



## Historic Meeting in Western Asia

By: Ken Fielder (Posted January 7, 2009)

*For the safety of various ministries and God's servants located in some of the darkest parts of the Muslim world, some locations and names mentioned in this article have been altered.*

Baptist International Evangelistic Ministries (BIEM) based in Danville, Indiana, has a wonderful record of establishing churches and training nationals in Russia and the Ukraine for almost thirty years and has begun in the last three years to reach into the Muslim world. Earlier this year I was invited by Bob McQueary, the Western Asia Director of BIEM, to participate in a national training week for Western and Central Asian pastors and missionaries to be held the second week of December. *FirstBible* was privileged to partner with BIEM financially to help make this training week happen.



In the early stages of planning, we hoped for a class of eight to ten students who could be trained in the areas of church planting and Bible doctrines and be challenged with information about reaching into the Muslim world. This developed quickly into a class of almost forty people. God gave us a wonderful week with students from the nations of Georgia, Russia, Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. Some were able to travel by plane and several rode a bus for over twenty-four hours to attend this training week.



By the end of the second day it was obvious that God was moving in the hearts of those in attendance. Pastors related how God was speaking to them about becoming more actively involved in the Great Commission. Young married couples expressed that God had called them to be missionaries and they were now being seriously challenged about the Muslim world. One pastor from Georgia stated that this was an historic meeting for the churches of western Asia. We believe and we are praying that what happened during this week will be the foundation of an effort that will have tremendous impact

on those who are in the darkness of the largest false religion on the face of the earth.

It was amazing and humbling to fellowship with these people in whom God has placed a burden and willingness to sacrifice for the gospel's sake. Some of them serve in places where there is no freedom of religion and no freedom of speech. Some of them are preaching the gospel in places where doing so endangers their very lives. Some of them are baptizing converts who, upon taking this step of obedience to the Lord, are losing everything. Surim, a pastor from Turkmenistan, shared what God is doing in his country. He has baptized twenty-five believers this year including the daughter of a high political figure. Her only question at her baptism was, "When my family learns of this, they will throw me out. Will you help me find a place to live?"

One of the teaching faculty during this week is a missionary who served in Siberia for 7 years. After being thrown in jail six or seven times, the local authorities finally gathered enough “evidence” on him and they would not allow him back into the country. God has redirected him to reach into the Muslim world of Central Asia. I was deeply challenged by his commitment to the Lord. He truly has a pioneer spirit and is fearless and bold in his quest to take the gospel of Christ into these areas that are hostile to the gospel.



We learned of a church in Kazakhstan led by a national pastor where the believers can only meet after dark, and often the service lasts all night. One such service, attended by the above mentioned missionary, consisted of a few songs and a message from God’s Word followed by several hours of prayer. The first five hours were spent in earnest, fervent, pleading prayer that God would send them to reach those without Christ, that God would allow them to share the gospel with their own countrymen and with those in surrounding countries. They are truly broken hearted for the spiritual blindness of the world in which they live. Then they prayed for the western Asian countries where there is some freedom of religion that God would burden their hearts to go share Christ with people in darkness. Then they turned their prayers toward America and prayed that the American Christians would not take their freedom for granted and that they would not allow materialism and the things of this world hinder their passion to spread the gospel. These and other stories related to us a sobriety concerning the things of Christ that is a rebuke to many of us who consider simple church attendance and the giving of a dollar or two in the offering great acts of service to God.

As far as world travel is concerned, this was the worst trip I have ever taken. There were multiple canceled flights, missed connections, seemingly endless hours in airports, only three hours of sleep in a thirty hour period, lost luggage, and a final arrival at a different destination which required my wife to drive 250 miles to pick me up.



On the ministry side, this was one of the greatest ministry opportunities the Lord has ever given me. It was a life-changing week. Although I went there with a burden in my heart to impact the Muslim world, I came home with a burden that was far greater and deeper. There is a real moving of God taking place, a worldwide awakening that is stirring God’s people to reach those in the Muslim world who are so terribly deceived. Some of these nations are more than 99% Muslim with Christian populations of less than 1%. We believe that God is specifically calling some of His servants to these lands and placing in their hearts a pioneer spirit and a spiritual reckless abandon like that of William Carey, Adoniram Judson and others who blazed trails for Christ where no one had ever gone before with the gospel. Please join *FirstBible* in praying that many will heed this call.