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## My Semester in Israel



SANDRA DORSAINVIL

Alberto, eldest son of Carlos Bonilla & Mayra Giovanetti who are themselves global servants with International Ministries, spent a semester in Israel, as part of his college learning experience. Short-Term Mission opportunities take many forms, from two weeks up to two years. Students can use their time in cross cultural settings as credit earning situations (as long as it is pre-approved by their educational institutions). We are grateful for how God is using everyone as sowers, ambassadors of The Word, instruments of peace. If you are interested in more information about Short-Term Missions, please don't hesitate to contact [volunteers@internationalministries.org](mailto:volunteers@internationalministries.org)

Here are Alberto's reflections on his recent trip:

“Spending any amount of time in the Holy Land is beneficial to anyone who wants to learn more about the Bible and how God used the ancient writers. Realizing that they wrote with the geography, history, and culture of their time in mind is helpful to better understand and appreciate the biblical message to the ancient reader/listener, but also to us today. There are many lessons to learn by walking in the Land, reading the Bible, and reflecting on how these ancient texts have influenced so many people for such a long time.

My experience in Israel was a great blessing because I was able to read the Bible where many of the stories took place. Some examples are reading Psalm 23 in the Judean Wilderness, Matthew 21:1-17 on the Mount of Olives looking over to the Temple Mount, and many others. Realizing that these stories had a geographical context made reading the Bible a different and richer experience. The mixture of ancient texts and archaeology and modern people living in Israel made me realize that the biblical land is full of rich history but also a very important present. It made me think that interpreting the texts, land, and archaeology well had important consequences on people today. My semester in Israel made me realize that good biblical theology ought to consider all the data and see how this can help people grow closer to Christ.

An impressive aspect of my semester in Jerusalem was realizing that there are so many different kinds of Christians in the world. There are the familiar Protestant/evangelical, as well as Catholic, denominations with whom I have interacted in the past, but in Israel and the rest of the Middle East, most of the Christians are Eastern Orthodox, which is very different from what I grew up with. I found it fascinating to go to many of the sites that commemorate an event in Jesus’ life and ministry and see a Byzantine church. Many of the biblical sites are marked with such churches, the most famous being the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, (also known as the Church of the Resurrection), which is the traditional site that commemorates Jesus’ death and resurrection. Realizing that Christians have worshiped Christ in these sites for centuries gives me a helpful perspective as a Christian to know that we have shared faith in Christ for so long and in such different cultural, geographic, and historical contexts.

Overall, my semester was deeply formative to my education, worldview, and especially my walk with Christ. Knowing that the Bible that I read had an ancient context that we can attempt to understand through different academic disciplines is not only interesting, but also helpful in a Christian’s walk with Jesus. There were many moments when I was with my classmates and professors visiting a site and reading a biblical passage and felt like it jumped at us and we gained a deeper understanding of the passage, and in God’s purpose with humanity. I would encourage anyone who desires to deepen his or her relationship with God and understanding of Scripture to spend as much time as possible in the Holy Land. I know my heart desires to return one day to continue to learn, and through my education, to help others learn and appreciate the great lessons that can be learned in this very special place and thus become more faithful disciples of Jesus.”



