

WHY JAPAN?

The Japanese are one of the most unreached people groups. Less than 1% of the 126 million Japanese people are Christians. The vast majority have not heard the Gospel message. **1,700 of the 2,500 towns of up to 30,000 residents have no church.** There are about 7,800 churches with an average attendance of 36 people, amounting to one church for 16,000 people. There are 34% fewer missionaries to Japan as compared to 20 years ago.

84% of Japanese claim to adhere to Shinto and Buddhism, but most are superstitious and unsure of their beliefs. Feelings of hopelessness and isolation have caused many to turn to suicide, which is the leading cause of death among 15 to 39 year olds. Over 25,000 people commit suicide annually, amounting to about 70 people per day!

Many feel empty and are in search of some sort of purpose and meaning in life. Japan has about 183,000 registered cult groups and is known by some as the cult capital of the world. A moral vacuum has caused many to turn to living for the moment and indulging in various pleasures to find an escape. Alcoholism, drug addiction and addiction to video games and social media have become major social problems. Japan is the #1 provider of child pornography and abortion is commonly used as a means of birth control.

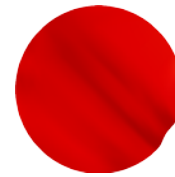
JAPANORAMA - SHINTO PRACTICES

At the Shinto shrine, the priest bestows a special blessing by waving a white wool-like tassel over worshipers to purify them. This is done, much like the Jewish priests who waved the hyssop over the offerings.

There are many similarities between the Jewish and Shinto religions. There is the Holy of Holies, into which the priest enters several times a year. There is the offering of unleavened rice cakes on the altar. As one enters the courtyard of the shrine, there is water and a laver to one side for washing and purification.

Each shrine has an **omikoshi**, which is said to contain the spirit of the god of the shrine. Much like the Jewish ark, the **omikoshi** is paraded through the streets of the neighborhood. This symbolizes the presence and blessings of the gods. As it passes by, a feeling of awe and fear is instilled in the hearts of those who see it.

Pray that those who place their hope in such empty practices would come to know the true and living God.



JAPAN MISSION

CALLED TO SERVE

Jan / Feb 2018

GOD WAS NOT SILENT - PART II

Dr. Kiichi Ariga was born in June 1933, into a deeply religious family. "Superstitions haunted my life and I had never heard of the creator God," he shared. "When I became a teenager, my best friend died, causing me to wonder where I would go if I died. I realized that I would go to hell because of my sinful heart. I made pilgrimages to the shrines, meditated and listened to lectures by the priests, but I found no peace. **The gods were silent.**

"I was on my way to pray at the shrine on New Year's Eve when my friend insisted on taking me to his church. I reluctantly agreed and there I learned for the first time that there were not 8 million gods, but only one true and living God.

"I heard of how I could be cleansed of my sin if I believed in the shed blood of Jesus and how I could receive the assurance of eternal life. With tears of relief and joy, I accepted the Living Savior as my Lord. The Lord filled me with the peace that I had so longed for! **God was not silent!**

"When I returned home to tell my parents, they were horrified and refused to accept my decision. For the next seven years, on Wednesday and Sunday nights, when I returned home from evening church meetings, all the doors would be locked. I would knock and the voice on the inside would say, 'Who are you?' 'Your son, Kiichi,' I would reply. Then the voice would say, 'Since you became a Christian, you are no longer my son! If you stop going to church and renounce your faith in Jesus, I will let you in.' I replied, 'Jesus Christ died for me, so I will die for Him.' Then the voice would say, 'Stay outside!' I had five rabbits at the time, so I often slept outside in the rabbit house with the rabbits.



Dr. Kiichi Ariga

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"About this time, a missionary came to my city and started an English Bible class in his home. I learned English and became his interpreter. Seventy of my classmates also came to his home. Many came to learn English, but later found the Savior. Three out of these seventy students became full-time workers for the Lord.

"I was inspired by a missionary to China who was visiting Japan. The Japanese soldiers arrested her during the Chinese-Japanese War and accused her of being a spy for the Chinese. They tried to brainwash her because she had told them that Jesus was the true God and not their human Emperor. They used some unspeakable cruel methods of torture, but she remained true to Jesus.

"Her testimony was later carried by a large English newspaper in Japan. A soldier who had helped to torture her read the article and wrote a letter to her. I traveled with her to his home and saw him begging for her forgiveness on his knees. She explained the way of salvation to him and prayed with her former enemy. Only the love of Christ could cause such love to be manifest. Jesus said, **Love your enemies**, and this is exactly what she did. I was deeply moved and began to seriously consider dedicating my life to full-time ministry.

"One day, while praying and fasting, the Lord gave me a vision. It was a vision of Christ asking Peter three times if he loved him. From the bottom of my heart, and with tears, I cried out, 'Yes, Lord, I love you more than anything.'

"Revelation 2:10 then came to me, **Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life**. It was then that I was convinced that God was calling me into full-time ministry.

"I had passed all my entrance exams to the prestigious Tokyo University when the Lord led me to attend Bible School. My parents were very angry when they heard that I decided not to go to university. They asked, 'Are you going to become a religious beggar? If you need money in the future, don't come to us begging for help. We won't give you anything!'

"I used part of the money I had saved for university to enter the Japan Evangelistic Band Bible School in Kobe.

"Then a family emergency arose. My older sister, who was expecting a child, had to have surgery. Her baby died during the operation. My sister and parents did not have enough money to pay for the operation, so I sent them the remainder of my university money. This left me without any money for my Bible School expenses. After speaking to the head of the Bible School and much prayer, the Lord miraculously provided the \$40 per month that I needed so that I could finish my four years of Bible School.

"After graduating, the Lord led me to plant a church in the town of Otawara, where there was no church. We began a one-week evangelistic crusade, put up posters and went from house-to-house to distribute tracts and announce the meetings. Forty-five people decided to follow Christ that year.

"The Lord brought one young mother of two, whose husband had been hospitalized for four years with TB. She worked hard to nurse him back to health. When he recovered, he divorced her, married a pretty nurse from the hospital and took their two children with him. She was despondent and took some poison, but vomited it back up. She tried to drown herself in the river, but was rescued. She returned home and closed the shutters. She cried and screamed for days in the dark. The neighbors called her 'the crazy woman in the devil's ghost house.'

"Amid her despair, she heard my voice announcing the meeting. She came with dirty matted hair and a filthy kimono. She looked like a deranged person. When the invitation was given, she and five others came forward. I felt led to put my hand on her forehead and pray, 'In the name of Jesus, devil, leave this woman.' She fell to the ground exhausted. The audience sensed that something extraordinary had taken place. Then I said, 'Your sins are forgiven!' She then rose from the ground with a radiant face and joy in her heart.

"The Christian ladies took her, cleaned her up and combed her hair. She then began to work for Jesus by bringing six of her cult friends to church. Like Mary Magdalene, the devils had been cast out and she loved the Lord. She began to visit TB patients at the hospital and two of them made decisions to follow Christ. Her experience showed us that the devil is a hard taskmaster, but that Jesus is the giver of peace, joy and happiness.

"After 7 years, my mother became a Christian. After another 7 years, my father, my brother, my sister-in-law, two sisters, two brother-in-laws -- all of them became Christians. Today, 55 of my family members are Christians! Praise the Lord!"

The Lord later called Dr. Ariga to further his education and to become a full-time evangelist. He now goes around proclaiming the cure for Japan: **1) Repentance, 2) Reconciliation, 3) Revival**.

One of his ministries is that of **reconciliation**. After WWII, many people in the USA, Canada, Australia and the UK had bitter feelings towards the Japanese. When Dr. Ariga visits these countries, he often starts by bowing deeply on his hands and knees while on stage while saying, "I want to repent from the bottom of my heart for what the Japanese people have done. Please forgive us for what we have done to your people!" Many are moved to tears by his sincere apology and start to pray for the salvation of souls in Japan, as their hearts are also healed.

Dr. Kiichi Ariga has been a dear friend of **Japan Mission** for many years. He has spoken at some of our evangelistic events and we have supported his ministry for the past 50 years.

Pray that the Lord would bless and strengthen Dr. Ariga, who is still going strong and maintains a busy schedule of meetings and lectures at age 84! □

(Contributor - Kiichi Ariga)