

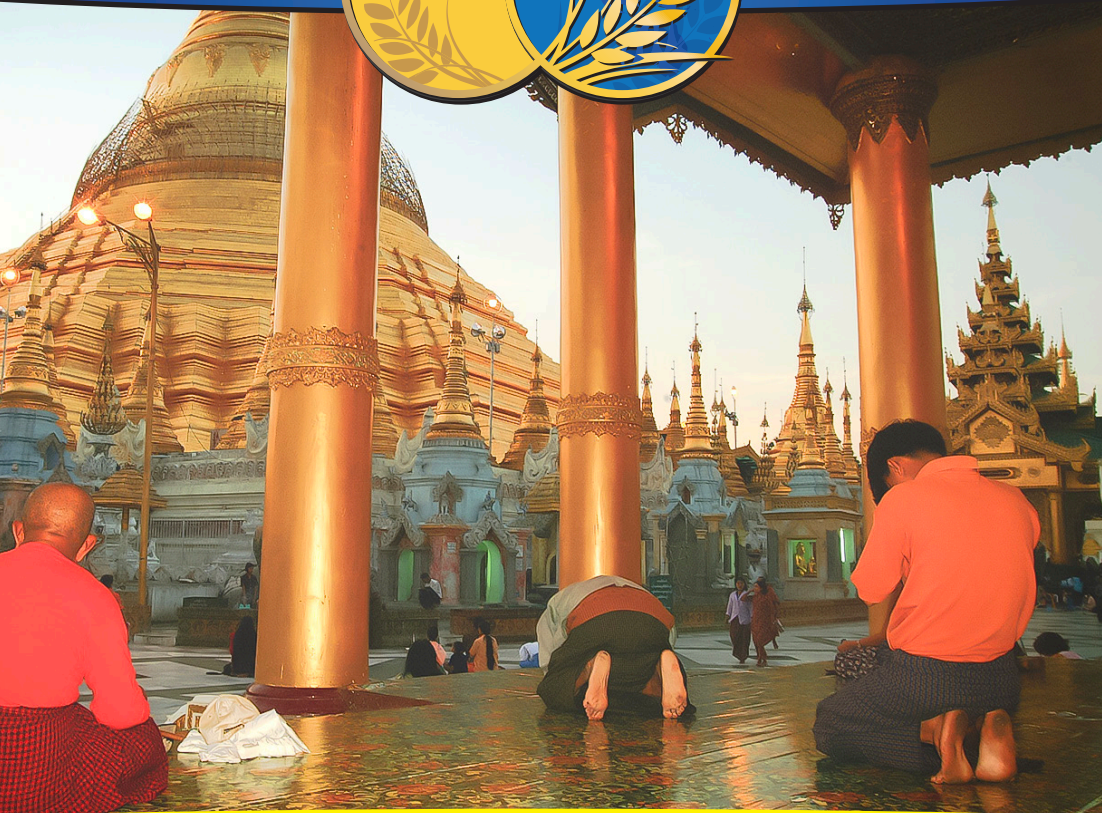
"PUT IN THE SICKLE, FOR THE HARVEST HAS COME!" MARK 4:29

Asia Harvest

APRIL 2023



NEWSLETTER #187



REVIVAL IN MYANMAR

A Strategic Opportunity to Impact a Whole Country

ASIAHARVEST.ORG • OFFICE@ASIAHARVEST.ORG



From the Frontlines

IN THIS NEWSLETTER WE ARE EXCITED to share what the Living God has been doing in Myanmar, which was formerly known as Burma. (By the way, the local name for the country has always been Myanmar, but the British called it Burma during the colonial era. The majority Buddhist people group are known as both “Myen” and “Bama,” which gave rise to their dual names.

The first Evangelical missionary to set foot in Myanmar was Adoniram Judson of Massachusetts, who arrived in 1813, aged 25, and is regarded as “America’s first foreign missionary.” Judson remained in Myanmar for 37 years, before he died on board a ship in 1850. During those 37 years of pioneer service, he only returned to America once.

Adoniram Judson gave every ounce of his life to serving Jesus Christ and the people of Myanmar. An insight into the level of wholehearted dedication he had can be seen in the classic letter he wrote to the father of his first wife, Ann, asking for his daughter’s hand in marriage.

Judson’s letter stands in stark contrast with much of Western Christianity today, where personal safety and comfort are placed first. He wrote:

FRONT COVER:

The famous Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon, Myanmar. The pagoda is the symbol and seat of Buddhist power in the country, which holds more than 30 million Burmese people spiritually captive.

*“The people who know
their God shall be
strong and carry out
great exploits.”*

(Daniel 11:32b)

*“They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of
their testimony;
they did not love their lives
so much as to shrink
from death.”*

(Revelation 12:11)

*“I have now to ask, whether you can
consent to part with your daughter
early next spring, to see her no more
in this world; whether you can consent
to her departure, and her subjection
to the hardships and sufferings of
a missionary life; whether you can
consent to her exposure to the dangers
of the ocean; to the fatal influence
of the southern climate of Burma;
to every kind of want and distress;
to degradation, insult, persecution,
and perhaps a violent death.”*

Remarkably, Ann's father read Adoniram Judson's letter and willingly agreed to give his beloved daughter to him in marriage.

Judson's words, by the way, were not an exaggeration. Ann had a brief and painful life in Burma, wracked by tropical disease and violence, and she suffered gnawing loneliness when her husband was falsely accused of being a British spy. While he was being tortured in prison for three years, Ann moved to a little shack outside the prison gates so she could visit her husband more easily.

The most difficult trial Ann endured was the personal heartache she carried. Her first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage; their son Roger died when he was eight months old; and baby daughter Maria died six months after Ann perished from smallpox at the age of 36.

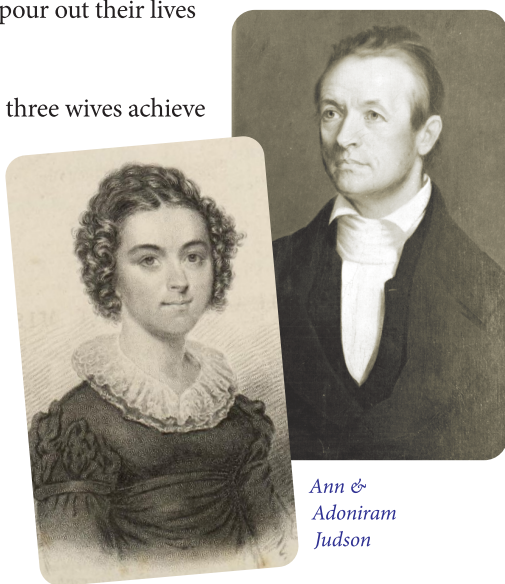
Meanwhile, when he was not behind bars, Judson preached the Gospel and translated the Scriptures for seven long years before he won his first convert to Christ. He soldiered on, enduring unbelievable hardships for the Name of Jesus. In 1834 he married a widow, Sarah, but their union ended when she died of illness ten years later.

The following year Judson married his third wife, Emily. She gave birth to a son, Charles, who only lived a few hours. Judson himself died in 1850, and Emily returned to the United States where she perished four years later, aged 36.

On the surface, it might appear that these brave pioneer missionaries wasted their lives, when they could have remained at home and enjoyed a more comfortable existence. But, like the Apostle Paul, they were willing to pour out their lives "like a drink offering" to God (Philippians 2:17).

Did Adoniram Judson and the brief lives of his three wives achieve anything of note for the kingdom of God? Read on, and you will discover that their labors were not in vain, as the Lord Jesus never lets a sacrificial life go unrewarded.

Incredibly, more than 170 years after Adoniram Judson's death, good fruit continues to grow from his life and ministry, and the **30 million Burmese people have begun to turn to the Lord in significant numbers for the first time in history.** ☪



*Ann &
Adoniram
Judson*



A Long-Awaited Breakthrough

Revival is Stirring the Burmese People!

DURING THE 37 YEARS Adoniram Judson served God in Myanmar, an interesting dichotomy took place.

Whereas he focused on reaching the cultured Buddhist Burmese people, with little apparent success, he took under his wing a rough character named Ko Tha Byu. He was a member of the Karen tribe, who at the time were considered the most backward and uncivilized people group in the country.

Ko had been a violent robber and murderer in his younger years, but after becoming Judson's servant he became fully convinced of the claims of Jesus Christ. Judson loved him and gave him the name Tha Byu, meaning "little brother."

Often, as Judson spent countless hours traveling around the nation debating with Buddhist monks and educated Burmese people, Ko would quietly sit around the campfires and share the Gospel with small numbers of Karen people in each location.

While it took Judson seven years to win his first Burmese convert, Ko Tha Byu led handfults of Karen families to Christ, and soon small pockets of believers had been established across a widespread area.

The Holy Spirit breathed life into the work, and after 12 years a total of 1,270 Karen had believed in Jesus and been baptized, plus many people from other tribes.

Over the past 30 years *Asia Harvest* workers have served the people of Myanmar, providing hundreds of thousands of Bibles in numerous languages.

For nearly two centuries, Christianity in Myanmar has followed the same general pattern, with the poor tribal groups in the country's border areas often warmly embracing the Gospel, while the proud majority Burmese have proved resistant. In Myanmar, many tribes have large Christian populations, but the 31 million Burmese people have continued to live and die apart from God, with less than half of one percent estimated to be Christians today.

One of the greatest contributions Adoniram Judson made for the kingdom of God was to translate the Scriptures into Burmese. The task was so intense that it often felt like every demonic power in the land had been mobilized to stop him.

Judson persevered, and the first Burmese Bible rolled off the printing press in 1835.

HEAVEN-SENT REVIVAL COMES TO MYANMAR

If you access news from Asia, you will know that for decades—and especially during the past four or five years—the military junta that rules Myanmar has increasingly committed atrocities against their own people.

Whatever chaos your country may have faced during the last few years of Covid lockdowns, it is probably little compared to the people of Myanmar, who in addition to Covid restrictions, have been forced to endure civil war, a genocidal campaign by the government, indiscriminate shooting of people in the streets, starvation, deprivation, economic collapse, and a military that has systematically raped and slaughtered many segments of the population, especially in the Christian tribal areas.

There is clear evidence that the evil genocide sweeping Myanmar has been conducted with the explicit help of the Chinese Communist Party, which seems to view Myanmar as a virtual vassal state of China. The bullets, bombs, tanks, and even air assaults have been done with machinery supplied by China.

The stories and pictures we have seen from Myanmar are too gruesome to share here.

Amid this chaos, the stubborn pride that has kept generations of Buddhist Burmese from believing in Jesus Christ has been eroded, and in their state of humiliation and brokenness, tens of thousands of Burmese have repented and given their lives to God.

(Continued...)

Truly, *“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”* (James 4:6)

From across the densely populated plains of Myanmar—inhabited by Buddhist peoples like the Burmese, Chaungtha, Mon and Rakhine—reports have emerged of families and sometimes whole communities being transformed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

People who were dead in their sins have been given new hearts; the hopeless now have hope and purpose in their lives; families that have worshipped idols for centuries are now praising the Living God; and many broken people are being put back together as the Lord Jesus has pity on the suffering Burmese and declares: *“I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”* (Romans 9:15)

A REVIVAL OF BASIC, BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY

Despite the wonderful breakthrough among groups in Myanmar that have long been considered resistant to the Gospel, the revival at this stage is numerically small compared to the tens of millions of lost Buddhist people there. But it is a blessed start.

Please pray the Holy Spirit will continue to fan the flames, and that millions of people throughout Myanmar will find Christ and glorify His Name.

God is doing a new thing through this revival. In the two centuries since Adoniram Judson arrived in Myanmar, the Christian landscape in the country became very denominational, reflecting many of the divisions seen in the Western world.

Countless Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican, Assemblies of God, and other churches filled the land. The faith of many Christians became nominal and dry, however, and the Body of Christ was in desperate need of a heavenly visitation.

The current revival has almost exclusively occurred through house church discipleship networks, where faith has been stripped of many man-made religious traditions and brought back to its basic, pure form. Gone is the division between paid clergy and “laymen.”

Now, new believers from this revival are considered *“kings and priests to serve our God”* (Revelation 5:10), and all members of the Body of Christ are encouraged to use their God-given gifts to build up others and to reach the lost.

The current move of God is also unlikely to produce a single visible church building.

Myanmar does not need one more cathedral or church building. Now, tens of thousands of newly redeemed brothers and sisters with a simple yet powerful faith gather in homes, basements, shops, halls, thatch huts, teahouses, or wherever else they may choose to meet.

Here at *Asia Harvest*, we have never had any interest in funding church buildings or visible places of worship. In fact, in the 35 years we have been serving in Asia, we have helped local believers plant thousands of fellowships of vibrant believers, but not once have we ever funded or constructed a church building.

There are practical reasons for our stance. In the countries we serve in, church-going Christians are easily identified and persecuted by militant Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, or Communists. Our goal when we help Asian believers establish a fellowship is that it is flexible from the start and able to go “underground” as soon as it needs to. It’s very difficult for the enemies of the Cross to destroy God’s children when they cannot locate them easily and there are no buildings adorned with crosses that point the way for the persecutors to go.

The nature of the current revival, which has been gathering steam for several years, is that many thousands of sinners have repented and surrendered to Jesus Christ. Each believer then disciples others, and in that way the Gospel has spread rapidly to their friends and relatives, who then share it with their contacts.

Like every movement where many people come to faith there are challenges, but the Holy Spirit has brought peace and love to communities that for centuries had been trapped in spiritual darkness and depravity. 

In this remarkable recent photo from Myanmar, new believers—mostly people from a Buddhist background—joyfully receive Burmese Bibles for the first time. Similar scenes are being repeated throughout the country as revival spreads.



A Rare Opportunity to Impact an Entire Country

Although no one except God currently knows the extent of the revival in Myanmar, what we can tell you is that when our co-workers there (who we have known for 30 years) began to field requests for Burmese Bibles, in a short space of time requests flooded in from more than 100 different Myanmar church and ministry leaders, begging for the Word of God so that new believers could be established in the faith and the gains from the revival would not fall by the wayside.

NOTE: Although the Bible Society exists in Myanmar, Bibles tend to be very difficult to obtain from them and are priced so high that most normal believers cannot afford to buy a single copy.

All Bibles provided by *Asia Harvest* are distributed free of charge to believers, via existing ministries, which have to account for what they receive by sending us reports and photos of their distributions.



As a result of this first round of requests, we have printed 80,000 full Burmese Bibles, and as you read this newsletter they are being distributed to grateful believers throughout Myanmar.

At \$3 each, the amount of money needed to do such a project soon becomes large, but we are thankful for our supporters who have prayed and given to our *Asia Bible Fund*, which allows us to implement large printings like this.

After the initial 80,000 Bibles have been

distributed and reports have been received, we envisage there will be a need for at least another 80,000 Burmese Bibles, plus thousands more in other minority languages. We will then evaluate the project, but in our experience in China and other parts of Asia, when much needed Bibles reach thirsty and desperate new Christians, the result is that the Scriptures act like fuel being added to a fire, causing the blaze to burn much brighter.

This, in turn, results in a surge in the number of new believers, who also need Bibles, and so the need escalates.

As we were writing this newsletter, our long-term Myanmar Bible co-workers sent us this message:

“Including the 80,000 now being distributed, we have received requests to print at least 150,000 more Burmese Bibles. Because of the civil war many people are turning to Christ. Buddhism doesn’t help the heart, but Jesus does.”

The main role of Asia Harvest in this move of God in Myanmar is to provide the Word of God to new believers. We expect to be busy doing this for at least the next few years. Please pray with us for the success of this project, so that God’s flock may be spiritually nourished and anchored in truth and grace.

We hope to give updates on the revival and testimonies from Burmese believers in future newsletters.

It is a great privilege to be involved, and we see it as a wonderful, God-given opportunity to impact not only a people group, but an entire country for the kingdom of God.



ASIA BIBLE FUND

FEEDING HUNGRY BELIEVERS AND EQUIPPING THEM FOR SERVICE

We invite you to join hands with us in praying for the revival in Myanmar.

Please pray that all 150 people groups there will soon have vibrant Christian communities that are reaching the lost and glorifying the Living God.

If you would like to support our Burmese Bible project, please fill out the yellow response form in this newsletter and send it back along with your gift.

Each Bible costs just \$3 to print and deliver!

Alternatively, one-time or monthly donations to the Asia Bible Fund or our other projects can be made via our secure website:



AsiaHarvest.ORG



WHERE NEEDED MOST

AS YOU CONSIDER THE BEST WAY TO GIVE TO THE WORK OF ASIA HARVEST, PLEASE CONSIDER A GIFT TO THIS CRUCIAL FUND

Donations allocated this way enable us to cover all expenses and overhead costs, and to allocate funds to the projects in greatest need at any given time, so that we can plan ahead with confidence, and have resources available whenever a sudden need emerges.



THE CHILDREN'S FUND

**YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT HAS REACHED
206,767 CHILDREN THROUGHOUT ASIA SO FAR**

The Children's Fund introduces children to Jesus in India, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and a host of other Asian countries.

Activities include printing and distributing Gospel literature designed for children, funding Sunday school training classes, providing free surgeries for those with special needs, and generally lifting children out of spiritual and physical poverty.

It costs an average of just \$10 to help reach a child for Christ.



ASIA BIBLE FUND

CURRENT TOTAL: 19,134,787 BIBLES PRINTED IN 156 LANGUAGES

The Asia Bible Fund provides the Scriptures in numerous languages of China, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and anywhere in Asia where God's people need His Word. These Bibles are distributed free of charge, equipping the Body of Christ and helping fuel the flames of revival.

Each Bible costs just \$3 to print and deliver. We also print millions of Gospel booklets for evangelism through this project.



LMF

LIVING MARTYRS' FUND

**BECAUSE OF YOUR PARTNERSHIP WE ARE
CURRENTLY SUPPORTING 804 LIVING MARTYRS**

The Living Martyrs' Fund supports Christian widows and church leaders and their families throughout Asia who are unable to work because of injuries or illness caused by persecution.

They and their families face extreme poverty and hardship. Through a gift of \$25 per month you can help support one of these living martyrs.



AWF

ASIAN WORKERS' FUND

**WE CURRENTLY SUPPORT 1,598 ASIAN EVANGELISTS
AMONG 1,219 UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS**

The Asian Workers' Fund supports indigenous church-planting evangelists among unreached Asian tribes and ethnic groups. These disciples have committed their whole lives to the Gospel but are hindered by lack of finances. To date, the evangelists we help have reportedly led 1,029,619 people to faith in Jesus Christ. You can help support these dedicated workers for \$25 per month each.

A prayer card and occasional updates are sent to all regular supporters of this project.



PRF

PERSECUTION & RELIEF FUND

TRANSFORMING LIVES FROM ASHES TO BEAUTY WITH GOD'S LOVE

Over the years Asia Harvest has provided assistance to the victims of natural disasters that have struck Asia. In addition to providing aid through medicine, tents, blankets, food and water, rebuilding homes etc., the Christians we partner with take every opportunity to share the Gospel, and many people have come to know Jesus Christ.

This project also provides physical and spiritual relief to Christian lepers, communities and families throughout Asia who are in desperate need.





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