

**Second Report**  
Winter Bible School  
Seoul, South Korea 2017

Monday (Jan. 9). David finished his first class and Sang informed us he was taking us North to an inexpensive eating place. The drive was slightly less than an hour directly north of Seoul to a spot where we could look across the river and see North Korea. I had been there before. David asked for details about the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone), and Sang explained that it is a strip of land between the north and south that is neutral territory, varying in width from four kilometers town to about 600 meters. It is untouched by at least domestic animals and is being allowed to grow in its natural state. If the two countries ever unite, that current DMZ will become a national park.

The following picture does not show the DMZ very clearly. It's taken from a restaurant and looking across the wide river that separates the two countries. The mountains in the distance are in North Korea.



There is a very striking satellite picture of the Korean peninsula taken at night that has been available for several years. I think one can pull it up on Google, and it shows the distribution of night lights in the two countries. It is a very interesting picture that portrays the enormous technological differences in the two countries—dark in the north and much more illuminated in the south. The differences in light, however, are symptomatic of huge cultural, political, and economic differences. I asked Sang about the most common impressions in the south about the leader of North Korea. He gave one word, “unpredictable.” The military intelligence, the watchfulness, seems to have a pretty good handle on the situation. Its surveillance is very good, and both the Korean and US military are ready to be mobilized. For some reason I haven't the slightest misgiving about being here in Seoul, less than an hour's drive from a land that has nuclear energy, some long-range missiles, and an unpredictable leader.

Our meal was rib meat with lots and lots of vegetables dishes. A common way of eating here is to get a lettuce leaf, put a piece of meat, some kind of sauce, a few garnishes (onions, spiced radish, sliced raw garlic, and so forth), wrap it up and put it in the mouth as a single, large bite. The meat is in small pieces that have been grilled. After eating and riding back to Seoul David commented that although we ate a lot of different things the one taste that lingers most prominently is the raw garlic! In the picture below are, from L. to R., David South, Bill Ramsay, and I. Notice the large number of dishes on the table.



*Parenthesis:* I should have mentioned the international flavor of the Sunday assembly. Local people were the largest number. Then there were three of us from the USA. A black brother from Louisiana, Christopher Caleb Collins, whose father in a preacher in Louisiana, is here as an English teacher. Victor Owusu and Linda Dedzie are from Ghana and both students in local universities. Vivi Naje Yeptho is a nice looking young lady also in a local university. Randy Pambalan is from the Philippines, but I am not sure what brings him here. Two or three brothers from Ghana are often here on business. They stay a few weeks, purchase used clothing, and then take them back to Ghana to sell them.

Tuesday: A newcomer showed up last night, a chap from somewhere down country. This morning, a full thirty minutes before class began, he was in the classroom singing hymns by himself and as loudly as he would in a congregational singing. He seems to be a kind of loner, but he pitches in and does things that need to be done.

Turns out that today is David South's birthday. I mentioned that to Sang and our interpreter, saying that the class should sing "Happy Birthday" to him. Somehow the word got around, and I noticed that they had purchased two cakes. Five candles were lit on one which they took in to him at the singing. I think he was taken aback by it.



This morning I finished my survey of Hebrews. I shared with them a metaphor one of my professors used when doing a rapid survey of something. He said it was like riding a bicycle through a museum. Hebrews can be a bit difficult to follow for non-Jews unless they are familiar with certain parts of the Old Testament. So, I wanted to help them see the overall picture before delving into some of the details. Tomorrow we shall begin studying in detail some of the themes that run through the book: covenant, Jesus Christ, high priesthood, faith, and so forth.



Here is a picture of most of the students. On Wednesday, chairs were placed in the center aisle since we have more than the 24 desk seats would accommodate. We have one student each from the Philippines, India, and Ghana. Most are Koreans, of course.

Wednesday. Today I began focusing on specific topics or themes in Hebrews. This morning I dealt with “Angels” and “God.” Interestingly, in the questions period there were many more questions about angels than about God. Well, perhaps we have more valid and clear information about our Heavenly Father than about angels. I acquainted them with Deut. 29:29, which indicates that the things God has revealed are for us, but the things that are not revealed are for God. I told them to lose no sleep over what they don’t know about angels, but to lose sleep over it if they were not related properly to Jesus Christ. At any rate, the students are diligent, taking notes and looking up passages of Scripture. My translator, Jin, has an M.Div. degree from Freed-Hardeman University, having studied both there and at Harding School of Theology. So, he is equipped to translate and make clear even some technical matters. That is a great help.

David is having a good time in his class. Today he informed me about their having a long conversation about eternal security, viz., whether one who validly becomes a Christian may so act as later to lose his promise of a home with God. Presbyterianism is rather firmly engrained in the thought of many who call themselves Christians, and “eternal security” was a prominent part of John Calvin’s theology. He used some of the Hebrews texts in his discussion, so when I come to them I will inform them that they have already considered them. I don’t want to leave the impression that God is reluctant to save us. Indeed, if any thing I have overemphasized that God is for us!

Today’s noon meal was provided by a new congregation here in Seoul, and it seems to be composed of a lot of young people in their 20’s and 30’s. That is a good sign.



One of the members gave each of us a DVD of the church’s singing group. The label reads: Church of Christ Acapella2, and it is made up of a dozen songs. I haven’t had a chance to hear any of it yet but I will soon try it on my computer with my ear buds. The Koreans like to sing.

BCC has for some time owned a fine piece of property near both a subway station and one of the universities, closer to the main part of the city. The current location of the BCC facility, which is really a rented area designed for an apartment, is located in the far west part of the city. It is convenient to the airport but some distance from the main part of the city. An architect has drawn the plans for a four-story building that should serve their purposes for many years to come. (See the following picture.) The projected cost is only \$500,000. I find that hard to believe, but they are careful in their planning so I accept it. Such a facility, which is modest for its location, can serve several purposes other than that of BCC and its teaching program. Likely a congregation will meet in the facility and it can be used for conferences that will serve many congregations in and around Seoul.



Tonight Sang took us to eat *Samgyetang*, a word that means something like ginseng-chicken-broth. Indeed, that is the main focus of the restaurant that is named Tosokchon Samgyetang. The meal consists of a small chicken stuffed with rice, a large (five inches or so) ginseng root, red dates, a water chestnut or two, various spices, and then cooked in broth in a large earthen-ware bowl. When the bowl comes out it is still boiling. The taste is wonderful, but it involves quite a large amount of food. Of course, other dishes accompany the main dish, viz., kimchi, white radish with red sauce on it, slices of raw garlic, a small cup of some sort of wine that is poured into the broth, and a cup of barley tea. I had told Sang in advance that I felt David South would enjoy that meal, and he did!

**More to come in Third Report**