

Alex Kocman: On today's show: What is the state of the church in North Korea? And how did South Korea see such explosive growth of the Gospel?

James Cha: So the executioner and the captain who authorized the execution, they both became believers through the Bible that were given out before Reverend Thomas was beheaded. And not only did they come to Christ, the captain actually started a house church. And this was all in Pyongyang and eventually his house church grew to such a large extent that they had to build a huge 1,500-member church building in Pyongyang and that church planted 18 daughter churches.

Alex Kocman: James Cha explains on today's show. Plus, what it has to do with the Muslim insider movement. But first an important message.

If you're a regular listener to this show, we wanted to say thank you. Without the Lord's help and without you, we wouldn't still be doing this. But we also want to know that this show wouldn't exist if it weren't for ABWE International and ABWE missionaries like Justin, who's a missionary in a Muslim country in Asia. So let me tell you about him. One day, he was wandering a crowded street doing street evangelism. He'd been doing it every morning for nine months with no results; he was discouraged. He sat down at an outdoor coffee shop, local men crowded the table, fraternizing before the start of the workday. Justin tried to start a spiritual conversation with a Muslim man seated next to him, and the man, disinterested, walked off.

But before Justin could even process the rejection, he heard a voice speaking to him in broken English. The voice said, "You said sins forgiven. How?" It was another Muslim man who had been sitting next to him who was listening silently the whole time. Justin, knowing the dangers of doing evangelism openly in this country, started to whisper to him about Jesus. They crept closer and closer until they were inches apart. They were looking around for danger the whole time. And Justin whispered the Gospel into this man's ear and the man grabbed him by the shoulders, pushed him back, and said "Many of us want to know this message, but we're not allowed to ask."

That's what life is like in a country where evangelism is illegal. And more than 130 ABWE workers like Justin are serving in places like this. Every gift to ABWE's Global Gospel Fund goes to critical staffing, support, training, and services to advance the Gospel to the lost and unreached through faithful workers like Justin. To learn more and become a partner with ABWE, at ABWE.org/partner. That's ABWE.org/partner.

Welcome to The Missions Podcast, the show that explores your hard questions on missions, theology, and practice to help goers think and thinkers go. I'm Alex Kocman, Director of Advancement and

Communications with ABWE, joined by Scott Dunford, West Coast Advancement Coordinator with ABWE and Pastor of Redeemer Church in Fremont, California.

Unlike our last episode, I got the whole intro out without stumbling it, so I'm happy about that and we're glad you're here and listening today. And if this show has been a blessing to you in the past, if this episode is a blessing to you once you're done listening to it, please remember to leave a positive rating and a five-star review in your podcast app of choice. That helps us get this to others that can be blessed by it. And if you have any questions, listen guys, we love hearing from you, we do release episodes that are based on listener input. Sometimes we'll do a mail bag episode, and so those lines of communication are open and Alex@missionspodcast.com is the place to go to get a hold of us and to send us your input. And I know that people are always curious why Scott so often just says "I'm curious" probably fifteen times in one episode, that's got to be one of the questions.

Scott Dunford: I don't know why it shouldn't be a question. I mean I think curiosity is how you learn things, so I'm not embarrassed about that, Alex. Well, you know –

Alex Kocman: It also killed the cat.

Scott Dunford: Yeah, I guess so, but I'm not doing curious things, I'm asking curious questions.

Alex Kocman: Is curiosity a vice? Is there any sense in which curiosity can be a vice?

Scott Dunford: I don't know, I feel like you're setting me up for something, Alex. So I would say no, no.

Alex Kocman: I think it can be, I think it can be.

Scott Dunford: Really? Huh.

Alex Kocman: Like not staying in your lane, you know? Being too inquisitive, right? Here's a fun thing, so I'm always reading kids' books with my kids and Curious George books, the old ones, the classic ones from the, you know, the '50s and '60s, whenever, they all start with you know "This was George, he was a good little monkey, but always very curious." Like a negative thing –

Scott Dunford: Sure.

Alex Kocman: like he's good, but he's curious. If you read any of the new ones, they all have "and" there instead of "but", "He's a good little monkey and he's always very curious." And so, I think curiosity can be a vice. Not for you.

Scott Dunford: Well, I, no, I don't think it is; I think you're pushing it too far. But –

Alex Kocman: Tell that to the authors of Curious George and the –

Scott Dunford: Sinful actions are sin, but asking questions especially when they're not disobedient questions, is a good thing, so. I'm gonna, here I stand.

[Laughter]

Alex Kocman: You can do no other.

Scott Dunford: I can do no other.

Alex Kocman: All right, well –

Scott Dunford: I'm curious, Alex.

Alex Kocman: we've also got a very resolute and maybe even curious guest joining us here today.

Scott Dunford: Nice.

Alex Kocman: And James T. Cha. Scott, tell us about our guest today. We've got a lot of things that we're curious about with James and we're covering a lot of ground here today, so we want to give him time.

Scott Dunford: So James Cha is a Korean American, born in the very historic city of Pusan, Korea. And if any of you are lovers of military history like I am, obviously a very important city especially in the Korean War. But immigrated to the United States in the '70s, studied at Cornell in engineering, and God changed the direction of his life and became a long-time missionary in central Asia working with Muslims. Saw God really use that and since 2000, since the year 2000 they've been in the United States working with the Crescent Project helping local churches reach Muslims in their community which is obviously something very heavy on my heart, and I know Alex's heart as well. And also founders of i43, which hopefully he'll talk a little bit more about that and has three grown children.

So, James, you know we have a lot of questions for you, we are very curious, especially about what God has done in Korea and what God has done in Korea –

Alex Kocman: Scott's curious.

Scott Dunford: and what He's continuing to do. I, and I'm gonna say Alex is probably too, just not as curious as me. So tell us a little bit about yourself, more

than what we've shared in that brief bio and how you found yourself involved in missions and doing what you're doing now.

James Cha:

Sure. Thank you, Alex, thank you, Scott. Thank you everyone for allowing me the privilege of sharing God's work in my life and the work of people around me. Just as Scott shared, my wife and I, we were both born in Korea. But the unique thing about is that both our parents, her parents and my parents, were born in North Korea. So you can say that we're pure, our children are pure North Korean blood. And the amazing thing is that when my father was born in 1927, he was born in Pyongyang which at the time was the capital city of one Korea. And that was during the Japanese occupation.

When the second World War ended, he stepped up to be a pastor; he was already a Christian, so this was from 1945 to 1950. He was pastoring a church in Pyongyang and then he was arrested by the Communists, and he was put into concentration camp, and he was to be executed and then the Korean War broke out in June of 1950. And just a rush and the pressure of the American soldiers fighting for our nation, the Communists fled and the prisoners who were in concentration camps were released and including my father. So my wife and I, every time we speak at a church, we always thank those who fought for our country, especially the Korean War veterans or children of Korean War veterans. We would not be here if it were not for the soldiers from America who fought for our people. So I want to give a special thanks to them.

And then we were in central Asia, actually from 2000 to 2010, for ten years and by God's grace we saw over 120 Muslims come to Christ, mostly Uzbeks and Tajiks. And then from 2010, then we've been in the States with Crescent Project reaching out to the Muslims. And i43 comes from Isaiah 43 verses 6 and 7 where God says, "Bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone whom I created for my glory, those who I formed and made." And we sensed that God, when we came back in 2010, that God was bringing the nations to America so that they would hear the Gospel message. So i43 was birthed out of a time of 40-day prayer, when we came back in 2010. What do we do about this? And the Lord led us to start this ministry and the main thrust of our ministry is through ESL program right here in Leesburg, Virginia. We had over 700 students go through our program during the last 8 years from 70 different nations, can you believe that? And I think according to Joshua Project we have over 520 different people groups living in America right now and increasing. So, the Lord is bringing abundant opportunities for the churches to rise up and reach out to the nations.

Scott Dunford:

So I've been very, to use Alex's word, curious –

Alex Kocman: I'm googling this by the way, and there is a long-standing tradition going at least back as far as Aquinas that curiosity is a vice. It's the inordinate pursuit of unprofitable knowledge at the expense of profitable knowledge so –

Scott Dunford: Oh brother –

Alex Kocman: I'm not that far off.

Scott Dunford: All right, it's okay.

Alex Kocman: Just you know –

Scott Dunford: you are. You probably, well, never mind this could be a rabbit trail. Serving in Asia, you know we were surrounded by you know it seemed like we were constantly running to Korean missionaries as well. And you know as someone who grew up in a very, you know, pretty culturally isolated part of America, I didn't understand, I didn't know what God had done in Korea and how many Korean Christians there were and even how many Korean missionaries were being sent out around the world. And then of course moving to the Bay Area and we've got Korean believers in our church; we even have a young man in our church serving overseas who's Korean American. And hearing a lot about what God's doing through the Korean church around the world and what He's done, and then of course I read a book published in 1977 from Banner of Truth talking about the Korean Pentecost and learning a little bit about the Great Suffering but also the amazing things that God had done in raising up the church in Korea in the early part of the 20th century. And I just would love to have you explain to us a little bit about how we got from there to here, what are some of the exciting things that God had done, and really doing an amazing work of the Spirit in Korea during that early part of the 20th century. But also what is He doing now and what are some things that we can learn here in the west from what God had done in Korea and also some of the missions activities and things that are going on out of Korea even currently? So James, I kind of wanna just turn it over to you, 'cause it's kind of a long introduction but I feel like you're someone who really could help us, help guide us through understanding all of those things.

James Cha: Sure, thank you, Scott. And that was a good summary of the impact of the Gospel that we see currently on Korea and the people of Korea, starting actually in 1866 or in mid-1800s, that's when the Gospel first came to Korea through Protestant missionaries. Prior to that, the Catholic church had come with the Gospel, but that wave of converts and church growth had been stifled by severe persecution. So in 1866 Reverend Robert Thomas came to Korea, one nation, the capital city was Pyongyang. And he came to that city and then unfortunately he was beheaded, that's how we welcomed our first Protestant missionary. God blessed – he was from

Wales, so God bless the Welsh, may they be blessed to a thousand generations. But God used his sacrifice and the Bibles that he brought, He used it to share and to just open the hearts of the people to the Good News.

So the executioner and the captain who authorized the execution, they both became believers through the Bible that were given out before Reverend Thomas was beheaded. And not only did they come to Christ, the captain actually started a house church. And this was all in Pyongyang and eventually his house church grew to such a large extent that they had to build a huge 1,500-member church building in Pyongyang and that church planted 18 daughter churches. And I believe this just shows the power of the Gospel but also the power of the sacrifice, the blessing of the sacrifice where Jesus says in John 12:24, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." And I believe Jesus was not only talking about Himself, but He was talking about those who would follow after Him, taking the Good News to the ends of the earth, including Reverend Robert Thomas, that through his sacrifice God would produce abundant seeds, abundant souls and fruit.

And so that's what happened and over the years, we had many missionaries coming from America, many actually from Princeton Seminary, at the time very conservative seminary. They sent hundreds of missionaries to Korea from late 1800s and on. And we had the Gospel just explode, churches were multiplying, excellent Bible study training, leadership training throughout the country. And the Lord allowed the Koreans to see many of the missionaries who came to our country being martyred; they were beaten, stoned, beheaded. And in the first couple generations of Korean believers, this was late 1800s, early 1900s, they were also arrested and tortured and beheaded.

But I am so grateful that the missionaries who came to Korea did not hesitate to give up their lives for the sake of the Gospel. They believed that Jesus was worthy, but not only that our people were worthy of their sacrifice. And so there is a verse that I want to share from Matthew 5, and it comes from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad." And the Lord tells us that persecution, when it comes according to His will and His time, is a blessing, it's not a curse. And He's saying rejoice and be glad because blessings will follow, there would be things that would happen to those who are persecuted that would be an evidence of God's blessing. And if you right now google the largest church in the world, it's Yoido the Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea. Pre-covid times, the attendance was about

800,000 members. I think right now it may be down to about 500,000. A lot of churches have downsized since covid. But still 500,000 is a huge number. And in, in 2016 we, my wife and I were at Korean World Mission Conference in L.A., and at the time they proclaimed, or they stated that there were about 16,000 full-time missionaries from South Korea all over the world. And there are about 80,000 churches, Korean churches, and then 4,000 in the US, 4,000 Korean American churches.

Scott Dunford: Wow.

James Cha: And these are huge numbers from such a small country in such a short time.

Scott Dunford: Yeah.

James Cha: And people would ask, “So how did this happen?” And I wanna give two main reasons. The first is coming from John 12:24 where again the sacrifice of the missionaries, starting with Robert Thomas, the Lord would honor those sacrifices, would allow abundant fruit to come out of that. And the second reason I believe is what we call the Korean Pentecost in 1907. So there’s a book that Scott mentioned, it’s, the two authors are William Blair and Bruce Hunt, you can get them from Amazon. The second author, Bruce Hunt, discipled by father and so when my father was born in 1927, he was discipled by pastors and missionaries who were there in 1907 and they said tongues of fire came down from heaven just like in the book Acts chapter 2. Because the Lord knew –

Alex Kocman: And that’s what we’re referring to when you refer to the Korean Pentecost?

James Cha: Yes.

Alex Kocman: Is that right?

James Cha: That’s what I’m referring to. It is, you know and around that time you had similar outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Azusa Street in the US, in China, and in Brazil, and also in, I believe in Wales, in Ireland, in Great Britain, at the early part of 1900. But I want to let you know that I’m an ordained Presbyterian minister and for a Presbyterian minister to talk about tongues of fire, this seems out of place, you know? And yet if I don’t mention this –

Scott Dunford: [Laughter]

Alex Kocman: That –

Scott Dunford: Yeah, I was wondering.

Alex Kocman: Yep. For Scott and I both as Baptists and reformed, yep.

James Cha: And another side note, on the mission field we did baptism by immersion, so I'm not strictly a pure Presbyterian, I just felt like immersion is the, is the best approach, the best method. Anyway, if I don't mention what happened historically in 1907 in Korea, the glory goes to man because then we will be kind of thinking "Well, how did the missionaries strategize their church planting effort and Korea became such a huge, you know saw such church growth in less than a century?" And yet if I mention this, the glory goes to God.

Alex Kocman: I think that's a fair point. If I, yeah, if I can cut in real quick, James, I think that's a fair point. I think we would say biblically and theologically that Pentecost was an unrepeatable one-time event and so whatever happened there historically, I simply don't have enough information to even know but we should at the very least take whatever the reliable historical record is, we should take it for what it is, and whatever you do with that, God gets the credit, not man. It wasn't this brilliant strategy, right, it was clearly God brought revival in some way. And obviously revival is still a thing that happens that hasn't ceased, and we want to make that clear. And I think that's an important starting point. So continue unpacking that and then I want to follow kind of the trajectory of the Korean church beyond that a little bit as you weave that story through.

James Cha: Sure. And what lead to the Korean Pentecost was the weeks and months of prayer by the missionaries. So these were western missionaries, mostly Methodists and Presbyterians, they were the predominant missionaries at the time in Korea. They saw that even though the Korean pastors and elders came to faith in Jesus, their lives were not changing; they were still drinking, still, you know, in immorality. Korean culture's very male chauvinistic, so women were second-class citizens. And some of these pastors would still beat their wives when they, you know, after giving their sermon they would go home and beat their wives, that's how Koreans treated their women.

And so the missionaries prayed, "God, we need transformed lives." But also at this time what began to happen was the Japanese were beginning to take over Korea, increasing presence and pressure upon the Korean people. And the Koreans hate the Japanese because of what happened even before that, over a, you know, centuries. And so the missionaries really wanted the Koreans to grow in love for their enemies. And in response to these prayer requests, that's what I, that's what I believe happened, God poured out the Holy Spirit. It transformed the lives of the pastors, of the elders. And if you read the Korean Pentecost, that book, there is a chapter where from children to their grandparents, they openly confessed their sins in front of God because they were in the face of the living, Holy God. They could not contain the, the guilt and the shame that

they felt for each, every one of their sins. And they openly confessed them before God and that's how God transformed their lives.

And so because of this time of outpouring of the Holy Spirit, what happened was, you know, school, principals and teachers began to see the changed, transformed lives amongst the Christian students and they were led back to the church by the students to hear the Good News and come to faith in Christ and have their lives transformed.

And so, I believe any time we, you know, someone says that there's revival, and that there's an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, I believe we can judge that or kind of observe that and evaluate it by the fruit. If the fruit contains changed lives, transformed lives, people just cut off from addiction, from any kind of immorality, immoral lifestyle, then that's a good indicator that a revival was genuine and the Lord was doing something in that community or in that city.

Scott Dunford:

So out of that incredible work of people coming to Christ and transformed lives, how did Korea become this missionary sending force? Did that happen right away or is that something that took some time? Do you have any understanding of that?

James Cha:

So that's, you know that very church I mentioned where in Pyongyang Reverend Thomas was beheaded, the captain or the official that authorized that execution, his church grew to be 1,500 members. That church, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had a very missionary mindset, just that was their heart. They even sent missionaries to China. You know, can you imagine a small country, a city like Pyongyang gathering up their believers and sending them as missionaries to the mainland China? And so it was birthed right, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 1907, that passion and that heart was in-born, it was intrinsic in every church, house church that grew across Korean peninsula.

And I believe that's a true reflection of what Jesus said in Acts 1:8, that He would, you know that as we wait on Him, and not only the disciples but even for us during our time as we ask the Holy Spirit to empower us, He will give us that power, the anointing, and filling of the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. And I believe that's what happened throughout that time.

Alex Kocman:

So it's, I enjoy hearing this history. We serve, Scott and I both, with ABWE which has a long history in Asia and the Pacific. And the history that intersects with World War II, our first missionary, Dr. Raphael Thomas, began ministry in the Philippines and then later when Japan attempted to annex the Philippines, several of our missionaries were taken as prisoners of war. And some of them, Ed and Miriam Baum, today we have our Baum awards named in their honor to exemplary missionary

services over 35 years with ABWE, right? So those cultural, historic things continue to remain, echoing in our organizational memory today. The history of missions is a fascinating thing. Help us track what happened coming out of the Korean church through World War II, through the expansion of Japan, and where compromise started to set in from your perspective. Because I think there's lessons from that that missionaries need to pay critical attention to today.

James Cha: Yes, and before I share that, if I may, I would like to read a couple passages from the Old Testament because I think it ties in really well.

Alex Kocman: Sure.

James Cha: And you know because I'm a –

Alex Kocman: Yeah, by all means.

James Cha: preacher, so this is a good time to give a little sermonette. And it comes from Exodus 20 and the first and second commandments. Exodus 20 verses 3 to 6 where God tells His people even before they go into the promised land, He says “You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven or on the earth beneath or the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord Your God am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me.” Which, just parentheses, that's about 70 years. “But showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

So skip a few centuries to Ezekiel, chapter 8, because by this time as you know the history of Israel, they have committed idolatries over and over and finally God sends them away on exile. And Ezekiel is in exile and he has this vision in Ezekiel 8:16 and it says, “He then brought me,” this man of God or angel, “brought me,” Ezekiel, “into the inner court of the house of the LORD. And there at the entrance of the temple, between the portico and the altar were about 25 men with their backs towards the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east. They were bowing down to the sun in the east.” So God allows Ezekiel to have this hugely grotesque, offensive vision of 25, that's high priests, and the serving priest, 24, lower priests, bowing their, turning away from the Holy of Holies, and facing toward the sun and bowing down. And in Ezekiel 10:18 he says the glory of the Lord departs from the temple, from the threshold and starts drifting away. And Ezekiel chapter 12, this is when God says that He will send them away as exiles to the, to foreign nations. So keep that imagery in mind of the people of God –

Alex Kocman: Okay.

James Cha: bowing to the sun. So then what happens in Korea in, starting from 1910 to 1945, the Japanese come and officially take over Korea. Which means Korea is no longer an independent country, we cannot speak Korean on the street or even in the homes, everything has to be Japanese. They built over 1,000 Shinto shrines all over Korea. Because the Japanese, they are Shinto Buddhists, they, you know they're, they believe in the sun, that's the sun goddess, and that's why their flag still has the sun. It's a very idolatrous flag in some respect because they, they honor their idol in that way.

Alex Kocman: Mm-hmm.

James Cha: And the Japanese also believe that their emperor, who was Hirohito at the time, in Second World War, that he was divine. So what they did was they forced all the Korean in public places like schools or factories, to bow down either to the image, the picture of Emperor Hirohito or what they did in churches was they brought in this small shrine, a miniature replica of the Shinto temple called kamidana. And they would place that on the pulpit and they would tell the pastor, "You can worship your Jesus, but before you start your worship of Jesus, bow one second to our idol and then you can worship your god."

And you know this was a dilemma because without doing this, they would shut down the church doors, they would shut down the churches, and they would arrest and kill or torture the pastor. And one of the key pastors at the time, leading pastors at the time was serving in Pyongyang and his name is Reverend Kee Chur Cho, he stood up against Shinto worship. And this particular pressure to bow down to the Shinto idol in the church began in 1938, so right before even World War II officially started between America and Japan. In 1938 the Japanese started enforcing this and Reverend Cho was one of the leading pastors and on the Sunday that he was to be installed in the largest church in Pyongyang, he gave this message, and this is just a short summary of it, just short part of that.

And in his sermon he said, "Shinto worship is a violation of the first commandment and it's a crime against the Holy name of the Lord. It is an act of betrayal against our Lord God." And he said we will not do this, so he did not even bow to the kamidana, he preached this message, the Japanese officials who were sitting in the back arrested him right away. And they kept him in prison for the next six years. They did not want to kill him, they wanted to break his will so that he would capitulate, so that he would compromise. And they were hoping that they rest of the pastors, seeing what was happening to one of the leading pastors of Korea, would cower and that they would compromise.

And there were a few other pastors and church members, elders, who did not compromise so they were either killed right away or they were put into

prison and tortured. But what happened during that time in 1938 amongst the rest of the pastors all over Korea, but especially in Pyongyang, they started struggling with fear and they gave into their fear. And here is what they came up with, this is their thinking, and it's the wisdom of men, you know the book of James talks about two kinds of wisdom. Here's the wisdom of men in times of fear. And they said, "If all of us pastors are arrested or killed, who will shepherd the flocks?" And second, if all the church doors are closed, how will the Gospel advance? And so they decided it is God's will that we stay open, our churches stay open, and we continue to lead our flocks, so they made this compromise on September 9, 1938. And it was a huge general assembly, mostly Presbyterian pastors and elders and missionaries, my denomination. And it says in this compromise, this resolution, "We ministers understand that worship at Shinto shrines has nothing to do with religious matters, and that it is not against the Christian doctrine. We are also aware that Shinto worship is a patriotic and nationalistic ceremony. Thus as citizens of Imperial Japan, we vow to show our loyalty through voluntary participation in the practice."

And after reading this, they signed this document. There were about 200 Christians there, including pastors, elders, and missionaries. And after signing the document, they all bowed at the Shinto shrine. And from that day on, until the end of Second World War, so for a period of seven years, every church that is open in Korea, the pastors are leading the congregation to worship the sun goddess in God's house, in God's sanctuary.

Scott Dunford:

Mm.

James Cha:

Can you imagine the heart of our Lord Jesus breaking over what is happening in His house? And so what happened that same day, Reverend Cho is being tortured in prison and his wife, as was her custom every morning, she would be having early morning by herself. And as she was praying, she had a vision from the Lord and an angel told her, "Read Hosea chapter 9." So she quickly opened up to Hosea chapter 9 and these are the words, "Do not rejoice, O Israel, do not be jubilant like the other nations. For you have been unfaithful to your God. You loved the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor. They will not remain in the Lord's land. Ephraim will return to Egypt and eat unclean food in Assyria." And basically God was saying to Israel, "I have plucked you out, I have redeemed you. I have saved you, I have poured out all my blessings upon you. How could you turn away from Me and worship worthless idols?" That was God's heart over Israel and now God's heart over the Korean church. You know Korea was such a small nation, no one recognized us; we were always overrun by either China or Japan. We're not even worthy to be considered a nation, but God did, and He sent His people starting from Reverend Thomas and hundreds of missionaries who gave up their

lives for our people. And He even poured out His Holy Spirit in 1907 upon our people and now God is saying “How can you turn away from Me? Who else has loved you like I have loved you? Who else has sent hundreds of people to die on the, for the, and benefit, you know for the benefit of your nation except for those who follow Me and call themselves followers of Jesus?” And it’s God’s broken heart over our nation.

And so this was God’s warning, and so for the next seven years there is Shinto compromise in every church that is open and then Second World War ends August 14, 1945. The Soviets or the Russians control northern part, Americans in the west the control or have influence over the southern part, but it’s still one nation. But it’s in September 9, 1948 the Russians declare Kim Il-sung as the ruler over the northern part. And Kim Il-sung, he grew up in a Christian home, but he became a devout atheist and communist. He, as soon as he came to be the ruler he said, “I am god the father, my wife if god the spirit, and my son, Kim Jong-il, is the son.” But if you look at their names, Kim Il-sung, his name means, the sun, S-U-N, is established. And Kim Jong-il, the second ruler, his name means the righteous sun. And it’s a play on words, as if God was saying to our people “You want to worship the sun goddess of Japan, I will give you two rulers whose names mean the sun and you will have to worship them by force.” And that’s been the history.

Alex Kocman: Wow.

James Cha: From 1950 when –

Alex Kocman: Giving them over to their idolatry.

James Cha: Yes. And so from 1950 until today Korea has been divided. Kim Il-sung and his dynasty ruling the north, and there’s no life there. You know if you ever talk to people who have served in North Korea it’s just, there’s no life. There’s been no other country on the face of the earth that has been separated to such a devastating extent as North and South Korea. Even Germany opened up, Russia, Soviet Union crumbled, Cuba opened up. But there’s no country like North Korea. And you know I believe it’s not a of lack of prayer. Every Korean church that I know, they pray for reunification, they pray for the borders to open up, it’s not because of lack of prayer that North Korea has not opened up. But I believe there is a spiritual reason, not political, spiritual reason why God has kept North Korea closed for so long and it’s because in Pyongyang, the capital city, that Shinto compromise just spread from there to the ends of the Korean peninsula. So what happened during 1950, ‘53, people like my father who did not compromise with the Shinto worship, they fled to the south and in Pusan there was a second revival that happened. And that gave birth to the Korean church in the southern part of Korea to really flourishing.

And we believe in 2010 something started happening. Because if you remember the Olympic Games, both the North Korean and the South Korean athletes came under one flag, they chose to come under one flag, and it was really momentous and eye-opening occasion. In 2018 was 70 years from 1948 when Kim Il-sung and I believe the Lord will continue to open up North Korea more and more. In 1953 will be 70 years of complete separation between the two nations. Now how this fits into our ministry, my wife and I, God has called both of us to minister to Muslims –

Alex Kocman:

Yes, I wanna hear, real quick, I do wanna hear how that ties in. I mean that's huge; you dropped some huge bombs on us and so I definitely want you to tie that in right away. Let me just pause real quick and it opens a huge can of worms and all we're trying to do is stimulate some Great Commission thinking here. But I think we do have to just slow down and recognize that in all of our missions talk, we talk about the unreached, we talk about those who are lost, it's a dark world, let's take the Gospel to them, and that's true. I just think we also have to use biblical discernment and we need to think well, are they only unreached, or are they only cut off and without access, or how did these countries end up this way? Are they under judgment? You know you would say North Korea is under judgment. We have to at least think through that, how has God worked with these nations through history. Look at the Middle East, and this will set you up, James, the Middle East used to be a bastion of Christianity. Obviously, that's no longer the case and we have to at least not only ask what does God want to do now and through the sending of missionaries into these hard places, but how did they end up that way and how has God dealt with peoples throughout history and – excuse me, providence. Incredible connections there, but go ahead, connect the dots to us now with your work with Muslims.

James Cha:

Sure. So you know during that time of Shinto compromise the pastors were thinking “Well, we'll just bow down to the Shinto shrine in the name of Jesus.” You know outwardly they will be doing the form but inwardly they are saying “Our spirits are still worshipping Jesus.” That, God doesn't take that, that's not acceptable to Him. And I believe the same thing happens when – and I want to just connect it with Insider Movement or C5 Contextualization, level 5 or common ground, whatever approach it is where missionaries, many from the US are telling Muslim converts to Christ, “Oh, we want to protect your identity, we don't want you to be persecuted, we actually see increase in numbers, don't burn the bridges. Therefore don't say that you are a Christian, tell them you're a Muslim who follows Esau and you can continue to go to the mosque and pray, just pray in the name of Jesus when you bow towards Mecca.” And that is offensive to our God. Our God is a jealous God, He deserves all glory, all passion, all commitment from us, not an ounce, not any deviation from that. And I believe the church history of Korea for us, it's a great, it's a

warning, it's a great lesson from history that our God wants the purity of the Gospel and that worship only to Him to be preserved whether here in the US or even on the mission field regardless of the level of persecution, regardless of how small a number of converts we may have at the time. We allow the Holy Spirit to give birth and multiplication to the churches across different people groups and languages, it's not our effort, we don't engineer it, we don't manipulate it, and we don't come in with these really offensive, idolatrous ideas saying that "Oh bowing towards Mecca, just doing it in the name of Jesus, that God would forgive that." I disagree with that; our God is a jealous God, and He will preserve His honor and glory. And he said that in Isaiah 41:10, "I am the LORD, that is My name; I will not give my glory to another, nor my praise to idols." So this is where in our approach to idols and church planting when we were in central Asia, we made sure that our converts, Muslims who want to follow Jesus, at the time of their conversion they had to renounce Qur'an, that it's not the word of God, they have to renounce Mohammed, that he's not the prophet of God, they have to renounce Islam, the Shahada, all of that before they come to faith in Jesus. So that was our approach, definitely we had fewer members, fewer numbers –

Scott Dunford: Mm-hmm.

James Cha: because some people were offended right away and they say, "Well then I don't wanna follow you," and we said "Okay, that's up to you." But you cannot come to Christ and Him alone while still holding onto Mohammed and his teachings, that doesn't work, that doesn't honor God. So that was our approach to evangelism and church planting.

Scott Dunford: And there's precedence for that, I mean in the, some of the early, or maybe early is too strong of a word, but some of the old baptismal confessions you know it starts with a renouncing of Satan and all of his works, you know and a clear statement from the believer ready to be baptized that he is a clear follower of Jesus and renouncing all of the works of darkness. And to call them by name could a very appropriate cultural thing because we need to, we're making it clear in our baptism, again I'm referring to believer's baptism.

Alex Kocman: The right kind of baptism, I'm sorry.

Scott Dunford: That we are, we're sending ourselves out to follow Jesus, you know? I wasn't gonna poke him with that, but you know what I mean? So that's an encouraging and could be a helpful thought process for our people who are serving in these dangerous but difficult places that, to follow Christ means we're not following other things.

James Cha: Amen.

Scott Dunford: What would you say, James, you know and I realize we have to wrap up this time together but what would you say to the response of saying “Well, how dare you ask people to suffer”? You’re looking back and thinking back about your ancestors who literally had to put their, I mean in recent generations, had to put their literal necks on the line to follow Jesus. What would be your call to contemporary Christians in very dangerous settings about the risk?

James Cha: I would just challenge missionaries or whomever is serving amongst different people groups, are you ready to face that persecution and challenge? Bruce Hunt, the man who discipled my father and he’s the second author of that book, Korean Pentecost, he was put in jail for four years by the Japanese because he would not teach his disciples Shinto compromise. And so the Japanese respected American citizens at the time, so they could not kill him but they put him in prison. And he was willing to suffer for the sake of our people to preserve the purity of the Gospel. We need men and women like him more and more. You know I, I want to close with just one last amazing testimony of another pastor who refused Shinto compromise and he was also put into, put in prison by the Japanese for six years.

Alex Kocman: Yeah.

James Cha: And his name is Reverend Son and when he was entering, ready to enter junior high, the official, the Japanese principal said “Well, you cannot register unless you go to the Shinto shrine and bow down.” And this man refused, as a teenager, and he came back home all bruised up, bleeding because the Japanese official just had him beat up and just threw him out. So when he came home, this was the prayer of his father, his father who was the first believer in the village and who also faced persecution and survived it, he said this, “Lord, I thank you for giving this lowly servant’s son such honor to endure this trial. It is said that the more the beating, the stronger the iron becomes. In the days to come, beat my son with a bigger hammer and with more crushing force in order to prepare him for a greater purpose. Please do not spare him from the pain of Your hammering until he becomes a worthy servant in Your sight. Amen.” And this was spoken not by a missionary but by a local Korean believer who knew what it’s gonna take to overcome the persecution by the Japanese who are not going away any time soon. You know may the missionaries, we foreigners, learn from the local converts whom the Holy Spirit will fill with such passion that they will give this kind of prayer. We need fathers like this, right now even in America. We need fathers like this who will say “Beat my son with a stronger hammer so that they’re ready for the time of persecution that will come,” because when Jesus is about to return we know it’s going to worse than it is now.

And so you know we, and then God not only blessed the Reverend Son with an amazing father, it was his wife as well. So what the Japanese did was if the pastor would not compromise, they would bring in the wife in front of him and either rape her or torture her. So some of the pastors gave up. But Reverend Son was resolute and the wife, two days before she was dragged in front of her husband, she, every day she has to supply food so she wrote this little slip of paper, Revelation 2:10 “Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” And she wrote back, on the back “Dear Husband, Dear, you know these words, don’t you? If you compromise in exception to worship you are not my husband, your soul won’t be saved either.” And so she was ready to face, and so when she, they brought her in front of him, they stripped her, they did all kinds of atrocity, she fainted because she could not endure the torture. But Reverend Son never compromised even though they were doing this to her, his beloved wife in front of him. We need women like this, we need to raise up daughters who would face whatever is necessary for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ and the glory He deserves.

Alex Kocman:

Amen, James. And it’s, it’s hard to end on as heavy a note as that, it doesn’t get any heavier than that and yet we do, we overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony. There is victory, there’s a cross, there’s suffering, there’s also a crown on the other side of that. There’s death and there’s resurrection. And so it’s not a dower note, it is a sober one that you’ve struck though, and with that though I think we’ve got to ask ourselves, as we engage the missionary task, are we teaching ourselves and others that we serve with, that we minister to, that suffering is normative? If we think suffering is the exception, we’re setting ourselves up for failure. If suffering is normative then we can at least begin to have these conversations and begin to think about being prepared because I think what this lesson teaches us in places where whether it’s insider movements, whether it’s any other methodology that can lead to compromise is the, who’s to say that God may not judge the church for its compromise, for its syncretism, and we find ourselves having not just North Korea but having other countries, having similar judgments fall because the church compromises.

God is a serious God, He’s a holy God, and Jesus Christ is King of kings, Lord of lords, He’s ruling the nations with a rod of iron, dashing them in pieces like a potter’s vessel, Psalm 2. And that still happens today, and so even as the Gospel is spreading and changing the world and the Great Commission is happening, there, He is also raising up some nations and putting others down. And there’s a degree of seriousness that we need to have about that.

So James, thank you so much. And listeners, thank you for being a part of this with us. May we pray more deeply and trust our Lord more for whatever suffering He gives us. We pray that this show has been a

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Alex Kocman, Scott Dunford, James Cha

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