



## Ethiopia: A Mary Craig Ministries Report

There is no place on earth like Ethiopia. It has its own unique culture, history, calendar, way to tell time, geography, and church. It is truly another world.

We flew from Fort Lauderdale to Washington Dulles and on to Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Airlines has smaller planes, a 2-3-2 configuration. They were not full, so this enabled us and others to stretch out off and on in the middle section, a great help during the 16 hours of travel.

When we arrived in Bole International Airport, we easily made our way to the baggage claim. Ethiopians are practical and efficient, helpful and courteous. However, all four of our bags never made it to the carousel. We think this is because the bags had been checked forward to Axum, even though we had several days layover in Addis. After about an hour the personnel at "Lost and Found" found our bags and we were on our way to the hotel.

To our surprise we find that Ethiopia is considered the head of all African nations. The Eighth Africa Union Summit was preparing to meet at the U.N. building starting Monday, January 29<sup>th</sup>. Leaders from 40 African nations come together to discuss the problems and issues of Africa. They came with their entourages, Mercedes cars, flags, and much excitement. Security was high. The weekend God chose for us to be here was no accident.

Looking out the hotel window you see the poverty, shanties, and dirt roads. You hear dogs barking and voices booming over a loud speaker. We learned later in Axum that the dogs have to fight off hyenas that enter the areas at night. Pray for them. They deserve some sleep!

The 14,000 member Assemblies of God church under Pastor Wolde is a joy. On Saturday, Pastor Wolde comes to one of our hotel rooms to review what we will do Sunday. We want to stay under authority. As if hearing the Lord, Pastor Wolde stops and then kneels at the bedside for impartation of anointing. We pray and the Holy Spirit leads us to impart the faith of Jesus, a greater anointing of authority, and fullness of the power of God.

On Sunday we are delighted to join into the unique flavor of Ethiopian worship. The congregation enthusiastically responds to the prophetic word I bring to them and they seriously consider the scriptures declared to them by Stephen. In two services they pray for Ethiopia in a passionate plea for God to do all His will in Ethiopia. We are given a beautiful scarf and decorated robe, both displaying the creativity of the artisans in Ethiopia. We share in the traditional Ethiopian meal of *Injera* bread and stew, tea and cake. We discover that *injera*, a large, pancake-shaped substance made from *tef*, is unique to Ethiopia. It has a foam-rubber texture, looks like a thin sponge, and has a slightly sour taste. The people eat it three times a day.



After the morning services, we head up a mountain to the highest point in Addis Ababa. When we learn that King Menelik performed human and animal sacrifice there, we pray to break the blood curse and I pour spikenard on the altar of sacrifice and release the anointing. We declare the name of the Lord: The Excellent Glory.

Dust fills your lungs but the weather is wonderful, 44-84 degrees F. We fly to Axum. Again we find the people friendly, helpful, gentle and yet having a history of mighty warriors. Ethiopia has a unique form of Christianity, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Their religious history traces from Cush, the grandson of Noah and father of Nimrod, to Menelik, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, to the Falasha (Ethiopian Jews) to the early conversion of Queen Candace (Acts 8) and the beginning of Christianity there.

A simpler life, another world, children gathering around the foreigner, curious eyes and giggles, a friendly openness to say, "What's your name? My name is Alexander." A young girl touches my skin and my hair, looks at my sea-green eyes, wants my wedding ring and my watch, and asks for money. They all ask for money. I tell them I am not carrying their money (which I was not), but I have Jesus. Do they know Jesus? Yes, some say, because all of Axum is Ethiopian Orthodox. There is only one church, and through pictures, paintings, and gospel preachers like our guide Sisay, the people grow up with life centered in the church.



Sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, a few chickens, cows, and bulls roam the dusty streets of this small town. Life slows to the quiet walking of the animals moseying along with a load of fire wood or hay. I say, "God bless the donkeys." At first Sisay looks at me funny because I notice the animals and love them and ask God to bless them. One donkey comes right up to me, and I touch his little forehead and ask God to bless him, and off he runs to get back on track lest his master beat him with a stick. Sisay, surprise on his face, wonders at our love for the animals, but soon he joins in as we bless the animals, the people, and the land.



I think Sisay became convinced when I took him through all the scriptures about the donkey and how Mary rode a donkey on the way to Bethlehem, how the animals were purportedly there at the birth of Jesus, how Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, and how the angel of the Lord upheld the life of the donkey over that of Balaam when Balaam wouldn't listen to his donkey and hit him.

Axum has a proud history dating back to the Queen of Sheba. Her palace and pool and the enormous rock stelae (large stone structures similar to obelisks) reveal an unexpected sophistication of architecture and engineering. Deep in the ground lie untapped mysteries of kings and kingdoms and the fame of Ethiopian warriors.

We go to St. Mary of Zion church where in a small building the original Ark of the Covenant is said to be guarded by a specially chosen priest. When I draw the ark as described in the OT, however, it is different from the replicas of the Tabot said to be the original ark. Certainly the people believe the ark to be housed there. They call Axum the Second Jerusalem and consider it to be the center of the world.

I am forbidden to enter the area because I am a woman. With this denial of access, I transfer the mantle to Stephen and he feels the power of God come on him. Sisay leads him through what seems like a maze of testing before Stephen reaches the gate of the building. There, with shoes off and the camera handed over to Sisay, Stephen Craig declares out the prophetic words again to Ethiopia. He declares Jesus Christ to be the Ark of the Covenant of God and calls the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. He declares Jesus the Chief Cornerstone and The Breaker. He declares Revelation 11.19.



Denied access, I stand at the gates of the complex and command them to open to women. (For more on access to God,



read the February message of the month.) Later when Sisay and Stephen join me, I ask Sisay to read from my Bible to the children. He does so quite willingly.

The next day we again join Sisay to take a walking tour around Axum. We notice that one street is called Denver Street. Apparently, the city of Denver sends money to Axum to help out. We think maybe that's how the one road got paved! There is so little water. The place has perfect weather year around, 55-77 degrees F. It just needs water, some good roads, and clothing for the people. Children and many adults go barefoot. Many have open wounds and swollen feet. All are covered with dust. In the rainy season, everything is mud, mud, mud. The irony is, they have an internet café and some people, like Sisay, have mobile phones!



Axum is the spiritual capital of Ethiopia, just as Addis Ababa is the political capital. Ethiopia used to be much, much larger than now. There is a history of powerful kings and queens and kingdoms. Today they are under a prime minister.

I thought about power while looking at the amazing engineering accomplishments of the stone stela erected to honor kings. I thought about power as we watched the parade of AU members arriving for the Summit. The thing about power is that it's not about the big decisions. You can decide to invade a nation or to topple an enemy kingdom. It's the small stuff, deciding what will affect one single life. If you lose that kind of sensitivity, you lose your sense of humanity and humility. Pride goes before a fall, and a haughty spirit before destruction.

Wednesday morning we were up at 5:30 a.m. No water. We were out of drinking water and the hotel faucets just turned with no output. I called the desk to no avail. Finally, some Ethiopians called the desk. The water came on at 6:10 a.m. There was enough of a trickle to get by before making our way back to the airport to go the 46 hours back to Fort Lauderdale. Crossing the Atlantic we had a good deal of turbulence three times, so when we landed at Washington Dulles, everyone cheered.

We flew Jet Blue from Dulles to FLL. We were woozy with lack of sleep, tired, and couldn't get enough water for thirst. The people surrounding us were coming down for the Super Bowl game. All they could think of was the Game, drinking, and where their seats were. We didn't talk. We were too tired. Besides, we had been in a different world, literally and spiritually.

Ethiopia completes the 27 nations list given to us by God some 14 years ago. MCM has gone on assignment to 61 nations on 33 mission trips. 28 people have participated, many more than once. We give all the glory to God for giving us the strategy to break the blood curse, to break poverty, to open and close gates, and to break bondages.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

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