

Subject: more about "The Passion" in Qatar

Friends,

Since the last email, so much has happened I simply do not know where to begin. In all humility, we have to say that in just a few short days, more Arab Muslims have been able to clearly hear (and see) the Gospel in their own language than we would be able to reach in a lifetime of ministry in the Middle East. We are just walking around in our own version of a 'shock and awe campaign'.

Let me give you the highlights and I'll try to write more of the details later.

- The film is so popular here in Qatar that they have been canceling the other films to show "The Passion" in all the theatres at a Cinema complex. I took a former student the 2nd night, who now works for the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and at the 7:30PM and 9:30PM showing the film was running in all 3 theatres. I would estimate that well over 50% of the people in the theatre were local Muslims – women completely veiled. I saw former students of mine walking out. I saw one British woman who converted to Islam walking out (I prayed she would find her way back to the faith she abandoned). You could see how this film had impacted everyone. After we saw the film, I looked at my former student and said to him in Arabic, "Don't you see that Jesus died for YOUR sins". I then really took a bit of a risk (seeing that he works for the Ministry of Islamic Affairs" – I said, "you know, you think that this film is here because of 'freedom of speech' or the 'new openness of your government', but actually God Himself has sent this film to CORRECT your people's total misunderstanding about who Jesus is, and why He came to earth". What followed was about a 2 hour discussion/debate on many of the differences between Islam and Christianity.
- On the second day, several of the local newspapers had the advertisement for the film ON THE FRONT PAGE. Here is one of the links to an English newspaper in case anybody is interested to see.
http://www.thepeninsulaqatar.com/Display_news.asp?section=Local_News&subsection=Qatar+News&month=March2004&file=Local_News200403213279.xml
- It appears that even Saudi Arabia is getting a chance to see the film, albeit through pirated DVD's - <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-chat/1098919/posts>. There are no movie theatres in Saudi Arabia anyway. God knows what He's doing. I was just reminded what the Apostle Paul writes:
 - o "It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love...The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely...But what does it matter? THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT IN EVERY WAY (pirated DVDs?), whether false motives or true CHRIST IS PREACHED. And because of this I rejoice". (Philippians 1:15-18)
- Timing of the release. The killing of Palestinian Hamas leader, Sheikh Ahmad Yassin happened the morning after the film was released. The Arab response has been a whole new wave of hatred for the Jews, which was illustrated in a large public demonstration/march yesterday. Again, God's timing is so amazing. At a time when the urge for Muslims to hate has been renewed, the Lord has brought THE PASSION telling them – NO, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES! Forgive them! The contrast is staggering.
- Today, two young people came up to me and asked me, "Do you have the New Testament in Arabic"? "Me and ALL my friends want to read it!"! Another asked about

where to get the Arabic Bible on the internet. THIS HAS NEVER HAPPENED! The film is generating so much interest in Jesus and the Scriptures. Every Christian we are talking to seems to have a story of two just like this one. May it continue to increase.

- Finally, I got a call from some good friends who are now a part an international prayer ministry. 800 people were gathered and he read my email which then led into a time of intercession for the impact of the film in Qatar and the Middle East. Some major Christian leaders were in the meeting, and after the meeting one of them came up to him and asked for a copy of the email. She told him that she was a personal friend of Mel Gibson's and that she wanted to send it to him to encourage him. He then told me that as far as he knew Mel Gibson now has a copy of the last email we sent you.

If somehow this one gets to him, Mel, we just want to say THANK YOU and God Bless You! You have truly been used by our Lord to change this Middle Eastern country (and more in the days to come) – to bring the message of Jesus' atoning sacrifice, His Kingdom of Love and His Divine Sonship to a people who have categorically denied every single one of them for more than 1400 years. Be ENCOURAGED Mel. Our lives and ministry have been changed forever. Whenever the DVD is finally released, PLEASE include Arabic subtitles so that we can continue to use this film, to the Glory of the Lord for many years to come.

Watching God at work,

Servants of Jesus in the CEEC