

# Catching Up in Asia

By David Wang



The other day, at a Leaders' Summit of ministries that each has a far reaching influence amongst the Chinese world, I tried to define Asian Outreach's current state: "We're like a bunch of fools, trying our very best to catch up with the Holy Spirit. On every front He is moving at lightning speed, swinging open unprecedented doors of opportunity."

Afterward, the President of a long-history Christian publisher, which has just started moving into China with their children's publications, asked if he could borrow my definition. "The same is happening to us," he said. "It's door after door cracking wide open, left and right, and everywhere!"

The publisher had originally intended to move in slowly, like three or four titles a year to "test the market." But the opportunities and demands are now simply overwhelming him.

Of course, I granted him the liberty to use my definition on Asian Outreach. In fact, I told him about another denominational publisher in Hong Kong who has just given us the right to print one of their Sunday school textbooks in China. Locally, the publisher has been selling several hundred copies a year. Yet the first print in one city alone in China was 15,000 sets — and they were completely gone in three weeks!

For God's people operating in the frontlines of Asian missions, Philip Jenkins popular book, *The New Christendom*, is definitely not a thesis. His observation that Christianity's centre of gravity has now shifted to Asia is a day-to-day reality. A challenge that is stretching all of us to the limit.

One Hong Kong church reported that over last Christmas holidays, more than 1,200 new converts were recorded. "We are completely taken aback," the Pastor told me. "We didn't do anything spectacular, but just ran repeated Christmas Thanksgiving services. New people just kept coming forward, to give their lives to Jesus."

There was a time I thought this phenomenon was just happening to China. And that this is a "kairos" moment for the Chinese people. Not so...

Last month, on the 15th Anniversary of Asian Outreach Mongolia, together with the Mongolia Evangelical Association, we conducted a National Pastors' Conference. More than half the pastors from the approximately 250 young churches of Mongolia attended, along with many other key Christian leaders. Their response was that as Christian leaders of Mongolia, they are now poised not just to transform a church, or a community, but indeed the whole country. "What happened during this Conference will impact on our country for years to come," shared one

participant. "Now is God's time for Mongolia."

Thinking back...during the 70's, we'd beamed "Streams in the Desert" broadcasts into China for 10 solid years. And we received just three response letters. It was like banging our heads against an airtight Bamboo Curtain of absolute god-less Maoism.

Or when we first launched our mission into Mongolia in the early 90's, there were only five believers of Jesus in the entire country. Three of them foreigners. There was only desperation and hopelessness in a poverty-stricken nation, suddenly abandoned by the collapse of the Soviet. We were pioneering, with little fruits, in a land deeply rooted in Buddhism, brainwashed by Marxism, corrupted to the core by poverty and greed.

And now, not only China, or Mongolia are becoming spiritually fertile, even Muslim Indonesia and Malaysia are reporting phenomenal growth of born-again Christian population.

Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and even India are sending out more and more cross-cultural missionaries. Last month, I stopped by Singapore for a quick weekend to conduct a mission conference for a local church. Her faith promise giving towards world mission this year is US\$3 million.

The Killing Fields of Cambodia are becoming a harvesting field. National leadership is maturing rapidly. "Christianity in our country must become indigenized, and not wear a Western face," Romanca our Cambodia Direc-

tor told us. "Local mission and church planting are now more and more the responsibility of the Cambodians."

Young churches in North Vietnam are sending missionaries into the mountains. Even in military controlled Myanmar, Christian ministries are flourishing. In a National Pastors Conference late last year, leaders from throughout the country were challenged, and committed themselves to greater service for the Lord, and to transform their nation with the love and power of Jesus.

Myanmar's church is now sending a good amount of missionaries across the border into China to minister to the tribal peoples in the mountains of southwest China. They are reporting encouraging results.

There was a time, missions in Asia was to persist, to struggle, to cry out to God, and wait for the move of the Holy Spirit. Lately, all over Asia God's Spirit is moving. To do His mission one has to run and run, in order to just catch up.

Wasn't it Prophet Habakkuk after demanding an answer from God as to how long he had to wait for Him to act, that God told him: "Look at the nations and watch — and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told." (Hab1:5)

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