

## First Report from Seoul, South Korea January 2017 by Philip Slate

David South, preacher of the Woodland Hills church in Cordova, TN, has accompanied me on this trip, and this is his first trip to Asia. I think he will do well, however, since his temperament should go well with Koreans.

We left Memphis early-- our flight for Detroit left at 6:15 am Thursday. Shortly after arriving in Detroit snow began to fall. The ground was covered, but by the time we are ready to take off for our 12:30 minute flight to Seoul, the snow had melted off the runways. Bill Ramsay had booked us in the Comfort section of the plane, which means he had to pay a little more for having ample leg room. It was nice.

One can see all sorts of people and scenarios when traveling. One chap who boarded with us must have been 6'3" tall and weighed 300 pounds. He had compresses on both knees and walked with a walker. Once aboard he had to walk sideways down the aisle since he was too broad to walk straightforwardly. Another fellow, who was wearing a Pittsburg Steelers jacket was the source of some sort of dispute. He was very pleasant, but there was some question whether he should be on board. He disappeared and I didn't know until we landed in Seoul that he was indeed on the flight.

We were delayed in Detroit for another reason as well. The Customs authorities removed (we didn't see it) six people from the flight and they had to get in hold and locate all twelve pieces of their luggage. All in all, we were delayed a full hour, but the flight crew managed to make up about 30 minutes. We landed at 4:35 rather than the scheduled 4 pm on Friday.

We were fed three meals during the flight-- too much. I had plenty of time and room to get up and move around, rise up on my toes, and so forth-- to keep up circulation to prevent DMT (deep muscle thrombosis). Collecting our baggage was no problem and Sang, the director of the BCC, met us. The outside temperature at 5 p.m. or so was 48 or 49 degrees. Which was quite warm for this time of year. I have arrived at this world-famous Incheon airport (voted "airport in the world" for the last five years) when it was whizzing cold: low temperature and wind blowing.

We arrived at the Bible Correspondence Center (BCC hereafter) in good order and settled in. Bill Ramsay of Murfreesboro arrived within minutes of our arrival but on a different flight. At BCC he is sleeping on a bed in the office and David and I are sharing a bedroom in another part of the precincts. We are all comfortable.

On Saturday morning Sang took us out to eat breakfast at the Dunkin Donut place where three of us had a ham and cheese breakfast sandwich with coffee. It was quite enough. On our way we passed a sign in four languages or scripts: Korean, English, Chinese, and Japanese.



This is a token of the way South Korea, and Seoul especially, has aspirations of being the technological communications center of East Asia. One will notice on a map that Seoul is directly east of Beijing. The distance is not very great.

Sang feels the time may come when English is spoken in Korea the way it is in Singapore. Of course Singapore is a former British colony and that made English easier to learn. Koreans are exposed to English in three ways: American military and business people come here plus many

Koreans travel to the USA for education, migration, and as tourists. English is taught in most public schools here. Since English is the official language of the air, sea, and business, it is advantageous for students to learn it.

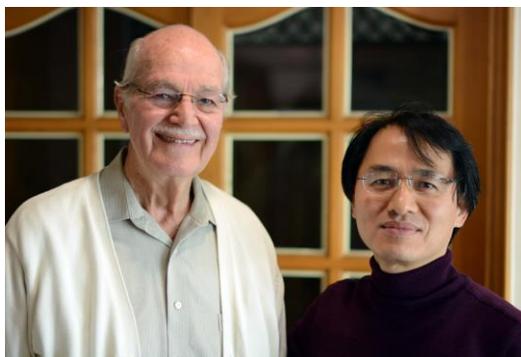
At lunch time we ate with a group of young people (20's and 30's) from a local congregation here in Seoul. They were having a "retreat" at the BCC, during which they sang, prayed, and studied the "church." It was good to see that many young people who were/are interested in spiritual things. David had a chance to be introduced to grilled pork with the inevitable rice and a selection of vegetables. We have a lot of small tangerines to eat. They are grown on Jeju Island off SK's south coast. It is sub-tropical and the destination of many honeymooning couples. There are eight or ten congregations on that island.

In the evening on Saturday Sang took us to an eating place located in the large railway station. The single item on the menu was spiced stewed chicken, with rice of course, and an assortment of vegetables in the large platter on which it was served. Among the items were long transparent noodles made from sweet potatoes. While that was the single menu item it did come with two levels of spice. Bill, David, and I ordered the hottest spice (Sang went along with it), but it was really not that hot to my taste. That was another introduction to Korean food for David, and he is doing well with it. He likes hot food, and to date he has really enjoyed everything he has eaten.

Sunday. This a.m. I was asked to preach. I used Ps. 73 to deal with the double problem of why bad people often get along well while righteous people have a hard time of it. Put another way, if there is no God, if all is left to chance, then why should good exist at all? Why should anyone have a right to expect good in a chance-oriented world? I did this—often do it—since in both ancient and modern time people raise this question. As usual here, we had lunch together in the precincts of the BCC. It is a good time to talk. In the afternoon I rested a bit, still coping a bit with travel weariness.

In the evening Sang took us to a restaurant that specialized in beef bone broth, called Solong Tang. There is a story behind it that goes back to a king about 600 years ago, but I'll not relate that here. It is a very satisfying meal, essentially a soup with a very good flavor that is eaten with rice. I am glad that to date David South has enjoyed everything Korean that he has eaten. Both of us sprinkled ground red pepper on some of our food, much to the amazement of the Koreans. Most of the Americans they know find Korean food a little hot for their taste, so it is amusing them to see two chaps add pepper to their meal! It is what I do at home, so I am not doing it to impress them.

Monday. My first class went well this morning. My translator is Changin Shin, known to



several people in Memphis and Henderson since he studied at both Harding School of Theology and Freed-Hardeman. He preached for a while at a Korean congregation in New York City but eventually came back to Korea. He lives and works in Busan (Pusan), host of the busiest port in Asia and a good congregation. This afternoon David South is teaching his first class on the epistles of John, with brother Sang Yang translating. Sang is the director of the Bible Correspondence Center.