

## World Christian Mission Through Migrant Workers in South Korea and Through the Korean Diaspora

The biblical people, Israelites' nickname, is 'the Diaspora.' The meaning of diaspora comes from a Greek word that indicates scattering. The Diaspora originally means Jewish people's relocation from Palestine. They had to endure their fate as the Diaspora throughout history. Since the Babylonian era, Israelites had to live as the people without nation, and through their prophets, Daniel and others, God reminded them their identity as God's chosen people. When Israelites lost their identity as God's missionaries, God even dispersed them to restore their mission.

After Jesus was resurrected, his disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. God-fearing Jews and converts to Judaism were visiting Jerusalem at that time. They were Parthians, Medes and Elamites; resident of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome. Among the Gentiles Cretans and Arabs heard the gospel of Jesus, and some of them believed it and returned back to their countries. (Acts 2:9-11) Apostle James starts his letter by saying, "To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations." Apostle Peter also begins his letter: "To God's elect scattered in the world." Scattering itself is a painful history, and yet there is always God's sovereign will in that history. In Acts chapter 8, there was a great persecution in Jerusalem, and all Christians left there to Judah, Samaria, and to the ends of the world except the apostles. Through their scattering they began to preach the gospel in Judah, Samaria, and to the ends of the world.

History of diaspora happens not only with Jews, but also almost all nations of people. For instance, Chinese people live all over the world, and also Spaniards and Portugal people in Europe as well as British people and Germans due to economical, political, and military reasons. Lately Koreans also live over 200 nations. When I traveled the west corner of Africa, I visited Benin Republic and Republic of the Gambia, and I was surprised to meet Koreans there. Wherever Koreans emigrate, they start Christian churches, and the churches become the center of their immigrant life.

God is using the Korean diaspora as a missionary tool. During the Japanese Occupation of Korea, Japan sent many Koreans forcefully to Sakhalin and Central Asia against their will; nevertheless, the descendants of Korea have helped Christian missionaries in Soviet Union especially with interpretation. Some Korean diasporas in mainland China have also become useful missionary resources. I believe over seven millions of Korean diasporas are potentially important for mission in the twenty-first century. The Korean diaspora mission is one of the most important strategies in recent Korean Christian mission.

During 70s and 80s when Korean churches were rapidly growing, they began to send missionaries. As the number of each denomination's mission organization and protestant group increased exponentially, they began to send more missionaries. For the last thirty years, they experienced awesome church growth and received God's amazing grace. In this period there were prominent establishments such as Mission Korea (MK) and Korean World Mission Council for Christ (KWMC) during 1988 Seoul Olympics. These events accelerate movements of Korean Christian mission, and also Korean diaspora mission began in this period. As a result of this Korean mission movement, the Republic of Korea became the 2nd missionary sending nation of the world. Korean churches have sent 20,445 missionaries to 169 countries in January 2010 according to Korean World Missions Association (KWMA).

Korean mission movements rise from recent mission forum and network on Korean diasporas and from major Korean mission meetings. The followings are such movements: Korea Students All

Nations (KOSTA, 1985), Mission Korea (MK, 1988), Korean World Mission Council for Christ (KWMC, 1988), Korean World Missions Association (KWMA), Korea Diaspora Missions Network (KODIMNET), etc. Various mission meetings have emphasized the importance of the Korean diaspora mission and its network.

On December 2009, KWMA held the 9th Korea mission leader forum, and its memorandum declared that world mission should be developed by diasporas, and the followings are the statements.

We need to notice the significance of world mission through diasporas, and especially the Korean diaspora because of their church development through “three-self formula”: self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing. This Korean diaspora church development should become a model to other nations’ diaspora church establishment. All diaspora churches should become self-supporting, self-propagating, and self-governing, so that they will become missional churches wherever they are.

1) Development of Korean Diaspora Church: We are paying our attention to the Korean diaspora churches. They were dispersed all over the world due to historical, economical, military reasons. Wherever they have gone, they voluntarily have established churches and have become missionary sending stations. The Korean diaspora churches have been approved by missionaries for their great contribution to world mission. Between the Korean diaspora churches and missionaries should co-operate; in other words, between lay leaders in the Korean diaspora churches and missionaries should support each other by taking different roles to fulfill world mission.

2) Development of Diaspora Mission Within the Republic of Korea: We have to take notice of Korean and other diasporas in the world, and we should use diasporas within the Republic of Korea for world mission. We have to take a careful look at various types of diasporas within Korea in order to develop appropriate training programs for them. Our goals for diaspora mission in South Korea are witnessing, discipleship, and missionary training because they are future missionaries for their own countries. We need to continuously develop worship services for diasporas in S. Korea according to their major tribal groups and languages. Korean mission society should provide workers for this ministry. For this migrant mission, we also need to have various networks to have more effective ministries.

I think the above shows well about diaspora mission’s process in S. Korea, and it’s direction and strategy. Development of diaspora mission in S. Korea upgrades world mission evangelism. When Korean churches see 1.2 million foreigners as future missionaries rather than the object of witness, a new window will open for mission. For this kind of diaspora mission, all Korean churches and world churches must participate in this ministry together for success.

Migrant Mission Network in Korea (MMNK) is a network for migrant mission in South Korea, and I am directly involved in this network, and I want to explain the development of diaspora mission within South Korea by introducing MMNK. At the end of 2008, several mission organizations got together and formed MMNK for the need for this network. After forming the network, they had their first large meeting, “2009 Korean Migrant Mission Expo.” This mass meeting is consisting of migrant mission and exhibitions of migrant mission ministries. Through this meeting we introduced many migrant ministries, and shared our knowledge and experiences on these various ministries and it also clarified our vision on this migrant ministry in South Korea. During the morning hours, we presented various migrant mission ministries and the afternoon hours about 200 migrant mission organizations and around 7,000 foreign workers gathered together for a mission festival meeting. Through this meeting we are able to communicate to Korean churches that migrant mission is rice beds for world mission.

Continual nurturing faith of migrant workers within South Korea has been a problem due to their frequent change of their job. MMNK can solve this problem because through this network we can provide information for all the migrant ministries in South Korea. This network can also provide ministries for returning missionaries from overseas. Recently migrant ministries are not only focus on migrant workers from different countries, but they also specialize their ministries on foreign students,

multicultural families and youths. Such ministry groups can continually nurture their members' faith, and can network with the other existing migrant mission groups.

Up until now, each migrant mission organization and church worked only with their own resources. For this reason the organization and church easily lose their passion and resources and they burned-out. Networking, among the organizations and churches with migrant ministry, enables them to exchange their experiences, information, and resources, which create the synergy effect and encouragement. The most important things in this networking are training migrant Christian workers and sharing resources for planting churches. Migrant mission network is networking among migrant missionaries as well as local churches, which will help trained Christian migrant workers for mission to establish churches when they return back to their own countries.

According to Korea Herald Business (2009.10.05), we are living in global nomadic age; 1 out of 7 is a migrant in world population. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published human development report on October 5, 2009, and its title 'Human Mobility and Development' said, "Migration contributes to human development and it is a motive power, and it increases individuals' finance, health, and education." For this reason, people move from country to city, and with similar reason we have many migrant workers, which we call them, "new nomadic people."

If you visit any mega-city in the world, you will see all different ethnic peoples living together. I view this phenomenon as God given opportunity for world mission. God also gave this opportunity to the Republic of Korea through foreign workers and students, and multicultural families. We must not lose this wonderful God given opportunity for world mission in our door step. Our two most important world mission opportunities: the Korean diaspora mission and multinational diaspora mission within the Republic of Korea. We must maximize these two most important mission, so that the Kingdom of God will arrive sooner.

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