

February 2024

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Greetings and blessings to you all from the Winter academic quarter. With the beginning of Advent, my mission travels took me to the Seattle area, where there is a University of the Nations campus in the suburb of Monroe. This campus is bilingual, and everything is done in Korean and English. All my materials are sent on well in advance for translation into Korean, plus during the lectures, I also have a verbal translator. I had 29 students, most from South Korea but a couple from North Korea and one Korean gentleman from Uganda, Africa. My lectures were on the letters and theology of St. Paul, and we covered both the arguments of the thirteen letters that bear his name as well as the archaeological excavations within the cities he visited.

Ephesians 1:1
p46
Chester Beatty Papyri
ca. AD 200
earliest copy of the Ephesian letter
(University of Michigan, Hatcher Library)



"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through [the] will of God to the holy ones who are also faithful in Christ..." (1:1)

134

Among other things, I lecture on the early manuscripts of Paul's letters, and here is the earliest existing copy of the Ephesian letter. One of the fascinating things about it is that it does not say "to Ephesus," leading many scholars to suggest that the letter may have been written to multiple churches, Ephesus being only one of them.

I've taught in several all-Korean mission schools over the years, and I find Korean culture to be fascinating. For one thing, the students are highly respectful, usually



Here, I and David Kwon, my Korean translator, work through Paul's Galatian Letter.

bowing slightly when they greet you. (Rather different than western students!) They are also highly disciplined, studying hard, and not adverse to spending long hours each day “in the books.” The challenge is getting them to engage in class discussion, since they usually default to the cultural ideal that the professor is, well, “the professor,” and students are there to listen, not talk. Inasmuch as I nearly always try to get students engaged in a discussion about theological points of view, which often differ between Lutherans, Baptists, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals, and the Orthodox, it usually takes me two or three days to get my Korean students to open

to such discussion. Still, at least it seems to me, this sort of engagement is critical to the educational process, and since U. of N. is part of an interdenominational mission organization and missionaries regularly work with Christians from diverse backgrounds, awareness of major theological nuances is the order of the day.



Wednesday, the staff scheduled a Q/A, and here the students finally opened up—and wow, did they ever open up! From

then on it was smooth sailing, and for the remainder of the week, I could hardly eat lunch or dinner for all the students wanting to sit down and ask questions. Afternoons were spent in private conversations with students as well, and it was amazing to learn about their own life journeys and how they came to faith. One privilege was to engage with three Mongolian students, who are nearing their goal of getting a Bible into the hands of every family in Mongolia. Out of 31 counties in Mongolia, they are down to the last five—quite a goal and quite a task! Koreans who manage to get out of the repressive regime in North Korea often end up doing so by way of Mongolia. While I was there, the campus said good-bye to one couple headed for Stanford University in California for post-doctoral work, and it was very fulfilling to see such a couple, highly educated, but deeply committed to the gospel!

Our next place of service was in Cartagena, Colombia, where I was scheduled to teach in a Bible Teachers School for two weeks. We left Detroit in a raging blizzard and near zero temperatures, arriving in South America to about 100 degrees hotter temps. This would be the second of three annual seminars for teachers of the Bible. I did a BTS I last year in Mexico, and in Colombia I taught BTS II in Cartagena. About 75 teachers from 18 nations made up my class, most from the various countries in South America, but also a handful from Europe and North America. All lectures were translated into Spanish, and we had a Portuguese



Here is my class of 70+ teachers (and a couple of young kids on the left), most from Latin America, but also several from Europe and America.

contingency from Brazil as well. Since all those in attendance are already teachers, the format was a bit different than my typical lectures, and I was directed to cover the material from Solomon through the exile, both kings and prophets, plus a



a variety of topics and issues linked to the Bible in these areas, including relevant archaeology, the history of Neo-Assyria, Neo-Babylon and early



Israel, one of my translators, was a delightful young man from Venezuela.

Jo van Bakel (left) from the Netherlands is the International Director for the Discipleship Bible Schools for which I teach, and Eze Mora (right), from Costa Rica, is another of my translators,

Persia, the Hebrew canon, the ancient texts in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, the history of the Intertestamental Period, and the Dead Sea Scrolls. We also covered historical-critical issues that occupy the academy, such as, dating methods, the diversity of literary genres, Mesopotamian and Canaanite religion, and theories about authorship and editorial revisions.

Cartagena is an old city, and looking at the ancient bulwarks of fortresses several hundred years old was fascinating. Getting used to cultural diversity with different foods, a tropical climate, no hot water, friendly geckos in-and-out of the houses, and taxis that tailgate at speed at about 12 inches made for an interesting couple of weeks.

In addition to my travel lectures, I still manage to keep up with several Hebrew and Greek students who are taking the language courses from me on-line. Currently, I have language students from Canada, Macedonia, India, and Hawaii with a couple students in the wings who will start soon.

The Spring will see me in Florida and the Netherlands plus a set of Zoom lectures in Bangladesh. (I was invited to come in person to both Bangladesh and Malaysia, but these half-way-around-the-world trips are getting to be too taxing for me at my age, so I've declined them, but I did agree to do Zoom lectures in Bangladesh.)

Just a closing prayer request...



I found out just this morning that a number of mission students—very much like the ones I teach—were in a tragic accident in Tanzania when a large truck lost its brakes and crashed into their bus. Eleven were killed, all in U.

of N. Master's Degree programs, and eight more are hospitalized. Please pray for their families and the places where they served, since many of them were primary leaders. It makes me think how devastated the early Christians must have felt when their two primary leaders, Peter and Paul, were both executed in Rome in the early 60s AD. These are times when it is not so much us holding onto God's hand as it is him holding onto ours.

In God's comfort and grace,

Dan and Peggy Lewis