

**Report from Ethiopia**  
**ABC 4/7/19**

**(S)** It's been said that a picture is worth a 1,000 words. Most of my sermons are between 5 & 6 thousand words. Therefore, let me show you 6 pictures & we'll close in prayer.

Let me begin by saying, *Thank You!* Your prayers, support, & allowing & enabling me to do this are appreciated more than I can express. As you know, I wasn't planning on going to Ethiopia this year. But when Joel called & said he was having trouble filling the teams to teach this year, our board of elders graciously allowed me to go. Also, thank you to Kent & Karen for being my personal secretaries & forwarding my updates to you. I got over there & Outlook wanted my passwords for my accounts that had my lists in them. Not wanting to hassle with it, Kent & Karen graciously forwarded things for me. This morning we're not going to be looking at James, we'll come back to that next week, but at Ethiopia & why I was there. Again, your prayers on our behalf were vital to our ministry there. The students were thrilled when I let them know you were praying for them & for me. They even prayed for you while I was there. It shouldn't amaze us, but around the world, we have Christians brothers & sisters who we immediately relate to because we are all in Christ. As promised **(S)**, the long beard is gone. But it didn't help my looks at all. **(S)** I still look like a grumpy terrorist. & leaving Addis I was chosen randomly to have everything taken out of my bag & searched & swabbed.

Ethiopia was never on my radar until 2016 when Joel first asked me to go with him to teach there. All I knew about Ethiopia were it's droughts, orphans, & long-distance runners. Like most other places in the world, I had no knowledge of Ethiopia. But God promised Abraham that he would be a blessing to all the nations. We know this is true through his descendant Jesus. God has drawn people to Himself in Ethiopia through His Son & His life, death, & resurrection to the praise of His glory forever. The Bible closes with people from all the nations praising God together. The Great Commission given to each of us is to go to all the nations. Along with the States, Ethiopia is one of the nations that God desires to come to Him to give Him praise. I'm thankful to have a very small part in that.

**1. History** If you're anything like me, your knowledge of history of Ethiopia is severely lacking. (S)

**A. Biblical** What about your biblical knowledge of Ethiopia? Where is Ethiopia first mentioned in Scripture? Gen 2:13 -- **And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia** (KJV) or as the NASB has it, **it flows around the whole land of Cush**, the upper Nile region, south of Egypt, the area of the horn of Africa. While the Bible doesn't state it, where is the Queen of Sheba from? **1 Kgs 10:1-10**

**1**Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with difficult questions. **2**So she came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart. **3**Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her. **4**When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, **5**the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her. **6**Then she said to the king, "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. **7**"Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard. **8**"How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom. **9**"Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness." **10**She gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a very great amount of spices and precious stones. Never again did such abundance of spices come in as that which the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon.

According to Ethiopian tradition, Queen Sheba came back pregnant with Solomon's baby & that line of descendants were the rulers of the country for hundreds of years. From Acts 8 we know that the gospel came to Ethiopia very early. The disciples had taken Jesus' words to heart (Acts 1:8) and had been His witnesses in **Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria**, & it appears that Ethiopia was the first of the **even to the remotest part of the earth** as Philip explained Jesus & the gospel from Isaiah to the **court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of her treasure** (Acts 8:27). He put his faith in Jesus, was baptized, & returned to Ethiopia rejoicing & I'm sure, sharing the gospel with others. Needless to say, the Ethiopians are very proud of their biblical history.

**B. Secular** Most of the world knew Ethiopia as Abyssinia until relatively recently. The Greek name *Ethiopia* is from 2 Greek words meaning *I burn* and *face*. Biblically, it refers to places south of Egypt.

Ethiopia has a population of over 110 million & is the most populous landlocked country in the world & has the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest population in Africa. 40% of its population is under 15 years old. Within Ethiopia is a large highland area of mountains & plateaus divided by the Great Rift Valley. Because of the great diversity of terrain, there is also a wide range of climate & animals, including 856 different types of birds. It has deserts along the eastern border & tropical forests in the south as well as mountain ranges in the northern & southwestern parts. Most of its cities are at elevations of over 6,500 feet. Ethiopia also has the town with the highest average annual temperature in the world, 93.2 degrees (Dallol) which lies 410 feet below sea level. It's the hottest place on Earth in terms of year-round average temperatures. The majority of the water of the Nile river comes from Ethiopia. Ethiopia is less than twice the size of Texas or 4x the size of Oregon & is one of the few nations not to be colonized by a European colonial power, although Italy occupied them from 1936-1941. During this time Emperor Haile Selassie (Ras Tafari) became a world-wide figure after delivering an address to the League of Nations & becoming *Time Magazine's* Man of the Year for 1935. For most of its history Ethiopia was ruled by a monarchy but in 1974 the monarchy was overthrown by a communist military government backed by the Soviet Union. The communists were in power until they were overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front in 1991.

Ethiopia has suffered greatly due to droughts & famines. Although its economy is picking up, it is still one of the poorest countries in the world. A middle class worker makes around 3,000 birr a month, which is roughly \$100 US. Over 15% of the population struggle to survive on less than \$1/day US. A few years ago in Addis, the capital city, more than 50% lived in slums. **(S)** The government has been building huge apartment complexes to help alleviate this problem. Agriculture makes up the vast majority of the labor force (70%) but it's mostly by small-scale

farmers who struggle to make a living. Although once known as the Bread Basket of Africa, its largest export today is coffee. Recently floriculture has taken off with exports of flowers & plants around the world.

Ethiopia has over 80 different ethnic groups & languages. The largest is Oromo with Amhara not far behind. **(S)** Remember the skeleton called Lucy discovered in 1974? It was found in Ethiopia. She's known there, not as Lucy, but as Dinkinesh, meaning *amazing*. She was named Lucy by her discoverers because when they found her they were listening to the song, *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds*.

**C. Political** Last year Ethiopia's prime minister resigned midway through his term. After a heated election, **(S)** Ably Ahmed was elected prime minister. He's a Christian man, ordained in the Assembly of God church. He's brought about some much needed changes in the country. He's released thousands of political prisoners & granted everyone freedom of speech. He immediately appointed females as half of his cabinet. He's battling the corruption that's been a way of life in the political climate there for a long time. He's up for re-election again this fall.

There are thousands of refugees from Somalia, Eritrea, & Sudan living in refugee camps in Ethiopia. The evangelical church is striving to find ways to bring the gospel to the nations that God has brought into Ethiopia.

**D. Interesting Facts (S)** They have 13 months in their year, but one of them only has a few days. The rest have 30. It is currently the year 2011. Stories differ why the calendar is different. Some say it's based on Jesus' annunciation (Lk 1:26-38). Others say it's based on when the Ethiopian Eunuch arrived with the gospel. Who knows. I also heard a couple of suggestions where the ark of the covenant is hidden within Ethiopia. I didn't go looking.

Also, their time is based on sunrise & sunset, like in biblical days. The Ethiopian day begins at 6 a.m. as opposed to our midnight. So while my watch may say it was 9 a.m. their clocks would say 3:00.

Traditional Ethiopian food uses no pork or shellfish of any kind as they are forbidden in the Orthodox, Jewish, & Islamic faiths.

Soccer & long distance running are the sports of choice. & while winning many Olympic medals in running, according to the locals, they can never put together a decent national soccer team.

**2. Why Ethiopia** So why did I go to Ethiopia & what did we do there? Out of 7.3 billion people on the planet, 6.3 billion live in Africa, Asia, Latin America, & Oceania. 75% of current Christians are non-western, living in one of these areas. But in these areas 80% of pastors have no formal biblical training. To put that into perspective, in the US there is 1 trained pastor for every 250 people. Around the world there is 1 trained pastor for every 450,000 people. Teaching & training pastors and church leaders is greatly needed. As I mentioned, the gospel came to Ethiopia very early (Acts 8:26-37). & the Christians there are very proud of their Christian heritage. But they are also quick to admit that Ethiopia is full of religion. **(S)** The Ethiopian Orthodox church is everywhere, but, for the most part, is spiritually dead & based on tradition & legalism & not on the Bible. There are signs this may be changing. There are a group of younger believers who want to reform the Orthodox church from the inside. One sign of this is that a GTN staff member has been invited to speak at an Orthodox Seminary in Addis. So pray for these believers & the Orthodox church, that it might come back to the gospel it was founded upon. In the orthodox church today, services are conducted in an ancient language that the vast majority don't speak nor understand. Ethiopia still needs *Philips* to bring them the gospel. Currently about a 3<sup>rd</sup> of the population is Muslim with 40% claiming to be part of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, & about 25% belonging to some protestant denomination. The rest believe in traditional religions, Mormonism, & the like.

A man named Girma **(S)**, who translated for me Monday through Wednesday, had a burden for his people & God has used him to spread the gospel in Ethiopia. Girma was born & raised in Ethiopia & lived under communist rule. He went to college in Russia but eventually found asylum in Germany before moving to the Seattle area (which has a large Ethiopian community). It was

during this time that he heard the gospel & came to know Jesus. He went to seminary & began pastoring an Ethiopian church in the Seattle area but he had a heart for the people of Ethiopia. He began traveling to Ethiopia to train pastors as he could. Eventually, he realized he couldn't do it all on his own. He began to put an organization & plan together to train pastors & church leaders. The organization is *Vision Leadership Institute*. 9 years ago he began working with Global Training Network & Joel to do this. He put together a two-year program where pastors, church leaders, & growing Christians come together for a week of training. That's why I was there. For the next year they meet weekly with a pastor to do further study. GTN teaches 10 courses & these are further divided into 24 modules the students go through with their pastors. After completing the two-year program they graduate & are encouraged to go & teach others as well. During the time they come together they study such things as Hermeneutics, Homiletics, Systematic Theology 1 & 2, Character & Integrity, Leadership Principles, Bible Survey, Missions & Evangelism, Church History, & Biblical Counseling. **(S)** This began in DebreZeit and Nazareth & is currently happening in 7 cities. Sheno, Ziway, Shashamene, Desse, & Kemisse. On my last day, I was at the graduation of students from Debre Zeit & Nazareth with 99 graduating. In 9 years over 1500 students have gone through this training with another 200+ graduating this year. They then return to their home churches & serve & teach others.

### **3. What I Did** What did I do while there?

**A. Thursday -- Saturday (S2x)** I had a 4 hour delay leaving Seattle due to weather in Newark. Got to Newark around 1:30 Friday morning. Didn't sleep well. **(S)** Spent the day relaxing, talking, & left Friday night for a 15+ hour plane ride to Addis. I knew we were stopping to refuel somewhere, but had no idea it would be in Lome, Togo **(S)** where most of the passengers disembarked & even more people got on. **(S)** Got in to Addis late Saturday night, collected our luggage, & drove to our guest house & tried to sleep.

**B. Sunday (S)** At 8 Sunday morning we had breakfast with the team **(S)** (Paul & Lisa Madson, & 2 other team members were already there). After breakfast we left for Debre Zeit & Nazareth & got

settled & ready for Monday. **(S)** All 3 years I've stayed at the Sheba Guest House in Debre Zeit. 3 years ago they were building an **(S)** addition & this year we stayed in it. It was a little nicer than the old building, **(S)** but I still had a room where the toilet leaked & water ran constantly across the bathroom floor.

**D. Monday through Friday** Christopher Schwarzen, Paul & Lisa Madson, & I were in Debre Zeyit/Bishoftu. Most towns have 2 names. Debre Zeit, roughly translated, means Mt of Light, after Jesus' sermon on the mount. The towns were all renamed by a previous ruler who gave them traditional Ethiopian names. Bishoftu is where the airliner went down a few weeks back.

**(S)** Chuck Gerwig, a pastor from Santa Cruz, was supposed to arrive Tuesday night late & teach the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students all day on Wednesday. He missed a connecting flight & spent 24 hours in Istanbul, Turkey. **(S)** Christopher Schwarzen stepped up & taught his classes for him.

**(S)** Monday morning, after breakfast **(S)** we took our local transportation **(S)** to the church where we were to teach. Classes were scheduled for 8:30. **(S)** At 8:30 there were maybe 5 students there **(S)**. African time is a real thing. By the end of the day there were about 40, split half & half between 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year students. **(S)** This is the church classes were held in the past 2 years. **(S)** Christopher **(S)** taught & Yinagu translated for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students, **(S)** students I taught last year. **(S)** Monday was the warmest day & my class met outside under the shade of a tree.

Monday through Thursday I taught twice a day. **(S)** Hermeneutics, how to study Scripture. Monday we talked about observing the text. **(S)** Tuesday it was interpreting the text, & on Wednesday it was on applying the text. **(S)** I had them observe, interpret, & apply James 1:2-4. **(S)** Apparently, this past week, the Hermeneutics teacher had them do the same thing from James. One of the students told about his trials of having his wife & 3 kids die in a fire & how God had used that in his life.

I also taught Homiletics, the art of preaching. Have I said how much this stretched me as I've never had a class in either hermeneutics or homiletics? Needless, to say, I learned far more than

the students I taught! On the final day of homiletics the students were given a passage from James 1 that they had to apply all that they'd learned in hermeneutics & homiletics.

Thursday & Friday I taught Character & Integrity looking at some biblical examples we should follow & some we should avoid. Paul taught leadership principles. **(S)**

Friday, at the close of our teaching time, a young lady rose & spoke for the class thanking us for taking the time to come & to teach them. After which we were each presented with a scarf. I don't know what it is about Ethiopia & scarfs! Although the elevation is high, it never gets cold enough for a scarf!

Interestingly, about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the people speak English to some degree. **(S)** Around  $\frac{1}{2}$  can understand & read some English. It was very clear as we were teaching, who could understand us & who had to wait for the translation. **(S)** While not getting to know the students real well, although some more than others, we spent a lot of time with our translators & some of the local pastors. **(S)** Most, if not all, had cell phones on which they read Scripture.

Every morning, after the 1<sup>st</sup> class, we'd have a break time of coffee, tea, & snacks. **(S)** This was a time to interact with the students & it was **(S)** fun to connect with the students I had last year.

**(S2x)**

After teaching, we'd travel back to our guest house. **(Splay)** No traffic lights but traffic flows with minimal horns or delays.

Every day after teaching we'd have lunch **(S)** around 2 & then I'd study for the following day, taking a break for dinner, until around 10 p.m. **(S)** Three nights for dinner we were able to go to the Pyramid Resort & have dinner overlooking one of the crater lakes that surround Debre Zeit.

**(S)** It was good getting to see some of God's beauty in other places. **(S)** Of course, coffee was always a given!

Electricity & wifi went on & off throughout the week for no apparent reason. Overall, it was better than the last 2 times I've been there. In Nazareth they went 3 days without wifi, so I'm glad I wasn't there!

Here are a few pics **(S)** of every day occurrences during my stay. **(S)** I have no idea how old this guy is. **(S)** He's been there all 3 times I've been there. **(S)** I've been asked in years past how slow they were, so here you go. They actually make better time than I thought they would.

While motorized vehicles are everywhere, it's still common **(S)** to see these & scenes like this. **(S)** The highlight of the trip was for me **(S)** to see the hunger & eagerness to study God's Word. **(S)** Pastor Shattu, where the wedding was last year, although a master teacher who meets with the students throughout the year, attends classes every year & always says he learns something. **(S)**

**Friday** After the teaching was done on Friday & after we exchanged contact information and goodbyes with the students, the group from Nazareth met us in Debre Zeit. **(S)** Most African food is usually very basic & bland in flavor. That's not true of Ethiopian food. Though it is often basic (rice, bread, cabbage, other veggies, & occasionally chicken, lamb, or beef) it was all very flavorful & very spicy at times. **(S)** Most Ethiopians add large amounts of sugar to their coffee, but I declined & enjoyed the pure essence of it. It's much like an espresso, thick & dark & delicious. **(S)** These are the students from Debre Zeit who we were privileged to spend time with.

**(S3x)**

**Saturday** **(S)** We had a graduation from the students who had completed the 2 year course in Debre Zeit & Nazareth. Paul asked me to take photos of the event **(S)** so I didn't have to sit up front & sweat. **(S)** The joy & celebration of this event was very evident on the students' & their families' faces. Sorry for the noise & graininess of the pictures. It was very dark in there!

As I reflect on the trip, I feel privileged to have had a small part in God's kingdom work in Ethiopia. Thank you for your prayers on my behalf.

While there, Paul took some videos & interviewed some of the students. we can have a better idea of how God is using this training in Ethiopia. He asked me to pick 2 of my students for him to interview. I look forward to seeing those & sharing them with you when they are complete.

After graduation & lunch, I was taken to Addis to begin my journey home. Addis to Dublin to refuel. Dublin to Dulles in DC. A 4 hour wait before boarding & flying to Seattle, arriving around

3:30 p.m. Wheels up Addis to touch down in Seattle was 26.5 hours. From time I left the guesthouse, until I arrived in our hotel in Seattle was almost 36 hours.

**(S)** What questions do you have that I might be able to answer? **(S)**

Why do organizations like Global Training Network train pastors around the world? Why does Joel ask me to do this? Because of the Cross of Jesus. It's His death & resurrection that brings true life to people around the world. It's His gospel that the world desperately needs. His plan is that all the nations, languages, peoples would come to Him & worship Him.

As we come to the communion table, we come to Jesus because we believe He is who He claimed to be & that He did what He came to do. The proclamation of His death & the remembrance of all that He is for us should draw us into deeper communion with Him. Faith is being satisfied in all that God is for us in Christ. Jesus has given us the ongoing object lesson of Communion to feed us spiritually with Himself. The Lord's Table proclaims the gospel. As John Piper has said, *Faith is a spiritual feasting on the risen, living Christ so that all that God is for us in Him satisfies our soul & sweetens our love for Him & breaks the power of sin in our lives.*<sup>1</sup> We are saved through Christ's death & resurrection. We are forgiven through Christ's death & resurrection. We are kept through Christ's death & resurrection. When you eat of the bread & drink of the cup today, understand that Christ's death & resurrection has purchased your salvation. Unless you're trusting Christ alone for your salvation, let the bread & juice pass you by, because they have no meaning for you. But if you have placed your faith in Christ alone for your salvation, then receive the bread & the cup with gladness because by it we proclaim His death & resurrection for us; by it we remember who He is & what He's done; by it we feast by faith on the goodness of our God who has given us His Son, forgiven our sins, & graciously given us eternal life with Him.

Time of silent prayer, confessing our sins & preparing our hearts & minds to remember Jesus & His death for us. PRAY MEN COME

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<sup>1</sup> [www.desiringgod.org/messages/why-we-eat-the-lords-supper-part-1](http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/why-we-eat-the-lords-supper-part-1)

On Jesus' last night with His disciples, while the meal was still in progress, He took some bread, gave thanks for it, broke it into pieces & handed it around to those present while saying these words: **This is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.** After the meal was over, He took a cup of wine, gave thanks for it, passed it around to His disciples, & said, **This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of Me** (1 Cor 11, Mt 26; Mk 14; Lk 22).

These are tremendously significant deeds & words. It's a shame that we're so familiar with them that they tend to lose their impact on us. By what He did & said, Jesus was dramatizing His death before it took place & giving His own explanation of its meaning & purpose.

During this final meal Jesus had with His disciples, He gave them instructions for His own memorial service, which wasn't to be a one-time deal, but to be an ongoing thing. They were to copy what He did, both His words & actions. They were to take, break, bless, & share in the bread & wine. What did these two things signify? Jesus said of the bread, **This is My body given for you,** & of the wine, **This is My blood shed for you.** His death speaks to us from both elements. The bread didn't stand for His living body but for His body as it was shortly to be **given** for them in death. The wine didn't stand for His blood as it flowed in His veins while He spoke to them, but for His blood which would be **poured out** for them shortly in death. We celebrate communion not to remember His birth, His life, His words, nor His miracles. It is His death on the cross that is central to Christianity & that is what we remember. PASS

Paul tells us in 1 Cor 11, reading from the Amplified Bible, **that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was treacherously delivered up & while His betrayal was in progress took bread, & when He had given thanks, He broke it, & said, *Take, eat. This is My body which is broken for you. Do this to call Me affectionately to remembrance.***

We remember Jesus' death on the cross for us as we eat of the bread together.

Paul goes on & tells us, **when supper was ended, Jesus took the cup also, saying, *This cup is the new covenant (ratified & established) in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it, to call Me affectionately to remembrance.***

We drink of the cup together remembering our Lord's shed blood, His death for the forgiveness of our sins.