

Chapter 8

Bolivia

— By David Wilson —

Bolivia is a landlocked country located in South America, situated between Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, and Peru. Almost two-thirds of the population is indigenous (Indian), and almost one-third is Mestizo (mixed Indian and European). Independence from Spain came in 1825 after a long war, but there have been over 200 coups since. Since 1985, democratic governments have helped stabilize the country, but about 50 percent of the world's cocaine is grown there. Inca ruins show how animal and human sacrifices were offered. The spiritual darkness of centuries is now being broken, and evangelicals have grown to about 12 percent.



ROBSON, CHRIS AND FAMILY

Bruno Costa, the OAC Brazilian National Director, met Robson when they were studying in the same Bible college. After they graduated, Robson shared with Bruno how he felt led to go to Bolivia. He wanted to study medicine at their reasonably priced medical university and also to do an OAC ministry. He joined OAC Brazil, was trained by Bruno, and in August 2013, he and his wife, Cristhiane (Chris), went by faith to Bolivia. They settled in Santa Cruz, the largest and fastest-growing city in Bolivia, with a population of 1.6 million. Six months later, Bruno brought two church teams from Brazil to work with Robson. I joined them along with David Proano from OAC Ecuador, who interpreted for me. We found a ripe harvest field, as up to 200 watched the Brazilian team

do a drama in the plaza and listened intently to the gospel being proclaimed. Many prayed to trust Christ as Savior.

Over 50 percent of Bolivia is under 19, making the schools an important mission field. We found the schools wide open for presentations of the gospel and the students very responsive. Neighborhood outreaches also turned out to be a harvest field. In one housing subdivision, a pastor who was planting a church there invited us to come to do outreach. Although it rained, about 80 percent of the people living there turned out to see our film and hear the preaching. People prayed to trust Christ, and the pastor invited them to his new church in the subdivision.



OPEN-AIR MEETING IN SANTA CRUZ

We all sensed that this was truly the time to establish an OAC branch in Bolivia. Robson felt led to abandon his plans to study medicine to become our full-time pioneer evangelist. So, OAC Brazil and our Overseas Ministry branch partnered to open the new OAC branch in Bolivia. God miraculously provided a new double-cab truck through a couple in Florida, and the Brazilian teams provided all the film equipment.

In the country of Bolivia, there is a tribe of Indians called the “Yuquis.” When the first missionaries went to reach them, they were shot with arrows. Eventually, however, they were able to share the gospel, and some believed. Then the missionaries had to leave, and no one had visited these people since that time. In January 2015, Robson, Bruno, and a Brazilian team were holding an open-air meeting in Santa Cruz,



A YUQUIS TRIBE'S BELIEVER BEING BAPTIZED BY PASTOR SLEMON

when three from this same tribe walked into their meeting. God's Word had not returned void. They had never forgotten the missionaries who taught them from the Bible. Now the children and grandchildren wanted to know more about God's Word. Pastor Slemon, who was helping Robson, invited them to come to church the next day. Fourteen of them came to the service! They asked Robson and Pastor Slemon to visit their tribe in the jungle, which they did. Hungry hearts listened to their teaching from the Bible. Twenty-two were baptized. More visits were made, and used clothes (they now wore clothes) and medicine were also taken to them.

When Bruno attended a missions conference in Atlanta, he met one of the original



YUQUIS TRIBE'S PEOPLE WATCH THE FILM ON JESUS

missionaries (Jack) who had been on the team that reached these people 30 years before. This missionary cried as he listened to the story of what the Lord had been doing in this tribe and rejoiced to know that his work 30 years before had not been in vain!

On my second visit to Bolivia, I wanted to see this tribe. Robson,

Sleman, David Proano, and I traveled five hours in the OAC truck to the jungle. What a great joy it was to meet these precious Yuquis people! At night, we used our generator, and they all gathered to watch our film on Jesus. David translated my message on the crucifixion and resurrection, and all acknowledged that they had put their faith in Jesus as Savior. Pastor Sleman encouraged them, and their joyful singing of Christian choruses rang out through the jungle. The fellowship was precious as we worshipped God with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We saw the land they had cleared for a church. Two years later, the church building was constructed by professionals, paid for by government funds given for the benefit of the community. Pastor Sleman continues to visit and conduct services, and he is looking for God's man to train to be their pastor. The next morning, as we packed our tent and waved goodbye, we rejoiced over what God had done in this tribe. He had spared another generation of Yuquis to hear and accept the good news of salvation. Truly, His Word has accomplished the purpose for which it was sent (Isaiah 57:11).



SLEMAN AND ROBSON WITH THE OAC TRUCK

The Presbyterian Medical School, where Robson was originally going to study, invites OAC to preach there from time to time to their 4,000 students. Robson continues to reach hundreds in the open-air and school assemblies, and even in a drug rehabilitation center. In 2016, he reached 26,000 people. Church teams continue to come with Bruno



MEDICAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS HEAR THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

from Brazil to work with Robson. OAC Bolivia is in the process of being registered with the government. This is proving to be a difficult task due to the President's ban on registering non-government organizations.

OAC Brazil has sent out its first missionaries to a foreign country. Nearly all of Robson and Chris's support comes from Christians in Brazil. To God be the glory!

In order to reach Indian tribes where there are no roads, OAC Bolivia now has a boat! A team goes out for 10 days, taking their tents, food, water, film equipment, generator, electric fence for jaguars, plenty of gas, etc., and an Indian guide. Each day they reach another village, show The Jesus Film, and preach a black light message. The response is tremendous. Some chiefs say to please send a pastor and they will build a church. This is happening. Some told us, "You are the first missionaries to ever visit our tribe."



OAC BOAT FOR REACHING INTERIOR INDIAN TRIBES



AN INDIAN TRIBE HEARING THE GOSPEL



AN INDIAN GIRL FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED



PUBLIC SCHOOL ASSEMBLY



OPEN HEARTS LISTENING TO THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION



RENE AND HELLEN, OUR NEW STAFF



RENE PREACHING IN RIO BAMBA

