

Spiritual Landscape

Once home to the seven churches of Revelation and the center of gravity for early Christian civilization within which the great creeds were formulated, Turkey may be the largest least evangelized country on earth.

Among 55 million Turks, 14 million Kurds, and one million Arabs, about 1500 Evangelicals meet in fewer than two dozen churches. Greek and Armenian minorities supply another 90,000 Christians of Orthodox and Catholic persuasions. Consequently, Turkey has roughly one tiny church for every three million people.

What happened?

Asia Minor was Islamicized in much the same way that North America was Christianized. As Europeans overwhelmed and displaced American Indians, so the Central Asian Turkish tribes overwhelmed and displaced the natives of Asia Minor; but not without bitter fighting.

As recently as 1900, Turkey was 22% Christian. That was before three million independence seeking Armenians were exterminated in genocide.

When the Seljuk Turks, operating from Baghdad, expanded their empire into the "holy land," Christian Europe fought for two centuries with the Crusades to hold them back.

Then the Ottoman tribe of Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453 and replaced the Byzantine Empire with their own, which by 1600 reached deep into Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

While in Central Asia, the Turkish tribes had followed either Animism (worshiping many gods in nature) or the Nestorian cult of Christianity (denying the full divinity of Jesus). As they absorbed Islam and settled new lands, mystical elements of their heritage like Whirling Dervishes and the Evil Eye remained. Accordingly, even today, Turkish religion at the

level of daily living consists more of superstition and folk magic than of keeping the pillars of Islam.

Stacked upon layers of preceding civilizations and perched on the fault line between East and West, cultural forces in modern



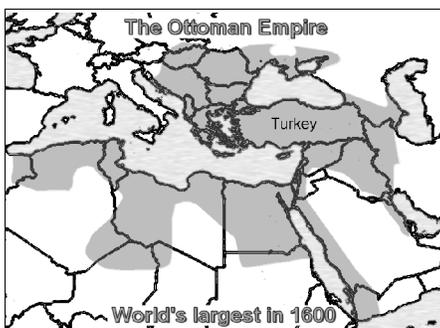
Turkey clash like tectonic plates. Kurdish separatists fight for independence in the impoverished east. Large numbers are fleeing the backward countryside to overpopulated industrial cities. Secular progressives agitate to speed modernization, while radical fundamentalists press for strict Muslim law amidst widespread corruption and moral decay.

The earthquake of August 17, 1999 gives us a metaphor for the cultural upheaval. By it, the Turks mark time – "before the earthquake and after the earthquake," and through the cracked social fabric it symbolizes, an indigenous church has been emerging.

Fourteen years ago Turkey had only two Evangelical congregations. These were in Istanbul. Today over a dozen fellowships meet in owned or rented properties throughout the country, and several other fledgling groups meet in homes. By establishing legal identities, Turkish Christians are gaining confidence and becoming more mainstream. Arrests and police harassment continue, but the courts are supporting religious freedom and attitudes are changing.

For centuries, popular opinion in Turkey has been that Christianity was subversive. Turks have felt about relatives following Jesus the way you and I might feel about a son or daughter becoming homosexual. Channeling some earthquake relief through a handful of Turkish congregations gave Turkish believers their first positive high profile since the Crusades and a big opportunity to vindicate themselves. A Christian FM radio station now broadcasts 24 hours a day in Europe's largest metropolis, Istanbul, and annual demand for Turkish language New Testaments and Bible study material steadily increases.

Asia Minor stands at a crossroads unprecedented since the days of the Apostle Paul. Seventy percent of its people live in urban centers and forty percent are under fifteen years old. Istanbul's skyline reveals its emptiness and thirst. In it thousands of minarets reach towards heaven along with tens of thousands more satellite dishes. While Islam calls from the one and secular paganism beams into the other, the church of Jesus is quietly growing.



Resource Contact Information

Resource	Contact Info
Turkish Language Bible Courses	www.kutsalkitap.org
On-line Turkish Language Scriptures	www.incil.com www.funet.fi/pub/doc/bible/html/turkish
Turkish Language Gospel Radio	www.radyokumru.com 1-719-548-7490 www.wb2000.org
Testimonies and Articles in Turkish	www.answering-islam.org/Turkish
Four Spiritual Laws in Turkish	www.greatcom.org/laws/languages.html
Turkish Language Audio Tapes: Audio Scriptures International Gospel Recordings	1-760-745-8105 www.gospelcom.net/asi 1-213-250-0207 http://members.aol.com/glorenet/
Turkish Language Videos: <i>Jesus Video</i> , JESUS Film Project <i>The Ransom</i> , MultiLanguage Media <i>Yoneko</i> , InterComm <i>Ali and Silvana</i> , Firm Foundation Trust	1-800-560-8713 www.jesusfilm.org 1-717-738-0582 www.multilanguage.com 1-219-267-5834 14 Hurst Way, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1QN, England
Turkish Language Scriptures: International Bible Society American Bible Society Scripture Gift Mission	1-800-524-1588 www.gospelcom.net/ibs 1-800-322-4253 www.americanbible.org 1-877-873-2746 www.gospelcom.net/asgm
Turkish Language Christian Books: Multi-Language Media World Missionary Press	1-717-738-0582 www.multilanguage.com 1-219-831-2111 www.wmpress.org
Turkish Language Tracts: Chick Publications Fellowship Tract League No Frontiers (United Kingdom)	1-909-987-0771 www.chick.com/catalog/TractLookUp.asp 1-513-494-1075 www.biblebelievers.com/FTL1.html 44 (0) 1424-772814 www.nofrontiers.com/
Pen-Pal Ministry to Turks	1-970-434-1942 www.missionsalive.org/two
Video Profile on Turkey	1-970-434-1942 www.missionsalive.org/two
Online Turkish Resource Directory	www.missionresources.com/turkish.html

Ministry Contact Information

Ministry	Agency	Contact Info
Education	Tyrannus Bible School	www.tyrannus-bibleschool.org/
Mobilization & Networking	Turkish World Outreach International Turkey Network	1-970-434-1942 www.missionsalive.org/two www.itnet.org
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Ministry to Expatriates in Turkey	Cleft of the Rock	1-800-755-7955 www.cleftoftherock.org
Evangelism & Church Planting	Frontiers Pioneers Mission to Unreached Peoples	1-800 GO-2-THEM www.frontiers.org 1-800-755-7284 www.pioneers.org 1-888-847-6950 www.mup.org

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