

“Welcome Home”: A Biblical Response to the Ukraine Crisis

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It has been an, um, *interesting* experience to be in Belarus, in the former Soviet Union, for two weeks while their next-door neighbor Ukraine was shaken by civil unrest, a takeover by angry citizens, the disappearance of their president who showed up in Moscow, and then their invasion and occupation by Russian troops. At the conclusion of one Sunday's worship service, the pastor led us in prayer for Ukraine, which had just called up all eligible men for military service and was preparing for war if need be.

One thing that made it um, *interesting*, for us as Americans was to find that we didn't have access to American websites of particular political views, and even Google search was blocked.

I was so thankful for English-speaking friends who were able to give us their perspective on the nearby tinderbox.

I learned that Ukraine is divided between the western portion of the country, which sees itself as European, and the eastern part, which feels more Russian. There is still some unhappiness over Nikita Krushchev's decision to award the Crimean peninsula to Ukraine, which didn't seem like such a big deal when it was all part of the U.S.S.R., before the fall of the Soviet system in 1991.

What struck me about all this was the role of identity and allegiance to nations. As we prayed for the Christians in Ukraine and Belarus and Russia, I thought about the fact that for believers in Jesus, no matter where we live, our identity

should always be first citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), and our allegiance to Jesus as our head.

As soon as we landed, I tweeted this: “Talked to a young Belarusian who loved his country so much more after visiting Europe. USA, I love you as least 2x as much. #WelcomeHome.” I do love and appreciate my country (especially flushable toilet paper and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Oh, and TexMex), but I am very aware that I have much more in common with my believing brothers and sisters around the world whose language I don’t understand but whose heart to worship Jesus I share.

A hundred years from today I won’t be an American, I will be a fully alive, unbelievably glorious citizen of heaven. That’s my true identity, my greater allegiance, and I’m sticking with it. Even as tears come to my eyes when U.S. officials check my passport and say, “Welcome home.”

That is NOTHING compared to the “Welcome home” that awaits me in my ultimate home in heaven.

This blog post originally appeared at
blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_bohlin/welcome_home