

TIBI HERALD

Editor

Steve Austin
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THIS ISSUE

**TIBI graduates largest class
Israel/Jordan 2023
Back to Cuba (finally!)**

*“Be diligent in these
matters...watch your life and
doctrine closely...persevere in
them.”*

I Timothy 4:15-16

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TIBI Graduates Largest Class Ever!



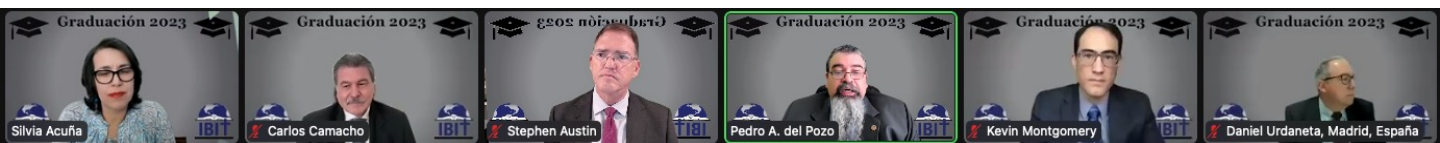
On Saturday, July 22, TIBI celebrated its 20th graduation, with our largest class ever. There were 28 men and women from 19 cities in 8 different countries. Of this group, 7 of the graduates were women, also a blessing.

Sadly, a lady named Rosse Aristizabal, who had started with this group in August 2021, passed away in March this year. TIBI granted her an honorary bachelors degree and spent time remembering some of her best qualities.

One of the 28 was Jesús Blanco, who is from western Cuba. He did all the work with our coordinators in Cuba, and was present by Zoom—the first time a student from Cuba has been at a Zoom graduation.

There were about 30 sites with students and the TIBI admin team present in the Zoom classroom. At least 75 additional people watched on the live streaming on our YouTube channel. In a number of sites, the students' families, friends, or church members were also there to cheer on the students, and lay hands on them in blessing during the final prayer, as is our custom.

As always, each class has special accomplishments and characteristics. During their two years, these men and women performed at least 121 baptisms and planted at least two new congregations. We say "at least" because these numbers are only the ones reported by our scholarship students; however, more than half the graduating class were not scholarship students, and we're sure they were active in baptizing and church planting as well.



TIBI's admin team

Israel/Jordan 2023

From June 29-July 12, TIBI hosted its 9th trip to Israel. The first two and a half days were unprecedented in our experience, as our flights were cancelled, and we were unable to get to Amman till 60 hours later. The airlines also lost the luggage of most of the group, and we didn't get it back till we returned home.



Capernaum and the Sea



Tranquil Garden of Gethsemane

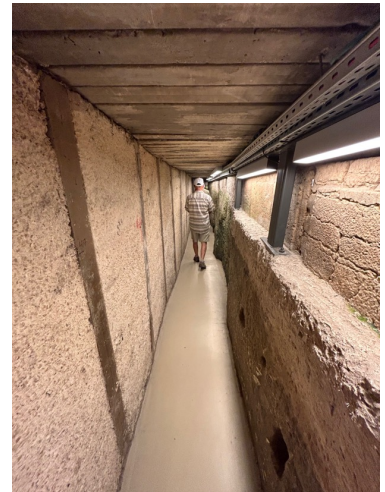


Orthodox Jews studying at the Wall

When we finally got on the bus in Amman, we went straight to Petra, then on to the southern border of Jordan, crossed over the Israel, and arrived at the Dead Sea that night—also dead on our feet from most of three days in airports, layovers, and sleepless nights.

The rest of the trip, except for buying a remarkable quantity of T-shirts and doing repeated laundry, was wonderful, as we saw all the sites we had planned in Judea, Jerusalem, Galilee, the North, the Golan Heights, and the coast. Our return trip to the States was incredibly smooth compared to the journey over! And finally our bags were all waiting for us when we got back to our airports.

We always see something new. This trip, one of the new places was at Herodion, where only months ago they reopened what used to be the main entrance into the fortress-palace—an enormously long, high staircase leading into the heart of the palace (left). Then at the souvenir shop of Kando, who received the first of the historic Dead Sea scrolls, Kando's grandson Sibley welcomed us warmly. He also introduced us to Abdul, who was one of the grandsons of the Bedouin who found the first scroll in a cave and brought it to Kando. (middle—notice one of the t-shirts Steve bought to replace non-existent luggage). Finally, we went through the Rabbinical Tunnel at the foot of the western wall, running 300 meters south to north along the original Herodian Temple Mount. (right)



Though we have not confirmed it yet, we would like to take our next trip to Turkey and Greece, for the first time ever, in the summer of 2025. Stay tuned for details—you would be welcome to join us!

Back to Cuba (finally!)

When we left Cuba in April 2019 after my 13th trip to Cuba, we never dreamed that it would be four years till we returned. But the pandemic, hurricanes, and health problems postponed the next three trips. Finally in May, Carlos Camacho, our field work supervisor, and Steve Austin spent 3 days training 30 church leaders from 4 provinces of Cuba. (next page, left).

We also celebrated a graduation of 10 students who had completed their Christian Worker certificate, consisting of 16 courses of Bible text and ministry. (below right). As mentioned above, one student, Jesus Blanco, finished the full 40-course bachelors degree. Since he couldn't be with us that day in Matanzas, he participated in last week's Zoom graduation.

We admire tremendously the spirit of our Cuban brothers and sisters. In spite of difficult circumstances, they have persevered and excelled. They are hungry and thirsty for knowledge and skills which will help them be more effective in their churches and communities. It is a privilege and an honor to talk to them and learn from them. Whenever I go to Cuba, we always feel like we learn more from them and their example, than they do from me.

After the graduation, we also rejoiced with one couple, Hugo and Ana, who made the decision to be baptized during this week. It was a wonderful time of celebration and fellowship. (below middle)

With great effort, perseverance, and creativity, this week was a wonderful blessing to everyone involved. We ask that you pray for them, for the new students, new graduates, and new brother and sister in Christ as they continue their lives and ministries. Please pray also for Tony and Liudmila Fernandez as they lead their amazing ministries.



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