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ABSTRACT

KOREAN CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF *BOK* AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY FROM MISSIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Sung Il Lee

More than one hundred twenty years has passed since the Gospel was delivered to the unreached Korean people. Korean church had made remarkable church growth under God's grace from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s. However, Korean church had experienced both stagnation and decline of church growth rate during the last 10 years (the mid-1990s to 2005).

This research was made to know the causal relationship between the stagnation/decline of the Korean church growth and the issue *bok* (blessing) one of the central themes of the Korean worldview from the missiological perspective. In particular, this research had ethno-historical, biblical survey as well as practical field research in order to learn how the biblical teaching of *bok* helps Korean Christians mature and overcome *kibok sinang* (a faith that seeks for earthly blessing first of all).

Korean culture is a culture of *bok* and Koreans have strong shamanistic sentiment to seek first material blessing. Koreans were drawn into the Korean churches by evangelism and sermons that emphasized, "*Jesu midko bok badeuseyo* (Believe in Jesus and receive blessing)." Those people who discovered that God is the source of all blessings and His presence as the eternal blessing, have kept their seats in the church and their position in the Lord, but those who failed to discover this true blessing began wandering intra- and inter-religiously. The direct reason why they failed to discover the true blessing in Christianity, the religion of blessing, is because church

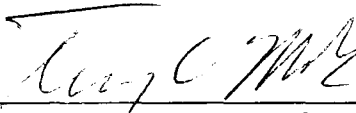
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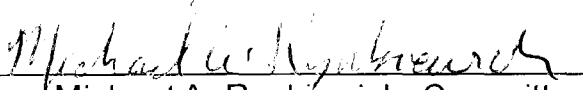
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AND SPIRITUAL MATURITY FROM MISSIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

By
Sung Il Lee

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Doctor of Missiology Degree

Asbury Theological Seminary

Wilmore, Kentucky

April, 2007

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Sung Il Lee

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DEDICATION

To God who gave, gives and will give the best blessing, the great revival to the Korean church as well as the whole world through His son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.

To my parents Kyung Yong and Hyun Oak Lee, who caused me to serve the Lord with sacrificial love and prayer and to mother-in-law Yong Nam Chung who prays for us.

To my wife Jung Ae, and my two children: Pyung Hwa and Woo Ju who made me possible to finish the project with sacrifice, encouragement, and support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background of the Problem

The Japanese regime (1910-45) and the Korean War (1950-53) destroyed the social order and traditional culture system of Korea. Survival competition, disunited families, and migration after the Korean War deepened the skepticism and despair on life itself. During this period, the news that someone had starved to death during the spring shortage of food had no high value. It was a time when the United States of America sponsored eighty percent of the budget of the South Korean government (Do Eun 2005:1). In relation to the desolation of Korea due to war, a special investigation commission dispatched by the 8th UN Korean Reconstruction Committee in October, 1955, reported that expecting an economic reconstruction from Korea is the same as expecting "to see roses bloom from a garbage can" (President Park Commemoration Enterprise 2003:1).

In the early 1960s, President Jung Hee Park, who established a military government through a *coup d'état*, took the lead in the pan-national New Village Movement¹ under the motto "Let's Live Well!" When he challenged people to change their line of thinking by replacing thatched roofs on their houses with slate and tiles, traditional kitchen units with modern and convenient units, I was born into a Christian family in Korea and grew up listening to and singing a national folk song, "Let's Live Well!"

¹ New Village Movement, initiated by the Canaan Farmer's School and adopted by the Park's Military Government, became the foundation of modernization of Korea. Canaan Farmer's School emphasized the New Mind Movement as the mental root and trunk of the New Village Movement, but the government only adopted and executed New Village Movement.

In this situation, most of the Korean Christian believers wanted concrete solutions to their daily problems and wishes rather than seek obscure comforts in the hope of a salvation in the next world.² I was brought up in a socio-religious environment where leaders of the Korean churches eagerly preached and evangelized people, saying, “*Ye su mid ko, bok bad eu se yo*” (“Believe in Jesus and receive blessings”), taking Western Christian rich countries as examples, such as the United States of America (Chi Joon Noh 1998:28). Poverty-ridden people came into church in great numbers to receive the blessings the church promised.

Looking back upon my old days, though I was a little boy, I came to understand what draws Koreans' attention and what strikes their ears and catches their eyes. It was *bok* (福 the blessing). *Bok* is still sought after now as it was in those days. Most of the Koreans had a list of “*oh boks*” (the five blessings).³ These *oh boks* catch Koreans' eyes and strike their ears and drive them to behave desirably. I agree with Tong Sik Ryu (1978:123) who states, “Korean culture is in fact, a culture of *bok* and its tradition is that to get the blessing is for Korean to feel a journey of thousand miles nearer to the place.” Koreans think that *five boks* would give them happiness.

While President Park's government had successfully carried out three five-year plans for economic development,⁴ the leaders of the Korean

² Joon Sik Choi (2006:6) in “A Study of Korean View on Life and Death” says that “the reason the Koreans show strong attachments on this-world rather the other-world, for they negatively accept the death” He (2006:6) explains, “Koreans associate first death with ‘the price of their sins’, ‘results of other’s grudge’, and ‘deficiency of their good works’ rather than they relate it with “liberation from this sinful world” or “call to the heaven from God.”

³ Oh Boks are longevity, wealth, order in peace, virtue, and fulfilling destiny. It is clearly stipulated in the chapter of *Hong Bum* (洪範編 General Provisions of Rules in Confucianism) in *Suh kyung, The Scriptures of Documents*.

⁴ President Park's government announced a synthesis economic 5-year plan on July 22, 1961. 1st 5 year Economic Development Plan (1962–66)

churches became forerunners of “Let’s Live Well!” instead of becoming evangelists of “Let’s Live Honestly!” (Keun Me Lee, 2005:23) They inflated the vanity of the Korean people by correlating faith life with receiving *bok*. Without her knowledge, as Jung Suk Rhee (1995: 303) points out, “the Korean Church has been the main channel for western mentality, including its capitalistic materialism, and the indigenous Shamanistic tradition has gradually infiltrated into the Church to develop a secular concept of ‘blessing’ among the Christians.”

As the New Village Movement prevailed throughout the country, *bok* was the most wanted topic in those days to awake a responsive cord in the hearts of the Korean people. The same phenomenon was witnessed in Korean church. Most of the Korean pastors, starting with Yong Ki Cho of the Full Gospel Central Church, Sun Do Kim of the Kwanglim Methodist Church, and Sun Hee Kwak of Somang Presbyterian Church, etc., went forward to theologize the gospel of blessing (Keun Me Lee 2005: 23, 34, 210, 256). These pastors discovered *han* (bitter grudge) in the lives of poverty-laden people and dealt with it using a socio-psychological approach such as the concept of “positive thinking” and “theology of blessing,” while *Minjung* (the mass of the people) theologians took structural analysis on the nature of the social problems.

established the foundation for the attainment of economic independence by setting socio-economical vicious circle to rights and 2nd 5-year (1967-71) successfully completed the rapid growth in the area of industrialization. With the success of 2nd Year Economic Development Plan, President Park changed light industries-centered structure into the heavy chemical industrialization policy throughout the duration of the 3rd 5-year Economic Development Plan (1972-76). (President Park Memorial Enterprise, 2003:2)

Upon hearing the preaching of the Gospel of blessing, Korean people rushed into the front door of churches with an expectation of gaining *bok* from God. The church grew by the force of numbers from the 1960s to the late 1980s. As Korean churches received a worldwide reputation for their rapid growth, I entered into the Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul (1979-1983) with a vision that I would be a missionary to other countries. With a lapse of time, I became a chaplain and served the officers and men of armed forces in the Korean Army (1986-91) with the Word of God after three years of serving a rural church at the Central province of Korea. While working as a chaplain, Korea, based on its economic development, hosted the 1988 Seoul Olympic. The New Village Movement and three five-year plans for economic development helped the nation establish a foundation of basic industries through industrialization of agricultural villages, and finally brought “the miracle of the Han River” by successfully transforming light industries to heavy industries. Eventually, these moved Korea into the ranks of advanced countries.

Three years after the Seoul Olympics, I became a missionary to the Philippines. I felt that the growth of the Korean church and Seoul Olympics made Korean missionaries proud and opened more doors to serve Filipinos. While Filipino pastors and lay leaders had great yearning for the fast growth of the Korean church, the signals of plateau of the Korean church growth began to appear. Scholars and special commentators began to ask why church growth was plateauing. Some blamed it on a revival of Korean shamanism (Chi Joon Noh 1998:30; Sung Choon Oh 1996:88). Shamanism was experiencing a revival, with wild growth and power gains, by portraying itself as the worst victim of Westernization. Anthropologist Joo Kang Hyun (1999:33) calls the religious phenomenon of the revival of shamanism “the

Second Shaman Movement.” A noteworthy phenomenon of modern shamanism is that it uses modern technology and has become a big business in terms of secure religious clients. It incites people to adopt materialistic beliefs and to abandon moral consciousness.

Other scholars blame the creeping in of materialism (Noh 1998:28, 34; Oh 1996:88; Jum Sik Ahn 1998:147). The Seoul Olympics helped to turn the hearts of the Korean people from “Let’s Live Well!” to “Let’s Enjoy Life!” If the Let’s-Live-Well attitude had made Koreans hardworking, the Let’s-Enjoy-Life spirit makes Koreans seek worldly pleasures. This spirit stirs a materialistic inclination and increases a propensity to consume. In general, with this spirit, the speculative spirits of people were stirred up, graft and abuse of power skyrocketed, and many people made fortunes by illegal means.

With the five years of missionary experiences, God guided me into North America to study with a vision that I would discover some insights as a mission strategist to help Korean churches in finding good direction. While I was studying at Drew University (1996-97), Korea met national economic hardship and had gone through economic reforms forced upon them by the International Monetary Fund. The Korean church is also lingering on a plateau. Each denominational headquarter and research center had begun to report that the growth is stagnant, or has stopped. A recent research (Won Kyu Lee 1998a: 217ff) holds that the Korean religions, including Korean Protestantism are in qualitative and quantitative crisis. The sense of crisis in the quantitative dimension is based on the reality that the Korean Church, whose membership had been rapidly growing since 1960, has become stagnant from the early 1990s. Further, the Korean Church has experienced a declining growth rate from mid-1990s to the present day.

In particular, a report from Won Kyu Lee, a religious sociologist and professor of Methodist Theological Seminary, Seoul, gives a great shock to the church circles. He (1998a:231) estimates that around ten million people came through the front gate of the church but left through the back gate from 1984 to 1997. This means that Korean churches failed to make a large number of them into Christians and they have become anti-Christian forces in the end. On the other side, the Korean church successfully retained some of them as Christians but still failed to transform them into dedicated disciples of the Kingdom of God and its righteousness. Thus, they remain as nominal Christians who are stumbling blocks in the church. This failure helped to stiffen the plateau situation of the Korean church (Sang Hwa Lee 2002:14).

With this depressing news about the Korean Church, I came to Wilmore, Kentucky, to study at the E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism, Asbury Theological Seminary. Having access to "Anthropology for Christian mission," I gained a missiological perspective to view the plateau situation of the Korean church. As "Let's-Enjoy-Life attitude" eventually brought 3.75 million credit bankruptcies from 1997 to the year 2005 (Hea Jeon Chung, 2004:1), I concluded that there was sure to be concrete reasons that caused plateau situation to the Korean church.

Since the plateau of the Korean church's growth, there have been many seminars and many researches to solve the problem of stagnation in the Korean churches. The questions asked are: "What socioeconomic factors have put the Korean Church on a plateau?" "How does the Korean church turn around from this situation?"

These seminars and researches offer several solutions. The first type is to overcome the plateau situation by deepening the spiritual quality of the Korean church. It advocates that focusing on the spiritual growth of the

Korean Christians helps the Korean church prepare for the next numerical growth. The second is to emphasize aggressive evangelism as the only way to overcome the plateau situation. The third plan focuses on the introduction of business strategy into church management. It looks only for programs and projects to manage the church better. Although all three of these approaches have value, I would like to argue for a fourth approach. Perhaps it is a lack of understanding of the Korean way of thinking that is causing the plateau situation. Perhaps the problem of the Korean church may have been caused by the Korean way of thinking. Most leaders of the Korean church have not studied in depth the matter of the Korean worldview and values and how they affect the church. It can be said that worldview is like the spirit of a culture and value is like the soul of it. The visible things of the culture are the expressions of the invisible things in the culture. In this sense, the phenomenon in the Korean society and church are closely related to the matter of the Korean worldview and values.

That is what I will study in this dissertation. The Korean worldview leads Koreans to form values, and their values lead them to actions. I begin with the hypothesis that the word *Bok* (福) permeates the Korean worldview and values. That is why people disregard even ethics in order to receive blessings. Perhaps it is this kind of worldview that causes Koreans to become makers of illicit fortunes, takers of odd eating habits, and superficial Christians. If an evangelist or a preacher does not know how people place more weight on receiving *bok* compared to other things, he or she will definitely fail to touch the hearts of people and cannot move their minds at all. As a worldview is the spirit and its values the soul of a culture, *bok* makes the spirit and the soul of the Korean culture alive. This concept of *oh bok* drives people to do unspiritual things to receive *boks*. It may promote overall

problems of the Korean society in parts, such as eclecticism, imagism, 'resultism', 'successfulism' and all-powerful materialism, and becomes barriers and obstacles to evangelism⁵ (Sung Il Lee 1994:2).

Statement of the Problem

I base my inference of the fundamental problem of the Korean church and Christians on misunderstanding of the biblical concept of *bok*. Perhaps their understanding of *bok* is still traditional and their traditional understanding of *bok* actually holds their limbs down firmly so that they cannot move into the next stage of spiritual growth. In other words, perhaps the problem of the Korean church is caused by the way of thinking centered on the five *boks*. The core of the problem is the failure of the Korean church to transform the Korean worldview and its core values into the biblical worldview and values regarding *bok*.

In order to test this possibility we will study three areas: (1) whether or not the traditional Korean concept of *bok* of the Korean believers holds back the growth and maturity of the Korean church and thus causing ineffective evangelism and mission works for the church; (2) whether or not the

⁵ Eclecticism – is an unwillful acceptance of a wrong policy by the subordinate even if it is for the deterrent of one's personal choice. Without taking consideration of norm and situation, namely, ability to ethically discern, to choosing and accepting is dangerous. Imagism – is a way of thinking the image look better for the purpose of putting on fronts or deception. Some have a tendency to distort the truth in order to hide their mission agencies' or churches' defects or problems. It is an act to cheat the person. "Resultism" – we mean the will to obtain good results without taking consideration of the method in attaining such result. Some say, "If the results are good, there is no problem, because the results will cover the wrong method." There is no other important thing except success.

So, many people want to ride a train called "The Success." In the mission field, missionaries need to respect the national standard and norms, as well as mutual support for the excellent results. We never regard the method, the norm, the standard, and the criterion of the mission work in advance of the results.

transformation of the traditional Korean concept of *bok* into the mature understanding of the biblical concept and its application to Koreans' daily life could become a growth factor to the Korean church and expedite her mission and evangelism strategically in terms of disciple-making ministry; and (3) whether or not the biblical and Korean traditional understanding of blessing could create deeper ties between Koreans and Christianity in terms of mission and evangelism.

The Research Questions

In order to adequately research the topic, the problem will be broken into three sub-problems:

Research Question #1: What is the Korean traditional and modern concept of *bok*, the blessing?

Research Question #2: What is the biblical view of *bok*, the blessing?

Research Question #3: How can the biblical concept of *bok* be contextualized to resist shamanistic understanding of *bok* and the prosperity gospel?

Subproblem #1: Identification and analysis of the literature describing the traditional Korean concept of blessing. As stated above, I believe that the traditional understanding of *bok* is connected directly with the Korean worldview and its understanding about it. Thus, Christian mission and evangelism need a clear understanding of the Korean worldview and value system which will be valuable in helping win Koreans to the Lord Jesus Christ. A failure to transform the traditional concept of *bok* into a Christian concept of it may be causing Korean churches to lose its members. Instead, it is possible that the traditional Korean concept of *bok* could be a redemptive link to lead Koreans to the Lord Jesus Christ (Don Richardson 2002). It gives Koreans a great challenge to develop a personal relationship with God

in terms of Christian maturity. Thus, through the library and personal research of books and material evidences, I will identify and analyze literature describing the traditional Korean concept of blessing.

Subproblem #2: Discovery of the biblical concept of blessing in the Old and New Testament. In correlation to the emphasis on the blessing, the Korean churches lacked in-depth study of the question, "What is the biblical understanding of *bok*?" There was a shortage of studies and researches on this concept. Some pastors argued that the traditional concept of *bok* is unbiblical and they adopted an extremely negative stance towards an inclination of the Koreans seeking first the blessings from God. They insisted that only spiritual blessing is biblical. But others argued that *oh bok* is quite biblical because God made Abraham, Isaac and Jacob men of great wealth (Genesis 26:13, 31:1) and made Joseph the prime minister of Egypt (Genesis 41:44). They rationalized *kibok shinang* (a wishful faith to seek first blessings) and its attitude to welcome every blessing in the world without sorting them, with the Scripture "seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33) as their basis.

Putting these arguments into shape, the former take *tabula rasa* policy and force the Korean traditional concepts and worldview underground while the latter take the opposite position and lead people to compromise the core Christian faith for personal, social and economic blessing, leading to syncretism. Our position will be that the best approach lies somewhere in between these two extremes.

Dictionaries and books of recognized scholars of the Old and New Testaments provide a biblical definition of blessing. Also, experiences of many years on my own inductive Bible study program about the biblical teaching of blessing (see Appendix 2. outline of Bible Study Text "Be a

Channel of Blessing”) gives convincing proof on this research. An integral understanding of it becomes the barometer to measure how the traditional Korean concept of blessing is close to or far from the biblical concept. In other words, it opens a way to the critical contextualization on the biblical concept of blessing.

Subproblem #3: How to contextualize the biblical concept of *bok*, blessing. For this process, an inductive Bible study course on the issue of the biblical teaching of blessing was taught to some believers. This Bible study “Be a Channel of Blessing” helped believers unlearn their Korean traditional concept of *bok* and relearn it in a biblical context. I believe that this intervention gives believers biblical strengths to resist both shamanistic influences and prosperity gospel influences.

The problem I am going to examine is stated in the form of a hypothesis: “Korean Christians may understand *bok* in a more shamanistic/materialistic way than in a biblical way. Korean Christian maturity depends on transforming shamanistic/materialistic faith into biblical faith.”

Delimitations

This study is focused on the cultural, biblical, historical, and modern understanding about blessing, and on how and what these concepts about blessing contribute to effective evangelism that is appropriate to the Korean worldview and to help Korean Christians mature in faith based on biblical understanding of blessing. It is limited to Korean and Korean Christian understandings of blessing.

The Religious Culture of Korea Analyzed

In order to understand the traditional Korean understanding of *bok*,

Korean culture must be analyzed in four parts: shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Protestantism. I would define culture as the expression of the cultivated results in the created world where God commissioned human beings. The "Korean culture," like any other culture, grew in a particular way because of its need to respond to Korean problems. In this point of view, "Korean culture" can be defined as "a learned, shared, and acquired integral system of Koreans' knowledge, feelings and values" (Jim Chew 1990:3) who have traditionally cultivated and communicated in the Korean Peninsula and its attached or related areas.

Korean Shamanism

Shamanism is a religious phenomenon centered on the shaman, an ecstatic believed to have power to heal the sick and to communicate with the world beyond. Mircea Eliade defines shamanism as a "technique of ecstasy in the least hazardous way" (1964: 4). This is a "system of religious and medical beliefs and practices that centers on the shaman, a specific type of magico-religious practitioner...who specializes in contacting and controlling the supernatural," originally centered in central Asia and Siberia (Robison 1996:1).

But scholars in Korea, which has the largest and most active living shamanic tradition, question whether this blanket use of the term "shamanism" can explain Korea's uniquely developed and long lasting popular belief system. The scholars on Korean shamanism who argue that "shamanism" is an utterly inappropriate description prefer to use the terms "*mudang*" (Korean shaman), "*mugyo*" (巫教 Shamanistic teaching), and its unabridged term "*musok jonggyo*" which means Shamanistic religion, instead of "shamanism" to describe this religious system (Hea Kuoung Koh 2005:1). In order to differentiate "Korean shamanism" from shamanism in

other countries, this study will use the terms “Korean shamanism” and “*mugyo*” or “*musok jonggyo*” interchangeably.

Korean shamanism, known as *Mu Gyo* (巫敎 Shamanistic teaching) or *Mu Sok* (巫俗 Shamanistic practices), is the oldest folk religion and the most prominent religious force dominating the religious life of the Korean people. It is regarded as “the foundation of Korean culture, because it is an indigenous religion which deeply penetrates the ethos and life of the Korean people” (Jung Yong Lee 1997:29). It is said to be the original religion of the Korean people.⁶

It is necessary to consider whether Mircea Eliade gives reliable information or not. He mentions that “...in Korea...Shamanism is documented as early as the Han period” (1964:461). He also (1964:5) asserts that, “generally Shamanism coexists with other forms of magic and religion.” Shamanism in Korea that has interacted with other religious traditions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity, permeating and influencing them (Lee SH 2004:215) can be defined as “Korean shamanism” or *Mu Gyo* (巫敎 Shamanistic teaching). It has always mingled with other foreign religions and formed a religiously complex society.

Sung Rye Kim (2000:2), a professor of religious anthropology in Seo Gang University, presents how scholars have studied Korean shamanism in A Historical Study of Research on Korean Shamanism (1999). According to her, there are five paradigms of the studies on Korean shamanism: Korean

⁶ However, there are all kinds of opposing arguments against that theory. A group of Korean scholars researched evidences of an influx of Korean ancestors to the Korean peninsula who had faith in the Highest God *Hananim*. They argue that these ancestors’ monotheistic faith in God became degenerated into shamanistic beliefs in material blessings, as Paul the apostle argues in Romans 1:18–23 (Sung il Kim Vol 2:29–41, C.H, Kang 1985: 112).

shamanism 1) *minjok jonggyo*, a national religion from the historical perspective (late 19th century to 1920), 2) a folk-religion from positivist perspective (1930 to 1950), 3) an original form of all religions from the psychologist perspective (1960 to 1990), 4) a social function of Korean shamanism from the structure-functional perspective (1970 to 1980) and 5) a popular culture from the socio-practical perspective (1980 to the present).

The historical perspective regards the origin of “Korean shamanism” “*singyo*” (神敎 a religion of god), established by Tan Gun, the founder of *Ko Cho Sun*, An Old Korea. Nan Gok (1885:1), a first scholar on Korean shamanism and founder of the historical perspective, insists in his *Mudang Naeryuk* (巫堂來歷 the origin of shaman) that the present Korean shamanism is a historical hangover of Tan Gun faith. Many scholars, such as Chae Ho Shin, Eun Sik Park, Nam Sun Choi, and Kyo Hun Kim, agree with his opinion that locates the origin of shamanism in the Tan Gun faith. They formed a historical paradigm to believe that particular faith of Korean people as the descendant of Tan Gun is “Korean shamanism” (Sung Rye Kim 2000:4). Nam Sun Choi regards Tan Gun as the father of the Korean people and founder of *Chunsin Sinang*, a faith in the God of Heaven, namely, *Hananim* (2000:7).

Recently, Christian scholars, like Sung Il Kim, are not only in sympathy with the historical paradigm but also the related *Chunsin Sinang*, Tan Gun Faith, and *Singyo* with a monotheistic faith in the highest God, *Hananim*, of Korean ancestor who came from Mesopotamia into Manchuria and Korean Peninsula. They argue that these ancestors’ monotheistic faith in God became degenerated into shamanistic beliefs in material blessings, as Paul the apostle argues in Romans 1:18-23 (Sung Il Kim Vol 2:29-41, C.H. Kang 1985: 112). Jin Tae Shon led the positivist paradigm on “Korean

shamanism,” and indicated a controversial point of historical paradigm on it and implemented a scientific method to see the developmental process of Korean shamanism from its primal faith to religious complexity from the socio-evolutionistic perspective (Sung Rye Kim 2000:8).

The psychologist paradigm regards Korean shamanism as the original form of all religions. It insists on the cultural peculiarity of Korean shamanism, by differentiating Korean shamanism from Siberian Shamanism. In Korea, there are two kinds of shamans: possessed, or charismatic shamans and hereditary shamans. The former, called *Naerim Mudang*, are typically found in the northern half of the Korean peninsula. After suffering from *Sinbyung*, an illness which is generally interpreted as a sign of a shamanistic calling, a potential *Naerim Mudang* apprentices herself to an established shaman from whom she acquires the knowledge and skills appropriate to her new occupation. The two women establish a “spirit mother-spirit daughter” relationship, the spirit mother later conducting the initiation rite which transforms her apprentice into a full-fledged shaman.

In the course of their rites, these shamans not only become possessed and experience ecstatic trance states but may also induce their clients to do the same. However, the hereditary shamans, called *Tangol Mudang*, are found in the southern half of the Korean peninsula. They are recruited not through possession sickness but simply by being born into a shaman's family. Though this type of shaman does not undergo trance possession herself, she may perform rites. This paradigm recognizes shamanism in the southern half of the Korean peninsula as the original and natural form, and considers shamanism in the northern half of the Korean peninsula as a sect of Siberian shamanism. Under the premise that shamanism in the southern half of the Korean peninsula is the proto-type of

Korean peculiar shamanism, this paradigm advocates the theory that Siberian shamanism came into the northern half of the Korean peninsula and mixed with Korean original shamanism (Sung Rye Kim 2000:12-13, 20).

The structure-functional approach to Korean shamanism understands the role of the shaman as a function in the framework of society.

Traditionally, shamans are divided into two types: priest type (southern Korean) and shaman type (northern Korean). But structure-functional paradigm classifies shamans into five types: priest, diviner, medium, medical doctor, and entertainer (Sung Rye Kim 2000:21; Sung Bum Yoon 1998:152-53).

The last paradigm is to see Korean shamanism as popular culture from the socio-practical perspective. It sees shamanic ritual, *gut*, as popular amusement or play of common people. In this sense, Korean shamanism and its ritual is a popular culture that gives people energy and hope to put up with all their difficulties (Sung Rye Kim 2000:27).

On the folk religion level, Korean Shamanism has certain characteristics: The first is hedonistic. It has a doctrine that human behavior is motivated by the desire for pleasure and the dislike for pain. The nature of blessings Shamanism appeals to is selfish and amoral, based on human basic instinct. It fails to teach its followers how to live and why to live. Its ultimate concern is to simply satisfy one's desires. Its second characteristic, "good luck," is the expectation of getting something without action and effort. The third characteristic is materialistic, not being satisfied with anything unless it can be seen and touched. All desires should immediately be seen and fulfilled materialistically. In this way, Shamanistic religion seeks first pleasure, luck, and material things (Chul Soo Park 2000:23).

Korean Buddhism

Though Buddhism, created by Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha, 563B.C.~483B.C.) over 2500 years ago, founded on Hindu beliefs, began with philosophy, later it went through the process of becoming a religion. There are two major divisions: Mahayana (Great Vehicle) and Theravada (Words of the Elders), and many subdivisions. Fundamentally, Buddhists believe that one must rise above desires, to reach a state of enlightenment. Buddha was venerated, and subsequently deified, though he never claimed to be anything more than a human. Originating in India, Buddhism gradually spread throughout Asia to Central Asia, Tibet, Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, as well as the East Asian countries of China, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan.

Buddhism was first introduced to China about 65 A.D. and arrived on the Korean peninsula in 372 A.D. from China. Korea was composed of three separate kingdoms during this period: *Koguryo* in the north, *Paekje* in the southwest and *Shilla* in the southeast. Buddhism was established first in *Koguryo*. The King of *Paekje* was converted to Buddhism in 384 and decreed that his subjects should follow suit. In *Shilla*, Buddhism gained official recognition in 527 and flourished in the United *Shilla* and *Koryo*. It contributed to the spiritual life of the Korean people by cultivating their minds.

However, Korean Buddhism in the *Koryo* Dynasty (918-1392) gradually declined with corruption, "because of its easy accommodation to other folk religious beliefs and practices, such as geomancy and the yin-yang theory of Taoism and Shamanism" (S.H. Lee 2004:219). With the rise of Yi Dynasty (1392-1910), Buddhism was replaced by Confucianism as the state religion and was treated as heterodoxy and its monks and nuns were forced to return to their homes. Despite the severe suppression by the Confucian Yi Dynasty, Korean Buddhism survived as a popular religion among the lower

classes and women. During the early Japanese regime (1910 to 1919), Korean Buddhism rebuilt itself as a result of the Japanese religious policies. Recently Korean Buddhism, partly motivated by competition with Christianity, refurbished Buddhist institutions of higher learning, youth activities, social welfare and human services.

In brief, early Buddhism in Korea received Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, but went through the syncretistic process with Korean shamanism and also through internal reformations. One of many schools in Korean Buddhism is *Jungto* Buddhism that spread over the country. Traditional Buddhism is very individualistic and futuristic, because it sees this world as impermanent. However, *Jungto* (Pure Land) Buddhism, the most popular form of Buddhism in Korea, taught an easy way of attaining happiness for ordinary people with a positive view of this world, by giving up the impossible attainment of Nirvana. It asked people to simply pray as much as possible and accumulate some works of mercy for the sake of gaining happiness both in this present world and the future world, and opened the way for the Korean mass Buddhism (Jung Suk Rhee 1995:6). Buddhism in Korea that has been shamanized is said to be “Korean Buddhism.”

Korean Confucianism

Confucianism was introduced to Korea before Buddhism. It was recorded that Koguryo in AD 372 established a college that taught Confucian scriptures, and that Shilla and Baekje also accepted it as the basis of their political system and governing principles. When Buddhism seized Korea as the state religion in the Unified Shilla and Koryu Dynasty, Confucianism had improved various laws and regulations for the selection of fit persons for higher positions, national rite rules, etc (S.H. Lee 2004:221). In the latter period of the Koryo Dynasty, Confucianism successfully became the leading

force in the intellectual and religious life of the country. Finally it became not only the state religion of the Yi Dynasty (1392-1910) but also penetrated deeply into the people through moral education from primary school to institutions of higher learning and through the exemplary life of the literati and the *yangban*, scholar-officials (S.H. Lee 2004:221).

Confucianism contributed to form Korean social and personal behaviors. While, Buddhism functioned in a religious role, Confucianism, functioned to give ethical norms that centered on the family system. Korean Confucianism is characteristic of "ethical particularism" (Che Bin Tan 1988:263) that emphasizes two kinds of relationship (structure) built on the ethical base. One is a vertical relationship and the other is a horizontal relationship. The former is the vertical relationship that emphasizes son-father-ancestors-God structure. In this relationship, Propriety (理 *li*) as the social foundation gives people goodness (仁), righteousness (義), courtesy (禮), knowledge (知), and trust (信). The latter is the horizontal relationship that results in the five human relations which Mencius set up: between sovereign and minister there was righteousness (君臣有義), between father and son, affection (父子有親), between husband and wife, distinction of function (夫婦有別), between old and young, a proper order of precedence (長幼有序), and between friends, trust and sincerity (朋友有信) (Sources of Korean Tradition 2:39). These five human relations explain the entire Korean social system and also underlie the social dynamics in Korean social exchange.

However, 'emphasis on the horizontal relationship over this vertical relationship'⁷ resulted in corruption of the *yangban*, the aristocratic class and

⁷ Zilu, an impetuous disciple of Confucius, asked how one should serve ghosts and spirits. Confucius said, "Till you have learnt to serve men, how can

in cultivating shame-sensitive culture. Confucius scholars lost their exemplary status and had a double standard: Confucius teaching was for the working classes, and *yang ban*, the aristocratic class, could get away with breaking the rules. At first, Confucian principle and its applications formed a new academic tradition, but later in the *Chosun* Dynasty it degenerated into non-practical justification and speculative emptiness. Korean Confucianism developed into two schools: the *Chu-tzu* school, which focused on principles rather than practices, and the Wang Yang Ming School, which focused on practices rather than principles. The former was adopted in Korea, while the latter was developed in Japan. The reason Japan accepted Western civilization earlier than Korea is due to her inclination to attach greater importance to convenience than to theories in practical situations (Jun Sik Choi 1997:58, 59). With the mal-adaptation of doctrines of *Chu Tzu*, as Robert B. Edgerton (1992) states, the culture of this sick society was internally distorted and finally began to enter the phase of collapse as the Yi Dynasty was breaking down with corruption, venality and greed of the times.

The fundamental teachings of Confucianism in Korea fell into a tool or methodology to obtain success in life (出世, *Chool Se*). People searched only for the fastest shortcut to receiving these blessings. For the sake of success in life, people always say over and over a Confucius teaching about "a man of virtue always swaggers on the main street," but they always use it as a temporary expedient for success in life.

Finally, Korea, with maladapted Confucian teachings, failed to keep up the trend of the times that claimed opening the door to foreign countries.

you serve ghosts?" Zilu then ventured upon a question about the dead. The Master said, "Till you know about the living, how are you to know about the dead?" (Analect XI. 11).

Its characteristics hardened with nepotism, in-group centeredness and collectivism in combination with shamanistic beliefs in material blessing.

Korean Protestantism

The writer uses the term “Korean Protestantism” to differentiate it from Roman Catholicism in Korea, and from Christianity in other countries. ‘Korean Protestantism’ simply means “the Protestant church in Korea cultivated by Korean culture, namely, mentality, the way of thinking and behavior of the Korean people.”

Protestantism in Korea has not only produced great effects in Korean society, but has also been influenced by Korean shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism and other newly-risen religions. First, there are things influenced by Korean Shamanism.

- *Gut*-centered (shamanistic ritual) religious life in Korean shamanism makes Korean Christians think of worship attendance as the whole of faith life.
- People think of worship service as the mere object of seeing or watching, as did *gut* in Korean Shamanism. It is routine to say “Let’s go to ‘see’ or ‘watch’ the worship service” instead of “Let’s worship the Lord,” or “Let’s offer worship to the Lord.”
- As people totally depended on “spiritual” shamans who were more powerful, Korean Christians are always looking for and depend totally on a so-called “spiritually” powerful pastor. These attitudes developed a “shamanistic” priest-centralism in Korean Protestantism.
- Amoralism in Korean shamanism is based on the Korean way of thinking that *Gut* performed by a spiritually powerful shaman makes everything turn out as one wishes.

Second, the influence of Taoism. *Lao-tzu*, a Chinese thinker and founder of Taoism, and his thought on *Sinsun* (神仙 a legendary hermit with miraculous power), inspired Korean pastors to be “*sinsun*-like pastors through mountaineering asceticism” (Jung Suk Rhlee1996:2) at the Mountain Prayer

House. These *sinsun*-like pastors place great emphasis on prophecy, dreams, visions, and dream reading.

Third, the influence of Korean Buddhism. All religions in Korea, especially Buddhism have been forced to be religions of the state. Several Korean churches have gone the way of political secularization and become very nationalistic. Emphasis on studies of the sacred books, spiritual enlightenment, and Buddhist meditation have influenced Korean believers to think of blind devotion to reading the Bible, praying and achieving spiritual awakening.

Bok (福, the Blessing)

The traditional Korean understanding of *bok* is present in all of these religions, shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Protestant Christianity. It shows itself in two ways, one negative and one positive.

The negative meaning of *bok*. It is to be free from three disasters and eight difficulties. There are three greater disasters and three lesser disasters: The former are fire, flood, and typhoon, and the latter are war calamities, epidemic, and famine. Also there are eight misfortunes: hell, starving ghost, animals, deaf and blind person, birth, age, sickness, and death. To avoid such natural, sociological and personal disasters is to be blessed in one's life.

The positive meaning of *bok*. Koreans have forward-looking attitudes to seek *Oh boks*, the Five Blessings, in order to achieve happiness. Confucian teaching of *oh bok*, such as longevity, wealth, order in peace, virtue, and fulfilling destiny is clearly stipulated in the chapter of *Hong Bum* (洪範編 General Provisions of Rules in Confucianism) in *Suh kyung* (The Scriptures of Documents). In the Confucian sense, if one can live a long time while living wealthy, in peace without any disaster or misfortune, do

many good deeds to increase virtue to earn people's respect, as well as having many children and fulfilling their destiny as predestined by heaven, one is perceived to have received *bok*.

Also there are *oh boks* of the common people in the chapter of Tong Sok (通俗編, Popular Custom), *Suh Kyung*. It records *oh boks* as having good teeth, longevity, many children, wealth, and success in life. Among the *sangnom*, lower class, they think that if one can live a long time while having good teeth and many children, as well as being successful in life, one is perceived to have received *bok*. It is recognized that these *oh boks* are outward signs that the gods or spirits of the ancestors have kept them well.

Review of Related Literature

The amount of literature related to this research is enormous. It is impossible to review every book related to the topic addressed. The writer will therefore review important books and articles that are directly related to the topics addressed in this research study. In this section the writer will review the books and articles related to the following crucial components of this research study.

Korean Religious Cultures and its Values and Worldview

The traditional Korean word for religion is *jong gyo* (宗教, the ultimate teaching). Roman Catholic is translated as *Chun Ju Gyo* (teaching of the Heavenly Lord) and *Ki Dok Gyo* (Christianity) as teaching of Christ. Shamanism is called *My Gyo* (Shaman's teaching), Taoism is *Do Gyo* (Toaist Teaching) and Buddhism is *Bul Gyo* (Buddha's Teaching). Confucianism is called *Yu Gyo* (Scholar's Teaching) (Moon Jang Lee 1999: 408).

In the multi-religious milieu of Korea, every *gyo* is perceived as having its unique or ultimate teaching. *Gyo* is understood to offer a comprehensive

system to perceive humanity, nature and the universe and it provides the foundation for culture, civilization, philosophy, science and art. In Korea, as well as in other Asian countries, every *gyo* emphasizes its uniqueness. Although a *gyo* may borrow the teachings of another *gyo*, they are never fused into one. The traditional Korean *gyos* such as Buddhism and Confucianism have maintained their exclusive religious identity and co-existed. Characteristically speaking, every *gyo*, in that it has a unique and comprehensive system of understanding, has been mission-oriented by nature. Other traditional religions as well as Christianity are mission-oriented (Moon Jang Lee 1999: 408).

Modern scholars such as Sa Jung Hong (1998) and Joon Shik Choi (1997) deal generally with Korean culture and its values and worldview. Their books give us a general and superficial understanding. But in relation to the religious culture, there are basically two classifications into which books of Korean religious cultures fall. One classification is books that have been written by authors who have inside views. These books help the writer to see other Korean religious cultures from the phenomenological perspective. The other types of books have authors who write about other religious culture through the eyes of an outsider, mostly Western Christians.

Korean Traditional Concept of Blessing

It is sufficient to say that Koreans are very interested in *bok*, but there are few books that explain it systematically. Thus, extensive research must be done on literature about the Korean concept of blessing. Among the literature, Kyu Tae Lee in his 한국인의 삶과 지혜 2: 이 내 가슴에 수심도 많네 (Korean's Lives and Wisdoms 2, 1992B) explains well this phenomenon that has existed from the earliest times.

Kwang Young Choi did a research study that made a comparison of Buddhist and Confucian thoughts of *bok* with that of Christianity. This research study was submitted to the Union Theological Study, the Philippines for Doctor of Ministry. Another helpful supplemental book is Moses Lee's dissertation, "Transforming the Korean Church: the Conceptual Transformation of Shamanistic *Bok* to the Biblical Concept of Blessing" (1994). This dissertation, starting with the assumption that the shamanistic *bok* includes only material blessing, denies the natural disposition of human beings to seek God's blessing. He, nevertheless, did a wonderful job to have found 47 mistranslations that are different from the original words by examining 587 songs of the Korean United Hymnal. According to him, these wrong translations in terms of *bok* misguide Koreans to believe "a God who gives material blessings and a Jesus who has little to do with repentance, the cross, or holiness" (1994:21). He insists that these wrong translations of Korean hymnals as neither accidental nor coincidental to distort the Korean Christians' understanding of God and of the gospel at both the surface and in depth level and also has hinder the spiritual maturity of the Korean Christians (22). Along the same line, Kwang Hee Lee wrote a dissertation at Fuller Theological Seminary entitled, "A Pastoral Evaluation of Korean Church Growth in the Light of Concept of Blessing in Traditional Shamanism: Toward a Contextual Theology of Blessing."

Biblical Concept of Blessing

Most Korean preachers have a passion and prayer for Korean believers to be blessed as mentioned in 3 John 1:2 (NIV), "Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." Books on sermons by Korean pastors help us understand the concept of blessing these pastors are preaching to their

congregations. Most of them understand that faith in God gives us blessings of spirit, soul and body. It is believed that faith in God through Jesus secures blessings of the spirit, namely salvation and heavenly blessings, blessings of well being as the blessing of the soul, and health as the blessing of body. In times of industrialization and westernization, Korean believers were fascinated with sermons on *bok*, but in times of post-industrialization and the return of traditional culture, they are wandering from this religion to other religions or heretical sects. In this present situation, Park Chul Soo's 축복의 혁명 (Revolution of the Blessing) requests a total transformation of the Korean Church. He states that the change of the concept of *Bok* will be the second conversion to the Lord and Savior.

Claus Westerman's The Blessing is a Western academic approach to this topic. It is a valuable scholarly work that surveys the issues and the literature dealing with them. He gives a broad exposition, section by section, and handles the major points with scholarly awareness and views on this topic. Also Gary Smalley & John Trent's The Gift of the Blessing attaches Isaac's blessing on Jacob and applies its content and method of blessing to family members and friends from a popular Western worldview.

Korean Christian World View

Recently, it is very popular to translate and publish Christian books for Korean readers related to the Christian worldview. These books are translated or published by scholars who studied abroad and also are well aware of how important Christian worldview is in the areas of mission and evangelism. These include Sung In Kyung's 나의 세계관 뒤집기 (Overturning My Worldview, 1998), Seung Hun Yang's 기독교 세계관으로 세상읽기 (Reading the World Through Christian Worldview, 2003), Jum Sik Ahn's 세계관을 분별하라 (Discern Worldview, 1998), and Korea Research

Institute for Missions' 선교와 세계관 (Mission and Worldview, 1999). These books provide a framework for discussion of missionary candidates, missionaries and missiologists.

Spiritual Maturity

In recent years, the topic of the Korean Church has turned from church growth to Christian maturity. The rate of quantitative growth of the Korean church has slowed or declined. It is believed that spiritual maturity is the next phase of growth. There are many attempts to understand Christian maturity in the Korean cultural atmosphere; however, comprehensive analyses are not yet made.

Recently, Shon Kyung Ku has written on the topic of Christian maturity. His books, 습관과 영적 성숙 (Habits and Spiritual Maturity, 2002A), 돈과 영적 성숙 (Money and Spiritual Maturity, 2002B), 인간관계와 영적 성숙 (Human Relationship and Spiritual Maturity, 2003A), and 기질과 영적 성숙 (Temperament Study and Spiritual Maturity, 2003B), are helpful to enlighten ourselves in terms of blessing and spiritual maturity in Korean context. Other helpful supplemental books are Kang Jun Min's 자아의 발견과 영적 성숙 (Discovery of the Self and Spiritual Maturity, 1999A) and 독서와 영적 성숙 (Reading and Spiritual Maturity, 1999B).

Korean Theology of Christian Mission

From the introduction of the gospel into the Korean peninsula until the 1960s, the Korean churches did not dare to attempt self-theologizing against "missionary theology," which had been taught by Western missionaries and churches. This changed in the 1960s through the 1980s indigenous Korean theologies began to appear. They can be classified into three areas: *minjung* theology, Korean religious cultural theology, and *kibok* theology.

Minjung theology had been prosperous in times of political oppression and socio-economic inequality. As the Korean economy prospered, however, these theologies based on the premise of oppression lost their appeal. In Korean religious cultural theology, Korean pastors and theologians began to express the gospel in terms of the Korean culture, and tried to build a Korean theology through self-theologization. Their attempts often led to theologies of religious pluralism.⁸ Thus, Korean churches have been outwardly dominated by *kibok* theology or blessing theology. Some see these theologies as doubly influenced by Western missionary prosperity theologies and Korean shamanism, especially the traditional concept of blessing or *bok*.

Min Nam Ki writes 한국식 전도법 (Contextual Evangelism in the Korean Syncretistic Shamanism, 1997) which is about a Copernican revolution to the Korean evangelism that had been dominated by the western way of evangelism. This paradigm shift of evangelism will soon bear fruit in the area of evangelism and will be a seed to the Korean theology of mission that fits into the Korean worldview. Larry Gene Lenning's "The Concept of Blessing and Its Application to Mission in Islamic West Africa" (1979) will be helpful to the Korean churches to bridge the gospel with the Korean culture. This book, in an attempt to build an effective bridge between the concept of blessing and that of Islamic West Africa, gives the writer an open view to this research study.

Data Collection and Research Methodology

The writer will rely on the following research methods to collect data: life-long

⁸ Dr. Byun Sunwhan, the president of the Methodist Theological Seminary, Seoul, Korea, was impeached and excommunicated in 1992 for professing religious pluralism.

experiences, library research, participant observation, questionnaires, and intensive interviews.

Data Collection

Life-long Experiences. For forty-seven years, I have absorbed many thoughts of Korea and Korean Churches to the degree that they have become a part of my thinking. According to the Wesleyan quadrilateral tradition, Christian experience is considered, along with “reason” and “tradition,” as dynamic and interactive aids in the interpretation of the Word of God in the Bible.” Wesleyans view religion as “a dynamic, enterprising force, arising from experiential contact with God ... in the life that the believers lives” (Robert C. Monk 1966:70). This means that my personal experience cannot but strengthen the validity of the academic research in terms of the collection and analysis of data.

Library research. The nature of this study requires collection of data through library research using both primary and secondary sources related to the topic. The basic data for this research study came not only from the writings of socio-religious scholars, anthropologists, missiologists, and theologians, but also from thoughts of non-Christians or secular segment of the Korean population. It will be a basic point of reference to compare with the reference of Korean Christians in Korea and America. In particular, chapters 3 and 4 will definitely rest with documentary sources of information in the areas of biblical and theological studies.

Participant Observation.⁹ Although participant observation may have the flaw to distort the observed behavior, it gives participant observer opportunity for in-depth systematic study of a particular group or activity (Garson 2007). As a participant observer of Korean culture, I will unravel a thread of this research study by making use of direct and indirect experiences. Some of the basic information that comes from my personal experiences and observations contribute partly to academic research.

Survey Questionnaire and Personal Interviews. In general, the questionnaire is said to be a major instrument for data gathering in descriptive survey studies, and is used to secure information from varied and widely scattered sources (Sanches 1986:123-24). In Chapter 5, "Understanding Blessing for Korean Christians," the writer strategically employs a pilot test and main survey, namely, questionnaires and personal interviews to verify the hypothesis.

Pilot Test

I selected two small groups from the church where I work in New Jersey for the pilot test. It proved very useful, giving me a chance to "field-test the questionnaire or other measurement device, to screen interviewers, and to check on the management of field operations" (Scheaffer, et al, 1996: 69). The results of a pilot test showed that some modification must be made before a full-scale sampling is undertaken.

The writer carried out the pilot test on the thirteenth day of March, 2005, in order to know whether the questionnaires are proper to the

⁹ There are two approaches in participant observation: while the phenomenological approach emphasizes the participant observer experiencing meanings through empathy, the empirical approach emphasizes systematic observation and recording of the milieu. This distinction is, of course, more a matter of emphasis than a dichotomy (Garson 2007)

hypothesis. For the pilot test, two sample groups were selected in the Bethany UMC, New Jersey. The two groups were independent of one another. One was a small Bible study group, the other an association of United Methodist Men. These two selected groups were composed of 15 men and 18 women, whose ages ranged from 36 through 55.

UMM groups and Bible study groups in Bethany UMC do not exclude women in their gatherings. The pilot test was done by using samples composed of both men and women. In this way some preliminary conclusions can be drawn about whether there is a gender difference to the result. Compared were two groups: one was a Bible study group the writer had taught which composed of students who were overflowing with enthusiasm to learn the truth; the other was a UMM group organized to enhance evangelism, mission and spiritual life based on Christian fellowship.

Research questions were concerned four topics: general background, self-examination of spiritual maturity, survey of the traditional concept of *bok* that the respondents had in the past or before becoming a Christian, and survey of the biblical concept of *bok* that they understand in the present as a church member.

This pilot test was not designed to archive absolute statistical validity but to provide guidelines and nuance to the basic hypothesis that biblical study of blessing could be a corrective to some aspects of the traditional concept of *bok*. We found that most respondents had a deep attachment to the traditional concept of *bok*, namely, the five *boks*, and showed strong pleasure at receiving *boks*. For the transition from the traditional concept into the biblical concept of *bok*, 3 persons of the 34 have taken less than 5 years, 8 more than 6 years but less than 10 years, 3 less than 20 years, the rest more than 20 years. Those who have taken fewer years of transition

had opportunities to have Bible studies and daily quiet time, while people who had long years of transition had neglected the means of growth and maturity, such as Bible studies and quiet time, spiritual experiences, etc. Major changes were made through Bible study and meditation on the word of God. This indicates that intensive disciple training will probably help Korean Christians become biblically mature believers and trained disciples. See chapter five for some specific results of this survey.

The Planning of the Main Survey

Statement of Objectives. The main survey was conducted to determine the present understanding of *bok* of Korean church believers and explore the degree of spiritual maturity.

Target population. The prepared questionnaire (See the Appendix 2) was given to 100 of the Bethany United Methodist Church in New Jersey, the United States of America, where the writer currently serves, asking their sincere and honest answers based on their knowledge and experiences. The Bethany United Methodist Church has more than 1000 regular adult Attenders. The personal interviews with church leaders will be formally or informally held at any chosen and given time.

Although these are Korean-American believers, not Korean believers in Korea, per se, the researcher believes that Korean-American churches replicate Korean cultural conditions to such a degree that same valid inferences can be drawn from them as reprehensible of the Korean church as a whole. Korean immigrants have prioritized “the maintenance of ethnic identity and preservation of the Korean culture” (Sharon Kim 2003:65) and

“have had stronger sense of peoplehood and ethic solidarity that Chinese and Japanese” (65).¹⁰

The frames. The Korean church has spiritual discipleship for laypeople,¹¹ various kinds of lay leadership resources, such as *Jangro* (elder), *kwonsa* (counselor) and *Jipsa* (deacon or deaconess). *Jangro* (elders) of this lay leadership represent the leadership of the Korean church with the pastor. Formal or informal interviews were carried out with pastors as well as elders, and questionnaires were distributed to selected class meetings, Methodist Men’s groups and Bible study groups.

Bible Study with the Experimental Group. The writer formed an experimental group who participated in a twelve week Bible study called “Be a Channel of Blessing!” People of this group were given a pre-Bible study test and a post-Bible study test.

Selection and training of field workers. Questionnaires were distributed through the presidents of the selected groups out of 34 UMM groups, leaders of the selected class meetings out of hundreds of class meetings and Bible study classes. These leaders were taught how to manage collecting data as coordinators. The various jobs were carefully organized before the survey was begun. Personal interviews were done by the writer only. This dissertation is an attempt to focus on one concept that

¹⁰ Korean immigrants are considered as more cultural than Koreans in Korea, for “the second- and third-generation Koreans in America are listening to Korean music, getting into this Korean pop culture and are dressing in Korea” (Rebecca Kim 2006:102) while Koreans in Korea aspire to be Americanized.

¹¹ The Korean churches have their own regulations and bylaws on lay discipleship guided by its affiliated denomination. *Jangro* has been selected among *kwonsas*, who also have been chosen among *jipsas* through restricted biblical regulations and bylaws of the local church. It generally means that *Jangro* is a more defined and selected leader than *kwonsa*, *kwonsa* than *jipsa*, and *jipsa* than laypeople.

may help the Christian Church to increase its effectiveness in its witness to Koreans. Also this missiological approach will help Korean missionaries to enhance their work and ministry in many effective ways.

Theoretical Framework

Two main theoretical frameworks were used to interpret the data collected in this study. The first is a biblical-theological framework, informed especially by the writings of John Wesley. The second is a missiological framework suggested by Don Richardson, critical discernment.

Biblical-Theological Framework

Every society faces important social issues. The church should teach how to deal with these social issues utilizing the biblical point of view. Doing so will result in people responding to the truth of the Bible. In order to interpret this research, the writer would like to reinterpret the blessing to help Korean Christians mature.

Special Blessing vs General Blessing. In accordance with custom, the writer uses the concept of general blessing and special blessing borrowing the theological terms of “general” and “special” revelation. In this sense, as shown in the table below, the writer uses the terms “general” and “special” blessing to give Korean Christians a clearer understanding of blessing in Jesus Christ versus general blessings that are given to all people whether they are Christian or not in Adamic/Noahic covenants.

The general blessing is given to the people as a possibility (potential asset). When Moses spelled out the dangers involved in forgetting that God is the source of every blessing that we enjoy, he admonished the Jews not to be proud of their power and strength that have produced wealth for them, saying “But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the

ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today” (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Revelation	Grace	Blessing
General Revelation: God reveals Himself in various ways. If one searches nature and the world, he can infer God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature without excuse. God reveals Himself not only in nature but also in all aspects of everyday life.	General Grace: As God the Father in heaven causes His sun to rise on [the] evil and [the] good, and sends rain on [the] righteous and [the] unrighteous, general grace means the grace that is indiscriminately given to all people. God leads people step by step in His unfailing grace to the special grace.	General Blessings: Whether one believes or not, God blesses human beings in the Adamic/ Noahic covenants. The blessing is given to people as a possibility (potential asset). Everything depends on one's self-development of the blessing as the possibility.
Special Revelation: The Bible puts an end to the question of revelation. God made His son Jesus the final and full revelation to this world.	Special Grace: If the grace of God has worked as the prevenient grace and convincing grace and one has responded to the grace of God, He leads him/her to the stage of the special grace that is allowed to the one who becomes His child by believing in Jesus Christ. The special grace unfolds to His child justifying, adopting, regenerating, sanctifying and glorifying grace until God has finished leading His children to His dwelling in the Kingdom of God.	Special Blessing: In the Abrahamic covenant, God promises to give special blessing to those who believe in Jesus Christ. In Him, God gives “all blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesus 1:3), that is, the blessing of the restoration of relationship with human being, eternal life, the presence of God, answers to our requests in prayer, etc. All these blessings are given to us in God through Jesus Christ.

Table 1: **General Blessing and Special Blessing**

The writer believes that God gave all human beings blessing such as “the ability to produce wealth,” as God the Father in heaven causes His sun to rise on [the] evil and [the] good, and sends rain on [the] righteous and [the] unrighteous (Matthew 5:4). General blessing such as the possibility to produce wealth, health, success, etc., depends on the self-development of one's sincere works, efforts and skills.

Unlike the general blessing, God provides the way to reach the special blessing that is only given through Jesus Christ. In the Abrahamic covenant, God promises to give special blessing to those who believe in Jesus Christ. In Him, God gives “all blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesus 1:3), that is, the blessing of the restoration of relationship with human beings, eternal life, the presence of God, answers to our requests in prayer, etc. All these blessings are given to us in Jesus Christ.

Seeing People with the Lens of Grace. It is helpful to use the Scripture way of salvation, which John Wesley (1978: 43-54) developed in light of the theology of God’s grace, to measure the rate (degree) of spiritual maturity of Korean believers. Wesley’s relational understanding of salvation in light of God’s grace helps us see a correlation in a Christian’s life with their maturity. He taught that the grace of God plays important roles in the way to heaven. In his understanding, grace is manifested in three ways: in creation, God’s forgiveness, and our transformation (Runyon 1998:26). Original sin, in Wesley’s view, leads to both the temporal and spiritual death of humanity. He says, “By nature all were born in sin, therefore they must be born again, born of God. By nature you are wholly corrupted. By Grace, you shall be wholly renewed” (Wesley 1978:65). Thus, he viewed salvation as the restoration of a broken relationship with God, while he viewed sin as loss of relationship with God. In terms of relationship, I love to understand salvation as walking with God through the process of it: Awakening from spiritual death — Justification (Repentance, Regeneration, Initial Sanctification) — Sanctification — Glorification — Kingdom of God. Thus, Wesley mainly articulates his concept of salvation in terms of relationship with the Lord by likening the process of salvation to a house. “Prevenient grace serves as

the porch, justification as the door, and sanctification or holiness as the room of the house” (Runyon 1998:27).

Seeing people in the light of the grace of God is a distinctive Wesleyan emphasis. Although John Wesley shared with many other Christians a belief in grace, justification, assurance, and sanctification, he combined them all on the basis of the grace of God that pervades our understanding of Christian faith and life (BDUMC 2004: 45). John Wesley expanded his understanding of prevenient grace beyond that of the Calvinistic emphasis that bound God's prevenient grace to the Scripture and limit it to the elect, the predestined or foreordained for salvation (Tuttle 1992:42-45). “While the grace of God is undivided, it precedes salvation as ‘prevenient grace,’ continues in ‘justifying grace,’ and is brought to fruition in ‘sanctifying grace’” (BDUMC 2004:46).

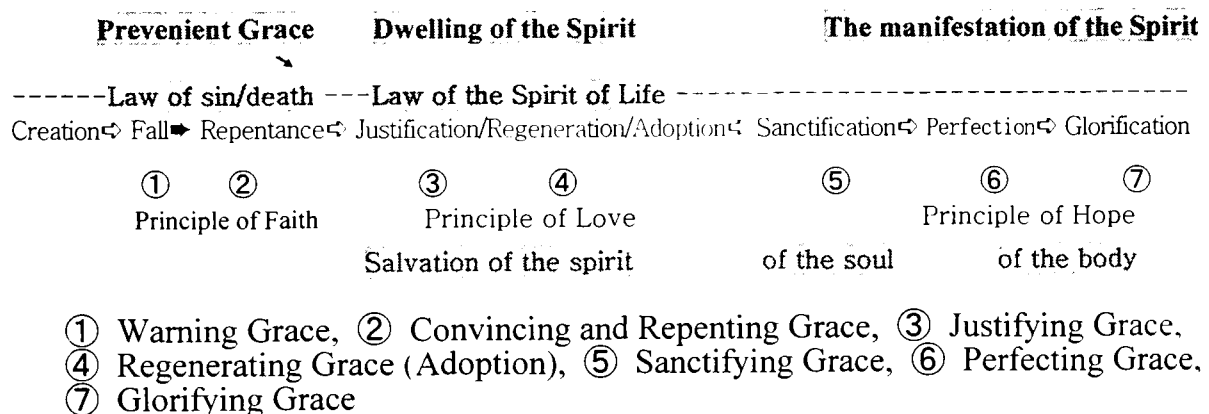


Figure 1: A Model for the Christian's Lifelong Experience of Sevenfold Grace
 (Develped Wesley's Scriptural Way to Heaven by the Author)

In brief, Christ's mission was to proclaim that the Creator will not abandon the world to corruption, but will transform it and its inhabitants in accordance with the image of the Son and in the power of the Spirit. The trajectory is toward the Kingdom of God. “The transformation and

sanctification of the world is God's aim" (Runyon 1998: 163).

I modified John Wesley's *Ordo Salutis*, the Scripture Way of Salvation, into a model in which a Christian can experience God's sevenfold grace throughout his/her life. God persuades us to choose Him [sic] by assisting grace at every moment in our lives whether we are aware of it or not. As Moses and the sons of Israel sang, "In Thy loving kindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed" (Exodus 15:13 NASB), so God leads His [sic] people to the kingdom of God by His [sic] full grace throughout their lives.

Missiological Framework

A second theoretical framework, the missiological framework, is constructed from Don Richardson's critical discernment. The concept of *bok* is a culturally God-given point of contact for Korean Christians to Korean people. Korean churches have overused the concept of *bok* to bring people into the churches but have failed to differentiate the Biblical concept from the traditional concept of *bok*. I believe that it has partly caused a lot of people to withdraw their concern from the churches.

I borrow ideas from Don Richardson for Korean Christians to have a new perspective on God's purpose in terms of the concept of *bok*. Don Richardson in his Eternity in their Hearts (1981:32-33) uses the terms "the Abraham factor," "the Melchizedek factor," and "the Sodom factor." The Abraham factor means God's special revelation in the Bible and the Melchizedek factor refers to God's general revelation in human consciousness and nature, while the Sodom factor indicates sinful aspects of culture and religion. Using these terms, Richardson explains the faith of the Hebrews as they came into the land of Canaan and how they were to relate to the culture and religion of the indigenous population. He distinguishes the truly friendly "Melchizedek factor" among the Canaanites

from the other dark “Sodom factor” of Canaanite culture. When Abraham returned from battle after he and his allies freed the captives of Sodom from the allied forces of eastern city-states, he was met by Bera, King of Sodom and Melchizedek, King of Salem. Abraham rejected Bera’s offer to return all the spoils in exchange for the people, but accepted the bread and wine from Melchizedek and gave him tithes of the spoils (Gen. 14:17-24). Abraham lived and separated from the city of Sodom that was destroyed because of its wickedness against God such as human sacrifices, temple prostitution, sexual debauchery, human haughtiness, and violation of hospitality (Gen. 18,19). In the words of Richardson, “the Abraham factor” responds to the “Melchizedek factor” and adopts it, while it rejects the negative “Sodom factor” (1981:27-32). All of this is symbolic and presents some important spiritual truths that we should understand and apply today in the process of mission and evangelism.

In this sense, when we discern the beliefs and practices in relation to the concept of *bok*, we have to find out some “Melchizedek factor” of traditional indigenous ideas and at the same time to know “the Sodom factor” in the traditional beliefs and practices of receiving *bok*. Indigenizing Christian Messages on *Bok* into the Korean Culture is to strengthen “Melchizedek factor” out of Korean traditional concept of *bok* and exclude the “Sodom factor” in the traditional beliefs and practices of receiving *bok*.

In summary, theoretical frameworks have the purpose of providing eyes to interpret this research data. A biblical and theological framework provides criteria with which to discern how to adopt critical contextualization. The missiological framework will give clues to solve the problem of how to contextualize the Korean concept of *bok* and the biblical understanding of blessing.

Data Interpretation and Analysis

The collected data of this research will pass through the biblical, theological, and missiological frameworks to determine the findings of this study.

Interpretation of the Data

The data of this research in chapter 2 will support the thesis that the Korean Church needs to understand the traditional concept of *bok* in order to develop an evangelistic method as well as to build up a true Korean theology of mission. Toward this end the interviews and discussions were reviewed and transcribed.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the biblical, theological and missiological understanding of *bok*. Perspectives of "Salvation History" and typological understanding of blessing in the Old Testament and the New Testament will be applied to these two chapters. Chapter 6 rests on major missiologists and theologians regardless of Korean and other nationalities. For the discussion of the understanding of blessing and spiritual maturity, insights from theologians, missiologists and historians of the Church will be utilized.

Chapter 7 will demonstrate that the incorporation of the biblical concept of blessing into the ministry, worship, outreach, and theology of the Church in Korea may very well enhance its witness but also may increase the receptivity of Koreans to the gospel. This chapter thus gives foundation to build up a new mission-based Korean theology on the understanding of *bok*, the key word of the Korean worldview. It will help the next generation of theological students to build a true Christian, a true Methodist, and a true Korean theology.

Analysis of the Data

In chapter 5 the analyzed data will give meaning to this research

study. For an analysis of the data collected by the main survey, I used SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Science) software program. The collected data has a process of encoding and decoding steps and is eventually completed to obtain the information of participants and response of each question. For the multiple response questions, multiple response frequency method was employed. To obtain the result of each question depending on the gender, age, and the group, cross-tabs procedure among descriptive procedure was completed. Also, a comparison between pre-test (before Bible study) and post-test (after Bible test) is made to see the difference between the two groups. Its descriptive procedure is completed by using descriptive procedure of SPSS program as same as above.

Missiological Implication

New missiological questions will provide opportunity for new answers. The following answers would emerge as the result of this research study:

1) A transformation into biblical concept of blessing will lead to a greater qualitative, spiritual maturity of the Korean churches. Sanctification (spiritual maturity) of the Korean believers can be enhanced by a fuller understanding of the biblical concept of blessing.

2) Understanding the purpose of why God gives us blessing, Korean churches can better witness to the gospel by changing the mentality from a self-centered or church-centered faith and life to a more society- and nation-reformed church.

3) A biblical change in concept of blessing will help increase the degree of dedication and devotion, change the self-centered content into prayer that is tuned with the Kingdom of God, and help Korean Christians become a priesthood of all believers by giving rather than receiving.

4) Understanding the biblical concept of blessing will help Korean theologians indigenize the gospel into Korean culture and build local mission theology of *bok*. A sound Korean theology of mission will prevent the deterioration of Christianity.

5) A model of how to help Korean Christians learn a more biblical understanding of *bok* will be a cross-cultural model in that “blessing is and always has been a common phenomenon in the religious experience of man” (Lenning 1979:27).

CHAPTER 2

TRADITIONAL KOREAN UNDERSTANDING OF *BOK*

In this chapter, I will examine how Koreans have perceived the concept of *bok* through various points in history. My objective is to illustrate how traditional Korean culture and the Korean understanding of *bok* in terms of Christianity have merged to shape the contemporary Korean outlook.

Koreans' Cultural Expression of *Bok*

One way of understanding culture is to view it as a unique expression of people's cultivation of their God-given earth. Korean culture is similar to all other cultures; it developed in a specific manner as it responded to particular problems and issues. Therefore, Korean culture is defined "as a dynamic system of socially acquired and socially shared ideas" (Luzbetak 1995:74) by Koreans who have traditionally resided in the Korean peninsula and neighboring areas.

People express their beliefs by thinking and translating their thinking into practice. Values that are most esteemed, then, are grounded as most desirable and excellent by the given culture. These values become normative and find their way into everyday life. Thus, one may learn both the general and the particular core values of Koreans by observing their culture.

The following questions are raised in my observation of the Korean culture: What draws Korean people's attention and why does it appeal to them? What strikes the Korean people's ear and what catches their eyes? As a life-long observer of the Korean community, I learned that *Oh bok*, five specific blessings, are tremendously appealing to Koreans. For Koreans,

“the *oh bok* are considered necessary requisites for happiness; Korean people regard the *oh bok* as the ultimate blessings. Whenever one is considered happy, he or she is said to have the *oh bok*” (In Kyu Whang 2006:3).

Koreans often joke that they were born to receive blessing, live to seek blessing, and die with the heart to invoke blessing. The word ‘*bok*’ is frequently used in their everyday life. For instances - ‘*boki itta*’ (to have luck/blessing), ‘*boki chaaonda*’ (be attended with blessing), ‘*boki dalananda*’ (lose his/her blessing), ‘*bokul mitneunda*’ (firm belief that one will receive blessing), ‘*bokeul noorinda*’ (enjoy blessing), ‘*bokeul tagonanda*’ (be born with the blessing), and ‘*bokseurubge sanggyutda*’ (fat and well-looking; prosperous-looking).

Each new year, Koreans often exchange greetings, “May you receive full blessings of this year!” and write in cards, “We invoke blessing upon you and your family.” The following are some widely used terms that demonstrate the full impact of ‘*bok*’ in the Korean culture: *bokji* (福地 the blessed land), *bokjo* (福祚 joyfulness in one’s life), *bokrak* (福樂 happiness and merriness), *bokwoon* (福運 gook luk), *soobok* (壽福 good health and happiness), *bokduk* (福德 inborn happiness), *hwabok* (禍福 good and ill fortune), *bokkwon* (福券 lottery), *hangbok* (幸福 happiness), *manbok* (萬福 every happiness in the world), and *ohbok* (五福 five blessings of blessings).

Whenever I visit Korean homes, I often find at least one hanging scroll of *bok*. One may find, for example, a *baek bok do* (百福圖, one hundred different variations of the letter *bok*); a *Baek Su Do* (百壽圖, one hundred different styles of the letter *Su*, 壽, Longevity); or even a picture or a painting of *Sib Jang Sang* (十長生), “ten creatures that live longer than human

beings.”¹² Moreover, I often find furniture, kitchen utensils, and other necessities that are carved or embossed with the letter *bok* (See Appendix 5).

These manifestations of *bok* demonstrate the passion of the Korean people for *oh bok* (five blessings). They long for the heavens to bless them while they live in uncertainty due to their historical and political context. Koreans inhabit a tiny portion of land surrounded by militant neighbors. Throughout history, Koreans have been invaded nearly a thousand times by Japan, China, and Russia. Japan had always wanted to conquer the Korean peninsula, whereas the Chinese, who were fully convinced that they were the center of the world, demanded Korea to act as their subordinate and extorted money and services. At one point, even Russia advanced southward to secure an ice-free port. For centuries, uncertainty and panic pervaded the Korean peninsula and inevitably gave rise to superstitions. The historical and social context certainly justifies why Korean people have always been so eager to seek blessings.

In a way, the tenacious hope for blessing in times of crisis and adversity accounts for the continuance of the Korean nation. Deprived of hope, Koreans would have succumbed to despair and hopelessness, and the nation of Korea would have been annexed by their aggressive neighbors. Instead, Koreans sought *oh bok* for happiness and fulfillment.

Pre-understanding of Value and Core Values

Core values mostly refer to general concepts of desirable and undesirable state of affairs. Core values are paramount for they are connected to the "selection of cultural behavior from among alternatives for the integration of a cultural system and for the way a society is organized"

¹² *Sib Jang Sang* includes sun, mountain, water, stone, clouds, pine tree, herb of eternal youth, turtle, crane, and deer. This Painting symbolizes an ideal world.

(Spradley 1975:299). All cultures embody a limited number of core values. Once the core values are identified, cultural manifestations can be understood more clearly (1975:287). To a certain extent, even governmental rules and prescriptions are enveloped in cultural values. These values are shared assumptions of what is right, good, and important.

I will relate a personal experience to hopefully illustrate how societal values and norms affect individual disposition. Once, I had dinner with a Filipino friend. While he ate with his bare hands, I insisted on using chopsticks. I considered eating with bare hands “dirty” and unimaginable. For my friend, however, there was nothing unusual about eating without utensils; in fact, it is normal for him to take meals in that fashion. Therefore, one must interpret another person’s behavior, not in light of one’s own motives and values, but in light of that particular person’s motives, habits, and values.

Korean cultural values reflect what Korean people regard most highly. The Korean culture is grounded on “content” that gives rise to forms and meanings in regards to Korean values, basic personality, politics, economics, technology, and ecology. Koreans, for example, are largely predisposed to collective or mass culture. Collectivism is defined as “an ideology that gives inner group harmony first priority.” Historically, Korea has been an agricultural society; thus, the group interest always outweighed individual motivations and profits (Joon Shik Choi 1997:34). Furthermore, Korean Confucianism that emphasizes community over individual has greatly influenced the nation as a whole. A second example. Koreans highly esteem *oh bok* (five blessings) and the attainment of *oh bok* as the way of life. As I have mentioned, *oh bok* is comprised of longevity, wealth, nobleness (eminence), heirs, and health.

Bok of Longevity. People naturally desire longevity. First and foremost, "Koreans regard longevity as a great *bok* (blessing)." Koreans have traditionally held large banquets for one's sixtieth birthday and this cultural practice continues even today. In times where the average life expectancy was short with forty years, longevity was highly esteemed. Living a long life indicates not only health and longevity, but the luxury and comfort of attention by one's children and passing on to them one's family legacy. Desiring longevity is different from the yearning of immortality or eternal life in one's next life; longevity is situated on the present here and now.

It is noteworthy that Koreans rank longevity as the first and foremost of the *oh bok*. It indicates the Korean mindset that perseveres through trials and obstacles for the sake of longevity. Koreans highly value life as the following proverbs demonstrate: "This world is better than the next world, even if one is hung upside down;" "There is no better place than this world;" and "A living dog is better than a dead minister of a state." For Koreans, "longevity is grounded on realistic actualism as well as the doctrine of life for life's sake" (Kyung Jeon Seo 2004:4).

Bok of Prosperity. Wealth and prosperity are also integral to the *oh bok*. "A desire for the *bok* of wealth should be understood as enjoying the goodness and luxuries of life and working to escape poverty" (2004:4). In the past, the majority of the people were peasants; they firmly believed that there was no escape for poverty due to cultural institutions that privileged royalty. As a result, *han* (恨), a lasting regret and resentment, against poverty was instilled into the Korean population. The invoking of material *bok* largely derives from this hope of transcending poverty and attaining wealth. The following are popular sayings that illustrate the valorization of wealth in Korea: "The spectacles of the Mt. Kumgang cannot interest the

hungry," "Bread is better than the song of the birds," and "When poverty comes in, love flies out." These sayings certainly expose the underlying desire for material wealth. "The desire for materialistic wealth along with the realization of longevity is the driving force in Korea" (2004:5).

Bok of Nobleness. Koreans also highly regard nobleness (eminence). One dominant characteristic of Koreans is that they are driven with the desire to attain the *bok* of nobleness. In all stages of life, Koreans seek nobleness, not only for themselves but for their children as well. Furthermore, it is common to hear compliments like "one looks noble," and "has a noble feature" in Korean culture.

While attaining nobleness is certainly not easy, it does remain in the realm of possibilities. If one were to study hard, work diligently, and build up an exemplary reputation, he or she will be honored and venerated by others. In Korea, the *bok* of nobleness is understood as holding a high office or title. Nobleness based on one's position and title instilled a passion in the Korean people's hearts to pursue studies, if not for the sake of knowledge, then for the sake of nobleness. For Koreans, longevity is the blessing of life, wealth is the blessing of household, and nobleness is the blessing of a clan. Family genealogy represents more than blood relations of individual members; it reflects the eminence and consciousness of the family.

Bok of Heirs. The desire for heirs and posterity are interconnected to the desire for longevity, wealth, and nobleness. The *bok* of descendants guarantees the continuation of one's legacy through one's heirs. Traditionally, Koreans have yearned for the *bok* of many sons. The traditional Korean family, then, emphasized not the love between husband and wife, but the bearing of heir(s). "The ultimate responsibility and hope for a Korean woman was bearing son(s), irregardless of her socioeconomic

status; a wife could be expelled from her husband's family if she failed to deliver children" (Kyung Jeon Seo 2004:6). In the East, the momentousness of producing an heir to succeed the family name is a universal cultural phenomenon. The pervading clan/family consciousness and the prevailing Confucian convention that upheld men over women deepened the desire for this particular *bok*. Another significant reason why Korean people favor son to daughter is because ancestral worship is central to one's filial duty. The eldest son of the family is required to conduct this ceremony.

Bok of Health and Beauty. People desire health and beauty. The Korean obsession for health is most revealed in the prevalence and consumption of exotic food, herbs, and analeptic. It is customary in Korea for one to preserve and maintain health by consuming analeptic, special restorative food and medicine; people prefer to preserve one's health through this method rather than exercising and regulating one's diet. Therefore, Koreans consume dogs, snakes, frogs, maggots, bear's galls, antlers, and variety of other things that are "health-promoting" and "health-preserving". These activities have contributed to a number of social fusses in Korea. These five blessings are not separate but are interrelated.

A Brief Korean History of Religious Culture in Terms of Bok

One can readily perceive, in Korean history, the conflict in the preservation of Korean nationality and spirituality amidst the inundation of foreign religions and culture. The religious culture in Korea is grounded on an ancient religious expression of national spirituality. Foreign religions were imported and contributed to the foundation and development of the Korean religious culture. Foreign religion, however, did not simply displace national spirituality. The formation of Korean religious culture was a long process of

confrontation and acculturation.¹³

The Korean religious culture was formed through the union of its own national spirituality and the influx of foreign religions. After Shamanism (-5th century), Buddhism dominated the Silla and Koryu dynasties (6th -14th centuries). During the Chosun dynasty, Korean Confucianism condemned Buddhism and dominated Korean culture (15th -19th centuries). The downfall of Chosun dynasty marks the beginning of Korean modernization; and, Christianity developed and played a significant role in the formation of Korean religious culture (19th -21st centuries) (CRTC 1975:53-55).

The contemporary religious environment of Korea is unique. Layers of religion, from the oldest religion of Shamanism to the newest religion of Christianity, exist in Korea. Korean socio-cultural context can be perceived as a medley of Shamanism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism and Christianity (Tan Che-Bin 1989:262). Shamanism generated Korean folk tales and superstitions. Buddhism and Taoism informed Korean religious thought. Confucianism wielded its influence by prescribing both individual and social norms. I intend to investigate the concept of *bok* as it relates to the three major religions: Korean Shamanism, Korean Buddhism, and Korean Confucianism.

Shamanistic Definition on *Bok*

The original definition and the author of the letter '*Bok*' remain unknown. Korean scholars now define the word through inferences.

¹³ Dong Sik Ryu 1996:14-15) illustrates this process: "In the several centuries after the importation of a new religion, this religion gains recognition from the society with its vitality and fruits and earns social privilege within in the governing structure of the society. After this happens, the religion outwardly holds the glory of national religion and inwardly begins to lose its vitality and flavor. Ultimately, another religion will take its place, as the Buddhism of Koryu dynasty was like this as well as the Confucianism of the Chosun dynasty.

Hwang In Kyu (2006:2) draws shamanic thought from the ideographic word 'bok' (福); he parses it as *si* (示) and *bok* (畐) and explains that *si* (示) symbolizes heaven (天) coming down and revealing itself to people, while *bok* (畐) depicts of a jar with a belly that juts out. Thus, Hwang defines *bok* as "very good luck" or "comfortable happiness" with the analogy of a belly-jutted-jar which God gave to His people. He understands 'bok' as 'luck beyond human power.'

In Korea, Shamanism is called *My Gyo* (Shaman's teaching). Shamanic thought on blessing is found in the chapter of Tong Sok (通俗編, Popular Custom) from the *Suh Kyung*. The concept of *oh bok* is recorded in Tong Sok which is characterized by having 1) good teeth, 2) longevity, 3) many children, 4) wealth, and 5) success in life. The concept of blessing in Korean Shamanism is comprised entirely of these five blessings.

The shamanic concept of blessing largely prevailed among *sangnom*, the common people. One was generally perceived as blessed when one fulfilled the five blessings. People who practice Shamanism tend to believe that "blessings are not achieved by human efforts, but are assigned to a person on the basis of the principle of yin-yang" (Jong Dae Seo 2002:88). For Shamans, the attainment of *oh bok* indicates foreseeing care and guidance of gods or ancestral spirits.

Shamanism perceives *bok* in two ways. From the passive point of view, blessing is seen as freedom from disasters and misfortunes. The positive point of view holds three *bok*, namely *yun myung jang soo* (延命長壽), prolongation of life; *boo kwi young hwa* (富貴榮華), wealth and prosperity; and *pyung kang an nyung* (平康安寧), peace and order; or five *bok* of healthy teeth, longevity, numerous heirs, wealth, and success in life.

Although most Koreans recognize *Haneunim* as the supreme God, they don't believe in Him. They believe that "Haneunim remains remote from the events of the world and rules the world through power delegated to lesser gods" (Jong Dae Seo 2002:76). In Shamanism, gods are generally divided into four levels: high, middle, low, and lowest. According to Jong Dae Seo (2002:77),

The heavens are ruled by the gods of heaven, the moon, the sun, every star and planet. The middle world is ruled by the earth gods, mountain gods, and ancestors. The lower world is ruled by *shipwangshin*, that is, ten king-gods that are said to rule the underworld. And the lowest world is ruled by various spirits.

All of these gods are invoked from one time or another depending on the situational context. Shamanism teaches the duties of these gods; they are "taking charge of space, the earth, and human beings and, depending up the prayers offered, bestowing the blessings of good luck, peace, and longevity" (Halla Pai Huhm 1998:13).

In relation to these gods, Shamanism maintains, "Blessings are gained by manipulating supernatural power" (Jong Dae Seo 2002: 88). Korean Shamans perceive supernatural beings as "instrumental objects whose spiritual power is to be used for the sake of real profits. Shamans don't mind the personalities and characters of supernatural beings but concern only their (prescribed) functions and roles" (In Hoe Kim 1978:111-12).

Korean shamanism serves its adherents with rituals to liberate them from all kinds of misfortunes and disasters and invoke the *oh bok*. Korean Shamanism has four functions: *kibok* (祈福, invoking blessings through sacrifices); *yangjae* (禳災, averting disasters and healing diseases through exorcism); *jumbok* (占卜, controlling one's destiny through divination), and

kamoo (歌舞, offering merriment by inviting people to sing and dance together) (Kwang Young Choi 1989:185-190).

A *Mudang* (Korean shamans) usually communicates with their adherents through words and rituals. *Mudang* has three major roles: 1) Communication with spirits or the dead — Shamans are supposed to communicate with spirits of the dead. A sorceress or a male shaman often acts as a medium between the living and the dead. 2) Foretelling the future— this practice usually takes place while a shaman is in a trance. When the shaman talks to his or herself in a trance, it is interpreted as a temporary possession of a spirit that informs the future of the person who is seeking *bok*. 3) Exorcism of illness and misfortune—The Shaman performs *putakkori* and *salpulli*, rituals mainly composed of song and dance to cure illnesses or chase away misfortune (Chul Soo Park 2000:20-21).

Accordingly, a person must complete three acts of belief to acquire blessings. The first act requires one to perform religious rites only in the case of either obtaining good fortunes or casting away misfortunes. These include *p'udakkori*, an exorcism done by a shaman or a fortune teller, that aims to prevent mishaps at crucial moments of approaching ill luck; *aekmaki*, a ward rite that involves prayer to the guardian god for good luck, peace and health of the inhabitants of a neighborhood; *bangmaekwi*, a ward rite that uses something as a shield to avert evil; and *boojuk*, an amulet to avert evil. The second act requires the performance of *gut*: a shamanic ritual that involves sacrifices for success, sacrifices to the spirits for blessings, or a rite that appeases household gods and heavenly gods. The third act requires the shaman to participate in rituals to afflict the devil by either striking the possessed body, or shocking the demon by applying pressure to the possessed (Hoon Ku Lee 1991:45).

Korean shamanism emphasizes the purging of all evil spirits out of one's lives and houses so that one may receive the five blessings. However, the concept of blessing in Shamanism "offers neither a spiritual dimension nor any future hope; it merely focuses on this present world" (Lee Myung Ihl 1995:129). Korean shamanism, then, does not subscribe to spiritual blessings or the concept of eternal life.

Korean Shamanism provides a primal worldview and a rudimentary concept of blessings. Shamanism is often referred to as *Kibok Sinang* because it only emphasizes material blessings and good fortune; "shamanic influence rooted in the Korean religions and Korean mentality is shamanic thought that seeks first blessings" (Yoo Hae Mu 2003:169).

The concept of *bok* in Korean Shamanism largely remained and still influence the cultural and religious atmosphere of the country. Prior to the introduction of other religions, Shamanism remained central to the people of Korea. Shamanism has been preserved through nature worship, ancestral worship, and provides a clear purpose in obtaining material blessings to its adherents. The influx of higher religions failed to oust shamanic faith; in fact, shamanic beliefs and practices remain strong. More importantly, the central ideology of Shamanism – the pursuit of material blessings, permeated not only the culture but actually filtered into the discourse of higher religions. While Confucianism and Buddhism flowered in the Korea, they were eventually Shamanized (Cha Nam Chang 2000:80).

Shamanized Korean Buddhism

Buddhism came to Korea during the Three Kingdom period in the 4th century A.D. The newly imported religion of Buddhism was ultimately Shamanized and degenerated into folk-Buddhism. The elementary foundation of Buddhism, which consists of the teaching of Karma and the

quest for happiness, integrated with the indigenous shamanic faith (Buddhanet 2005). Eugene Nida, an anthropologist, differentiates 'Korean Buddhism' from mainline Buddhism that teaches the pantheistic identity of human soul with the world soul or primeval oneness (Nida 1954:171). Mainline Buddhism claims to be salvational (Nida 1954:137), as demonstrated in *Miregbul*, a kind of *bodhisattva*.¹⁴ In contrast, Korean Buddhism is *Kibok Bulgyo*¹⁵ (Shamanized Buddhism). Its practices involve determining auspicious days, deciding upon fortuitous names, foretelling fortune by one's physiognomy, and reading horoscopes. All these practices demonstrate that Buddhism could not exist in the Korean peninsula without invoking blessings for its adherents.

The following parsing of the Chinese letter *bok* (福) illustrates the typical Buddhist understanding of blessing:

When a farmer (示) has one field (田) to feed his one (一) mouth (口), it is *bok*. However, the word *bok* began to expand with more luxurious meanings such as longevity, wealth, health, power, social status, numerous descendants, and so forth. Now it can mean whatever good for human beings (Moses Lee 1994:9, 81).

This parsing accentuates an individual cultivating his or her field of blessing. Replacing the (示) to symbolize farmer, as opposed to the traditional understanding of God or heaven, Buddhist definitions illustrate an atheistic view of blessing.

In Buddhism, *bok* is derived from the Sanskrit *pun ya*, which means

¹⁴ Bodhisattva, by means of vows and practices, has undertaken to achieve complete enlightenment, but who then refrains from entering final Nirvana and remains in this world to assist other sentient creatures to that goal.

¹⁵ *Kibok Bulgyo* is not an academically defined term, but I use it to characterize Korean Buddhism. *Kibok Bulgyo* is considered as the corruption of mainline Buddhism (Hyojin 2004).

'inborn blessing and generous heart' (福德). *Pun ya* is earned through the accumulation of one's good deeds. Buddha accentuates the correlation between blessing and wisdom in The Dharma Flower Sutra (法華經) where he asserts: "One who cultivates blessings but not wisdom is like an elephant wearing a necklace; one who cultivates wisdom and not blessings is like a Arhat with an empty bowl" (BTTS 2003:14). Buddha also specifies how one may accumulate blessings. He states:

It is from a number of actions, not just one. There is a saying, 'Don't skip doing a good deed just because it is small, and don't do a bad deed just because you think it is insignificant...' For example, you should not think that a little lie is of no major importance. If you tell a lot of little lies, they become a big lie. In the same way, you should think that killing an ant is a small and unimportant matter, because if one day you kill a person, it will have begun with your killing the ant. You should pay attention to little things and not follow your whims and wishes. To cultivate diligently the accumulation of blessing involves being careful to do the deeds that should be done, even if they accumulate only a small amount of merit and virtue. Gradually they cause an accumulation of great merit and virtue. Mount Tai (A sacred mountain in Shandong Province in China) is made up of individual motes of dust, but even though motes of dust are small, many of them together make up a mountain. So too is the creating of blessing." (Flower Adornment Sutra. Ch 40 華嚴經)

In primitive Buddhism, *bokjun* (福田), "a field that produces blessing", refers to the attaining of Buddhahood. However, with the passing of time, there was an increase in the number of fields of blessings: *sambokjun* (the three fields of blessing),¹⁶ *Chilbokjun* (the seven fields of blessing),¹⁷ and *Palbokjun* (the

¹⁶ The Three Fields of Blessing includes Buddha, Teachings of Buddha, and Monk. But the Upasaka specifies "the scriptures, parents, and the poor and diseased" as the three fields that produce blessing. (Hwang In Kyu 2006:2)

¹⁷ The Seven Fields of blessing are: building Buddhist Pagoda or sanctuary for monks, caring of fruit trees and cleaning lotus ponds, healing the diseased, helping passengers cross over river or sea, building bridges for people, making spring for those who thirst, and building public comfort stations for people. (Kwang

eight fields of blessing).¹⁸ Moreover, all creatures - including that of animals, are considered as *bokjun* which produces infinite blessings.

Buddha makes a distinction between the blessing of Pure Land and the blessing of this world. While people always chase after worldly blessing and are under the influence of worldly passions, bodhisattvas and sages seek the blessing of the Pure Land (2006:2). He also taught the five blessings to his disciples. He instructed that a good natured person would receive five inborn blessings through the following and preaching of the law of Buddha. They are 1) long life 2) wealth 3) good looks endowed with neat features 4) good reputation 5) wisdom and sagacity. (Hwang In Kyu 2006:3). Compared to the five blessing found in *Shoo-king*, the Scripture of Documents, the five blessings are virtually same except the blessing of neatness and wisdom. Buddha instructed that one can receive these five blessings if one follows his law. Thus, Buddha asserted that blessing came from one's efforts and actions (Ik Jin Ko 1987:249-250).

In Kyu Hwang (2006:3) argues that Buddha revealed himself as a person who endeavored to receive blessings through the accomplishments of following deeds: giving alms, teaching others, enduring unfairness, teaching the commandments, pleading and saving humanity, and seeking spiritual awakening. He emphasized that one does not simply receive blessings, but earns them when one acts upon his teachings. Buddha also asserted that one's luck depended on one's karma, the accumulated merits of one's previous life. Lillian Too (2003:60) addresses the issue of blessing in terms

Young Choi 1989:203)

¹⁸ The Eight Fields of Blessings are: constructing road, building bridges, paving rough roads, practicing filial piety toward one's parents, providing Buddhist monks with food, nursing the diseased, giving relief to those who meet calamities, and delivering the Buddhist law to the masses. (Kwang Young Choi 1989:204)

of karma:

Every happiness, you experience in every moment, is caused by past good karma; every suffering, you experience in every moment, is caused by past bad karma. And every moment thought and action, depending on whether it is positive or negative, produces happiness or suffering.

It is noteworthy that the early teachings of primitive Buddhism taught believers of life beyond the here and now and emphasized blessings in relation to altruism and karma. Buddha's teachings accentuated the doing of good deeds for others rather than one's own self.

Buddhism was initiated by a young prince who renounced ephemeral and material pleasures of his palace to search for true happiness that transcends suffering. Buddha came to be known as the "consummate blessing seeker who craved eternal, transcendent blessing by elimination of illusory temporal, sensual, and material blessing" (Moses Lee 1994:81). In Korea, however, the teachings of *bokjun* were changed by *Kibok Bulgyo*. While Korea first imported Buddhism that taught the "Great Vehicle", it has gradually been Shamanized and reduced to the current state of *Kibok Bulgyo*. While I was studying the Buddhist teaching on blessing, I was given a book on Tibetan Buddhism. The book provides information on how and what the Korean Buddhism teaches about the five blessings:

To get the ultimate healing;
-Meeting the Seven Medicine Buddhas, which "bring enormous happiness-a feeling that is contagious-so when you meditate on his deep-blue image you are soon surrounded by a pervasive sense of joy, fearlessness, and deepening contentment." (Lillian Too 2003:94)

To get the most powerful healing not only for their own disease or problems, but of those of others;

-Meeting the Compassion Buddha-Avalokiteshvara which is “the divine protector of Tibet, the land of snows, and signifies the all-pervasive blessings of his famous mantra, which means ‘homage to the jewel in the lotus.’” (2003:128)

To get the gift of longevity;

-Meeting the Trinity of Longevity Buddhas-White Tara, Amitayus and Namgyalma. (2003:150)

To have children (son or/and daughter);

-Meeting Tara, the Mother of all the buddhas. (2003:179)

To grant wealth and to relieve the poverty of all sentient beings;

-Meeting the Wealth Buddhas, Jambhala, which is one of the principal bestowers of wealth, with Shakyamuni Buddha, White Tara and Green Tara. (2003:202)

To achieve the Great enlightenment;

-Meeting Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, “which has powers of protection against evil influences.” (2003:228)

Even though Buddhist teachings on blessing is strongly related to self-cultivation to produce happiness and blessing, what has caused Shamanized behaviors and incantations to surface in a religion that preaches the cultivation of one's good deeds to receive blessing? In Kyu Hwang (2006:4,7-8) offers two possible explanations of why Buddhism in Korea collapsed into *kibok bulgyo*. He first argues that the teachings of Buddha are simply too difficult for people to put them into practice. These teachings do not directly benefit them and reality does not permit for one to always sow what are deemed “good” actions. The fact that most Korean people held on to Shamanism certainly explains why people had a hard time applying Buddha's teachings into real life. Hwang also asserts that government workers and aristocrats practiced Buddhism to seek blessing for the reigning monarch, the nation's inhabitants, and the prevention of national disasters. Thus, the government was the strongest supporter of Buddhism. Thus, for

Buddhism to appeal to the common people, it had to be Shamanized.

The Korean Confucianism and *Bok*

Korean Confucianism of the Chosun Dynasty displaced the prevailing Korean Buddhism of the Koryu dynasty. The new dynasty of Chosun adopted Confucianism as the state ideology and implemented policies to rigorously suppress Buddhism. The governmental apparatus was brought in line with Confucian ideals and the trained bureaucracy had all undergone a system of Confucian education. Confucian advisers acted as guides and wielded its influence on not only the king's behavior but his decisions and policies through *wangdo* (王道, the Way of King), the Confucian ideal (Grayson 2002:107). During its golden age of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Confucianism helped advance economic and cultural progression; Confucianism was instrumental in the invention of Hangul (the Korean alphabet) in 1443 and pluviometer in 1442. With time, however, Korean Confucianism lost its touch with reality and became more abstract and philosophical. It embraced "a theory of nature of the universe, a theory of knowledge, and a theory of morality" (Grayson 2002:115). Thereafter, the development of the country was blocked by the hegemonic influence of the Confucian elites. For instance, Confucians instituted *chesa* (ancestral rites) in the national level to perpetuate their power. They considered one's filial duty to be respecting one's parents, dead or not, and giving royalty to the king. However, the Confucian elites disunited as a result of this ritual system and they annihilated each other. In time, the country became religiously stagnant and complacent. There would be no significant religious movements in Korea in the 18th and 19th centuries until the advent of Protestant missionaries.

In the mid-Chosun period, the Yi dynasty implemented the practice of ancestral rites all over the country. Ancestral rites were justified and favored

for the Chinese Classics¹⁹ maintained that they were means of attaining blessing.

The most common definition of blessing in Confucian Korean is “ancestor’s favor,” and “heavenly or divine favor.” Such definitions reveal a typical Confucian understanding of the concept. In regards to the letter *Bok* (福), Confucian scholars see it as the combination of *si* (示), which means “seen” or “shown”, and *bok* (畐), which means “full” or “filled with.” They associate the pictograph *bok* (畐) with a wine pot filled with Korean rice wine. This interpretation closely matches the practice of ancestral worship. During the service, participants drink a cup of wine, that is, “drink blessing”. The letter *bok* (福 the blessing) is defined as “the ancestor’s virtue that is given to the one who worship one’s ancestors” (Soo Kyung Choe 2007:A-2).

The Book of Odes in *Hong Bum* (洪範編 General provisions of Rules in Confucianism), one of the most ancient Chinese texts, enumerates Five Blessedness: Long Life, Wealth, Serenity (order in peace), Love of Virtue, and Object fulfilled at Death (E.H. Parker 1994:672). When one has these five blessedness then he or she is perceived to have attained *bok*. In the Confucian sense, the *oh bok* are the requisite conditions for happiness. The *oh bok* in the chapter of *Hong Bum* represent the desires of the *yangban* class. In contrast to the desires between the *yangban* (Korean aristocrats) and *sangnom* (Korean peasants), *sangnom* would rather be successful than to earn respect, and be content with having many children than to fulfill his or her destiny as predestined by heaven (Hwang In Kyu 2006: 2). Confucian

¹⁹ The Chinese Classics were recognized as the Scripture of Confucianism. These books are: Book of Confucian Analects (논어), Book of the Great Learning(대학), Book of the Doctrine of the Mean(중용), The Works of Mencius (맹자), Book of Rites (예기), Book of Odes(시경), Book of History (서경), Book of Filial Piety (효경), Book of Changes (주역)

teaching on blessing consists of merriments that are obtained through prosperous heirs, sacrifices to forebears, doing good and attaining the five blessings.

In Confucian teaching, *Tien* (天, the Heaven) is attributed as the source of blessing. It is related in *Myungsimbogam* (明心寶鑑 A Treasury Teaching to Be Kept in the Heart) that, “those who obey the Heaven will exist, but those who rebel against the Heaven will perish”. Similarly, it is also written in *Dongmongsunseup* (童蒙先習 A Teaching for Children) that “the Heaven returns those who do the good with blessing, but returns those who do evil with curse”. These texts illustrate that the Confucian teaching of Heaven correlates with God of Christianity in many ways. For example, there are numerous instances in *She King* where one could readily see the similarities between the Christian God and the Heaven.

She King (詩經, the Book of Odes) maintains that heaven is the source of blessing. In the chapter of Decade of Luh Ming, it is written that “Heaven protects and establishes thee, With the great security; Makes these entirely virtuous, that thou mayest enjoy every happiness” (James Legge 1970:255). From another chapter, Decade of King Wan, Tian (天) is considered as “God who had raised the State, raised up a proper ruler for it” and the king was he who “received the blessing of God” (Legge 1970:451-52). In the chapter of Decade of *Shang Min*, one prays to God to “seek for the emoluments of dignity and obtain all blessings, thousand and hundreds of thousands of descendants” (Legge 1970:482).

Despite the similarities between the Christian God and the Confucian Heaven, Confucianism teaches that Heaven confers blessing upon people through their great ancestors and kings. It is written:

In the midst of the fields are the huts,
 And along the bounding divisions are gourds.
 The fruit is sliced and pickled,
 To be presented to our great ancestors,
 That their distant descendants may have long life,
 And receive the blessing of Heaven.

... ..

We sacrifice first with pure spirits,
 And then follow with a red bull;
 Offering them to our ancestors.

... ..

They will reward their descendant with great blessing,
 Long life, years without end (Legge 1970:375-76).

The nationally instituted ancestral rites overseen by the king and the worship of ancestral spirits within the private realm of household are all performed to invoke the blessing of Heaven (Legge 1970:634-635). It is written in *She King*, the Book of Odes, that a king may be a blessing for his people if his rule allows peace to flower in his kingdom (Kwang Young Choi 1989:225).

Confucian teaching emphasizes the self in relation to the three sources of blessing (Heaven, ancestor, king). The teachings accentuate that happiness or blessedness also depends on one's self, or one's way of thought (Kwang Young Choi 1989:226). Thus, while blessings ultimately depend on the favor of the Heaven and one's ancestors, Confucian teaching stresses one's own efforts and mindset as well (Yong Nam Kim 1996:10).

Confucian rituals in Korean society have evolved into a series of elaborate and complex formalities. These rites may be divided into largely two categories: clan-oriented rites and royal ritual system. The clan-oriented rite refers to ancestral rites that address near and distant relatives. The royal ritual system is comprised of five rites: (1) Kil-lye (Auspicious Rites), (2) Ka-lye (Congratulatory Rites), (3) Pil-lye (Guest Rites), (4) Hyung-nye (Mourning Rites) and (5) Kun-lye (Military Rites). The royal rituals are called sacrifices,

and the clan-oriented rite indicates *chesa* (Grayson 2002:182-83).

Confucianism, like Buddhism, gradually became shamanic as much as it became a normative religion - its theistic characters were consumed by ancestral worship (Nida 1954:136). The emphasis on filial duty in Confucian teaching protected the prevailing practice of ancestor worship. The Book of Filial Piety (孝經) asserts the concordance between the filial duty and the ancestor worship:

No happiness could exist in this life unless the spirits of the dead were conciliated by living representatives through sacrifice, prayer, and duty. In other words, blessedness can exist securely on earth only under the shadow or protection of the Spiritual Abode above (E.H. Parker 1994:672).

However, shamanic beliefs and practices reduced ancestral worship as a means of attaining blessing (Kwang Young Choi 1989:222). Thus, *Chesa* in Korean society is like a corban, that is, a gift devoted to Ancestors (Mark7:11) on numerous occasions. Likewise, the fundamental teachings of *chesa* evolved into a level of folk belief. Confucian teachings, then, became a tactic or instrument for one to obtain the five *bok*. *Chool Se*, (出世, success in life) especially, is considered the fastest shortcut to receiving these blessings.

Kyung Il Kim (1999:35, 41, 121), in *Kongjaka Jukeoja Naraka sanda* (The Nation will Revive when Confucius Dies), criticizes Confucian cultural code for integrating the worldly religious rites of Shamanism and consequently transmuting Korea into a culture of collectivism and classism. Nida acutely pinpoints that Korean people base their everyday way of life on Confucianism, solve their problems and uncertainties of future through the Shaman, and rely on the Nirvana of Buddhism for life after death (Nida 1954:171).

Oh Bok and the Korean Worldview

The word *Bok* (福) is perhaps the most important and meaningful word for the Korean people. The Korean worldview embodies the word “blessing.” All the major religions have each incorporated the *oh bok* into their teaching. The preacher or evangelist who fails to understand or address the prevailing mindset that ultimately upholds attainment of *bok* over all else, will fail in touching the hearts of the Korean people and transforming their *bok*-obsessed dispositions.

Kibok sinang (祈福信仰, shamanic belief in material blessings) literally means “a faith that first seeks *bok*.” Those who have seriously studied Korean religions would be likely to use the term to characterize Korean faith and religiosity whether they're referring to Korean Protestantism or Korean Confucianism or Korean Buddhism. The term *Kibok sinang* refers to “the unusual state of this worldly desire that satisfies secular condition such as wealth, health and success in life and business through religion” (Heung Soo Kim 2000:1). While such term was mainly used to characterize Korean Buddhism, fact is, Korean Protestantism also embodies *Kibok sinang*. In fact, the Korean church had been criticized as a *Kibok sinang* since the mid-1970s. Even the Christian faith of Koreans has largely developed into a faith system that seeks first *oh bok* (Chi Joon Noh 1998:29).

The Korean worldview is a worldview of *bok*. *Bok* is a kind of faith that settled into the basics of Korean lives (WOC 2003). Worldview encompasses the view of reality that is fundamental and shared by people in a given culture. The predominating worldview of a society normally dictates the worldview of an individual. An established worldview integrates all aspects of society such as politics, economics, religion, social organization and educates. It is the soul of a society. Worldview can be likened to an

iceberg. The top that is immediately visible represents the manifestation and realization of the worldview. Thus, what is left unseen, the part that lies beneath the surface, comprises the hegemonic worldview which dictates society and the lives of the individuals that belong to the society. Religion rests just at the surface of the water. The worldview lies deeper and is much more fundamental than religion. It is the worldview that shapes and integrates our various fields of knowledge; it governs everyday life and behavior of individuals (Whiteman 1999, Kraft 1979: 53, Hiebert 1985: 45).




Western Christian worldview		Non-western worldview	Biblical worldview
<i>Spiritual World</i> *Creator God *Jesus Christ *Evangelism	Whose God is True?  Gospel as Word: The Truth of God	<i>Spiritual World</i> *Supreme Being /Force	<i>Spiritual World</i> *God the Father *The Risen Christ *The Saints before us
<i>The Excluded Middle</i> (The domain of shaman and magic in animist cultures)	Who's more powerful?  Gospel as Sign: The Power of God	<i>Supernatural World</i> *Spirits *Ancestors /Deceased *Astrology *Dreams *Sacred objects	<i>Supernatural World</i> *Angels *Prayer and Visions *Sacred space *Signs and wonders
<i>Physical World</i> *Seeing, feeling, hearing, touching *Science/Tech. *Human development	Does it Work?  Gospel as Deed: The Love of God	<i>Physical World</i> *Seeing, feeling, hearing, touching *Folk science /Technology	<i>Physical World</i> *Holy Spirit w/ us *Christ in us *The Word of God *Science/Purpose *Development

Figure 2: **Contrasting Modern western, Non-western and Biblical Worldviews.**
 (Adapted from Paul Hiebert and Bruce Bradshaw. Revised by Sungil Lee)

The Korean concept of universe consists of a temporal world and the invisible realm of a spiritual world. The spiritual world is an object of faith and religious awakening; it also serves as a base for the temporal world. The spiritual world is portrayed by the interaction of yin (陰) and yang (陽) in t'aeguk (太極) symbol, and religion exists within the total universe in both the

temporal and spiritual world. This Korean worldview contrasts with the worldview taught by Western Christians.

In order to live in both the spiritual and temporal worlds, a path between these two worlds must exist. . This path is the Tao (道), or the Way. In numerous places, the Korean Bible accepts this term and alludes to Christ when He referred to Himself as the Way that leads to the truth and to the life of God (John 14:6). Religion, then, exists in the spiritual world by means of the Way (Dong Shik Ryu 1996:2).

Physical death is highly ceremonialized in Korea. In Korean folklore, when one leaves the world, he or she is thought of as a dead that still lives near his or her children. It is important to note that majority of Koreans believe that ancestors continue to live despite physical death. Thus, deceased parents are ritually honored through ancestral worship and rites on the anniversary of the ancestor's death. As a whole, all ancestors are commemorated on *Ch'usok*, the Korean thanksgivings day and New Year's Day (Grayson 2002:182, Cf. Charles H. Kraft 1996:226).

The foremost reason Koreans venerate ancestral worship is because they believe that ancestral spirits are messengers of *Ok Whang Shang Che* (玉皇上帝, King of Heaven). According to Korean folklore, these messengers bring blessings or curses to their descendants, depending on their faithfulness of ancestral worship rituals. As messengers, these ancestors report back to the King of Heaven of their conduct and consequently, they deliver rewards or punishment from the king. These messengers are also believed to have the power to change good for bad and bad for good. With such belief, Koreans often rely on famous medicine men or shamans; they may purchase amulets or perform shamanic rituals to

protect themselves from curses and soothe their ancestor spirits so that they may bestow blessing upon them.

To Koreans, ancestral worship is not only a means of blessing but also central to one's filial duty. While the practice of ancestral worship has been dramatically transformed, the practice still remains an integral part of family life in Korea. It still exists and continues to be faithfully observed. The fact that these ancient rites, albeit in revised form, continue to play a significant role in contemporary Korean illustrates its explicit importance in the Korean society and its individuals.

Korean core values are closely linked to the Korean worldview. Consider the *bok* of longevity as an example. A long life free from serious illnesses, malignant diseases and fatal accidents is undeniably desirable. Many Koreans attribute illnesses and accidents as the workings of the spirits and gods; deaths are also perceived as a ghostly attack. Thus, Koreans consider it extremely important to be on favorable terms with spirits, especially that of one's clean, lineage, and family. Since ghosts are identified as spirits of one's ancestors, traditional Koreans expect these ancestral spirits to bestow gifts, protection or other benefits upon them. Moreover, the excessive yearning of longevity also indicates the attachment of Koreans to the present, material world as opposed to spiritual world.

The Korean worldview that upholds material blessings and the physical life ultimately manifests itself in the pursuit of *bok*. The attainment of *bok*, then, is the spirit of the Korean worldview. The concept of *oh bok* generates an unbridled pursuit of *bok*. Such value ultimately promotes eclecticism, image-ism, status-ism, "resultism," "successfulism," and an all-powerful superficiality and materialism that acts as barriers and hindrances to evangelism. Kyung Jeon Seo, a professor of Buddhist Teaching in Won

Kwang University, mentions, “The traditional concept of *bok* can have negative results in today’ society. ...greed and envy of others’ material fortunes is leading to challenges in society” (2004:7). The table below illustrates a comprehensive, traditional concept of blessing that is deeply embedded in the hearts of Koreans.

Subject	Supreme God (Retired or Careless), Demons, Spirits, Ancestor’s spirits
Goal	To control, to manipulate
Contents	Partial, earthly, visible, this worldly; Individualistic; Selfish, humane, mechanic
Means	Prayer, offering, manipulation
Locus	Buddhist temple Personal house (Gut) Shaman’s house
Others	No sense of worship No relationship with devil No repentance No morality No obedience

Table 2: Comprehensive Understanding of the Traditional Blessing

An Evaluation on *Kibok* Religions From a Socio-ethical Perspective

Korean government does not recognize Korean shamanism as a formal religion or consider Shamans as official practitioners, although they number close to six hundred thousands (Johnstone 2001:389) with adherents of about 70 percent of Korea’s populations (Hyun Soo Lee 2005:74). Young Dong Kim (1994:555) in “The Mission Task of Korean Protestantism faced with Challenge of Shamanistic Spirituality” says, “If Buddhism, Confucianism, Roman Catholic, and Protestantism are called formal religion of Koreans, it is sage to say that Korean shamanism is the real and true religion of Koreans.”

With a strong influence from Korean Shamanism, Korea's formal religions which include Buddhism, Confucianism, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity, are called *Kibok* religions. Korean shamanism seems to possess special qualities that infiltrate and shamanize imported religions in degrees that are deplorable. James H. Grayson (2002:19) mentions that "the nature of the primal religion of Korea (Korean shamanism) will explain in part why and how Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity have been accepted in Korea" and why they have experienced little social influence over the Korean culture. He (2002:230) continues to emphasize that Korean shamanism "has shaped the development of all religions and philosophies." Perhaps each religion was successful in drawing people to its religion by contextualizing some shamanistic practices and being innovative with the religious qualities. John T. Kim (1996:234) in his dissertation "Protestant Church Growth in Korea" affirms this:

The presence of shamanistic faith in Korea has played an important role in bringing about the present numerical growth of the Korean churches. ... Some shamanistic elements are effectively used by the Christian churches, mostly without fully realizing their origin, in order to attract more people.

But, these religions soon became shamanized with a counteroffensive of Korean shamanism by losing their critical discernment. Eventually such religion becomes the pest to people in that society. In this section, evaluations from Korean scholars on Korean *Kibok* religions or shamanized religion from a socio-ethical perspective are reviewed.

Hyun Soo Lee (2005:74) spells out the problems of Korean shamanism: 1) Shamanism does not provide moral standard to its adherents. The concept of good and evil is not based on the ethical or moral norms but is

decided by the amount of material blessing. 2) Shamanism makes people bound to the pantheistic and fatalistic thoughts that restrict constructive development. 3) Shamans convoke material blessing by manipulating spirits using three instruments: drums (enjoyed by good spirits), bells (detested by evil spirits), and mirrors (representing light).

When a religion is degenerated into a *Kibok* religion, the religion gradually loses its cultural, political, and social influence over the society (Grayson 2002:49). In the process of diminishing influences, the *kibok* religion radiates baneful effects to deteriorate the socio-ethical qualities in the society. Above all, *kibok sinang* (shamanized faith) makes its adherents unconcerned about their society, nation, and humanity except for themselves and their immediate family. It makes its adherents satisfied with self-centeredness and self-service. Byung Keum Chun (2005:55) argues that, "it becomes problematic when convoking this blessing is privatized and justified with individualism and egotism, although Christian faith begins with blessing of salvation from God."

Second, *kibok sinang* distorts the very nature of the religion and misleads its adherents. And it further weakens the positive functions of the society, while it strengthens its negative functions. Korean Christianity in the period from 1885 to 1960 had contributed to the restoration of morality that was once paralyzed by formalistic Confucianism and shamanism (Deok-Joo Rhie 2000:119-120). However, from 1960 to the present, Christianity began to be influenced by Korean shamanism by supporting "The Church Growth First Policy" and entertaining believers with sermons of material blessing. In this process, they gave up on nurturing believers with spiritual guidance of the Word of God (Sung Jong Shin 2005:62).

Third, *kibok sinang* thwart its adherents from coping with diverse

functions and needs of the plural society (Cha Nam Chang 2000:81). Fourth, *kibok sinang* is too superstitious and fatal to expect development of neither personal maturity nor society. Hyun Soo Lee (2005:73) reports, “70 percent of Koreans consult fortunetellers and of them 50 percents believe divination signs.” John T. Kim (1996:234) affirms that Koreans, including many Christians, consult *mudang* (Korean shaman), and practices *kosa* (the sacrifice to the spirit-gods), *Kut* (shaman ritual), *jum* (divination), *kwansang* (physiognomy), *soosang* (palm reading), *saju* (fortunetelling) and *palja* (astrological interpretation of fate). Fifth, *kibok sinang* not only paralyzes discerning and purifying abilities of adherents but also brings absence of ethical or moral consciousness to them. *Kibok sinang* will ultimately bring spiritual depravity, moral corruption, and reversal of value and concept of good and evil in the society. Sixth, *kibok sinang* makes its adherents realistic and blinded to the Kingdom of God, because it is called “a radical realistic religion” (Ho Jin Chun 1997:47). Tong Sik Ryu mentions that, “realism and actuality of Korean shamanism makes people accept Christianity as a religion that avoids disasters and convokes blessing when people meet with disease and disasters” (Shon, Yoon Tak 2001:1).

Any religion that allows infiltration of Korean shamanism loses its consciousness in truth, morality, history, culture, society, and finally humanity. Furthermore, it leads its adherents to a false truth and to indifference and carelessness towards neighbors (See Appendix 6: Actual Circumstances of Shamanized Korean Churches).

Summary

In summary of the general survey of the Korean religious concept of blessing, I would like to consider two final points. First, I would like to

underscore the hegemonic influence of a primal religion otherwise known as shamanism. This primal religion did not disappear with the advent of Buddhism in fourth century Korea. Rather, it has become a foundation for all religious experiences in Korea and “has shaped the development of all religions and philosophies, which have been transmitted to Korea, including Buddhism, Confucianism, and Roman Catholic and Protestant Christianity” (Grayson 2002:230).

Secondly, Korean history can be generally divided into periods of various religious dominations: the era of Shamanism in the Old Chosun period, the era of Buddhism in the middle of Three Kingdoms and the Koryu Dynasty period, and the era of Confucianism in the Chosun dynasty period. Present-day Korea is post-Confucianism. While strong revivals among Korean Shamanism, Buddhism, and Catholicism are readily observable, Korean Confucianism seems to have bit of a dust.

Also we have two important lessons from this study. First, a flexible but insistent clamor for blessing of Korean shamanism has ruled over the Korean worldview. Though imported religions enhanced the primal religion in terms of technology and information, they failed to change its worldview themes on blessing. Second, adopting shamanistic practices and beliefs by compromising critical discernment allows temporary growth spurt in church but this will soon lead to crisis of degenerating its religious nature.

In light of a complicated religious context, the Korean church faces a great challenge of not only winning people to Christ, but also to go out into the world with the Gospel. The Korean predilection for blessings can act as great contact point for personal and mass evangelism. But in some ways this contextualization of *bok* may have gone too far. Korean Church is in need of a transformation. The Church needs to persuasively appeal to

Korean believers and help them reconstruct a biblical concept of blessing in their minds without losing the important point of contact that *bok* provides.

With this, the Korean Church will take its first step for spiritual maturation and consequently gain momentum and vitality to undertake the Great Commission.

CHAPTER 3

THE BLESSING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

When the first missionaries to Korea translated the Bible into the earliest version of the Korean Bible, they knew that Koreans were eager to receive blessings. They translated Gospel (good news) into *bok eum* (福音, blessed voice) and the four books of Gospel of the N.T. *Bok eum suh* (福音書, Book of blessed voice). With this missionary tradition, the modern translators of the Korean Bible translated some adjective such as "good," "happy," "beautiful," or "well" into *bok den* (Blessed, Isaiah 65:23), *bok de ke* (Blessed, Ruth 3:1) in the Revised Korean Version.

Definition and Use

The most common Korean definition of blessing is "good fortune, or good luck, happiness" (Minjunseorim 1996:847), "a desirable state, divine favor or "benediction" (Paran 1999). However, a more complete definition must include the ideas of beneficent force, efficient power, the holy or holiness, the sacredness, and charisma. In the English language, the term "blessing" has lost much of its dynamics and has become rather shallow in meaning and impact. Unfortunately, it has often been reduced to formulas people use to pray before eating or to express concern for one who has sneezed. Even in the church, the word, "blessing" often has the connotation of simply signifying the end of the worship service (Lenning 1979:11).

Hebrew Terms

Korean terms for *bok* and *chookbok*, blessing, abound in the Old Testament, occurring over 400 times. These numbers indicate that all the living creatures, especially human, need blessing from God to live. Three

major terms בָּרַךְ (barak), אֲשֶׁרִי (ashre) and טוֹב (tov) are bound to the Korean terms *bok* and *chookbok* in the Old Testament.

The Hebrew word בָּרַךְ (barak) has several meanings such as 'to kneel,' 'to bless,' 'to praise,' 'to salute.' This root and its derivatives occur 415 times.²⁰ Of 415 occurrences, the meaning "to kneel" appears only three times. Even though some argue on this basis that barak "to kneel" is denominative verb from berek "knee" and is unrelated to barak "to bless," בָּרַךְ (to bless) and בֶּרֶךְ (knee) are meaningfully related to each other to the word meaning "to kneel" since in earlier times one would kneel to receive blessings. When the less kneels to receive blessing from the greater, he gives fine speaking to the greater. In general, the blessing is transmitted from greater to the lesser. This might involve father to son (Genesis 49), brothers to sisters (Genesis 24:60), king to subjects (1 Kings 8:14). Berec is used in relation to submission and obedience (Isaiah 45:23), fear and weakness (Nahum 2:10), prayer (1 Kings 8:54), motherly care (2 Kings 4:20) (Robert 1980:132). The Hebrew word berawkaw does not merely signify "blessing" (*bok*) or "blessing," but also "being blessed" or "being filled with blessings," as well as the concrete blessings which ensue, e.g., good fortune, power, etc. (Kittel Vol 2. 1964:755).

The word 'beraka' has two contradictory meanings: Its first meaning is something that God bestows on a person from above while its latter meaning is something that a person offers to the Lord from below. The former is called 'blessing' and the latter is called 'praise.' Strictly speaking, praise and worship is a response and expression of thanks to the blessing of God. The

²⁰ The majority are in the Piel stem (214) which is translated 'to bless.' The Qal passive particle "blessed" occurs only sixty-one times. The meaning "to kneel" appears only three times.

primary meaning of blessing is upon a person from God (DPH 1997:609).

This word well reflects the faith of the Israelites that happiness and delightfulness comes from God (Kittel Vol 2. 1964:793-94).

The Hebrew word אֲשֶׁרִי (ashre, blessed) is derived from אָשַׁר (ashar) which means 'to go, to walk.' One of its derivative forms is the noun אָשֶׁר (asher) which means 'happiness,' 'blessedness', or 'bliss.' It always occurs as the masculine plural construct of the noun which form is non-existent in the Hebrew Bible, "O the happiness of" (Robert 1980:80). To be 'blessed' (אֲשֶׁרִי), human has to do something positive. For example, a 'blessed' human is one who trusts in God without equivocation (Psalms 2:12, 34:8, 40:4, 84:5, 12, 146:5, Proverbs 16:20). A 'blessed' human is one who comes under the authority of God's revelation: His [sic] Torah (Psalms 119:1, 1:2, Proverbs 29:18), His [sic] word (Proverbs 16:20), His [sic] testimony (Psalms 119:2), His [sic] commandment (Psalms 119:1), and His [sic] way (Psalms 128:1, Proverbs 8:32) (Robert 1980:80).

The Hebrew word טוֹב (tov) means 'a good thing', 'benefit', and 'welfare.' It derives from the verb טוּב (tuv) which means 'be pleasant' and 'be good.' This Hebrew word טוֹב (tov) is translated into 'bok' in the book of Job 2:10, 7:7 and 'haengbok' (happiness) in Deuteronomy 10:13, while it is literally translated into 'good' in both verses in KJV and NIV version. Judging from this, early Korean Bible translators tried to implant new concept of blessing in the believers whose eyes search for only visible, tangible, and this-worldly blessings. They might want their eyes to open toward טוֹב (tov) 'good thing from God' to include not only material but also heavenly and spiritual blessing.

Bok in the Korean Bible

The primal basis of the Korean Bible was a Chinese Bible. The

earliest Chinese Bible was translated by Robert Morrison (1783-1834) who was a first Protestant missionary from England to China. In 1813, he finished translating The Chinese New Testament. Then he translated the Chinese Old Testament in thirteen years (Jin Ho Lee 1996a:37). After his death, The London Missions and England Bible Society formed a Chinese Bible Revision committee with four members and finished the first revision in 1839 (1996a:51). After that, several missionaries took the lead in the second revision in 1856. This second revision is called “The Wenli Bible” (文理譯) which has been recognized for its fine style and well-written sentences. Another nickname is ‘Delegates Bible’ because it was translated by delegates from the missionary group in China at that time (1996a:52).

This ‘Wenli Bible’ became the primal basis of John Ross’ Korean version of the Gospel of Luke in Manchuria and Lee Soo Jung’s Korean translation of the Gospel from Mark in Japan in 1882. When the first missionaries entered into Korea, they brought Lee Soo Jung’s Korean version of Mark into Korea in Easter, 1885. But, the Gospel of Luke, translated by John Ross, led the procession of first missionaries into Korea and had been distributed by Korean *Kwon Seo*, Korean evangelists who were sent by missionaries to preach the Gospel and sell the Bible to the people.

In 1893, the Korean Bible Translation Committee was organized. Missionaries selected the Greek Bible and Revised Version among English versions and Korean committee members selected the Chinese Wenli Bible as the primal basis. In this way, the translation of the Korean version of the Bible was completed in 1911 when the Choson, the last dynasty of Korea, was annexed by the Japanese. With their consistent efforts, the Korean Version of the Bible had new birth in this country in 1938 (1996a:53). Afterwards, with revisions to the Korean language spelling system in 1952

and 1961, the Korean version of the Bible had been revised over and over again, and today it is used by all of the Korean Christians. In 1998 the Korean Bible Society published the Newly Revised Version of the Korean Bible and it was widely received by the Korean Churches. Accordingly, the researcher, using the Revised Korean Version of the Bible in 1961, analyzes how the Korean words for *bok* (blessing), *haengbok* (happiness) and *chookbok* (invoking the blessing) are related with the Hebrew and Greek terms and what connotations these words have for Koreans.

While the writer examines stem words for blessing, he finds there is a linguistic tie with Hebrew and Korean. The Hebrew word for blessing is בָּרַךְ (baw-rak'), בְּרַךְ (ber-ak'), בְּרַכָּאֵל (baw-rak-ale') or בְּרַכָּה (ber-aw-kaw). The stem is brk. The Korean word for blessing is *bok*. The stem of *bok* is also bk or brk with its prolonged pronunciation. This linguistic tie between the Korean language and the Hebrew language might provide a bridge to non-believing Koreans in leading them to a living faith relationship with Jesus Christ. The parallels between the Old and New Testament usages of blessing are striking. To be blessed is to be granted special favor by God with resulting joy and prosperity (Lenning 1979:12).

In this section, the researcher summarizes how the above Hebrew words are translated and used in the Revised Korean Version.

Haengbok (幸福, Happiness). The Korean word *haengbok* appears two times in the Old Testament. The one in Deuteronomy 10:13 is from טוֹב (goodness), and the other in Deuteronomy 33:29 is translated from the Hebrew word אֲשֶׁרִי (ashre, pl. const.).

Chookbok (祝福 Invoking the blessing). The Korean word *chookbok* appears 83 times in the Old Testament. Whether this word is used as verb or noun, it describes an action to invoke for the blessing to God. The

Hebrew word בֵּרַכָּה (beraka) and its verb form בָּרַךְ (barak) are used for *chookbok*. The following shows how suffix of the word *chookbok* changes:

chookbokkwa Joshua 8:34, chookbokboda Genesis 49:26
 chookbokeun Deuteronomy 33:7, chookbokeul Genesis 27:41,
 Numbers 23:20, Deuteronomy 11:29, chookbokeu Numbers
 23:20, chookboki Genesis 49:26, Zechariah 8:13, chookbokiyo
 Psalms 62:4, chookbokhage Genesis 27:4, 27:7, Deuteronomy
 10:8, 21:5, 2 Samuel 8:10, 1 Chronicles 18:10, 23:13,
 chookbokhago Genesis 28:1, 28:6, 31:55, 47:10, Joshua 14:13,
 22:7, 2 Samuel 6:18, 1 Kings 8:66, 1 Chronicles 16:2, Job 29:11
 chookbokhagi Genesis 27:10, Deuteronomy 27:12,
 chookbokhagireul Genesis 27:30, 48:20, Psalms 109:17,
 chookbokhaneun Genesis 12:3, 27:29, Numbers 24:1, 9,
 chookbokhani 1 Kings 8:14, 2 Chronicles 6:3, chookbokhanira 2
 Chronicles 31:8; chookbokhara Exodus 12:32; chookbokharago
 Joshua 8:33, chookbokhareo 2 Samuel 6:20, chookbokharyugo 1
 Chronicles 16:43, chookbokharini Deuteronomy 24:13
 chookbokharira Genesis 27:25, 48:9, chookbokhamae Genesis
 47:7, Leviticus 9:23, chookbokhamyu 1 Kings 8:55,
 chookbokhamyun Proverbs 27:14, chookbokhasoseo Genesis
 27:19, 31, 34, 38, chookbokhayuo Genesis 14:19, 24:60, 27:27,
 48:15, 20, Numbers 6:23, Joshua 22:6, 1 Samuel 2:20, 1 Kings
 1:47, chookbokhayutgo Joshua 24:10, chookbokhayutdeora
 Genesis 27:23, 49:28, Exodus 39:43, chookbokhayutdoda
 Numbers 23:11, 24:10, Psalms 118:26, chookbokhayuteuni 2
 Chronicles 30:27, chookbokhayuteude Genesis 49:28,
 chookbokhayuteunzeuk Genesis 27:33, chookbokhaji Genesis
 32:26, Proverbs 30:11, chookbokhajido Numbers 23:25,
 chookbokhan Genesis 27:41, chookbokhanda Psalms 129:8,
 chookbokhanjira Genesis 32:29, chookbokhaljini Numbers 6:27,
 chookbokhameuro Leviticus 9:22, chookbokhami Deuteronomy
 33:1.

Bok (福 Blessing). The word 'bok' appears 118 times in the Old Testament. The three Hebrew words are translated into the Korean word 'bok.' The Hebrew word אֲשֶׁרֶ (ashre, to call blessed) with its changed forms

is attested a total of 45 times. It appears in Psalms 26 times, Proverbs 8 times, and Deuteronomy 33:29, 1 Kings 10:8, Isaiah 30:18, 32:20, 56:2, Job 5:17, Ecclesiastes 10:17, and Daniel 12:12, Song 6:9, etc. (Biddle nd:195).

The word טוב (goodness) is translated into 'bok' in Job 2:10, 7:7. The following shows the suffix of 'bok':

bok Genesis 2:3, 27:27, 30:27, Deuteronomy 1:11, 5:29, 12:7, 16:15, Judges 17:2, 17:13, Ruth 2:4, 3:10, 1 Samuel 23:21, Psalms 1:1, 34:12, 65:10, Isaiah 61:9, Jeremiah 31:23. bokkwa Genesis 49:25, Deuteronomy 11:26, 30:1, 15, 19, Nehemiah 9:35, Jeremiah 33:9, bokdo Zephaniah 1:12, bokboda Job 42:12, bokdege Exodus 20:11, Ruth 3:1, Job 1:10, Proverbs 5:18, Ezekiel 34:26, bokdeodgo Psalms 128:2, bokdeda Psalms 72:17, Ecclesiastes 4:2, Malachi 3:12, 15, bokdedoda Genesis 30:11, 1 Kings 10:8, 2 Chronicles 9:7, Psalms 127:5, Proverbs 3:18, bokden Job 7:7, Song of Songs 6:9, Isaiah 52:7, 65:23, Ezekiel 34:26; bokeu Genesis 12:2, boki Genesis 27:38, 39:5, Deuteronomy 11:27, 12:28, 19:13, 23:5, 28:2, 33:16, 33:23, Ruth 2:19, 20, 1 Samuel 25:33, 26:25, 1 Kings 10:7, Nehemiah 13:2, Job 5:17, 22:21, Psalms 2:12, 16:2, 32:1, 2, 33:12, 34:8, 40:4, 41:1, 65:4, 84:4, 5, 12, 94:12, 106:3, 109:17, 112:1, 2, 118:26, 119:1, 2, 128:1, 129:8, 144:15, 146:5, Proverbs 3:13, 33, 8:32, 34, 10:6, 11:26, 14:21, 16:20, 20:7, 21, 28:20, 29:18, Ecclesiastes 10:17, Isaiah 3:10, 19:24, 25, 30:18, 32:20, 56:2, 65:8, Jeremiah 20:14, 42:6, Lamentations 3:38, Ezekiel 44:30, Daniel 12:12, bokira Psalms 73:28, bokiroda Genesis 49:25, bokeuro Psalms 21:3, boke 1 Chronicles 4:10.

Youbok (有福) The Hebrew word **יְשׁוּעָה** {eh'-sher} is used as 'youbok.' In the Korean Bible, 'youbok' appears three times in Psalms 89:15 and 137:8, 9. While NIV translates it into "Happy shall be ~" (137:8-9) and "Blessed is the people that ~" (89:15).

Boonbok (分福 portion) The word for 'boonbok' means a portion that is prepared to be given or inherited to someone. The Hebrew word

חַלֵּק (khay'lek) is used for this Korean word. It occurs six times in the book of Ecclesiastes: boonbokeul Ecclesiastes 5:19, boonboki Ecclesiastes 9:6, boonbokinira Ecclesiastes 9:9, boonbokiroda Ecclesiastes 2:10, 5:18, boonbokira Ecclesiastes 3:22.

Hermeneutical Approaches onto Blessing

What does the concept of blessing mean in the Old Testament?

Although it has reference to many approaches, we will focus on two of the most important: the covenantal and missiological approaches to blessing. However, the following four approaches are noteworthy for this study which includes: the magical, reductional, instinctive, and spiritual power approaches.

Magical Approach

Blessing, like curse, is “an object of belief in primitive religion” (Kittel 1964:755). According to primitive beliefs, something material comes with the blessing through transfer that is made by actions (gestures or contacts), and especially by words, which may imply blessing (1964:755). In pre-Israelite times בָּרַךְ (barak), coupled with magical concepts, meant to “endow with beneficial power” (Link 1986:207) involving not only the process of endowing but the condition of being endowed as well. The story of Balaam (Numbers 22-24) combines the pre-Israelites phenomenon of blessing with the power of Yahweh, the God of Israel. Balaam, a pagan charismatic soothsayer, is deprived of his own innate power of control and could only bless. Before Yahweh, the real agent of blessing, Balaam loses its magical quality to convey the power (1986:208). According to Kittel (1964:755),

Men and things which are blessed are as it were endowed with this

power and can transmit it affecting everything with which they come in contact. What has been said applies to the fullest possible degree when the blessing comes directly from deity. In this case it is a supernatural furtherance of man's action and course which proceeds from deity.

People in the primitive times believe that "blessing originally involved a self-contained beneficial force which one could transmit to another and which stood in contrast to the destructive power of cursing" (Colin Brown 1986:207).

Johannes Penderson understands 'blessing' with his view of the soul. He perceives the soul as "the total state of being of a person" (Mitchell 1983:17). Human in his total essence is a soul which "is filled with a power that enables it to grow, thrive and accomplish its work" (17). Penderson defines blessing (beraka) as the power of life and growth; it is also the success and happiness which fills the soul (18). He sees "the act of blessing as a transfer of the person's soul" (18) and understands that God's blessing strengthens and increases the person's soul, enabling that person to promote fertility and acquire wealth through his own ability. He does not distinguish God's power from the person's soul; the power Gideon possesses which permits him to save the Israelites is equivalent to that of Yahweh's power (18).

Moreover, human blessings are a transfer of soul power, irregardless of the form of the blessing for the blessing may be a greeting, a material gift, or a benediction of a dying father. The one who blesses bequeaths the recipient a part of his own soul. Physical contact, like kisses and laying of hands, is generally necessary for the proper transmission of the soul. When humans bless God, they worship and praise Him. In all, Penderson primarily holds blessing to be a self-fulfilling power. An oral blessing cannot be revoked for it has been pronounced by one who is equipped with power of the soul. Once the blessing is uttered, it must act by the power that has been

put into it (1987:18).

Mitchel (1987) points out several flaws in Pendersen's position. He criticizes that by equating the "manifestation" of blessing with blessing, Pendersen leads readers to confusion on a lexical level, and that his definition on everything positive in life as part of the lexical meaning of blessing needs to be clarified in terms of when good things can and cannot be called blessings. In particular, his mystical understanding that blessing operates by means of soul power is untenable, and his inordinate contention that the strength of a human's soul could produce the blessings of fertility in his wife, animals and crops is too magical to accept. The transfer of blessing cannot be accomplished by human power alone (1987:19).

Reductional Approach

There are two extreme perspectives that have served to interpret or misinterpret the biblical sense of blessing as materialistic versus spiritual. Material reductionism tends to collapse all the blessings of God into categories of self-centered materialism (Moses Lee 1994:206). This approach may be identified with the prosperity gospel. In some ways, Sundo Kim, Yonggi Cho and many revivalists are major leaders of this approach. They prefer Oral Robert, Kenneth Hagen, Kenneth Copeland and Robert Schuller to other gospel preachers. According to them, God wants everyone wealthy, healthy and heaven-bound blessed. In order to receive these material blessings, we must only sow the seed of money as a token of our faith. They teach "how to have good business with Father God. They teach how to use formulas like the so-called "name it, claim it and take it" tactic" (1994:206).

Criticism goes to the reductional approach: it ignores the importance of the cross, self-sacrifices and denial in a Christian life. It detours the

concerns of believers from the spiritual maturity, discipleship, Christian excellence, and many other virtues to worldly success. It endangers Christianity to be reduced to success technique.

Instinctive Approach

There has emerged another interpretation on the subject of blessing, which I call the “instinctive approach.” Human beings have an instinctive sense to seek blessing and life, by avoiding curse and death. Our instinctive inclination to invoke the blessing is given by God who blessed human beings right after His creation works was completed.

“I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life...” says Deuteronomy 30:19. The parallelism in this exhortation indicates that blessing is equivalent to life, while curse is equivalent to death. The text shows the integral relationship between blessing and life. In the biblical context, “blessing is the sharing in the life of God; beginning with creation and the power to pass on that life by virtue of the blessing of the creation” (Moses Lee 1994:203).

Spiritual Power Approach

It is not erroneous for Marguerite G. Kraft (1995:6) to say, “for many non-Western societies the spiritual realm is the center of life. Humans are seen as weak and needing increased strength to survive in the world full of spirit activity. All that happens in life is related to vital force.” Also, her description on the Western and non-Western Christian is acceptable and recognized.

Christians in the West struggle to combine a secular worldview and the God of the Bible, while dependence on spiritual powers in pre-Christian experience makes Christians in non-Western societies much easier to depend on God as a Christian. (1995:6-7)

In relation to the issue of blessing, Christians, especially pastors and church leaders of the Korean church eagerly seek spiritual power for success, wealth, guidance, and meeting daily crises (for example, illness, accidents, barrenness, and drought). In appearance, they seek Christ to involve their felt needs,²¹ internally they claim the spiritual power rather than the Lord Jesus Christ. Their yearning is not for the presence of the Lord God, but for spiritual power only.

Many Korean pastors have tendency to put spiritual gifts as the most important part of the church growth above fruits of the Holy Spirit. Thus, they make efforts to be spiritually powerful pastors to meet the felt needs of church members but neglect almost their personalities and spiritual formation. By equating blessing with spiritual power, spiritual pride and pretending to be spiritually empowered prevail over the Korean church and endanger the body of Christ (Sung Choon Oh 2000:241-246).

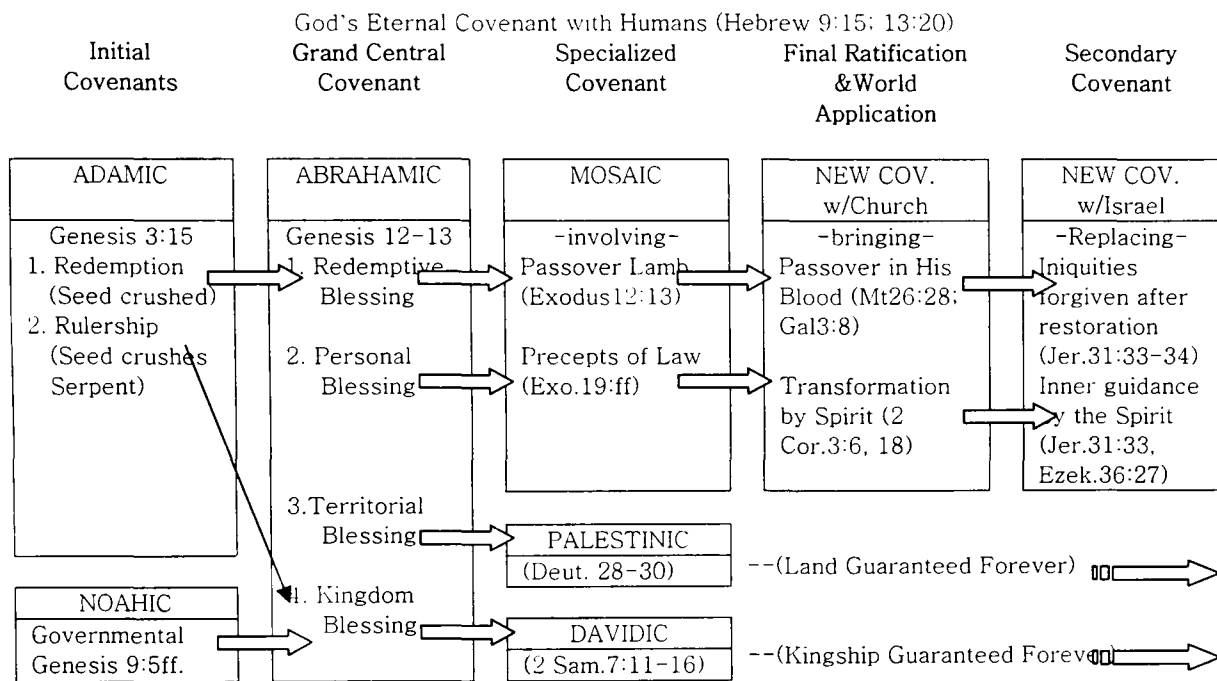
Covenantal Approach

The Bible records God's many covenants, beginning with the promise of the Redeemer in Genesis 3:15 and climaxing with the New Covenant through the blood of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8) (Wiersbe 1991:15). It is clear that God's intention and desire to bless humanity is a central focus of his covenant relationship. Therefore, the blessing of God is meaningful when it is understood in the context of covenants.

The figure below gives a perspective to see the structural understanding of the covenants centered on the blessing of God (Stanley A.

²¹ Kraft (1995:19) mentions the specific felt needs for spiritual power as follows: 1. Perpetuity Needs, 2. Prosperity Needs, 3. Health Needs, 4. Security Needs, 5. Restitution Needs, and 6. Power Needs. When these basic spiritual needs are not being met in the Christian experience, they often go to the church on Sunday but to diviner, medicine man, or spirit doctor.

Ellison 1998:29). I adopt this figure to see the blessing of God from this structural understanding of the covenants. It gives a clearer understanding on how the blessing of God has played an important role in the context of covenants.



Purpose of the Covenants:

1. To reveal and guarantee God's redemptive purposes in His "Eternal Covenant."
2. To reveal and guarantee God's Kingdom purposes through His chosen nation Israel.
3. To provide a faith basis for personal relationship with God

Figure 3: The Bible Covenants: God's Purposes Outlined

Adopted from Stanley A. Ellison(1998:29)

To begin with, the blessing is the word of God, which is found in close connection with the creation. After creating the living creatures of the waters, the land and the sky, the first work God did was to bless them (Genesis 1:22). In the same way, God also blessed human beings after creating them in His [sic] image (Genesis 1:28). The common message of the blessing of God is about fruitfulness, multiplication, and fullness over the world. If there is a unique difference between the living creatures and humans, it is the responsibility given to humans for the subjugation of the earth and dominion

over the living creatures. The writer of Genesis introduces God the Creator as the giver of blessing. This means that God is the original source of the blessing, the foundation of being, and the sustainer of life.

However, sin brought not only the severance of the relationship between God, the giver-of-blessing and human and between human and the living creatures, but also death and curse to all creatures. God takes “no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live” (Ezekiel 33:11 NIV) and “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4 NIV). God expresses His [sic] desire to rule His [sic] blessing over human beings including all the creatures through several covenants. “When God makes a covenant, He enters into an agreement to commit Himself to give what He promises. It is purely an act of grace” (Wiersbe 1999:15).

Adamic Covenant (Personal, Gen. 3:14-24). Warren W. Wiersbe understands the command of God in Genesis 2:16-17 as “the first covenant” (1998:40). He argues that “at this point, it’s God who makes the terms of agreement.” Covenant is a binding arrangement between two or more parties that governs their relationship. Wiersbe writes, “God is the Creator and human is the creature, a royal tenant in God’s wonderful world, so God has the right to tell the human what he can and cannot do” (1998:40). In conformity with the rules of the first covenant, obedience to this Word will keep them in the sphere of God’s fellowship and approval. Disobedience will bring them God’s judgment and spiritual and physical death.

In this covenant, why does God have to test Adam and Eve?
 God wanted humans to love and obey Him freely and willingly and not because they were programmed like robots who had to obey. In one sense, God took a risk when He made Adam and Eve in His own

image and gave them the privilege of choice; but this is the way He ordained for them to learn about freedom and obedience (Wiersbe 1998:41).

After Adam and Eve sinned against God, God made a visit to them, saying "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). This visit was made to give them His [sic] blessing that forgives their transgressions and covers their sins (Rome 4:7 NIV). If not, as stated in Genesis 2:17 "Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen 2:17. KJV), God's masterpiece of creatures might come to nothing. Knowing their vain efforts to cover their sins, God the Creator "took the initiative not only to redeem humanity but also to vindicate His name and eternal purpose" (LaRondelle 2005:16). God brought redemptive message to them in the form of a unilateral covenant (Genesis 3:15). As soon as they showed their faith in Him [sic] by giving a new name "Eve" to his wife, God removed their flimsy human-made garment and clothed them with a new clothing, that is, garment of skin that stands for 'imputed righteousness' from Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:21). "Innocent animals had to die so that the man and woman might have a new beginning and be back in fellowship with the Lord. It's a picture of what Jesus did for sinners on the cross when He died for a sinful world (2 Corinthians 5:21)" (Wiersbe 1998:70).

In the Adamic covenant (3:14-21), there are two parts. The first part (3:14-19) is the proclamation against Satan the arch-deceiver. A Redeemer will come to crush him and to restore humankind in Paradise. This proclamation, at the same time, delivers God's promise to Adam that the offspring of the woman will be sent through the virgin birth and that he will have the ultimate victory over Satan and will save people who personally put their faith in Him [sic] from the bondage of Satan.

In the second part (3:20-24), the initiative of God to restore fallen human beings reveals that “He was a merciful and caring Creator whose love for humanity exceeded a justice which would condemn the sinners” (LaRondelle 2005:17). God promises His total grace in Genesis 3:21 to the one who believes in God’s redemptive work through the coming Messiah Jesus Christ. No one can expiate sin by him/herself, but God can redeem his/her sin. God gives Adam and Eve a holy privilege to “walk with me, dressed in white” (Revelation 3:5).

Central to the divine plan of redemption stands God’s promise of blessing and curse in Genesis 3:14-19. The blessing specified in the Adamic covenant is the blessing of salvation, that is, the restoration of relationship with God through “a Male Seed” (Kaiser, Jr.1998:28). From the beginning, the Bible clearly shows that true blessing comes through the proto-evangel on “the male descendant who will stamp on the head of the Serpent and crush its head” (30).

Noahic Covenant (Governmental, Gen. 9:11-17). The first time we read of God making a “covenant” with human beings is in the story of Noah. After the flood, Noah was grateful to the Lord who had delivered him from the flood. Then he built an altar to God (Gen. 8:20) and made a sacrificial burnt offerings with some of the clean animals and clean birds (Genesis 8:20), which was accepted graciously for in it “the Lord smelled a soothing aroma” (Genesis 8:21).

God blessed Noah and his family by repeating the mandate twice (Genesis 9:1, 7) as He told Adam and Eve to “be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 1:28 NIV). And He [sic] established His [sic] covenant with Noah again — a new covenant that was a renewal of the Adamic covenant, with redemptive additions (Gen. 9:1-17). Noah became “like

And in the second part of the covenant, after giving Noah an instruction about the shedding of animal blood, God promised to involve the sanctity of human life, i.e., that "whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed; for in the image of God He made man" (Gen. 9:6). Some (LaRondelle 2005:20, Wiersbe 1998:117) infer that this verse justifies "the death penalty for murder. God allows the government to have 'Biblical authority and mandate for capital punishment.'" This judicial responsibility continues in the civil authority which bears the sword as God's servant, according to Roman 13:1-7.

God gave people a visible sign to remember His [sic] covenant. The sign of the covenant was a multicolored rainbow that was placed in the sky. When we look at the rainbow, this covenant reminds that our Father is also looking at the rainbow. It is in this sense that the rainbow "becomes a bridge that brings us together" (Wiersbe 1998:121). It would give deep and great meanings to both God and people with its lovely colors (Genesis 9:13-16). It is my conviction that the rainbow reminds God that human absolutely needs the Savior and at the same time it reminds us of the many-colored grace of God. It symbolizes God's faithfulness and grace in the judgment of the rain clouds.

As the rainbow binds heaven and earth together with its multicolored bow, Jesus came into this world as the sign of the "manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10) from the throne of God which is "encircled by the emerald rainbow" (Revelation 4:3). As the rainbow functions to bind and to bridge, Jesus as the only Mediator between God and man, binds sinners, that is, Noah's descendants, and God with His [sic] cross in terms of reconciliation (1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:18).

In terms of the covenant blessing, God wants us to enjoy not only the blessings of natural life but also the blessings of spiritual life. God's deepest desire is for the descendants of Noah to "be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4) and is for all human to be blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

God blessed Noah and his sons, as He blessed Adam and Eve right after the creation work was done. He said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth" (Genesis 9:1 NIV). As recorded in Genesis 9:2, "The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands." It is evident that God installed a kind of safety device on all the beasts and creatures by giving fear and dread to them. It is sure that it was the blessing of God's protection for human beings from harmful beasts and creatures. In the same context, God gave them a prohibitory decree that "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man. As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it" (Genesis 9:6-7 NIV). It was also a kind of safety device of God for the sake of a fresh start.

In relation to the Noahic covenant blessing, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. (1998:32) induces very unique interpretation on Genesis 9:25-27:

Let's go back to Genesis 9:26 where Noah blesses Shem. "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem!" (Genesis 9:26). Verse 27 names all three together, Japheth, Shem, and Canaan. About Japheth, Noah says, "May God extend the territory of Japheth." Then he says, "May God dwell in the tents of Shem." Since the Hebrew says, "May he dwell," some assume it means that Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem. But I think it's really a promise. The second blessing is that

God, not the descendants of Japheth, will come and dwell with the Shemites. Here God is choosing the Semitic people.²²

In brief, in the beginning God brings a blessing—a material blessing—for all the people upon the face of the earth. Then He [sic] brings a spiritual blessing, the blessing of the seed. From the woman one will come who will be the answer to the historic polarization of the Serpent's seed and the woman's seed. God becomes even more specific. That seed will be Shemitic, from the Shemitic peoples, the Shemites, Shem: "God will dwell with Shem" (Kaiser, Jr 1998:33).

Then, what are special features of blessing in God's covenant with Noah different from the Adamic covenant? It is the blessing of the promise on "the dwelling of God among mortals" (Kaiser 1998:31). As we shall see more fully in the coming pages, God then chose one Shemite named Abraham and made him a great blessing through the Good News, which will be for all the nations upon the face of the earth (33). In this sense, the blessing of God is a blessing to wait for the completion of salvation history. Strictly speaking, it is a blessing to hold a promise in faith that the Redeemer will come.

The Bible clearly says that someday when "the kingdom of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15), the blessing that is given to Noah and his sons will be completed. Isaiah describes the new world as follows:

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play

²² He (1998:32) continues to support his opinion with grammar. "In grammar, the subject of the first clause is the antecedent for the pronoun used as the subject of the second clause. So we have the promise of God coming and dwelling with men."

near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. (Isaiah 11:6-8 NIV)

In conclusion, God's covenant with Adam and Noah are wider in scope than all the other covenants in the Bible. The whole nations are within the limits of the Noahic covenant. The following covenants, such as Abrahamic covenant and Davidic covenant, are the means to fulfill the Adamic and Noahic covenants. These covenants have two clear purposes: one is for the Israelites to become a bridge to connect the blood line of Messiah who is to come as the Savior and King of the world; another is for the Israelites to become the light for the nations, Noah's descendants, who have hoped to wait for the Savior seeing the rainbow, the sign of the covenant. It is essential to emphasize that the reason God blessed Noah and his sons with the sign of the rainbow is to wait for the Christ Jesus the only Mediator, who is the ultimate blessing of all people.

Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12-15). The history of Israel begins with the promise of blessing. The curse that had dominated the early chapters of the biblical story (Genesis 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 9:25) was countered by God's promise to Abraham that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3). The record of Israel's past is best understood as an outworking of blessing and cursing (Deuteronomy 27:1-28:68).

After the tower of Babel, God took a new initiative by carrying out "paradigm shift" in His [sic] salvation history. For a while, God soothed Noah's descendants, nations in the Genesis 10 to wait for the Savior in faith who is to come to restore the original and complete blessing for them. Meanwhile, God launched His [sic] plan of redemption by choosing Abraham

and his descendants to be His [sic] mediator to bless nations in Genesis 10. In other words, God called Abraham and his descendants as an errand nation of God's love. As one peeps into God's plan of redemption through a family prophecy (Genesis 9:24-29), God made a plan to redeem the descendants of Noah in the tent of Shem, the ancestor of Abraham. The descendants of Japheth and Ham would find God "in the tents of Shem."

It must be emphatically stated that God's covenant with Abraham is not a renewal of the former covenants. God made a totally new kind of covenant with Abraham so that He [sic] could fulfill the promise of salvation with Noah and his sons, and rebuild the Kingdom that Satan was trying to ruin by tempting human to rebel. With the "blessing" pronounced to Abram and through him on all human beings in Genesis 12:1-3, God the Creator "clarified His earlier promise of a Redeemer who will redeem humanity, destroy evil, and restore Paradise, and confirmed His promise to bless 'all people' in His universal outreach" (LaRondelle 2005:23).

The Adamic world continues through Noah, but it has been significantly changed, for God made the covenant with Abraham central and global, giving the vision of a world redeemed from sin and restored unto God: "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3, 18:18,22:18, 26:4; 28:14). Stanley A. Ellison understands the blessing of God as the central point in the Abrahamic covenant. It is characteristic that he understands God's covenant with Abraham as the grand central covenant of the Bible and makes the other covenants secondary. It is in this sense that other stories of the Bible, including the life of Abraham and the history of his descendants, clearly show how these four promises of blessings have been fulfilled.

1) Personal Blessing

When God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans, God promised Abraham and his seed great personal blessings of prosperity and God's protection. Genesis 13-24 illustrates how God;

1. made Abraham a father of a great nation (Genesis 12:2)
2. gave Abraham new name and made his name great (Genesis 12:2)
3. made him the origin of blessing in this world (Genesis 12:2)
4. made Himself be the shield and great reward of Abraham (Genesis 15:1)
5. gave him descendants (Genesis 21:1-7)
6. gave him the land of Canaan as inheritance (Genesis 15:7-21)
7. made him live a good old age (Genesis 15:15)
8. made him wealthy (Genesis 24:35)

Abraham received a new name, great personal wealth, and the Lord's special care. Why did God give Abraham these personal blessings? It is evident that God saw his response to God in his obedient faith.

2) Territorial Blessing

"To your offspring I will give this land [of Canaan]" (Genesis 12:7).

The first part of the story of Abraham (Genesis 12-15) is about the land. Abraham arrived at the land of Canaan which God showed and directed. Faced with famine, he went into Egypt, but returned to Canaan again with God's helping hand. By making concession to the demand of Lot (Genesis 13), he received the promise of the land again from God, but couldn't see its fulfillment. When he rescued the captured Lot and his family from the northern allied army and did not take spoils which King of Sodom proposed, Abraham heard that his descendants would come back to this land after the fourth generation passed (Genesis 15). Though God had repeatedly reminded Abraham of the promise that He [sic] would "give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed"

(Genesis 26:4), Abraham in his life time could not possess any lands, except the cave of Machpelah which he purchased as a burial site for his wife Sarah and himself. However, the land God promised to Abraham was taken by the Israelites led by Joshua and fully possessed by the Israelites at the time of King David.

Then, what lesson would God like to give Abraham with this matter of the Promised Land? The Promised Land which God indicated to Abraham had double meanings: one was the land of Canaan and the other the heavenly city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Because Abraham and his sons waited for that city, they could live in the land of promise as if they lived in a foreign country dwelling in tents (Hebrew 11:8-10).

3) National Blessing (1 Samuel 7)

The second part of the story of Abraham (Genesis 16-21) is about the descendants and nation. God gave this childless couple the promises that “I will make you into a great nations and will bless you” (Genesis 12:2) and “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore” (Genesis 22:17).

Though the book of Genesis stresses that Abram and his wife were unable to contribute to the fulfillment of the divine promise, they tried to do so through their slave woman, fathering Ishmael with Hagar. But God explicitly disallowed their contribution to it, and strengthened His [sic] promise to have their own child by covenant-making ritual with Abraham (LaRondelle 2005:23-24). This ceremonial covenant suggests, “God pledges Himself, as symbolized by the sacrificial death of animals, to the unconditional certainty of His plan to fulfill His promise to Abram. This implies that God took upon Himself the obligation of the covenant” (25).

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God appeared to him with these assured words: "You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram [meaning "exalted father"]; you name will be Abraham [meaning "father of multitudes"], for I have made you father of many nations" (Genesis 17:4-5). "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her" (Genesis 17:15-16). The Abrahamic covenant "is defined in terms of regenerating promises" (25).

With severe tests for Abraham and Sarah, Abraham had Isaac, the child of a creative miracle of God. The present day significance of this national promise is seen in that both the Jewish and Arab nations claim Abraham as their father. When Abraham was dead at the age of one hundred seventy-five, he had only one son Isaac and two grandsons, Esau and Jacob. The specific great nation promised was Israel, as later indicated to Moses and David (Genesis 12:2; 17:4-5) (Ellisen 1998:35)

4) Spiritual Blessing (Galatians 3)

The blessing is the core of God's covenant with Abraham. God promised to Abraham, saying, "[A]ll peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3). Then, God called Abraham and Sarah the father and mother of the nations, and set the way for the nations to be received God's blessing by sending the Redeemer through their blood-line. That's why the "New Testament writers constantly recognize a Messianic promise in the Abrahamic covenant. Paul in Galatians 3:8 and 16 and Peter in Acts 3:25-26 apply the word "seed" or "offspring" in Genesis 12:7, 22:18 and 28:14 to a singular person, the risen Messiah" (LaRondelle 2005:23).

In Christ, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that is, of Israel, determined to appear as the God of all peoples (Verkyul 1999:28). The ultimate fulfillment of Abrahamic covenant would be completed by Jesus Christ the seed of Abraham who “redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Its fulfillment results in that “the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:14).

Thus, God made Paul declare, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:29NIV). In Christ God blesses the children of God in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). “Christians today partake of the Abrahmic blessing in this special way-they justified by faith as Abraham was” (Genesis 12:3, 15:6, 18:18, 22:18) (Ellison 1998:36).

This fourfold promise to Abraham unveiled God's plan for His [sic] people. As Abraham and Sarah built a strong faith-relationship with God in series of severe tests of faith, the Israelites also had to learn the lesson by going through the route where Abraham went.

The Specialized and Secondary Covenants. John R. W. Stott in “The Living God is a Missionary God” suggests how to interpret the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy without having misunderstandings and disagreements. His suggestion is that the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy is examined from the threefold perspective: the past fulfillment, the present fulfillment and the future fulfillment (Stott 1999:5). He defines “threefold perspective” to see the promise of the Abrahamic covenant:

The New Testament writers themselves understood Old Testament prophecy to have not a single but usually a triple fulfillment-past, present, and future. The past fulfillment was an immediate or historical

fulfillment in the life of nation of Israel. The present is an intermediate or gospel fulfillment in Christ and his Church. The future will be an ultimate or eschatological fulfillment in the new heaven and new earth. (1995:5).

In this section, let us examine how the promise of the Abrahamic covenant has been fulfilled in the four parts of specialized and secondary covenant: Personal blessings were spelled out in the Mosaic Law. They were conditioned on individual observance. Territorial blessings were elaborated in the Palestinian covenant. Palestine would ultimately be given to Israel. National blessings were specified in the Davidic covenant where the king and the kingdom are delineated and guaranteed. Spiritual blessings to all nations are seen to be fulfilled in Christ's providing redemption for all men (Ellison 1998:44).

1) Mosaic Covenant

As Abraham was the father of the Hebrew race, Moses became the founder of the Israeli nation. When the Israelites escaped from the bondage of the Egypt, the people had multiplied to over two million. Moses, who had both divine training in God's direction and royal training in leadership, established them a nation in the wilderness. To function as a nation, they required a constitution of civil, social, and moral laws as well as spiritual instructions to maintain their covenant relationship with God. God gave guidance for worship and a mandate for service in the form of a covenant. This Mosaic covenant fully satisfied these requirements.

This Law, according to Ellison, serves two basic functions in the plan of God: one is a covenant system for God's covenant people Israel and the other is a revelation for all humanity. First of all, the Law serves as the covenant system. It is essential to recognize that

[T]he Mosaic Law was not given as a means of salvation. ... Salvation is always received by faith in God's word, whether in Old and New Testament times. That word in the Old Testament was His promise to provide redemption, as seen in the proto-evangel and symbolized by Passover lamb. The Law was not designed to condition salvation, but to emphasize one's need of salvation (1 Timothy 1:9) while providing God's people with a proper code of conduct. In this sense it served to condition the Lord's blessing on His people while teaching them His way (Deuteronomy 4:40, 30:9-10) (Ellison 1998:38).

One thing we can be certain is that this Mosaic Law came to an end at the Cross when the Levitical priesthood ended and the torn temple veil at Christ's death dramatized the fact that "the old was consummated and the new priesthood of Christ had begun" (38). Ellison (1998:38), citing the apostle Paul's argument, emphasizes that the Law functioned as a divine covenant system before Christ's coming, but was designed to last only until the seed of the Abrahamic covenant (that is, Christ) would arrive (Galatians 3:16, 19).

Secondly, it was designed as a set of spiritual and moral principles for all humanity (Matthew 5:18). It means that the Law reveals "God's basic principle of holiness and love by setting forth an organized code of moral and spiritual behavior for all" (38-39). Thus, "the Mosaic Law served as a mirror by which each could see his or her sins and seek the mercy and grace of God through the sacrificial offerings" (39).

In brief, though this Mosaic Law as a moral covenant was meant to continue forever in that "it relates to the Abrahamic covenant that promised a seed to bless all nations in that it emphasized the need for that seed," (39) it as a covenant system with Israel ended at the Cross and was replaced with the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31.

Toward the end of Israel's history as a nation (586 B.C.), Jeremiah the prophet announced a future covenant with both Israel and Judah. This is called the "New Covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31ff.) in that it will take the place of the Mosaic Law received at Sinai. According to Ellison, like the Mosaic, the New Covenant will condition blessing; but unlike it, it will be an inward ethic, written on the heart, rather than a list of do's or don'ts. All will know the Lord from the least to the greatest (1998:42).

But, Ellison reverses the general understanding that "the New Covenant finds its fulfillment in the church" (1975:37). He argues that it is wrong that "the opinion of many throughout history that the Jew lost their covenant right by slaying Messiah" (1998:43). Wiersbe sympathizes with Ellison's opinion by criticizing, "Some say that the church is now 'spiritual Israel' and all of these Old Testament promises are now being fulfilled in a spiritual sense in the church. The church has no covenant relationship to the land of Israel, for God gave that land to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15); and the blessings and curses were declared to Israel, not the church" (1999:175). Applying the New Covenant in Jeremiah primarily to the Church results in giving 'a total deception' to the historic people with whom it was made. Ellison (1975:37) persuasively states;

The church is not under covenant relations as such, although it does participate in the benefits of that future covenant (in that the New Covenant is also based on the blood of Christ as is the Church – Matthew 26:28). Our "covenant" is the Lord himself. Paul said we are ministers of the spirit of the new covenant, which spirit he identified as the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:6,17).

Ellison (1975:37) criticizes that the church foreclosed on this promise of a future covenant for Israel earlier, even though it surely is "the future

event.”²³ He (1998:43) explains as follows:

The New Covenant of Jeremiah then will be established with a new generation of Israel, all of whom will know the Lord and have received His forgiveness. It will begin a new era of spiritual relations when they are gathered from dispersion and have met the Lord himself. ...He will then be the god of all the families of Israel and institute a new plan of blessing His people (Jeremiah 31:1-6).

Differentiated with the New Covenant with Israel, Ellison (1975:37) believes, as above mentioned Figure 6, “the New Covenant with Church was brought by the Lord Himself who through His blood in death and resurrection has become our Lord and Guide (Luke 22:20, 2 Corinthians 3:6, 17). Jesus died and rose to be our Lord, not to put us under another system (Matthew 11:28; Rom 14:9).”

2) The Palestinic Covenant

This covenant was given to Israel through Moses about thirty-nine years later, detailing their right to the land of Palestine (Deuteronomy 28-30). Ellison (1998:39) gives very interesting explanation on the Promised Land as follows;

As related the Abrahamic, occupying the Promise Land was unconditional, guaranteeing their final possession of the land. But related to the Mosaic covenant, it was conditional, requiring their observance of the covenants laws. ... As tenants in the Lord's land, their positive responses to His leadership was required to remain in the land.

It is understood throughout the Scripture that this blessing was many times

²³ Ellison (1975:37; 1998:42-43) insists that “this Jeremiah covenant will be instituted when Israel and Judah are regathered and reconstituted as a people of God. It will take place following the ‘time of Jacob's trouble,’ a time of great slaughter which is the great tribulation (Jeremiah 30:7; 31:40). It will be in the latter days when Jehovah will be the God of all the families of Israel (Jeremiah 31:1).”

forfeited because of their disobedience and straying from the Lord as seen in the later history of Israel. However, this covenant, as Ellison (1998:40) argues, did not end with a warning of judgment but with a promise of final restoration grounded on the Abrahamic promise of the land. It means that Israel would finally possess the land forever.

3) The Davidic Covenant

The Lord's "national" promise to Abraham came to fruition about a thousand years later. His [sic] promise of a great nation included kings and kingdoms and was later specified to come through the tribe of Judah (Genesis 17:6, 49:10). This covenant was partially fulfilled in 1010 B.C. by the Lord who crowned David as the king. God promised David and his house a permanent throne right and a permanent kingdom; his house would never be destroyed as was Saul's, the throne would always remain in his family, and the kingdom would be established forever. These were divinely guaranteed, regardless of the fact that David's sons often proved unfaithful and were sent into exile (Ellison 1975:35-36; 1998:40-42).

As the Davidic covenant guaranteed that David's future son through Solomon would reign over Israel forever, the Old Testament conundrum is beautifully resolved in the virgin birth. Zechariah further declared that His rulership would extend over all nations (Zechariah 14:9). He will, in fact, one day be King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16) (Ellison 1998:42).

The Covenants Summarized. These covenants unfold "God's blessing plan" (Kaiser, Jr 1998:32) for His people. In the Adamic covenant, God showed his redemptive plan through the "blessing of a male seed" (1998:29), and in the Noahic covenant he promised "the blessing of the dwelling of God among mortals" (31). These blessings in Genesis 1-11 are the foundational blessings. In the grand central covenant with Abraham,

“the blessing of the Gospel” (32) is given to all humanity. God is not playing favorites here. The final purpose of God’s blessing on Abraham is to give him the Good News, saying “So that in your seed all the nations of the earth might be blessed (Galatians 3:8).” Of course, that ‘seed’ is one, namely, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Missiological Approach

The most comprehensive and integrated approach of blessing in the Scripture is missiological. From the missiological point of view, mission begins with the heart of the triune God who wants to make His [sic] blessing rule over His [sic] creation. It proves that “the first thing God does in relation to humans is to bless humans” (Kittel 1964:757). The blessing of the creation is the gift of God for all humankind.

After the fall of human beings, the purpose of mission in God’s mind is to bring the blessing of the creation to all humanity. As stated above, the covenants of God reveals “the heart of the promise-plan of God” (Kaiser, Jr 1998:23) that is depicted through the word blessing. In spite of the fall of the human, God brings the blessing of a male seed (Genesis 3:15), the blessing of the dwelling of God among mortals (Genesis 9:27), and the blessing of the Gospel (1998:24-33).

Unfolding the plan of God for the nations, God chose one Shemite named Abraham and commissioned him as a missionary to the land of Canaan. In this sense, “the missionary mandate of the church does not begin with John 3:16 or Mathew 28:18-20. It begins with God’s covenant with Abraham. We are blessed that we might be a blessing” (Wiersbe 1999:15).

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and

your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (12:1-3 NIV).

God promised to show Abram a land, make him into a great nation, and use that nation to bless the whole world. God blesses us that we might be a blessing to others, and His [sic] great concern is that the whole world might be blessed.

An Errand Nation for the World. Moses Lee in "Transforming the Korean church: The conceptual transformation of shamanistic *bok* to the biblical concept of blessing," has a clear understanding of the blessings which Abraham had received from God. He (1994:208) says, "A missioloical approach interprets the blessing of the chosen one—Adam or Abraham—not as the privileged but as an instrument to bless all." He says, "Genesis starts not with chosen Israel but with all nations (Genesis 11). The election of Abraham was not for his own glory or self satisfaction but for the service of all nations (Genesis 12:1-3)."

Why did God elect Abraham and Israel? God's election of Abraham and Israel concerns the whole world. He [sic] needs "an errand nation" to disclose God's universal intentions (Verkuyl 1978:92; Hutchinson 1993:1). In that God's purpose of election is to call a minority to serve the majority, God made the Israelite take His [sic] blessing to the whole world, like the promise given to Abraham when God called him out of Ur in land of the Chaldeans. At Mt. Sinai, the Israelites were invited by God to participate in His [sic] priesthood (Exodus 19:4-6). As far as they knew, the reason why they were chosen as God's special possession among all peoples, Israel tried to prove His [sic] purpose to bless all the nations. In Psalm 67 that is

derived from the Aaronic benediction found in Numbers 6:24-26, Psalmist had sung that Israel was to be “a light to the nations, just as Abraham had been told, the writer of Exodus had exhorted” (Kaiser, Jr. 1991:14-15).

The basis for God's election of Israel was to be found throughout the Scripture in his spontaneous and unmerited mercy. However, in the day of Old Testament, the prophets accused the reconceptualization of Late Judaism that Abraham was chosen not on the basis of God's grace but because of his own achievements. In particular, Amos, Jeremiah, and Isaiah turned away the Israelite in introverted pride and “lashed out at the people’s ethnocentric pretension and charged them with subverting God's actual intentions (Amos7:9-10) (Verkuyl 1978:92).

Though election primarily conveyed neither privilege, nor favoritism, but rather responsibility, Israel always forgot the purpose of their election. The book of Jonah contrasts the love of God with Jonah himself—a missionary who does not have a missionary's heart. The emphasis of the Jonah story is, therefore not on the conversion of Nineveh; it is a call to the Israelites to allow them to be converted to compassion comparable to that of Yahweh (1978:96). In this missionary book, “God has to wrestle against Israel’s narrow ethnocentrism which tries to restrict his activity to the boundaries of Israel alone and against the church’s ecclesiocentric refusal to go out into the world to proclaim God’s message and do his work” (1978:97).

A Call to be a Channel of Blessing. Harper G. Smyth (1903) well expressed God’s purpose of election through his word and music, titled “Make Me a Channel of Blessing.”

Is your life a channel of blessing?
Is the love of God flowing through you?

Are you telling the lost of the Savior?
Are you ready His service to do?

Refrain:

Make me a channel of blessing today,
Make me a channel of blessing, I pray;
My life possessing, my service blessing,
Make me a channel of blessing today.

Is your life a channel of blessing?
Are you burdened for those that are lost?
Have you urged upon those who are straying,
The Savior Who died on the cross?

Is your life a channel of blessing?
Is it a daily telling for Him?
Have you spoken the Word of salvation
To those who are dying in sin?

We cannot be channels of blessing
If our lives are not free from known sin;
We will barriers be and a hindrance
To those we are trying to win.

The following figure helps to see a more comprehensively missiological picture of the Scripture. It outlines God's plan of blessing and co-working with the Israel and the church: Our God is the origin of blessing. We are saved by God's love and His [sic] redemptive work and chosen as sole agent of deliverer of blessing. Now is the time to ask a question: "Then, does the world, the recipients of God's blessing, receive His blessing through Israel and the church as the agent of God in this world?"

I align myself with this approach to blessing. As the mission of the Israel was to deliver the blessing of God to the nations, the mission of the church is to transfer God's blessing to the world. I believe that the blessing of God is also the heart of the message of Jesus.

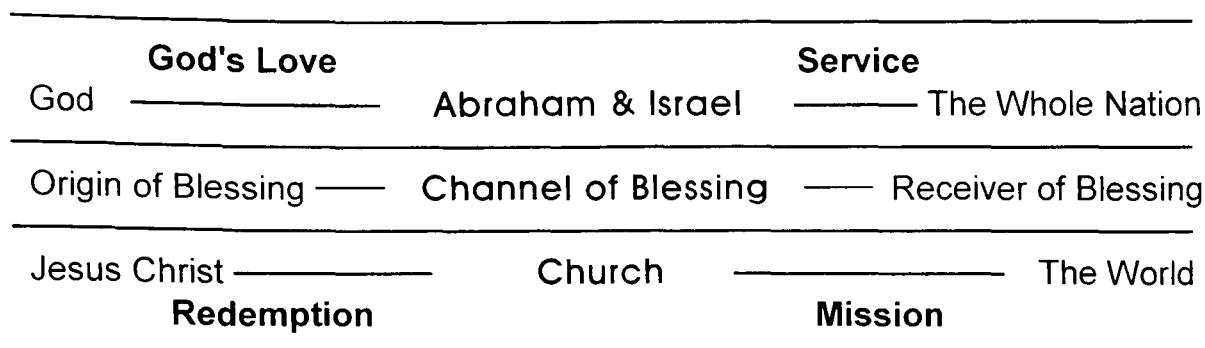


Figure 4: Mission as Channel of Blessing

The Dynamic Understanding of the Blessing in the Old Testament

If one were to ask the question “What is the Bible all about?” a brief but fair answer would be: an account of God’s interactive plan to give His blessing to all humanity. In this sense, the Bible is equal to be called “the book of blessing,” because the concept of blessing pervades throughout the Scripture.

It is common knowledge that the first act God committed after creation of human was to bless them. Blessing is like an “after service” God has graciously granted to His creatures. Without God's blessing, humans cannot exist as human beings. Because God blessed His [sic] creature, human, now that creature becomes a true human being (Jae Chul Lee 1994[2000]:25-28). In this section, the general topics that rose from the Old Testament, such as concepts, contents, functions, purpose, communication, etc., will be discussed in detail.

The Concept of Blessing

God’s divine work of blessing becomes God’s way of empowering and encouraging His [sic] people. The Hebrew word בְּרָכָה (berakah) has been translated to mean both a blessing and a gift.

בְּרָכָה (berakah) as Blessing. It is a “power-laden concept” (Lenning 1979:31). When blessing is seen as something definitive and objective,

quantitative rather than qualitative, it can be thought of as a magical formula in that blessing is a prerogative of God. Number 22:6 indicates that in pre-Israelite days blessing was thought of as a magical formula or power. Balak believed that Balaam possessed this power. “It proves that Israel struggled with a strong animistic emphasis on blessing” (1979:32).

“Blessing is not magic; but it is power, power that is inherent in man as God created him and as God continues to empower him with gifts” (32). It is “an element of vitality,” and “a life-power” (32) that enables one to be fruitful, to increase in number, to fill the earth and subdue it, and to rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground (Genesis 1:28). It is believed that “not only is the degree of blessing different from person to person, but the kind of blessing differs as well between people. All types of blessings have one thing in common: they relate to the positive uses of power” (32).

בְּרָכָה (berakah) as Gift. – Its etymologically oldest meaning is “gift” (1 Sam 25: 30:26). The concepts of giving and blessing are often closely related (Josh. 14:13, 2 Sam. 6:18-19. Deut 15:14) (33). It is important to note that בְּרָכָה (berakah) does not always refer to the giving of material gifts but can also refer to a promise or wish for something (33).

The Content of Blessing

Mitchell (1987:v) in The Meaning of BRK “To Bless” in the Old Testament divides the blessing in the Old Testament into two large sections: one is God blessing human, and the other human blessing human. He (1987: 29, 36) also searches the content of blessing into four categorizations: the patriarchal blessing promise, the covenantal blessing promise, wisdom retribution aphorism, and the prophetic apocalyptic blessing promises.

The Patriarchal Blessing Promises. In the patriarchal promises,

blessing consists of God's bestowal of descendants (Genesis 12:2; 17:16, 20; 18:18; 22:17; 26:4; 28:14), fame (Genesis 12:2), dominion over others (Genesis 12:3a, 18:18, 22:17), land (Genesis 12:1; 26:3, 4; 28:13), God's presence (Genesis 26:3,24; 28:15, 20), and protection (Genesis 28:15). It is characteristic that the patriarchs were used as the status of being mediators of blessings in the patriarchal blessing promise (Genesis 12:3, 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14) (1987:33-35).

The Covenantal Blessing Promises. Unlike the patriarchal blessing promise, the content of blessing in the covenantal promises includes "human fertility" (Exodus 23:25; Deuteronomy 7:13-14; 28:4, 11; 30:16), longevity (Exodus 23:25; Deuteronomy 30:16), good health (Exodus 23:25), dominion over other nations (Deuteronomy 7:14-16), and fertility of domesticated animals and crops (Deuteronomy 12:7; 15:10; 23:21; 28:12) (Mitchell 1987: 37-40).

These blessings would lift Israel far above all other nations (Deuteronomy 26:19) and make Israel "a light to the Gentiles" (Isaiah 49:6). This would give the Jews opportunities to tell the other nations about the true and living God (Deuteronomy 28:10) (Wiersbe 1999:167).

Wisdom Retribution Aphorisms. In that they predict that God will bless or curse people based on their adherence to the standards of Torah piety, it is similar to the covenantal promises. However, it differs from most of the covenantal promises in that God is usually not specified as the agent (1987:44-45). The content of blessing in the wisdom aphorism is usually not spelled out, but when it is, blessing consists of such things as prosperity, children, good crops, and esteem. It is important to know that blessing and curse do not operate by the power of the spoken word, but result from God's attitude toward the person (1987:45).

The Prophetic Apocalyptic Blessing Promises. Unlike the previous discussed promises to individuals or household, these promises of blessing are made to the nation as a whole. The prophets describe the fulfillment of the promises as occurring in a future golden age, rather than in the life time of the recipients of the promises. God's blessing consists of fertility, longevity, prosperity, and peace (Isaiah 65:18-25). These benefits are not reaped through a natural process or from God's retribution, but from "God's dramatic intervention in the course of history" (1987:52-57).

In conclusion, the major aspects of blessing in the Old Testament are fertility and prosperity, shalom, holiness, and praise and thanksgiving (Lenning 1979:34). Let it once again be pointed out that the contents of God's blessing include health, longevity, wealth, prosperity, peace, success, victory, etc. (Deuteronomy 28:1-14; Leviticus 26:1-13; Psalms 1:1-3; 32:1-2,5; 41:1-2; 65:4; 73:1,9, 12-13; 84:5; 106:3; 112:1; 127:5; 128:2; 133:3; 144:12-15; Proverbs 3:13-35; 8:32-36; Job 29:10-11; Isaiah 32:20; 56:1-2). In addition, the blessings of forgiveness (Psalms 32:1-2; 84:5) and eternal life (Psalms 133:3) are included. It is to make special mention that the content of blessing requires the right relationship with God the source of all blessings (Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 11:22-23, 30:8-10; Micah 6:6-8, Isaiah 58:4-11, Psalms 41:1, Proverbs 14:21, Malachi 3:6-12, 4:2-3,). God wants us to be blessed, and the covenants and the Law were given for this sake.

The Function of Blessing

The Hebrew word for blessing was used over 640 times in the Old Testament alone. Gary Smalley (1993: 16-18) in The Gift of the Blessing emphasizes four crucial functions it holds:

First, the word for blessing pictured God's original plan for mankind. The very first thing God did after creating us was to bless male and female

He [sic] created in Genesis 1:27-28. An encouraging truth for us is that we were created to be blessed. We were notified that God's design for us is that through the descendants of Abraham all the families of the earth are connected to experience God's blessing and to learn to bless others as recorded in Genesis 12:3. God's blessing is the major purpose for our creation. In the Old Testament thought, there was nothing worse than being under a curse. But as powerful as a curse might be, there was one thing stronger, to be blessed by God.

Second, blessing was a time to pull together a group. In the Old Testament, many examples show that blessing was given to unite a group of people. Melchizedek has Abraham gather his family and blesses them as a group (Genesis 14:19, 20); Moses assembles the entire Nation of Israel in the wilderness to bless them (Deuteronomy 33:1-5), as do Aaron, David, and Solomon after him (Number 6:23-27, 1 Kings 8:15-61). Blessing a group can increase the unity each member feels for that group and it can do much more.

Third, blessing was a time to call upon God's protection. For those living in the days of patriarchs, blessing was a time to call on God's protection for a loved one as shown in Genesis 28:1 where Isaac blesses Jacob before sending him to avoid his brother. Traveling in Biblical times was much more dangerous than today, and no one ever wanted a loved one to go beyond their sight without words of blessing resting upon the traveler.

And fourth, blessing was used to mark an important rite of passage. Whether at birth (Ruth4:14-15), a marriage (Genesis 24:60), or on the passing of leadership from an older generation to a younger (Genesis 27:1, 48:1), blessing was used to mark significant milestones in one's life.

These four functions of the Old Testament blessing; using us to God's creative purpose, uniting a group, invoking God's protection, and providing a rite of passage, were common practices in Bible Times. In the Old Testament, the practicing blessing people had unique spiritual and prophetic aspects.

The Condition and Communication of Blessing

"How is blessing bestowed?" (Westerman 1978:27) To respond to this question, the researcher approaches with two related topics: one is related to the issue of the condition required for one to be blessed and the other is connected to the issue of how God communicates His [sic] blessing to His [sic] people.

The Condition of Blessing. The Old Testament is insistent in its emphasis that God is the sole source of blessing. In general, God promises blessings, but sets the conditions to receive these blessings. We are asked to do something to please God who will give blessing to those who were open and obedient to Him [sic]. But, it is too serious not to overlooked that these conditions are made in terms of the Mosaic covenant: obeying the word of God, having a proper relationship with God, and maintaining a morally responsible life in this world (Deuteronomy 7:12-13, 28:1-14, Leviticus 26:1-13).

It is essential to emphasize that the condition of blessing should be dealt with the issues of "the general or common and special grace."²⁴ In

²⁴ John Calvin used the term "gratia communis" (general grace) and "gratia particularis" (special grace). He also classifies "general grace" under three heads: 1) Universal general grace, a grace that extends to all creatures, 2) Common general grace, that is a grace which applies to mankind in general and to every member of the human race. And 3) Covenant general grace, a grace that is common to all those who live in the sphere of the covenant, whether they belong to elect or not (Louis Berkhof 1996:3).

terms of the general grace, general blessings (Genesis 1:22, 28, 9:1) flow from the work of creation to the people as if “He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45) regardless of whether they are Christians or not based on Adamic/Noahic covenants. When I speak of “general grace” that is operated by the Holy Spirit, it includes “general blessings, such as rain and sunshine, food and drink, clothing and shelter, which God imparts to all men indiscriminately where and in what measure it seems good to Him” (Berkhof 1996:5). Even though it is hard to explain that “a holy and just God extends grace to, and bestows favors upon, sinners who have forfeited everything, even when they have no share in the righteousness of Christ and prove finally impenitent,” it is clear that “those material blessings are generally or naturally shared also by unbelievers” (1996:7).

Thus, I believe that general blessings are given to the people as a seed of possibility (potential asset) as the master gives servants to put a minar to work (Luke 19:13, Cf. Matthew 20:1-16). Thus, the condition of general blessings “partially” depends on one’s sincere efforts to develop it. The reason I emphasize the word “partially” bases on the fact that the world does not wholly support harvesting what he sows. Without constant operation of the Holy Spirit, general blessings add trouble only (Proverbs 10:22). When Moses spells out the dangers involved in forgetting that God is the source of every blessing that we enjoy, he admonishes the Jews not to be proud of their power and strength that have produced wealth for them, saying “But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today” (Deuteronomy 8:18). In this sense, wealth gives them pride to ignore God, the source of all blessings.

The Bible as well as the nature proves that God gave all human beings general blessings in the forms of “a seed to be developed” that is “the ability” to produce wealth, to keep health, to make it use of success.

General blessing depends on the self-development of one’s sincere works, efforts and skills. However, researcher does not exclude that if those general blessings given as possibilities are guided by God, the source and genesis of blessing, they would please God more and then be more fruitful.

Unlike general blessings, God designates also the way to attain His [sic] special blessing. These special blessing are given on the ground of the redemptive work of the coming Redeemer. In the Adamic and Noahic covenants, God promises the Mediator between Him [sic] and people. Even in Abrahamic covenants, God promises Abraham and his descendants to give “special blessings” on the basis of their faith in the coming Redeemer. The apostle Paul also argues that “the Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: “All nations will be blessed through you” (Galatians 3:8).”

What then is a special blessing? A special blessing in terms of special grace is the blessing of the blessings (that is, general blessings). It can be defined as “all the blessings in heavenly place in Christ” (Ephesus 1:3) that is given through the restoration of relationship with God through Jesus Christ. The Psalmist declares that “Blessed are the people of whom this is true; blessed are the people whose God is the LORD” (144:15, cf. 146:5). Also, Isaiah confesses that “Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!” (Isaiah 30:18). Special blessing is God himself and the things that is related or is given off, such as eternal life, the presence of God, answers to our requests in prayer, etc.

The Comprehensive Understanding of Blessing in the Old Testament

It is “God’s nature to bless” (Wesley Duewel 1995:15). He [sic] created us to be blessed by Him [sic] (Genesis 1:28, 5:2, 9:1). God promised Adam eternal life, thriving offspring, and fruitful agriculture with the condition that Adam must not eat of the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In the Old Testament, blessing has dual dimension: spiritual and material, or heavenly and earthly dimension.

But sin brought severance from God and made human beings lost their sight of spiritual or heavenly dimension. Human beings became blinded to spiritual dimension of *bok* and considered material or earthly blessing as a whole. Ki Tae Shon (1982:2) in his Blessed Humans confirms that, “the reason everybody hungers for blessing is that the forefather of human beings lost his blessed nature endowed from God.” With the fall, this blessing is then changed into a promise and a wait for the Messiah (Gen 3.15, Isaiah 30:18) who will restore both dimensions of *bok* to the people. The following is an outline of blessing from the Old Testament in terms of its features, and its deliverers and beneficiaries.

Its Features

The Old Testament blessing has a close relationship with choice, a choice between “life and prosperity, death and destruction” (Deuteronomy 30:15). The Old Testament gives Korean Christian believers special attractions in terms of *bok*.

1. The Old Testament confirms that human needs *oh bok*. Humans have a necessity to sustain themselves as soon as they are born. Hence, people refer to wealth, in this sense, as a blessing from God. God’s blessing is manifested most obviously in human prosperity and well being; long life, wealth, peace, good harvests and children are the items that figure most

frequently in list of blessings such as Genesis 24:35-36, Leviticus 26:4-13, and Deuteronomy 28:3-15.

Christopher J. H. Wright in The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative condenses characteristics of blessing which God promised Abraham. He (2006:208-220) suggests that we see blessing in the frame of 'creational and relational', 'missional and historical', 'covenantal and ethical', and multinational and Christological' blessing. Though the Old Testament confirms longevity, health, wealth, success in life, and fertility which Koreans have traditionally sought, the Old Testament never fails to remind the Korean Christians of the truth that true blessing is in the relationship with God and His holy attributes for which human beings have pined (Ki Tae Sohn 1982:2).

Ki Tae Shon (1982:2) mentions that the Old Testament "broke down the secular concept of the Oriental to confine the blessing to material only and suggest the way to the righteous as blessing in terms of relationship with God." The Old Testament writer never forgot that "the factor that makes a blessing a blessing is the relationship between God and man" (Mitchell 1987:165). We have seen that blessing is initially and strongly connected with creation and all the good gifts that God longs for people to enjoy in His world, but at the same time these things are to be enjoyed within the context of healthy relationship with God and with others (Christopher 2006:221).

2. The Old Testament reminds us that human beings need heavenly blessing because we are doomed to die. Actually, a person may be materially blessed without necessarily knowing or acknowledging God the sources of blessing, and tragically attributes the blessings he/she has in fact received from the living Creator God to other gods (Christopher 2006:218). This means that "such experience of general blessing simply by living in God's blessed creation (along with what is often called 'common grace') is

neither itself redemptive nor guarantees eternal blessing, for it does not include 'knowing God'" (2006:219).

Because no one can escape death, one should acknowledge death and then prepare for it (Ecclesiastes 3:2, 4:2-3, 7:1-2, Job 19:29). The believers in the Old Testament lived day to day with the hope of an afterlife. The true blessing is learning how to fear of God. This refers to life after death, rather than life living in the present. The concept of blessing as defined in the Old Testament is not to twist worldly materials for selfish gain but to use them in fulfilling the will of God, to wait for the coming Messiah, and to have eternal life within the triune of God and in His [sic] Kingdom in the afterlife.

Its Deliverers and Beneficiaries

The best understanding of blessing in the Old Testament is to view blessing from the perspective of mission and covenant. Above all, covenants in the Old Testament should be interpreted in terms of mission. The foundational covenants are higher covenants than the central covenants. The foundational covenants are directly related to peoples in Genesis 10. God promised people the blessing of a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15) in the Adamic covenant and the promise of His [sic] dwelling among mortals in the Noahic covenant to people through His [sic] redemptive plan.

1. God Blessed Abraham and the Israelites to be a Multinational Blessing. In order to fulfill His [sic] promise of blessing to peoples, God had covenanted with Abraham and His [sic] descendants to bring the blessing to the nations. It was the grand central covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3). God's blessing in the covenant with Abraham is the blessing of the Gospel that should be given to all humanity through him and the Israelites. Thus, Paul affirms that God "announced the gospel in advance to Abraham"

(Christopher 2006:213) so that the Gentiles would receive the blessing of justification by faith through Abraham (Galatians 3:8).

The final purpose of God's blessing on Abraham and the Israelites is to let them share the Good News with the people, saying, "So that in your seed all the nations of the earth might be blessed (Galatians 3:8)." God blessed Abraham to be a blessing to the neighbors in terms of relational and missional purpose. God promised to make the Israelites as His [sic] treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:5-6) to be a light for the nations in the covenant in Mt. Sinai. Like Abraham, God expected them to be blessed first by accompanying with God without losing their sense of the God-given mission to be a multinational and Christological blessing to the nations (Christopher 2006:216). But they could not reach God's expectation.

2. The Nations are the Beneficiaries of Israel's Blessing. The nations are definitely beneficiaries of the blessing of God (Christopher 2006:474) according to the Adamic and Noahic covenants. In the premise that the Israelites would do their missionary works toward the nations, in God's providence 1) the nations as beneficiaries of Israel's blessing would praise and worship Israel's God (Psalm 66:3-4, 8, 68:30-32, 86:8-10, 96:7-9, 138:4-5). 2) The nation would be included in Israel's identity. The nations were predestined to be "registered in God's city, blessed with God's salvation, accepted in God's house, called by God's name, joined with God's people" (Christopher 2006:489).

However, with general failure of Israel's mission toward the nations, the nations became "witnesses of Israel's history" (2006:467) in a derogatory point of view. As the nations were portrayed as witnesses to the covenant between YHWH and Israel, "they were not just summoned to witness the

making or breaking of the covenant but to observe Israel living by it” (2006:469). The nations had tragically become witnesses of God’s judgment on Israel because of Israel’s catastrophic rebellion and apostasy of idolatry throughout the history of Israel (472).

An Evaluation of Korean Thought on *Bok* from the Light of the O.T.

Clearly there are many points of contact between Korean *bok* and Old Testament blessing. These similarities are great opportunities to preach the gospel which Koreans will relate to. In each of the three similarities we list below, however, are also opportunities to share how Old Testament blessing goes beyond *bok* - by providing an even deeper and richer understanding. Filtering Korean traditional concept of blessing with lessons from the Old Testament blessing, three major things should be applied to the Korean church in terms of preaching or teaching on the Old Testament blessing.

Points of Contact #1: Reason God Gives Material Blessing

“Why did the Lord promise these material blessings to the nation of Israel?” For one thing, an acceptable explanation is that “the nation of Israel was still in its spiritual infancy” (Wiersbe 1999:168) at the time when the Lord made covenants with Abraham and Moses. The material blessings promised are often only “symbols of more abstract benefits” (Mitchell 1987:52), such as God’s favor and peace, spiritual blessings, and the presence of God. One way to teach children is by means of rewards and punishments:

These material blessings were God’s way of reminding His children that obedience brings the blessing but disobedience brings chastening. However, it wasn’t long before thinking Israelites discovered that wicked people were also receiving blessings, so there was something more faith than just being rewarded. (See Psalms 73; Jeremiah 12:1-4; Job 21:7-15). Gradually God taught His people that their obedience

was a witness to the other nations (Deuteronomy 28:12) and brought glory to His name. Obedience also built godly character in the people so that they were indeed a holy nation and a kingdom priests (Wiersbe 1999:167-68).

Hoon Ku Lee (1991:211) gives us an insightful reason why the Old Testament blessings seem more material than abstract or spiritual blessings. He (211-12) illumines the reason from the gradual perspective of the concept of blessing in the salvation history,

When God taught Israelites 'spiritual blessings,' He used an audio-visual education method to teach it by expressing material and earthly blessings according to their receptive level. The holy blessing as result of obediences to the word of God was appeared as the conquest and expansion of Canaan in the national level and as material wealth and prosperity in individual level.

Thus, the preachers let believers know that *oh bok* (five blessings) are not essential blessing at all but relationship with God is true and essential blessing. These general blessings are a visible sign of God's favor that invites the recipient to a closer relationship with Him [sic], the fountains of all blessings, and that at the same time attracts the attention of others and make them desire God's blessings, too (Hoon Ku Lee 1991:211-212).

Points of Contact #2: Vertically and Horizontally Relational Blessing

The Old Testament explains blessing within the context of relationships. The Bible reminds us that humans should have a proper relationship with God in that human beings are not source of blessing. The general blessing is God's invitation that invites us to have the special blessing, that is, God Himself [sic]. As Proverbs 10:22 says, "the blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it." The general blessing, without having a right or proper relationship with God, becomes a source of troubles which agonizes his or her soul.

Every religion except Christianity is centered on the promise of a better place somewhere rather than on the relationship between one's faith and person. However, as Christians, our goal is to know God more deeply and to get closer to Him [sic]. When one begins pursuing something only for the improvement of one's life, then the main purpose of one's life becomes dedicated to oneself. One then begins to idolize oneself. Henceforth, even one's comfort, happiness, materials, and work can also become idols. Generally human mind becomes focused on the person, but a Christian's mind should be centered on God. With this, one can have a stronger hope (Jung Hyun Oh 2005:57).

Thus, the Korean church leaders should lead believers to have a clear biblical concept of blessing in the faith-relationship with God. Falling apart from God, even general blessing becomes an idol. To make general blessings a true blessing, one should be in the faith relationship with God. When one has a right relationship with God, general blessing is meaningful and vital power to serve others for the glory of God. For instance, the Israelites were chosen to spread God's blessing by developing personal intimacy with others, but they have failed to fulfill their task (Wright 2006;210).

Points of Contact #3: Teaching Believers "God the Ancestor of the 'ancestors'"

The roles of patriarchs who blessed their sons and grandchildren will be good examples to Korean believers. In addition, teachings examples of respects for ancestors from the Old Testament will help Koreans learn an important lesson against their Confucian culture. Many traditional Koreans believe that blessing comes from their ancestors or spirits.

In this cultural atmosphere, teaching God as the Ancestor of the 'ancestors,' by differentiating biblical concept of blessing from traditional concept of blessing will give impact and transform Korean church as well as

	Traditional Blessing	Biblical Blessing
Subject	Demons, Spirits, Ancestors	Holy Trinity
Goal	to control, to manipulate	to bless others, to be Holy unto God
Contents	partial earthly visible this-worldly individualistic selfish humane mechanic	Holistic earthly and heavenly visible and invisible this-and other-worldly individualistic and social Altruistic humane and environmental mechanic and personal
Means	Prayer Offering Manipulation	Prayer, Repentance Right worship Submission, humility, obedience
Semantic Components	to control demons to be healthy to be wealthy to be secure to be prosperous to be productive no sense of righteousness or holiness no social peace to be controlling not relational not missional not praising not exolting	God's favor to be healthy to be wealthy in righteousness to be secure to be prosperous to be productive to be righteous ad holy (Ps. 1:1) to be peaceful with community to be obedient to have right relationship with God and with neighbors (salom) to be missional (Gen. 12:1-3) praising God (human blesses God) exolting each other (human blesses human)
Locus	not national Buddhist temple Personal house (Gut) Shaman house	to be great nation God's special appointed place God's blessings are not limited by place
Others	No sense of worship No relationship with devil No repentance No morality No obedience	Proper worship Eternal relationship with God Repentance is the key Holiness Obedience
End	Hell	Heaven

Table 3: The differences between Traditional and Biblical Blessing
(Excerpted from Moses Lee 1994:197)

the Korean society. God is the origin of all blessing – The Great Ancestor. Even if one's ancestors were to bless their descendents, this authority comes from God, not from the ancestors themselves. In addition, the reasons for respecting their ancestors are different; in the Old Testament, people respected their ancestors because they were right in the eyes of God. These people did not worship their ancestors nor attach any sort of superstitions on them. Thus, our attitude towards our ancestors should not go over the level of respect and blessing portrayed in the Old Testament. This is the Biblical perspective on ancestor worship in terms of blessing.

Summary

To give a succinct summary of this long research, the Old Testament shows more this worldly blessing than the other worldly. But the Old Testament does not fail to promise humans the best blessing that can be gained in this world. It is the redemptive blessing of God. God originally promised to bring this best blessing of God to all nations of the world in the title deed of the covenant with Abraham (Wright 2006:31). Though general blessings are incomplete blessings, these blessings would make Israel lift on high for the sake of Israel's missional perspective when these can be used in the faith relationship with the Coming Redeemer.

CHAPTER 4

THE BLESSING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

As we have seen, a considerable number of similarities exist between the traditional Korean concept of blessing and the Old Testament concept of blessing. Through my studies, I have come to believe that these semblances helped found the Korean Church. However, through my research on the New Testament, I became convinced that such similarities also inhibited the development of Korean Church in Christian discipleship. The New Testament illustrates that Jesus Christ embodies fulfillment of revelations; moreover, He represents the consummation of the Old Testament blessing.

Definition and Use

Hebrew and Greek Terms

The concept of blessing found in the New Testament is analogous to the Old Testament. Two major terms εὐλογέω and μακάριος are used throughout the New Testament. The Hebrew term בָּרַךְ (ber-aw-kaw) is translated into the Greek word εὐλογέω while אֲשֶׁרֶי (ashre) is translated into μακάριος. Here I intend to examine the occurrences, meanings, and uses of the words εὐλογέω and μακάριος. I also intend to investigate these concepts in the New Testament.

The Word εὐλογέω The Hebrew בָּרַךְ (barak) and בָּרַךְ (ber-aw-kaw), which the Israelites used for blessing, are translated into the Greek word εὐλογέω and εὐλογῖα in the LXX (Kittel 1964:755). This particular word is derived from Hebrew; and, it is primarily used to describe action. It does not refer to a state or quality of being (Lennig 1979:73). While the term is used

variously according to its context, the definition is: “speak well of, praise, extol, bless, greeting, giving thanks, consecrating, blessing other men by calling down God’s power upon them” (Lenning 1979:73). The word carries diverse signification depending on the context of its usage. For example, when the word is used in reference to God, it signifies “to praise, to extol, and to eulogize.” Similar to the Old Testament, the New Testament also recognizes human’s duty to bless (εὐλογέω) God (Luke 1:64, Mark 6:41) (Kittel Vol II 1964:761). For the sake of convenience, I will cover this particular aspect in the Four Gospels and the Pauline and non-Pauline texts.

1) In the Four Gospels.

The word εὐλογέω occurs 26 times out of 68 instances. It is used diversely. For the most part, the word refers to Jesus when He imparts blessings; for example, in His miracle of loaves (Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:41, 8:7; Luke 9:6), in the Eucharistic benediction (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22), and in His blessing the disciples before His ascension (Luke 24:50, 51). There also are cases where the term is used in relation to human (Matthew 25:34; Luke 1:28, 42, 64; 6:28). It is also used with God; the word implies “to praise” in such occurrences (Luke 1:64; 2:28; 24:53). Furthermore, the word occurs in stereotyped formulas (Matthew 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 1:68; 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13) (Lenning 1979:73-75; Thuruthumaly 1981:50-52; Westermann 1978:64-101; Kittel Vol II 1964:761).

2) In General Epistles

The word εὐλογέω appears 19 times in the Non-Pauline texts. There are two instances where the word is used to mean ‘to praise’ God (James 3:9; 1 Peter 1:3; 3:9); 1 Peter 1:3 “Blessed [be] (Ευλογητος) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... (KJV). On other occasions, the word is used in relation to humans (Acts 3:25, 26, 1 Peter 3b; Hebrew 7:1, 6, 7, 11:20,

21, 12:7). For example, Hebrews 7:1 tells us that Melchizedek blessed (εὐλογήσας) Abraham (Genesis 14:19 f.). Hebrews 7:7 clearly illustrates that the lesser person is blessed by the greater (εὐλόγηκεν). The transmission of blessing from an ancestor to a descendant (Hebrews 11:20 f. cf. Genesis 27:28 f., 48:15 f.) takes place in an unshakable confidence of God's great promise to Abraham. The one who blesses imparts God's protection to the blessing. In Acts 3:25 "... He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed (ἐνευλογηθήσονται) (KJV).'" Here, the blessing is given in opposition to curse (James 3:10, 1 Peter 3:9a): James 3:10 "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing (εὐλογία) and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be (KJV)" (Lenning 1979:73-75; Thuruthumaly 1981:50-52; Westermann 1978:64-101; Kittel, Vol II 1964:761).

3) In Pauline Writings

The word εὐλογέω with various denotations occurs 31 times in Pauline writings. Thuruthumaly conducted research on Pauline's use of the word. According to him (1981:52-53):

It is used in reference to the Old Testament promise of blessing to Abraham (Galatians 3:8, 9, 14; Hebrew 6:14, 7:1, 6, 7; 11:20, 21; 12:17); for saying a blessing (1 Corinthians 14:16), for the Eucharistic blessing (1 Corinthians 10:16), in contrast to curse (1 Corinthians 4:12, Romans 12:14), for God's blessing man in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), Man's blessing God (2 Corinthians 11:31; Romans 1:25, 9:5) (Cf. Lenning 1979:73-75; Kittel, Vol II 1964:761).

The Word μακάριος. The Greek word μακάριος comes from the Hebrew word אַשְׁרֵי ('ashre) that means happiness or well being (Kittel Vol IV 1967:364). Originally, the word was found only in written texts; the word,

however, soon entered common speech.

In the Hellenistic period, this term was used to describe immortal beings (Ernest 1994:433). However, the word μακάριος started to encompass not only God but also a person “late, happy, or blessed,” with the appearance of the Septuagint (LXX). The word μακάριος makes its appearance in Genesis 30:13: “I am happy, because my daughters will call me happy! So she called his name Asher.” It is the first biblical beatitude.

The word can also be found in the ancient texts; many ancient thinkers used the word to express their opinions on happiness. Homer identified it with “wealth, that is, possession of the good things of life, which implies a good wife and children.” Euripides thought it to be “power and a life of pleasure.” Stobaeus called it “fame or glory,” while Plato defined it as “freedom from trouble or misery.” Others defined it in terms of being “able to live in joy without suffering any disfavor of fate,” or more simply “happiness for mortals.” Aristotle also defined it following Xenocrates' tradition as “one whose soul is virtuous” (Ernest 1994:436-37).

It is also important to know that the word μακάριος is almost uniformly translated as blessing (Becker 1986:216). For instance, it is written that “Blessed are the spiritually poor; for the kingdom of heaven is theirs (Matthew 5:3).” Thus, as a consequence of association of both the Hebrew אֲשֵׁרִי (ashre) and the Greek μακάριος (makarios) meanings, calling someone ‘ashre and makarios, makes it a religious statement. It is an assertion about a person’s happy state in respecting God (Hamm 1990:9).

In the New Testament, the adjective μακάριος (blessed, fortunate, happy) occurs 50 times in the context of pronouncing someone or something

blessed.²⁵ The verb μακαρίζω (call or consider blessed) occurs only twice (Luke 1:48, James 5:11) and the noun μακαρισμός (blessing) only three times in Galatians 4:15, for the blessedness of receiving the message of salvation, and twice in Romans 4:6, 9 with reference to the remission of sins. The verb μακάριζειν, which occurs twice in the NT, is used in Luke 1:48 and 11:27 to depict the blessing of the mother of the Messiah by all generations. In the synoptic Gospels and the Revelation, Jesus is often portrayed using the word μακάριος in His eschatological preaching. He refers to it in the third person: "Blessed are ~" (Μακάριοι οἱ) in the New Testament beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) and in His teachings (Matthew 11:16, 13:16, 16:17, Luke 6:20-22, 10:23, 14:14-15, John 13:17, 20:29) (Becker 1986:217).

Its Uses in the Korean Bible

It is paramount to understand the meanings and uses of these Hebrew and Greek terms to see how they were translated into Korean.

Haengbok (幸福, Happiness). The Korean word *haengbok* (happiness) appears twice (Romans 4: 6, 9) in the New Testament. It was translated from the Greek word *makarismos* (blessing) in the formula "makarios hos (tis) ... happy is he who..." (U. Becker 1986:215-217).

Chookbok (祝福 Invoking the blessing). The Korean word *chookbok* appears 16 times in the New Testament. Regardless of its use as either verb or noun, it describes invoking God's blessing. The Greek word εὐλογέω and its various changes are used for *chookbok*. The following shows how suffix of the word *chookbok* changes:

chookbokul Romans 15:29, Hebrews 12:17; chookbokeu 1

²⁵ In the New Testament, the adj. μακάριος appears 50 times (13 times in Matthew, 15 in Luke, 2 in John, 7 in Pauline, 2 in 1 Peter, 2 in James, and 7 in Revelation. (Becker 1986:216)

Corinthians 10:16; chookbokhaneunba 1 Corinthians 10:16;
 chookbokhago Hebrews 11:21, chookbokhara Romans 12:14;
 chookbokhamyu Luke 6:28; chookbokhasigo Matthew 26:26, Mark
 8:7, 14:22; chookbokhasinira Mark 10:16; chookbokhasideoni Luke
 24:50; chookbokhasil Luke 24:51; chookbokhayuteumyu Hebrews
 11:20; chookbokhal 1 Corinthians 14:16

Bok (福 Blessing). The Korean word 'bok' appears 68 times in the New Testament. The two Greek words are translated into the Korean word 'bok.' In all, the word εὐλογέω variants are used 52 times, and the word μακάριος is used 16 times by Jesus in the New Testament beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) and other teachings (Matthew 11:16, 13:16, 16:17, Luke 6:20-22, 10:23, 14:14-15, John 13:17, 20:29). It's significant that the Beatitudes in Matthew are in the form of the third person, while those of Luke are in the second person (Ernest 1994:437). The following shows the suffix of 'bok':

bok Matthew 25:34, Acts 3:26, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Peter 3:14, 4:14;
 bokdeda James 5:11; bokdedoda Luke 14:15, John 20:29;
 bokdesigo 1 Timothy 6:15; bokdesin 1 Timothy 1:11; bokbilmeul
 Hebrews 7:7; boksreoun 1 Timothy 2:13; boki Matthew 5:3, 4, 5,
 6, 7, 5:8, 9, 10, 11, 11:6, 13:16, 16:17, 24:46, Luke 1:42, 45, 48,
 6:20, 21, 22, 7:23, 10:23, 11:27, 28, 12:37, 38, 43, 14:14, 23:29,
 John 13:17, Acts 20:35, Romans 4:7, 8, 14:22, 1 Corinthians 7:40,
 Galatians 3:14, 4:15, James 1:12, Revelation 1:3, 14:13, 16:15,
 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14; bokeuro Ephesians 1:3; bokjoomyu
 Hebrews 6:14; bokjoogo Hebrews 6:14

Bokum (福音, the Gospel). It is also necessary to focus on the word "bokum" (gospel) that derives from the Greek term εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) "εὖ" (good) + "αγγέλιον" (herald, tiding, good news). Even though there are many near equivalents of "εὖ", like "sun" (선 善), "ho" (호 好) and "yang" (양

俚), the Korean church leaders chose to translate the Greek term "εὖ" as *bok* (福 Blessing) (Moses Lee 1994:4). In the Korean translation of the New Testament, the word "*bok*" occurs 113 times.

When Koreans hear the word "*bok um*" (gospel), they naturally associate it with their traditional concept of blessing, namely, material blessing and success in life. Moses Lee (1994:4) criticized such translation, he writes that "*bok um*" is "not a proper contextual translation; it is, rather, a syncretized (shamanized) one." The researcher points out that this was an innocent attempt to effectively reach Koreans. At the same time, such attempt restricted the transformation necessary from the traditional Korean concept of blessing into a Biblical one.

bokum Acts 20:24, Romans 1:9, 15, 1 Corinthians 9:14, Galatians 1:6, 8, 2:7, Ephesians 4:11, Colossians 1:5, 1 Thessalonians 2:4, Hebrews 4:2, 6; *bokumkwa* Romans 16:25, 2 Timothy 1:8, 2 Timothy 2:8, Revelation 10:7; *bokume* Romans 2:16, 1 Corinthians 9:12, 23, Philippians 1:27, 4:3; *bokumeuro* Romans 11:28, 16:26, 1 Corinthians 9:14, 18, 2 Corinthians 10:14, Ephesians 3:6, 2 Thessalonians 2:14; *bokumeun* Romans 1:2, 16, Galatians 1:7, Colossians 1:23; *bokumeul* Matthew 4:23, 9:35, Mark 1:14, 15, 8:35, 10:29, 16:15, Luke 4:18, 43, 8:1, 9:6, 20:1, Acts 8:25, 35, 40, 10:36, 14:7, 15, 21, 16:10, Romans 1:1, 16, 10:16, 15:19, 20, 1 Corinthians 1:17, 9:16, 18, 23, 15:1, 2 Corinthians 2:12, 9:13, 10:16, 11:4, 7, Galatians 1:7, 8, 9, 2:2, 3:8, 4:13, Ephesians 1:13, 3:7, Philippians 1:7, 16, 2:22, 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 9, 2 Thessalonians 1:8, 1 Timothy 1:11, 2 Timothy 1:11, 2:9, Philemon 1:13, 1 Peter 1:12, 1 Peter 4:17, Revelation 14:6; *bokumeu* Mark 1:1, Acts 8:4, 15:7, Romans 15:16, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Galatians 2:5, 14, Ephesians 6:15, 19, Philippians 1:12, 27, 4:15, Colossians 1:23, 1 Thessalonians 3:2; *bokumi* Matthew 11:5, 24:14, 26:13, Mark 13:10, 14:9, Luke 7:22, 16:16, 2 Corinthians 4:3, Galatians 1:11, Colossians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 1:5, 1 Peter 1:25, 1 Peter 4:6.

The Dynamic Understanding of the Blessing in the New Testament

Despite the fact that the New Testament largely inherits the Old Testament concept of blessing, sharp distinction exists in the concept, content, function, and condition of the blessings.

The Source of Blessing

In this section, the researcher will explore the questions, “Who receives the blessing?” and “Who bestows the blessing?” There are significant reasons as to why these questions are being discussed before other questions. It is purposely done so that a clear, albeit general, understanding of blessing is provided. Usage variations of blessing in the New Testament investigated by Westerman (1978:69) and Thuruthumaly (1981:53) follows:

	Subject	Object
I	God	Human
II	Christ	Human
III	Human	Human
IV	Human	God

Table 4: The Subject and Object of the Blessing

God as the Source and Giver of Blessing Heading I illustrates that God is depicted as the giver of blessing sixteen times in the nine New Testament passages.²⁶ These nine passages include: Matthew 25:34; Acts 3:25-26; Romans 15:29; Galatians 3:8-9, 14; Hebrews 6:7-8, 14; 12:17; Ephesians 1:3; and 1 Peter 3:9. They reveal God as the subject of blessing and indicate that there are two different channels of blessing. Lenning

²⁶ Lenning mentions “eight passages” (1979:76) in this category, while Westermann argues that there are “nine passages.” (1978:75) When I thoroughly investigated them in both the Greek and the English version, I have found that there are 16 occurrences in nine passages.

classifies these two different channels of blessing as patriarchal and Christological blessing. He (1979:79-80) uses the title “the patriarchal blessing” when he emphasizes the word “promise” rather than “blessing,” and employs the title “the Christological blessing” when he stresses “realization of the promised blessing” through Jesus Christ.

1) Patriarchal Blessing

The passages in this group include those found in Matthew 25:34, Hebrews 6:7-8, 12-15 and 1 Peter 3:9. Common theme in these passages is “inheriting the blessing given by God.” The phrase “inherit the blessing” denotes that one “is bequeathed blessing from” someone. Lenning (1979:77) categorizes such blessings as ‘patriarchal blessing.’

Abraham and his descendants were chosen as agents to bless others in the Abrahamic covenant. In the covenantal perspective, Abraham remains the center of blessing. Thus, the New Testament writers like Paul and the author of Hebrews, actively testify that God's blessing will be inherited by people who believe in Jesus Christ for Jesus Christ was born into Abrahamic line. It is through the Abrahamic covenant that the church inherited the ultimate blessing (Westermann 1978:75; Lenning 1979:77).

2) Christological Blessing

The passages in this category come from Acts 3:25-26, Galatians 3:8-9, 14, and Ephesians 1:3. These passages accentuate the fulfillment of the promise in Christ as opposed to the promise of blessing given to Abraham. Acts 3:25-26 and Galatians 3:8-9, 14 declare that the promise to Abraham is completed in Christ. In these verses, blessing becomes synonymous with “God’s saving act in Christ” (Lenning 1979:79). Furthermore, Ephesians 1:3 illustrates that the believer inherits God's ultimate blessing in Christ. Paul concludes that God's work of salvation in Christ is his crowning blessing. In

this sense, “blessing is thus understood entirely in Christological or soteriological term” (Westernman 1978:79).

Jesus as the Source and Giver of Blessing Heading II shows Jesus as the subject of blessing. It should be noted that Jesus, above all, blessed children (Mark 10:16). Mark, the earliest Gospel writer, uses the specific word “bless,” while Matthew describes the same incident as “lay his hands on them and pray” (19:13), and Luke wrote that “he should touch them” (18:15) (Lenning 1979:80).

Jesus also blessed meals. When Jesus uttered this word to give thanks for the miraculously feeding of 5000 people (Matthew 14:19; Mark 6:41, Luke 9:16) and the 4000 people (Mark 8:7), the word signifies the initiatory part of a miraculous event. Moreover, Jesus blessed the bread and wine at the last supper (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22-23) and the post-resurrection meal with the two men in Emmaus (Luke 24:30). Matthew 14:19 writes that ..., he gave thanks (εὐλόγησεν) and broke the loaves.... Through His blessings, his followers realize not only the “eternal significance of redemption” (Lenning 1979:82) in relation to the two elements with His death, but their eyes also become spiritually open and their hearts burn (Luke 24:31-32, 45) (Westermann 1978:83, 99).

Jesus also blessed His disciples before his ascension (Luke 24:50-51). His “final action in the public life was an act of blessing. As Acts 1 reveals the important relationship between Jesus' farewell blessing and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, His blessing is realized in the lives of believers upon the coming with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost” (Lenning 1979:82).

People As Blessers Heading III illustrates the giving and receiving of blessing between people. There are two different types of “blessers”: While there are people that bless others in traditional Judaistic ways, there are the

disciples of Christ that “bless those who prosecute [them]” (Lenning 1979:83).

1) Blessing others in the Judaistic Tradition

There are numerous instances in the New Testament that depict the Judaistic tradition of blessing others. It is in this tradition that Elizabeth blessed Mary (Luke 1:42); Simon blessed Joseph and Mary in light of the rite of circumcision of Jesus (Luke 2:22-38); Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau; and Jacob blessed his sons (Hebrew 11:20-21). While some scholars classify Melchizedek's blessing of Abraham (Hebrew 7:1,6-7) under Heading II because Melchizedek is considered a proto-type of Jesus who became a high priest forever (Hebrews 5:6, 10, 11; 6:20; 7:20; cf. Psalms 110:4), I choose to place Melchizedek's blessing under the Heading III as well.

2) Blessing one's Persecutors

This group includes the case where a human blesses those that persecute and curse them (Luke 6:27-28; Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 4:12-13a; 1 Peter 3:9). In all these passages, the responsibility and the act of blessing are contrasted with curses and other evil acts. For example, Luke 6:28 says, “... bless (εὐλογεῖτε) those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” Jesus' emphasis on this novelty of blessing indicates that He desires to “eradicate cursing in the life of the church and in the kingdom of God” (Lenning 1979:85).

People as blessers of God Heading IV illustrates human blessing God. The most frequent instances (40 passages) are the doxologies wherein God is the object of blessing. In such cases, blessing signifies “to praise” (Luke 1:64; Galatians 3:8, 9; 1 Corinthians 4:12, 10:16, 14:16; 2 Corinthians 1:3, 11:13; Romans 1:25, 9:5, 12:14). Luke 1:64 says, “And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue [loosed], and he spake, and

praised God (εὐλογῶν τὸν θεόν)” (KJV) (Westerman 1978:69, 98; Thuruthumaly 1981:53; Lenning 1979:83).

The Concept of Blessing

The primitive Church understood Christ Jesus as the center of the Gospel, faith, and the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). This transformation brings forth a “decidedly new formulation” (1978:66) to the Christian community, in which the word “blessing” characterizes God’s grace in granting us salvation through Christ. Grounded on the momentum of the inter-testamental period, the Old Testament concept of blessing underwent a dramatic transformation that is centered on Christ’s life and His redemptive work.

With the understanding of Christ as the fulfillment of the revelation and the promise of blessing in the Old Testament (Hebrew 1:1), the Old Testament “concept of blessing not only began to decrease in frequency of occurrence, but it also began to lose the material connotation associated with it in the Old Testament”²⁷ (Lenning 1979:70-71). Concurrently, the arrival of the coming Messiah “shapes and refines” the major concept of blessing in the Old Testament: The hitherto dominant emphasis on the ‘fundamental significance’ of blessing was uprooted from its material connotation to a spiritual connotation (Lenning 1979:70). Likewise, the nation of Israel was deemphasized to encompass all generations (Thuruthumaly 1981:37), and the weak futurist form gave into a strong eschatological form (Thuruthumaly 1981:37). Westermann, Thuruthumaly, and Lenning investigate how such

²⁷ The occurrence of *brk* appear 426 times in the whole of the Old Testament (Thuruthumaly 1981:17), although the occurrence of *eulogein* with its derivatives made it occur only 68 times in the New Testament (1981:49). Most occurrences in the Old Testament were used to denote ‘fruitfulness’, ‘abundance’ and ‘riches,’ but only few cases demonstrate this in the New Testament.

decisive changes occur in the New Testament through their studies on the concept of blessing.

First, “the Old Testament concept of blessing is basically altered” as it is demonstrated in Galatians 3:8-9, Acts 3:25-26, and Ephesians 1:3 (Westermann 1978:99). These verses testify that blessing signifies God’s gift of salvation through Christ or justification by salvation. Here, the God of Israel is Himself [sic] the blessing given through Christ, and Christ Himself is the one who blesses; God’s entire bestowal of blessing becomes connected with His work in Christ (Westermann 1978:66). As seen in the aforementioned verses, the concept of blessing has Christological or soteriological meaning. For example, relating Galatians 3 and Acts 3 to Genesis 12:1-3, New Testament writers incorporate the previously unhistorical concept of blessing into the history of God’s activity with his people (Westermann 1978:99).

Second, as seen in Romans 15:29, the novel expression - “the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ,” indicates a new usage of the concept of blessing in the Christian community. Westermann (1978:99) asserts that blessing is spoken “in reference to the fact that proclamation of the gospel brings about the growth, prosperity, and strengthening of the community.”

Third, the exhortation of blessing those who curse you illustrate another significant change (Matthew 5:43-44, Luke 6:28, Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 4:12; 1 Peter 3:9). As Jesus urged his disciples to “love your enemies, bless them (εὐλογεῖτε) that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you,” the early Christians leaders subverted the old concept of “Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy” and Christianized it (Westermann 1978:99).

Concerted in the love of Christ, “the church of Christ and the individual Christians no longer need to curse anyone, because the work of Christ was on behalf of their enemies as well” (Lenning 1979:85).

Although the New Testament underwent a fundamental transformation, the concept of blessing remained rooted in the Old Testament. Westermann (1978:100) epitomizes the retention of the traditional concept as following:

(1) In the blessing bestowed by Jesus, which unite the procedures of blessing and their interpretation from the Old Testament with the specific work of Jesus. (2) In the blessing bestowed by the disciples, which was a part of their commission, along with proclamation; (3) In the blessing of Christ, which is effective in strengthening the churches and making them grow; (4) In the description of the consummation of salvation as the inheriting of blessing.

It is significant that alongside the transformation in the concept of blessing, or, the Christianization of blessing through Christ’s teachings, the Old Testament concept of blessing “could continue and ha[ve] its own place even in the writing of the New Testament” (Westermann 1978:66) in terms of its maturity and development. For instance, while the greeting of blessing was merely a formality in the Old Testament and the Jewish community, the Christian community was able to transform it into an enthralling and impressive greeting of blessing. Westermann (1978:100) describes,

When the disciples are commissioned (Matthew 10; Luke 10), they are sent out not merely with the message of the coming of the kingdom but also with the powerful greeting of blessing, and this corresponds to the twofold division of the mission as preaching and healing. Blessing takes on meaning where as the message touches the existence of those who are settled in their houses, villages, and cities. The greeting of blessing in the New Testament letters belongs in the same context.

In conclusion, the traditional Old Testament concept of blessing was

baptized and revitalized by the Redemptive event of Christ. He restored the full meaning of blessing in Him. Lenning (1979:69) emphasizes,

God, in bringing salvation, did not just deliver His people only from slavery and sin; he also delivered them to a new life, a new state of being that was designed for growth, prosperity, enrichment, and maturity. This aspect of salvation is called blessing. Blessing is God's 'wholistic, continuing, ongoing, regular relationship with his people.

The Content of Blessing

There are two major divisions in God's blessings: the former is a special blessing, the latter, a general blessing. The special blessings are not of this world, but of the Kingdom of God. These special blessing are expressively bestowed on believers so that they may contribute to the expansion of the Kingdom of God. At the same time, general blessings are also intimately joined with the maintenance of human existence. Thus, when one knows that God is the source of all blessings including special blessings, and uses blessings one receives for God's resolved purposes, these blessings become real not only to him but also to others.

The general blessing retains stronger continuity than the special blessing in the New Testament. Christological emphasis sharply transforms meaning and the content of the blessing in the Old Testament; it is no longer materialistic, but kingdom-oriented (Lenning 1979:86).

Blessings in the General Grace of God. What is general blessing? The term 'general blessing' can be defined as blessing God bestows in the frame of the Adamic and Noahic covenants. Whether these blessing are believed to be real or not, these blessing are given to people as a possibility (potential asset). The self-development of the blessing as a possibility is

crucial. There are general blessing that are given before and after the fall of Adam and Eve.

1. Blessings that were given before the fall in God's general grace

Much of the Old Testament understanding of blessing is revealed in the lives of many New Testament characters. As found in the Old Testament concept of blessing, fertility, growth, maturity and peace remain key aspects in the New Testament as well. The blessing of marriage testifies to this analogy. As Jesus mentioned in Mark 10:4, blessing of marriage is institutionalized by God. God officiated Adam and Eve to become one flesh and blessed them to have children and to walk together in their journey to heaven (Genesis 2:18-25, Hebrew 13:4, Ephesians 5:22-23, 27).

It has been sufficiently demonstrated that fertility was a major aspect of blessing in the Old Testament. God's command to humanity was to be fruitful and to multiply (Genesis 1:28, 9:1). However, there are few people in this world that did not receive this blessing of fertility for known or unknown reasons; people who are in need of God's special intervention. As God blessed Sarah with a child when she was barren, (Genesis 21:1-2), so God may also restore fertility to those who are deprived of it. The New Testament illustrates people who earnestly seek God's special intervention for their barrenness. Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah, was unable to bear children until God blessed her with fertility in old age (Luke 1:25). Mary, the mother of Christ, was invited to participate in God's blessing of fertility in the context of salvation (Matthew 1:18).

In addition to fertility, one finds several references where God blesses people with growth and maturity (Lenning 1979:87). It is said of John the Baptist that he as a "child grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the

wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel" (Luke 1:80, cf. 2:40).

When parents come to know why God bestows the blessing of growth and maturity, they would uphold their responsibility of raising their children as godly people.

There are also several illustrations where God blesses people with the gift of leadership. God blessed Adam and Eve to rule over the nature. He [sic] told them to "rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28 NIV). This blessing calls attention to the blessing of leadership God accords to His people. When I employ the term "leadership," I mean it as an inclusive term. Leadership serves to restore the state of shalom by placing all things to where it respectfully belongs. In this sense, the blessing of leadership results in a deeper, all encompassing shalom, corresponding with the Greek word, *eirene* (peace). True leadership works toward attaining peace with God, conciliating relationships, committing to the Kingdom of God, and creating unity and harmony (Lenning 1979:88).

However, since the fall, history was deprived of a worthy leader that embodied this Biblical leadership. It was Jesus who finally came and became the emblem of the servant leadership. In God, we are blessed to affirm God's will, not our will, to be done in the radius of our lives, as it is in heaven.

2. Blessings given after the Fall in God's general grace

After the fall, human was torn away from God, the source and the beginning of all of life's blessings. Sin dissevered the relationship between God and human; with that, people lost their special blessings and were reduced to a state of despondency where they constantly sought blessings. The privation of a relationship with God brought forth a distortion in the

concept of general blessings, especially in its purpose and usage. This total distortion gave birth to the so-called *Kibok Sinang* (Shamanistic beliefs in material blessing) in the heart of people; they “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles” (Romans 1:23).

However, God still bestows His [sic] blessings upon fallen people. The bestowals of blessings illustrate God’s prevenient grace. His [sic] grace draws sinners and functions as a cord that binds them to His [sic] love. These blessings are, above all, a promise of the coming Messiah. When men lost eternal life and became slaves of death, God promised them a Redeemer (Genesis 3:15, Romans 5:6, 8, 10). God turns His [sic] promise into a “realized” blessing whenever one accepts the Redeemer as Savior and Lord. God also bestowed the blessing of sustentation. He [sic] accorded this blessing to Adam and Eve so that they could preserve life (Genesis 3:16, Ephesians 6:1-3, 1 Timothy 5:8). Furthermore, God also brought the blessing of harvest for the laborers (Genesis 3:17-19, Deuteronomy 28:12). He [sic] promised that he would preserve the results of toil. Thus, if one were to work diligently, he would have bread to eat for all the days of his life.

Spiritual Blessing in God's Special Grace. Some scholars, after studying the contents of the New Testament blessing, conclude that there is uniformity in both the Old Testament and the New Testament blessing. At the same time, while the similarities are apparent in the general blessing given by God’s grace, the notion of special blessing indicates a distinction.

What is blessing, then, “in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ”? (Ephesians 1:3). As mentioned in the first chapter, the term “special blessing” defines the blessing given through Jesus Christ within the tradition of the Abrahamic covenants, while “general blessing” signifies

blessings given as possibilities, following the structure of Adamic and Noahic covenants. Through Christ, God grants “all blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesus 1:3). He [sic] blesses people with eternal life, His [sic] presence, the restoration of human relationships, answers to our prayer requests, etc. All these blessings are granted to us by God through Jesus Christ. In the following section, I will arrange the content of blessing according to the subject.

1. Spiritual Blessings in Pre-creation

God concedes heavenly blessings to one who believes and abides in Him [sic]. These spiritual blessings were predestined to be accorded even before God created the world. It is important to question the specific content of blessing Apostle Paul had in mind when he touched on the concept of spiritual blessing. Eschatologically, all spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms are sent down to the earthly world for the believers to utilize it for God's glory and the advancement of the Gospel.

Above all, it is only in Christ that believers receive blessings to inherit the Kingdom of God. When Jesus blessed children, he asserted, “Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3, c.f. Matthew 19:14). Lenning attributes “humility and unquestioning faith” (1979:90) for the distinct characteristics of children and asserts that adults inherit the Kingdom of God by receiving God's rule and Lordship (1979:90). Apostle Paul enjoyed the status of citizenship in the Kingdom of God (Philippians 3:20; 2 Corinthians 5:8). Although Paul was a citizen of Rome, he lived his life as a heavenly citizen filled with hope for the coming Kingdom of God.

The blessing (gifts) of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual gifts also comprise God's heavenly blessings. These gifts do not imply a merely

temporary reception of the Holy Spirit but symbolizes the permanent residence of the Spirit in human (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:9). Furthermore, “the blessing of the Spirit is the very purpose of redemption and the realization of the salvation;” (Thuruthumaly 1981:115) because, if one does not secure the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ (Romans 7:8, 9). The Spirit strengthens the believers to overcome the sufferings of the sinful world, and inspires the believers to live their lives for the advancing Kingdom of God (Hebrew 6:4; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4; Acts 7:55-60).

The spiritual blessing is that of transcending our material bodies in Spirit through rapture or the resurrection of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Prior to the creation, the Lord planned for the blessed ones a resurrection, more specifically, the transmigration of the soul from the present material body into a celestial, resurrected body.

Before the creation, God ordains the aforementioned special blessings for His [sic] children who were chosen in Christ. God calls people to bless (1 Peter 3:9) and to renew them so that they can inherit His [sic] Kingdom (1 Thessalonians 4:3, 7, 1 Peter 1:15-16). Of all these heavenly blessings, the utmost blessing is His [sic] eternal abiding (1 Timothy 6:12; Rome 11:29; 1 Peter 5:10, Ephesians 4:1). The best blessing which God endowed humans is “the outpouring of God’s spirit upon a person, group, or area. That is one of God’s greatest ways to bless” (Wesley Duewel 1995:15).

2. Special blessings given after Creation but prior to the fall

God blessed Adam and Eve with a life in paradise. He [sic] also allowed them to eat the fruit of Tree of Life. These favors were special blessings that Lord gave after the creation but before the fall of Adam and Eve. Initially, God blessed the earliest humans to live in the Garden of Eden

(Genesis 2:8, Isaiah 51:3, Acts 3:19). Eden means “pleasure,” “delightfulness,” and “joyfulness.” Therefore, repentance signifies returning to one’s state before the fall, or, recapturing the blessing of joyfulness and delightfulness of Eden. God also blesses with the fruit from the Tree of Life (Genesis 2:15-17, 3:19; 2 Thessalonians 3:10, Ecclesiastes 3:13). The fruit from the Tree of Life will be given to all those who belong to God’s Kingdom.

3. Special blessings given before one acquires faith in Christ

God promises and actually bestows special blessings. Another example of such blessings is the blessing of Immanuel. The blessing of Immanuel is bestowed even before one accepts Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior (Isaiah 41:10). Most importantly, God grants special blessings of companionship to even the worst of sinners (Matthew 1:23, 11:28, Luke 5:32, John 8:1-11, Rome 8:32). Jesus, in His time, was called “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matthew 11:19, Luke 7:34). Furthermore, God promises that he will always stay with us; he will remain by our side to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20). Lastly, God blesses us with the gift of enjoying His [sic] presence for eternity in the afterlife. All these special blessings are preconceived by God even before Christ's birth.

4. Special blessings that come after one accepts Jesus

After one believes in Jesus, God blesses him or her with special blessings. God blesses by providing Jesus, our sole object of faith (Acts 4:12, 16:31, Matthew 1:21). God specifically made Adam the father of all nations so that all of humanity could be blessed through Jesus Christ, the second Adam (Act 17:26).

God blesses by forgiving one's sins. In accordance with the riches of His [sic] grace, He [sic] bestows salvation (Ephesians 1:7, 2:1). How did Jesus bless or redeem us from the curse of the Law? As Paul cites from

Deuteronomy 21:23, "Cursed be everyone who hangs on a tree," Jesus became the curse by hanging His body on the cross (Thuruthumaly 1981:118-19). In doing so, He completely satisfied the law's claim and fulfilled the blessing of Abraham so that even the Gentiles may receive salvation through faith in Him (Thuruthumaly 1981:120).

God grants a blessing of the Holy Spirit. His [sic] love demands that He [sic] gives His [sic] children the best gift, the Holy Spirit (Matthew 7:11, Luke 11:13). In the Old Testament, "the promise of the Spirit, as the promise of blessing to Abraham (Galatians 4:6) was intimately connected with the outpouring of the Spirit of God in the messianic time as foretold by the prophets" (Thuruthumaly 1981:121). In this sense, receiving the Spirit indicates a direct participation in realizing God's promise of blessing to Abraham (Acts 2:23, Ephesians 1:13). The function of the Holy Spirit becomes a blessing in many ways: 1) it teaches all things, 2) it calls attention to all the things Jesus said (John 14:26), 3) it acts as a guide for the truth, and 4) it emphasizes what is yet to come (John 16:13). I firmly believe that if the Korean church is sensitively led by the Holy Spirit in its four holy functions, newly converted Christians would not wander from the house of God to divination houses.

The Holy Spirit blesses God's children by empowering them with spiritual gifts (Lenning 1979:92, 94). Apostle Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as only a part of the blessing in two related passages. In Romans 15:29, Apostle Paul promises "the full measure of the blessing of Christ" to the Roman church. Paul says that he would impart "some spiritual gift" to invigorate the church in Roman 1:11. In Galatians 3:14, Paul writes, "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the

Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit" (Romans 15:29, Galatians 3:1-14).

God promises the following special blessings to all who acquire eternal life through Christ Jesus (1 John 2:25): He promises peace (Mark 5:34, Luke 7:50, John 14:27), His [sic] eternal encouragement (2 Thessalonians 2:16), salvation (Hebrew 5:9), forgiveness of sins (Hebrew 9:12), walking in the Holy Spirit, eternal inheritance (Hebrew 9:15), Christian perfection (Hebrew 10:14), glory (1 Peter 5:10), Kingdom of God (2 Peter 1:11), and eternal life (1 John 2:25).

5. Special blessings that utilize blessings given through God's general grace

God's will becomes visible when one grows in Him [sic]. Spiritually, faith is an eye-opening experience. When one acquires faith, one has an eye-opening experience of seeing Jesus Christ as the Savior and the Lord. It is also through faith that one follows the way of the Lord. Such eye-opening experiences provide wisdom and knowledge so that one may utilize the blessings given in His general grace to God's absolute will. In fact, many people, whether they are Christians or not, waste God-given blessings due to their sinful desires. Mature believers, however, become God's channels of blessing. They bless others through their own blessings. They please God through such selfless commitments.

The Condition of Blessing

The ultimate condition of blessing is to have faith in God as the fountain of all blessings. God works through Christ Jesus; all blessings flow out of Christ and reaches people through Christ. It is significant that the New Testament portrays faith in Christ as the conditions of blessing because "the Old Testament does not speak of faith in connection with the blessings God bestows" (Westermann 1978:11). An example drawn from the

Beatitudes follows.

It is written, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3). The New Testament lists numerous conditions of blessing: the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3), those who mourn (Matthew 5:4), the meek (Matthew 5:5), those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6), the merciful (Matthew 5:7), the pure in heart (Matthew 5:8), the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), those who are persecuted for righteousness (Matthew 5:10, 1 Peter 3:14), those who hear the word of God and obey it (Luke 11:28, John 13:17, James 1:25; Revelation 1:3; 22:7), those who have not seen and yet have believed (John 20:29), the faithful and wise servant (Matthew 24:45-46), those that inherit the kingdom (Matthew 24:34; Luke 14:15; Revelation 19:9, 20:6), those that persevere in trial (James 1:12, 5:1), those whose transgressions are forgiven and whose sins are covered (Romans 4:7-8), those that help the works of God (Galatians 4:15), those that give than receive (Acts 20:35), the dead who die in the Lord (Revelation 14:13), those that stay awake and keeps their clothes with him (Revelation 16:15), those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9), those that have a part in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6), and those that wash their robes (Revelation 22:14).

All the aforementioned conditions found in the New Testament are directly linked to the receiving of special blessings in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3). It is fallacious to suppose that blessings are automatically granted when one fulfills all the foregoing conditions. These conditions exist as spiritual guidelines to draw believers closer to the Lord.

The Bible certainly reveals that wonderful blessings are in store for those who truly reside in Jesus Christ. Those that believe in Him and make consistent efforts to abide in Him are predestined to receive all spiritual

blessings of the heavenly realm in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). That is, they receive the blessings of: being chosen (Ephesians 1:4), being called to a holy life (1 Timothy 1:9), being justified freely by His grace through redemption (Romans 3:24), being free from the law of sin and death (Rome 8:1-2), being alive to God (Romans 6:11), being filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:17, Acts 5:24), being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ephesians 1:13), being a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), being a son of God (Galatians 3:26), being very bold (Philemon 1:8), having a refreshed heart (Philemon 1:20), crucifying sinful nature with all its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24), forgiving each other (Ephesians 4:32), boasting in the Lord only (Philippians 1:26), being equipped for all good work (2 Timothy 3:16), becoming imitators of God's church through suffering (1 Thessalonians 2:14), being perfect in Christ (Colossians 1:28), and obtaining salvation with eternal glory (2 Timothy 2:10).

The Communication of Blessing

In the Old Testament, the communication of blessing between God and His [sic] people was limited both verbally and non-verbally. However, the incarnation of Jesus brought forth revolutionary changes in the hitherto restricted communication of blessing. Similar to the communicating method of the Old Testament, the New Testament blessing is communicated through sacred acts, as well as the spoken and written words. Although these actions and words do not specifically involve blessing words, they communicate blessing. Lenning and Westermann investigate this issue.

Spoken Words In the New Testament, there are four major classifications of verbal blessings: salutations, benedictions, beatitudes, and doxologies. (1) Salutations-Lenning categorizes salutations into two groups: "personal encounter greetings" found in the Gospels and Acts, and "written epistolary greetings in the letters of Paul and the other writers" (1979:96).

Lenning argues that salutations, such as “shalom,” “go in peace” (Mark 5:35), “peace be with you” (εἰρενὲς ἡμεῖν), and “hail” (καίρε) (Matthew 27:29), usually express a wish for blessing, health, and peace (1979:97). The letters however, usually start with an initial greeting of “grace to you and peace,” and conclude with “a wish and prayer for the blessing of grace” (Lenning 1979:98) in reference to the name of God and Jesus Christ, the sources of all blessings.

(2) Benedictions- Benediction is “the official pronouncement of the Lord’s name and blessing upon those who have appeared before him in worship” (Lenning 1979:99). Benediction carries not only the assurance of blessing, but also the worship setting that becomes a means to blessing. Lenning differs homiletic benediction (Hebrews 13:20, 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13, 5:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, 3:5, 3:16; Romans 15:5-6, 13) from the apostolic benediction (2 Corinthians 13:14) (1979:99). Benedictions function as “a channel of the impartation of God’s blessings on the hearers and readers of the word of God” and illustrate the “intent and content of God’s rich blessing in his people.” (Lenning 1979:100-01)

(3) Beatitudes - An in-depth study on this issue will follow later.

(4) Doxologies - The doxology is one of the most common modes for communicating blessing in the New Testament. It is a response to the revelation of God’s love and the blessing of eternal redemption in Christ. (Lenning 1979:107). Doxologies are found in Luke 1:68-79, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Ephesians 1:3, 1 Peter 1:3, Romans 1:25, 9:5, 2 Corinthians 11:31 in the form of eulogy, Romans 16:25; 2 Timothy 4:18; Hebrews 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:7; and 2 Peter 3:13 in the form of an ascription to praise God (Lenning 1979:105-06). Doxologies certainly are avenues and channels of blessing.

Sacred Acts The New Testament also emphasizes that blessings are

communicated through actions. The laying of hands and anointments are often used to express blessings in the New Testament (Lenning 1979:107-08). The only exception to the laying of hands as a method of blessing is the ascension of Jesus; He bestowed upon His disciples the promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:4-8). The laying of hands is surely an effective method of communicating grace, power, healing (Mark 1:30-31, 5:23, 8:22-25, Acts 9:17), and blessing as well as the bestowal of spiritual gifts (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6), and ordination (Acts 13:103; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).

There are numerous references to the act of anointments in the New Testament: the ritual of preparation for fasting (Matthew 6:17), an act of courtesy to an honored guest (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-54; John 12:1-11), part of the preparation of a body for burial (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:56; John 19:39-40), and a conventional method of therapy (Luke 10:34; Revelation 3:18) (Lenning 1979:107-13).

Blessing in Liturgical Perspective Various forms of worship setting are used to exchange blessing: greetings and benedictions, prayers and praises, and in the ministry of the word. Blessing is indeed a vital component to acts of worship by God's people. The rites of the church, baptism, the Lord's Supper, confirmation, Christian marriage and burials are all special rites of blessing that strengthen people throughout their lives (Lenning 1979:114-120; Westermann 1978:113-120). The blessing of God is imparted to the Christian community in the name of Christ. Therefore, communication of the Christian blessings can be observed together in the work of Jesus Christ, and the work of His church (Westermann 1978:119).

The Purpose of Blessing

Why did God bless human beings to "be fruitful and increase in

number, fill the earth and subdue it, Rule over ..." (Genesis 1:28). Why is the first book of the Bible set in the Garden of Eden while the last book closes in the city of the New Jerusalem, the eternal Kingdom of God? In between, the redemption by Lord Jesus Christ renews humanity after its downfall. Why does the Lord choose to bless the people again? For what reasons does He provide believers with the blessing that comes from Christ's redemptive work?

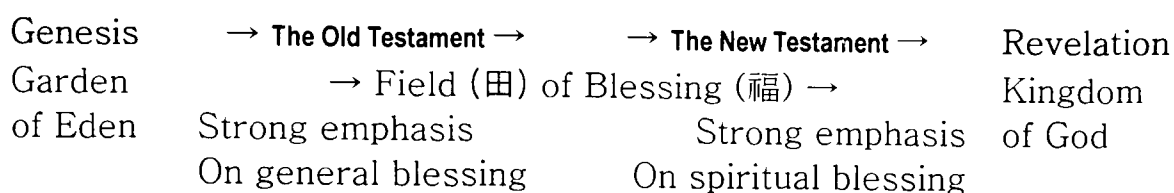


Figure 5: Understanding God's Providence from Kingdom Blessing

It is written in Genesis 2:15 that the "LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." God defines "subdue it, ... rule over..." as "to work it and take care of it" in His [sic] work field. These bible verses clearly denote that "we are made by God to display our leadership for the sake of God's purpose" (Dallas Willard 1998:53). I take the blessing of leadership to be the ultimate blessing from general blessings. The Lord provides us with this blessing for salvation. His [sic] blessing is an invitation for us to work with Him [sic] to develop this world into God's Kingdom. He [sic] provides us the blessing of Abraham in Christ so that we may bless others. In sharing the Lord's blessings, this sinful world becomes "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

The blessings of the Lord strengthen our leadership; through the Holy

Spirit, we walk and work alongside God, advancing the Gospel until Lord reigns supreme for eternity.

The Functions of Blessing

In addition to the Old Testament functions of blessing, some new functions of blessing are found in the New Testament. As mentioned earlier in the section, “the content of blessing,” there was a major transformation in the function of God's saving acts, grace, and forgiveness in the New Testament. God's blessing of salvation in Christ is distinctive from the general blessings; salvation is part of God's special blessings.

The Beatitudes

There are several blessings in the New Testament that are different from the salutations and benedictions in their form and the usage of fixed, definite terminology (Lenning 1979:93). Of these, the Greek word, μακάριος with its variations, is used in all the beatitudes. In light of this fact, some scholars prefer calling them “maakarisms” instead of “beatitudes.”

There are disputes over the exact number of beatitudes. Even the two Gospels that treat the subject differ (Nine in Matthew 5:3-12, four in Luke 6:20-23) on this issue. While some scholars argue that there are Eight Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12), some believe there are Nine Beatitudes (Lenning 1979:102). Some call it the Nine Beatitudes according to the number of the word μακάριος, while others call it the Eight Beatitudes because of the eight subjects.

Beatitudes refer to a state of great joy and blessedness. According to Lenning, beatitudes either express admiration and praise or teach a truth or introduce discourses on life and truth (1979:102). Alongside its function, one may question the rhetorical purpose of the beatitudes. Here, Hamm

(1990:12) provides an understanding by taking an example from a commercial advertisement that uses beatitudes: “happy are those who drink ‘Old ----!’” According to him, “a beatitude is a kind of congratulation, spoken by one human being to another, the purpose of being to affirm, encourage and hold up as example those qualities for which the person is congratulated” (1990:12). If that is indeed the purpose, Jesus is promoting the values and behaviors of the blessed people by emphasizing futuristic and eschatological undertones. Becker (1986:217) writes,

Previously the Beatitudes were seen as a vehicle for setting out the virtues ordained by God for man, but now it is quite clear that phrases such as ‘poor in spirit’, ‘those that mourn’, ‘are meek’, ‘hunger and thirst after righteousness’ are merely different aspects of an attitude to the world nearing its close, an attitude of lasting patience and hope.

Despite the underlying estimation for the coming Kingdom of God, the Greek word reverses “all customary evaluations”; it announces the good news of salvation to those that are eagerly anticipating the advent of God’s Kingdom (Becker 1986:217). The word clearly revalorizes secular values that are subsidiary to the one supreme God, the Kingdom of God (368); it highlights the “distinctive religious joy which accrues to a man from his share in the salvation of the kingdom of God” (367). Therefore, the term clearly emphasizes the spiritual blessings as opposed to mere material blessings.

The Eight Beatitudes

John Wesley discovers that “the way to heaven ... the royal way to the Kingdom ... [as] the full and perfect will of God” in the Beatitudes. From a developmental perspective, he regards particular beatitude as a metaphor; each one represents a stride on the road to heaven (Meistad

1989:43)²⁸. Rev. Paul Cho Yonggi in The Way to the Blessing relates the Eight Beatitudes as “eight minds and life attitudes to receive the blessing of God.” He (1991:5) emphasizes:

[S]uccess and failure in the life of people are totally dependant on their minds and attitudes. Jesus implants endless spiritual resources in the heart of the believer, who are eager to receive blessing and to be successful through the Sermon on the Mountain.

Comparison Chart of Matthew and Luke To facilitate comparisons, I have arranged a chart from the gospels of Matthew and Luke. I have used the New International Version for both gospels.

Matthew 5:3–12 (NIV)		Luke 6:20b–23 (NIV)	
3	Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven	20	Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.
4	Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.		
5	Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.		
6	Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.	21	Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.
7	Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.		
8	Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.		
9	Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.		
10	Blessed are those who are		

²⁸ Donald M. Joy sees Wesley’s theology of Christian growth with theories of psychological development based on the beatitudes as the prototypic of all other transformational models, and that throws light on the psychological theories of Erikson’s “epigenetic stages of life crisis,” Levinson’s “seasons of a man’s life,” Maslow’s “hierarchy of human needs,” and even Piaget’s “stages of intellectual and moral development.” (1985:302–304)

persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	
11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.	22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.
12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.	23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.

Table 5: Comparison Chart of Beatitudes in Matthew and Luke

There are similarities and differences in regards to the beatitudes in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. As mentioned earlier, Matthew provides nine beatitudes – eight of them are cast in the third person plural while the ninth is addressed in second person. Contrarily, Luke provides four beatitudes in the form of the second person plural (Hamm 1990:15).

A contrast exists between the present and the future tense in both Luke and Matthew. In Matthews, all of the beatitudes (excluding the first and the last) are introduced with statements in the present tense and finally closed with a promise of blessing in the future tense. Matthew writes that those who are poor, meek, mourn... will attain their respective blessings in the future. The first and the eighth beatitudes are identical for they both conclude with: “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. Similar to Matthew, Luke also contrasts the present and the future tense. Luke writes that those who at present are hungry and weeping will be blessed in the future. Furthermore, the first and the last beatitudes of Luke are also written in the same verb tense. According to Hamm (1990:15), “whereas the Lucan Jesus

congratulates the poor and the hungry, the Matthean Jesus congratulates the poor in spirit and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.”

Through His beatitudes, Jesus was trying to inform his disciples the nature of ‘the road He [was] about to take’ and ‘the road to life with God He invite[s] us to take’ in a sensible and comprehensive fashion. Although this road is seemingly radical and unimaginable to us, this journey with Christ Jesus will prove to be a blessing and powerful because He will surely stay with us. Lenning (1979:102) describes it as “a life of peace, righteousness, and blessedness designed to be lived within a world that was radically different from that kind of life.”

The Contents of the Eight Beatitudes In this section, I choose two representative preachers to compare their understanding of the Eight Beatitudes. The first preacher is John Wesley from the 18th century while the other preacher is Robert Schuller in the late 20th century.

1. The Blessing of the Kingdom of God for the Poor in Spirit (Matthew 5:3).

Wesley perceives the eight beatitudes as “the sum of all true religion”; he holds the “poverty of spirit” as the foundation of authentic Christianity. From the lowest of all these gifts, Christians “are called of God to come up higher ... to the highest blessings of God in Christ” (WW.1:321). Wesley rejects interpretations that posit “poverty of spirit” as a “noble virtue of humility” (WW.1:325) that pursues self-righteousness, or “Roman ideals of voluntary poverty” (Meistad 1989:46) that drive pious believers into monasteries and deserts. He writes, “Christianity begins just where heathen morality ends.” (WW.1:326) Wesley sees the “poverty of spirit” in those who are “humble; they who know themselves, who are convinced of sin; those to whom God hath given that first repentance, which is previous to faith in Christ.” (WW.1:323)

When a sinner is cleansed in the blood of Christ and renewed by His almighty Spirit, he or she will be rid of all fears but the loving, filial fear of our Father who is in heaven. The redeemed person shall be a witness to the beatitude - "Happy are the poor in spirit; for there is the Kingdom of heaven" (WW.1:327). The person's heart and soul that is grounded on Christ Jesus will emerge as an innermost kingdom that is sealed by the Holy Spirit who provides righteousness, peace, and the joy of Christ. The kingdom of heaven is already alive in the redeemed souls.

John Wesley considers "poverty of spirit" not only as the first step to the way of salvation, but as "a continual sense of our total dependence on Him, for every good thought, or word, or work" (WW.1:328). Wesley always translates the Greek word *makarios* to "blessed," rather than the vague alternative "happy," for God's blessing is the source of happiness. He underlies the "realized" character of the eschatological blessing by emphasizing the present experience of salvation (Meistad 1989:47).

In The Be-Happy Attitudes: Eight Positive Attitudes that Can Transform Your Life, Robert Schuller (1985:23, 26, 29) interprets "poor in spirit" as occupational, intellectual, and emotional poverty. He (1985:31) sees "poverty" as "a positive possibility;" it motivates the "poor in spirit" to supplicate for God's help. He (1985:47-52) asserts that when one humbly admits one's needs, they will be fulfilled. Therefore, the be-happy attitudes are "positive possibility," they may transform one's life in powerful ways.

2. The Blessing of Comfort for the Mourning (Matthew5:4)

Wesley sees the second beatitude as another step to the way of salvation. He clarifies this point by asserting that this particular beatitude concern those who "mourn after God," (WW.1:330) not those who mourn 'on some worldly account." (WW.1:329) The mourners of God are those who

once “rejoice[d] with joy unspeakable” and continually seek His presence they have experienced Lord’s blessings in numerous ways – tasted the ultimate joy in God, experienced His mercy, have faith in the coming Kingdom of God, having the inward kingdom of heaven in their own heart. To Wesley, they are blessed because they “follow on to know the Lord and steadily refuse all other comfort” (WW.1:331). Their affliction will be taken away eventually; they will be comforted by the Holy Spirit and the fresh manifestation of God’s love.

The return of the Comforter will mark the end of the mourning, but it will be followed by what Wesley calls “a blessed mourning” (WW.1:332) that abides in God’s children. They mourn for humanity’s sins and weep for all the sinners until “the Lord of all shall put a period to misery ... and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the water covers the sea” (WW.1:334). Thus, Wesley suggests “a relationship between mourning and the pre-Christian experience of personal sin under the influence of God’s prevenient grace” (Meistad 1989:54).

Schuller (1985:55) asks, “What happens to good people when bad things happen to them?” He (1985:56) replies: “God does comfort good people when bad things happen to them.” For Schuller, bad things - such as diseases, deaths, and sorrow, are brought upon us not because of any lack of knowledge but because of humanity’s disobedience. Our disobedience of God’s laws, our disregard for the guiding principles the Lord provides us through several different channels – the Ten Commandments, secrets to longevity and health, the disclosure of secrets to salvation - are responsible for the bad things that people experience in life (1985:58-60). When bad things happen, Schuller suggests that we humbly ask God the Comforter to intervene in our lives instead of heaping blame and resentment against God

and oneself. Schuller states that God comforts us in several ways: He gives us courage, a sense of calm, companionship, and a new set of commitments (Schuller 1985:61-87). With this beatitude, he teaches us the importance of having a relationship with God.

3. The Blessing of Inheritance of the Earth for the Meek (Matthew 5:5)

Wesley proclaims that Christian meekness is far-removed from apathy, ignorance, lack of emotion, or insensibility. It is the avoidance of “every extreme” to “balance the affections,” and it “poses the mind aright ... preserving the mean in every circumstances of life” (WW. 1: 336).

Meekness provides patience and contentedness not only in relations with ourselves, but also in reference to “God or our neighbor” (WW.1:336).

Wesley recognizes that these mourners are now led by true piety and active caring for others. He asserts, “When it is exerted toward other men, then it is ‘mildness’ to the good, and ‘gentleness’ to the evil” (WW.1:337).

In the interpretation of the particular blessing of this beatitude, Wesley asserts that the meek shall enjoy whatever portion God hath given them here, and shall hereafter possess the new earth, where the righteous dwell. Thus, it may be said that they do indeed inherit the earth, although their heart, desire, and joy are set in heaven (WW.1:341, cf. Meistad 1989:59).

In his Be-Happy Attitude #3, “I’m going to remain cool, calm, and corrected,” Schuller redresses the misconception of “the meek” in the King James translation; he illustrates that provided with the proper context, this beatitude can be understood as: “Blessed are the mighty, the emotionally stable, the educable, the kindhearted, for they shall inherit the earth” (1985:91). He (1985:92) forms an acronym out of the word “meek”: M-Mighty, E-Emotionally stable, E-Educable, K-Kind. He concludes that when one accepts Jesus as the Lord and the Savior, one will come to accept this

beatitude. In other words, "you will come to the end of your life with pride behind you, love around you, and hope ahead of you" (Schuller 1985:117).

4. Blessing of Fulfillment for those that Seek after Righteousness (Matthew 5:6)

Wesley, once again, interprets this beatitude as another step to the way of salvation. By this stage, a turning point has ensued - hindrances of true religion are left behind and replaced by the righteousness of Christ, which paves the way for the continuing work of God (Meistad 1989:64). He defines righteousness as "the image of God, the mind which [is] in Christ Jesus. It is every holy and heavenly temper in one; springing from, as well as terminating in, the love of God, as our Father and Redeemer, and the love of all men for His sake" (WW.1: 343). No religion in the world can satisfy hunger and thirst for the living God;²⁹ Wesley views such spiritual hungers as "the strongest of all our bodily appetites" (WW.1:343). It can only be filled through fellowship with the Father and the Son; the walking in the light as God is in the light; ... righteousness and true holiness" (WW.1:344). Wesley exhorts us to seek "the power of godliness," (WW.1:345) so that we will continuously sit "in heavenly places with Christ Jesus"; for, Christ imputes His righteousness on us and satisfies our spiritual hunger with the manna of His love.

Schuller raises a question, "How do you really satisfy that inner emotional hunger?" (1985:134) While secular people may alter the fourth

²⁹ John Wesley asserts that worldly religion implies three things: 1) abstaining from outward sins that are scandalous, such as robbery, theft, common swearing, and drunkenness; 2) doing good such as relieving the poor or being charitable, as it is called; 3) using means of grace; going to the church and to the Lord's supper at the least. (WW.1:343-44) Wesley states that worldly religions issues the righteousness of the world" to one who does his or her duty. (Meistad 1989:66)

beatitude as "Blessed are those who seek fame, success, power, or sexual gratification," he (1985:134, 136) emphasizes that "the way to satisfaction and happiness, as Jesus teaches, lies in seeking righteousness." Schuller (1985:137) defines 'righteousness' as "real repentance that is a positive, dynamic and highly-motivated life;" it is, then, a path to God's forgiveness. He (1985: 143) informs us that righteousness comes through "positive affirmations."³⁰

5. Blessing of God's Mercy for the Merciful (Matthew 5:7)

Wesley asserts that mercifulness is an outstanding fruit of faith. In regards to salvation, Wesley identifies the merciful as sanctified Christians. The merciful are "concerned for those who are still without God in the world, still dead in trespasses and sins" (WW.1:345). They are "compassionate, the tender-hearted, those who, far from despising, earnestly grieve for, those that do not hunger after God" (WW.1:346). Through the Lord, the merciful "obtain His mercy, not only blessing of God upon all the ways, by His now repaying the love they bear to their brethren a thousand-fold into their own bosom," (WW.1. 354) "till He calls you up into the region of love, there to reign with Him for ever and ever!" (WW.1: 355)

Schuller (1985:151) develops fifth beatitude to his Be-Happy Attitudes #5 - "I'm going to treat others the way I want others to treat me." He applies "the law of proportionate return" (1985:160) to this beatitude and interprets it in another way: when Christians, who have experienced God's mercy, show mercy to others, mercy will spring from a variety of different sources. Thus, he emphasizes the caring of others and the responsibility of showing mercy

³⁰ Robert Schuller provides an example of positive affirmations that imparts deep satisfaction: I am a child of God! I'm God's idea, and God only has good ideas! I want to do it! I can do it! I will do it! I am going to take chances! (1985:144)

upon those who have yet to experience God's mercy. He illustrates his point by calling attention to Mother Theresa's mercy on those who are suffering with deep and hidden wounds (1985:167-181).

6. The Blessing of Seeing God for the Pure in Heart (Matthew 5:8)

Wesley deems the love of our neighbor as "the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment" (WW.1:356-57). He argues that one needs to examine "what foundation our love of our neighbor stands; whether it is really built upon the love of God; ... whether we are pure in heart" (WW.1:357).

Wesley asserts that the pure in heart are those "whose heart God hath purified even as He is pure; who are purified, through faith in the blood of Jesus, from every unholy affection; who are being cleansed from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfect holiness in the loving fear of God" (WW.1:357).

This purity of heart leads one to love his or her neighbor.

Wesley argues that God manifests Himself to the pure in heart through "the clearest communications of His Spirit, the most intimate fellowship with the Father and with the Son" (WW.1:359-61). Through God's unveiling of Himself, the pure in heart sees more of God in all His providences and in all His appointed ways³¹ (WW.1:361). Wesley links the beatitude of the pure in heart with "the sanctification, or Christian perfection that implies the transformation of human values and motivations. ... It is the total identification of the believer's personality with the likeness of God" (Meistad 1989:83). For him, the perfection implies "the perfection of the heart after being purified with God, emptied of sin, and filled with divine love or the mind which was in Christ" (Meistad 1989:85).

³¹ When Wesley writes "in all these His appointed ways," he mean earnestly praying in privacy, listening to the Gospel, participating in the communion, and reading the word of God, etc. (WW.1:361).

Robert Schuller (1985:183) substitutes the sixth beatitude with his Be-Happy Attitude #6: "I've got to let the faith flow free through me." He interprets the "pure in heart" as a reward that follows from the struggle to "have more faith, to conquer doubt, to know God in a real, personal, and life-changing way." Here are his prescriptions: 1) Wise up, 2) Clean up, 3) Give up, and 4) Take up (1985: 184). These prescriptions help people attain a relationship with God; but, above all, one should be "wise up" and see that "religion is a sign of health, while skepticism is a mark of illness" (1985:187). One also has to "clean up" any negative emotions that blocks one from having faith and seeing God (1985:188). Furthermore, one also has to "give up" anything that hinders one from approaching God for help (1985:197). Finally, one has to "take up" the cross of Jesus Christ (1985:205). In doing so, one will become a positive believer whose faith shall flow free (1985:208).

7. Blessing of Assigning Children of God as Peace-Makers (Matthew 5:9)

Having discussed 'holiness of heart,' Wesley makes a turning point to 'the holiness of life' (Meistad 1989:88). He asserts that Jesus illustrated "how inward holiness is to exert itself in our outward conversation" (WW.1:364). "'Blessed,' said Christ, 'are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God'" (Matthew 5:9).

Wesley (WW.1:365) delimits the meaning of the term 'peace-maker' to the literal meaning of those who are "lovers of God and man." He (WW.1:365) continues to define the term 'peace-maker':

[W]ho utterly detest and abhor all strife and debate, all variance and contention; and accordingly labor with all their might, either to prevent this fire of hell from being kindled or when it is kindled, from breaking out, or, when it is broke out, from spreading any farther. ... They use all innocent arts, and employ all their strength, all the talents which God has given them, as well to preserve peace where it is, as to restore it

where it is not. It is the joy of their heart to promote, to confirm, to increase, mutual good-will among men, but more especially among the children of God, however distinguished by things of smaller importance.

The peace-makers, who are filled with love for God and for all of humanity, do good unto all men in the full extent of the word whenever they have the opportunity. Wesley paraphrases this beatitudes as, "blessed are they who are thus continually employed in the work of faith and the labor of love; for they shall be called the children of God" (WW.1:367). Wesley interprets the phrase, "called the children of God," as those who have received God's outpouring of Spirit of adoption into their hearts. In this particular beatitude, the holiness of life is integral in the way of salvation (Meistad 1989:91). He accentuates human justice by linking the idea of shalom to the field of ministry; for, transformed nations will advance the Gospel and the Kingdom of God.

Schuller restates the seventh beatitude as the following: "I'm going to be a bridge builder." Christians are called to live a life of "the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in" (Isaiah 58:12 KJV). Although the role of a mediator is oftentimes costly, dangerous, and tough, it is integral because breaches of peace pervades our entire world (Schuller 1985:21213). Schuller argues that there are specific steps to become a peacemaker. Above all, one has to make peace with oneself by encountering the greatest peacemaker of all time - Jesus Christ. Then, one has to live at peace with others. The role of a peacemaker requires "a big heart full of love" (1985:230). One day, the peacemaker will be named the prince of peace – one who repairs breaches and restores broken paths.

8. Blessing of the Kingdom of Heaven for those who are Persecuted for Righteousness (Matthew 5:10).

In his sermon, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount," Wesley defines who the persecuted are; (WW.1:368)

[T]he righteous: he that is born of the Spirit; all that will live godly in Christ Jesus; they that are passed from death unto life; those who are not of the world; all those who meek and lowly in heart, that mourn for God, that hunger after His likeness; all that love God and their neighbor, and therefore as they have opportunity, do good unto all men.

In his sermon, Wesley continues to deal with the nature of the persecuted. He finally concludes his interpretation by offering suggestions on how to behave when one is persecuted. Wesley personally experienced persecution growing up in the Epworth rectory and later with the Methodist movements. It is noteworthy that Wesley "values persecution so positively that he almost regards suffering to be a Christian virtue" (Meistad 1989:96).

Schuller (1985:247) abstracts the message of the eighth beatitude in his Be-Happy Attitude #8: "I'm going to be happy - anyway!" Persecution is not just a physical torture, oppression, suffering, or a threat to one's physical safety for his or her beliefs. Schuller includes harassment, snubs, rejection, discrimination, peer pressure, social pressure, moral pressure, etc. that occur in various levels of life into the category of persecution. Schuller (1985:251) confesses that he has been persecuted by negative thinkers; he draws an analogy by comparing it to how a rich person may be persecuted by a suspicious, cynical 'have-not.' He (1985:252-287) provides a very practical guideline for Be-Happy Attitude-holders in case of persecution. He writes that the be-happy attitude-holders:

- 1) Remain positive!-They chose to rejoice in spite of their circumstances.
- 2) Were prepared! They had equipped themselves with a spiritual and emotional support system that become an invisible shield.

- 3) Persevered in doing what is right.
- 4) Pardoned those who did the persecuting.
- 5) Persisted in trusting God, even when He seemed far away! They kept in mind that God is the ruler yet, that will have the last word and it will be good.
- 6) Prayed for understanding and strength! They accepted the help God offers to those that are suffering.
- 7) Passed triumphantly through the necessary phases that we must all go through when we face tragedy.

He (1985: 273) concludes that positive thoughts can transform persecutions into opportunities “for healing, for forgiveness, and for compassion.”

Summary. Wesley relates the Eight Beatitudes as the way of salvation from a developmental perspective. Wesley emphasizes that the reward of this journey is “happiness that naturally and directly flows from holiness” (Meistad 1989:101). At the same time, Wesley advocates, “holiness has nothing to do with human merits, but it is entirely wrought by God through grace” (Meistad 1989:101).

Robert Schuller, a leading proponent of the gospel of prosperity, describes Jesus Christ as the ‘model’ of the Be-Happy Attitudes. He (1985:287) says, “Jesus should have been the world’s greatest possibility thinker who ever lived. He had nothing going for Him.” Schuller, who gave great influences to the Korean pastors, interprets the Eight Beatitudes as successful pilgrimage to prosperity and success (Il Kwon Chung 1998:6).

Compared to John Wesley, Schuller had a criticism that “he degraded the Eight Beatitudes as a rite passage to the theology of prosperity, Christian faith as a secular science of success or the rules of conduct in life” (1998:8). Unlike Schuller, John Wesley drew the Eight Beaitudes as the scriptural way to salvation by developing it the core of his theology and ministry.

Comprehensive Understanding of the New Testament Blessing

In early Jewish thoughts, outward blessings, such as one's longevity and worldly prosperity, were "regarded as tokens of the Divine favor, the rewards bestowed upon righteousness, and so were associated with feelings of religious gratitude and trust" (Lambert 1994:676a). However, their bitter experience of Exile shattered many naive misconceptions; as a result, they were driven to seek blessing outside the sphere of material prosperity. Through prophecies, they gradually fostered a hope of the forthcoming Messiah. They eagerly await the expected Kingdom of Messiah that will deliver blessedness of both the outward power and glory and the inward trust and joy. At once, this hope incited the Jewish heart, and even at present, their anticipation for the Messianic blessedness continues.

However, Christ's arrival did not contain any of the magnificence or victory the Jewish people anticipated; instead, Christ came with "His new doctrine of blessedness, which must be determinative for all Christian ideas upon the subject" (676a). The crucial concepts of the New Testament blessing may be characterized into the following four points.

An Inward Spiritual Experience

First of all, the nature of the New Testament blessing is "an inward spiritual experience" (Lambert 1994:676a). As seen in the Sermon of the Mount, the Beatitudes begin and end with a declaration of blessedness that lies in possessing the Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3, 12) and that Divine Kingdom, as Jesus affirms elsewhere, is to be sought within the heart (Luke 17:20f) (676a). Apostle Paul expounds on this Kingdom in Romans 14:17: "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." The essence of the New

Testament blessing lies in knowing God the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ.

General Blessings Are Not Excluded

While spirituality is the innermost quality of Christian blessedness, general blessings are not excluded from its scope and content. Lambert asserts that even though “Jesus unquestionably put spiritual goods above everything else, and taught that to these all natural desires and affections and all concerns for earthly benefits must be subordinated” (Lambert 1994:676b). He freely recognized the intrinsic worth of things that are naturally desirable, and showed His own appreciation and approval of them by teaching His disciples. He taught them to pray for their daily bread (Matthew 6:11, Luke 11:3); forbid them to be anxious about food; urged them to strengthen their faith in God who knows of all their needs. Paul writes that “the whole matter of the harmony in Christian experience between the earthly and the heavenly blessings, as having their common source in the Divine love” (676b). Furthermore, Paul adds, “All things are yours, whether ... the world or life or death or the present or the future--all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God (1 Corinthians 3:21-23, cf. Rome 8:32).

A Present Reality of the New Testament Blessing

In the Old Testament, “the day of Messianic gladness had been a far-off vision as seen in the prophet of the Old Testament. ... The kingdom with all its blessings lay in the future-a hope and a promise but not an actual present” (Lambert 1994:676b). But, with His presence, as Jesus declared himself, the Kingdom of God had come and the blessedness, therefore, was already present, “for the substance of that blessedness, as follows from its spiritual nature already referred to, does not need to be postponed till the arrival of a millennium on earth or the entrance into a Paradise of bliss in the

future world” (676b). Lambert illustrates the present reality of the New Testament blessing; he writes, “When men know and realize that God is their Father and that they are His children, the light of the eternal strikes with a redeeming and transforming power upon all the things of time, and even on earth the days of heaven begin” (676b-677a).

The Eschatological Aspect of the New Testament Blessing

As Jesus stated in the Last Beatitudes, “Great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12, Luke 6:23), the New Testament blessing “looks to the future world for its perfect consummation” (Lambert 1994:677a). The books of Gospel demonstrate that Jesus did not disregard earthly goods, or dismissed them as undesirable; in fact, He placed them accordingly in His doctrine of blessedness. Similarly, He did not ignore earthly ills, or ask that His followers face them with stoical apathy or pretend everything was agreeable.

Bacon expresses a half-truth when he writes, “Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity the blessing of the New, which carries the greater benediction and the clearer revelation of God's favor” (Bacon 1615). With a hope that one day we may obtain the glory that eschatological blessedness will bring to us, we Christians have to persevere and overcome present adversity - “Adversity is not presented in the New Testament as blessing itself, but only as a means to an end-the end being blessedness from which every element of adversity has been taken away” (Lambert 1994:677a). Lambert writes that the writer of Revelation assured us of the following:

[T]he true blessedness even is here and now in a world of sorrow and pain; it also has the promise of a perfect life when no disturbing or depressing and when God “shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;

and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, either shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

The New Testament blessing can be summarized as the following: God is the sources of all blessings. Jesus, a visible image of God, is given by God as a gift to humankind. In other words, He is the eulogia, and through Him the eulogia passes on to humankind (Gale 2005:983a).

The Complementarity between the Old Testament and the New Testament

The Old Testament and the New Testament both have the same viewpoint of blessing; they merely differ in emphasis. According to Westermann (1979:6), the Old Testament accentuates God's blessings while the New Testament stresses deliverance through Christ over worldly prosperity.

When the Old Testament gradually gave way to the New Testament, the Primitive Church did not need to emphasize God's bestowal of general blessings (Westerman 1978:13). However, the church needed a stronger reason to ascribe God's gift of salvation in Christ as "all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Thus, Christian blessing embodies more spiritual value than mere material value.

Criticizing the faulty definition of the word "happiness" as "lucky, or 'fortune,'" Joo Young Shon provides an etymological origin of the word "blessing." The word is derived from the word "bleed"; thus "blood" forms the foundation of the word "blessing". Joo Young Shon (1987:126) argues,

Blessing, therefore, is related to the blood of Jesus Christ. By the blood of Jesus, a man is cleansed from sin and the bondage of Satan, receives salvation, and becomes a child of God. This is the blessing of

Christianity: going from death unto life. All Christians should turn from the traditional concept of *bok* to the biblical concept of blessing.

It is clear that blessings in the New Testament results from the Redemptive work of Jesus Christ. The Cross symbolizes God's boundless grace in His [sic] merciful gift of salvation in Christ. God's deliverance is accompanied by a state of shalom that fills one's heart with spiritual blessing. In his research on blessing (1979:85, 88), Lenning identifies shalom (peace) as a gift that is united in God's deliverance (spiritual) and God's blessing (general); shalom is ultimately grounded on the redemption of God. The New Testament blessings are perceived as a corollary of salvation for its "wholistic, ongoing, regular role in God's relationship with the Church" (Lenning 1979:11).

An Evaluation of Korean Thoughts on *Bok* **in light of the Old Testament and the New Testament**

I evaluate the traditional concept of blessing in light of the biblical teaching as the following:

Mistaking Christianity as a Religion of Material Blessing

It is tempting to misconstrue the religion of salvation as a religion of materialism (Luke 12:13-21). Some misjudge Christianity and sees it as a medium to transmit material blessings. The more they acquire wealth, the more they think of themselves as blessed. Thus, when they become poor, they often think themselves cursed (Yoon Keun Lee 1982:47-48). Jesus warned us of materialism; he related the parable of the foolish rich man (Luke 12:16-21). The foolish materialist placed his hope in temporary good instead of submitting his hope to God – who richly provides us with everything for our

enjoyment (1 Timothy 6:17).

Spiritual leaders in the Korean church need to encourage believers to place their faith and hope in God as opposed to earthly goods that are ephemeral. They need to warn their congregation about God's wrath upon those who possess material-oriented life attitudes (Philippians 3:19, Colossians 3:1-2) (Yoon Keun Lee 1982:49). They must be taught that true blessing is to be near God (Psalms 73:28, 146:5, 7:25). Although our faith is easily swayed by our immediate surroundings, we are daily encouraged by God and His [sic] word. He [sic] challenges us to fix our eyes on Him [sic]; He [sic] urges us to place our hope in His [sic] Kingdom. We should always thank God for His [sic] blessings; and, in times of crises, we must pray and dwell upon His [sic] word.

Assuming that Blessing means to Live Better Than Others

Majority of Korean believers assume that “blessed” means living a better, more convenient life than others. Many people firmly believe “the more, the better,” and “the higher, the better.” They imagine they are blessed by God when they acquire more wealth or reach higher status than other people.

It is crucial that church leaders redress this faulty conception of blessing and instruct true biblical nature of blessing. Biblical teachings should be provided so that believers will understand that eternal life is infinitely more precious than our earthly life. Korean believers have to grasp the fact that salvation is given to us by God as a merciful gift. They have to learn to value God and the gospel over physical families and earthly riches (Mark 10:29-30). When one understands the significance of eternal life, he or she will form the right attitudes towards riches: True blessings do not reflect social conditions, that is, the high and low of social status or position,

or the high and low of income. It is only in Jesus that we are truly blessed; how rich or poor, or the how high or low status is of absolutely no importance (James 2:5-6) (Yoon Keun Lee 1982: 54).

Assuming that Blessing Indicates a Better Health than Others

Many assume that the blessed have healthier and stronger bodies than others (Psalms 73:4). As I have shown, health does fall into the category of God's general blessings (Matthew 5:45). However, one cannot assert that good health results from dutiful devotions. It is important to know that one should not be proud of one's health; one should always strive to keep holistic health, that is, health in spirit, soul and the body (3 John 1:2).

Furthermore, diseases are not the direct result of sins; in fact, oftentimes, they are implicated in physical deaths of human beings. Therefore, blessing shouldn't be limited to health and longevity (Yoon Keun Lee 1982:61).

Assuming that Blessing Means Having Superior Parents or Children

Numerous Koreans envy those who have parents or children that are successful and outstanding by societal conventions. Although the younger generation may be successful in terms of socio-economics, many of them are failures when it comes to faith. Many parents fail to concern themselves with their children's faith, even though it far outweighs physical and material matters.

Church leaders should address this Confucian concept of the blessing regarding children. They should teach that material success of children should not be interpreted as a blessing. They should also be taught that salvation is not bestowed at once to a given family, but that it is granted to individuals. Our children should strive to excel in God's standards that takes precedence over secular conventions (Ezekiel 18:20, Deuteronomy 24:16).

Spiritual leaders in the Korean church have generally failed in transforming the prevailing secular and traditional concepts into biblical teachings. On biblical teachings, the importance of spiritual maturity should be emphasized. God is concerned, not with the matters of our eating and drinking, but with our spiritual growth, understanding the will of God, and walking and working with God in the field of mission and ministry (Jum Sik An 1998B:158).

Summary

Biblical investigations on the subject of blessing reveal that traditional Korean understanding of blessing is seriously flawed. The following chapter will show how contemporary Korean churchgoers hold their view on blessing. Our hypothesis is this: numerous Korean believers do not know how to differentiate blessings. They associate blessing with secular world values: bountiful food, good health, respect of others, and a comfortable life (Sung Il Kim 2001:97). The significance of this issue lies in their false conviction; they are convinced that their concept of blessing is biblically sound. They usually point to the books of Genesis and Deuteronomy to justify their misconceptions. These books do promise blessings of fertility, prosperity, protection, success, wealth, and health. However, one should call attention to how the Old Testament interprets the field (田) of blessing (福) as tangible, visible, and worldly, while the New Testament interprets it as the kingdom of God, the ultimate form of blessing.

CHAPTER 5

THE RESULTS OF STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I reveal the results of statistical analysis, from the surveys conducted on the concept of blessings adopted by believers who attended a Korean immigrant church. The surveys were done in two ways with members of the Bethany Korean United Methodist Church: one was general survey to the members in order to know their concept of blessing, and the other was experimental survey that is designed as a group of pretest and a 12 week Bible Study program and posttest. In relation to the survey for a group of pretest and posttest groups, although the survey of the Bible study class cannot be said to produce statistically valid results because of 1) small numbers and 2) Korean Americans, not Koreans in Korea, the results are illustrative for following reasons: This study 1) shows general concept of blessing Korean immigrant believers have, 2) opens our eyes to see how the Bible study or its proportionate alternatives are important to make Christian believers mature enough in faith to overcome their self-centered *kibok sinang* and 3) provide *bok* as a catalytic converter to contextualize the Gospel and imported theology into Korean culture and worldview.

Research Discovery and Description of Findings

“Discovery has been the aim of science” (Strauss Anselm et al. 1990:15). This research project is designed to combine qualitative and quantitative methods to avoid bias and prejudice on my part so that I may obtain valid and reliable data (1990:18-19). It utilizes theoretical foundation as a base for analysis on research findings and leads toward missiological implications and final conclusion that will be addressed in the next two

chapters.

My coding system reflects the elements of grounded theory, which is based on the conceptualization of the collected data. According to Raresh R. Pandit (1996:2), a grounded theory³² “is not generated *a priori* and then subsequently tested. Rather, it is ...inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents.” The purpose of the grounded theory method is to provide assistance to build theory that is “discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to the phenomenon” (Pandit 1996:2). This theory “does not begin with a theory, and then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (Strauss 1990:23). Its basic elements are concepts, categories and propositions. Once data is collected, it is classified in one of the three forms of coding: the open coding refers to the labeling and categorizing of the phenomena as indicated by the data; the axial coding organizes the categories by making connections or comparisons between categories and their sub-categories; and the selective coding attempts to integrate categories to form the initial theoretical framework (Pandit 1996:9).

I utilized open coding and assigned categories for interviews. The data collected through questionnaires is also marked by different numerical code of various respondents so that I can trace the changes in the participant's response. It allows one to disclose the respondent's way of thinking in relation to the given concept of blessing. One can refer to information and categories of main survey since the concepts are related by

³² Strauss (1990:21) classifies grounded theory as one of qualitative research such as ethnography, phenomenological approach, life histories, and conversational analysis.

the statements of relationship.

Questions were categorized and coded as well to obtain frequency. For multiple response questions, the method of multiple response frequency was employed. This information and data, gathered through surveys and interviews, will provide broader and deeper understanding of the phenomenological situation of the Korean immigrant church.

Basic Information on Research Population

The subjects of this research were Korean church members of Bethany Korean United Methodist Church, located at 491 Alps Rd, Wayne, New Jersey, U.S.A. While Bethany Korean UMC is part of the United Methodist Church, it does not stress denominational characteristics like most of the other immigrant churches.³³

Information Frequency on the Main Research

The main research was conducted in December 2006, in Wayne, New Jersey. I entrusted the responsibility of distributing and collecting surveys to two presidents of UMM and two cell leaders between December 10 and 17. The survey was delivered on the second week for UMM and on the third week for class meetings. Thirty-four UMM members and 66# class members were randomly selected for participation. A total of hundred copies were distributed and seventy-nine were completed and returned. Twenty-one prospective informants failed to complete the questionnaires. The rate of return was 79%. The personal profile of participants is provided below in Table 1 (information frequency).

³³ Unlike churches in Korea, immigrant churches in United States as well as other countries, are attended by people from various denominations. They are generally reluctant to raise any denominational issues that may possibly contribute to division in church and the local Korean association.

The distribution of informants show: 50.6% are male and 49.4% are female (Table 6), 75.9% are between the age of 30 and 59 (Table 8). Of them, 2.5% are widows or divorced and 26.6% are singles (Table 7).

Table 6: Gender (N=79)

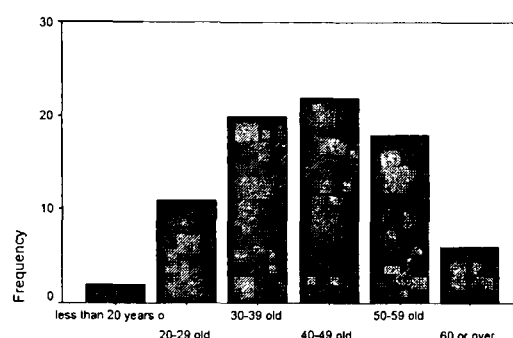
	Frequency	Valid Percent
Male	40	50.6%
Female	39	49.4%

Table 7: Marital Status (N=79)

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Married	56	70.9%
Single	21	26.6%
Other	2	2.5%

Table 8: Age (N=79)

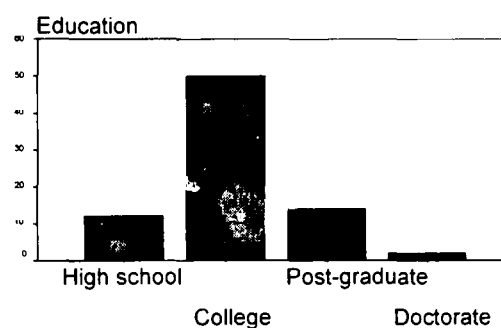
	Frequency	Valid Percent
- 20 years	2	2.5%
20-29 years	11	13.9%
30-39 years	20	25.3%
40-49 years	22	27.8%
50-59 years	18	22.8%
60 or over	6	7.6%



Approximately 85% of the participants received college or university education (Table 9).

Table 9: Education (N=79)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
High school	12	15.2	15.4
College	50	63.3	64.1
graduate			
Post-graduate	14	17.7	17.9
Doctorate	2	2.5	2.6
No Mark	1	1.3	



Korean immigrant believers in the United States have relatively higher educations than Christian believers in Korea. Myung Ihl Lee in his research on Korean Christians shows that 41.2% were educated in college and university (1995:150). Around 70% are middle to upper-middle class in

income (Table 10). Table 11 reveals that around 24% of young adults are students while 40% are salary workers or professionals. No mark in frequency means that the participant has not checked any items.

Table 10: Annual Income (N=79)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Under \$20,000	21	26.6	29.6
\$20,000-\$60,000	25	31.6	35.2
Over \$60,000	25	31.6	35.2
No Mark	8	10.1	

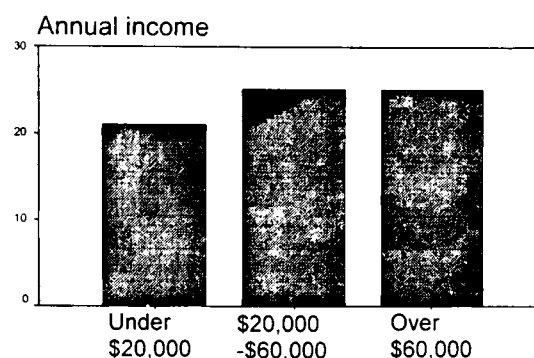


Table 11: Occupation (N=79)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Student	19	24.1	24.1
House wife	4	5.1	5.1
Self-employed	11	13.9	13.9
Salary worker	17	21.5	21.5
Engineer	3	3.8	3.8
Professional job	15	19.0	19.0
Pastor	1	1.3	1.3

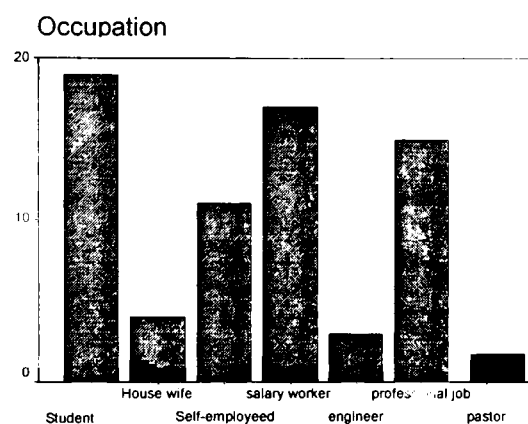
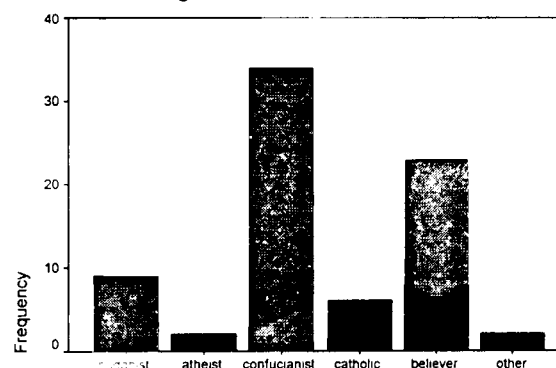


Table 12: Former religion (N=79)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Buddhist	9	11.4	11.8
Atheist	2	2.5	2.6
Confucian	34	43.0	44.7
Catholic	6	7.6	7.9
Christian	23	29.1	30.3
Other	2	2.5	2.6
No Mark	3	3.8	



In reference to informants' former religion before they converted to

Christianity, thirty-four persons (44.7%) classified themselves as Confucians before converting to Christianity while 23 (30.3%) were born into Christian homes (Table 12). These statistics illustrate that 70% of Christians converted from other religions. In particular, South Korean Government released Religious Demography on September 15, 2006. According to this statistics, out of 47,041,000 Koreans – the most popular religion was Buddhism with 10,726,000 (22.802%) adherents; followed by Protestantism, 8,616,000 (18.317%); Roman Catholicism, 5,146,000 (10.940%); Confucianism, 105,000 (0.222%); Won Buddhism, 130,000 (0.276%); and other religions, 247 thousand (0.962%). More significantly, a total of 22,071,000 citizens (46.481%) did not practice any faith. The percentage of adherents of each religion remained approximately the same in recent years (2005 Religious Demography).

The 2005 Religious Demography shows that only 0.222% of Koreans identified themselves as Confucians. However, this research indicates that 43% of participants were previously Confucians. This egregious inconsistency is due to the fact that Confucianism does not have any religious organization. Still, Korean Confucianism “forms the ground for Koreans’ internal value systems. ... Virtually all Koreans are practical members of the soft Confucian community” (Yee-Heum Yoon 1997:12). Confucianism permeates Korean social and normal values although most people lack factual knowledge of Confucianism such as his texts and teaching.³⁴ In this sense, Yoon warns, “Christianity which has yet to take its place in the soft tradition, is in danger of becoming secularized with the concomitant loss of

³⁴ Yee-Heum Yoon (1997:13) evaluates Christianity: “In the case of Christianity, while it has not yet reached the same level of influence as Confucianism and Buddhism, knowledge of its history and doctrines has been wide spread.”

spiritual authority" (1997:13).

In relation to Table 13, approximately 40% of the participants have been Christian for less than 10 years, while 60% were deacon/deaconess, counselors, or elders (Table 14).

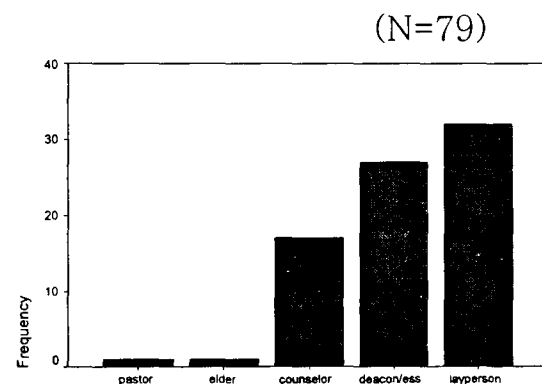
Table 13: **Years of Being a Christian**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Under 5 years	17	21.5	21.8
6-10 years	14	17.7	17.9
11-15 years	9	11.4	11.5
16-20 years	7	8.9	9.0
21-25 years	4	5.1	5.1
26- 30 years	6	7.6	7.7
31-35 years	5	6.3	6.4
36-40 years	4	5.1	5.1
40-45 years	2	2.5	2.6
46 and over	10	12.7	12.8
No Mark	1	1.3	

Korean churches are unique in lay leadership that they employ a hierarchy of spiritual discipleship. Korean church elects elders (jangno) from counselors (*kwonsa*), counselors are selected from deacons and deaconesses (jipsa), while deacons and deaconesses are chosen among the believers (*pyungsindo* or regular members).

Table 14: **Identity in the church**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Pastor	1	1.3	1.3
Elder	1	1.3	1.3
Counselor	17	21.5	21.8
Deacon/ess	27	34.2	34.6
Layperson	32	40.5	41.0
No Mark	1	1.3	



Although each denomination or church has different by-laws to install church members as lay leaders in the church, the Bethany Korean UMC follows the guideline on lay spiritual discipleship of the KUMC that prescribes qualifications of lay leaders. The qualifications of deacon/ness are regular church Attenders over three years who are born again and baptized Christians as well as tithe –givers, while counselors (*Kwonsa*) had shown

their constant sincerity and faithfulness to the Lord more than five years in the church. For an elder in the Korean church is considered as lay representatives of the church, best qualification is good standing with (senior) pastor.

Within strong Confucian ideologies of five human relations (See page 19), a hierarchy of spiritual discipleship is often mistaken with social rank of faith in the church. When the faith and rank goes together, genuine believers may become degenerated Pharisaical Christians. Social rank consciousness impairs our live up to servant leadership (Moon Jang Lee 2000/7:70).

In reference to Table 15, I classify church members into four groups: seekers, (church) Attenders, (dedicated) believers, and disciple-makers (interchangeably used with dedicated disciple) (Cf. pages 260-262).

Table 15: **Self-Measuring Spiritual Maturity**

(N=79)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Seeker	2	2.5	2.6
Attender	27	34.2	34.6
Believer	41	51.9	52.6
Disciple	8	10.1	10.3
No Mark	1	1.3	

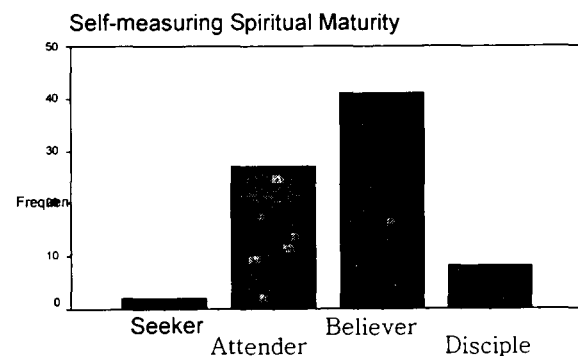
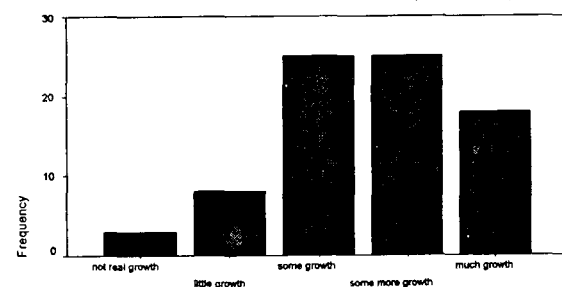


Table 16: **Self-Evaluating Growth Rate**

(N=79)

	Frequency	Percent	Percent
Not real growth	3	3.8	3.8
Little growth	8	10.1	10.1
Some growth	25	31.6	31.6
Some more growth	25	31.6	31.6
Much growth	18	22.8	22.8



Apart from lay spiritual leadership in the church, I allowed informants to measure their own spiritual or faith maturation. Of the 79 respondents, 52.6% identify themselves as dedicated believers while 10.3% perceive themselves as disciple-makers. 34.6% viewed themselves as regular church Attenders (Table 15). Also Table 16 shows that 86.1% responded that their faith have been maturing in recent years.

Information Frequency on the Experimental Research

I employed an experimental research methodology to my main research. The particular methodology I deployed is the “The One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design” (Leedy 1997:233). Leedy (233) defines this methodology as “a type of experiment in which a single group (a) has a pre-experimental evaluation, then (b) is administered the experimental treatment, and finally (c) is evaluated after the experiment.”

I formed two Bible study groups for experimental research: one group met right after the first Sunday service between 9:30-11:30 am; while, the other group convened on Thursday mornings between 9:30-11:30 am. Eight participants of the Thursday Bible study group (TBSG) and 9 participants of the Sunday Bible study group (SBSG) completed the pre-test. While TBSG attended the bible study faithfully, SBSG suffered from fluctuations in number of Attenders. Of the 9 original members for SBSG, one withdrew but three new members joined and were there to complete the post-test. Thus, while 17 members completed the pre-test on November 12 and 16, 2006, 20 members responded to the posttest on January 17 and 20, 2007. Therefore, 16 members took both the pretest and posttest while 4 members only took the posttest and a member took the pretest only.

Thus I engaged in a “correlational studies to examine the degree to which variations or differences in one variable are related to variations or

differences in another variable" (Leedy 1997:224). Thus, the pretest-posttest designed group allowed me to interpret various changes the participants went through for participating in this bible study.

A brief look at the information frequency of the pretest-posttest group shows that the twelve-week bible study engendered some changes in how the informants viewed themselves in relation to their church (Table 17).

There was a decrease in the number of informants that regarded themselves as Attenders (76.4%→50%) while there was an increase of informants who now saw themselves as disciple makers (5.8%→30%).

Table 17: Pre/Post-Test group with Self-Measuring Spiritual Maturity

	Attender	Believer	Disciple Maker
Pre-Test	3 (17.6%)	13 (76.4%)	1 (5.8%)
Post-Test	4 (20%)	10 (50%)	6 (30%)

The informants unanimously responded that their faith was deepened as a result of the 12-week program.

Table 18: Pre/Post-Test group with Self-Evaluating Growth Rate

	Some Growth	More Growth	Much Growth
Pre-Test	7 (41.2%)	6 (35.2%)	4 (23.5%)
Post-Test	7 (35%)	6 (30%)	7 (35%)

One's growth in faith certainly affects one's life

(Table 18). Most

participants are now

engaged in spiritual

discipleship as a testament

to their growth in faith (Table

19). They are dedicated in

Table 19: Pre/Post Test and identity in the Church (N=Pretest 17, Posttest 20)

	Elder	Counselor	Deacon	Lay People
Pre-Test	0	7	8	2
Post-Test	1	8	8	3

helping newer members of the church flourish in biblically and theologically sound faith.

Results of Statistical Analysis of the Main Survey

I present the results of the survey on the Korean immigrant believers' concept of blessing. I have categorized the topic into traditional and biblical

concept of blessing and behavior pattern of receiving and sharing blessing.

The Korean Traditional Concept of Blessing

God is the source of all blessings. He created us to bless us.

Humans cannot live without God's blessing; thus, it is human nature to seek blessing. However, the issue at hand is *kibok sinang* or *kibok jooeui* – an ideology that upholds blessing as the goal of one's life, not a means to a greater purpose for the glory of God, which is the advancement of God's Kingdom through sharing of one's blessings.

The respondents were asked to list three of their greatest desires and yearnings (Table 20). While 38% of the informants expressed their first and greatest concern with spiritual maturity in God, other informants showed a personal and family concern (27.9%), a healing of the body and mind (16.5%), special dream or vision (11.4%), and well-being and wealth (2.5%). It is clear from the statistics of sum of three greatest desires that personal and family concerns (44.3%) are of utmost importance. Statistics reveal Korean church's overemphasis of

individualistic faith; for, while 28% of participants show concern for their own spiritual maturity, most people disregard the concern for becoming a better witness or desiring justice, peace, and hope in the world.

In relation to the crowd-centered ministry paradigm, the Korean church

		N=79
<i>A personal and family concern</i> ① 22 (27.9%) ② 29(36.7%) ③ 53(68.3%)		104 44.3%
<i>Spiritual maturity in the Lord</i> ① 30 (38%) ② 27(34.2%) ③ 10 (12.7%)		67 28.5%
<i>A healing of the body and mind</i> ① 13 (16.5%) ② 4 (5.1%) ③ 8 (10.1%)		25 10.6%
<i>Special dream or vision</i> ① 9(11.4%) ② 13 (16.5%) ③ 1(1.3%)		23 9.8%
<i>Well-being life and wealth</i> ① 2 (2.5%) ② 4 (5.1%) ③ 3(3.8%)		9 3.9%
<i>A better witness winning others</i> ① 1 (1.3%) ② 2 (2.5%) ③ 2(2.5%)		5 2.1%
<i>Justice/peace/hope for the world</i> ① 1 (1.3%) ② 0 ③ 1(1.3%)		2 0.8%

Table 20: Present Concerns

have growth-oriented, belief-oriented, church-centered, and organization-centered ministry. Belief-oriented ministry can be defined as a ministry to overemphasize the vertical relationship with God but fails to account for the horizontal dimension of faith (See pages 263). As a result, Korean believers often believe that the purpose of faith is to achieve salvation and to receive God's blessings (Won Kyu Lee 2003:143-44). The Korean Church's belief-oriented ministry with its accentuation of blessing leads the believers to concentrate solely on God and oneself but neglect the responsibilities that they have as Christians for their neighbors and society. It incapacitates transcendent values such as love and justice (2003:143-44). There is no way for the Korean church to take off the label of *kibok sinang* or *kibokjooeui* until head (belief) and heart (life and action) go hand in hand.

Participants were asked to choose the most important thing in their lives (Table 21). The results show that 52.2% responded that faith life was of the utmost importance while		(N=79)
	<i>Faith life</i>	36 (52.2%)
	<i>Sweet home</i>	19 (27.5%)
	<i>Good job with honor and money</i>	5 (7.2%)
	<i>Health</i>	4 (5.8%)
	<i>Much time and leisure</i>	4 (5.8%)
	<i>Good friends</i>	1 (1.3%)

Table 21: The Most Important Thing

others regarded family life (27.5%), good job with honor and money (7.2%), health (5.8%) and much time and leisure (5.8%) as the greatest importance. Table 21 reminds Korean church leaders to think over people (47.8%) who regarded faith life as second or third best. In the strong shamanistic Korean culture, the bane influence of *kibok sinang* provides Christian believers two temptations: first, it makes them to overlook horizontal (communal) level of faith as locus where Christian faith in vertical (individual) level with God should be verified. Second, it makes them utilize their faith as means to get the most important thing. In this sense, 47.8% have certain risks of *kbok*

sinang that make Christianity as a means to obtain blessing.

Hee Nyung Lee (2003) suggests how church leaders guide *kibok sinang* to reach to the stage of faith maturation in a religiously mixed but strongly shamanistic cultural context. She (2003:50-51) outlines five stages of spiritual growth (Ephesians 4:13): (1) *kibok* faith- is characterized by a love for this world, and self-seeking, sinful desires; it always takes advantages and is obsessed with receiving blessings. Solution for *kibok* faith is repentance that will weaken one's love for this transient, material world. (2) Legalistic faith- is characterized by willful independence and the belief of autonomy; it is enthusiastic but endlessly self-glorifying. Similarly, its solution is also repentance that transforms self-righteousness into humility and grace. (3) Self-denial faith- is marked by passivity, uncertainty, and guilt. The only solution is, once again, repentance and the conscious decision to entrust and surrender one's all to God. (4) Obedient faith- marked by one's recognition of God's sovereignty; one pleases Lord with an active faith life that is centered on prayer and His word. One exemplifies a life of devotion that brings pleasure to the Lord. (5) Integrated faith- is God-centered and submits to the Lord God who is the King and the Master. God's word is internalized and one is motivated to dwell in the Spirit so that one may be transformed as a channel of blessing.

Of the subjects of blessing surveyed, 85.1% identifies God as the source of blessing, the one who bestows blessings while 5.4% believe in good fortune and 4.1% in human's efforts.

Table 22 depicts five columns. First and fifth columns are the two extremes wherein the first column indicates one's alignment to materialistic, visible, tangible, earthly and traditional concept of blessing; while, the fifth column denotes one's belief in spiritual, visible, intangible, heavenly, and

biblical concept of blessing. The third column, of course, illustrates neutrality and moderateness. Those listed on the first and second columns are confined to the concept of material blessings. Less than 10% of the participants are materialistic. Among the group of believers, 42% believe in the Old Testament concept of blessing while 32.3% have been exposed to the concept of the New Testament blessing. Overall, 14.5% of believers are grounded on kingdom-oriented blessing.

	(N=79)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Materialistic		8 (10.4%)	30 (39%)	24 (31.2%)	15 (19.5%)
Visible		10 (13.7%)	33 (45.2%)	24 (32.9%)	6 (8.2%)
Tangible	1 (1.4%)	7 (9.7%)	35 (48.6%)	20 (27.8%)	9 (12.5%)
Earthly	1 (1.4%)	6 (8.1%)	31 (41.9%)	28 (37.8%)	8 (10.8%)
Traditional	1 (1.3%)	6 (8%)	28 (37.3%)	24 (32%)	16 (21.3%)
Total (%)	3 (0.8%)	37 (9.9%)	157 (42.3%)	120 (32.3%)	54 (14.5%)

Legend: 1 =extremely closer to the Left, 3=middle, 5=extremely closer to the Right

Table 22: **Concept of Blessing**

People have instinctive needs. People invariably seek blessings to fulfill their needs. The spirit, the soul and the body all have different needs. Maslow's "heirarchy of needs" provide us with a clear understanding on how the human proposition to fill *deficiency needs* (1-3) is associated with physiological needs and growth *needs* that are, in turn, associated with

Need of the body		----	Need of the soul	----	Need of the spirit
1	2		3		4
Wealth, health, success, long life, and many children	Sweet home, fellowship with friends, good reputation		Happiness, peace of mind		Something to live for
Physiological needs	Love/Belonging/ Social needs		Esteem needs Cognitive needs Aesthetic needs,		Need of self-actualization
Safety needs					Need of self-transcendence Spiritual need

Figure 6: Needs of Human

psychological needs. While *deficiency needs* have to be met, *growth needs* (4-5) continually shape one's behavior. According to Maslow, the higher

needs come into focus when only the lower needs are satisfied.

Such understanding suggests without consistent efforts and transformations that believers will not move beyond the fulfillment of the deficiency needs and ultimately settle into *kibok* faith. However, when a person's spirit and soul are saturated with blessing and joy that comes only from God, people are liberated from the chains of deficiency needs.

Move to the Biblical Concept of Blessing

Numerous Korean believers are all captives of the word "*bok*." Even when a pastor imparts special and spiritual blessings upon his congregation, believers will accept these blessing but within the traditional hermeneutic frame of blessing. Thus, the understanding of Korean worldview and values are paramount if the Korean church wants the believers to be transformed into disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, if the church fails to transform the shamanic concept of *bok* into a Christian concept, that may cause tremendous harm and spiritual damage. Let us have an example. A recent BBC-TV program, "What the World Thinks of God" (BBC 2004), reported the findings of an international survey conducted in the world's ten most secular countries.³⁵ BBC program executives questioned one thousand people in each country concerning their belief in God. It helps Korean Christians to see where they are on their journey of faith and spiritual maturity. In this survey 42% of the one thousand Korean respondents claimed to be lifelong atheists, 9.3% were Roman Catholic believers, 25.6% were Protestant Christians, and 24% were Buddhists. To the question, "I would die for my God and my belief," more than 90% of those surveyed in Nigeria and Indonesia said they would give

³⁵ The countries surveyed were USA, UK, Israel, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Nigeria, Russia, Mexico, and Lebanon (BBC 2004).

their lives for their beliefs, but among Korean respondents only 12% would be willing to sacrifice themselves for their beliefs. The survey rated Korea lowest of the ten countries in dedication and willingness to die for their beliefs.

These findings challenged us to think of the purpose of belief in God. In fact, Koreans come to Christianity to gain blessings from the Western God, because the gods they had relied on could not give them what they needed and could not protect what they wanted. Without a preceding transformation of the Korean concept of *bok*, the blessing, into the Biblical concept of *bok*, it is nonsense to expect them to offer their ultimate sacrifice to God. The traditional Korean concept of *bok* falsifies the teaching of Christ; while it certainly draws people's attention to churches, it ultimately hinders believers from developing spiritual maturity and attaining personal relationship with God.

The Korean churches are facing a fatal crisis, one that is believed to be a by-product of the theology of blessing, namely the native theology of prosperity in Korea.	<i>For salvation and eternal life</i>	38 (48.1%)
	<i>For peace of mind</i>	17 (21.5%)
	<i>For a meaningful and honored life</i>	12 (15.2%)
	<i>For the children</i>	7 (8.9%)
	<i>For health and long life</i>	1 (1.3%)
	<i>For success and wealth</i>	1 (1.3%)

Table 23: First Motive of Attending Church

A number of participants were transformed through the bible study program that emphasized biblical concept of blessing. Initially, 48.1% responded that their motive for church attendance was to gain eternal life and salvation in Christ. On the other hand, 51.9% of the participants were drawn to church for their traditional concept of blessing (Table 23).

Participants were questioned if their first motive for attending church has changed as a result of the bible study program. 72.5% (57 people) responded that their motive had indeed changed while 27.8% (22 people) declared that it has not. Of the 57 people who responded positively, 52.6%

(30 people) declared that their motive for attending church was to attain spiritual maturity in God while 12.2% expressed that they discovered their special vision and dream in God (Table 24).

If the former question dealt with the changes in purpose and motives for attending church, this question seeks to locate the cause of this change. None of the informants attributed the cause of their change to the church. In fact, 50.8%	<i>Spiritual maturity in the Lord</i>	30 (52.6%)
	<i>A personal and family concern</i>	8 (14%)
	<i>Special dream or vision</i>	7 (12.2%)
	<i>A healing of the body and mind</i>	4 (7%)
	<i>To get blessings from God</i>	2 (3.5%)
	<i>Justice/peace/hope for the world</i>	0 (0%)

Table 24: Change of First Motive

“understanding the will of God and experiences of the Holy Spirit” that transformed their purpose. 24.5% declared that it was the “assurance of the kingdom of heaven and salvation” that caused them to change (Table 25).	<i>Understanding the will of God and Experiences of the Holy Spirit</i>	29(50.8%)
	<i>Assurance of heaven and salvation</i>	14(24.5%)
	<i>Assurance of forgiveness and conversion</i>	4 (7%)
	<i>Knowing the raison d'etre</i>	3 (5.2%)
	<i>Getting the better life</i>	0 (0%)

Table 25: Cause of Change

Believers remain in the church for a reason. Believers are always seeking blessing that would fill their needs and desires. Table 20 demonstrates that people attend churches with hopes of fulfilling their needs. A church, then, should be a place where one can accept Jesus Christ as one's Savior. It should be a place where one can discover God's will and maintain biblically sound faith. Instead of obstructing believers from attaining spiritual maturity, the church should act as a bridge that encourages believers to mature in faith and renounce their worldly ways. A church with a disciple-centered ministry will be effective in helping believers discover their true purpose in Jesus.

Table 26 demonstrates that Bible studies and its related works (42.1%) are the most effective means of change. Testimonies and sermons in special revivals meetings and mission rallies (21.1%), recognized as an important means of church growth, are also important means of change.

Prayer life, also, is an important means of change	<i>Studying the Bible & meditation & Reading devotional books</i>	24 (42.1%)
	<i>Testimony/Preaching at special meeting</i>	12 (21.1%)
	<i>Listening the God's voice through prayer life</i>	8 (14%)
	<i>Regular Worship Service</i>	2 (3.5%)

The participants were asked the following question, "How many years did you attend church before your motive finally changed?" As an answer to this question, 37.1%

Table 26: Means of Change

responded that it took 6 to 10 years, 17.7% 1 to 5 years, 12.9% 11 to 15 years, and 11.3% 16 to 20 years (question 7).

Receiving God's Blessing

Everyone knows that we can share only what we have; it is utterly impossible to share with others what we do not have.

The participants were asked (question 8), "Do you have a strong sense that you have received blessings?" In	<i>Strongly agree</i>	47 (62.7%)
	<i>Agree</i>	20 (26.7%)
	<i>Middle</i>	7 (9.3%)
	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	1 (1.3%)

In response, 89.4% declared that they were indeed blessed by God. Many believers do not have a sound self-image before God or people.

Table 27: Self-Image

<i>Giving</i>	35 (45.5%)
<i>Middle</i>	30 (39%)
<i>Strongly giving</i>	10 (13%)
<i>Receiving</i>	1 (1.3%)

However, in this research, only 1.3%

Table 28: Listing to Giving or Receiving

expressed their disagreement that they were blessed by God (Table 27). In relation to Table 28, the following question was asked: "Which do you cherish more - receiving or giving?" In response, 45.5% declared that they share

their God-given blessings with others. Sharing of blessings, whether it is spiritual or material, foster love and faith in church and society. At the same time, sharing is also confined to *Uri* (We) – boundary.

The word “*uri*” (we, our, us) is an affinity group over the individual “I.” Unlike the individualistic Western society, the Korean society embraces a collectively broader concern for larger social context. Relationship of *uri*, then, is extremely important. An *Uri*-group, however, is only confined to one's group that includes him or her; for example, *uri*-parents, *uri*-teachers, *uri*-relatives, *uri*-school, *uri*-church, *uri* friends, etc. *Uri*-group provides people with emotional satisfaction and a sense of harmony because no one can exist without the support of “*uri*.” Thus, there is naturally a sense of loyalty within the *uri*-groups. It is natural for one to play favoritism with one's friends or a member of one's *uri* group. This works because one builds self-esteem through a sense of belonging; the presence of someone from an in-group reminds one that they are not alone. The opposite of in-group bias is *out-group bias* where, by inference, people outside one's group are ostracized (Newman 2005:53).

The case of *uri*-group certainly affects church as well. Church leaders foster loyalty and commitment to *uri*-church but do not encourage the believers to transcend the *uri*-boundary. There is a strong predilection in Korean churches that nurtures exclusiveness within the *Uri*-boundary; believers tend to close their hearts to not only other religions and denominations but with other neighboring churches. Such culture leads to factionalism and denominationalism as well as individualistic church-centralism. Thus, sharing and relief works are usually limited to the immediate church and perhaps the denominational boundary.

Table 29 shows the responses to the question, “Do you feel shame when you perceive that you do not have material and other visible blessings from God?” I was met with several responses such as “I felt so shameful that I am not rich and that I live in a small house as a so-called elder of the church” or “I cannot hold cell groups or UMM meetings in my home because

God has not blessed me with a bigger	<i>Strongly disagree</i>	25 (32.1%)
house.” In all, 16.6% expressed their	<i>Disagree</i>	23 (29.5%)
shame at the lack of visible material	<i>Middle</i>	16 (20.5%)
blessings from God. Their responses	<i>agree</i>	9 (11.5%)
reflect <i>kibok sinang</i> in which one “has	<i>Strongly agree</i>	4 (5.1%)

Table 29: Shame Feeling

grown up in a tradition of asking God for the good things of life, to see material riches as a sign of spiritual blessings” (Myong Ihl lee 1995:166).

Table 30 denotes responses to the	<i>Follow God</i>	38 (50%)
question, “How can one receive	<i>Use Prayer</i>	19(25%)
blessings?” The responses illustrate	<i>Help Neighbor</i>	12 (15.8%)
the ways in which Koreans seek	<i>Use Charm/amulets</i>	3 (3.9%)
blessings. In response, 50%	<i>Follow the Rules</i>	2 (2.6%)

Table 30: People’s Doing To Get Bok

answered, “follow God” while 25% replied, “use prayer”. Other responses include 15.8% of “help neighbor” and 2.6% of “follow the rules”. The word “follow” in this sense connotes pleasing God. In various ways, prayer is recognized as a very important way to receive God’s blessing. James H. Grayson (2002:165), a United Methodist missionary to Korea from 1971 to 1987, writes:

Joint, out-loud congregational prayer (*tongsong kido*) is impressive not only for its volume but also its fervent nature. Attendance at church and fervent prayer are believed to create a spiritual condition in which the believer will be blessed (often understood to be material blessings), a clear reflection of the shamanistic religious traditions of Korea.

On the two dimensions of faith, Korean church believers maintain strong vertical relationship with God while they fail to foster a strong horizontal relationship with each other.

(N=79)

<i>Bok-Already Received from God</i>		<i>Bok-Most Wanted from God</i>	
<i>Salvation & Spiritual blessing</i>	51 (65.4%)	<i>Salvation & Spiritual blessing</i>	31 (41.8%)
<i>Peace of mind</i>	11 (14.1%)	<i>Success & Wealth</i>	18 (23.7%)
<i>Sweet home with many children</i>	4 (5.1%)	<i>Peace of mind</i>	11 (14.5%)
<i>Success & Wealth</i>	1 (1.3%)	<i>Health & Longevity</i>	11 (14.5%)
<i>Health & Longevity</i>	1 (1.3%)	<i>Sweet home with many children</i>	1 (1.3%)
<i>Others</i>	1 (1.3%)		

Table 31: Blessing-Already received and Most Wanted from God

Table 31 deals with two questions: “Which of the following do you think you have already received abundantly?” and “What do you want to receive most in the days to come?” In response, 65.4% claim that they have received “salvation and spiritual blessing,” while 41.8% express their wish to receive salvation and spiritual blessings. However, their most desired blessings reveal shamanic desire of material blessings: success and wealth (23.7%), peace of mind (14.5%), and health and longevity (14.5%); desire for material blessings (58.2%) outweighs spiritual blessings (41.8%).

To the question, “What is the biblical way to receive blessing?” In response, 70.5% responded that reading and keeping God's word as the best biblical way while 12.8% chose prayer. Myung Ihl Lee points out spiritual attitudes that reflect clear *kibok sinang* (a wish belief for earthly blessing) seen in many Christians. He (1995:166) says, Many Christians have spiritual attitude that if the believer performs all the correct religious actions, such as attending all church services, reading the bible, praying to God

every day, and offering their tithes correctly, God will greatly honor them with material blessings.

According to James H. Grayson (1995:55), Korean Christians think that the “Christian God must be

propitiated by proper religious behavior;” this attitude “clearly reflects a belief derived from a Shamanistic practice that spirits properly propitiated will grant material blessings.” A clear manifestation of this statement is that many believers do not embrace their neighbor in order to please God.

Sharing God’s Blessing

God does not provide blessings so that we can monopolize and manipulate it to our own self-interest. Instead, God blesses us so that we may share it with others. Thus, Jesus emphasized, “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). The Korean church will ultimately be judged against God’s words because *kibok sinang* is a self-absorbed faith that can only be overcome through sharing of blessings.

Table 33 illustrates how the participants interpret God’s purpose in giving us blessing. As results show, 49.4% indicated that God bestows blessing to advance mission works; 36.4% share that God desires us to share blessing with the needy; 7.8%

responded that God wants us to enjoy them. Table 34 addresses the question, “How much of your blessings do you share?” In response, 83% of the informants replied that they share a tithe of their income. Others, 31.6%,

<i>Reading and keeping the word of God</i>	55 (70.5%)
<i>Prayer</i>	10 (12.8%)
<i>Doing good to neighbor</i>	4 (5.1%)
<i>Others</i>	1 (1.3%)
<i>Doing no harm to neighbor</i>	
Table 32: Biblical Teaching to Get <i>Bok</i>	

<i>Giving them for the mission</i>	38 (49.4%)
<i>Sharing them with the needy</i>	28(36.4%)
<i>Enjoying them</i>	6 (7.8%)
<i>Passing them onto our offspring</i>	0 (0%)
<i>Showing them to others</i>	0 (0%)

Table 33: God’s Purpose To Give *Bok*

indicated that they financially support the advancement of gospel and the expansion of the Kingdom of God.

However, Myong Ihl Lee asserts that “about three out of every five [people] expected material blessings in return

<i>Little Bit</i>	<i>13 (17.1%)</i>
+ <i>Tithe</i>	<i>17 (22.4%)</i>
+ <i>Over Tithe</i>	<i>19 (25%)</i>
+ <i>Mission/Donation</i>	<i>24 (31.6%)</i>
+ <i>Whole Life</i>	<i>3 (3.9%)</i>

for giving tithes or offerings” (Myong

Table 34: Sharing God’s Blessing

Ihl Lee 1995:166). The church needs to guide the believers to obtain mature understanding of God's purpose in blessings. The Korean church can be a channel of blessing that advances God's kingdom only when it understands and sets to practice God's greater purpose in blessing.

Table 35 addresses the following question: “Since becoming a Christian, have there been times when your faith has been severely tested or lost?” As results show, 61.3% said no while 38.7% answered yes. Of those 29 people that answered yes, only

<i>Career/job/work decisions</i>	<i>11 (35.5%)</i>
<i>Marriage/family/personal relations</i>	<i>7 (22.6%)</i>
<i>Doubt and confusion</i>	<i>6 (19.4%)</i>
<i>Church’s emphasis on offerings</i>	<i>3 (9.7%)</i>
<i>No difference with other religions</i>	<i>3 (9.7%)</i>
<i>Others</i>	<i>1 (3.2%)</i>
<i>Health issues</i>	<i>0 (0%)</i>

Table 35: Faith Lost or Faith Tested

9.7% indicated that their faith was almost lost at one point. The acquirement of spirituality is not wholly dependent on obedience and faith. Overcoming of various trials and adversities, maintaining one's faith amidst flames of doubt and skepticism can also strengthen one's faith and spiritual maturity.

Results of Statistical Analysis of the Pretest-Posttest Group

I have designed an inductive Bible study course that focused on the biblical concept of blessing. It was designed with a presupposition that

Korean Christians largely perceive *bok* in materialistic terms, and that spiritual maturity of Korean Christians is contingent on conquering the shamanic faith with a biblical faith. The program was entitled “Be a Channel of Blessing” and through it, I endeavored to unlearn the Korean traditional concept of *bok* and instill in the believers the biblical concept of blessing. The 12- week program was designed to strengthen the foundation of biblical faith to resist both shamanic and prosperity gospel influences.

(N=Pretest 17, Posttest 20)

	Pre-Test				Post-Test			
	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple
God		4	12	1		3	9	6
Effort						1		

Table 36: **Giver of Blessing/Self-Measure of faith**

Both pre-tests and post-tests indicate that believers see God as the source of blessing. There were some changes with how the believers evaluated themselves. Some of the participants, who in the pre-bible study test classified themselves as “Attendees” or “believers,” saw themselves as “dedicated disciple” or “disciple makers” in the post-bible study test. I believe that the Church should not only preach biblical concept of blessing but also introduce various bible study programs to help Christians better understand the biblical concept. The only way to overcome *kibok sinang* is to nurture a proper understanding of blessing and to help Christians practice the biblical concept of faith.

Table 37 denotes changes in the motivation and purpose for church attendance. The post-test illustrates that biblical understanding of blessing has caused changes in the participants' motives and purpose. Clear understanding of the Gospel allowed them to better understand God's will for them; moreover, many of them confirmed their assurance of salvation and Kingdom of God in Christ.

(N=Pretest 17, Posttest 20)

	Pre-Test				Post-Test			
	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple
No		1	3				1	1
Yes		3	10	1		3	9	5
1		2	4			1	5	2
2			3			2	4	2
3								1
4		1						
5			2					

Legend: 1. Understanding the will of God and experiences of the Holy Spirit, 2. Assurance of kingdom of Heaven and Salvation, 3. Assurance of forgiveness and conversion, 4. Knowing the raison d'être, 5. Getting the better life

Table 37: Change of First Motives/ Self-Measure of Spiritual Maturity

In regards to God's will, God's permissive will differs from His [sic] absolute will. Many people in the Korean church hold shamanic belief such as: "if you insistently voice your desires and demands upon God through prayer, the Lord will surely relent and fulfill them for you". This type of shamanic faith and practice is prevalent among Korean believers. During the bible study, however, they were taught to search for God's absolute will towards themselves, their family, and their church. Once we realize God's amazing love and absolute will towards us, we cannot help but commit ourselves unto God and join Him [sic] in the advancement of His [sic] Kingdom. Their discovery of God's undying love and purpose in them motivated them to accept the role of a "disciple maker" in the church.

The purpose of ministry is to help transform believers into spiritually mature believers that are dedicated to the expansion of God's Kingdom. Table 38 illustrates that studying the Bible is the most effective means of transformation. Unlike Table 26 which 24 (42.1%) out of 79 marked the Bible study as a means of change, 69 percent in both pretesters and posttesters in Table 38 credited the Bible study as the most important means of their transformation. Respondants in Table 26 and 38 rank the graded list of important means of change as follows: Bible study (42.1%), special meetings

(21%), such as revival meeting or seminar, and prayer meeting (14%), and regular worship service (3.5%). These findings are enough to awake and alert the pastors and believers who consider the sermon as the best means of transformation.

(N=Pretest 17, Posttest 20)

	Pre-Test				Post-Test			
	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple
1		3	6			2	7	2
2			3			1		1
3			1				1	
4								1
5								
6								1

Legend: 1. Having Bible study, meditation & Reading devotional books, 2. Listening the God's voice through prayer life, 3. Testimony & Preaching at special meetings, 4. Regular worship services, 5. Community Services through church, 6. Others

Table 38: Means of Change/ Self-Measure of Spiritual Maturity

Martha Huntley (1941:122), a Presbyterian missionary to Korea, believes that "Korea was a nation of scholars and would-be scholars. The Confucian classics had shaped their culture. Now another Book was to reshape their lives." Korean people carefully studied Confucian texts and practiced Confucian faith in the past. Now, they are reading and studying the Christian Bible that has the power to reshape their lives. Bible studies renew Korean Christians in their faith; it makes them a new person in Christ (Huntely 1941:122).

While studying the bible is unquestionably important to one's faith and practice, it does not immediately gratify the necessities to become a mature Christian. In fact, there is no easy path to Christian maturity; it is a life long process. A Christian will be liberated from the snares of *kibok sinang* only under the Spirit's guidance and the practice of bible-oriented faith.

(N=Pretest 17 Posttest 20)

	Pre-Test					Post-Test				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Q1-A		1	5	6	7		1	3	9	7
Q1-B		1	6	8	3		3	5	8	4
Q1-C		1	6	7	4		2	5	9	3
Q1-D			8	7	3		2	4	8	5
Q1-E			4	7	7		1	4	8	7
Total		3	29	35	24		9	21	42	36
		3.2%	31.9%	38.5%	26.4%		8.3%	19.4%	38.9%	33.3%

Legend: A-Materialistic/Spiritual, B-Visible/Invisible, C-Tangible/Intangible, D-Earthly/Heavenly, E-Traditional/Biblical

Table 39: Pre/Post-Test and Concept of Blessing

This class served as a great challenge for the participants to overcome the shamanic worldview of *bok*. The changes and the effects of the Bible study can be seen in Table 39. The decrease of 3 (31.9%→19.4%), which indicates neutrality and moderateness, point to the increase in the biblical understand of blessings represented in 4 (38.5%→38.9%) and 5 (26.4%→33.3%). The increase in 2 (3.2%→8.9%), which represents shamanic concept, is perhaps due to the three participants who joined the class from the middle of the Bible study. A biblically grounded teaching can serve as an antidote to *kibok sinang*. It is my conviction that bible studies serve to strengthen the faith and maturity of Christian believers.

(N=Pretest 17, Posttest 20)

	Pre-Test				Post-Test			
	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple
1		1	1			1	2	
2		2	1			1	2	2
3			5	1		1	2	
4		1	6				3	2
5							1	2

Legend: 1. Little Bit, 2. + Tithe, 3.+ Over tithe, 4. + Mission/Donation, 5. + Whole Life

Table 40: Self-Measure of Faith and Offering Life

Three participants were given a chance to share their testimony after the completion of the bible study. They shared that they now believe that

blessings are given to be actively shared with others. Wesley once said, “unless one’s purse is opened, he is not yet authentic Christian, I am used to measuring the maturity of our faith by observing how our church members gives tithe, thanksgiving to the Lord, and share what he has with the poor.” Wesley provided three important presuppositions: the Children of God, first of all, should do their best to love each other by making use of the mammon of unrighteousness. Secondly, they need to regard money as the “most compendious instrument ... of doing all manner of good” and using it in accordance with Christian wisdom. Wesley advocated the “right use of money.” He did not consider money even in itself; he believed that it could be put to good or bad purposes. In his sermon *The Mystery of Iniquity*, he writes that “love of money is the root of all evil,” not money in itself (no.34). He emphasizes that all who fear God must endeavor to be faithful stewards of “the mammon of unrighteousness”.

(N=Pretest 17,Posttest 20)

	Pre-Test				Post-Test			
	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple	Seeker	Attender	Believer	Disciple
No		3	10	1		3	8	5
Yes		1	3			1	2	1

Table 41: Cause of Tested or Lost of faith (triple answers)

To the question, “Since becoming a Christian, have there been times when your faith has been severely tested or lost?” approximately one-fourth of believers (4 in pretest group and 4 in post test group) replied that they had undergone severe trials. They cited several sources of tests and trials: career/job/work decisions (3 persons), marriage/family/personal relations (5 persons), doubt and confusion (2 persons), health issues (2 persons) and other (1 person). People did not contest church's emphasis on offering. They accepted the fact everything belongs to our generous Father God.

(Table 41).

Both groups thought that they were blessed by God.

Christians should know that

they are blessed and propagate this self-image of blessed people in God to advance the Kingdom concept of blessing (Table 42).

The knowledge of biblical concept of blessing also changed their disposition towards receiving and giving. Many of them who were receiving-oriented in the pre-test indicated that they were now willing to be giving-oriented. Many of them also thought it necessary to become dedicated disciples than to remain as mere believers. Spiritual maturity, then, comes with the willingness to share and give one's blessing (Table 43).

Table 42: Self-Image as the Blessed

	1	2	3	4	5	
Pre-Test			1	4	12	17
Post-Test			3	2	14	19
Total			4	6	26	36

(N=Pretest 17, Posttest 20)

		1	2	3	4	5	Total
Attender	Pre-Test			3	1		4
	Post-Test				2	2	4
Dedicated Believer	Pre-Test		1	5	6		12
	Post-Test			5	1	4	10
Dedicated Disciple	Pre-Test						
	Post-Test				3	3	6

Legend: 1. Strongly receiving, 2. Receiving, 3. Middle, 4. Giving, 5. Strongly Giving

Table 43: Receiving or Giving-oriented

Findings of Interview

Those who participated in the interview were asked, "What are the most important differences between the traditional concept and Christian concept of blessing?"

Traditional Concept of Blessing

Interviewees expressed their thoughts on the traditional concept of blessing. They held that these blessings were visible, physical, earthly, materialistic, and tangible. Material blessing can either be attained through

one's efforts as much as it can be accorded by God. It is characterized by health, longevity, wealth, trouble and accident free. Blessed people are those who are honored and respected by many. They also have good relationship with not only the family but also their community.

However, interviewees also criticized the traditional concept of blessings as momentary, relative, fortunate, impersonal, individualistic, avaricious, unethical, selfish, and vain. They do not provide peace and rest for those who have it.

Christian Concept of Blessing

Some interviewees expressed that Christian concept of blessing is visible, material, tangible, physical as well as invisible, spiritual, and intangible. The majority regarded the biblical concept of blessing as spiritual, heavenly, and invisible. They held that biblical concept of blessing was to know God's will and faith in Jesus Christ. They stated that to live a blessed life was to recognize God's sovereignty, to believe and glorify Jesus the Savior, and to surrender one's will to obey God. It is to live in this world as God's children. It is to seek eternal life and becoming a channel of blessing in advancing God's kingdom.

Christians live in this world but are not of this world. We are born again through the work of the Holy Spirit by believing in Jesus Christ. We are God's children. God generously blessed us so that we may live in this world. He [sic] accords special blessings so that we may bless others in walking and working with Him [sic].

Compared to the material blessings of this world, special blessing seeks the Kingdom of God. Material blessings are confined to this world but spiritual blessing transcends this world into God's Kingdom. We cannot possibly fathom the value of blessings God gave us through Jesus because

we only know this world. Our material world is tempting as it continually seduces Christians to renounce special blessings for the transient pleasures of material blessings that eventually drives people to hell. However, the Spirit of God strengthens Christians. The Spirit allows us to see God as the true source of blessing.

These special blessings are “eschatological blessings.” We receive the special blessings in Jesus Christ to advance God's Kingdom. The more we draw these blessings from God, the more we can do to advance God's Kingdom and to proclaim our joy in Him [sic].

Jacob was blessed at Bethel and at the ford of Jabbok, but he could not live his blessings until he returned to Bethel. Later, he was able to stand before the Pharaoh, the most powerful human in the world, and bless him. This is the image we need to keep in mind when the Lord tells us that “You will be a blessing ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2-3). People may be proud of the earthly blessings they enjoy, but there are greater blessings, heavenly blessings, that God wants us to claim. He [sic] wants us to have both material and heavenly blessings to advance His [sic] Kingdom purpose.

Results of Statistical Analysis of the Hypothesis

In Eternity in Their Heart, Don Richardson (1984:31-33) states there were three major factors of influence in the Canaanite culture. First is the “Abraham factor” which indicates God’s special revelation which continued through the Old and New Testament. The “Melchizedek factor” signifies God’s general revelation which is already present. The “Sodom factor,” however, reveals the evil components of the Canaanite culture which brings forth God’s judgment. Richardson (1984:33) argues that these three factors

combined and/or affected each other throughout history.

Among Korean traditional factors seen in the Korean Christian believers, some hinder them to have right understanding of the Gospel, while others quicken them to understand the Gospel (Moon Jang Lee 2000(8):65). This research began with the presupposition that some factors in Korean worldview and its understanding of *bok* have great impact on the quantitative church growth but crippled the spiritual maturity of Korean believers. Based on the results of ethno-historical, biblical and field research, I inferred whether or not and which cultural factors promote the spiritual growth of Korean church and its believers. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I can adopt this approach and identify which aspects of the Korean culture is a preventing (Sodom) factor or a promoting (Melchizedek) factor. Thus, the method of critical discernment provides a way of differentiating various factors in the given context of Korean church.

Preventing Factors of Spiritual Growth in the Traditional Concept of *Bok*

Although the Old Testament should be interpreted in light of the fulfillment of the revelation in Jesus Christ, some Korean leaders equate the Old Testament concept of blessings with the traditional Korean concept of blessings due to the emphasis on material blessings in the Old Testament such as longevity, wealth, order in peace, virtue, fertility, success in life, and fulfilling destiny. However, in doing so, these leaders fail to address that great believers of faith like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were also endowed with heavenly blessings. They dismiss the spiritual blessings that these figures received from God and emphasize *kibok*, a wish for material blessings in this life.

The Old Testament blessing appears to be compatible with *kibokjooeui*, the sodomic factor of traditional Korean concept of blessing.

Kibokjooeui is a belief system that regards material blessings as an end and therefore, encourages the unrelenting pursuit of material blessing to its adherents. *Kibokjooeui* invariably filtered through all religions of Korea and consequently subdued it. Korean Protestantism was no exception to this phenomenon.

Table 22 shows that around 11% (1 & 2) are extremely shamanic while 42.3% (3) are attached to the Old Testament concept of blessing that is also compatible with *Kibok sinang*. *Kibok sinang* has taken root on all religious activities, concepts, and actions; its adherents are found in revival meetings, healing services, one hundred day prayer meetings for special purposes like the passing of college entrance examinations, New Year wish offering, One thousand day burnt offering, etc.

★ Special Offering – a pastor once asked church members to offer “*Byulmi Chookbok Hunkeum*” (Blessing for an special offering of tasty food) to receive special blessing as Jacob did to Isaac. His idea grew out of Genesis 27:4, “Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.” It is un-Christian and un-biblical to receive blessing by offering mere sacrifices without living a faithful Christian life (Hoon Ku Lee 1999:158).

★ *Ansoo Kido* (the laying of hands) – Many Korean believers preferred *ansoo kido* to just act of prayer, because it brought blessing and healing to them (2 Kings 5:10-14). As Naaman did, they ask pastors or evangelists to lay their hands on their heads or spots for blessing and healing.

★ Prophecy - Koreans often consult fortunetellers. Some Christian believers habitually check their daily fortune through playing Korean cards *Hwatoo* (花鬪 Flower Cards) or reading the horoscopes on daily newspaper. They constantly seek pastors or lay peoples that have spiritual gifts of prophecy and rely on them as they would a fortuneteller.

★ Prayer - Many Christians depreciate prayer into a means of fulfilling their secular desire. They solely rely on prayer and say that “prayer

changes everything” without backing up their prayer with faith.

★ Home Visitation- Many believers believe that pastors bring blessings and fortune to their homes. Thus, they urge pastors to come and bless their house and business, because they believe that blessings can be controlled by the servants of the Lord.

Promoting Factors of the Traditional Korean Concept of *Bok*

There are a lot of Melchizedek factors in the traditional concept of *bok*. Most Koreans believe that blessing comes from *Hanulnim* or Heaven, while Confucianism distorted that belief with the practice of ancestral worship. Korean Protestant churches have struggled with the issue of ancestral worship from the beginning of Christianity. None of the informants attributed ancestral spirits as sources of blessing (Question 2).

In relation to the ancestral worship, Korean Protestant churches displaced ancestor worship with “*Choomo Yebae*,” (추모예배, memorial service). Utilizing this memorial services, Korean church leaders have preached God as the Ancestor of ‘ancestors,’ by differentiating the biblical concept of blessing from the traditional Korean concept of blessing. They also preached that God is the genesis of all blessings and that one's ancestors do not possess any authority on the matter of blessing. They stressed the need for altering the traditionally minded Koreans' attitude towards their ancestors so that they do not go beyond the level of respect and blessing, as people in the Old Testament were taught to respect but not to worship or attach superstitions on their ancestors.

One of the tasks of Korean Church leaders is to help believers biblically harmonize the Korea-ness and Christian-ness and promote the new image of Christianity (Moon Jang Lee 2000(8): 67). The research confirms that constant biblical teaching of blessing and its concrete application to daily

life will be spiritual maturity factor. Before unconditionally condemning *kibok sinang*, if church leaders develop a Bible study group and have a time to study the matter of *bok*, the unbiblical worldview in Christian believers will be exposed to the face. As seen in the section of “results of statistical analysis of the pretest-posttest group,” understanding biblical concept of blessing promotes growth in faith and maturity. Analyzing the results from the 12-week Bible study program have revealed to me of the importance of the Bible study as a step of critical contextualization.

Summary

The overall result of this research supports the biblical teaching on blessing to release Korean Christians from the baneful effects of *kibok sinang* and materialism. The belief and practice of biblical concept of blessing will help Korean church overcome the present impasse that was brought on by *kibok sinang*. The only way to restore the bleak situation of the present is to seek first the spiritual blessings and to adopt the rightful role of the Church as a channel of blessing.

CHAPTER 6

MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY OF THE KOREAN CHURCH

The problem of the Korean church is deeply rooted in the Korean worldview. Thus, without redressing the fundamental issue of the Korean worldview, the Korean Church will fail to gain the true missiological perspective and sink further into spiritual stagnation. In this chapter, I will expound on three missiological implications gained from the ethno-historical research (chapter 2), the biblical research (chapter 3 & 4), and the anthropological research (chapter 5).

Deficiency of Critical Discernment and Diffused *Kibok Sinang*

Partick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk in Operation World (2001) accurately point out that the Korean Church is faced with the following spiritual challenges:

Spiritual pride. There has long been a widespread belief that success and prosperity are an indication of God's blessing. There is often a pride in statistical growth, impressive organization and buildings, with exaggerated claims made. It is a temptation for leaders to seek success, wealth and degrees more than lifting up the Cross. ... Inadequate discipling. A significant number of Christians come from a background steeped in Buddhist concepts and structured by Confucian ethics. The Spirit and the Word must bring them into the full liberty of grace in the gospel. Neglect of ethical teaching has meant little application of biblical truth to social issues. Christians have often condoned low ethical standards, bribery and corrupt practices and have neglected social wrongs. Catholics have taken a stronger stance on these and often gained more credibility than Protestants (2001:388).

They mention spiritual pride among Korean pastors that is caused by

distorted concept of blessing in the Korean churches as well as inadequate discipling and neglect of ethical teaching caused by absence of critical discernment. What has caused this undesirable state in the Korean church? We learn how the lack of critical discernment had formed *kibok sinang* (shamanistic faith) in the Korean churches and had contributed to diffuse *kibok sinang* over the Korean churches and theology.

Period of Formation of Christian *Kibok Sinang* (1885-1960)

Early missionaries in Korea and church leaders perceived that "Shamanism or animism, had actually prepared the nation to receive Christianity" (Shearer 1966: 30). Martha Huntley (1941:123) in her Caring, Growing, Changing: A History of the Protestant Mission in Korea reports that "The early Korean Christians were convinced they were grappling with evil spirits and that their God would prevail." These reports illustrate that missionaries and early Korean Christian leaders approached shamanism in terms of spiritual warfare or power encounter. They viewed "*mugyo* (Korean shamanism) as evil superstition, or the works of the devil. The spirit of *mugyo* was identified as the devil, and *mudang* (Korean shaman) with their followers were considered sons of the devil" (Moses Lee 1994:66). Thus, the Korean church believers of the earlier stage advocated the eradication of superstitious beliefs and habits from a Western scientific viewpoint. They began to persuade people to destroy shrines of tutelary deities, burn amulets and spirit tablets, and discontinue *gut* (shamanistic ritual) at the family and village level.

As a result, Korean shamanism seemed to have disappeared until the 1960s. There were two causes: First, two revivals, Korean Pentecost (1903-10) and the Revival Movement (1930s) had a strong impact on the Korean

believers not only to endure the regime of Japanese rule (1910-1945) and the Korean War (1950-53) with faith, but also to challenge believers to give up their old beliefs and practices with strong messages of repentance for idolatry and sins. Second, this led to the social movement of the Korean church to eradicate superstitious practices and beliefs (Moses Lee 1994:133).

However, church leaders failed to use critical discernment. They did not properly deal with shamanism from a missiological perspective. They had a naïve conviction that missionary efforts in Korea were largely successful in Christianizing the Korean shamanism because they might “not have understood the prevalence of shamanism as a very important part of religious culture of Korean people” (John T. Kim 1996:234). The absence of critical discernment eventually led Korean churches to fail to transform the traditional concept of *bok* (blessing) into a biblical one. This gave Korean shamanism an opportunity to resuscitate as baneful viruses of the Korean society that no religious vaccines can cure. In reference to the revival of Korean shamanism, many scholars gave warnings to the Korean church to struggle with the predominating shamanic ideologies (Joon Sik Choi 1997:282). This means that the Korean churches did not answer the questions that shamanism answered or met the daily needs of the people. During the rapid transition from the agricultural society to the industrialized and westernized society, Koreans began to revert back to Korean shamanism for their daily concerns with their backs against technological fantasies and abstract religious teachings of the Korean churches (Bradshaw 1993:26).

Period of Diffusing *Kibok Sinang* (1960-Present)

Heung Soo Kim in his article, “*Kibok Sinang*” (Shamanistic Faith: Change of Christianity after the Korean War), inferred the reason of revival of Korean shamanism. After the Korean War (1950-53), extreme struggles for

existence, disunited families, and drifts of population from rural areas to urban areas evoked “materialism and selfish individualism that tried to keep their profits and secure themselves in the anarchical state” (Heung Soo Kim 2000:3). Also, materialism had replaced humanism that had stressed the moral perfection of human in the traditional value. This materialism led to social upward movement and success-orientation of people in the period of the economic development (1960s-70s) (2000:3).

In this social situation, the Korean church leaders began to fan the flame by stirring latent *kibok sinang* deep into the hearts of the people through their prayer and sermons. Previously, the term “*kibok sinang*” was only applied to shamanism or shamanised Korean Buddhism, but this term began to be applied to the Korean church since 1960s. Korean Church leaders began to encourage people’s survival desires by promising them earthly/material blessing, health, encouragement, and comfort through their preaching and prayer (2000:4). Some of them had strived for their own church growth by even using shamanistic propositions to the people. Their uncritically discerning acts of ministry eventually contributed to awaken the latent *kibok sinang* of people in cooperation with the New Village Movement (2000:9-10).

Korean Church leaders failed to notice how shamanism transformed and reshaped the philosophies and religious practice of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Roman Catholicism (Grayson 2002:230). While the nationwide New Village Movement was encouraging Korean masses to achieve “a better life through whatever means was available to them,” the churches which adopted many elements from shamanistic rituals and whose pastor stressed and even promised a better life here and now began to grow in numbers (John T. Kim 1996:215). The promise of a better life and security

in God appealed strongly to not only the destitute but also the middle class who were also deprived of security and stability within the historical context of Korea.

In the 1980s, the revival movement led by revivalists and Pentecostal's spiritual movement was criticized as a shamanistic *kibok sinang* movement that correlates the this-worldly centered, success-oriented, and material-centered worldview to salvation (2000:18). John T. Kim, (1996:216) in Protestant Church Growth in Korea, describes this phenomenon:

The desire for earthly blessings draws many people to churches where the sermon of material blessing is emphasized in preaching. For instance, Pastor Paul Yonggi Cho of the Central Full Gospel Church on Yoido Island, stress God's material blessings in the present life and brings about explosive church growth. The church slogan is from the second verse of the third epistle of John: "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health; I know that it is well with your soul." That leads to the church's "triple-meter faith" in riches of the Spirit, of the body, and in possessions.

During this period, preachers had a warning from scholars to neither materialize Christian thought on blessing and grace of God nor make Christian faith superstitious (Heungsoo Kim 2000:18). In this way, Christian faith is regarded as a kind of *kibok sinang*, the manipulating means to get blessing from God.

The lack of critical discernment of Korean church leaders led them to emphatically deny the integration of shamanism in Korean Protestantism and wholly condemn shamanism as evil (Anderson 2004:95), but then directed paradoxical situation that strengthened *kibok sinang*. Yoon Sung Bum (1998:141), a forerunner of indigenization movement in Korea, maintains that

the absence of critical discernment was responsible for the widespread manifestation of shamanism in Korean Christianity.

The Missiological Implication #1: *Bok* as Taught in the Korean Church is Both the Same as and Different from the Biblical Teaching

The Bible confirms that human beings are not made to live without God's blessing. It is natural and universal to seek blessing. God's blessing works for human beings as an automobile company provides an after service program. Losing the relationship with God, the source of all blessings, human beings are fallen to the state of earnestly seeking and desiring blessing. With sinful nature, eyes of humans were veiled (2 Corinthians 3:15) and could not see "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 1:3). The Korean church partially helped Christian believers to remove the veil from to see the spiritual dimension of *bok* but partially failed by adhering to the traditional concept of *bok*. The following discussion shows how the Korean church has taught the perspective of *bok*.

Correlation of Faith and *Bok*

In the Yeongnam Presbyterian Seminary, a professor of evangelism taught seminarians to evangelize to the ones who reason that they are "too poor to believe in Jesus" by saying,

"If you believe in God, you will have not only salvation of spirit and soul but also will have blessings in the midst of your life according to 3 John 1:2. Uzzimura Kancho once said that if one did not become the rich after one believed in Jesus for three years, he or she would definitely have a problem of unbelief. The Bible says, Jesus came to search for the poor and make them rich." ... Everything is right if you make them believe in Jesus. You have to help them accept Jesus. It is not bad (Web Administrator 2006).

They directly correlate "believing in God" with "getting richer," and mislead

believers about material blessing.

Correlation of the Triune God and *Bok*

Korean people had long lived in the midst of the gods and spirits of fear. They had known *Hananim* or a higher God as transcendental God who had no concern for people in this world any more and transferred ruling authority to the gods or spirits (John T. Kim 1996:209). But, they rediscovered *Hananim* in the church as God of love who gave His only and one begotten Son for forgiveness of our sin and our salvation. Thus, they could be “glad to find a high God of love to replace the gods of fear they had known” (1996:209).

However, they lost again their gladness in Christian faith because many pastors described God as someone who can give or confiscate the blessing upon our attitude toward the church and pastors. According to In Kyo Chung, a Korean homiletic professor, many pastors scared the believers with a terrifying God and comforted them with a blessing God at the same time. The reason they emphasized the duality of God was heavily related to their ulterior motive to build a church or to start projects that centers on their “Church Growth First Policy.” They drew an image of God who gives more love to one who gives offerings to him. They dismissed the God of love from the believers (In Kyo Chung 2007).

Their emphasis on a dreadful God encourages believers to cling to *kibok sinang*. Hoon Koo Lee (1991:41-42) argues,

Shamanistic believers are rank outsiders who do not have any concern about having relationship with God and His sovereign will to be fulfilled through them, but understand God as a contributor to supply their felt needs. Their concept of God is so self-centered and their recognition of God is seen as God who punishes. They believe that the punishment can appear in various aspects of life, such as

health, business, and material. Thus, on that occasion they try to solve the wrath of God by giving offering, fasting some duration, having special prayer times.

Shamanic believers perceive God as an instrument of blessing; they debase the Biblical God as a benefactor of blessings and not as God whom they desire to build a relationship. The image of a fearful God denies Korean Christians of accepting the concept of salvation as having a relationship with God. Korean Christians with shamanistic beliefs appreciate the role of Christ who took away sins and curses on our behalf and became a mediator between God and human beings. They exalt the Cross of Jesus Christ as the sign of forgiveness of sin and of blessing, but do not fully lift it up as a sign of obedience in which we share the blessing of God with others.

Focusing on earthly blessings such as prosperity in daily life and physical health, the Holy Spirit was emphasized as an able power to make those blessings possible (Heungsoo Kim 2000:12). Pentecostal movement, in particular, emphasized the Spirit as the able power, the Son as the master, and God as the Father (2000:12). Revivalists attributed the cause of failures to lacking the Spirit and emphasized fasting prayer and attendance of revival meeting in order to receive prophesy, speaking in tongue and divine healing from the Spirit (2000:10). They taught and preached that the presence of the Spirit brings this-worldly blessing (2000:13).

Correlation of Offering and *Bok*

Koreans often greet each other with questions such as, "How old are you?" "What do you do?" "How big is your business" "How much do you get paid or earn?" Even pastors ask questions like "How many people do you have under you?" or "How much do you earn?" Some pastors are even driven with the desire to employ the *kibokjuk* proposition for the growth of his

church. Moses Lee writes, "Numerous pastors preach on offering money to the Lord to receive *bok* from God. Change of heart or repentance is less important. Revivalists praise generous givers from the pulpit and curse those who offer too little" (Moses Lee 1994:174). Some revivalists even negotiate how much money they will receive for the special revival meeting before accepting the invitation. There are cases where some revivalists are evaluated for their persuasive abilities to convince church members to offer more money to the Lord. These revivalists do not visit small churches or poor churches located in the countryside or on islands.

Recently, there was a symposium under the title, "Analyzing Sermons of Sixteen Successful Pastors in Korea" (Kidokgyo Sasang 2004). Kyung Je Yoo, a presenter, analyses a sixteen well-known pastors' sermons and criticizes them as follow:

The worst problem in sermons of Korean churches is that there was no theology. The absence of theology lets a preacher to interpret the Bible by choice and compromise the Word of God to the given situation. A typical example is *sambakja* (triple-meter) salvation or theory of the honest rich that teaches, "if you believe in Jesus well, you can be the rich. ... If you do your best for religious life and offer many money, you will be blessed and be the rich" (Kidokgyo Sasang 2004).

"Defining *bok* as actual blessing of the spirit, health, and material, the church leaders demand church members to pray for this blessing, give offerings, and attend revival meeting and early morning prayer meeting in order to receive these *bok*" (Heungsoo Kim 2000:12). As people offer up something for the material blessing or cure for disease by appeasing evil spirits in Korean shamanism, many believers expect Christian offering to have the same function. Thus, offering money has changed from giving thanksgiving to the

grace of God to a way to receive material blessing from God (Myung Ihl Lee 1995:126).

In an interview, In Kyo Chung told an anecdote of an elder from his church. Making long story short, thirty years of church history include purchasing the land around the church to rebuild the church building four or five times with credit of the church lay leaders. Many pastors made unreasonable requests using Christian faith, blessing, and expectation and had achieved numerical church growth.

Correlation of Prayer and *Bok*

Korean churches are renowned for their practice of prayer. Overnight prayer meetings, intercessory prayer, fasting prayer, unison prayer, intensified prayer, and dawn prayer meetings are common practices within the Korean church. Many Korean believers focus on prayer for wish-fulfillments and daily struggles that invariably involve money. Though I do not weaken supplicatory prayers, many Christians depreciate prayer into a means of fulfilling their secular desire with the saying, “prayer changes everything.” They just employ prayer for them and their family affairs to seek *bok* without backing up their prayer with faith and repentance.

Majority of Korean believers pray as means of attaining blessing. Such practice indicates syncretism. They pray within the Christian framework but to obtain the traditional concept of blessings. Many people perceive prayers as necessary in the acquirement of blessing. These believers see prayer as a way of appealing to God who will then bestow blessings upon them. They pray hard but the content and the attitude of their prayer remains *kibokjuk*. The concept of blessing in *kibok sinang* is self-centered while the concept of blessing in Christianity is selfless and Christ-centered.

A typical example is *Ansoo Kido* (the laying of hands) - many Korean

pastors or believers, however, hold beliefs that laying on of hands bring blessing and divine healing to them (2 Kings 5:10-14) (Hyunsoo Lee 2005:75). They even evaluate with the rise and fall of his modulation or pitch whether a pastor has spiritual power or not (2005:76) because they mistakenly believe that it is the pastor who gives blessing. Ethics or morality is excluded from their prayer, because their wishes and desires are more important than morality (2005:75). These humanistic and shamanized practices of prayer activities are quite different from the biblical teaching of prayer. A way to overcome *kibok sinang* is related to the biblical teaching on prayer while presenting difference of shamanistic prayer and biblical prayer (Hyunsoo Lee 2005:77).

Correlation of Wealth and *Bok*

A famous revivalist in 1980s preached at the Revival meeting at a church in Geochang province. "If you believe in Jesus for three years well, you can clear your debts. God, above all, will increase your property, and secondly make you wise, and lastly makes your children rise in the world" (Young Hee Baik 1980). "With the influx of benefits of economic development during the mid-1970s, many pastors began to preach wealth as a sign of grace and blessing" (Heungsoo Kim 2000:12). "Material wealth is important in the moral value system of Korean society. The moral concept of the good and bad does not exist in Shamanism because the volume of material possessions becomes the measure of the good and bad" (Myung Ihl Lee 1995:126).

Correlation of Health and *Bok*

Since the middle of 1950s, one who was praying and receiving the laying on of hands from pastor for healing the disease rather than going to hospital and drug store is considered as a better believer. This trend to

receive the laying on of hands from the pastors or famous revivalists in order to get blessing and be healed from the disease has been spread over the Korean church (Heungsoo Kim 2000:6). A lot of side effects related to these beliefs are reported to the public and disgrace the prayer mountain as a nursery to *kibok sinang*.

Correlation of Participation in the Church Meetings and *Bok*

“Attendance at church and fervent prayer are believed to create a condition in which the person will be blessed” (John T. Kim 1996:216). The prayer of shamanic Christians is primarily a petition for worldly blessings, happiness, health, material success and a higher social status. John T. Kim (1996:217) addresses shamanic Christians when he explains,

[H]aving faith in Yahweh God is interpreted not differently from believing in the traditional spirit-gods who bless the followers with material wealth and longevity. The issues of material blessings has become a great concern to Korean Christians who speak of *kibok sinang* (belief in prayer for blessings) as being the principle spiritual problem facing their church.

Hoon Koo Lee (1991:45) strongly criticizes the frantic Korean revival meetings. He (45) calls some revivalist as *mudang* who put on Christian clothes and scolds them to make Christian revival shamanistic *gut* that formed *kibok sinang* in Christianity.

Correlation of Home Visitation and *Bok*

Many believers misunderstand the purpose of pastor's visits to their homes. They believe that pastors bring blessings and fortune to their homes. Thus, they urge pastors to come and bless their houses and business. They believe that blessings can be controlled by the servants of the Lord.

In brief, the research helps us check how we are involved with old beliefs and practices in terms of blessing. When we read verses on blessing

in the Old Testament without having new heart and new eyes that were unveiled by the revelation (2 Corinthians 3:15), we convicted that the Old Testament verified the traditional concept of *bok*. Thus, some preachers went so far as to proclaimed that “the rich are the blessed and the poor are cursed” (Moses Lee 1994:224). They were busy to convince Korean believers that Christianity promises them the same material blessings in shamanic thought and emphasized that Christian faith also guarantees eternal faith and spiritual blessing. In doing so, they did not mention the biblical conditions or the requisites to receive blessing, but utilized shamanistic propositions for their ministry (Moses Lee 1994:222).

The research shows how we fell from the biblical teaching of blessing. Biblical teaching of blessing is “holistic—visible as well as invisible, earthly as well as heavenly, material as well as spiritual, this-worldly as well as other-worldly, social as well as individual, environmental as well as humane, mechanical as well as personal” (Moses Lee 1994:142), and present as well as eschatological blessing. In this world, we are called to live in the special blessing of God’s kingdom as the present reality and at the same time live in this world using general blessing for the expansion of the kingdom of God. The Bible clearly mentions that we are strangers and foreigners in this world and are not yet in the heavenly home (Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 1:17, 2:11). Thus, we should not mistake this worldly general blessing as everything.

The Missiological Implication #2: Misunderstanding of *Bok*- A Reason for the Stagnation of the Korean Protestantism

We have seen that traditional concept of blessing had worked as the motive of church growth in Korea since 1960s. People had been drawn into

the church seeking whatever new blessings were offered. In spite of the fact that Christianity is a religion of true blessing, a strange phenomenon surfaced. The 2005 Korean Religious Demography released from the Korean government says that the number of Korean Protestantism decreased (1985/6,487,000 /16.1% - 1995/8,760,000/19.7% -2005/8,616,000 /18.3%), while Korean Buddhism (1985/8,059,000/19.9%-1995/10,321,000 /23.2% - 2005/10,726,000 /22.8%), and Roman Catholics (1985/1,865,000/ 4.6%-1995/2,951,000/6.6%-2005/5,146,000/10.9%) increased in numbers (Sisa Press 2006). Compared to the overall increase of the Korean religious population from 42.6% (1985) to 53.1% (2005), only Korean Protestantism experienced decrease.

The second missiological implication is that one of the reasons for the stagnation of the Korean Protestant Church is due to misunderstanding of blessings. The Korean church had failed to reveal blessing-seekers what true blessings the church has for them in God. While church leaders have been enforcing the importance of earthly or general blessing, they had been fatigued to seek true blessing that satisfies their hearts. The church leaders had been busy with their own agenda of church growth first policy rather than the Kingdom agenda, which includes the proliferation of the heavenly blessing.

This Earthly Blessings Cannot Satisfy People Forever

As St. Augustine (1994:13) once confessed that “for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee,” humans are not made to be satisfied with this-worldly things and blessings. As Ecclesiastes says, “The eye never has enough of seeing, nor the ear its fill of hearing” (1:8 NIV), church leaders should help believers set their hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1). But many Korean pastors struggled in vain to gain the confidence of the

people with blessing of the earthly things and worldly wealth rather than to fill the minds of people with things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

During the time of a rapid church growth in Korea, “*Yesu midko, bok bateu seyo*” (Believe in Jesus and receive blessings) was one of the popular phrases adopted in personal evangelical approaches. The concept of blessing and the name *Hananim* for God are typical example of Melchizedek factors in the Korean culture. However, no efforts were made to unlearn the traditional concept of blessing and impart the Biblical concept of blessing as it was done so for the concept of *Hananim*. Early missionaries and Korean pastors exerted tremendous efforts to eradicate shamanic, Buddhist, and Confucian connotation in the name of *Hannanim*. Having eliminated cultural associations of the word *Hananim*, they supplied the concept of Biblical God into the word through bible studies, sermons, revival meetings, etc. (Richardson 1984:62-71; Yong Kyu Park 2004:582).

The Global Research Institute commissioned by the Ministry and Theology reports result of current preaching ministry of Korean pastors (2007:2-5). The study included information from five hundred seventy eight Korean pastors. Those pastors evaluate the importance of preaching in ministry just as high as in the past (75.5%). They view that sermon has great influence on the Christian maturity and growth of a community (98.3%). In relation to their characteristic of sermons, 61.1% answered that they range themselves with encouragement, comfort and blessing, while 12.4% were preaching to awaken sins of believers and call upon them to repent (26.5% are middle). Strange thing is that pastors in the bigger church were more inclined to give blessing (less 50-59.5%, 50-300-60.9%, and Over 300-66.6%), while pastors in the smaller churches were more inclined to give sermons on

repentance of sin (Over 300-9.2%, 50-300-10.4%, and less 50-15.4%). This research shows that sermons of blessing are still the main theme on the pulpit in the Korean church.

Young Don Park (204:208) asserts that while the Korean church is successful in leading people to salvation, it fails in inspiring people to live the life of holiness. The loss of the church's "cultural, political and social influences" in Korean society is due to the lack of sanctification in the Korean church (Grayson 2002:49). The ineffectiveness of wielding holy influence over the society generates stagnation. Without the Christian maturity to seek first God, the source of all blessings, rather than general blessings, this prevailing inclination of seeking material blessings and happiness will ultimately suppress the church's spiritual growth.

Why is it that new believers, who have received the gospel and were led to church, ultimately leave churches dissatisfied? Although people were drawn into church seeking happiness and blessings, if the Church does not provide the reason to remain in the church as people of God, they eventually leave the church dissatisfied. That was one of the main reasons that around ten million of Korean people rushed into the front door of the church and went out the side or back door during 1983-1997 (Won Gue Lee 2000:163-64). Ignorance of critical discernment and persistence on numerical church growth of Korean pastors could not help but fill the mind of people with this-worldly blessing. Korean pastors condemned shamanism but eventually strengthened *kibok sinang* using blessings in the Old Testament without the process of hermeneutics in light of the New Testament.

People Need Special Blessings for Their Eternal Satisfaction

We know that churches exist to help people experience God as their master. People who disbelieve in the living God ultimately idolize something

– whether it is money, state, or a person – as their Baal and master. In this sense, there are numerous Baal-faith holders³⁶ within the church as well. Many people perceive material blessings as the requisite for happiness. For these people, money is their Lord. Jum Sik Ahn, (1998:147) reveals his worry about the prevalence of Baal-faith in the Korean church. He (1998:147) pinpoints the overemphasis of prosperity and fertility and calls attention to the oversight of sins in Korean churches. Baal faith consists of mysticism and this-worldly *kibokjooeu* or the principle that derives the purpose of life in earthly and material blessings. Both the Baal-faith and *kibokjooeu* focus on the issue of suffering and ultimately evades the topic of sin. By focusing on suffering, they both maximize pleasure and minimize suffering. This-worldly *kibokjooeu* makes use of God's power to remove suffering, while mystic *Kibokjooeu* tries to remove suffering through a union with God. The purpose of Baal faith is also grounded on worldly blessing. Baal-faith adherents and *kibokjuk* believers both perceive suffering as the absence of blessing.

Won Gue Lee (1992:238) specifies the baneful influences of shamanic Christianity as the neglect of one's neighbor and society due to selfish and individualistic faith. Jum Sik Ahn (1998:147) points out the harmful influence of Baal faith. The church ultimately deprives believers of attaining spiritual maturity and experiencing true happiness in redemption by evading the issue of sin and overemphasizing worldly blessings. True blessing allows the believers to revel in their redemption and forgiveness of sins. Believers, then, should experience the blessedness of redemption in church by confessing their sins to God, repenting their sins, and receiving the blessing of

³⁶ Kibok sinang (Shamanistic faith) is interchangeably used with Baal-faith in this dissertation.

forgiveness by the blood of Jesus Christ. The present case in the Korean church is that people do not confess and repent their sins to the Lord. Many of them do not feel the need to repent because pastors repeatedly told them that they would receive blessings of God. However, these believers are not able to enjoy the blessedness that comes to their spirits and souls because they failed to repent. Spiritual catharsis cannot be experienced through promises of earthly blessings. These believers need to be redeemed from the oppression of their guilt so that they may bask in the blessedness of God's redemption.

Many pastors justify themselves for their actions of imparting only blessing and comfort, because they are worried that addressing sins will provoke and anger the congregation. The reason for this type of action is due to their lack of understanding the biblical blessing. When a preacher addresses the issue of sins through the Word of God, and covers their sins with the blood of Jesus Christ, then, the congregation will hear the voice of God the Father in his or her sermon. If a preacher admonishes his congregation without providing them with the joy and comfort of forgiveness, it amounts to abuse. At the same time, merely doling out comfort and blessing without redressing the issue of sin is nothing more than keeping the believers fooled. The *kibok joeui* believers regard God the Holy Spirit as a mighty benefactor who bestows blessing; they seek the Spirit not for the glory of God but for the sake of their material struggles – wish-fulfillment, healing disease, business success, and the quantitative growth of church (Jum Sik Ahn 1998:148).

What, then, is the difference between Baal faith and Jehovah faith? The only difference lies in the procedure. The Baal faith seeks the earthly blessings and they may glorify God after they receive them. The

Jehovah faith seeks the glory of God and receiving earthly blessings are secondary. If one seeks the glory of God, he/she may be blessed with earthly blessing. The society criticized the Korean church for its failure to transform “*kibokjuk* believers” into biblical Christians. The church also received numerous accusations for its “*kibokjuk*” tendencies. This “*kibokjuk*” Christianity led to the failure of the church’s role as salt and light of this world.

	Jehovah Faith	Baal Faith
Purpose	Glory of God	Earthly Blessing
Process	Personal Relationship with God	Impersonal Relationship with God
Result	Earthly Blessing	Glory of God

Table 44. The Difference of Jehovah Faith and Baal Faith
(Adapted from Jum Sik Ahn 1998:151)

Furthermore, optimistic faith and gospel of prosperity that were imported from the U.S. exacerbated the harmful influence of *kibokjuk* faith. Korean church compromised true faith for *kibok(jooeui)juk* faith. In dismissing the culture-enriching, life-transforming power of Scriptures, the Church inevitably found itself in bondage to the culture of materialism.

The Missiological Implication #3: Biblical Teaching of Blessing

- A Help with Developing Better Contextualization

Third missiological implication is that biblical study of blessing in Church may help with developing a better contextualization. The sole responsibility of the Korean church is to overcome *kibok sinang* or Baal-faith and *kibokjooeui*. Sung Jong Shin (2005:61), a leading pastor of a Korean church, calls attention to the Korean church to overcome *kibok sinang* for the glory of God, as the Reformer reformed the corrupted medieval churches with

a whole heart and strength. He (2005:61-62) mentions that the Korean church needs to reform seminaries which do not properly teach the Bible, awakening lay people to participate in the ministry through disciple training process, subverting individualistic 'churchism' which a founding pastor gives place to his son with considering the church as his own possession, not God's possession, strengthening small size churches rather than concentrating on the bigger church-oriented, and being a community centered church which leads and shares with a community. He (2005:62) stresses that by sharing God's blessing with a community, the Korean church can overcome baneful effects of *kibok sinang* that discredited the church.

Also Byung Keum Chun (2005:52-57) suggests his ideas on ways to overcome *kibok sinang* in the Korean churches. He mentions building a Scripture-centered church, liberating from Church Growth First Policy, and renewing revival meeting which degenerated into means of *kibok sinang* to root into the Korean church. In reference to revival meeting (復興會, *booheunghoe*), it had been used as a nationwide channel of blessing that revitalizes the flagged faith and corrupted practices of Christian believers. Since 1960s, revival meetings in the Korean churches had become the means of *kibok sinang* to secure special amount of budget for church building, land, bus, burial place, etc. Now he (2005:57) asks the Korean church to return to revival meetings, which God can utilize for His [sic] own purpose.

Before 1960s, the Korean church had persecution and hatred from the society, but today's Korean churches receive accusation and derision. The former was brought to the church because of their consecration to God, but the latter was incurred to the church because of having no Christian difference from them (Cho Jun Park).

Biblical Teaching for the Right Understanding

The problem of surging *kibok sinang* in Korean churches can eventually be overcome through sermons that propagate God's intention. When the intention of God is proclaimed on the Korean pulpit, the word of God will root out evil beliefs and practices related to shamanism (Kwang Bok Lee 2005:64). There are two counterproposals to address *kibok sinang*. First, church leaders should critically study how biblical concept of blessing differs from the accepted traditional concept and share it with their congregation through public and private preaching and teaching. Second, church leaders need to train themselves to critically discern Melchizedek factor from Sodom factor through the guidance of Holy Spirit.

The church leaders have the mission to inform the congregation of the crippling, injurious effects of *kibok sinang*, a faith that first seeks material blessings. Seung Jae Lee, in "The Pitfall of the Blessing Thought" (축복사상의 함정) (1/15/2004), vividly depicts the Korean ideal of blessing: "A man of famous family who had an outstanding appearance, completed a famous school with excellent records and got married to a beautiful woman lives in affluence while working at a high salary job with material blessings." He (1/15/2004) criticizes,

Korean believers interpret the cardinal points of the Bible as blessing, set their sights on blessing and live for blessing as their sole guide. They love to recite Deuteronomy 28:6, "You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out," and want to receive all these blessing from God.

He warns against misinterpretations of what it means to be a Christian.

Falsifying the true essence of Christian faith as *kibokjuk* will lead to an

ultimately dissatisfying pursuit of material blessings. Moreover, *kibokjuk* faith will also lead believers into a spiritual impasse.

To be a Christian means to believe and follow Jesus Christ, the Savior. However, there are numerous Korean believers, who reject the New Testament while embracing the Old Testament concept of blessing. Although in the Cross believers can find the greatest blessing God bestows, they carry their Bible but fail to bear the cross of Christ. They fail to see that Jesus Christ lived for suffering, not blessing. They do not understand that Jesus came to this world to serve; he offered his life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28). The Cross is the emblem of suffering, but, it is suffering that provides us with the greatest happiness of salvation.

In “What’s Wrong of *Kibokjooeu* Faith?” (기복주의 신앙은 무엇이 잘못 되었는가?), Seung Jae Lee (7/20/2004) differentiates supplication and seeking blessing from God and *kibokjooeu* or *kibokjuk* faith.

Seeking for blessing to God is not subject to criticism in terms of religious universality. But a *kibokjuk* theological system to interpret all things as blessing is sure subject to criticism. It is sure that God is the source of all blessings for a person as well as a nation. Looking over the countries, we come to know that God-believing countries received blessing from God and live in affluence. However, teaching Christianity as a religion to give blessing, the nature of the thought of the Cross would be damaged and Christian faith would be no difference from superstition. With a perspective of blessing, one who interprets everything as blessing cannot proclaim the thought of the Cross, that is, the opposite concept. The core of Christianity is the thought of the Cross and it does not stand for the blessing but sacrifice. Those who are equipped with Baal faith say that the Cross of the Lord is blessing for us. It is only a half truth, but exactly speaking, it is not accurate expression of the Cross. When we come to know that the cross of Jesus Christ also implies for us to take our cross as Jesus took the cross for us, we can be mature Christians.

When we speak of the Cross, we should speak of it as a sacrifice, not as a

blessing, for the phrase “blessing of the cross” distorts its true meaning. Falsification of the meaning of the cross will logically lead to a belief that “sacrifice is blessing.”

Seung Jae Lee (7/20/2004) continues to argue about the meaning of Cross in terms of sacrifice:

Sacrifice is unhappiness, distress, and tears; it is not a blessing. The Lord does not want His cross to be misinterpreted as “the blessing of the cross.” Jesus clearly stated that, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). Obsession of blessing ultimately hinders believers from transcending mere faith into obtaining greater and stronger faith. Thus, believers should be warned against the crippling effects of *kibokjuk* faith.

While humanism upholds *Kibokjuk* approach to satisfy human’s desire and felt needs, theocentrism instructs the truth and purpose God seeks in each person. History testifies to the fact that God greatly provides for those that first seek His kingdom. Countries that first sought material blessings were weakened, while nations that first sought God’s kingdom became prosperous. Today, it is hard to find people who are dedicated to take up their cross to follow Jesus in Korea. Instead, there are crowds of believers that merely want to obtain material blessings. A *kibokjooeui* church neglects national and social concerns for individualistic interest; moreover, it fails to nurture sacrificial leaders that will further advance the Kingdom of God.

Church leaders have to train believers to rightly discern Melchizedek factor from Sodom factor through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the only antidote for *kibok sinang* is true understanding and praxis of Christian faith. Furthermore, orthopraxis and true knowledge led by the Holy Spirit will also lead to a foundation of Korean mission theology of blessing.

For research purposes, I organized a 12-week Bible study program entitled “Be a Channel of Blessing” at Bethany United Methodist Church (See Appendix 2). When the participants were exposed to biblical understanding of blessing, they testified to life-changing transformations that helped them see blessing in a new light. The biblical concept of blessing:

- Will deepen the quality of Christian life.
- Will increase the maturity rate and faith.
- Will transform one’s life from a mere receiver to a giver and a sharer.
- Will provide an experience that “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).
- Will be the 2nd Conversion of the Korean Christian to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Will bring the 2nd Blessing to the Believer.

Furthermore, a deeper understanding of biblical blessing will transform one’s life in the community. They:

- Will be the Key to bring the Maturity to the Korean Church.
- Will make modern Koreans be more receptive to the gospel.
- Will touch all areas of a Korean believer’s life.
- Will be an effective analogy of redemption to not only the Koreans but also others who pursue the happiness and blessing.
- Will contribute to form a viable Korean theology mission. Self-theology will let Korean Christians build a bridge to the gospel when it is connected with the human disposition, to which God imposed.

Biblical Teaching for the Right Practice of Blessing

Kwang Chul Park (2004:56) calls attention to the duty of the church leaders. He asserts, “Once we had a lot of grace and encouragement from the sermons of blessing, but we cannot overstay more on that level. Now is the time to set believers to do their responsibility before the actuality of the dark nation and world.” Also, Cha Nam Chang (2000:74-85), in “Prayer Life

and Blessing,” reports the negative impacts of *kibok sinang* in church and society. He argues that *kibok sinang*:

1. Distorts the Gospel and misleads believers.
2. Weakens the positive functions and strengthens the negative functions of religion.
3. Destroys the healthy image of the church.
4. Sickens the church and pollutes society.
5. Disturbs spiritual maturity of the church.
6. Makes difficult to include diverse functions and needs of the plural society.
7. Becomes an instrument of church growth first, but it soon provokes to increase socially pathological phenomenon and to create stagnant stages of the church (2000:81).
8. Becomes superstitious and fatal.
9. Destroys natural purifying system of religion.
10. Do away with ethical or moral consciousness by paralyzing discerning abilities.
11. Lose its historical consciousness by making Christians unconcern on the social, national, and global issues, but only concern his individual or family issues (2000:82).

The issue at hand is that the Korean Church ultimately failed to act as a channel of blessing although God blessed the Korean church tremendously precisely for that reason. The anti-Korean church criticisms should be interpreted as an exhortation for the church to translate God’s blessing into actions of love, service, and hope. The church needs to wake up from its spiritual dormancy and transform its role from a “receiving church” to a “giving church” (Donald N. Clark 1986:33). If the church transforms itself in accordance with the Bible, the Korean church will surely advance the Gospel and adopt its rightful role as the salt and light of this world.

The Korean church should cast aside the obsequious and shameful manner in which it begs for money for the purpose of having impressive buildings and facilities. Instead, the church should focus on its internal structure. Korean church leaders have the responsibility of awakening the

spiritually dead believers of *kibok sinang*. In Early Morning Type Christian (새벽형 크리스찬), Bong Joo Moon (2004:267) warns Korean believers against their *kibokjuk* prayer habits. He writes:

Kibok sinang encourages its adherents to pray and no question is asked about whom the bless-giver is. They do not care a bit about even the ghost of egg or the ghost of a dead bachelor give blessing. They are in tight place where they want to just receive blessing from them. They do not have any concern about the one who gives blessing. It is unimaginable for them to love the one who gives blessing. This is the key difference of the prayer in *kibok sinang* and the prayer of Christians who confess to the Lord, "I love you, Lord."

The only way to overcome *kibok sinang* is to properly understand the biblical concept of blessing and becoming a channel of blessing. By sharing God's blessing with others, the Korean church will come to grasp God's amazing grace. It will reclaim the joy it once experienced and find its fulfillment in carrying out the Great Commission. Thus, proper understanding of biblical blessing and the right praxis are paramount to nurturing sound Christians and healthy indigenous churches.

Biblical Teaching for Building a Bridge for the Unchurched

According to 1997 Korean Religion and Religious Consciousness, half (about 26%) of atheists who made up over half the Korea's population (53.1%) had experiences of having had faith in the past. A large percentage of them had experienced churches (Won Gue Lee 2000:115). The reason they stopped having faith in Christ was exposed as discredit and disappointment in the Korean church (115). In relation to Church's losing credit, the Korean church has two major problems: first, atheists view the Korean churches too concerned with the extension of religious influences rather than the pursuit of the truth, and could not provide them real meaning

of life (115). They felt an objection to extreme emphasis on offering and excessive issue of material blessing (117). Second, they view Christian believers as having strong faith in the Church but inattentive in Christian life with the neighbor. They view Christians are short of community service and love for their neighbor. The hypocrisy of Christians discredits themselves to the Korean society (118).

In reference to atheists' discredit and disappointment, Korean church needs self-reformation to become a channel of blessing in the community. Above all, the Korean church enforces its paradigm shift from come-structure to go-structure, and individual church-centered to community-centered church. The reason community censured for church is that the Korean church has self-serving, self-centered, and self-consuming way of God's blessing. The Korean church has received criticism from the society for having long neglected its neighbors. The church condemns shamanism but church itself is caught by selfish ideologies and practices of shamanism. If the Korean churches remember their neighbors and begin to share with them whatever God blessed them, the Korean churches can become the channel and instrument of blessing in the community. Also the Korean churches should teach believers to live as "the witness of blessing in their community" (Lenning 1979:198). According to individual fondness, not based on the biblical commandments, the Korean pastors may allow or prohibit their believers to involve community service. A lot of pastors do not want their church members to involve community activity outside church, for they worry about the decrease of the amount of offering because believers offer their money to the community rather than to the church. This is directly caused to baneful effects of *kibok sinang*.

Second, the Korean church should discover *bok* as contact points to build a bridge for the unchurched. The word “*bok*” provides wonderful contact points with non-Christians. Lenning gives us a missiological insight, “If the Christian church would recognize the strong communal emphasis of blessing, it would change its methodology so as to preach the Gospel and witness to the social units instead of to individuals” (1979:199). If the Korean church go into a deeper level of community and emphasize openly and honestly the totality of blessing on the community as a whole, the dynamic of communal blessing can become an exciting missiological link in the bridge of Korean people who are earnestly seeking the true blessing.

In Korean context which Western way of evangelism engrosses whole attention, Min Nam-ki (1997:276-280; 1999:53) developed an evangelism track called “Do You Know the Five Stages of Blessing to Know God?” He made *chookbok* as contact point with traditional Koreans who have been influenced by syncretistic Shamanism and considered *bok* as the best value in this world. He (1999:53) outlines:

The first stage is to introduce God the Creator as the only true God, by differentiating God from demons and spirits. The second stage introduces the relationship between God and man, saying that although man is created to be the lord of all creation, man commits sin and worships other gods who are not true God. The third stage is to introduce that the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only way to God in that Jesus took “our shame” by subjecting himself to public disgrace on the Cross and guaranteed “honor” before God and all the witnesses through his Resurrection. The fourth stage is to challenge people to separate from the sin of worshipping other gods and to believe God by accepting Jesus as their Savior and the Lord. The fifth and last stage is to lead people to a definite decision, concluding that knowing (believing) God and His Son Jesus is the true blessing, and that rejecting Christ is the ultimate shame.

As he uses the shamanistic proposition to seek blessing as contact point of

evangelism, he tries to build a bridge to the unchurched Koreans from their receptive reference. In this sense, when the blessing of God is understood as a wholistic power that touches all areas of believer's life, and when Koreans experience this power that is designed to affect both the individual and the community, then they will become more receptive to the Good News (Lenning 1979:20).

If the Korean churches reform themselves to be God's channel of blessing, they may restore their lost credit from the Korean society. In relation to the natural blessings in Genesis 1:28 from the missiological perspective, here we can interpret it totally new, in order to motivate believers to build a bridge for the unchurched.

1. Fruitfulness – God blessed human to be “fruitful.” As one is born through one's parents, he/she must be born anew from above. A true blessing is to be adopted as sons and daughters of God by a new birth in Jesus Christ and the Spirit (John 1:12, 3:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17). This is the first blessing.

2. Multiplication- God blessed human to be multiplied or reproductive. Being born again as a child of God is not enough. One must grow spiritually under the care of Jesus Christ who helps nurture new born Christians into disciple-makers. The second blessing, then, is to be a spiritually mature disciple-maker.

3. Repletion- God blessed human to be filled the earth. Through spiritual reproduction (multiplication), he/she must contribute to the biological growth of the church (or the Kingdom of God). One should advance God's Kingdom and testify of God's undying love and mercy. He or she should lead non-believers to church. This is the third blessing God wants to bestow upon us.

4. Subjugation- God blessed human to be subdue the earth.

Quantitative growth is not enough in the eyes of God. Subjugation indicates that the believers advance their spiritual influence and power so they may help bring everyone under the feet of the Lord (Ephesians 1:22). Christians should evangelize and destroy the forces of sin and death. The Bible tells us that we are called to bless others through our spiritual influences (Genesis 12:3). The fourth blessing, then, is attaining spiritual influence to advance the gospel.

5. Leadership- God blessed human to rule over the creatures. The word "rule over" indicates true leadership. It does not mean "success in the world", but a given ability to lead people to God's will. Christian leadership should contribute to the advancement of God's kingdom and promote the absolute will of God in earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10); there will be no greater blessing than this. God needs to reign over every heart of individuals, family, government, nations, and the universe. After all, the Bible tells us that the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9). Thus, God wants to reign in us and help us attain true leadership to promote God's everlasting Kingdom.

The Korean churches should bless their members to be a blessing for their neighbors in terms of new interpretation of Genesis 1:28. While people in this world are busy to attain its material dimension of blessing, the Christians should open their eyes toward God who are the source of blessings.

Biblical teaching for Building a Korean Contextual Theology of Blessing

The Gospel is incarnated in the reality of those who exemplifies their life in Christ. It is embodied in the people that help support the growth of faith in not only them, but also in others. The gospel requires the participation of a

church to fully realize its potential, because without the involvement of church, there is no integral incarnation of the gospel. Culture is the concrete context in which 'integral incarnation of the Gospel takes effect. Without addressing the given cultural framework, the church and its theology serves as a vehicle of external domination or lapses into docetism. In this sense, Korean contextual theology should be the product of a dynamic interaction of all these roots - gospel, church, and culture. It reminds me that "Gospel + Culture + Faith produce Christianity" (Whiteman's Class note 2000). When gospel and culture interacts with Faith, it produces various forms of Christianity as well as numerous forms of local theologies.

Kwang Sik Kim (2000:238), in Theology in Word and In Deed (언행일치의 신학) defines Korean indigenous theology as "a Korean contextual theology that interprets the Gospel into the Korean actual context and makes the Word appeared into the concrete deeds in the actual history, not remained as the abstract words." He (2000:239) holds preachers as true indigenous theologians and stresses that sermons should be contextualized in the Korean church. He names the Korean contextual theology "a theology in word and in deed" (2000:240). Addressing three anti-Christian phenomena in the Korean church, he (2000:239) argues that Korean contextual theology should empower the Word of God to obtain eschatological resolution; furthermore, he underscores the need for the church to act as a vehicle of salvation that provides grace to the following anti-Christian hostilities: intellectualism, legalism, and secularism.

Kim (2000:239) criticizes all the aforementioned anti-Christian movements. Furthermore, he denounces conservative Christians that outwardly flaunt their faith through preaching and declaration, but do not practice their faith in actions. He believes that contextual theology needs to

disclose the hypocritical fact of legalism and pietism in the Korean church. He (2000:239) perceives legalism as an extension of shamanism that feigns devotion while it is solely comprised of selfishness and covetousness. While it remains averse to God's grace, it certainly welcomes material distractions with open arms.

In relation to secularism that drives the ambition of political brokers in the Korean church, Kim (2000:239) maintains that the nature of secularism is filled with the absurd expectation of Jude of Iscariot. While it outwardly exclaims faith and reliance with such phrases like "for Christ only" and "for the vested rights only," it ultimately betrays Christ to be crucified (2000:240). Korean contextual theology should help the preacher prioritize and impart messages that advocate "in Word and in Deed."

Sung Bum Yoon (1998:141), an initiator of the Korean contextual theology, highlights the importance of contextualization. He strongly advises that Korean church leaders build Korean contextual theology so that the church will not slip into shamanism. However, conservative theologians and church leaders misinterpreted contextual theology as an anti-Christian theological movement and entombed the contextualization movement through religious impeachment. In Constructing Local Theologies (1985), Schreiter argues the impossibility of constructing Korean contextual theology without paying adequate attention to the given culture in which Christianity operates. Cultures can be understood etically by an outsider or emically by an insider. Understanding culture inevitably entails the concerns of holism, identity and social change.

As Schreiter (1985:23) defines local theology as "a dynamic interaction in the Holy Spirit among the gospel, the church and the culture," Korean contextual theologies must engage the following: church tradition,

communal styles of thought, and cultural practices. In regard to the three roots of local theologies, present Korean theologies only concern two factors, the gospel and the church. Therefore, Korean theology faces de-culturalization of the gospel or the segregation of church and culture led by conservative theological groups.

In relation to these roots, Korean Christians must seriously consider “Koreanness” and “Thirdworldness” in contextualization. Koreanness is needed to fill the void that can not be filled with “Thirdworldness” which comprises poverty, injustice, tyranny, violence, and women's issue. As I believe that indigenous Christianity results from the work of Holy Spirit, an appropriate contextualized theory can only be attained with the guidance of Holy Spirit.

I use my imagination to draw forth a Korean mission theology of blessing. The theology that I am envisaging can be likened to a fabric that is interlaced with the 'fine' Korean cultural linen and made up of filaments of Korean value and worldview. It would be a Korean theology that still maintains its universality. I would lead Koreans to embrace the Christian worldview and draw Korean believers to adopt their proper role as a channel of blessing. It would be grounded on Wesley's “scripture way of salvation” and biblical anthropology.

Emphasis on John Wesley's Theology of Grace As Moses and the sons of Israel sang, “In Thy loving kindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed” (Exodus 15:13 NASB), God leads us to His Kingdom through His grace that reaches every aspect of our lives. Wesley draws the way to the Heaven in standard sermons such as “the Scripture Way of Salvation” and “Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mountain.” As I have mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, John Wesley, who upholds the Eight

Beatitude as “truly summary of the Christian religion” and “genuine religion of Jesus Christ” (WW 1:377), develops a scriptural way to salvation based on the Eight Beatitudes.

Works of the Holy Spirit	God's Grace	Wesley's Way of Salvation	Threefold Salvation	Principles
Prevenient Work of the Spirit	Warning Grace Converting or repenting Grace	Poverty of spirit Mourning		Principle of Faith
Dwelling of the Holy Spirit	Justifying Grace Initial Sanctifying Grace	Meekness Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness	Salvation of the spirit	
	Regenerating Grace(Adoption)	Mercy	Salvation of the Soul	Principle of Love
The Manifestation of the Spirit	Perfecting Grace Glorifying Grace	Purity of heart Peace-maker	Salvation of the Body	Principle of Hope
	Kingdom of God	Persecution for Christ's sake		

Table 44: Theological Framework for Korean Mission Theology of Blessing

Moreover, his doctrine of prevenient grace is considered one of the most important discoveries in Christian history because it links the sinner to God the Father through Jesus Christ. When a sinner comes to the Lord through redemption and converting grace, he or she will be able to grasp just how wonderful and fulfilling God's love is. Thus, he or she will be led into the way to God's Kingdom by the Spirit that dwells in the heart and manifests Himself [sic] through the believer. John Wesley illustrated that a human is designed to live in God and to be assisted by the Holy Spirit at every moment of his life. The below table shows the works of Holy Spirit in the pilgrimage of human beings, the grace of God that is manifested through the process of spiritual growth of believers, and Wesley's way of salvation that reveals the genuine blessing of Kingdom of God. From a mere glance, one may readily

conceive how the works of the Holy Spirit greatly differ from material blessings.

Emphasis on the Wholistic Salvation Based On Biblical

Anthropology How did God create human? Who are we? Human occupied a unique place in the order of God's creation. A human was made in the image of God; they are the only created beings that communicate with God and act as a bridge between the natural (seen) realm and the spiritual (unseen) realm (2 Corinthians. 4:16-18). Biblical anthropology maintains that a human is endowed with spirit, soul and body (Genesis 2:7, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrew 4:12). God accorded us with spirit so that we could communicate with Him [sic] and illuminate our soul. However, the fall of Adam severed our relationship with God; moreover, it brought sin that inflicted death upon the human spirit and the human body. It was Jesus Christ who finally came and restored our relationship with God. Through His Cross, He abolished the wall that isolated us from God; He rejuvenated our spirits so that we may communicate with God (Revelation 17:11; Heb. 9:13f, 22). Thus, whoever believes in Him has a living soul with spirit (Hong Do Kim 1990:70).

The Body of human constitutes flesh, bones, and blood – God molded us with the earth and when we die we will return to it (Genesis 3:19). The soul of the human came into being through the union of spirit and body (Genesis 2:7) – it is endowed with three important elements reason, emotion, and will. Hong Do Kim (1990:7), in The Type of Ministry for the Church Growth, argues that body contains world-consciousness, while the soul embraces self-consciousness of the bodily life, and the spirit, created in God's image embodies God-consciousness. (Hong Do Kim 1990:7)

Let me take an example to illustrate the relationship between God and human. Let us suppose that God is the power plant and the human spirit,

the electric bulb. As it is written in Proverbs 20:27 that “The lamp of the Lord searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being,” so the Holy Spirit sent by God the Father and the Son dwells in the human mind. Jesus, the Way and the Truth and the Life, acts as an electrical wire that links human to God in terms of communication (John 14:6). Through Jesus, the electrical wire, the Holy Spirit, that is, the electrical power that dwells in human spirit, transforms human into a new being in Jesus Christ. God lives not only in our spirit and soul, but in our body as well. The human spirit, filled with Holy Spirit, lights up the soul. New life springs from the spirit and flows into body and soul. Consumed by the Holy Spirit, God's power emanates from the person's voice, his hands and feet. Thus, the person becomes an instrument of God, a channel of blessing. Therefore, Jesus equates “good gifts” with the “Holy Spirit” - it is the ultimate gift that our heavenly Father desires for us (Luke 11:13).

Office of Jesus	Relation of the Lord to -	Tenses of Salvation	Wholistic Salvation	Wholistic Blessing
Jesus-Incarnation John 1:14	The spirit-Accept Him as Savior John 1:12-13	Salvation in the past-Atonement Ephesians 1:7	Regeneration-Salvation of the spirit John 3:3-6	Spiritual= Blessing in the Special Revelation or Grace : Right relationship with God
Jesus-the Holy Spirit John 14:16-23	The soul-Accept Him as the King Galatians 2:20	Salvation in the present-sanctification in the love through the fullness of the Holy Spirit Philippians 2:12	Sanctification-salvation of the soul Galatians 2:20	Mental= Blessing in the General Revelation or Grace : Right relationship with people
Jesus-the Coming King Hebrew 9:28	The body-Accept Him as bride-groom Matthew 25:1-13	Salvation in the future-Resurrection and Rapture 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Glorification-salvation of the Body 1 Corinthians 15:51-54	Physical= Blessing in the General Revelation or Grace : Right relationship with the thing

Figure 7: **The Wholistic Salvation of the Spirit, the Soul and the Body**
(1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrew 4:12, Isaiah 57:15-16)

Without the Holy Spirit, the spirit is like a dead bulb that causes confusion and disorder of the soul. When the Spirit of Jesus lights up the

dead bulb, darkness fades away and spirit illuminates the soul and the body. The human spirit guides the soul through communication with God in Christ and through control of our bodily desires. Spirituality demands that we affiliate ourselves with the spirit's guidance; while sensuality is achieved through carnal desires (2 Corinthians 4:16-18, Galatians 5:16-17). Human being is a bridge that connects the spiritual world with the material world. More importantly, God blessed us with the honor of being His steward; Human being represents God.

Korean mission theology of blessing, then, should be firmly grounded on biblical anthropology. In particular, we are a spirit that is endowed with a soul and body to live in. As the spirit is in need of blessing, the soul and the body also have needs. Accordingly, Korean mission theology should first address the needs of the spirit, then that of the soul and the body respectively. As seen in the figure 7, Jesus demonstrates His various roles in our lives and endows us with His salvation according to our needs.

Emphasis on The Kingdom Value of Blessing The Korean mission theology of blessing should embrace the Kingdom value of blessing that the church has long neglected. Moses Lee (1994:229) refers to the biblical concept of blessing as “kingdom-oriented missional *bok*.” He (1994:229-30) stresses the church as the primary locus of God’s mission:

God established the church in order to manifest His love for the world. As we construct the missiology of Korean *bok*, we may regard the church a source of God’s *bok*. To provide God’s *bok* is not to provide aboriginal shamanistic *bok*, but kingdom-oriented *bok* or kingdomized *bok*. We need to develop a Korean missiology of the kingdom-oriented *bok*. In doing so, a mission theology of the church as the primary channel of the kingdom of God.

The Korean church should not merely proclaim God's kingdom but live as citizens of His Kingdom in the here and now. We should adopt our rightful role as God's instrument; we need to take up this blessing of sharing this heritage and His loving *bok* with all nations (Galatians 3:14).

The religious expression of *kibokjooeui* is *kibok sinang* or Baal faith are grounded on Shamanism; it is utterly materialistic – there is neither transcendence nor salvation. Unfortunately, Koreans often mix eschatological faith with evasive faith. Evasive faith promotes escapism where one may forget one's problems and responsibilities. Numerous Koreans regard faith or religion as a temporary refuge. Similarly, scholars misunderstand this evasive function of faith as other-worldly. However, other worldly faith does not relate to eschatological faith. Although *kibok sinang* may successfully provide its adherents with a temporary haven where they can escape the problems of the world, it can not compare with eschatological faith that strengthens its adherents, conquers hindrances, and ultimately transcends this material world. True Christian faith supports believers to stand firmly in conviction of salvation. It provides the believers with kingdom inheritance that is imperishable, undefined, and unfading.

The figure 8 shows that present Korean believers align themselves with the Old Testament concept of blessing (See Table #20 and 22). Their understanding of blessing strongly suggests *kibok sinang*. Thus, the New Korean Mission theology of blessing has to guide the church so that it may transform the nation and the society. It must highlight the kingdom value of blessing as John Wesley did through his sermons on the Eight Beatitudes.

A Korean contextual theology should help transform *kibokjuk* believers so they may stand firmly on eschatological faith. Through this transformation, Korean church can serve the world as channel of God's blessing; it will

“reconcile the world to God, to heal the suffering world, and to share economic resources with the needy” (Moses Lee 1994: 234).

	Traditional Blessing	The Old & New Testament Blessing	Kingdom of God Blessing
Sources of blessing	This worldly and earthly blessings	Both worlds (emphasis on this-? or other-worldly?)	The heavenly and spiritual blessings
Characteristics of faith and the present emphasis of the Church	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> Kibok sinang or Baal faith, Materialism Oh Bok (Five Blessings) </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> OT NT ← Emphasis → </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> Eschatological faith The Eight Beatitudes </div> </div>		
Social Impacts	Bring social disorder and confusion	<u>The present Korean church listed to the OT and Traditional</u>	Bring transformation of society and nations

Figure 8: **The Korean Church at the Crossroad**

Emphasis on the Well-Balanced Theology. Numerous pastors and preachers tend to teach the traditional concept of *bok* without critical discernment. Many believe that the overemphasis of worldly and earthly blessing assisted the rapid growth of the Korean church. Without critical discernment, Korean church leaders will fail to differentiate between traditional concept of *bok* and the Old Testament concept of *bok*. They will continue to superimpose the traditional concept of *bok* on the Bible, in particular the books of Genesis, Deuteronomy, and Malachi. They will continue to exploit the Bible to promote *kibok sinang* in the Korean church.

Moses Lee criticizes the Korean Church for teaching an unbalanced theology of trinity. He (1994:239) writes, “The most desirable targets in seeking *bok* in Korean Christianity are power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. ... We lose sight of God the Father and of the work of Jesus, by highlighting the Holy Spirit too much.” Korean believers desire the gifts of divine healing,

speaking of tongues, prophesy, and other spiritual gifts that can be linked to help solve social, economic, and physical needs (Myoung Ihl Lee 1995:117). The church leaders, then, need to instruct them that spiritual gifts should be used in terms of mission and advancement of God's kingdom.

The following issues epitomize in the fields of theology, soteriology, Christology, and blessing.

Theology. Kraft asserts that "The people of another culture (or subculture) may see God's essential message more clearly in Hebrew dress than in Hellenistic dress" (1979: 229); analogously, in Korea, there are cultural factors that either hinder or contribute to the understanding of the gospel. However, Koreans do have an unnaturally strong predilection to manipulate God for self-interested desires and blessings.

Soteriology. Concepts of sin, formalism, salvation are often contaminated with Shamanic, Buddhist, Confucian, and even Taoist elements. There are many analogies that strengthen Korean believers' understanding of soteriology.

Christology. Christians do not have difficulty grasping the resurrection of Christ or the miracles He performed. Koreans firmly believe that the apostle Paul met the risen Christ on his way to Damascus. The Korean worldview embraces miracles unlike the positivistic worldview of the West (Moon Jang Lee 2000: 72). There are some similarities between the role of Korean shaman and the different office of Christ. For example, Christ acts as an intercessor for Christians; similarly, one of shaman's role is to mediate between spirits and humans (Myoung Ihl Lee 1995:121).

Blessing. Blessing is a key issue to Korean people and their church. The issue of blessing directly relates to worldview. Without redressing the faulty concept of bless, Korean church will continue to

stagnate. The Korean church needs to find a contextual theology that fits into the Korean context.

The Korean church has developed two erroneous concepts of blessing – the issue of offering and matter of prayer to attain blessing. Kwang Hee Lee (1993:77-78) criticizes believers that regard “prayer as a cure all medicine for all the problems and offering as an investment for fortune.” Conservative Korean church leaders use the American theology of prosperity to justify their false belief that traditional concept of *bok* is firmly grounded on the Bible. Thus, they help propagate the uncritical use of unbiblical concept of blessing in the church. Lee criticizes that “the theology of prosperity ... seduced the Korean churches to the trail of Shamanism” (1993:78). Korean mission theology should underscore the need for acquiring and sharing heavenly and spiritual blessings through sharing earthly and material blessings with each other.

Earthly and Material Blessing	Spiritual and Heavenly Blessing
Felt Needs	Eternal Need
-Temporary	-Perennial
-Partly	-General (Basic)
-Relative	-Absolute (Intrinsic)

Figure 9: Methodological Frame of Critical Discernments for Blessing

The figure below helps us define true blessings through a methodological frame of questions: Is it perennial? or temporary?; Is it partly? or general?; Is it relative? or absolute? In addition to this methodological framework, Korean mission theology needs to lead the believers into spiritual maturity by attributing multiplication, repletion, subjugation, and rule into the concept of blessing (Genesis 1:28).

Summary

The Korean church has committed an egregious sin of taking blessing as the goal or the purpose of life. We have failed to become a channel of blessing; likely, we have failed to utilize God-given blessings for the fulfillment of God's will. While the Bible clearly dictates the reason God bestows His blessings upon us, many church leaders are blind to God's purpose; they fail to see the spiritual impasse the church is in and expend their energy on quantitative church growth and the foolish adornment of church buildings. The Korean church has gradually lost the blessings of spiritual influence and leadership God accorded us.

If the Korean church dissociates itself from the traditional shamanic concept of blessing and adopt the biblical concept of blessing, the Korean church will experience the revival God is preparing for the Korean church. To do so, Korean church needs to overcome its spiritual stagnation. For Koreans, *kibok sinang* is their Baal and *kibok jooeui* remains their philosophy, their way of life. The Korean church needs to expel *kibok sinang* and *kibok jooeui* from the realm of Christianity. The only prescription is the embracing of Biblical concept of blessing that:

1. will bring spiritual maturity to believers.
2. will change Korean believers from self-centered, church-centered faith life to a society-and nation-reformed faith life.
3. will help Korean believers indigenize the Gospel into Korean culture and self-theologize based on the Korean worldview.

In reference to the nature of mature faith, the Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN in 1990 defines a person with mature faith as who:

1. Trusts in God's saving grace and believes firmly in the humanity

and divinity of Jesus

2. Experiences a sense of personal well-being, security and peace.
3. Integrates faith and life, and sees work, family, social relationships and political choices as part of religious life.
4. Seeks spiritual growth through study, reflection, prayer and discussion with others.
5. Seeks to be part of a community of Believers in which people witness to their faith and support and nourish one another.
6. Holds life-affirming values, including a commitment to racial and gender equality, an affirmation of cultural and religious diversity and a personal sense of responsibility for the welfare of others.
7. Advocates social and global change to bring about greater social justice.
8. Serves humanity consistently and passionately through acts of love and justice.

Kwang Hee Lee (1993:131, 34) challenges the Korean church by saying, "Blessing should not be considered as the subject to enjoy for oneself but as the spiritual gifts from God to take part in His kingdom ministry." I praise the Lord God who has bestowed His spiritual blessing as well as material and numerical blessings to the Korean churches. I believe this is God's blessed opportunity to invite the Korean church to take part in His [sic] Kingdom ministry through mission and evangelism.

CHAPTER 7

TRANSFORMATION OF SHAMANISTIC *BOK* INTO BIBLICAL *BOK*

Chapter 7 provides a comprehensive digest of similarities and differences between shamanistic *bok* and biblical *bok*. The issue of the generalizability of the survey findings from before and after the 12 week bible study as a transforming process will also be discussed. In reference to the generalizability issue, the possibility of the Hawthorne Effect of the researcher upon the research audience during the process of the 12 week treatment will be examined. Lastly, the bright future of the Korean church as it matures with a biblical teaching and practices of *bok* will be expounded.

The Similarities and Differences of Shamanistic *Bok* and Biblical *Bok*

Shamanism and the Old Testament have both similarities and differences in their conception of *bok*.

Similarities between Shamanistic *Bok* and Biblical *Bok*.³⁷

As Korean shamanism highly esteems *oh bok* (five blessings) and its attainment, the Old Testament confirms that human beings shall not live without the blessings of God. *Oh bok* which Korean shamanism pursues are intensively expressed in Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (NAS).

Longevity. Korean Shamanists rank longevity as the first and foremost of the *oh bok*. Living a long life indicates not only health and longevity, but also the luxury and comfort of attention by one's children and

³⁷ The Shamanistic concept of *Oh Bok* are mainly discussed in the 2nd chapter "Pre-understanding of Value and Core Values" at this dissertation (44-48).

passing on to them one's family legacy. The Bible mentions the *bok* of longevity, which God gives to the ones who love God (Deuteronomy 30:20; Proverbs 10:27) and honor one's father and mother (Ephesians 6:2-3), although there is a wicked man living a long life in one's wickedness (Ecclesiastes 7:15).

Health. Shamanism perceives *bok* of health in relation to being free from disasters and misfortunes. *Yun myung jang soo* (延命長壽, Maintaining one's life by the prolongation of life) denotes that health is the basic means to prolongation of life. For this sake of health, Koreans prefer to preserve their health with special restorative food and medicine rather than with exercising and regulating their diet. When Koreans lose their health, they begin wandering from folk medicine, to Korean medicine, to hospital, to Korean shamans, and lastly to the church or prayer mountain. With shamanistic influence, some believers hold beliefs that health is the blessing of God and disease is the curse from God. The Bible values *bok* of health, but also teaches that disease can be a blessing to lead them to God the Creator and the Master of human beings (1 Kings 5:15; John 11:4).

Prosperity. Wealth and prosperity are also integral to the *oh bok* in Shamanism. Shamanism promises *boo kwi young hwa* (富貴榮華 wealth and honor) to the people. *Bok* of wealth should be understood as a desire to enjoy the goodness and luxuries of life and to work to escape poverty in the past when the majority of the people firmly believed that there was no escape for poverty due to cultural institutions that privileged nobility.

In relation to wealth and prosperity, the church leaders stressed that believing in Jesus and being children of God is the way to great wealth and honor (2 Chronicles 18:1). Some preachers or revivalists () emphasize,

If one did not become rich after one believed in Jesus for three years, he or she must definitely have a problem of unbelief. The Bible says, Jesus came to search for the poor and make them rich. As Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 26:13) and Jacob (Genesis 31:1) who had received God's blessing engrossed great wealth, Christians should be blessed with great wealth.

God knows how money is important to human beings and recognizes the power of money.

Nobleness. For Koreans, longevity is the blessing of life, wealth is the blessing of household, and nobleness is the blessing of a clan. Koreans also highly regard nobleness (eminence). Koreans consider their or their children's success in life as a way to renew honor and glory of the clan. In Korea, the *bok* of nobleness is understood as holding a high office or title. Nobleness based on one's position and title instilled a passion in the Korean people's hearts to pursue academics, if not for the sake of knowledge, then for the sake of nobleness.

The Bible clearly states that high position does not make one noble. God "crowned him [sic] with glory and honor" (Psalms 8:5). God values each one of us more than the world (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36) and sent Jesus Christ to save them (John 3:16) and makes the Holy Spirit dwell in their hearts in order to seal them as the children of God (Romans 8:16).

Heirs. Traditionally, Koreans have yearned for the *bok* of many sons.³⁸ While blessings of longevity, health, wealth, and prosperity are *bok* of his/her own age, the *bok* of descendants guarantees the continuation of one's legacy. Since 1970s, entering into the time of nuclear family, although thought of male preference gradually disappeared, children became idols in

³⁸ Thus, there are unspeakable grieves and sorrows in the Korean women in relation to infertility and 'no son.' With these infertility and 'no son' issues, countless shaman rituals are offered.

Korean homes. In fact, many Korean senior pastors in mega churches are not afraid to pass down senior pastor's position to their sons by succession. Giving senior pastor position over to their son by succession has become a nationwide epidemic.

In relation to heirs, the Bible clearly tells us that God selects us as the heir to inherit the Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 15:50; Galatians 5:21; James 2:5). Although in Christ we are the heir to inherit "every good and perfect gift" from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights (James 1:17), not all but many church leaders are busy to emphasize heir believers to inherit this worldly things rather than to emphasize their Christian status through which they will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Peace and Order. Besides *oh bok*, shamanism also proclaim *bok* of *pyung kang an nyung* (平康安寧, peace and order); people are deprived of peace, because shamanism could not purge all evil spirits out of one's lives and houses (Mark 3:27; Luke 11:21-22). The Bible explains that the world cannot give humans peace. Peace comes from God, because God is Jehovah shalom (Judges 6:23).

In summary, shamanism entails some positive role in its preparing people to be open to supernatural or spiritual matters. Shamanistic concept of *oh bok* was a typical redemptive link to lead Koreans to biblical blessings in terms of similarities.

Differences Between Shamanistic *Bok* and Biblical *Bok*

What makes Christianity different from shamanism in terms of *bok*? If both Christianity and shamanism stress material and physical blessing in terms of *bok*, what draw Koreans' attention and what strikes their ears and catches their eyes to remain as Christians? Only differences can make

Christianity unique from Korean shamanism as well as other religions.

People will be restless in their hearts until they come to rest in God, because they are not satisfied with this-worldly things and blessings.

In reference to the differences, the concept of blessing in Shamanism “offers neither a spiritual dimension nor any future hope; it merely focuses on this present world” (Lee Myung Ihl 1995:129). Korean shamanism, then, does not subscribe to spiritual blessings or the concept of eternal life.

However, the Eight Beatitudes, the unique list of blessings in the New Testament, gives “an inward spiritual experience” (Lambert 1994:676a), and begins and ends with a declaration of blessedness that lies in possessing the Kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3, 12). Divine Kingdom, as Jesus affirms elsewhere, is to be sought within the heart (Luke 17:20f) and the essence of the New Testament blessing lies in knowing God the Father through His [sic] Son, Jesus Christ.

The Blessing to Enter Into the Depth of the Presence of God. Like Wesley’s developmental understanding of the Eight Beatitudes, its gradual emphasis leads readers to the revival of the personal and community level: the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3), those who mourn (Matthew 5:4), the meek (Matthew 5:5), those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6), the merciful (Matthew 5:7), the pure in heart (Matthew 5:8), the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9), and those who are persecuted for righteousness (Matthew 5:10, 1 Peter 3:14). These people must have inner attitudes to receive the blessing of the Kingdom of God. Those who climb the mountain of the Eight Beatitudes will fulfill the conditions of revival as recorded in 2 Chronicles 7:14, “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

The Blessing to Touch the Nature of God's Presence. There are also extra-beatitudes Jesus mentions (Matthew 11:6, 16:17, Luke 7:23, 11:28, John 20:29, Acts 20:35). These extra-beatitudes are given blessings to experience the nature of God's presence in deeper way.

1. Blessing of Knowing Who Jesus Is (Matthew 16:15-17).

Upon Peter's confession of faith, Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." This beatitude reveals that those who truly know Jesus are blessed. When one truly understands who Jesus is, he or she will be blessed; furthermore, he or she will be transformed into a new being and live his or her new life with Christ, the Lord and Savior. This transformation will bring about new purpose in one's life and restore a new mission within him or her. Thus, this beatitude refuses Shamanistic thought to consider faith as means to gain blessing but accepts faith as a personal relationship with God. In this sense, knowing Jesus is the blessing of blessings.

2. Blessing of Seeing, Hearing and Obeying God's Word.

When a woman in the crowd uttered, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you," Jesus replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:27-28 NIV). Jesus related the following beatitude to his disciples: "blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear" (Matthew 13:17). Here, He was accentuating the fact that many prophets and righteous men that came before Him had longed to see what His disciples were able to see, and desired to hear what the disciples were able to hear (Matthew 13:17-18). When He finished washing His disciples' feet, Jesus said - "you will be blessed if you do" (John 13:17) likewise, thereby exhorting them to do for each other what He had done for them.

3. Blessing of Those Who Believe without Evidences.

Jesus proclaimed to Thomas, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Like Thomas, we are often doubtful; we often do not believe in anything that is invisible and intangible. This particular beatitude warns against believers that always search for visible signs and miracles to measure the degree of God's love towards them. The Lord revealed His utmost and deepest love towards us through His death on the cross. He verified His love for us through resurrection; furthermore, He sealed His love with the Holy Spirit that abides in our hearts. While God still allows us to observe His [sic] miracles and signs, believers should not place them over the Word of God, for there is no greater miracle than His [sic] Word.

4. Blessing of the Giver.

Acts records that Lord Jesus asserted: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Giving is central to the foundations of Biblical Christianity. In sharing and giving, we become channels of blessings that transmit God's blessings. However, immature Christians often distort this beatitude and make it out to be: 'blessed is he who receives more.' They always seek to gratify their endless selfish cravings; they make all kinds of excuses to avoid helping the poor and the needy. A paradox that I always find striking is that, oddly enough, those who help others are usually the poor, not the rich. The Bible defines the rich as those that give - not those that possess material possessions.

The Blessings to be Alert with God. The risen Lord gives readers the seven beatitudes from the book of Revelation (1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 14). The Lord lets the children of God to keep alerting to the relationship with the Spirit of God, because they live in the world that diffuses

their faith and concerns throughout the air. The seven beatitudes are: those who hear the word of God and obey it (Luke 11:28, John 13:17, James 1:25; Revelation 1:3; 22:7), the dead who die in the Lord (Revelation 14:13), those that stay awake and keeps their clothes with him (Revelation 16:15), those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:9), those that have a part in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6), and those that wash their robes (Revelation 22:14).

In general, unlike shamanism, the biblical blessings are characterized with the relationship with God and the cross. The entire beatitude can be expressed into a single word “the Cross.” These beatitudes ask Christians to live a life to pick up and carry their own crosses. The cross we take is the power to transform the world into a blessed place and the way for us to receive the Kingdom blessing. Also when we take our own cross and follow after Jesus, others will receive blessing.

In conclusion, the Korean church leaders might maximize their opportunities to emphasize the similarities between Shamanistic *bok* and biblical *bok*, but they could not connect these similarities as opportunities to link to emphasize “special blessing” that is unique in Christianity. If so, shamanism’s awareness would “help Koreans to understand and accept some direction from biblical Christianity” (Jong Dae Seo 2002:94). If Korean churches try to differentiate special blessing from general blessing, people in the church would discover differential blessings from their shamanistic concept of blessing and they will learn to cherish more Kingdom blessing rather than this worldly blessing. The Korean people would become more receptive and Korean Christians become more mature in terms of spirituality as well as the perspective of others.

Reliability and Generalizability Issues

The research requires validity and generalizability³⁹ in order to offer reliability.

Validity

In reference to validity, I made a serious attempt to get rid of the participant and observer biases and tried to demonstrate causal relationship between treatment and outcome. As I mentioned earlier, the survey of the Bible study class cannot be said to produce statistically valid results because of 1) small numbers and 2) Korean Americans, not Koreans in Korea were the subjects for this study. However, the results are illustrative for following reasons: The study shows 1) common thoughts on blessing Korean immigrant believers have. Although these are Korean-American believers, Korean-American churches replicate Korean cultural conditions to such a degree that same valid inferences can be drawn from them as reprehensible of the Korean church as a whole. 2) it opens our eyes to see how the Bible studies or its proportionate alternatives are important to make Christian believers mature enough in faith to overcome their self-centered *kibok sinang* and 3) it provides *bok* as a catalytic converter to contextualize the Gospel and imported theology into Korean culture and worldview.

Generalizability Issue

³⁹ Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about. There are validity threat to be solved; 1) history, 2) testing, 3) instrumentation, 4) regression, 5) mortality, 6) maturation, 7) selection, 8) selection by maturation interaction, 9) Ambiguity about causal direction. 10) Diffusion of treatments, 11) compensatory equalization of treatments, 12) compensatory rivalry. Generalizability, that is, external validity, refers to the extent to which the findings of the enquiry are more generally applicable outside the specifics of the situation studied. When validity and generalizability issues are confirmed, the research can be said that it has reliability which means trustworthiness (Colin Robson 2005: 105, 106-07).

In relation to generalizability (external validity), I had examined a 12 week Bible study course, "Be a Channel of Blessing," which I implemented at the Bethany United Methodist Church. With a supposition, I raise a question: if a study may be repeated with a different target group or in a deliberately different setting with the same teaching material but a different instructor to access the generalizability of its finding, can same findings be replicated?

Statistically my study cannot demonstrate this. However, I think my study shares enough positive result so that this is worth trying in other settings. I am confident that replication of this study will give an affirmative answer but there are several considerations to consider in order to duplicate the same findings: 1) Teaching Material – I had developed a 12 week teaching material, "Be a Channel of Blessing" and opened two Bible study groups for these projects (See Appendix 2). Under the general guidance of "Critical Contextualization" which Paul Hiebert (1999:24) suggested, I wrote teaching materials as follow; a) gather all information on old beliefs and practices before judging people, (b) study biblical teaching about the event using two test of truth: the test of Scripture and objective reality, (c) evaluate their old beliefs and practices in the light of new biblical teachings and made decisions on the basis of this newfound truth, and (d) create newly contextualized Christian practices. Through a process of transformation, "people can move from where they are" to where God wants them to be (1999:28-29). 2) Instructor – "Carelessness, casualness and lack of commitment on the part of the enquirer" (Colin Robson 2005:108) definitely guarantee unreliability. If an instructor have digested the teaching material and acquainted oneself thoroughly with the procedure, this teaching material would be useful to transform their old concept into biblical concept of blessing.

3) Participants – “a corresponding lack of involvement by participants” (108) cannot but help to increase unreliability. In relation to bible study, participants need to be involved in the discussion, activities and home works designed by teaching material. 4) Setting – If it is possible, secure a setting where instructor and participants can have interactive sharing and communicating in the bible study.

The Future of the Korean Church: From Decline to Growth

Although these are definitely not the sole factors, it is not an overstatement to say that the future of Korean churches depend on the conscious decision and changes for the present maturity. It is worthy to expound on the process of four stages to promote changes as well as the important issues that were overlooked due to their attachment to church growth ideologies. First, let us discuss on *kibok*-mindedness which maybe one cause of both church growth and decline.

Factors overlooked despite criticisms of being “*kibok-juk*”

Faced with the problem of church stagnation and declination, Korean Church has shown more interests and focus on the side issues rather than the founding issues.

1. During the Church growth spurt of the 1960s to 1990s, although it may not be true for all churches, majority of them have placed too much emphasis on secular blessings. Since the arrival of Christianity, it experienced steady growth throughout Japanese colonialism and the Korean War but from 1960s, successful economic reforms and *Saemaul Movement* (New Village Movement) have awoken the slumbering *kibok*-mindedness in the general population. Korean Church was quite attractive to new believers as they preached secular blessings. Prof. Bong Ho Sohn (1983:208-9, in Social

Roles of Religion, asserts that shamanism has had the greatest impact on the growth of Korean Church. In The Biblical Concept of Blessing, Kwang Young Choi (1989:264-65) criticizes,

When church uses shamanism, it will definitely experience growth. This is why many churches use shamanism for growth...As church emphasizes on blessings, healing, promotion, and being successful, numbers may grow. Many churches in present Korea tend to think that as long as number increases, that is all they can ask for and equates this quantity growth with successful ministry. Even though a minister has personal moral issues, as long as he can gather people and lead people to give offering, they are willing to ask such person to lead revivals.

"Today's Korean Church pride in their external growth but internally, they are suffering from a critical sickness in need of a major surgery....Seeing people gather in masses with cheap faith which anticipates secular blessings with Jesus, Korean Church pride that they are experiencing revival" (Hoon Ku Lee 1999:157).

2. Emphasis on secular blessings has been one of the important factors in the stagnation and declination of Church growth since 1995. Chi Joon Noh (1998:13) uses the term "the Reverse J-Curve" phenomenon to reveal the growth and declination of the Korean church. He (13) says,

Many current researches have studied the growth factors and decline factors separately and have not been able to illustrate the organic relationship between them. In order to overcome such studies, it is important to comprehend the dynamic relationship between the factors of growth and decline in church members. We can use the term the J Curve to express such phenomena. The reverse J curve phenomenon refers to the phenomena of a factor which promoted both growth and decline.

Factors of Korean Church Growth Stagnation," Chi Joon Noh explains that from a social perspective, jobs and moves caused by advancing

industrialization has caused apprehension and fear amongst people which led to them to take Christianity.

Furthermore, Noh asserts that from an ideological perspective, Christianity was composed of anti-communism, materialism, and the westernizing modernism. In addition, the church management principle of individualized expansionism has met the needs of the masses who were in need of community as they lost their stability of living close to home and families. Noh feels that these factors have caused Church growth in Korea. However, from 1990s, industrial society experienced a turn over to informational society and the redefining of Korean tradition along with rejection of the secular value system of modernism clashed with Korean Church and they became an anti-Christian force. Noh also analyzes that church individualism has led them to be deemed “closed” with apathetic attitude toward neighbors. These cost churches respect in the society and ultimately decline of membership in the Church (1998:13-40).

3. The future of Korean Church depends on healthy churches and mature members. One of the factors which bring church into health and maturity of their members is grasping the biblical concept of *bok* or blessings. When the Church teaches and practices biblical concept of blessings, Korean Church will recover their social trust and experience new era of revival.

If Korean Church teaches and practices biblical concept of *bok*, it may experience dramatic changes. The task given to ministers from Jesus is not to make members but to “make disciples” (Eph. 4:11-12). “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19 NIV). “And He gave some [as] apostles, and some [as] prophets, and some [as] evangelists, and some [as] pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to

the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12 NAS).

Many Korean ministers judge the success of their ministry with numbers of church members, Jesus measures success with number of disciples produced. Although many factors are needed to grow from members to disciples, one of the focal factors is related to the biblical concept of *bok*. Comprehension of the biblical concept of *bok* is second rebirth and the second greatest blessings after salvation through faith in Christ for members. Biblical understanding of *bok* is God's *bok* because His [sic] presence is the greatest of all the blessings. It further qualifies believers to be thankful with or without much wealth which leads to mature faith.

Conditions

There are many mature churches in Korea which have overcome the *kibok* faith and have become channels of blessings to their neighbors. There are three conditions in order for churches to overcome their *kibok* faith and to develop into mature churches.

1st Condition: from *kibok* faith to biblical faith. One of the significant characteristics of *kibok* faith is that it is self-focused and selfish. Their focus is only on receiving. From this point of view, the first condition to transform to a biblically blessed church is to transform their receiving attitude to giving attitude. Mature church has become a church that serves and gives to their neighbors.

A good example of such church is Junju Antioch Church. Since its establishment forty years ago, they have been using a deserted U.S. military barrack as their church building and the entire church exerts their full power for missions. Every Saturday, the entire congregation gathers to clean the Junju vicinity and renovate town's plumbing system, and have matured to be seen as a church that serves and gives to their neighbors.

2nd Condition: from faithful believers to dedicated disciples. Second characteristic of a mature church is transformation of blindly serving members to passionate disciples of Christ. One of the weaknesses of Korean churches is that although they have raised members, they are evaluated to have done mediocre job in raising mature disciples of Christ who impacts and changes the society. Although there are no accurate statistics, reports show that only 5% of churches are working toward training their members to be Spirit-filled disciples of Christ. Sarang Church is known to be one of these churches that work hard to develop Spirit-filled disciples of Christ.

3rd Condition: from closed Uri group to toward open Uri-world. Third characteristic of mature church is that they are churches that are silent revolutionaries. Recently, a Yesu-Maul Church in Shindang-dong, Seoul, is silently transforming their town as Wesley had transformed the English society. Furthermore, Canaan Farmers' School refers to their members as "blessed people" and such "blessed people movement" have brought forth changes in the Korean society in silence. Unlike the closed-minded and individualistic minded churches in Korea, Yesu-Maul Church and Canaan Farmers' School are becoming mission-minded model churches to create bigger community that are open and embrative in Christ. These churches are exemplifying how every church must leave their small cage and enter into the big world with a missional and communal identity.

In conclusion, if Korean Church does not overcome the pollution of shamanism, it is difficult to recover the true face of Christianity" (Kwang Young Choi 266). Korean Church must stop sending out the message of "Receive blessings and peace by accepting Christ." Instead, they must participate in the suffering of Christ to become mature Christians as they spread the blessings of Christ to the rest of the world. As I conclude this dissertation,

seeing the effects of biblical concept of *bok* in the maturing process of believers, I firmly believe that with transformation of sharing the already received *bok* of Christ, Korean Church will play a blessed role not only in the Korean society but also in world missions.

Recently, Jacques Attali (2007), the world's renowned futurologist, made remarks that Koreans "have enabled a country ruined by the war to transform within three decades into the 12th largest economy,"⁴⁰ and "demonstrated its capabilities by questioning its own development model during the Asian economic crisis in 1997 and managing to grow further based on IT activities." He stresses that Korea will soon be a leading nation in the areas of knowledge, security, entertainment and urban life in 2025 and will attain a rank called "eleven world powers" given that Korea overcomes three major challenges: the threat from North Korea and reunification, a rapidly aging population that could threaten the demographic balance, and future economic development of the country, and social harmony in-between Japan, China, Russia, and the U.S. By overcoming such challenges, Korea will greet bright future. Just the same, as they overcome the blessing concept of shamanism and find harmony and balance in the biblical concept of *bok*, Korea will have much to offer to the churches in the world.

⁴⁰ The other eleven countries mentioned by Attali include Japan, China, India, Indonesia, Russia, Australia, Canada, South Africa, Brazil, and Mexico. He emphasizes the fact that the above mentioned countries have risen and are growing as new powers while the U.S. is losing their ground as the super power country due to the increase of the national financial obligation, drop in dollar value, and leveling of international power due to growth of other countries.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATION AND FINAL REMARKS

In this chapter, I will recapitulate major arguments and findings of my dissertation. I will finally close with recommendations for the Korean church and those who want to conduct further research in this area

Summary of Research Findings

This research I conducted in ethno-historical, biblical, and practical areas surrounding the concept of blessing has a very significant purpose in contributing to the introduction of evangelistic methodology, fitting to the Korean mentality and to the construction of building a mission theology based on Korean culture and its value and worldview.

Ethno-Historical Research

I have examined the traditional Korean concept of blessings and demonstrated how the particular Korean worldview and set of values manifest itself in every sphere of the society. Through my research, I have come to conclude how prevailing shamanic ideologies altered the concept of blessing within the realm of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Protestantism to form *Kibok sinang* and *kibok jooeui*.

Biblical Research

I have also surveyed the biblical concept of blessings. Chapter 3 discussed the Old Testament concept while I focused on the New Testament in Chapter 4. My research addressed various similarities and differences that exist between the biblical concept of blessing and the traditional Korean concept of blessing.

Practical Field Survey

I have executed an ethnographic research on two Bible study groups from Bethany United Methodist Church in Wayne, New Jersey. I conducted a preliminary survey with members and executed another post-survey following a 12 week Bible study program entitled “Be a Channel of Blessing.” Moreover, another research was conducted with the aforementioned church, except this survey addressed the general congregation. My research situates the reality of one representative Korean immigrant church on a scale between traditional (shamanic) and biblical concept of blessing.

This research study is a significant contribution for the mission and evangelism of the Korean Church. This study 1) helps show Korean Christians how to possess a genuine Christian faith in terms of traditional and biblical understanding of *bok* and Christian maturity, 2) helps Korean missionaries and evangelists to understand, first of all, the people of the field culture and their values and worldview and to incarnate themselves into the life situation of the native, and 3) helps Koreans to be familiar with the evangelism and content of the Korean churches and to remove negative feelings toward Korean churches.

What are the outcomes of the research? First, this study will effectively help the Korean Christians and churches know what modern Korean themselves have said about this in their writings. It must be emphatically stated that if one understands Korean culture and worldview, his/her evangelism would strategically lead more people to the Lord and people would be more receptive to the gospel. In this sense, understanding *bok* and its shame-sensitive culture makes the gospel strategic to the materialistic and secular Koreans, who are becoming more unreceptive to the Western approach of evangelism.

Thus, this research on the understanding of blessing promises to be an important step in preparation for what must necessarily precede presence, proclamation, and persuasion. A deeper understanding of blessing would help modern Koreans to be more receptive to the gospel. When the blessing of God is understood as a holistic power that touches all areas of a Korean believer's life, and when he experiences this power that is designed to affect both the individual and the community, then he will become more receptive to the Good News.

Second, this study challenges Korean Christians to study what the Bible describes as God's blessing, and encourage and inspire Korean Christians to be mature and purposeful. It does not take a prophet to know that discovering the holistic meaning and the role of blessing and its vital relationship to life and faith can be helpful to build a bridge that allows the Korean believers to overcome cultural and religious barriers.

It is the writer's conviction that the best learning takes place by discovery. If Koreans were to discover the total meaning and impact of blessing, they would be better able to divert their allegiance from the naturalistic five *boks* to the biblical meaning of *bok* as a holistic spiritual blessing that comes from God and that spiritual blessing is inclusive of material and visible blessing, as well as merital happiness. Taking the circumstances into consideration of the concept of *bok*, which interrupts spiritual maturity and growth of Korean believers, it is essential to help and guide them to have the right concept of it and to incorporate blessing into their personal lives. This serves as a test of effective evangelism and the quantitative and qualitative growth of the Korean churches.

Third, this study is important because of its pioneering work on a missiological approach at the level of the core Korean value and Korean

worldview. With the writer's personal experience and research on this issue, understanding of people's culture and worldview changes missionaries to become incarnational and receptive people of God. It becomes the most effective bridge to the gospel when it is connected with the human disposition to pursue happiness and blessing, a universal phenomenon, which God imposed. Historical research on western missionaries to Korea reveals that most of them kept the Western way of evangelism and maintained ethnocentric mission policies, which they decided to keep Korean church leaders ignorant of, therefore keeping them at an inferior theological educational level to that of the western missionaries. These ethnocentric mission policies made the Korean church dependent on the Western churches and theologies, and finally resulted in forming Korean churches that drifted from the Korean worldview and culture.

Thus, a missiological approach may bring a turning point to make a stagnant situation in the Korean Church to turn around by entering into a deeper phase in the Korean worldview. As Don Richardson (2002) discovers how the "peace child" works as a principle of redemptive analogy to the Shawi People at Papua New Guinea, the connection between the Korean traditional concept and the biblical concept of blessing will serve as a similar function to the Korean people.

Fourth, this research also challenges Korean church leaders and theologians to deeply consider their own culture and worldview, and contribute to their approach to Korean people at the level of receptive oriented ministry and local theology. It finally results in building Korean theology of mission in terms of *bok* and in preaching the gospel based on their situation in life.

Finally, this research study shows clear differences between the traditional Korean understanding of *bok* and the biblical understanding in New Jersey and in Korea. It indicates the cross-cultural differences between Korean-Americans in Western Christian culture and Koreans in non-Western culture. It gives a tip to bridge cross-cultural differences.

Recommendations for Further Research

I have not been able to fully address the following areas in relation to the concept of blessing:

Urgent Need for In-Depth Research on *Kibokjooeui* and *Kiboksinang*

Further studies are needed in historical and biblical research on the concept of blessing. While many scholars condemn prosperity gospel and theology, there are no comparative studies that address Korean theology of blessing and the American theology of prosperity. Generally speaking, the present Korean theology of blessing finds its root “in the context of a deeply suffering nation reeling from the aftermath of Japanese occupation and a devastating civil war;” it is, basically, “good news for the poor and oppressed” (Allan Anderson 2003:102). American theology of prosperity, however, ignores the role of suffering in God’s providence and upholds prosperity as an end in itself (2003:102-03). Further research is necessary to examine the interaction between both theologies. One should also examine both positive and negative aspects in regards to the influence of theology of prosperity in the Korean church.

Further research is also necessary to examine how the preaching of *bok* provides a bridge within church between the clergy and the congregation. Moreover, the role of *bok* as a bridge between non Christians and the gospel should be addressed in the field of ministry or evangelism. Present day

kibokjuk ideology in church fails to inspire believers to take up the Great Commission. Most people are satisfied with remaining inside church and seeking blessing for themselves. It is my belief that kingdom-oriented preaching and sermons, such as those found in Korean mission-oriented churches, will encourage believers to break out of their comfort zones and evangelize to those that do not know Christ. If further research demonstrates that a church that emphasizes mission and Kingdom-oriented sermons become more evangelical, perhaps it will challenge *kibok sinang* - minded churches to adopt Kingdom-oriented concepts of blessing. Thus, there should be conclusive evidence that pinpoints whether *kibokjuk* or biblical concept of blessing contributes to qualitative and quantitative growth in the Korean church.

Urgent Need for Paradigm Shift in Ministry

Korean church has been enormously blessed by God who wants the Korean church to participate in the advancement of Gospel as well as the expansion of His [sic] Kingdom. However, a paradigm shift in Korean ministry is required for spiritual maturation so that the Korean church may effectively participate in the expansion of God's kingdom.

As I have demonstrated, there are two obstacles that hinder the spiritual maturation of the Korean church: *kibok sinang* or *kibokjooeui*, and crowd-centered ministry. Crowd-oriented ministry resembles entertainment like that of a circus; it is analogous to how a shaman may capture the attention of her adherents.

Hak Il Chang (1998:33, 35) in Join the Band categorizes people who followed and served Jesus into four different groups: the crowd, the disciples, the twelve apostles, and the chosen three among His disciples. He characterizes the crowd as those (Matthew 4:23-25, Mark 3:7-12, John 6:1-

15) that witnessed salvation but did not receive the greatest of the salvation. Jesus performed numerous miracles in front of the crowd; he healed their sicknesses, fed them when they were hungry, drove out evil spirits, and preached the gospel to them. However, the crowd was ultimately not interested in the heavenly gospel but followed Jesus out of their selfish desire for the worldly blessings. They saw Jesus as a problem-solver and a cure-all. For them, Jesus was only an instrument of blessing.

Chang defines the disciples (Luke 6:12-13, John 6:1-66, Acts 2:41), (1998:36) as "those who merely had confession of the mouth, but not the commitment of the heart;" he certainly differentiates them from the twelve apostles found in Mark.⁴¹ Unlike the disciples during Mark's life, the disciples from Luke and John professed their faith but ultimately rejected sacrifice that was required and demanded of them so that they may participate in His suffering through perseverance.

Chang (1998:43) regards the twelve apostles as "saints of true dedication." They were specially appointed by Jesus so that they may share

⁴¹ They were those who simply believed in Jesus, therefore, different from the twelve disciples. In the Book of Mark they were referred to in the same manner as the twelve disciples (Disciples = twelve disciples, 3:14,16; 4:10; 6:7,9; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10). Luke and John used the same concept to characterize those who believed Jesus and those who were His disciples (Luke 6:12-13; John 6:1-66). Apostles were described as twelve disciples (Luke 5:12-13; 8:1; 9:1,10,12; 18:31; 22:3,47; John 6:66-67). Thus, disciples are differentiated from the twelve disciples. During the time of Mark, believers were undergoing oppression. To believe in Jesus during times of social and political instability meant that believers were oppressed; they may have had to face martyrdom. Mark gave them (disciples) the same treatment as the twelve disciples. With the passage of time, churches grew, but, saints in the times of Luke and John simply did not reach the level of saints in Marks' time whom endured oppression and went so far as to risk their lives for Jesus. Luke and John distinguished this generation from the other twelve disciples: as "believers without genuine sacrifice" as opposed to "those who believed in Jesus wholeheartedly" (Hak il Chang 1998:36).

in His life and advance His ministry. Jesus traveled with them and empowered them for the Great Commission – they were given the power to cast out demons and heal the sick, they were granted the authority to rule even the kingdom of God. Chang (1998:43) characterizes the twelve apostles as follows:

- a) One who hates his parents, spouse, siblings, and even his own life (Lk. 14:26).
- b) One who carries his cross and follows Jesus (Luke 14:27).
- c) One who gives up everything (Luke 14:33).
- d) One who hears God's Word, and puts it into practice (Luke 8:19-21).
- e) One who loves others (John 13:34-35).

Chang (1998:44-46) perceives three of the twelve disciples, Peter, James, and John, absolutely integral for their leadership and service in the group; for, they "lead the dedicated believers. If the twelve disciples were dedicated believers, then these three were disciple-makers. Jesus placed Peter, James and John closer to Himself than any other, in order to raise them up as leaders among the twelve, and great leaders for the church. The Bible testifies that these disciples who were trained by Jesus were not only Jesus' witnesses after His resurrection and ascension, but they also faithfully took on the duties of core leadership in the church of Jerusalem" (Acts 3:1-10; 4:1-22; 8:14-15; 12:1-2).

At large, Jesus ministered to crowds of people and his disciples so that they may receive salvation and be renewed. He not only preached to His twelve disciples but also nurtured and trained them, especially, Peter, James, and John so that they may further advance His gospel. The Korean church is in definite need of a paradigm shift if it wants to advance His ministry and fully live up to His teachings.

Through my observation, I have come to conclude that most Korean church leaders center their spiritual care for the multitudes; they stake their lives on the crowds. Many pastors and church leaders are obsessed with numbers; they are just as fascinated by the numbers of congregation as they are with the economic power that comes with having a large congregation. Most leaders perceive their job as winning souls as opposed to making disciples. They think highly of themselves for having a great number of congregants at their church. This type of ministry is 'crowd-centered ministry' and focuses on the increase of the so-called 5 Bs: Baptism (Number of Members), Budget, Building (Construction and Expansion of Church Buildings), Bus (with the purpose of transporting members of other churches to one's own) and Burial Place (so that the family of the deceased will remain loyal to one's church).

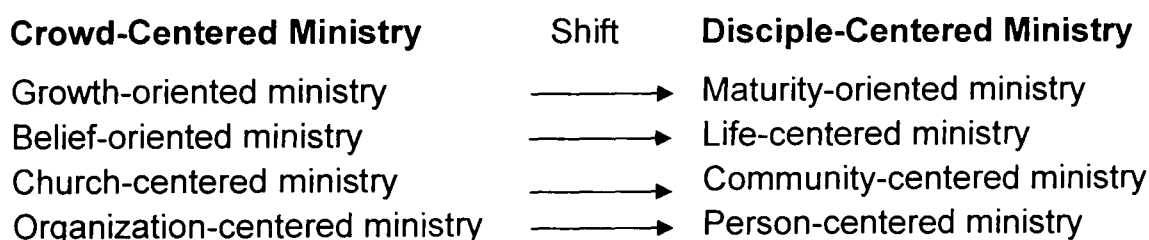


Figure 10: **Paradigm Shift from Crowd to Disciple-Centered Ministry**

As shown in figure 1, the aforementioned type of ministry is growth-oriented, belief-oriented, church-centered, and organization-centered. The sole purpose of crowd-centered ministry is attaining quantitative growth. Tremendous amounts of resource and energy are expended for this purpose. In many churches, revivals, prayer meetings, and bible studies are all conducted for quantitative growth and Attendees are naturally perceived as products of evangelism (Won Gue Lee 2003:141). In particular, revivals that

emphasize spiritual experiences are effective for not only the church's growth but the increase of the 5 B's (2003:142). Growth-oriented ministry disseminates Growth First Policy which ushers in expansionism, materialism, and "Resultism;" it preaches that "volume of material possessions is the measure of successful ministry and even faith" (Myoung Ihl Lee 1995:131; Won Kyu Lee 2003:147). Furthermore, such ministry engenders conflicts and rivalry between churches. Ultimately, it damages the social image of the church.

Belief-oriented ministry overemphasizes the vertical relationship with God. As a result, Korean believers often believe that the purpose of faith is to achieve salvation and to receive God's blessings. Belief-oriented ministry fails to account for the horizontal dimension of faith (Won Gue Lee 2003:143-44). This ministry leads the believers to concentrate solely on God and oneself and neglect the responsibilities that they have as Christians for their neighbors and society. It undermines the harmony of having both the vertical faith and horizontal love and consequently, helps create *kibokjuk* believers (2003:152). Furthermore, belief-oriented ministry degenerates Christian faith into that of *kibok sinang*; the overemphasis of attaining blessing consequently incapacitates the transcendent values like love and justice (Won Gue Lee 2003:153).

Oftentimes, church-centered ministry joyously welcome newcomers while they betray tremendous amount of reluctance in seeing people go. Such ministry results in "Individual Church First Policy" and consequently affects cooperation in denominational or super-denominational dimensions. The "group egotism" of this ministry ultimately enfeebles the church's prophetic role against society (Won Gue Lee 2003:154-55). Moreover, the organization-centered ministry of Korean church breeds competition and

pretension both within the church's bureaucracy and competing with other churches on the outside. One can readily perceive the hierarchy that resembles Confucian rank system in the organizational management of a church (2003:155). Overall, the Korean church is steeped in a crisis; it is in a deep need of a thoroughgoing transformation. Both the believers and non-Christians have negatively evaluated the present Church's "growth first policy."

It is extremely difficult to encounter true disciples endowed with biblical worldview in present day Korean churches. In that respect, I fear the Lord's rebuke, who has said to the Laodicean church,

"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see" (Revelation 4:17-18).

While church leaders are busy celebrating the quantitative growth in their churches, they are blind to the fact that Korean church has become shamanized. They do not see the toxic symptoms of *Kibok* theology, literally the shamanic theory of blessing that has become prevalent in the Korean church. While the traditional concept of *bok* was successful in introducing the gospel to Koreans, the failure of overcoming this shamanic concept has led them to remain as spiritually immature believers. Now is the time for the church to shift its paradigm and displace traditional concept of *bok* with a biblical one. I eagerly suggest that the new paradigm of ministry should stress maturity-oriented, life-centered, community-centered and person-centered ministry.

Church growth must be achieved in the frame of Christian maturity that upholds fellowship and the restoration of community. A mature church is a missional church where one can worship, receive biblical education, engage in fellowship, and provide services to the society – ultimately, a spiritually mature church becomes the light and salt of this world.

There needs to be an overall harmony within the church – a church should be disciple-centered as much as it is life-centered; similarly it should be both belief-centered and life-centered, practice-centered as much as it is doctrine-centered. The teaching of the church should help believers realize how life should be led. Accordingly, belief-centered ministry goes with the practice-centered and life-centered ministry.

The church should be community-centered. The nature of the church, as well as Christianity, is to be of service to others. Thus, the church should be of service to its local community; a community-oriented church fosters harmony and sense of fellowship between the church and the local community. Therefore, the Korean church should invest both materially and spiritually for services to the local community.

The new paradigm of ministry additionally requires a person-centered ministry. Organization-centered ministry based on authoritarianism and discriminative and unequal rank system is largely ineffective. The need for mutual respect and humility is pressing. Thus, Spiritual guidance in church administration is essential.

Urgent Need for Biblical Studies on Blessing

Why is *Kibok sinang* prevalent in Korean churches? What are the influences of *Kiboksinang* and how does it affect individuals and societies? What are the differences between *kiboksinang* and biblical faith in God? What does the Old and New Testament say about blessing? How does the

Biblical concept of blessing differ from the traditional concept?

The reading and understanding of Bible are crucial in answering some of these questions. We have to ask that the Holy Spirit guide us so that we may discern critically not only the biblical concept of blessing but what it means to be true Christians. I have developed a 12-week bible study program called "Be Channel of Blessing." All the participants in the bible study unanimously responded that they now have a new understanding of blessing and what it means to be a mature Christian (See Appendix 2: the outline of the Bible study-Be A Channel of God). I believe that such Bible study program is necessary for believers to overcome *Kibok sinang* and learn how and why the Lord bestows blessing upon His [sic] believers.

Urgent Need for a New Korean Mission Theology of Blessing

The Korean church is in pressing need of 'a new Korean mission theology of blessing'. To address this need, we have to research effective ways to inform the Christian concept of blessing in biblical, theological, cultural, and practical spheres. A contextualized biblical concept of blessing that can be administered to the Korean church is necessary. The concept of contextualized *bok* should be biblically grounded.

Final Remarks

Since the mid-1990s, I have often heard people describe the Korean church as "stagnant." While certain churches are no where near stagnant, I feel that the word "stagnation" captures the current situation of Korean churches. Instances of "revolt after revival," and "degeneration after grace" were seen throughout church history. In The Laws of Revival, James Burns (1993:5) discusses "the laws" of revival, as well as the "laws" of the absence of revival. "The first tendency," he writes, "is for the doctrine of the church to lose its

power of convicting the conscience, convincing the mind, or moving the heart." He continues on to pinpoint that "spiritual decay brings with it a formality of worship in which the "ritual" is so exalted that it crushes the spirit." This booklet convinced me that recent stagnation of Korean church is caused by an aftereffect of an explosive church growth. Stagnation, then, is merely an aftereffect but what exactly causes this aftereffect? I believe that the overemphasis of crowd-centered ministry is responsible for this aftereffect.

Having experienced massive church growth, Korean church has become obsessed with quantitative growth, caught by materialism and superficial concern for gathering people together as opposed to training them to further advance the Gospel. Generally, Korean church has emphasized worship and preaching rather than training and discipling believers. Presently, the Korean church has found itself in an impasse. The focus on crowd-centered ministry weakened the church's spiritual power to overcome the stage of "the revolt after revival." The disproportionate emphasis of crowd-oriented ministry attenuated the entire spiritual health of the church.

Another factor that led the Korean church into an impasse is the failure of imparting the necessity of practice. While over-stressing the promise of blessings, the Korean church has neglected to instruct God's commands and its practice. More significantly, the teaching of the word was merely interesting and shallow. Lynn Dulakis (1997) address this particular practice of Korean church,

The words that represent the great doctrines of the faith have become "dirty words" to many in Christianity. Rarely do we hear of people who are convinced, convicted, or moved by good, sound preaching of Bible doctrine. Christian entertainment seems to be one key to drawing a large crowd today. If we can have the latest in popular music or trendy speakers, people will flock to hear. Even sermons today lean more

toward entertainment. Pastors who can tell a lot of good stories and be very creative in their presentation will gain an audience.

Passing through the period of rapid church growth, the unpracticed Gospel gradually lost its persuasive argument over the society. The only way to conquer stagnation and overcome impasse is to achieve a balance between the ministry to gather together and the ministry to train and establish believers as co-workers; and, to obtain a balance of preaching the promise of blessings and the commands of God.

APPENDIX 1 — Research Questionnaires A Survey of Korean

THIS INFORMATION IS FOR CLASSIFICATION PURPOSES ONLY

1. Sex: Male ☐
Female ☐
2. Age: Under20 ☐
20-29 ☐
30-39 ☐
40-49 ☐
50-59 ☐
60 or over ☐
3. Married: Married ☐
Single ☐
Other ☐
4. Education: High School ☐
College graduate ☐
Post-graduate ☐
Highest Degree ☐
5. Annual Income: Under \$30,000 ☐
\$30,000~\$60,000 ☐
over \$60,000 ☐
6. Occupation: _____
(specify)
7. Please check your former religion before you became a Christian.
Buddhist ☐ Confucianist ☐
Atheist ☐ Catholics ☐
Christian ☐ Other ☐

(specify)
8. How many years have you attended church?
Under5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐
11-15 years ☐ 16-20 years ☐
21-25 years ☐ 26-30 years ☐
31-35 years ☐ 36-40 years ☐
40-45 years ☐ 46 and over ☐
9. What is your present spiritual discipleship, which means, position in your church?
Pastor ☐ Elder ☐
Counselor ☐ Deacon/ess ☐
Layperson ☐
10. If you put yourself into one of four people groups in the church, where do you belong?
(Circle One)
1-----2-----3-----4
Seeker Attender Dedicated believer Dedicated Disciples
11. Over the few years, do you believe you have grown in your Christian faith?
1-----2-----3-----4-----5
No real growth Some growth Much growth

Thank You for taking part in this survey. Your answers will be completely anonymous. Put a cross in the box next to the category that best describe

1. In your definition, to which side is your concept of blessing closer?

	1-----	2-----	3-----	4-----	5
Materialistic					Spiritual
Visible					Invisible
Tangible					Intangible
Earthly					Heavenly
Traditional					Biblical

2. Who, do you think, gives blessing?

1. ☐ God, 2. ☐ Spirits, 3. ☐ Ancestors, 4. ☐ Good fortune, 5. ☐ My utmost efforts

3. What was your first motive to begin attending church? (check three only)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> for salvation and eternal life | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> for peace of mind |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> for health and long life | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> for the children |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> for a meaningful and honored life | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> for success and wealth, |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____ | |

4. Has your first motive to begin attending church been changed? (If YES, check three. If NO, skip 4, 5, 6 & 7)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> A personal and family concern | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> A healing of the body and mind |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual maturity in the Lord | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Special dream or vision |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Justice/peace/hope for the world | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Well-being life and wealth |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> A better witness winning others | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> To get blessings from God |
| 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____ | |

5. What has caused your first motive to change?

- | |
|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Understanding the will of God and Experiences of the Holy Spirit |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Assurance of heaven/salvation, 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Assurance of forgiveness & Conversion |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing the raison d'etre 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Getting the better life |

6. Which means make your first motive changed?

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Studying the Bible & meditation & Reading devotional books | |
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Listening the God's voice through prayer life | |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Testimony/Preaching at special meetings | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Regular Worship Service |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Community service thru churches or Missions | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

7. How many years after your first motive began attending church has been changed?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
 Under 1 yr 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41 & over

8. In your definition, do you have a strong sense that you have received blessings or are a blessed person?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

9. What are your greatest longings and concerns today? (Circle only three appropriate answers)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> A personal and family concern | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> A healing of the body and mind |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual maturity in the Lord | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Special dream or vision |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Justice/peace/hope for the world | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Well-being life and wealth |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> A better witness winning others | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> To get blessings from God |
| 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Others _____ | |

10. Which do you cherish more—receiving or giving?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 Strongly receiving Strongly giving

11. Do you feel shame when you think that you do not have material and visible blessings from God compared with others?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 Strongly disagree Strongly agree

12. How can one receive blessings?

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 Use Charm Use Prayer Follow the Rules Help Neighbor Follow God

13. Which of the following do you think you have already received abundantly? (Check only one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Salvation & Spiritual blessing | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Longevity |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Peace of mind | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Success & Wealth |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet home with many children. | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> etc. |

14. What do you want to receive most in days to come? (Check only one)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Salvation & Spiritual blessing | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Health & Longevity |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Peace of mind | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Success & Wealth |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet home with many children. | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> etc. |

15. In your thinking, how does the Bible teach you the best way to receive blessing?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Prayer, | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Reading and keeping the word of God |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Doing no harm to neighbor | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Doing good to neighbor |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Others | |

16. For what reason and purpose do you think that the blessing is given to you?

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Passing them onto our offspring | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Showing them to others |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoying them | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Giving them for the mission |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing them with the needy | |

17. How do you share your blessing in terms of quantity? (Higher number includes the lowers)

1-----2-----3-----4-----5
 Little Bit + Tithe + Over Tithe + Mission/Donation + Whole Life

18. Since becoming a Christian, have there been times when your faith has been severely tested or lost? ☐ No ☐ Yes. If so, how? (Circle three only)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Church's emphasis on offerings | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Career/job/work decisions |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage/family/personal relations | 4. <input type="checkbox"/> No difference with other religions |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Doubt and confusion | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Health issues |
| 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Sports and leisure activities | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Others |

19. What are the most important differences between the traditional concept and the Christian concept of blessing?

20. What do you think the most important thing to live a life is?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1. <input type="checkbox"/> Good job with honor and money | 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Health, | 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Good friends, |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Much time and leisure | 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet home | 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Faith life |

APPENDIX 2 –BE A CHANNEL OF BLESSING (A 12 Week Bible Study)**Be a Channel of Blessing!**

Contents of Table

1. The Origin of Blessing
2. The Vision of Blessing
3. The Loss of Blessing
4. The Blessed News
5. Blessing and the Covenants
6. The Blessing and Grace
7. The Blessed People and the Revolution of Blessing
8. The Blessed Church
9. The March of the Blessed Encounters
10. The Channel of Blessing
11. The Blessed Prayer
12. The Blessed World-The New Heaven and Earth

1. The Origin of Blessing

Objectives: To give participants a clear understanding of God who is the beginning of blessing and who blesses His creatures. Also to give them explanation that an inclination to seek the blessing of God is biblically right and that *Kibok sinang* is a kind of faith system that loves something more than God the blessing-giver.

Praise: ♪ Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing (Korean Hymnals #28)

Text: Genesis 1:22, 27-28

Key Verse: "God blessed them and said to them, *"Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground"* (Genesis 1:28).

Icebreak

What cause people happy?

Why are people unhappy although they find happiness?

Introduction

Could you spell out five things that make you happy?

Could you write down five things that make Koreans happy?

The Text

1. God who gives Blessing

The first thing God does in the Bible is to bless humans (Genesis 1:21, 28). Then what is the intention and will of God who created human beings?

1) God and His Intention

(1) בָּרָא **bara**, Gen.1:1: "to create": generally used of the spirit. Creation of the heaven and earth.

(2) עָשָׂה **asah** Gen.1:21: "to make": generally used of the entire living person (body and spirit), Creation of creatures, It implies direct relationship between God the Creator and creatures.

(3) יָצַר **yatsar** Gen. 1:27, 2:7: "to form": generally used of the body, the object of God's blessing.

This threefold usage is combined in Isaiah where we find the purpose for which Man has been created very clearly described:

*"Everyone who is called by name, for My glory I have **created** him, I have **formed** him, indeed, I have **made** him"* (Isaiah 43:7)

2) God the Source of All Blessing

True blessing does not depend on the amount of possession. People will be restless in their hearts until they come to rest in God, because they are not made to be satisfied with this-worldly things and blessings.

2. Humans who can behave as he/she should with the blessing of God.

Blessing is like an "after service" God has graciously granted to His

creatures. Without God's blessing humans cannot exist as human beings. Because God blessed His creature, human, now that creature becomes a true human being

3. The contents of blessing (common and different points)

What are the common and different points between humans (1:28) and every living creatures (1:22)? Why does God add the blessing of subjugation and leadership (Genesis 1:28, 2:15)?

4. Discernment true faith from *Kibok Sinang* (shamanistic)

1) Traditional Koreans' value based on bok.

Korean highly esteems *oh bok* (five blessings) and its attainment.

Could you explain what *oh bok* is and its value is?

2) Terms defined:

Kibok-

Kibok sinang-

Kibok jooeui-

3) Differences and similarities between biblical faith and kibok sinang

4) Oh Boks and The Old Testament blessing

The Old Testament confirms that human beings shall not live without the blessings of God. *Oh bok* which Korean shamanism pursues are intensively expressed in Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (NAS). How could you explain this matter?

Conclusion and Application

Do you agree that there are shamanistic concept of blessing in the bottom of heart who commits misconduct and unfair practices? It implies that humans try to attain the blessing by any means.

Reading: Oh Boks As Core Korean Values

2. The Vision of Blessing

Objectives: To show participants what God expects the blessed *human* to do in His garden, and that the intention of God is to bless human, saying “subdue it. Rule over...” (Genesis 1:2) and “put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:15).

Praise: ♪ When Upon Life's Billows (Korean Hymnals #489)

Text: Genesis 2:7-17

Key Verse: “*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it*” (Genesis 2:15).

Icebreak

What kind of leaders are you?

Introduction

The meaning of blessing in:

Hebrew - אֲשֶׁרִי ashre, בֵּרַכָּה berakah,

Greek - εὐλογία eulogia, μακάριος makarios,

English -Blessing

Chinese and Korean - 福 bok bok

The Text

1. Covetousness-what are you looking now?

What is the purpose and content of blessing which we seek earnestly? Do you agree that covetousness interpret the word of God? There are many lenses to interpret the word of God. One of the lenses is the lens of covetousness. With what kind of lenses, do you read and interpret these verses?

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

3 John 1:2

Malachi 3:10

Matthew 7:7-8

2. Vision-What is the vision of God toward human being when He blesses humans?

What is the meaning of the letter *bok* (福)? One can recognize and define each radicals that make up this character: God (示); first or one (一); a mouth that represents a person (口); and garden (田). ‘God-first-person-garden’ indicates ‘happiness’ or bok for Adam, the first man, when he receives the gift of a lovely garden home by the Creator God. In the letter ‘bok’ (福), si (示) symbolizes God; the word ‘bok’ (福) may be interpreted as a pictograph that illustrates a man working with God in the garden. Therefore, even though one may be prosperous without God, it is not a true blessing.

What does the letter bok imply about bok (blessing)?

1) We are made to meet God in personal relationship.

2) God gives each one of us garden (田, the mission or the things to work with God), for God has the vision toward us (Philippians 1:12). We are so happy when we know the sense of mission God commissioned.

3) We are happy when we are working/walking with God.

4) Humans should keep the garden (work place) in order to fulfill the will of God.

How about you? Do you recognize the reign of God in your life, and let the will of God be fulfilled in your home, workplace, and your church?

3. Purpose - What is the will and intention of God to give blessing?

"For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13).

Do you know the good purpose of God who bestows the blessing to you, to your home, to your church, to your workplace?

4. Means - What does God give human to do his job?

God gives humans leadership as means to let the will of God fulfilled in the garden of Eden, that is, this world.

*"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and **let them rule over** the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*(Genesis 1:26 NIV)

Conclusion and Application

Examine our motives to seek blessing and God's intention to give us blessing. Recognize the fundamental difference between the two.

Reading: People who need to receive the Blessing from the Saints
(Gen.47:7)

3. The Loss of Blessing

Objectives: To show how Sin brought severance of the relationship with God, the origin of blessing to human, and resulted in the loss of blessing. The participants come to know how human lost their glorious position to dress the garden and to keep it and fell into a state of slavery to sin and the devil.

Praise: ♪ Far, Far Away in Heathen Darkness Dwelling (Korean Hymnals #277)

Text: Genesis 3:1-19, Ephesians 2:1-3

Key Verse: *"in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others"* (Ephesus 2:2-3).

Icebreak

What was the actual state of humans before the fall?

Which blessings did human lost after the fall?

Introduction

Humans are delighted when they are blessed by God. But sin severed the relationship between God and human, and humans are degenerated from the blessed steward into blessing beggar for their wish and problem solving.

The Text

1. Devil - the tempter who tries to sever the relationship between God and us (Genesis 3:1-5)

The origin of Satan (Heb.1:14, Mt. 18:10, Gen. 28:12, Eze.28:11-19)

The Rebellion of Satan (Isa. 14:12-15; Rev.12:7-9, Lk 10:18, John 8:44, 1 Pet 2:4, Jude 1:6)

龍(dragon) = 立(to stand) + 月(over moon or star) + 卜(to compare) + 己(himself) + 三(with the Holy Triune God)

The Temptation of Satan (Gen.3:1-8, Isa.14:13-14)

鬼(devil) = 丿(motion) + 人(man) + 田(garden) + 厶(privately)

魔(tempter) = 鬼(devil) + 林(trees) + 广(cover)

The Present of Satan (2 Cor.4:4, Eph 6:11-12)

The Defeat of Satan (Gen.3:15, Rev. 19-20)

The End of the Satan (Mt 25:41, Rev.20:10)

2. Sin - some impurities that make human not to be a channel of blessing to others (Genesis 3:6-8; Isa.59:2).

People make joke: in the world there are two kinds of sin: One is already detected sin, and the other is not yet detected sin. But the Bible clearly says, : you may be sure that your sin will find you out."(Num.32:23)

The Four Attributes of Sin

1) The Attractive Attribute (Gen.3:6, Proverbs 5:3-5, 9:13-18, 23:31-32, 2 Cor.11:14-15)

- 2) The Destructive Attribute (Rom 3:23 1 Pet.2:6-8, Gen.13:10-13, 19:1-38)
- 3) The Heredity Attribute (Exo.20:5, Rom.5:12)
- 4) The Dominant Attribute (Gen 4:7, Psa.19:13, Rom 5:21, 6:12-14)

3. Idolatry - a religious expression of the distorted mentality that is far away from God the origin of blessing (Genesis 3:9-14)

Sin has transmitted God's blessing into "blessing with God." Wealth for Chinese character Bu (富) shows "blessing without God" (福 bok). It means that the blessing of God has dual dimension: spiritual and material dimension. But sin brought severance from God to human beings and made them blinded to spiritual dimension of bok. People are mad to seek the transmuted blessing, that is, the earthly and material blessing.

- 1) Fear of Sin
- 2) Rebellious Attribute of Sin
 - (1) Spiritual expression of rebellious attribute—Idolatry (Rom 1:18-23)
 - (2) Ethical expression of rebellious attribute-sexual pervasion and homosexual practices (Rom 1:24-27).
 - (3) Social expression of rebellious attribute-doing such things deserve death and approve those who practice them (Rom 1:28-32).
- 3) Expansion attribute of Sin (Rom 3:10-12, 5:18-19)
The Bible judges human Sin-Positive (죄인 양성판정)
- 4) Perennial Attribute of Sin (John 3:16-21, Rev. 20:11-15, 21:8, Lk 16:19-31)

4. Slave - the state of human beings that are degenerated into threefold slaves of sin, devil and the self (Ephesus 2:1-3)

- 1) People in the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (2 Tim.2:26)
- 2) Pursuing Business for Actualization of the Self (Eph.2:2-3)
- 3) Slave of Sin (John 8:34)

Conclusion and Application

Man's depravity and his outcries toward God (Mt 11:28)

4. The Blessed News

Objectives: To have the participants to know that the gospel is the

Text: Luke 2:10-14

Praise: ♪ Take The Name of Jesus With you (Korean Hymnals #91)

Key Verse: *"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'" Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.'" (Luke 2:10-14).*

Icebreak

What was the good news that made you happy?

Introduction

The first missionaries translated Gospel (good news) into *bok eum* (福音, blessed voice) and the four books of Gospel of the N.T. *Bok eum suh* (福音書, Book of blessed voice). They knew that Koreans were eager to receive blessings. Thus, when Koreans hear the word "*bok um*" (gospel), they naturally associate it with their traditional concept of blessing, namely, material blessing and success in life.

Text

1. The Gospel distorted by the Felt Needs (Mark 1:32-39)

- 1) Is the Gospel just for your wish –fulfillments?
- 2) Is the Gospel just for solving your daily struggles?

2. The principles of discerning true Good News which humans listen

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'" (Luke 2:10)

Earthly and Material Blessing	Spiritual and Heavenly Blessing
Felt Needs	Eternal Need
-Temporary	-Perennial
-Partly	-General (Basic)
-Relative	-Absolute (Intrinsic)

Methodological Frame of Critical Discernments for Blessing

"As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned! Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:9-10).

3. The good news of great joy for all the people

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."(Luke 2:11)

1) Jesus is the Good News

	Triple Office	Triple Salvation	Triple Blessing
C	1. The shed blood	1. Salvation of the spirit	1. Blessing for the
H	of Jesus	(Eph.2:1)-Justification	Spirit
R	2. The whipped	2. Salvation of the soul	2. Blessing for the
I	body of Jesus	(Jn14:27)-Sanctification	soul
S	3. The death of	3. Salvation of the body	3. Blessing for the
T	Jesus (Isa. 53:5)	(Mt 8:16-17)-Glorification	body

2) What kind of attitudes do people have toward the Gospel?

4. Good News-God's Invitation of the Sinners

What is the Gospel from the God's side in the Bible?

- 1) The Value of the Gospel (John 3:16, Rom 5:8)
- 2) The Scope of the Gospel
 - (1) Time- The Gospel initiated from eternity (2 Tim 1:9, Rev. 14:6)
 - (2) Objects -All nations (Mt 24:14, Rev. 7:9)
 - (3) Span of the Revelation-the Whole Bible (Rom 1:2)
- 3) The Authority of the Gospel
 - The Gospel of God (Rom 1:1)
 - The Gospel of His Son (Rom 1:9)
 - The Gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor 4:4)
- 4) The Purpose of the Gospel (Acts 10:36, Rom 5:10, 2 Cor. 5:18-19)
- 5) The Characteristics of the Gospel
 - The Gospel of the Grace of God (Acts 20:24, Cf. 1 Pet.5:10)
- 6) The Result of the Gospel
 - New Creation (New Being, 2 Cor.5:17)
 - Change in Christ (Psa.89:15-16, John 15:11, 1 Thess.5:16)

Conclusion and Application

The first missionaries did well in that they translated Gospel (good news) into *bok eum* (福音, blessed voice). The gospel is the Blessed News, which all nations and all people group should hear. Our duty is to transform the traditional concept of blessing into biblical concept of blessing and let them live as the blessed people of God.

5. Blessing and the Covenants

Objectives: To search the meaning of the Noahic Covenant in which God blesses Noah and his children and gives the rainbow. To show how the blessing of God is important in the covenants by studying the covenantal planning of God who wanted to make Abraham and his descendants the channel of blessing to the rest of nations.

Praise: ♪ Standing On The Promises of Christ My King
(Korean Hymnals #399)

Text: Genesis 9:1-17, 12:1-4, Galatians 3:6-14

Key Verse: "Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth" (Genesis 9:1).

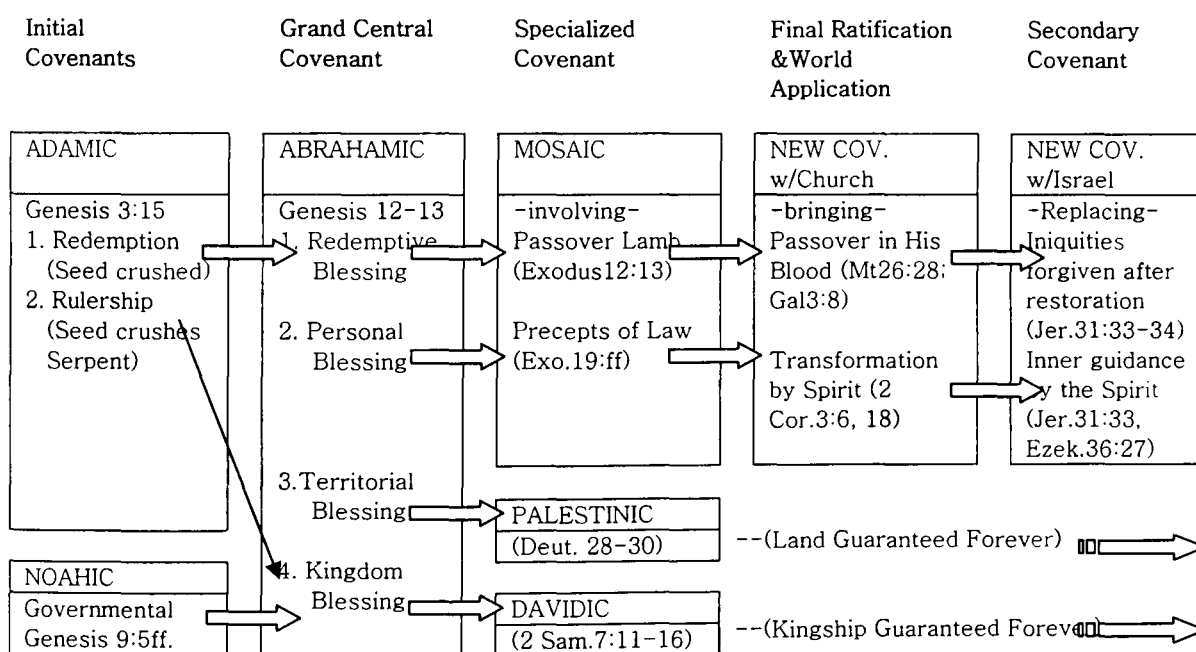
"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:2-3).

Introduction

The Bible is the book for humans. It is about the book that records the principle to restore the lost blessing caused by sin and share the blessing restored in Christ with others.

The Bible records God's many covenants, beginning with the promise of the Redeemer in Genesis 3:15 and climaxing with the New Covenant through the blood of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8). It is clear that God's intention and desire to bless humanity is a central focus of his covenant relationship. Therefore, the blessing of God is meaningful when it is understood in the context of covenants.

The figure below gives a perspective to see the structural understanding of the covenants centered on the blessing of God



Purpose of the Covenants:

1. To reveal and guarantee God's redemptive purposes in His "Eternal Covenant."
2. To reveal and guarantee God's Kingdom purposes through His chosen nation Israel.
3. To provide a faith basis for personal relationship with God

The Bible Covenants: God's Purposes Outlined

The Text

1. The Blessing in the Adamic Covenant (Genesis 3:12-21)

- 1) Proto-evangelism (Genesis 3:15)-Virgin Birth, War of the Descendants, Bruise, Ultimate Victory
- 2) Porto-salvation (Genesis 3:20-21)-God's total grace, the death of innocent lamb, the redemption through blood-shedding

2. The Blessing Given in the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 9:11-17)

- 1) Rainbow Covenant (Gen 9:8-17)
- 2) Blessing waiting the author of their salvation (Hew.2:11)
- 3) Noah's Descendants
- 4) Genealogy of the two Chosen peoples in the Bible (Genesis 9:2; 26; 10:22, 24-25)

3. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12-15)

- 1) Personal blessing
- 2) Territorial blessing
- 3) National blessing
- 4) Universal blessing

4. Mosaic Covenant Displaced with the New Covenant (Exo.20, Jeremiah 31)

"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life" (Leviticus 17:11).

Conclusion and Application

These covenants unfold "God's blessing plan" for His people. In the Adamic covenant, God showed his redemptive plan through the "blessing of a male seed," and in the Noahic covenant he promised "the blessing of the dwelling of God among mortals." These blessings in Genesis 1-11 are the foundational blessings. In the grand central covenant with Abraham, "the blessing of the Gospel" (32) is given to all humanity. God is not playing favorites here. The final purpose of God's blessing on Abraham is to give him the Good News, saying "So that in your seed all the nations of the earth might be blessed (Galatians 3:8)." Of course, that 'seed' is one, namely, Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Reading: Direction of Joktan the God's Chosen People (Genesis 10:25)

6. The Blessing and Grace

Objectives: To show how the blessing which God gives His children in Christ is special, by illustrating the general and special blessings in the light of general and special revelations.

Praise: ♪ I Am Rejoicing Night and Day (Korean Hymnals #427)

Text: Exodus 15:13, Matthew 5:45

Key Verses: *"In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling"* (Exodus 15:13).

"That you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45).

Icebreak

What do you think is difference between Christians and non-Christians in terms of blessing?

Introduction

Special blessing is given to believers, while general blessing is given both the righteous and the unrighteous.

The Text

1. The general and special revelation (Rom 1:19-20)

2. The Cross - A divergence to divide happiness and blessing

New Covenant - The Lord took our curses and gives His wonderful grace and blessing

3. The general and special blessings

1) The Blessings in the general grace

(1) Blessings that were given before the fall in God's general grace

Blessing of fertility, prosperity, and fullness

Blessing of subjugation

Blessing of leadership

(2) Blessings given after the Fall in God's general grace

The bestowals of blessings in God's prevenient grace (that draws sinners and functions as a cord that binds them to His love)

The blessing of promise of redeemer

The blessing of the promise of the coming Messiah

The blessing of sustenance (that preserve life)

The blessing of harvest for the laborers (that preserve the results of toil)

2) The Blessings in the special grace

(1) Spiritual Blessings in Pre-creation

Blessing of being an heir to inherit the Kingdom of God, spiritual gifts, and having spiritually heavenly body through rupture and resurrection

- (2) Special blessings given after Creation but prior to the fall
Blessing to live in the paradise, eating fruit of life
- (3) Special blessings given before one acquires faith in Christ
Blessing of being with sinners
- (4) Special blessings that come after one accepts Jesus
Blessing of giving us object to believe
Blessing of forgiveness of sins
Blessing of being children of God
- (5) Special blessings that utilize blessings given through God's general grace
Blessing of using general blessing for the kingdom of God

4. The blessing of God that is given in a Christian's lifetime (Luke 15:11-24)

- 1) Warning Grace,
- 2) Convincing and Repenting Grace
- 3) Justifying Grace,
- 4) Regenerating Grace (Adoption),
- 5) Sanctifying Grace
- 6) Perfecting Grace,
- 7) Glorifying Grace

Conclusion and Application

The grace of God is blessing which God imparts His presence to human beings. This-worldly blessing is not everything.

Task:

7. The Blessed People and the Revolution of Blessing

Objectives: Many of us were invited to the church with a word saying "Believe in Jesus and get the blessing." Now it is time to invite people again, to a place of change called the ford of Jabbok, where Jacob had a new name from God. From there on, we have to live a revolutionary Christian life as Jacob turned into new being in terms of the biblical concept of blessing.

Praise: ♪ Am I a Soldier of the Cross (Korean Hymnals #489)

Text: Genesis 32:24-32

Key Verse: *The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome" (Genesis 32:27-28).*

Icebreak

Could you share with us if you have testimonies to be a blessing to others?

Introduction

What do you think is the mission of the blessed people?

1. Culture-the situation of life of the Blessed People

- 1) Definition of Culture
- 2) Structure of Culture and its Elements
- 3) Behaviors and styles, Value system, and Worldview

2. Kibok Culture and Korean Cultural Code

- 1) Features of Korean culture
- 2) Bok-A Key to permeate Korean Behaviors and styles, Value system, and Worldview
- 3) Korean Religious Concept of Bok (Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism)
- 4) Modern Korean Concept of Bok (Materialism, Secularism)

3. Encounter with God the Source of Blessing and Worldview Change

- 1) Christian Attitudes toward Korean Traditional Culture
- 2) On Criticism that the Korean church has been shamanized instead Christianizing Korean culture.
- 3) Even Culture Must Be Born Again
- 4) A meaning to be Christian-"Transformational"

4. Revolutionary Attitudes and Dissolution (Mt 5:1-12)

- 1) Christian-A People who met God as the origin of the blessing in Christ
Jacob was blessed at Bethel and at the ford of Jabbok, but he could not live his blessings until he returned to Bethel. Later, he was able to stand before the Pharaoh, the most powerful human in the world, and bless him.

This is the image we need to keep in mind when the Lord tells us that “You will be a blessing ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2-3). People may be proud of the earthly blessings they enjoy, but there are greater blessings, heavenly blessings, that God wants us to claim. He wants us to have both material and heavenly blessings to advance His kingdom purpose.

2) The Eight Beatitudes-Value view for the Blessed People

3) The Extra Jesus Beatitudes -The Blessing to Touch the Nature of God’s Presence

4) The Beatitudes in the Revelation-The Blessings to be Alert with God

Conclusion and Application

Do you know the reason to give you new name “Christian.” New name means that you have new meaning, new purpose, and new mission from God.

8. The Blessed Church

Objectives: To remind participants that the church is the general assembly of the blessed persons who have a new name, that is, a new worldview. The church is to help the saints, who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ, to have intimate relationship with God in the Holy Spirit and to do the ministry of service.

Praise: ♪ Song of Blessing (Korean Hymnals #489)

Text: Ephesians 1:23, 4:11-12

Key Verse: "which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Ephesians 1:23).

Icebreak

Introduction

Church is the general assembly of the blessed person who had new name, that is, new worldview, and of the saints, who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly [places] in Christ.

The Text

1. The blessed saints who were redeemed from the bondage of Satan and consecrated to God

1) The community separated from the world (Ecclesia- Mt 16:18, 18:17, 1 Cor.1:2, Acts 7:38)

2) The community consecrated toward God (Kuriakon-1 Cor 11:20, Rev. 1:10, Lk 22:15, Rom 14:8-9)

2. The General Assembly of the Blessed People who has new worldview in Christ

1) The Blessed people who know Jesus (Mt 16:15-17)

2) The Blessed people seeing, hearing and obeying God's Word (Lk 11:27-28, Mt 13:17-18)

3) The Blessed people who believe without Evidence (Jn 20:29)

4) The Blessed people who is more to give than to receive (Acts 20:35)

5) The Blessed people who are alert with God (Rev. 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20: 6, 22:7, 14)

3. The Errand who delivers the spiritual blessings in heavenly places (1 Pet. 2:9).

1) Church-the Headquarter of Revolution (Mt 16:18)

(1) Unity (Eph 4:3-6), (2) Holiness (Rom 1:7), (3) Universality (Jn 3:16), (4) Apostolicity (Eph 2:20-22)

2) Jesus Christ-The Command-in-Chief of Revolution (Eph 1:22-23)

3) Mission Statement of the Commander-in-Chief (Acts 26:18, Rev. 21:7)

4) Church-Change Agents which diffuse the God's Blessing

사랑 **God's Love** 봉사 **Service**
 하나님 God ————— 이스라엘 Israel ————— 온 민족 The Whole Nation

Origin of Blessing — Deliverer of Blessing — Receiver of Blessing

Jesus Christ ————— Church ————— The World
 구속 **Redemption** 선교 **Mission**

4. Church as Christian Community- The means of the Lord who fills everything in every way

- 1) A church which leads the saints to the core of the Gospel
- 2) A church which teach the way to accumulate the goods in the heaven
(Mk 10:17-22)
- 3) A church which makes the saints practice the principle of God's prosperity
(Mk 10:29-30)
- 4) A church which set the Lord's criteria of success into this world (Lk 12:13-21)

Conclusion and Application

The *raison de'tre* of the church is mission and the purpose of mission is to help people as the ones who are blessed in the Lord

9. The March of the Blessed Encounters

Objectives: To give an explanation of why closeness to God is blessing and to introduce a series of stories of the blessed men and women who met God. To give an understanding that these encounters with God led them other encounters and each of these encounters contains an expectation of God.

Praise: ♪ Song of Blessing (Korean Hymnals #489)

Text: Exodus 3:1-12, Psalms 16:1-11

Key Verse: *"Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." (Psalms 16:1-2)*

Icebreak

Introduction

Stories of the blessed men and women who met God in their lives

The Text

1. Blessing in the Encounters with the good God (Psalms 73:28)

- 1) Relationship with God restored in Christ Jesus
- 2) God who concerns more relationship (being) than ministry (doing)
- 3) Christian life in the relationship with the Lord
- 4) My Pentecostal

2. Blessing in the Encounters with the good people (Psalms 16:3)

- 1) Concentric circles of relationship

Circle #1 – The Self: Restored relationship with God in Christ (Gen 12:2,3)

Circle #2 – Family

Circle #3 – Relatives

Circle #4 – Close Friends

Circle #5 – Neighbors, colleagues, fellow worker and school mates

Circle #6 – Acquaintances

Circle #7 – The Unknown

- 2) The way to develop the encounters into good relationship
- 3) Wisdom to form relationship and use the contact points

3. Blessing in the Encounters with the good works (things)

- 1) God who promise and distribute good works (inheritance) (Psa.16:6)
- 2) Incorporeal assets to develop my inheritance holy (Dueo 7:6, Psa.33:12)
- 3) The purpose of God who give us everlasting possession (Exo 15:13)
- 4) The mission which we have to complete

4. Blessing in the Encounters with the good fruits

"I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my

body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Psa.16:8-11).

Conclusion and Application

God plans and guides an encounter with you. He knows how to change your encounters into good relationship that create wonderful things.

10. The Channel of Blessing

Objectives: To let participants know that mission is the sharing of God's blessing with people. The most effective way is a sharing through their spiritual gifts with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Mission and evangelism are to share the blessed (good) news with people whom we the blessed saints meet. Sharing the blessed news with peoples is going on in the holistic concerns.

Praise: ♪ Make Me a Channel of Blessing (American Gospel Song)

Text: Genesis 12:1-3, 33:1-11, Nehemiah 1:1-11, Acts 20:35

Key Verse: *"Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it" (Genesis 33:11).*

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

"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" (John 12:24).

Icebreak

Introduction

Why does God give us the blessing? What should be the goal of the blessed people?

The Text

1. Bless God!

"And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Genesis 9:26)

"And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all" (Genesis 14:19-20)

"And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren" (Genesis 24:26)

"Bless the Lord your God for ever and ever. Be blessed thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise" (Neh.9:5)

2. Bless people!

1) The Five Principles of God's Blessing

(1) God wants to bless people.

(2) God uses the people of God to bless others (Mk 10:16, Lk 24:50-51, Gen. 14:19-20, Heb. 11:20-21, Num.6:23-26)

(3) We must be blessed first to bless others who are not yet people of God
(Gen.30:27)

(4) We have to follow the way God determined (Num 6:27, Heb.11:20, Mt 17:20).

(5) The blessed will experience the improvement in their lives (Gen 39:4-5, Psa. 127:3-5)

2) The Five Ways to Bless Others

(1) Blessing means to dear others.

(2) Blessing begins implanting the faith.

(3) Blessing becomes a real treasure to others

(4) Blessing begins knowing other's felt needs and concerns.

(5) Blessing is to help the will of God toward others fulfilled

3) The Exposed Result when we bless others

4) The Five Stages to Bless Others

(1) Meaningful Touch

(2) A Spoken Words

(3) Attaching High value

(4) Picturing A Special future

(5) An Active commitment

3. Bless the Promotion of the Sacred Works!

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet.2:9).

"Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel" (Philippians 1:12)

4. Those Who Bless Other are Blessed

A Story who has been a blessings in her community

A story of Ruth who became a channel of blessing for the ruined household

Stories of Esther and Daniel who became channels of blessing for the Babylonian captives

Conclusion and Application

Mission is sharing the blessing with people. Are you used as a channel of blessing to your family, your community, your country, your world?

11. The Blessed Prayer

Objectives: To help them know how important prayer is to the blessed people, and remind them that prayer functions to connect disconnected people to the Lord God the source of all blessings.

Praise: ♪ Prayer of Jabez (Korean Gospel Song)

Text: 1 Chronicles 4:9-10

Key Verse: *"Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, 'Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.' And God granted his request" (1 Chronicles 4:9-10).*

Introduction

Prayer is not a means to manipulate God for my wish fulfillment. Prayer is rather sacred reversal against this wicked world.

The Text

1. Prayer is the means for us to live the Gospel

- 1) Prayer is a conversation based on relationship with God
- 2) Prayer is a privilege given to the saints
- 3) Prayer is like an switch that make electrical power flow
- 4) History shows God's answers on children's prayers

2. Prayer of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:9-10)

- 1) "You would bless me"
- 2) "Enlarge my territory!"
- 3) "Let your hand be with me"
- 4) "Keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain."

3. Prayer and field go hand in hand

- 1) Blessed prayer-Great reversal against the bad situation (Lk 18:7-8)
- 2) Blessed prayer-Strongest type of social activity
- 3) Spiritual frontline-where we pray
- 4) Prayer and field must go together

4. Examples of Prayer

Conclusion and Application

Prayer does not work but God works.

12. The Blessed World-The New Heaven and Earth

Objectives: To describe how the Kingdom of God is really a blessed world. It is the blessed world where God the origin of blessing, God the Son, who took all the curses for sinful people and gave them the genuine (special) blessing, and God the Spirit who has mobilized the blessed church and leads the blessed saints to pitch their tents among the peoples. People in this world have been partly blessed with the blessing of God but there we will be perfectly blessed with it.

Praise: ♪ We Are Bound For Cannan Land (Korean Gospel Song)

Text: Revelation 21-22

Key Verse: *"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever'"*(Revelation 11:15).

"No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him"(Revelation 22:3).

Icebreak

Introduction

From the Garden of Eden to New Jerusalem: the Completion of God's vision with the blessing

The Text

1. We are the blessed who are invited to join the God's salvation history

1) God's direction of works

Genesis	→ The Old Testament →	→ The New Testament →	Revelation
Garden Of Eden	→ Field (田) of Blessing (福) → Strong emphasis On general blessing	Strong emphasis On spiritual blessing	Kingdom of God

Understanding God's Providence from Kingdom Blessing

2) Restoration of the biblical meaning of Bok (blessing)

- (1) Meaning of bok in Korean Shamanism
- (2) Meaning of bok in Korean Buddhism
- (3) Meaning of bok in Korean Confucianism
- (4) Meaning of bok in Korean Protestantism

2. We are called to transform this world into the blessed world

"The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.'" (Rev. 11:15)

- 1) What is the problem of this world?
- 2) What is the blessed world?
- 3) Why we the blessed people transform this world into the blessed world?

4) Who will lead this transformation in this world?

3. God who will renew this world (Rev. 21:5-7)

- 1) Three Stages in the salvation history
 - Already-D-day
 - Not Yet-V-day
 - Present Time-Intervals between D-day and V-day
- 2) Judgment Work of God who

4. Biblical View on the New Heaven and New Earth

- 1) Kingdom of God
- 2) Comprehensive Understanding of the Kingdom of God
- 3) Characteristics of Kingdom of God
 - (1) The place where the will of God is completed
 - (2) The place for the one who loves God and is loved by God
 - (3) The place where the Lord give reward to everyone according to what he/she has done.
 - (4) The place where the saints sitting down with the Son on his throne and having power over the nations (Revelation 2:26, 3:21)

Conclusion and Application

Are you preparing the Great homecoming? Are you expecting the Kingdom of God which consummate the history?

APPENDIX 3 – The Verses on Blessing in the New Testament

The word μακάριος

1. Jesus' Beatitudes

[Matt.5:3-11] Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. 10. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

[Matt.11:6] Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.

[Matt.13:16] But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.

[Matt.16:17] Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

[Matt.24:46] It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

[Luke6:20-23] Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

[Luke10:23] Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.

[Luke11:28] He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

[Luke12:37-38] It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night.

[Luke12:43] It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns.

[Luke14:14] and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

[Acts20:35] In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

[Rev.1:3] Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.

[Rev.14:13] Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

[Rev.16:15] "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

[Rev.19:9] Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."

[Rev.20:6] Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

[Rev.22:7] "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."

[Rev.22:14] "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may

have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

2. Other's Beatitudes

[Luke1:42] In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!

[Luke1:45] Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!

[Luke1:48] for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed,

[Luke11:27] As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."

[Luke14:15] When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God."

[Luke23:29] For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'

[John13:17] Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

[John20:29] Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

[Rom.4:6-9] David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: 7. "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 8. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." 9. Is this blessedness only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? We have been saying that Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness.

[Rom.14:22] So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by

what he approves.

[Gal.4:15] What has happened to all your joy? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.

[James1:12] Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

[1Tim.1:11] that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

[1Tim.6:15] which God will bring about in his own time--God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords,

[Titus2:13] while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

[James1:25] But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does.

[James5:11] As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

[1Pet.3:14] But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."

[1Pet.4:14] If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

The word εὐλογέω

1. God Blessed

[Matt.25:34] "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'

[Acts3:25-26] And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'26. When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

[Gal.3:8-9] The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." 9. So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

[Heb.6:7] Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God.

[Gal.3:14] He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

[Heb.6:14] saying, "I will surely bless you and give you many descendants."

2. Jesus Blessed

2.1 Jesus Gave Thanks

[Matt.26:26] While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

[Mark8:7] They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them.

[Mark14:22] While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

[Heb.12:17] Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears.

2.2 Jesus Blessed People

[Mark10:16] And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on

them and blessed them.

[Luke24:50] When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

[Luke24:51] While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.

[Rom.15:29] I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.

[Eph.1:3] Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

2.3. Jesus' Exhortation

[Luke6:28] bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

3. People Blessed

3.1 People Praised God

[Luke2:34] Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,

[1Cor.14:16] If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying?

[Eph.1:3] Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

3.2. People Blessed People

[Rom.12:14] Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

[1Cor.4:12] We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it;

[1Cor.9:23] I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

[1Cor.10:16] Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

[Heb.7:1] This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him,

[Heb.7:6-7] This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7. And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater.

[Heb.11:20-21] By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future. 21. By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of Joseph's sons, and worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

[1Pet.3:9] Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

APPENDIX 4 – A Critical View of Today's Korean Church

A Critical View of Today's Korean Church

I will analyze the present condition of Korean church and its theology through a methodological approach. I will then proceed to illustrate how the traditional concept of blessing works within the given framework of Korean church.

Methodology of the Critical View

I will employ three methodological approaches to critically analyze the current standing of Korean church. I will use Don Richardson's approach of critical discernment and, lastly, Barnett's theory of cultural change.

Don Richardson's Critical Discernment In Eternity in Their Heart, Don Richardson (1984:31-33) states there were three major factors of influence in the Canaanite culture. First is the "Abraham factor" which indicates God's special revelation which continued through the Old and New Testament. The "Melchizedek factor" signifies God's general revelation which is already present. The "Sodom factor," however, reveals the evil components of the Canaanite culture which brings forth God's judgment. Richardson (1984:33) argues that these three factors combined and/or affected each other throughout history.

Richardson's tool allows for discernment and the identification of different factors in traditional concepts and practices of blessings in the Korean culture. With the guidance of Holy Spirit, I can adopt this approach and identify which aspects of the culture is a "Sodom factor" or a "Melchizedek factor." Thus, the method of critical discernment provides a way of differentiating various factors in the given context of Korean church.

Barnett's Innovation Model Barnett's model of innovation is useful in

demonstrating how innovation of concepts of blessing takes place in the context of the Korean Church.

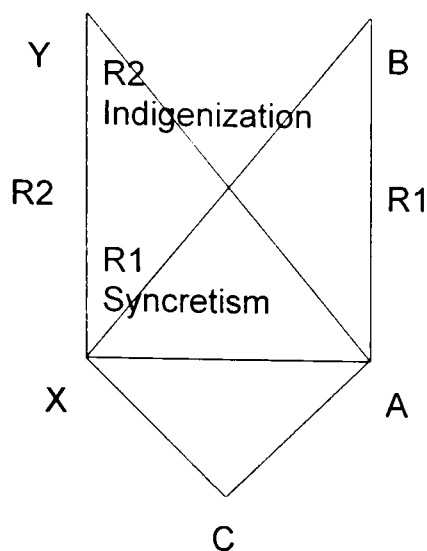


Figure 1. Innovation Model

In the diagram, AB is a prototype of A culture. The areas of A-R1-B represent the ideas of culture A wherein A is done in expectation of B. XY represents stimulus configuration adopted by the advocator. X also produces Y through R2. Thus, X-R2-Y represents the ideas of culture X. The convergent analysis C is the common denominator of X and A culture. Thus, CX and CA becomes equivalent in the innovator's mind. Both process leads to identification, i.e. the innovative process.

Innovators frequently equate $CA=CX$ and treat them alike, assigning same meaning or function even though advocator does not equate CA with CX. Identification is made by the innovator in two ways: projection as indigenization ($R1=CX$ to Y through R1) or assimilation as syncretism ($R2=CA$ to Y through R2).

Diagnosis of Contemporary Korean Church

These methodological are helpful in critically analyzing the present condition of Korean church.

"Shamanized" Christianity In Korea Early missionaries that reached Korea rushed into preaching the gospel to the shamanic Korean people without further consideration of what might happen in the future. Roy E. Shearer perceived the shamanic nation of Korea as a nation well prepared to receive Christianity. He contends, "there is no strong, organized religious opposition but found instead that Shamanism or animism, had actually prepared the nation to receive Christianity" (Shearer 1966: 30). Widespread use of the word '*Hananim*' (God) and the strong predilection for blessing allowed Koreans to welcome Christianity with open arms. Even it is reported that shamans introduced people to Christianity whenever she faced with problems over beyond her power or spiritual abilities in terms of "Power Encounter,"⁴² and while Buddhism competed with Christianity, it ultimately lost. The widespread practice of ancestral worship allowed for Confucianism to hold itself against the growing popularity of Christianity. The religious situation in Korea is analogous to Nida's argument (1954:18) that Christianity great appealed to animists in Africa, Burma, etc. She further argues, "A great deal of the success of the Christian missions among predominantly animistic peoples is related to the lack of security found in animistic beliefs" (1954:19). Deprived of secure foundation, many animists gravitate towards Christianity when crises or exigent circumstances confront their beliefs and

⁴² Martha Huntley, a woman missionary to Korea, witnessed, even though the missionaries certainly did not teach the Koreans to cast out demons, the early Korean Christians were convinced they were grappling with evil spirits and that their God would prevail. Eventually, exorcism was an important church activity. When a person was delivered from evil spirits by Christian exorcism, his whole family was likely to embrace the new religion, impressed by its power and effectiveness. What is more, Korean shaman led people to the church when she met with unsolvable problem. (1941:123-125)

ideologies (Nida 1954:19).

These explanations illustrates the rather naïve conviction that missionary efforts in Korea were largely successful in Christianizing the Korean shamanism. While it may certainly have had an appearance of success, Christianity in Korea struggles with overcoming the predominating shamanic ideologies. Korean Protestantism is at an impasse and need for contextualization in theology and practice is urgent. If not, Christianity in Korea faces the danger of completely absorption by Shamanism (Joon Sik Choi 1997:282). Early missionaries and church leaders of Korea failed to notice how shamanism transformed and reshaped the philosophies and religious practice of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Roman Catholicism (Grayson 2002:230). They ultimately lacked missiological insights and failed to provide a critical contextualization of the culture.

In "Impact and Acceptance of Western Culture from the Shaman's perspective," Kil Sung Choi (1987:61) argues,

The miraculous diffusion of Christianity with its rapid church growth in Korea is justified to have common ground of religious mentality to correspond to the Korean people. The most common ground is shamanism. That is, the nature of Christianity with its secondary elements such as miracles, speaking in tongues, revival meeting, healing through prayer in Christianity meets with the nature of Korean Shamanism.

Moreover, Choi (1997:61) insists that Shamanism helps Korean Christianity maintains its religiosity through mystical elements that is familiar to the Korean culture. Suh Jung Bum (1986:101), a scholar of Korean literature, criticized Christianity for being shamanic, he writes:

When Christianity entered into Korea, promise that if you believed Christianity, you would be blessed. That's way they call the books of

gospel "*bokeumseo*" (books of blessed voice), and doing evangelism "*bokeum junhaneun kut*." People thought that if they believed Christianity they would be blessed. In the end, when the Christianity came into Korea, the Korean masses rushed into the church to receive the blessing

Kil Sung Choi (1987:53), a Korean Shaman, is positive in his evaluation of Korean shamanism. He maintains that "*Moosok* (Korean Shamanism) has communal elements with Christianity, in that it has deeper religiosity than Confucianism and mystical elements. That's why *Moosok* played important roles and functions in the process of diffusion and indigenization of Christianity." Yoon Sung Bum (1998:141), a forerunner of indigenization movement in Korea, maintains that the absence of critical contextualization is responsible for the widespread manifestation of shamanism in Korean Christianity.

Korean Syncretistic Christianity Joon Sik Choi (1998:132), a Korean anthropologist, characterizes the religious practice of Korean people as multifarious. For example, while people practiced Confucian rites, they still revered Buddhist images and idols. If there was a *Seonangdang* (서낭당, a shrine for a tutelary deity) at the mouth of a village, people invoked blessing by throwing a stone into a heap. People practiced various religions as they were the same. A missionary commented that "Korean people practice ancestor worship and at the same time venerate Buddha; having problems they ran into the shaman" (Joon Sik Choi 1998:133). James S. Gale once expressed that "the religion of the Choson was strange religion that is mixed with ancestor worship, Buddhism, Taoism, animism, divination, magic, astrology, and fetishism" (Yong Kyu Park 2004:500).

Korean shamanism not only shaped Korean Buddhism and Confucianism but deeply influenced social, familial, and political life. Korean

shamanism is deeply hegemonic; as a result, “the Korean Protestantism also face[s] the same syncretistic problem” (Myung il Ihl 1995:30). As I have mentioned before, while Protestantism in Korea generated positive effects in the society, it has also been greatly affected by shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism and other new religions.

Korean Protestantism, then, is syncretistic. Sung Tae Kim (1991:321-322) in “Contextualization and the Presbyterian Church in Korea” investigates the syncretism of Korean Protestantism in three areas: (1) theology (2) Christian life values and (3) church leadership. Addressing theological issues, Kim perceives that the Korean understanding of God, the Holy Spirit, Christology, Demonology, Church, etc, is largely syncretistic. Kim asserts that motivation for prayer, revivals, and blessing are also integrated with prevalent shamanic ideologies.

Syncretism or Indigenization Barnett’s model of innovation is useful to determine whether Korean Protestantism is on a right path of contextualization . The practice of prayer (or other religious practices) has been exercised for the purpose of seeking *bok*, prior to the introduction of Christianity into Korea. The original practice of prayer demonstrates *kibok sinangi*, or, shamanic beliefs in blessings. I have included this example to illustrate that Christian teaching and practice of prayer were not introduced in a cultural vacuum.

In diagram, AB is the prototype of traditional Korean practice of praying for blessings, for examples, a mother’s fervent prayer at early dawn, shaman’s overnight prayer in the mountains, early morning rites before the statue of Buddha, etc. A-R1-B represents the idea of Korean religious practice of prayer in which A is done in expectation of B – *ohbok* (five blessings). For Koreans, traditional prayer is a means of attaining blessings;

it functions as a way of manipulating spirits or gods that bring blessings or curses.

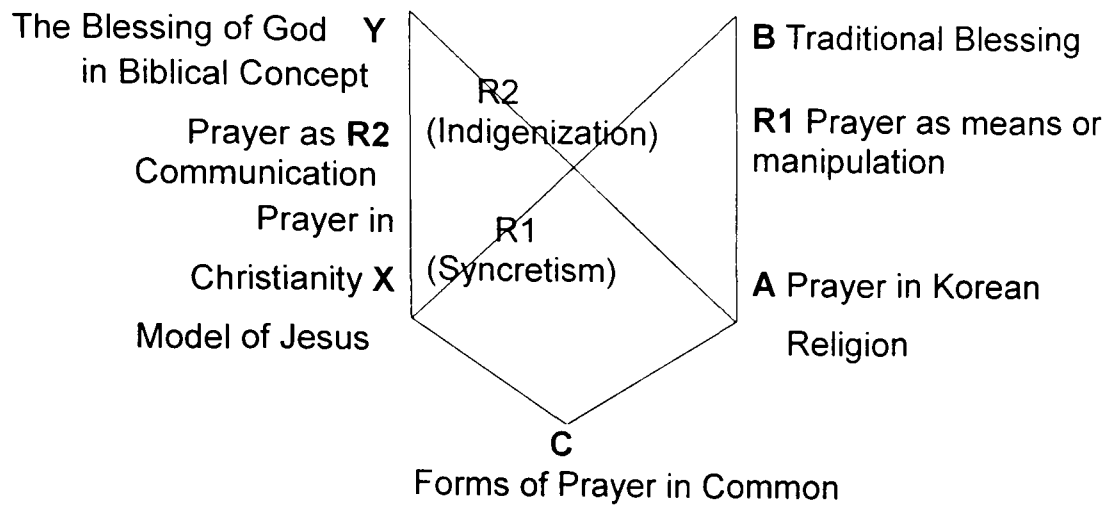


Figure 2. Diagnosis of Korean Protestantism

The concept of blessing in *kibok sinang* refers strictly to earthly, material blessings in one's home, extended families, i.e., relatives, and communities. The traditional practice of prayer is a way to acquire blessings whether it may be to attain harmony and peace in oneself or earthly wealth, etc. XY is stimulus configuration advocated by missionaries and the Bible. Furthermore, X produces Y. Therefore, X-R2-Y represents the idea of Christian prayer that is advocated by Western missionaries finally in contact with the shamanic practice of prayer represented in A-R1-B. Relationship R2 in the configuration XY may or may not be the same as that of R1 between configuration AB.

Through convergent analysis, C represents commonalities found between the Christian prayer (x) and the traditional shamanic prayer. Through convergent incorporation, this existing commonality acts as an intermediary, a common denominator, so that a Korean Christian can identify with the Christian prayer by calling attention to his or her past experiences. Thus, CX

and CA become are deemed equivalent to the innovator. Both CX and CA lead to identification, i.e. the innovative process.

Innovators frequently equate CA and CX and consequently, assign the same meaning or function upon them although missionaries did not equate *kibokjuk* (shamanic) prayer with Christian prayer. This identification is called to mind by Korean Christians. While the style and attitude of their prayer resembles a shamanic one, they absorb the Christian idea of prayer through joining CA to Y and similarly R2 with CX.

1. Innovation as Assimilation or Projection

Just before the Korean Pentecost in 1907, numerous missionaries gathered in Pyung-Yang after hearing reports of India's great revival. These people earnestly sought God and prayed so that Korea too may experience revival. These missionaries initially decided to pray starting from noon for a period of one month but later changed the hour to four o'clock in the afternoon. They expended tremendous amount of time in prayer. While missionaries prayed with one mind for a revival at four in the afternoon, Korean believers started earnestly praying at four in the morning for the same reason. Korean believers were able to identify the missionaries' prayer with their own experiences of shamanic praying in the past, and they integrated this practice to their own Christian life.

Korean Church commonly holds prayer meetings at dawn, all-night prayer meetings. Moreover, some Korean believers regularly fast and pray for several days at a time in prayer mountains. The practice of prayer at prayer mountains, in its meaning and form, strongly correlates to the tradition of shamanic rituals. Korean myth regards mountains as sacred places where heavenly figures descend; it is considered a place of divine revelation. Traditionally, Korean women prayed to gods with an offering of a bowl of pure

water at dawn. Sacrifices and prayers to ancestors usually occurred after midnight. Numerous similarities exist between the prayer rituals of *kibok sinang* and the practice of prayer in the Korean church.

2. Projection as indigenization

Much of the practices of prayer in *kibok sinang* have been innovated by Korean believers. The joining of CA to Y results in R2. Korean believers often exercise shamanic prayer within the Christian context; instead of praying to ancestral spirits, they pray to God and ask Him for blessings. Thus, few Korean believers ever mature, or live their life in accordance with Christ. They do not want to serve God or advance the gospel to the unreached, unsaved, and unchurched for the expansion of God's kingdom. They fail to understand that prayer is a form of communication, a relationship, between God and His children.

Kibokjuk remnants can still be found in the practice of prayer in the Korean church. Majority of Korean believers pray by joining CX to B with the result of R1; they still pray as means of attaining blessing. Such practice indicates assimilation as syncretism. They pray within the Christian framework but to obtain the traditional concept of blessings. Many people perceive prayers as necessary in the acquirement of blessing. Thus, their concept of prayer is still confined to a shamanic view of prayer. These believers see prayer as a way of appealing to God who will then bestow blessings upon them. They pray hard, but the content and the attitude of their prayer remains *kibokjuk*. The concept of blessing in *kibok sinang* is self-centered while the concept of blessing in Christianity is selfless and Christ-centered.

True innovation is ascertained through critical discernment. In Shamanism, people practice prayers to manipulate gods who can bestow

blessings and protect them from curses. Within the churches, there are numerous Christians whose prayers are means of obtaining blessing, not relationship with God. There are thus two innovations within the Korean church, that of assimilation and projection. Recently, Korean church has become a lot more committed to mission works. Withstanding numerous criticisms, Korean church strives to contextualize the Gospel through “critical discernment.”

In retrospect, some influential preachers, in the sixties and the seventies, opted for total rejection as they were chiefly concerned with economic advancement. Numerous church leaders collaborated with the government and uncritically used Deuteronomy 28:1-14 as proofs for material blessing, social status, many descendants, and victory over enemies. In doing so, they never once mentioned the conditions or the requisites for blessing. They convinced Korean believers that Christianity promises them the same material blessings in shamanic thought and emphasized that Christian faith also guarantees eternal faith and spiritual blessing. Some preachers or theologians were put off by such remarks and rejected the teaching of *bok* at church. (Moses Lee 1994:222) Convicted that the Old Testament verified the traditional concept of *bok*, some preachers went so far as to proclaimed that “the rich are the blessed and the poor are cursed.” (Moses Lee 1994:224) The lack of critical contextualization and discernment engendered the rise of *kibok sinang* and *kibokjooeui* during the Korean War and the economic revivals that followed the war.

Diagnosis on the Present Korean Theology

In “The Formation of the Korean Church and the Historical Analysis of That Factor,” (한국교회의 형성과 그 요인의 역사적 분석) Keun Hwan Kang provides a comprehensive perspective on Korean church. It addresses the

church's theological trends, faith and the manifestation of it in practices, and the influence it has on socio-political dimensions. Kang (2004:53) characterizes Korean faith in its earliest period fundamentalist (1884-1930); other theological thoughts that challenged fundamentalism were universally suppressed. But the rising of biblical criticism methods and Ecumenical movements in the Korean church (1930-1960) resulted in a division of theological group between the conservatives and the liberals (2004:53). The following table illustrates the crux of Kang's perspective.

Conservatism		Liberalism
Conservatism-criticizing ecumenical movement and opposing the use of Biblical criticism	Mood	Liberalism-accepting ecumenical movement and using biblical criticism methods
Confessional-opposing liberal theology and vindicating theology advocated by missionaries.	Type	Apologetic-contextual theology, secular theology, political theology, and liberation theology
Objectivism-Denominational authority	Mode	Subjectivism-pursuing the liberty of scholarship

Figure 3: Comparison of Conservative and Liberal Theology

Korean theology was depolarized in the 1960s and led to a triangular theological world of (1960-1990) conservative theology (*kibok* theology), social participant theology (*minjung* theology), and religious cultural theology (contextualizing theology based on the Korean culture) (2004:54). However, rapid changes in socio-economic and political environments transformed Korean theology once again. The present theological setting of Korea (1990-present) is comprised of the division within conservatism into extreme conservatism (fundamentalism) and conservative evangelicalism, and the division within liberalism into socially participant theory (*minjong* theology)

and religiously cultural theology (contextual theology) (Keun Hwan Kang 2004:65).

Conservatism		1930-60	Liberalism	
Extreme conservatism (fundamentalism)	Conservative evangelicalism (<i>kibokjuk</i> Theology)	1990-	Socially participant theology (<i>minjong</i> theology)	Religiously cultural theology (contextual theology)

Figure 4. Present Theological Trends in Korea

Of these four theological trends, conservative evangelical theology is by far the most predominating. Conservative evangelicalism is characterized by a "selfishly individualistic trend, evasively other-worldliness, and authoritative legalism" (2004:65); it maintains a predominantly *kibokjuk* ideology. The once popular *minjong* theology bit the dust with the extermination of military dictatorship, and the contextual theory also faded away when it was met with disapproval by church denominations despite its attempt at rebuilding itself in terms of self-theologization. Thus, while the Korean church has been externally influenced by missionary theology, the theology gradually syncretized with Korean Shamanism; it was fundamentally debased by the melding of prosperity theology and the shamanic concept of blessing.

I will briefly touch upon the theology of David Yonggi Cho, an influential preacher in Korea. In "The Contribution of David Yonggi Cho to a Contextual Theology in Korea" (2003:85) Allan Anderson vindicates Cho Yonggi's theology as "contextual theology that is born in the particular situation of Korean suffering." Anderson (2003:85) contends that the interaction of Cho's theology with Korean shamanism should be examined in light of Korea's particular historical and situational context and not be viewed

from the perspective of the American 'prosperity gospel.' He criticizes several western scholars such as Walter Hollenweger, David Martin, and Harvey Cox who insisted that the success of Korean Pentecostalism was due to the integration of Christianity and shamanism. Anderson (2003:92-94) advocates, "Cho's Pentecostal message is a contextual theology that has adapted to and transformed its cultural and religious environment." David Cho (1984:9) in *More Than Numbers* explains his theological position,

Being a Korean and having been saved out of Buddhist religion, I have been able to appreciate the distinctive position of Christians who come from the Third World ... We evangelical Korean Christians have developed our own traditions. This is very important because it makes it possible for us to be Christian without being less Korean. In the past, missionaries not only brought their religion but also their culture to the countries they evangelized. So it became apparent that this produced an unnecessary hindrance to the acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

David Cho fully understands the importance of culture; he theologizes the Christian message within Korea's cultural framework - a nation torn apart by war. His sermons of hope in Christ and the power in Holy Spirit provides hope for a suffering and destitute community (Anderson 2003:94, 98). Cho added threefold blessings to the Pentecostal's fourfold 'full gospel of Jesus the Savior, Healer, Baptizer with the Holy Spirit, and the Coming King. His 'threefold blessings of salvation' includes soul prosperity, prosperity in all things, and a healthy life, based on 3 II John. Cho stresses that happiness does not come from outward wealth ('mere material gain), but from 'solutions to our deep, inner problems, and at the same time condemns those who think that happiness comes from power and wealth (Anderson 2003:101-02).

I gained a lot of insights through observing David Yonggi Cho's contextual ministry. Having been trained and experienced in the field of

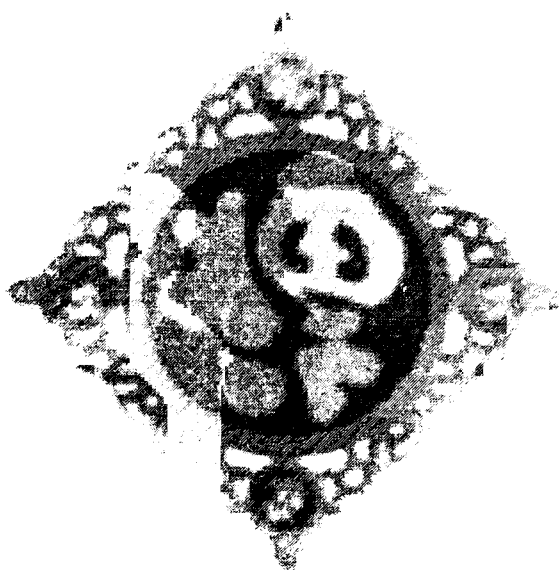
mission work, I was able to gain considerable amount of insight through studying contextual theology and ministry. I came to understand that many pastors and theologians outside uncritically assumed that the rapid church growth in Korea was due to a fusion of revivalism and prosperity theology with shamanic practices. People tend to condemn Korean church as shamanic from merely seeing external similarities and common association of ideas between both religions. While Barnett's model of innovation shows similarities in form, style, mode, and religious practice between traditional Shamanism and the Korean Protestantism, the greatest problem lies in misinterpretations and misuse of meaning by Korean believers.

The lack of critical discernment and critical contextualization of Korean church leaders lead them to emphatically deny the integration of shamanism in Korean Protestantism and wholly condemn shamanism as evil (Anderson 2004:95). Thus, Harvey Cox, who once condemned David Yonggi Cho as "a Pentecostal shaman," entitled Korean Pentecostalism as "Shaman and Entrepreneurs: Primal Spirituality on the Asian Rim" (1996:226). Cox related that "the paradox is that the Korean churches do preach against shamanism, but at the same time they incorporate and Christianize elements of the shamanistic worldview and practice" (Cox's email to Jeremy Reynolds 2000:5). He continues, "There is a difference between rhetoric and practice. As I say other expressions of Pentecostalism in *Fire from Heaven*, one of the great strengths of Pentecostalism is its capacity to integrate pre-Christian cultural expressions into a Christian practice" (Cox's email to Reynolds 2000:5).

Like David Yonggi cho, numerous Korean church leaders define their practices in reference to the Bible over pre-Christian religions. The church currently faces numerous crises such as the unchanging traditional mindset

and worldview, the lack of critical contextualization and discernment in Korean church leaders, and the limitation of crowd-centered ministry paradigm. Moreover, the untransformed concept of blessing and the untransformed Korean worldview plagues not only the believers but the Korean church leaders.

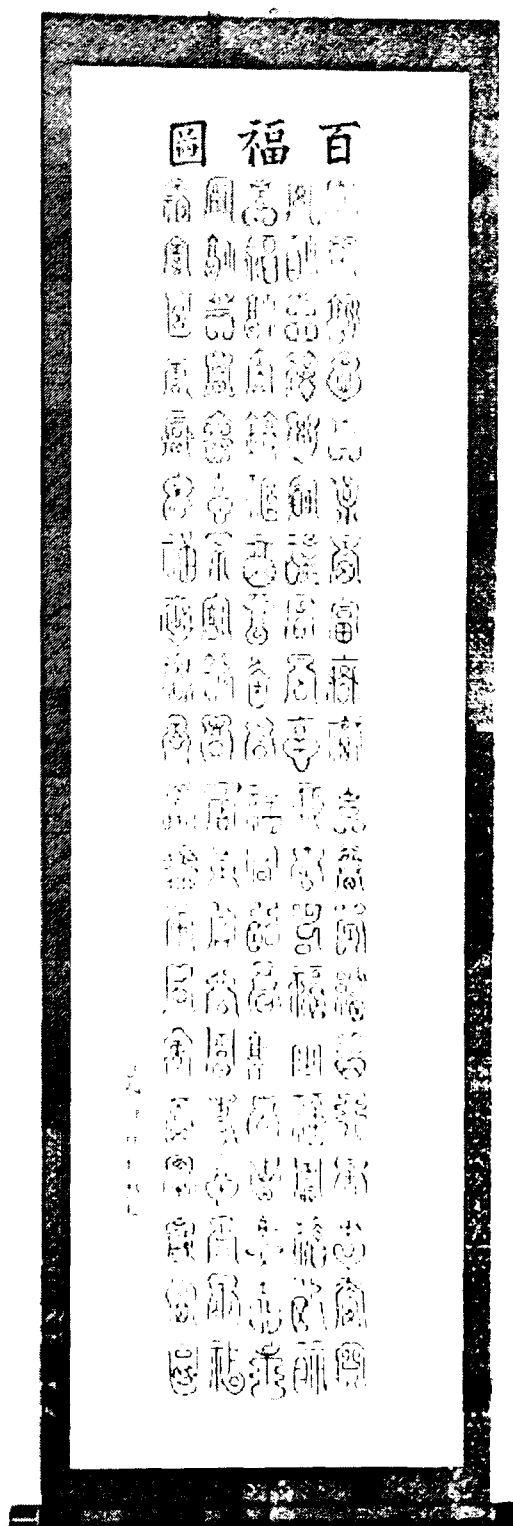
APPENDIX 5 –Pictures on Letter *Bok*



Picture 1. The Up-sided letter '*Bok*'



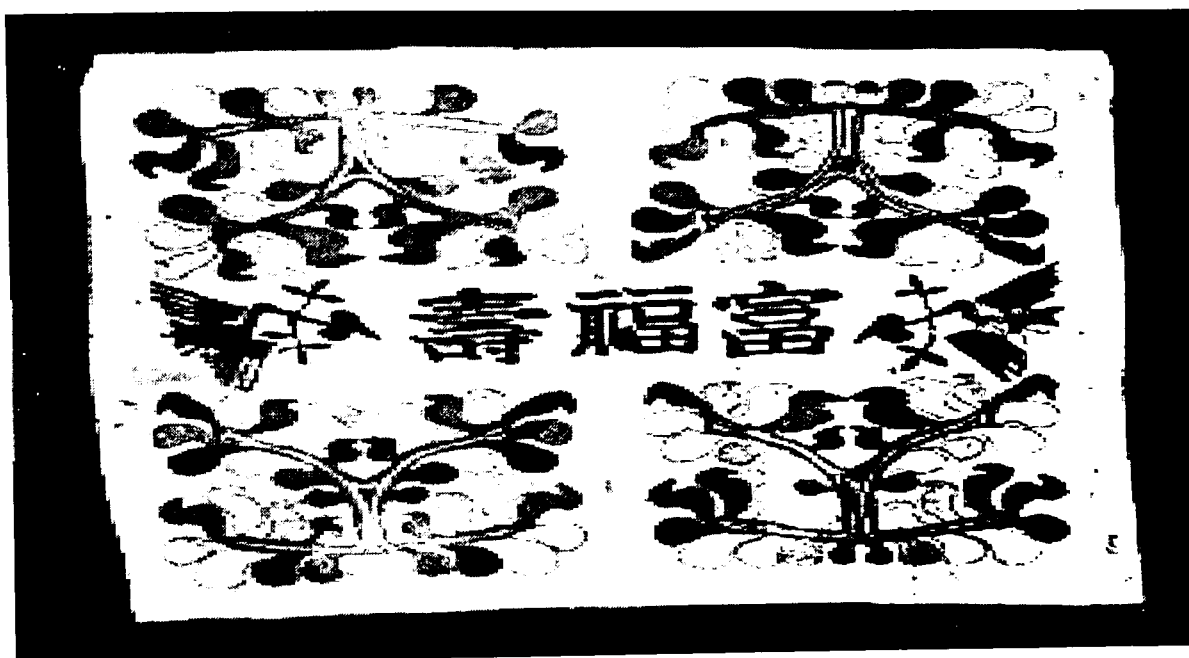
Picture 2: The Chinese Letter '*Bok*'



Picture 3. Hundred Different Styles of Letter '*Bok*'



Picture 4. Sib Jang Saeng Do (十長生圖 十曲屏) Ten Longevity Symbols/19th century)



Picture 5. Embroidered Letter Longevity, Blessing and Wealth on Silk Wrapper



Picture 6: Blessing Button



Picture 7: Tote Bag



Picture 8: Teddy Bear

APPENDIX 6 – Actual Circumstances of Shamanized Korean Churches

Actual Circumstances of Shamanized Korean Churches

There are positive and negative self-images of the Korean churches.

- I. Positive Self-images of the Korean Church
 1. Self-Supporting Church
 2. Self-Propagating Church
 3. Self-Governing Church
 4. Self-Theologizing Church

- II. Negative Self-images of the Korean Church
 1. Self-Driven Church
 2. Self-Privatized Church
 3. Self-Centered Church
 4. Self-Serving Church
 5. Self-Consuming Church
 6. Selfishly Evangelizing Church

The early Korean churches had these positive and healthy self-images. Unbeknown to us, today's Korean churches come to have negative and destructive self-images. These are actual circumstances of shamanized Korean churches. Let us expound on each of the negative self-images of the Korean Church.

1. Self-Driven Church

"Every church is driven by something. There is guiding force, a controlling assumption, a directing conviction behind everything that happen" (Rick Warren 1995:77). There are many Korean churches that are driven by tradition, personality, finances, programs, buildings, events and seekers (1995:77-80). Despite the fact that churches and pastors exist to discover God's will (1995:97) and pastors are called to "serve God's purpose" (1995:395) rather than asking God to serve the purpose which they created,

Korean pastors seem to have slightly different motives.

Although church should be driven by God's purpose and will, lots of Korean churches are driven by self-interests of pastors and lay church leaders. Although church growth is an important topic in theological discipline, it is unbiblical if the church is driven by "Church Growth First Policy" and "Individual Church First Policy" that are motivated by *kibok sinang* and secular successfulism. "The goal of a pastor is not success. It is secular desire to preach the Gospel before numerous believers and to be honored by them" (Oh Kap Lee 2005:8).

While many pastors are driven by those policies, many lay believers are positively driven by *kibok sinang* of material wealth. Lee Seung Jae (2007:1) criticizes that "believers are accused of being too mercenary to have material authority and power; they believe that having faith in Jesus means attaining all wishes, solving all problems, and receiving material blessings and authority. Because they do not care about the will of God toward the Korean churches, they are facing difficulties."

In the Korean church, many pastors and believers hope to get three authorities from God: human authority, spiritual authority and material authority. Because they believe that these three authorities guarantee the success of ministry or business, Korean pastors and believers are struggling to get these blessing of authorities through fasts and prayers. They believe that when they use these three authorities at one's pleasure in the Church or business, their ministries and church will have success, growth.

"Church growth is the natural result of church health. Church health can only occur when our message is biblical and our mission is balanced" (Warren 1995:49) Genuine church growth needs five facets: "grow warmer through fellowship, deeper through discipleship, stronger through worship,

broader through ministry, and larger through evangelism" (Warren 1995:47).

2. Self-Privatized Church:

Lee Seung Jae (2007:3-26) explains the reasons for diminishing Christian believers, criticizing that pastors in mega churches fall into idolatrizing their children and material. He (2007:3-26) criticizes,

"Many Korean senior pastors in mega churches were not afraid to pass down senior pastor's position to their sons by succession. Giving senior pastor position over to their son by succession has become a nationwide epidemic, following the precedents of Kwang Lim Methodist Church, Choong Hyun Presbyterian Church, and Kum Ran Methodist Church. As state is not a private possession, church is not a private property of the senior pastor."

These are clearly influenced by *kibok sinang*, for those pastors thought "how can I give up this church to others when I shed my blood and sweat to build it?"

3. Self-Centered Church

Most of the Korean church are managed or ministered not by team ministry, but by sole leadership of a senior pastor. As all road leads to Rome, all powers converge on a senior pastor. The pastor should make church God-centered, but they equate the word 'God-centered' to 'senior pastor-centered.' They do their best to set up the system to display their three authorities at their pleasure. An editor of Korean Newspaper once criticized that "senior pastor has become an idol in the Korean church", because associate pastors and lay leaders are busy adulating the senior pastor and study what pleases him/her.

Although pastors should place God in the center of the church, many pastors replace God with themselves. Their will replaces God's will and their

purpose replaces God's purpose. In order to fulfill their purposes and wills using their three authorities at their pleasure, they employ associates, staffs, lay leaders, events, strategy and methods. Rather than concentrating on developing mature members (Warren 1995:331), these pastors "focus on growing a church with programs" (1995:108) "It is really hard to look forward to the future unless the Korean church gives up self-centeredness and replace it with God-centeredness and Jesus-centeredness. Now is an opportune time for true repentance, faith, and regeneration" (Oh Kap Lee 2005:11)

4. Self-Serving Church

As a tree yields fruits for the sake of others, the church only exists for the glory of God and for the lost world before God. 'Self-service' is a system, especially in a restaurant or petrol station, in which customers serve themselves and pay at a checkout. 'The self-serving church' can be defined as a church that understands the reason for their existence as for themselves only. As Jerusalem church practiced self-service, many believers in the self-serving Korean churches serve and help one another while utilizing all possible means and sources with total disregard for the Lord's great commission and great commandment. They are ignorant of their community and foreign affairs. They do not know that the immediate effect of self-serving practices isolate them from the community and that isolation leads it to ghettoization.

As Rick Warren (1995:32) mentions, "A church's health is measured by its sending capacity rather than its seating capacity", Christian believers must go into the world to bring the lost to the Lord through Christian service and mission. To believers, Jesus says, "Go!," but to the lost world, Jesus says, "Come!" (1995:235)

5. Self-Consuming Church

The blessing God bestowed on the Korean church should be naturally distributed to the church and to community and foreign countries. However, the Korean churches have self-consumed all of their blessings and materials for their own purposes. Chi Joon Noh (1998:107) shows actual circumstance of self-consuming church as follows:

They concentrated all resources in the churches on to their projects of building magnificent places of worship, parsonages, burial places, education and mission buildings, prayer mountain or retreat centers, purchasing bigger buses. In this way they invest all of their resources for their own extension.

Mission and community service are last things on their “to do list.” Despite the fact that God specifically promises more blessing to givers than receivers, Korean church leaders are still feeble in translating this into actions.

6. Selfishly Evangelizing Church

Even evangelism is largely used in “church growth first policy and my church only policy.” Non-Christians call this “aggressive evangelism.” Using loudspeakers, many evangelists increase stress not only to Christians but also to non-Christians. As fisher dredges for fishes, many churches visit other believers in smaller churches using their big buses and women evangelists. They invoke conflicts among the churches and promote “transfer growth” encouraging horizontal mover from one church to another. These are typical example of group-egotism in the church which habitually pursues the interests of their church rather than the Kingdom of God.

In conclusion, “A discredited and isolated church from people can not but decrease in numbers. Even religion should provide competitive power. If not, that religion will decline. A religion that is abstract and notional or idolizes

Mammon with *kibok sinang* cannot continue to deceive people” (Seung Jae Lee 2006:5). The Korean churches are called to be mature by overcoming stage of *kibok sinang* before God and the society.

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- #57 On the Fall of Man
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- #43 The Scripture Way of Salvation
- #60 The General Deliverance
- #40 On Christian Perfection
- #41 Wandering Thought
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