoke with them of Christ, and of the burden of the Lord for Türkiye: for the ancient Byzantine land, and for Constantinople. We parted with the hope of returning, by the grace of God, for quieter work, and of seeing an underground church raised in Türkiye.



PLATE 70
Over coffee with one of our contacts in Istanbul.



PLATE 71
Talking of the burden of the Lord for Türkiye.



PLATE 72
An evening meeting with our second contact.



Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

MATTHEW 10:16



PLATES

Hagia Sophia and Old Istanbul



PLATE 73
The gallery vaults.



PLATE 74
Scaffolding under the dome.

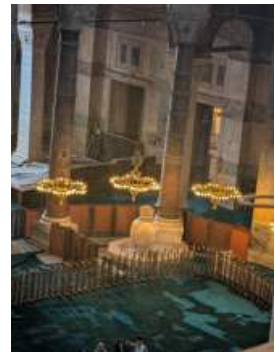


PLATE 75
The nave, with the lamps and carpets of the mosque.



PLATE 76
A marble slab in the floor of the upper gallery.



PLATE 77
A painted icon in the upper gallery.

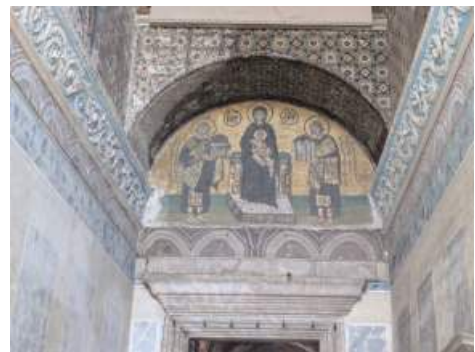


PLATE 78
Mosaic over a doorway.



PLATE 79
The Virgin and child over the south-west vestibule.

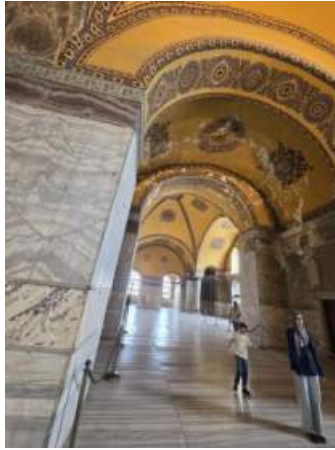


PLATE 80
The narthex of Hagia Sophia.



PLATE 81
The prayer hall of the Sultan Ahmed Mosque.



PLATE 82
Hagia Sophia from the square.



PLATE 83
The Sultan Ahmed Mosque.

PART IV

The Seven Lampstands





REVELATION 1-3

Seven Golden Lampstands

WHEN JOHN was on the island of Patmos, “for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ”, he turned to see the voice that spoke with him, and saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of them One like the Son of Man. The seven lampstands, he was told, are the seven churches of Asia, the Roman province on the west coast of what is now Türkiye; and to each of them the risen Christ sent a letter.



I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and, What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

REVELATION 1:11

The seven cities lie on a great loop of roads, each about a day’s walk or more from the next, in the order in which a messenger from Patmos would have carried the letters: north from Ephesus to Smyrna and Pergamum, then south-east through Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia to Laodicea. All seven were great cities of the Roman world. Today the churches to which the letters were written are long gone, and in all seven places the followers of Christ are at most a small remnant. Ephesus, Pergamum, Sardis and Laodicea are fields of ruins; Smyrna lies beneath the modern city of İzmir; Thyatira beneath Akhisar, and Philadelphia beneath Alaşehir. The lampstands have been removed from their place.



Our road to the seven churches of Asia and back to Istanbul, 22–23 August 2026, about 1 590 kilometres. The churches are numbered in the order in which we visited them.

We went to pray over them all, for their restoration. On Saturday 22 August, on the road south from Istanbul, Ekaba recorded a few words:

I'm on my way to Pergamon, where we will be surveying and going through the seven churches. I'm praying over them for the restoration, because the God who came and took their candlesticks can build it, plant it back again.

SATURDAY 22 AUGUST 2026

Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia

WE LEFT ISTANBUL early on Saturday and drove south, across the Gulf of İzmit on the long suspension bridge and down through the farmland of ancient Mysia, some four hundred kilometres, to Bergama. Below the acropolis of Pergamum the Kestel reservoir lay blue among the hills.



PLATE 84

The Osmangazi Bridge over the Gulf of İzmit, Saturday morning.



PLATE 85

The Kestel reservoir below Pergamum.

PERGAMUM: WHERE SATAN'S THRONE IS



PERGAMUM

Pergamum was the capital of the Attalid kings and then of the Roman province of Asia, a city of temples on a steep acropolis three hundred metres above the plain. Its library was second only to Alexandria's, and parchment, *pergamene*, takes its name from the city. On the acropolis stood the great Altar of Zeus, now in Berlin, and the temple to the emperor Trajan; below it was the Asclepion, the healing shrine of the god whose emblem was a serpent; and its theatre, cut into the hillside for some ten thousand people, is among the steepest in the ancient world. Pergamum was the first city in Asia to build a temple to a living emperor.



I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

REVELATION 2:13

We climbed to the temple of Trajan, its white columns standing against the sky, and looked down the face of the theatre to the plain and the town. We prayed there over the city where Satan's throne was, that the name which Antipas would not deny would be confessed there again.



PLATE 86

The Trajaneum on the acropolis of Pergamum, Saturday 22 August.



PLATE 87

The columns of the temple of Trajan.



PLATE 88

A corner of the Trajaneum.



PLATE 89

The theatre of Pergamum, cut into the hillside.



PLATE 90

Ekaba on the acropolis.

Below, in the modern town, stands the Red Basilica, a vast temple of red brick built in the second century for the gods of Egypt, which the Christians of Pergamum later turned into a church.



PLATE 91

The Red Basilica, Bergama.

THYATIRA: THE WOMAN JEZEBEL



From Bergama we drove east to Akhisar, the ancient Thyatira, a city of trade guilds, of wool-dyers and bronze-workers. Lydia, “a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira”, was the first convert in Europe. The Lord commended the church there for its love, service, faith and patience, and rebuked it for tolerating “that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess”. What remains of the city lies in a small excavated park in the middle of the modern town, around a stretch of colonnaded road.



PLATE 92

Ekaba at the site of Thyatira, Akhisar, Saturday evening.



PLATE 93

The colonnaded road of Thyatira.



PLATE 94

“Thyateira antik sütunlu yolu”: the ancient colonnaded road.



But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations.

REVELATION 2:25–26

SARDIS: A NAME THAT YOU ARE ALIVE



At Sardis, near the modern Salihli, the capital of Croesus and the Lydian kings, where the first coins were struck, the great court of the Roman bath and gymnasium has been raised again, its two storeys of columns standing against the hills. Beside it was one of the largest synagogues of the ancient world. To the church here the Lord wrote the hardest of the seven letters.



I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.

REVELATION 3:1–2



PLATE 95

The Marble Court of the bath-gymnasium of Sardis.



PLATE 96

The restored façade of the Marble Court.



PLATE 97

The great walls of the gymnasium.

PHILADELPHIA: AN OPEN DOOR



We came to Alaşehir, ancient Philadelphia, in the last light of Saturday. Philadelphia was the one church of the seven of which the Lord said nothing against; and it held out longer than any other Christian city of Asia, until 1390, a century after the rest of the region had fallen to the Turks. In the town stand the massive brick piers of the Byzantine church of St John, and stretches of its old walls.



See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ... He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God.

REVELATION 3:8, 12



PLATE 98

Philadelphia (Alaşehir) in the evening light, Saturday 22 August.



PLATE 99

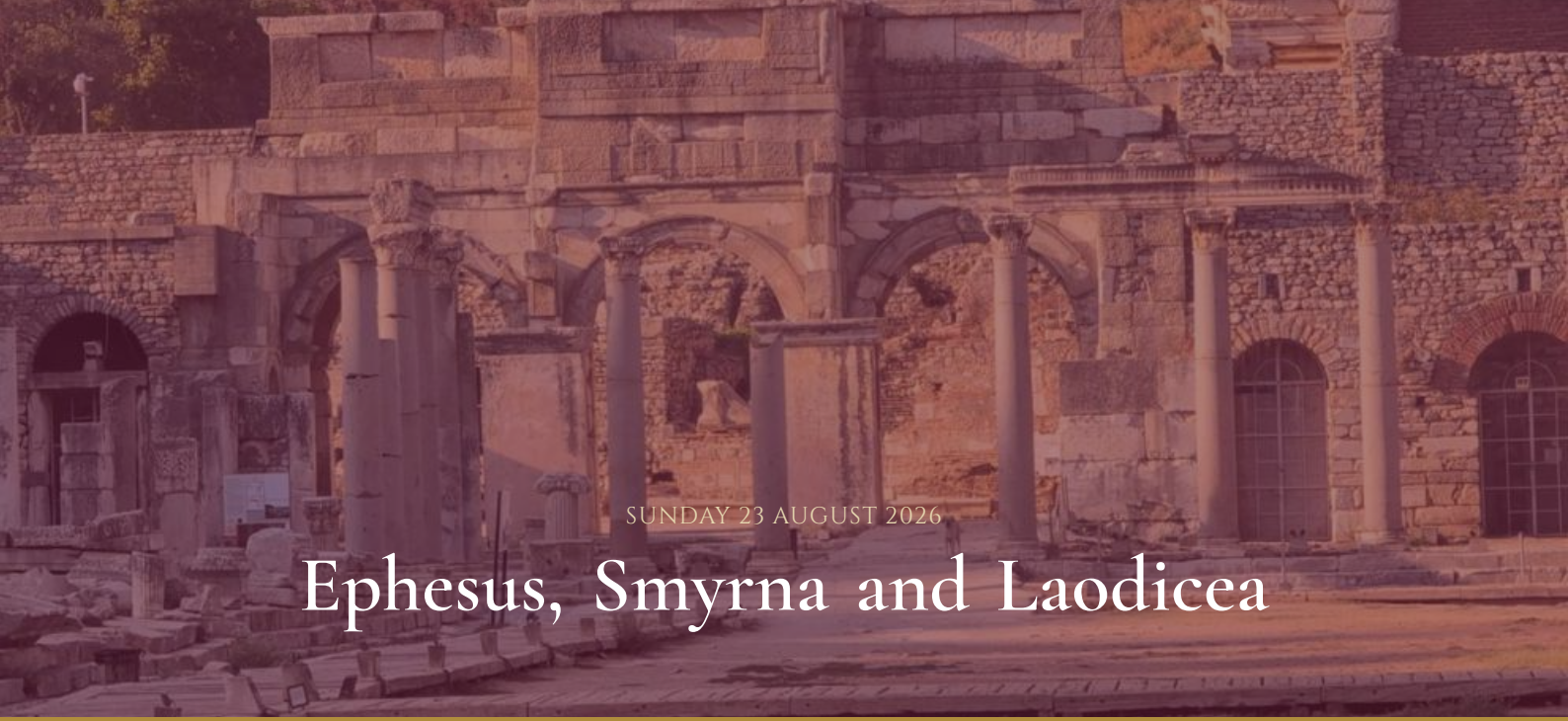
Ekaba at Philadelphia.



PLATE 100

A brick pier of the church of St John, Philadelphia.

We prayed at Philadelphia for an open door into Türkiye that no one can shut.



SUNDAY 23 AUGUST 2026

Ephesus, Smyrna and Laodicea

ON THE LORD'S DAY we were at Ephesus early, soon after eight in the morning, before the heat and the crowds, walking down the marble street between the ruins in the low sun.

EPHESUS: YOUR FIRST LOVE



EPHESUS

Ephesus was the greatest city of Roman Asia and one of the largest in the empire, a port on the Aegean with a quarter of a million people. Its temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Paul lived and taught here for more than two years, “so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus”; the books of magic were burned in the street; and in the great theatre, which held some twenty-five thousand, the silversmiths of Artemis raised the riot of Acts 19. Timothy led the church here, and by tradition the apostle John lived and died here. Its harbour has long since silted up, and the city stands empty several kilometres from the sea.



Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

REVELATION 2:4–5

We walked down Curetes Street, past the gate of Mazaeus and Mithridates, to the façade of the Library of Celsus, raised in the second century in honour of a governor of Asia, and on to the great theatre where the city once shouted for two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” Here, of all the seven, the warning of the removed lampstand was first spoken; and here it has been most completely fulfilled.



PLATE 101

The marble street at Ephesus, Sunday 23 August, early morning.



PLATE 102

Ekaba before the Library of Celsus.



PLATE 103

The great theatre of Ephesus, where the riot of Acts 19 took place.



PLATE 104

The Library of Celsus.



PLATE 105

The gate of Mazaeus and Mithridates.

SMYRNA: FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH



Smyrna, the second of the seven, lies beneath İzmir, today the third city of Türkiye, on the gulf north of Ephesus. To Smyrna, as to Philadelphia, the Lord had no word of rebuke. Its bishop Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John, was burned there about AD 155 at the age of eighty-six, saying, “Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong. How then can I blaspheme my King who saved me?” We went to Smyrna too, and prayed over the city where Polycarp stood faithful unto death.



Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. ... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

REVELATION 2:10

LAODICEA: NEITHER COLD NOR HOT



In the afternoon we drove east, up the valley of the Meander to Denizli, and came to Laodicea in the heat of the day.

LAODICEA

Laodicea was a rich city of bankers, of black wool and of a famous eye-salve, so wealthy that when an earthquake destroyed it in AD 60 it refused help from Rome and rebuilt itself. It had no water of its own: hot springs at Hierapolis to the north and cold springs at Colossae to the east, while its own supply came by aqueduct and arrived tepid. Paul's fellow-worker Epaphras laboured here, and Paul wrote of a letter to the Laodiceans (Colossians 4:13–16). In 2010 archaeologists began to uncover a large church of the early fourth century in the middle of the city, with its baptistery and its mosaic and marble floors, one of the oldest church buildings in the world. It is now protected under a modern roof, with glass walkways laid over the floor.



I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

REVELATION 3:15–16

We walked through the theatre and along the colonnaded street, and came to the church. It still stands: not a ruin scattered in a field, but the walls and floor of a church of Laodicea, a relic of the very church to which the risen Christ wrote. Beside it stands a board with the letter to the church of Laodicea. And there, in the church, Ekaba had the opportunity to pray at the altar.



PLATE 106

The church of Laodicea under its protective roof, Sunday 23 August.



PLATE 107

Ekaba in the church of Laodicea.



PLATE 108

The nave of the church from the glass walkway.



PLATE 109
The plan of the church of Laodicea.



PLATE 110
The board bearing the letter to the church of Laodicea.



Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

REVELATION 3:20

At the altar of Laodicea we prayed for Türkiye, and for the seven lampstands and the land to which they once gave their light.



PLATE 111
The theatre of Laodicea.



PLATE 112
The colonnaded street of Laodicea.



PLATE 113
Columns of Laodicea against the hills.



PLATES

The Seven Churches

Pergamum



PLATE 114

The theatre and the plain of Bergama.



PLATE 115

The view south from the acropolis.



PLATE 116

The reservoir from the acropolis.



PLATE 117

The columns of the Trajaneum.



PLATE 118

On the acropolis.



PLATE 119

Chidera's view of the colonnade.



PLATE 120

The hills of Mysia from Pergamum.

Thyatira and Philadelphia



PLATE 121

The ruins of Thyatira.



PLATE 122

The excavated park, Akhisar.



PLATE 123

Stones of Thyatira.



PLATE 124

Old walls of Philadelphia.



PLATE 125

The church of St John, Philadelphia.



PLATE 126

Carved stones beside the pier of St John.

Ephesus



PLATE 127

On the marble street.



PLATE 128

The theatre and the harbour road.



PLATE 129

The ruins of Ephesus.



PLATE 130

A small chapel among the ruins.



PLATE 131

Before the Library of Celsus.



PLATE 132

The gate and the library from above.



PLATE 133

The Library of Celsus from the hillside.



PLATE 134

The public latrines of Ephesus.

Laodicea



PLATE 135
A doorway at Laodicea.



PLATE 136
Ekaba above the theatre.



PLATE 137
The walls of the church.



PLATE 138
A board on the church of Laodicea.



PLATE 139
The baptism board.



PLATE 140
The theatre seats.



PLATE 141
Chidera at Laodicea.



PLATE 142
A gateway of Laodicea.



PLATE 143
The colonnaded street.



WEDNESDAY 26 AUGUST 2026

The Kingdoms of This World

THEN THE JOURNEY was over. We made our way back to Istanbul, and on Wednesday 26 August we flew home, Ekaba to Calgary and Chidera to Winnipeg, each to his family.



PLATE 144

On the road, Sunday 23 August.



PLATE 145

The airport, Wednesday 26 August.



PLATE 146

Homeward.

We had walked where Barnabas and Paul walked, and where the risen Christ walked among the lampstands. We had seen an island that honours its old goddess on its shelves, and is divided in two; a city whose greatest church is a mosque; and a nation in which the name of Christ is almost unknown and may not be preached. We had seen seven fields where the light once burned. And we came home, not discouraged, but with a burden and a certainty.



Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”

REVELATION 11:15

PART V

The Fruit and the Call





WHAT THE LORD DID

The Fruit

THIS WAS a journey of survey, of witness and of prayer, more than of gathering. We record here what we believe the Lord did.

THE WORD ON THE STREETS OF CYPRUS



In Nicosia, Ayia Napa, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos the word of the gospel was given out on the streets and spoken to those who would hear. Seed was sown in the land where Barnabas and Paul first sowed it.

ALTARS RAISED



In every place we prayed: in the rock-cut tombs of Paphos, where we raised an altar and declared that the land belongs to Jesus Christ; at the pillar of St Paul; under the dome of Hagia Sophia; over Sultanahmet; and in each of the seven cities, ending at the altar of the church of Laodicea. We believe that prayer offered in these places, in the name of Jesus, is not lost.

DOORS IN TÜRKIYE



Where we could not preach, God gave us people. We made connections with two individuals in Istanbul and shared with them the burden of the Lord for Türkiye. These are the first threads of what we pray will become quiet, lasting work, and, in God's time, an underground church in the land of the seven churches.

A BURDEN RECEIVED



Above all we came home carrying a burden: for Cyprus, divided and given over to its goddess; for Constantinople, whose light was put out; and for the seven lampstands of Asia, which the Lord who removed can restore.



He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

REVELATION 2:7



A FAITHFUL ACCOUNT

Challenges and Resistance



WE RECORD the obstacles as plainly as the fruit, because this is a faithful report.

THE COST



Every one of our missions is paid for out of our own wages. This one took us across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean, with hired cars and some two thousand kilometres of road, in the same year as missions to Britain in February and July, to Halifax in May, and to Spain still to come in November. Ekaba left home with a child not yet two months old.

PAGANISM AND SENSUALITY



Cyprus is a land given over to Aphrodite. Its tourism trades on her name, and its shops openly sell obscene souvenirs of a kind we have seen nowhere else in the world. Its resorts are known for their nights. The spiritual state of the island is grave.

A DIVIDED ISLAND



The division of Cyprus since 1974, and the presence of the Turkish army in the north, kept us from Salamis and Famagusta, where the apostles first landed, and from the north of the island altogether.

A CLOSED LAND



In Türkiye we could not preach in the open at all. Public evangelism is treated as a threat, speaking against Islam may be prosecuted, foreign Christian workers have been expelled, and Christians have been killed for their faith within living memory. Our witness there had to be personal and discreet, and we have withheld the names and faces of those we met.

CHRISTIAN MONUMENTS, ISLAMIC HOUSES



We walked through Hagia Sophia among crowds of visitors and worshippers in a building that is now a mosque, where the mosaics of Christ look down on prayers offered to another. We could pray there only quietly. The seven churches are ruins and museums, visited by tourists, with no living congregation in most of them.

A SHORT TIME



Fourteen days, many of them spent in the air and on the road, are not enough for lands of this size. Much that could have been done was left undone.



We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.

ACTS 14:22



FOR THOSE WHO PRAY

Prayer Points

WE ASK all who read this account to labour with us in prayer.

1. **For Cyprus**, the land of Barnabas: that the gospel preached by the apostles would be heard again in its towns; that the people would turn from Aphrodite to the living God; and that the seed sown on the streets of Nicosia, Ayia Napa, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos would bear fruit.
2. **For the healing of the division of Cyprus**, for peace and justice between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, and for the Muslims of the north to hear of Christ.
3. **For Türkiye**, a nation of some eighty-five million people in which the name of Christ is almost unknown: for open doors that no one can shut.
4. **For the two people we met in Istanbul**, for their protection, and that the word they heard would take root.
5. **For the small and pressed churches of Türkiye**, and for all who serve Christ there at cost.
6. **For the seven lampstands of Asia**, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea: that the God who removed them would set them in their place again.
7. **For our return**, by the grace of God, for underground work and the raising of a church in Türkiye.
8. **For the brethren at Baza and Caniles in Spain**, whom we go to strengthen in November.
9. **For our households**, who bear the cost of our going.



THE CALL

He Shall Reign

THE ISLAND where the gospel first went out to the nations is given over to its goddess. The city that gave the church its creed has turned its greatest church into a mosque. The seven lampstands are fields of ruins. Here is the tragedy of a people who forget God: when the church steps out of the Spirit and begins to walk in the flesh, declension takes over, and the lampstand is removed.

But this account does not end in ruins. The Lord who walks among the lampstands is alive forevermore, and has the keys. What He removed He can restore. What He planted in Cyprus by Barnabas and Paul He can plant again. And the land of the seven churches is His, as every land is His.

We went to pray it back, and we will go again. Will you pray with us, and will you go?



The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!

REVELATION 11:15

He must reign.

Ekaba Bisong & Chidera Bisong

Calgary and Winnipeg, October 2026