

Cerdded a Gweddio gyda Christnogion y Dwyrain Canol

Mynd i mewn i

WYTHNOS 6: PALESTINA

Jerwsalem



Walking and Praying with Christians of the Middle East

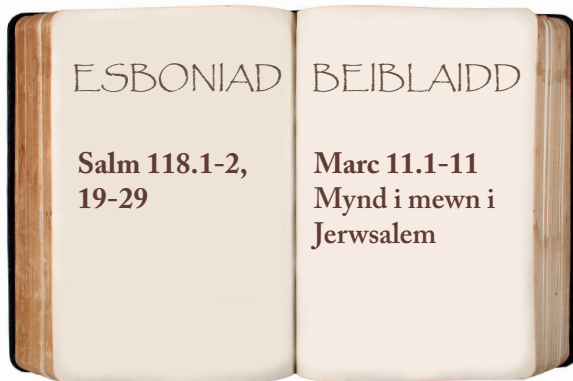
Entering

WEEK 6: PALESTINE

Jerusalem



Yn yr wythnos olaf, byddwn yn tynnu sylw at Gristnogion Palestina y gellir olrhain eu gwreiddiau yn ôl i amser Crist. Deil y Cristnogion hyn i fyw dan amgylchiadau anodd oherwydd y cweryl rhwng Israeliaid a Phalestinaid.



Pan ymwelodd y nofelydd Americaidd Herman Melville â Jerwsalem yn 1857, fe'i trawyd gan y nifer fawr o gerrig a oedd ym mhobman, a nododd yn ei ddyddiadur y byddai'n deall o hynny allan pam bod lle mor amlwg i gerrig yn y Beibl. Yng nghanol yr anialwch, parodd Duw i ddŵr lifo allan o graig. Carreg oedd gobennydd Jacob. A charreg wedi ei threiglo ymaith fyddai'n cyhoeddi bod Crist wedi cyfodi o'r bedd.

Mae Jerwsalem heddiw'n ddinas wahanol iawn i'r un yr ymwelodd Melville â hi. Mae'n llawer mwy, ac er gwaetha'i sancteiddrwydd honedig mae'n ddigon tebyg mewn llawer ffordd i sawl dinas arall. Fodd bynnag, mae pobl yn dal i ymweld â hi, i chwilio am hen adeiladau o gerrig ac i gerdded y ffordd a gerddodd Crist ei hun yn yr wythnos dyngedfennol honno sy'n dechrau â Sul y Blodau.

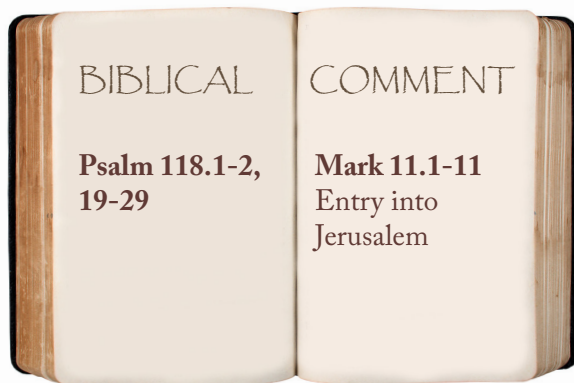
Ond mae Jerwsalem heddiw'n adleisio sawl peth o Jerwsalem dyddiau Iesu. Dinas a feddiannwyd ydyw, ac y mae gwahaniaeth barn ar sut i roi terfyn ar hynny. Dinas o wrthdaro, ac eto dinas a berchir fel lle sanctaidd, a thair crefydd yn ei hawlio, 'yn cystadlu i'w charu', chwedl y diweddar Esgob Kenneth Cragg: bydd y sawl a fu'n ymweld â hi'n gwybod yn iawn mor agos i'w gilydd yw Mur Gorllewinol yr Wylofain, Eglwys y Beddrod Sanctaidd a Chromen y Graig. Yr hyn a anwybyddir

**'Y maen a wrthododd yr
adeiladwyr a ddaeth yn
brif gonglfaen'**

(Ps.118.22)



For our final week, we highlight the Christians of Palestine whose origins can be traced back to the time of Christ. Christians here continue to live under difficult conditions due to the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians.



When the American novelist Herman Melville visited Jerusalem in 1857 he was struck by the number of stones that were scattered around and he commented in his diary how he from then onwards understood why stones play such an important role in the Bible. In the midst of the desert wilderness, God provides water from the rock. A stone served as a pillar for Jacob. And a rolled away stone would announce that Christ had risen from the grave.

Jerusalem is a very different city today than the one that Melville visited – it is much bigger, and despite its contested holiness, in many ways resembles many other cities. However it is still the case that people come to Jerusalem in search of ancient places built of stone; a chance to walk the way that Christ himself trod in that most momentous of weeks, which Palm Sunday heralds.

But the Jerusalem of Jesus' time has many resonances with the Jerusalem of today. A place of occupation, with differing views as to how best to overcome this. A place of conflict and yet a place revered as holy. Today's Jerusalem is synonymous with the differing claims of three religions, what the late Bishop Kenneth Cragg described as 'competitively loved': any visitor to Jerusalem will know all too well how close to one another are the Western (Wailing) Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Dome of the Rock. Yet what is often overlooked is

**'The same stone which
the builders rejected
has become the
chief corner-stone'
(Ps.118.22)**

yn aml yw'r gymuned Gristnogol, sydd wedi parhau yn Jerwsalem ers dyddiau'r eglwys fore.

Dywed adroddiad Marc am Iesu'n cyrraedd Jerwsalem iddo fynd ar ei union i'r Deml ac 'edrych o'i gwmpas', fel pe bai'n bererin cyffredin. Ac eto fe wŷr Marc, fel y gwyddom ninnau, y byddai dyfodiad Iesu i'r ddinas yn achosi helynt (y diwrnod canlynol byddai'n bwrw i lawr fyrddau'r cyfnewidwyr arian yn y Deml). Ei fradychu a'i wadu, ei gondemnio a'i arteithio a'i ladd – dyna oedd yn disgwyl Iesu yno.

Wrth inni gyrraedd Jerwsalem gyda Iesu, cofiwn nad meini a wrthodwyd yw Cristnogion Palestina, y 'meini byw' sydd dan oresgyniad, ond meini a anghofwyd. Ac ar ddechrau wythnos sancteiddiaf y flwyddyn Gristnogol cofiwn y dwyster arbennig a fydd gan hanes marwolaeth ac atgyfodiad Iesu Grist i holl bobl y Dwyrain Canol.

Pwy yw Cristnogion Palestina?

Mae Cristnogion y Balestina hanesyddol (sydd heddiw'n cynnwys Israel a'r tiriogaethau Palestinaidd) yn olrhain eu gwreiddiau'n ôl i gyfnod Crist. I Eglwys Uniongred Gwlad Groeg neu i'r Eglwys Gatholig y perthyn y rhan fwyaf ohonynt, er bod hefyd nifer fechan yn perthyn i draddodiadau Protestannaidd neu draddodiadau Uniongred eraill. Yng nghyfnod Ymerodraeth y Tyrciaid a hyd nes creu Gwladwriaeth Israel yn 1948, Cristnogion oedd rhwng deg ac ugain y cant o boblogaeth Palestina, ac yr oeddynt yn rhan sylweddol o hunaniaeth genedlaethol y Palestinaid. Erbyn heddiw, fodd bynnag, syrthiodd y ganran i lai na dau y cant, yn bennaf o ganlyniad i allfudo oherwydd yr ansefydlogrwydd gwleidyddol parhaus yn yr ardal. Dywedir bod dwywaith cymaint o Gristnogion Palestinaidd tref Ramala ar y Lan Orllewinol yn byw erbyn hyn yn Dearborn, Michigan, nag sy'n byw yn Ramala. Mae ar rai pobl ofn y bydd poblogaeth Gristnogol Palestina wedi diflannu'n llwyr mewn ychydig genedlaethau.

Llusernau yn Eglwys y Beddrod Sanctaidd, Jerwsalem



Jerwsalem o Fynydd yr Olewydd

Sut beth yw bod yn Gristion ym Mhalestina heddiw?

Nid yw bywyd yn hawdd i Gristnogion Palestina heddiw. Er bod ganddynt ymlyniad corfforol ac ysbrydol dwfn at y Wlad Sanctaidd, bu'n rhaid iddynt, fel y bu'n rhaid i bawb ym Mhalestina, ddygymod â chanlyniadau dybryd yr anghydfod parhaol rhwng Israel a'r Palestinaid, yn cynnwys trais (a ysgogir gan y ddwy ochr), byddin oresgynnol, rheolfeydd, meddiannu tir ac weithiau tresmasu hyd yn oed ar eu hawliau mwyaf sylfaenol.

Mae'r stori wir a ganlyn am wraig o Nasareth o'r enw Mair yn ddarlun ardderchog o fater hawliau dynol. Iddewes ifanc o Balestina oedd y Fair o Nasareth yr ydym ni'n gwybod amdani ac yn ei charu o'r hanes yn y Beibl, ond Cristion o Balestina yw'r Fair fodern, yn byw yng Ngallilea, lle y mae'r rhan fwyaf o'r 150,000 o Gristnogion Israel yn byw. Rai blynyddoedd yn ôl cwmpodd mewn cariad â Christian arall o Balestina o'r enw Ra'ed. Mae gan Ra'ed ddiddordeb angerddol mewn anabled, ac y mae'n gyfarwyddwr cartref i blant anabl ddirifol yn ymyl Bethlehem, ar ochr draw'r ffin ag Israel ar y Lan Orllewinol a feddiannwyd.

Am fod y gymuned Gristnogol ym Mhalestina mor fach erbyn hyn, mae dyweddiadau rhwng cyplau sy'n byw ar y naill ochr a'r llall i'r ffin yn beth digon cyffredin. Ond wynebai'r berthynas ramantus hon un anhawster ar unwaith: sut y gallai'r ddau ddyweddio? Mae'n draddodiad yn niwylliant Arabiaid Palestina i'r priodfab ymweld â theulu'r briodferch i ofyn am ei llaw. Ond ni allai Ra'ed, am mai Palestinaid ydoedd, gael trwydded gan yr Israeliaid i ymweld â theulu ei ddarpar wraig yn Nasareth. Felly, bu'n rhaid meddwl am rywbeth arall.

Byddai pethau'n siŵr o fod yn iawn unwaith y byddent wedi priodi? Gallai Rae'd wedyn ymuno â'i wraig yn

the Christian community which has had a continuous presence in Jerusalem since the early church.

Mark's account of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem refers to immediately entering into the Temple and 'looking around' as though he were just another religious pilgrim. Yet he knows – and we know – that Jesus's arrival in Jerusalem will be disruptive (a day later he would over-turn the tables of the money changers in the Temple), a place of betrayal, desertion, condemnation, torture and death.

As we arrive in Jerusalem with Jesus, we remember too that today the 'living stones', the Christians of Palestine, who live under occupation are not so much rejected stones but forgotten ones. And as we approach this most holiest of weeks in the Christian year we remember the special poignancy that the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ will have for all the people of the Middle East.

Who are the Christians of Palestine?

Tracing their origins back to the time of Christ, the Christians of historic Palestine (which today includes both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories) are mostly from Greek Orthodox or Catholic backgrounds, although there is also a small number of Christians from Protestant and other Orthodox traditions. In Ottoman times and up to the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Christians accounted for between ten and twenty per cent of the total population of Palestine and were a significant part of Palestinian national identity, but that figure has fallen to less than two per cent today, mainly as a result of emigration driven by the continued political instability in the region. It is said that twice as many Palestinian Christians from the West Bank town of Ramallah now live in Dearborn, Michigan, than in

Lamps in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem



Jerusalem from Mount Olive

Ramallah. Some people fear that the Palestinian Christian population could disappear entirely within a few generations.

What's it like being a Christian in Palestine today?

Life is not easy for Palestinian Christians today. Despite a deep physical and spiritual attachment to the Holy Land, they have had to cope like all Palestinians with the severe consequences of the continued dispute between Israel and the Palestinians, including violence (provoked by both sides), occupation, checkpoints, land seizures and sometimes even the denial of the most basic rights.

The issue of rights is best illustrated by a true story involving a Palestinian woman called Mary from Nazareth. The Nazarene Mary we know and love from the Bible was a young Palestinian Jewish girl, but this modern-day Mary is a Palestinian Christian living in Galilee, where most of Israel's 150,000 Christians live. A few years ago she fell in love with another Palestinian Christian called Ra'ed. Ra'ed is passionate about disability, and he is director of a home for severely disabled children near Bethlehem, on the other side of the Israeli separation barrier in the occupied West Bank.

Because the Palestinian Christian community is now so small, it is quite common for engagements to involve couples from both sides of the separation barrier. But this romantic match faced an immediate problem: how could they get engaged? It is a tradition in Palestinian Arab culture for the bridegroom to visit his potential bride's family to ask for her hand in marriage. But Ra'ed, being Palestinian, could not get an Israeli permit to visit his bride's family in Nazareth. So they had to do things differently.

Surely all would be sorted once they were married? Rae'd could then join his wife in Nazareth? Sadly not. Despite

Nasareth? Na, oedd yr ateb trist. Does gan Mair, sy'n ddinesydd Israellaidd, er ei bod o gefndir Palestinaidd, ddim hawl i ddod â gŵr o Balestina i mewn i Israel. Mae deddf Israellaidd o 2003 a elwir yn Ddeddf

Dinasyddiaeth a Mynediad i Israel yn gwahardd yn benodol i wŷr a gwragedd o Balestina ddod i mewn i Israel a phreswyllo yno. A hynny dim ond am mai Palestiniaid ydynt! Nid rhyfedd bod llawer o bobl hyd yn oed yn Israel yn ystyried bod y Ddeddf yn dangos anffafraeth. Fodd bynnag, methiant fu sawl her iddi yn Uchel Lys a Goruchaf Lys Israel.

Yr eironi yw y byddai gan Ra'ed pe byddai'n Iddew, hawl awtomatig i fyw yn Israel, am fod Israel yn wladwriaeth Iddewig sy'n cydnabod 'hawl i ddychwelyd' i Iddewon yn unig. Gallai Ra'ed fod wedi byw yn Efrog Newydd neu Florida neu Lundain gydol ei oes, heb unrhyw gysylltiad, teuluol nac arall, ag Israel, a dal i 'wneud Aliyah' i Israel a byw yno'n barhaol.

O ganlyniad i'r ddeddf hon, nid oedd gan Mair unrhyw ddewis ond mynd i fyw gyda Rae'd ym Methlehem ar ôl priodi. Yn waeth fyth: pan aethant ar eu mis mêl, golygai'r cyfyngu ar deithio y bu'n rhaid i Mair hedfan o Tel Aviv, a Ra'ed o Amman yng Ngwlad yr Iorrdonen. Nid yw carwriaeth yn beth mor syml i Balestinaid ag y mae i'r gweddill ohonom!

A hithau erbyn hyn yn gymuned fechan iawn, mae Cristnogion Palestina, ar y naill ochr a'r llall i'r ffin, wedi dioddef anffafraeth, goresgyniad ac ansefydlogrwydd gwleidyddol. Mae eu hanawsterau eraill yn cynnwys gweld eu tir yn cael ei feddiannu, eu tai'n cael eu dymchwel, cyfyngu ar eu teithio (gyda rheoliadau milwrol) a chyfyngu neu hyd yn oed wrthod eu hawl i ymweld â Lleoedd Sanctaidd Jerwsalem. Dyna pam yr allfudodd llawer ohonynt. Rhaid inni weddio y bydd Cristnogion Palestina yn aros yn eu mamwlad ac yn parhau i fod yn wir dystion i Iesu yn eu cymunedau.

Y tu allan i Eglwys y Beddrod Sanctaidd, Jerwsalem



Cwestiynau i'w trafod

1. Sut yr ydych yn ymateb i'r sefyllfa y mae Cristnogion Palestina yn ei hwynebu heddiw?
2. A yw'n bosibl i Jerwsalem gael ei hanrhydeddu gan dair crefydd heb fod gwrthdaro?
3. Pe na bai cymuned Gristnogol hyfyw yn Jerwsalem a'r Tiriogaethau Palestinaidd, pa effaith a gâi hynny ar Gristnogaeth?

Gweddi

Dduw iachaol,
wrth inni ddynesu at Jerwsalem gyda Iesu
bydded inni gofio bob amser
am drallodion a dioddefiadau dy eglwys
yn y wlad y byddwn yn aml yn ei galw'n 'sanctaidd'.
Gweddiwn ar iti glywed cri ei phobl
a phrysuro'r dydd pan lifa'r cenedloedd i mewn i'th
Ddinas Sanctaidd
ac y bydd pawb yn byw mewn heddwch.
Gweddiwn hyn yn enw Iesu Grist.
Amen.

being an Israeli citizen, albeit from a Palestinian Arab background, Mary has no right to bring a Palestinian husband into Israel. This is because an Israeli law called the 2003 Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law specifically blocks Palestinian spouses from entry into and residence rights in Israel. Just because they are Palestinian! No wonder many people even in Israel regard the Law as discriminatory. However, several challenges to the Law in Israel's High and Supreme Courts have failed.

The irony is that if Ra'ed were Jewish, he would have an automatic right to live in Israel, as it is a Jewish state which recognises a 'right of return' for Jewish people only. Ra'ed could have lived in New York or Florida or London all his life and have absolutely no family or other connection with Israel, but he could still as a Jew 'make Aliyah' to Israel and live there permanently.

As a result of this law, the only choice was for Mary to go and live with Ra'ed in Bethlehem after they were married. But worse than that: when they went on honeymoon, travel restrictions meant that Mary had to fly via Tel Aviv while Ra'ed had to travel via Amman in Jordan. Romance for Palestinian Christians is not as straightforward as it is for the rest of us!

Being nowadays a very small community, Palestinian Christians on both sides of the separation barrier have borne the brunt of discrimination, occupation and political instability. Other challenges include having their land seized or houses demolished, travel restrictions (including military checkpoints) and having restricted (or even denied) access to the Holy Places in Jerusalem. This is why so many Palestinian Christians have emigrated. Our prayer must be that the Christians of Palestine remain in their homeland and continue to be an active presence in their communities, and a real witness to Jesus.

Outside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem



Questions for discussion

1. How do you respond to the present situation faced by Palestinian Christians?
2. Is it possible for Jerusalem to be honoured as a holy city by three faiths without there being conflict?
3. If there ceased to be a viable Christian community in Jerusalem and the Palestinian Territories, what impact would that have on Christianity?

Prayer

Redeeming God,
 as we approach Jerusalem with Jesus
 May we be ever mindful
 Of the continuing trials and sufferings of your church
 in the land that we often call 'holy'.
 Hear their cries, we pray
 and hasten the day when the nations will stream to your
 Holy City
 and all will live in peace.
 This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ.
 Amen.