

SPOTLIGHT: Robert Park's North Korea Mission

PARK: LEE JAE WON / REUTERS

INSET MAP: GOOGLE EARTH / ©2009 DIGITAL GLOBE



After crossing the frozen Tumen River from China into North Korea, Park was reportedly captured in the village of Bangwon-ni.



KOREA'S FIRST PROTESTANT MARTYR

Park's journey was reportedly inspired by the martyrdom of Robert Jermain Thomas (1839–1866), a Welsh missionary who distributed Bibles in northern Korea.

HOERYONG

CHINA

NORTH KOREA

SOUTH KOREA

"I am an American citizen. I am coming here to deliver God's love. God loves you."

ROBERT PARK,
upon entering
North Korea.

➔ On Christmas Day, 28-year-old missionary Robert Park walked into North Korea in a deliberate—and successful—effort to be arrested. His goal: "to proclaim Christ's love and forgiveness" to Kim Jong Il and to call for the release of political prisoners. On February 5, North Korea sent him home. Before the release, Open Doors USA president Carl Moeller worried that Christians in labor camps "will suffer a bit more" because of the effort. But Park's pastor in Tucson, Arizona, says Park is a hero. "We didn't want it to end with it being a tragedy," John Benson of Life in Christ Community Church told the Associated Press. "We wanted it to end as a win-win, with an outcry around the world."

IN HIS OWN WORDS

"He loves you and wants to save you and all of North Korea today . . . All we are asking is for all North Koreans to be free, safe, and have life."

PARK, IN A LETTER TO KIM

"An estimated 1,000 people a day die by starvation. . . . North Korea has been sent more food aid than any nation in the world, but the food has not gone to the people who need it. So this is murder."

PARK, IN AN INTERVIEW WITH REUTERS
THE WEEK BEFORE HIS JOURNEY

"Know that I am the happiest in my life. . . . Incredible miracles are happening in the liberation of North Koreans right now."

PARK, IN A DECEMBER 23 E-MAIL TO
HIS PARENTS OBTAINED BY THE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

"I do not want to be released. Until the concentration camps are liberated, I do not want to come out. The Cross means that we sacrifice our lives for the redemption of others."

PARK, TO REUTERS