

Shabbat Shalom

I've been back from my most recent trip to Israel for nearly six weeks. Since returning my life has shifted into overdrive and it feels like the trip took place a lifetime ago. A lot has changed in a very short time. Yet despite how much has changed, I am more aware than ever of the things that *cannot* change. Now more than ever I am living in the tension between the uncertainty and urgency of the moment, and the certainty and timelessness of eternity.

That's where Israel lives, too. This reality was more apparent to me on this past trip than ever before. It was a time of contrasts. I was aware of those contrasts on both a personal level and a national level. On a personal level, I heard myself express to someone that the primary reason I come to Israel is simply because I love to be there with Jesus and I know it gives Him great pleasure to have me there with Him. I don't have an agenda and I don't need one. Simply being there with Him is enough for me. That was, and is, absolutely true. Then, just a day or two later, I heard myself saying that my heart was so torn in two that I told the Lord I just couldn't bear to come again for such a short time and without a clear purpose. My heart and destiny are so deeply intertwined with His heart for that nation that it rips my heart apart to merely stay a couple of weeks, pray a bit here and there, and then get on a plane and leave again. If I'm going to go, I need to be able to plant my heart there for the long run and play a specific role in His plan and purposes for Israel. That too was, and is, absolutely true.

How can both be true? I don't know—how can the sovereignty of God and the freewill of man both be true? There are mysteries in this life that can't be resolved with mere human reasoning. I don't know how both are true, I just know they are – and I live in the tension.

On a national level, during this trip I saw many prayers from years past answered before my eyes – the church in Israel *is* being strengthened and more Jews are coming to know Yeshua as their Messiah than at any time since the first century – but I also saw the depth of need with greater clarity and realized there are many, many prayers yet to be prayed and yet to be answered. The sense of hopelessness, anger and apathy throughout the nation was palpable, yet there is also great hope and expectation rising in the church – especially amongst messianic believers. I was encouraged and excited – and I was sobered and saddened. All real. All true.

We are living in the tension of what is and what is yet to be. While there is no denying what currently is, our hope is in the *certainty* of what is yet to be. The Lord drove this home to my heart one Friday afternoon as I was standing on a terrace overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem. Since Shabbat begins on Friday evening, Friday afternoon is typified by “the rush before the rest.” Rarely is the city as frantic as it is on Friday afternoon. The city basically shuts down from Friday evening to Saturday evening, so everyone rushes around to accomplish necessary chores and get their shopping done before the beginning of the Sabbath. As I watched the city rushing about, there was a profound and tangible stillness in my spirit. Despite the frenzy of her inhabitants, despite the ongoing

clash in the second heaven, I knew there *was* stillness and peace in Jerusalem. As I watched and listened, I realized it was heaven's stillness. It was heaven's rest and peace for Jerusalem. From heaven's perspective the destiny of that city is already accomplished. When Jesus watches Jerusalem, He is at perfect peace. Yes, He still longs for the day He can "gather her as a hen gathers her chicks." And yes, His heart is often broken as He waits. But while He waits, He is still. He is at peace. He sees the end from the beginning. And His shalom *is* available in that city even now.

We live in a time of clashing "realities." Yes, there are many difficulties and trying circumstances in daily life. Yes, there is an ongoing battle in the second heaven. Yes, there are many mysteries and seeming contradictions that are impossible to reconcile with human understanding. Yes, we face many challenges to believe despite the colliding realities of what is and what is yet to be. But heaven is at rest. Heaven is at peace. And there *is* a Sabbath rest available – even now – to those who will be diligent to enter into it.

In a very real way, Jerusalem *has* entered into her rest. So can we.

Shabbat Shalom sweet city of God. Your destiny is secure.