

The ²⁰⁰¹ Vine

Millennium
For Internal
October
2001
Vol 10/2001
Circulation Only

Greetings in Jesus' Wonderful Name. It is indeed gratifying to note that many brothers and sisters in JCC has volunteered to do their bit for the community surrounding the church as volunteers in the revision tuition programme in September to October. This is Christian love seen in action. We thank God for this. As churches move forward to penetrate the community at large in Singapore, it is timely to consider the Biblical principles and teachings for social services/charity so that it can be anchored in God's Word as well.



There are a few fundamental questions perhaps that we should consider: Who should provide charity? Who should receive charity? What is the method of charity? How does such assistance relate to Gospel proclamation? What is the objective of charity? How is the effectiveness of the charity efforts to be measured?

Biblical perspectives

Biblical charity from the scriptural perspective is that love for God and neighbours begins with God's love and redemption. The law to "love your neighbour" in Lev 19:18 is anchored in Exodus experience, see Exodus 20:2: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt."

Charity is predominantly and primarily ascribed to God. When man does good acts or kindness, they are derived from the initial action of God toward his people. True



charity is done by those who have first experienced God's grace and favor, since it is motivated by God's deed of salvation and forgiveness. Love for neighbour follows from love for God, which in turn follows from God's love for us.

Charity is not simply an attitude or an attribute but an action. God also bestows grace and favor to his people by what he has done.

Who is my neighbour? Interpreting Lev 19:18 "Love your neighbour as yourself".

There is in fact a long history of dispute on interpretations – whether neighbour refers to people inside the covenant community or both inside and outside. "Neighbour" is generally limited to those within the community of faith in the Old Testament Scriptures. But Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan overturn any legalistic restrictions and broadening it into one of love for everyone including one's enemies. The principle is this: One cannot define one's neighbour; one can only be a neighbour. The charity of God's people begins among God's people but not limited to them. (Gal 6:10).

Charity in everyday life

Every Israelite participated in the act of tithing to support the welfare of the poor (Deut 14:28-29). Widows and orphans were to be given special concern and protection (Deut 10:18). Sojourners and strangers living among the Israelite community are not to be oppressed (Exodus 23:9). The poor are to be helped with an open and generous heart. There are not to be exploitation of the poor and unfair accumulation of wealth (Lev 25:35-37). The Israelites are to use God's gift of land as recognition of God's grace and blessing and in turn be gracious to the needy. God is the true landowner. Charity is part of everyday life, integrated into the corporate and individual lives of God's people.

Future aspect

For Christians, charity is motivated by the promises of God, indicative of his presence with His people, and determinative to their hope for the final manifestation of the Kingdom of God.

Charity's relationship to Gospel proclamation

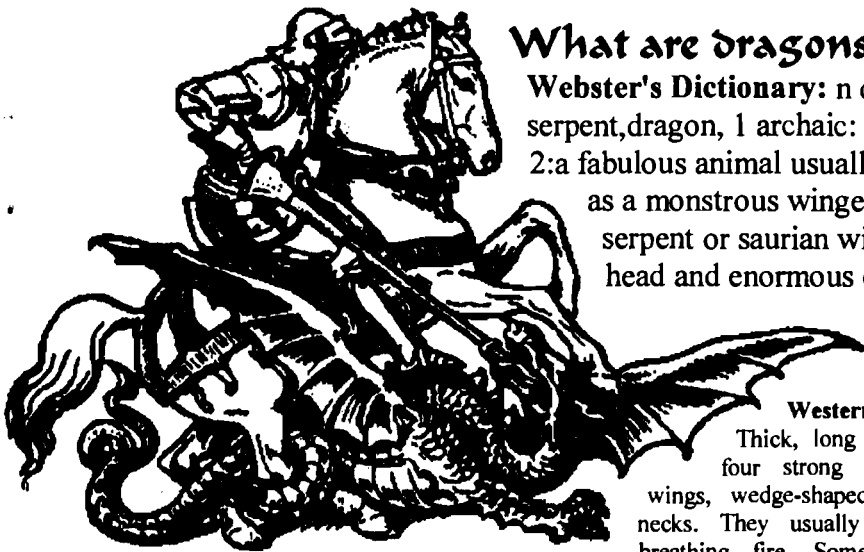
The proclamation of a special life under God's blessings also served as a witness to the world around them. The glory of God in the midst of his people and reflected in their love and charity for one another would be seen by the nations who will come to the light (Isaiah 2:2-4). God's people in acts of charity can serve the evangelistic mission of the church, giving witness to God's love.

Charity is part of the Gospel proclamation, for by deeds done in such ministry, Christ is presented. It is an extension of Christ's saving and serving love through His people to another and to the world. In Jesus' ministry both healing and proclamation took place. In Jesus' instructions to his disciples, both preaching and healing are given as responsibilities (Mark 16:18; Matt 28:18-20). Deeds cannot, by themselves communicate Christ, the Gospel also needs to be proclaimed (Matt 11:4-6).

May we love our neighbours as ourselves in words and action. Amen.

Pastor Martin M.

An Internet article:



What are dragons?

Webster's Dictionary: n dracon-,draco
serpent,dragon, 1 archaic: a huge serpent
2:a fabulous animal usually represented
as a monstrous winged and scaly
serpent or saurian with a crested
head and enormous claws.

Western Dragon

Thick, long bodied, scaly skin, four strong legs, two bat-like wings, wedge-shaped heads, and long necks. They usually are portrayed as breathing fire. Some breeds of these dragons have been known to be shape changers, and others have the chameleon power to change color of their background. They are sometimes displayed as having a spade or spiked tail. They eat but once a month on a sheep or ox, or even a human (myth says they prefer virgin maidens). They can be any color, or many colors, depending on the breed of the dragon.

When most people think "dragon" they most likely think of the Western dragon. Western dragons are usually portrayed as evil, mean, and bloodthirsty. They were also known to have huge hoards of gold and jewels hidden in their lairs. The most famous dragons are portrayed as Western-type dragons: St. George and the Dragon, Beowulf and the Dragon, and Draco in the

movie **DragonHeart**. Some stories have the western dragon as the Devil in Christianity. Other stories in legend say that eating a dragons' heart will give the consumer the power of understanding birds, eating the dragons' tongue enables the person to win any argument, and rubbing the dragons' blood on skin will protect against stab wounds. Another myth references **Vlad Drakul** to mean Son of the Dragon, or Devil. The end of the dragon came with Christianity, and knights that were eager to prove their faith. The knights quickly discovered that dragon-hunting was very profitable, and soon most the dragons in the world were destroyed in a very short time. Vikings had dragon figureheads on the prow of their ships. The dragons on the ships were believed to endow keen site and cunning to the Viking warriors. Today the Welsh flag still has a red dragon on a green/white background, and the red dragon is their national symbol.

Eastern Dragon

These three species of dragons look very similar, but come from different parts of the world. They all have sinuous serpentine bodies, have four legs, they do not usually breath fire, usually shown not to have wings, but are illustrated to have them which is the Adult Imperial Dragon. The dragons are said to be made up of many different types of animals of the Earth: the body of a snake, scales of a carp (fish), head of a camel, horns of a giant stag (deer), the eyes of a hare (rabbit), ears like a bull, a neck like an iguana, belly of a frog, paws like a tigers, and claws like an eagle. Most of the time they are shown to have a lion-type mane around its neck, on its chin, and on each elbow. They have two antler-type horns decorating their wide-mouthed head, and two long "feeler" whiskers spreading out from their snout. Eastern dragons have 117 scales, 81 infused with yang, the good, and 36 infused with yin, the bad. This evens out the dragons temper and personality.

There are three families of Eastern dragons: 3 toed, 4 toed, and 5 toed. Three toed dragons are Japanese. Four toed dragons are Indonesian or Korean. Five toed dragons are Chinese. They are shown in the colors blue, black, white, red, or yellow. Oriental dragons are usually shown with a pearl in their mouth, under their chin, or in their claws. This is apparently where the dragon gets its power, and how it ascends to heaven. Roasted swallows are the Chinese dragon's favorite food.

In China dragons are known as **Lung**. There are four main kinds of **Lung**: **Tien-lung**, The Celestial Dragon: who protect the places of the Gods, **Shen-Lung**, The Spiritual Dragon: who control the wind and the rain, **Ti-Lung**, The Earth Dragon which control rivers, and water on the Earth, and **Fut's-Lung**, The Underworld Dragon which guards precious metals and gems. Separate dragons control the rivers of the North, South, East and West. The commander of all the River Dragons is Great **Chien-Tang** who is blood red, has a fiery mane, and is 900 feet long.

Eastern dragons are portrayed as good, kind, and intelligent. Oriental Dragons have the most recorded history in the world, especially in China going back thousands of years. In history they have a very close link to the weather. It is said that some of the worst flooding in Asia's History was caused when a mortal has upset a dragon. In Chinese history, the 5-toed dragon is the symbol of power, and is considered "Imperial Dragons". Long ago, it became law in China that only the Emperor could have a five-clawed dragon displayed on his robes or illustrated on anything the Emperor owned. It was usually a Yellow dragon, thought to be the most superior of all the colored dragons. If someone other than the Emperor was caught wearing the symbol of the 5-toed dragon, he was put to death.

Considering the Tithe.

In a few weeks time you will receive a letter asking you to consider how much you are giving to the church for 2002. This is mainly for the treasurer to do the budgeting excise for next year. How much you give and whether it is pleasing to God is between you and your Maker. However for those of you who do not know the Biblical principles relating to tithes and offerings, let me share with you some articles I found on the Internet.

What is tithe? Tithe means one tenth (1/10) part. A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord. It is to be offered to the Lord (Lev.27: 30-32). It appears that this practice of offering tithes was prevailing even among the gentiles like Babylonians. Following this the Patriarchs had been offering tithes to God (Gen.14: 20; 28:22). God declared this as an ordinance during the time of Moses. However we learn that Israelites were not following this properly. Therefore when God spoke through Malachi, He advised them to return to Him (Mal. 3:7). The people asked Him in which matter they should return to Him. God said, "You are robbing Me in tithes and offerings. Bring the whole tithe in the storehouse, that there may be food in My house" (Mal. 3:7-9).

The reasons which prompted the Hebrews and the Gentiles to pay the tithes:

1. The nation belonged to God. All the lands belong to God. Therefore on the fruits and harvests of the land they paid the tithes.
2. They paid the tithes as a measure of gratitude for the blessings they received from God (Gen. 28:22).
3. As they gained victory in wars, they were paying tithes in the spoils (Gen. 14:17-20).

The Levites and the priests who minister to God had no inheritance among the Israelites. Therefore God gave the tithes and offerings of the Israelites as inheritance to the Levites and priests. God had commanded the Levites and priests to pay a tenth of the tithes they received, to Aaron the chief priest (Num.18: 20-32). Similarly the firstfruits of the Israelites and some special offerings to the Lord would belong to the chief priest (Num.18: 8-19; Ex.23: 19; Deut.26: 1-11).

A New Testament believer is one who is slave to the Lord redeemed by His blood. A New Testament believer is a new Israelite. "You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Cor.6: 20). The price paid for us was the holy blood of Lord Jesus Christ. "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Pet.1: 18,19). We who are so redeemed are slaves to the Lord (1 Pet.2: 16). Therefore his spirit, soul and body as well as his property and inheritance, all belongs to the Lord. He

should employ these for the glory of God. He should use them according to the will of God.

These days some think that 'tithes' is an Old Testament teaching, which is not applicable to the New Testament believer. Jesus said: "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mat.5:20). What is meant by the righteousness of the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law? It is written in the Scriptures (Luke 18:9-12 and in Mat.23:23) that they used to give tithes on everything. If that is so, what should we do? The Lord teaches us to give more than they. A person's love for the Lord is measured by how much he gives to the Lord. Those who love more give more (Luke 7:36-48). We find that the Lord appreciated the poor widow who gave the Lord all she had to live on (Luke 21:1-4). Many who claim to live according to the word of God fail to give tithes.

A few others use the tithes as they wish. They take the tithes and give a portion of it to their church; a portion to the ministries of their choice and the rest to the pastors whom they like or their relatives who might be doing ministry elsewhere and also to the pastors who visit their house. They feel that they have given their tithes to the Lord. Such people in fact have not given their tithes to the Lord so far. Tithe belongs to the Lord. Who are you to spend as you wish that which belonged to the Lord? You should spend the Lord's portion only according to His wish and in accordance with the Scriptures. "Bring the whole tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test Me in this", says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Mal.3:10). Storehouse means the shrine of God (Neh.13:12-14). "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with the instructor" (Gal.6:6). You should give your tithes to the pastor who ministers among you. The pastors should give their tithes to the chief (I Cor. 9:9-14). Don't give your tithe to the convention preachers who visit your house once in a way or to those who ask your tithes for the magazine ministry or any other ministry, which they do. Give your tithe only to the priest who gives you bread and wine and blesses you (Gen.14: 18-20). You believer, if you want to do something for the pastor of your choice, first give the tithe to the Lord and as you are free to spend the balance as you wish, you may do so. There should be an order in giving the tithe. Tithe should be given regularly without fail (I Cor.16:2). Some people give tithe sometimes and don't pay at other times. When the income is low they would give tithe, but when it is high, they wouldn't give, worried that they have to give more.

Your worldly blessing will be proportionate to the magnitude of your generosity. "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to

you" (Luke 6:38). "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap bountifully. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (II Cor.9: 6,7). Giving to the Lord is a special gift. Some people say they do not have anything as their income is meager. If the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. Those who desire to give should give immediately, so that their willingness to do it may be matched by their completion of it, according to their means (II Cor.8:11,12).

The tithe is the tenth of one's income, which the righteous have always devoted to the Lord. Some teach that tithing belonged only to the time of the Law of Moses and, a therefore, does not apply to the church. Yet, long before the time of Moses, we read that Abraham, the type of believer, paid tithes to Melchizedek, the type of Christ (Ps.110). "If Abraham were your father", Jesus said, "ye would do the works of Abraham" (Jn.8:39). One of the notable "works of Abraham" was to pay tithes to Melchizedek, the Priest-King of Salem (Gen.14:17-20), and every one who is of like faith with Abraham pays tithes to the Melchizedek of the church, Jesus Christ, by bringing tithes to those sent by him to preach his gospel. God's will concerning tithes and offerings has never changed. As Melchizedek received tithes, so Jesus does. If one patiently observes those who refuse to bring their tithes to the Lord, he will in time discover the real motivation is their rebellion.

It was long before the Law was given that righteous Jacob promised God, "Of all that Thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee." Jacob was, at that time, without home or income, and friendless in a strange land, on a perilous journey; nevertheless, this vow and his faithfulness to it resulted in his return to his father's house in peace and plenty. So, the righteous lived as the Law said to live before the Law was actually given. The Law was given as a light, revealing what righteous behavior was and what it was not.

It helps to understand these truths if we keep in mind that paying tithes is not giving anything. It is only rendering to God what belongs to Him. One does not give tithes; he pays, or renders, them. If the law of the tithe is to be ignored, then God's church is without a system for its financial support. God has given law and order to every phase of government on earth, from the home to the nation. Then, why should anyone think that God would leave the church, the earth's highest form of government, without a system of financial support? Taxes are for the support of the state; tithes are for the support of the church. One cannot neglect either and be a faithful follower of Christ, for Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things which are God's."

Offerings

Not only did God say that he had been robbed in tithes, but also in offerings. An offering is what we give after we have paid tithes. This offering must come from our nine-tenths, since the one-tenth is already the Lord's. Because they have not understood the truth concerning tithes and offerings, many of God's dear children have served Him for years, and have never given one dime to support His pastors. All they have done is render tithes to Him. Concerning offerings Paul wrote, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

Some oppose tithing today quoting Matthew 23:23 as proof text. In doing so they actually twist Jesus' words to teach just the opposite of what Jesus clearly said. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices... But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness." Stopping at that point in the verse might allow some misinterpretation. But Jesus continued, "You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." From here we see that Jesus regarded the Old Testament practice of tithing as continuing into the new covenant under which we now live. The giving of either tithes or offerings with a grudging spirit loses much of the blessing that can come as we faithfully give out of love rather than obligation.

Christians should fellowship with a local body of believers and bring their whole tithes into that storehouse (Malachi 3:10). Though some of the Israelites may not have liked decisions made by Moses and his successors, they were given no alternatives. While we may designate some of our offerings (beyond the tithes) to ministries outside the local church, the tithes rightfully belong in the church with which the Christian identifies.

Some Christians do not tithe, claiming they cannot afford to give up 10 percent of their income. Simple arithmetic may suggest that 90 percent will not go as far as 100 percent in satisfying essential family needs. But God has built a multiplication factor into our giving of tithes and offerings. Malachi recorded God's words, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... Test me in this... and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3:10).

In this critical times when putting your money in banks bring so little interest why not consider where you want to deposit your treasure, for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Martin Cheah

The Transforming Power of Prayer

by Tan Swee Leong

Clement of Alexandria one of the early Church fathers states, "Prayer is keeping company with God"— a friendship not a rigid discipline, a relationship not a performance. Whilst we see prayer as a necessary discipline, we often lose sight of the fact that we are relating to a personal God who has created us for relationship with Him. When we pray we respond to the relationship in friendship and love offered by God, we allow Him to live in us. Often we are unthinking in our prayer, our focus is on getting God informed of our needs, desires and plans, even if all these are of God's work and Kingdom. How often we have neglected to seek to know what God wants us to do, His will.

Being born again, we need to be changed to the person God intends us to be. This calls for changes in our thinking and doing, reflected in the character of our prayer, which in turn reflects the character of God. This calls for our mindset to be re-oriented. Often our focus of prayer is prayer not God. We have to learn how to enjoy the experience, to communicate with God, to submit to Him, to be like Him. This calls for a responsive heart and listening mind.

All this, seem like a high ideal but when we develop the right perspective, right thinking will help us in right doing.

Entering into personal friendship with God means that we recognise our sorry state and throw ourselves on God's mercy. This is a very humbling experience but it leads to an honest unpretentious friendship with the Almighty God. Friendship with God is a transforming trust which allow us to be completely open and honest because we can trust completely without any fear of being taken advantage of, exposed, ridiculed or condemned. All our needs are covered by the trust we are able to enjoy in God. All our being including our inner self is in His keeping. This relationship is exemplified in the illustration of the vine and the branches, involving the deep relationship characterised by Christ and the disciples. Our life originates from the Father who through his Son faithfully ensures that we bear the fruit of the Spirit. It is the revelation of the life of God growing fuller and fuller. Jesus is pouring the fullness of his love; we are not able to receive all He has to offer. The infinite Christ living in us - what an awesome thought! This sense of awe leads us to worship, encouraging us to think of God's transcendent power opening us to God who is able to transform our entire being.

Objective of Prayer

Why do we pray? We have needs, we have struggles, and we have doubts. We need to tell God about them. In the process, prayer becomes an

instrument for our own well being, that we may "feel good", that our spiritual life may be healthier. Perhaps there is nothing wrong in this. Prayer however is to allow God to live inside us, to change us to become a complete person as God intends us to be. It is a "transforming friendship" transforming us from broken to new, we become that unique person God originally created us to be, the full light of knowing ourself is revealed through prayer. This is not for our personal benefit, as prayer enables us to enter into a whole new life of relationship.

Prayer is seeking the mind and the spirit of Christ, surrendering of our self-determination to God - to let Him be Lord of our life. Prayer shapes our inward life to imitate the mind of Christ. Sounds impossible, on our own effort it definitely is so. In Christ through God's Spirit, what we fear we might lose in our identity, God is able to increase our "identity" when we join our life in Christ.

In seeking the mind of Christ, we develop a new mindset. We need to be open to the Spirit, to be responsive to what we read in the Bible, to allow for the inner change of heart, to realise that this inner change is more important than what we need to achieve in front of men. It should cause us to want to know what God wants our life to be causing us to be listening more rather than talking.

All this is well and good for our own personal edification. However God has created me as a relational being made for each other. How often we neglect community in the throes of our own busyness, and the modern day promotion of individualism, selfishness, and narcissism. Busyness, as James Houston the founding Principal of Regent College calls it are "acts to repress our inner fears and personal anxieties to achieve an enviable image to display to others." Busyness is a determination not to "miss out on life." As I reflect on this, it is all for self, it is all to gain adulation and recognition for self, not to miss out on life but then again what life? In prayer, we re-discover this life, who we are, our being. As we receive from the Lord we need to share with others what He has given us. Our openness to the Lord should cause us to be also more open to others.

Practice of Prayer

In speaking of the practice of prayer, it is not a technique, neither is it an unthinking habit or a tradition we practice as a custom. Prayer is also not magic which we use to release God's power through fervent ecstatic speaking in tongues. Prayer is theology and ethics, in thinking and doing, guided by what we believe and how we behave. Prayer is guided by right living as well as right thinking.

What does all this say about the practice of prayer? We need to know ourselves, this teaches us "what to ask and how to approach God." Knowing myself, what does this mean? Strange as it may seem, we fear knowing ourselves because we fear discovering uncomfortable truths about ourselves. Prayer is a mirror of the soul. We need humility, to understand oneself. Humility is "being aware of our moral weakness, our helplessness in the face of evil." We need to realise our position in relation to God, to distrust our own sense of achievement or capabilities but to seek God and learn from His word. Humility enables us to learn to ask, as we recognise our weaknesses and to turn to God. We realise our need for God's help and grace. Prayer coming from our heart, the core of our being, is where God seeks to relate to us, and through which we can begin to see ourselves.

The practice of prayer requires our response and diligence. Prayer goes hand in hand with knowing and discerning from the inspired Word of God. We need to saturate ourselves with the Word and the lessons and teachings of Biblical people and from the church fathers. The spiritual disciplines of fasting and stillness is relevant, to clear the mind and subordinate the body to our spiritual needs before God. Community and prayerful friendships, which provide encouragement and support is pertinent, particularly in this age of

individualism. Spiritual direction through mentoring relationships from elder and fellow Christian who can offer advice and direction in living would help to deepen our prayer and spiritual life. All these make us realise, that prayer is not what we do on our own with God but the relationship extends to the community and to relating to people in the Bible and to Christians through the ages.

We struggle with prayer, there are a number of obstacles we need to overcome.

Firstly, there is always the tendency to seek to achieve on our own. We need God's "transforming friendship" to work in our heart, shape our ways and give us a renewed perspective of what the Lord want to do with our lives.

We need to trust God more. We have to confess and admit that we cannot handle our own uniqueness, we need God to run our lives in the face of all the mysterious evil around us. Prayer allows us to throw ourselves before God who understands all that is going on and can bring light into our darkness. God is the one we can trust absolutely, whom we can give our whole heart and entrust him with our whole identity.

We struggle with fear and anxiety. God has dealt with these powers and the forces of evil and He sheds light into our hearts to give us life and the

Excerpts from **Billy Graham's Message** **National Day of Prayer and Remembrance**

I have been asked on hundreds of times in my life why God allows tragedy and suffering. I have to confess that I really do not know the answer totally, even to my own satisfaction. I have to accept, by faith, that God is sovereign, and He is a God of love and mercy and compassion in the midst of suffering. The Bible says God is not the author of evil. It speaks of evil as a "mystery." In 2 Thessalonians 2:7 it talks about the mystery of iniquity. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

He asked that question, "Who can understand it?" And that is one reason we each need God in our lives.

The lesson of this event is not only about the mystery of iniquity and evil, but secondly, it is a lesson about our need for each other.

Finally, difficult as it may be for us to see right now -- this event can give a message of hope -- hope for the present, and hope for the future.

Yes, there is hope. There is hope for the present because I believe the stage has already been set for a new spirit in our nation.

One of the things we desperately need is a spiritual renewal in this country. We need a spiritual revival in America. And God has told us in His Word, time after time, that we are to repent of our sins and we're to turn to Him and He will bless us in a new way.

There is also hope for the future because of God's promises. As a Christian, I have hope not just for this life, but for heaven and the life to come. And many of those people who died this past week are in heaven right now and they wouldn't want to come back. It's so glorious and so wonderful. And that's the hope for all of us who put our faith in God. I pray that you will have this hope in your heart.

This event reminds us of the brevity and the uncertainty of life. We never know when we too will be called into eternity. I doubt if even one of

those people who got on those planes, or walked into the World Trade Center or the Pentagon last Tuesday morning thought it would be the last day of their lives. It didn't occur to them. And that's why each of us needs to face our own spiritual need and commit ourselves to God and His will now.

I'm speaking for the Christian now, the Cross tells us that God understands our sin and our suffering, for He took them upon Himself in the person of Jesus Christ our sins and our suffering.

And from the Cross, God declares, "I love you. I know the heartaches and the sorrows and the pains that you feel. But I love you."

The story does not end with the Cross, for Easter points us beyond the tragedy of the Cross to the empty tomb that tells us that there is hope for eternal life, for Christ has conquered evil and death, and hell. Yes, there is hope.

I've become an old man now and I've preached all over the world and the older I get the more I cling to that hope that I started with many years ago and proclaimed it in many languages in many parts of the world.

This has been a terrible week with many tears but it has also been a week of great faith. Churches all across the country have called prayer meetings and today is a day that they are celebrating not only in this country but in many parts of the world.

My prayer today is that we will feel the loving arms of God wrapped around us, and will know in our hearts that He will never forsake us as we trust in Him.

May God bless you all.

SELF-CONTROL

by Whitney Hopler

Confess ways in which your appetites have been spinning out of control. Be honest and trust God to deal lovingly and effectively with the issues.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to transform every aspect of your life. Ask for strength for the specific ways you need help controlling problem areas.

Seek to discover God's desires for your life, and ask God to make those desires yours as well as His. Surrender any of your own desires that don't align with God's desires for you. Know that following God's will leads to a joyful life, not a gloomy, austere one.

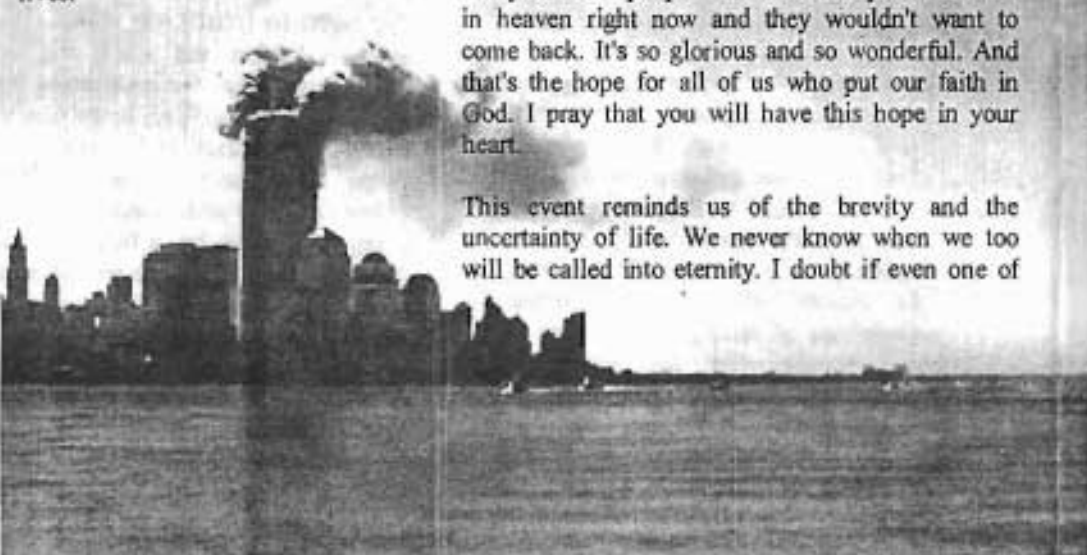
Remember that God knows what's best for you, and consider all the benefits of controlling your appetites in ways He intends (for example, greater physical fitness if you don't overeat).

Be careful how you speak, making sure that your words encourage others rather than hurting them. Try to listen actively to others and carefully consider what they say.

Commit to sexual purity and set clear boundaries to follow. Ask a trusted friend to help you be accountable.

Ask God to show you how He would like you to be a better steward of your resources - time, money, energy, attention, etc. Then devise a plan for doing so.

Make God your top priority in life. If anything or anyone is a higher priority to you than God, rearrange your priorities to give God His rightful place and ask Him to renew you through His Spirit.



knowledge of God, which is able to expel this darkness and violence inside us. God is able to raise us to new life morally, spiritually and psychologically. Receiving the creative power of Christ I believe will enable our prayer life to grow and remove the deeply repressed emotions. God transcends all our enemies; His light will overcome the darkness. Often we fail to see God as the powerful ruler of our lives who is able to overcome the evil we face and the strongholds in our lives.

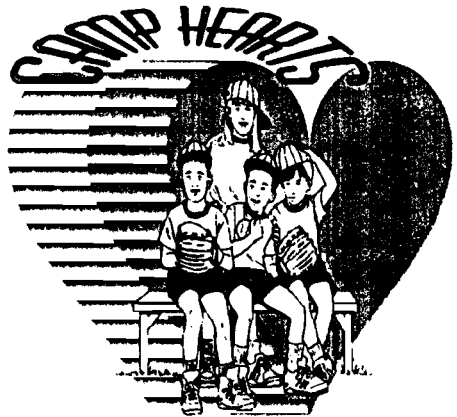
Is prayer your natural disposition? Is it your first line of thinking and reacting? Or is prayer an afterthought? Prayer is a medium of exchange between a needy person and a rich God. The person who is rich in prayer is very rich. "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." (James 5:16b) Without prayer the soul languishes in poverty. What a price to pay when our loving God is reaching out to us with this gift and offer of His 'transforming' friendship. Would you take time to build this friendship?

A tiny boy of four was warned by his older sister that he couldn't talk in church. "They won't let you say anything," she said.

"Who won't?" the boy asked.

"The hushers," she replied.

Have you signed up yet?



17 - 19 Nov 2001

Scripture Union Campsite

\$48 only

Age: Pr 1 - 6 only

Let's talk about:

CHURCH HOPPING & CHURCH GROWTH

I shared in the August issue of the Vine about Pastor Michael's work in Nias. It bears stating that he is a pioneer in the Lutheran missionary outreach to Nias. At first, it was a co-operative exploration with the organisation YWAM. When YWAM faced constraints and was unable to carry on, Pastor Michael was left alone to carry the baby to term. He did not just give up. Burdened in the heart, he persevered to convince everybody in JCC and then in our sister Lutheran congregations about the value of the missionary effort and so the LCS full endorsement of the mission finally materialised. Not only that, our pastor also presented the missionary work to his audience at a consultative meeting between the LCS and several Lutheran Churches from different countries. Within a relatively short time the mission got the interest and encouraging participation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. It was faith at work as God's plan on the mission unfolded in His time. Some credits are due to Pastor Michael for his faith in God as he underwent initial struggles not only with a burden of love in the heart for a people in desperate need on the island of Nias, but also with the difficult task of working the ground here in JCC and then in sister Lutheran congregations to promote the missionary prospect to listeners who had hardly any prior knowledge of the Sumatran island and its inhabitants. Credits are due to the English Council of JCC for being quick to recognize the value of the opportunity and providing the much-treasured encouragement to Pastor Michael. Credits are also due to JCC members who so

warm-heartedly embraced the missionary enterprise, with some even digging into their own pockets as they made haste to get the work going due to the urgency of the needs in Nias. Credits are due to the LCS for being nippy on the uptake in moving the endeavour further forward. The biggest acknowledgement with thanks must certainly go to God for his grace. This is God's blessing we easily forget to count to our satisfaction while some of us pull long and sad faces at the unpleasant aspects of our church. The needs of the Nias missionary enterprise are still great, and all loving brothers and sisters in Christ are urged to step forward to be counted in this work of the harvest. It is surely ironic if we turn our back to a good harvest God has put in our care and where we have the potential of doing a good job, then bellyache over the lack of fruits for our Christian work out of JCC.

We are reaching out to people to promote the growth of God's Kingdom, yet we cannot see it. We have a weekly bus taking dialect-speaking folks to Yishun Christian Church for dialect service (some of these folks go to the YCC themselves and return by the bus we provide), but we may never physically see with our eyes the spiritual growth of these folks. It is not a case of service failure for which we have to regret about that we do not have our own dialect service in JCC. Thankfully to God, count it all joy that we have the means to co-labour, though in a small way, with our Lutheran sister congregation towards a common goal.

I feel that every local church has her character and her place in the larger community serving her role in collaboration with other local churches, and all the local churches in unity and putting aside parochial considerations fulfil the common blueprint for universal Church Growth that is in God's hand. Some people like worship in a solemn liturgical form; others like a worship style with song and dance, etc. The larger community in Singapore has enough space to accommodate different-character and different-size local churches. We may have the giftedness and resource for foreign missions whereas another local church may have the resourcefulness in reaching out to dialect-speaking people in the immediate neighbourhood and add numbers to her congregation. We also have our youths in the BB and GB who can be developed spiritually while our neighbouring churches may have their own outreach programs to students. Is there any church member who is presently not holding any responsibility but is willing to step forward to render service to our uniformed boys and girls? How about just putting in two hours of time per week for our Tuition Programme?

Wouldn't you like to count the YEC (Yishun Eldercare Centre) as another blessing to the LCS of which we are a part not just in membership but also in service? If you are someone who feels that your talent finds no use within the four walls at 2 Tah Ching Road, do not lose sight of the fact that you can reach beyond the four walls in service while still remaining a faithful member of the JCC community; the YEC is one area you may explore for service opportunities. Apart from this, you may also offer support to the GMB, TGNC, Seafarers Mission and any other ministry of

the LCS. Whatever work done in the LCS ministries is work done for the Lord. As we all do our best in Christian duty, we should not forget our dependency on God for guidance, not on our own will. There are opportunities galore for members of JCC to make themselves counted as servants of the Lord, but where are the takers? We should not be so narrow-minded to see only what we wish to see within a small compound and what we can display to soothe our pride, but fail to see the big picture that our field for Christian service is not limited by physical space or physical vision. A small and mature building may have its unique attractiveness when it is well-occupied and exudes warmth from every pore of its occupants, and without having any artificially erected perimeter fence to circumscribe our Christian service in response to God's commandment on love and outreach to the lost.

Imagine how it would be if we just import all the fine ways of worship and church growth ideas from other successful local churches (particularly any local church that focuses on local work with minimal missionary engagement) and jettisoning worthy attributes of our Lutheran traditions. We may suddenly find ourselves growing in numbers, and our brother Rodney and sister Aunty Grace and many others feeling out of place. Who will then cater to their spiritual interest? Do we pack them off to some remote village church that has the right warmth and camaraderie (but not the size and beautiful modern architecture) while we comfort ourselves that we are doing great things in the Lord's service surrounded by the bustle of hundreds or even thousands of fellow Christians? In fact, for a church doing well with thousands of members, I would

suggest that it is time for her to consider spawning new churches with distinct foci on more manageable diverse groups instead of holding on to a huge assembly and tolerating the drawback of marginal utility.

It is a folly if we count all our blessings and start to rest on our laurels, neglecting to reach out to more people in our evangelical and nurturing effort, including reaching out to existing members to build them up. Matt. 7:13 tells us that wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction. The work of evangelism and spiritual nurture is therefore a tough one. Let us be cognizant of our blessings and be spurred to greater accomplishments in leading more people through the narrow gate as we apply our giftedness in God's service.

If we want Church growth, we should say to one another: "We need to support each other and not just talk. Let us pull up our socks and work harmoniously together."

Do not say: "I can depend on you and on the leaders to lead; let me just wait and see!"

Facing the reality of a labour shortage as Jesus recognised (Matt. 9:37), did our good Lord leave his disciples with no way out? No, he advised:

"Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Matt. 9:38)

Jesus asked his disciples to pray for what they needed – i.e., more workers. How many of us in JCC gripe and whine without praying?

It is also a folly if we stop counting our blessings but count only what we do not have as we look at other local churches' building prominence, service fame, multi-million \$\$\$...\$\$\$ budgets and charming preachers with envy in our eyes and relentlessly whip ourselves and our leaders for real and imagined shortcomings. Instead of exploring ways to co-exist peacefully with other local churches as a collective body of Christ reaching out to the lost, or setting up mutually beneficial ministry partnerships with fellow sister Lutheran congregations, sharing scarce human resources (such as in preacher exchange or lay manpower attachment for significant programs) and physical assets, chipping in with each other's strengths to patch up each other's weaknesses, do we get tempted to compare numbers in the membership of churches/congregations with an isolationist and divisive mentality ("you gain, I lose face")?

"What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:12-13 NIV)

Or do we harbour a business-minded competitive spirit, seeing a fast-rising neighbouring church as a threat to our own survival?

If so, our negative attitude will not help Church growth, but will only sink the church further as we burn ourselves out with a superfluous performance battle.

Ultimately, it is not we but God who gives the increase (that which is sustainable). Not our will but God's will:

"What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:5-11 NIV)

Building properly and patiently with a Christ-laid foundation rather than human plans alone makes for a strong and growing church (spiritual strength coming before numerical growth) that will not eventually be weighed down by a complicated administrative machinery, which entangles programs, finance and personnel management in red tape. It is not difficult to visualize a large church that is knotted with work in physical building maintenance, recording attendance, updating ever-changing visitor list, keeping close tabs on offerings, and managing meeting schedules to avoid clashes that are especially common when a core of ministry workers wearing different hats serve a large block of inactive members; all this at the expense of effectively utilising much of precious time doing the qualitative

spiritual-building work a church is meant to do.

Of course, I am not asserting that JCC should not aspire to grow or that a large church is necessarily fraught with ills. What I would emphasise is that we can seek growth but cannot demand it – both in terms of growth size and the locations of harvest fields. As advised in the Corinthians passage quoted above, we can plant and we can water, but it is God who makes things grow. And when such growth comes, the church leaders have no reason to shout their boast from a mountaintop since the growth is but by God's grace.

Indeed, we should never neglect planting and watering, being servants assigned to the tasks by our Master. Each of us will be rewarded according to our labour even if have to wait patiently upon God for His timing for the harvest.

Therefore, we ought not be like discouraged sheep growing springs on the feet and led astray by guiles and appearances of ineffectuality of our labour when in God's plan the fruit harvesting season may just be over the horizon.

Growing the church by first working a quality Christian foundation with what we have will ensure that we avoid the pitfalls of becoming a magnificent-looking edifice that is set on seemingly hard and solid ground, but cracks up with a sudden earthquake. (A serious failure to reckon all hidden ground hazards and perform meticulous calculations on potential costs before a venture!)

Church growth is really a two-edged sword. With numerical growth, we may not

only have more members and money for ministries, but also higher operating expenses and possibly a concentration of workload on a small core of faithful workers (excellent candidates for burnout) while a greater number of members set higher expectations and demands. If we do things right for church growth and depend on God for results, the fruit will be sweet. However, if we do things wrong based on a blinkered foresight and reactionary considerations, anything that can go wrong will go wrong and the most ambitious plan will backfire.

To build a church is very difficult, but to sink one is easy if the church builder takes things for granted instead of seeking God continually on calm or stormy seas. Never to be neglected is the fact that Jesus is the Master Builder and the sure Foundation. "Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain." (Ps 127:1a NIV)

"Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast." (Heb. 3:1-6 NIV)

Do we hold on to our courage and hope, or do we boast about our fleet-footedness in running from a challenge? "No discipline

seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Heb. 12:11)

Just as Members of Parliament cannot lead a constituency successfully without the complementary diligence of grassroots workers (ordinary but important folks), the clerical ministers and the lay members in the church ought to be assiduous in fulfilling their respective roles of leadership and providing grassroots support in a symbiotic partnership. Let us not belabour the chicken-and-egg issue on which should come first. If either in the partnership does not come up to scratch in Christian responsibility, let one not condemn the other but prayerfully seek God for wisdom in dealing with one's own humility and the other's difficulty.

May God bless us all to function cooperatively and in unity, in accord with His divine plan for us so that He may have the pleasure of making our dream of church growth come true.

It is alright for us to appraise one another constructively to benefit ourselves with the observer's point of view and analysis about our performance; but let us do so with love, forbearance, the right objective and due encouragement. Let us be as good in taking as in giving constructive comments, but always with care not to cut down our fellow brother or sister in Christ.

May the challenges we face today not frighten us off, but prepare us well for tomorrow.

John Lee

Are you looking for **SIGNS OF THE END**

The book of Revelation reveals that the antichrist will be able to track and control all financial transactions and that NO MAN will be able to buy or sell anything unless he has the mark.

He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark of his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. - Revelation 13:16-17

Not until recent times did people understand how this prophecy could possibly come to pass. There was simply no way that anyone could control the buying and selling activities on such a large scale. Certainly it will be a monumental task to keep track of all men, and their financial transactions, all across the globe.

Modern technology has created a new electronic world without borders. With modern computer technology, satellites, and devices like the Global Positioning System device, which can track anyone within 3 feet anywhere in the world, such a feat seems more plausible. And new developments in biometric and smart card technology make such a feat seem more plausible as well. Indeed, Antichrist's world government is not only believable but seems just around the corner.

No one knows how the mark will be imprinted on the hand or the forehead. Given rapidly evolving modern technology, if the Lord tarries a bit longer there may be some developments.

It seems that every unusual hurricane, flood or earthquake elicits a flurry of speculation about the approaching end of the age. This is true in our time but it has also been characteristic of the entire 2000 year history of the church. In the first century the Apostle Paul found it necessary to quiet the concerns of the Thessalonian congregation,

"Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come..." (2 Thess 2:1-2)

It is helpful to note that momentous events, great miracles in the Bible, did not cause people to flock to God. The resurrection of Jesus—the most momentous event in all of history—could hardly escape great notoriety in the First Century Jerusalem Post, but no new conversions are recorded.

In Jesus' day the religious leaders asked Jesus to please tell them the signs of the times in which they lived,

The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away. (Matthew 16:1-4)

The rebuke of Jesus clearly suggests that any aware person who simply watched the weather, read the news, and was aware of what God has already told us in the Bible,

should easily be able to figure out that nature of the times in which they live. The only sign Jesus said would be a clear public indicator of the momentous times in which the Son of God came to earth—would be His resurrection. As we have noted, this sign came and went and was ignored by the multitudes!

Many have thought that Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25) gives a list of signs of the end of the age. This is actually not the case. Jesus gave instead **signs of the age!** Wishing to strengthen His disciples and knowing He would be away from them for 2000 years, in broad brush strokes He told them that the entire time period between His two advents would be marked by

"...wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the *beginning* of birth-pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. (Mt 24:6-14).

These, he said, were not even the actual birth pangs that marked the end of the age, but the *beginning* of the birth pangs!

The Olivet discourse begins with three questions from his disciples. Jesus answers all three.

"Do you see all these things [the temple]?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Mt 24:2-3).

The destruction of the temple he told them (Luke 21:20) would come at a future date when Jerusalem was surrounded by armies. This came to pass in AD 70. The disciples wished also know the **sign of his coming** and the **sign of the end of the age**. Jesus answers these questions in reverse order. The sign of the end of the age will be the desecration of the Third Temple by the coming man of sin, (Mt. 24:15) and the sign of His coming would be His visible appearing in glory on the clouds of heaven from the Mount of Olives. (Mt. 24:30)

What this means is that the age we live in, with all its violence and unrest, will continue past the rapture to the mid-point of the tribulation. It is then that the actual birth pangs of the coming new world order will begin!

Every year I read articles by Christian writers who raise alarm signals about rising ocean temperatures, greater-than-ever hurricanes—and what is most common, authoritative claims that the number of earthquakes is increasing—a sure sign of the end.

Being a trained and experienced scientist I thought the increasing-earthquake claim would be something I could easily check on the basis of readily available data. Sure enough, there is no evidence that earthquakes are on the increase.

It is quite true the Bible has a lot to say about big earthquakes. The end of the age when Jesus stands upon the Mount of Olives is marked by will surely be the greatest earthquake experienced on earth. Even now stress is evidently building up world-wide in anticipation of this great event. I believe we have descriptions of this one mammoth world-wide earthquake in Zechariah 14:4ff, Ezekiel 47:1-12, Joel 3:18 and in Revelation 6:12, 8:5, 11:19 and 16:18-21. In fact, the Revelation passages help us to anchor the sequence of cascading judgments God calls down upon the earth during this period--because they all culminate in this one great earthquake as a clear marker that Christ has now commenced His reign on earth.

I do not believe, therefore, that God has given us special signs that help us identify where we are with respect to His return--the Second Advent. But we can observe the weather! Merely reading up on the events in the Middle East in the last 100 years and being familiar with our Bibles can not help but show us that "He is at the very gates." There is no reason for us to be caught off guard by the sudden return of our Lord Jesus Christ--at any time.

The next event of prophetic significance to occur on earth--completely unannounced, will be the silent, secret removal of the true church (the rapture), by Jesus Christ. A period of at least three and a half years of what appears to be world peace and prosperity will ease into place under the skillful deceit of the two beasts of Revelation 13. The Third Temple will be build in Jerusalem, it will be dedicated and placed into service with animal sacrifices and a fully functioning Levitical priesthood. For most people on the earth, it will be life as usual, perhaps with even a little more hope for a rosy future than exists now.

Then the end of the age will suddenly come--when the false messiah steps into the Holy of Holies of the Third Temple and announces that He is God. This, Jesus' said, would be the one and only sign of the end of the age given from God to alert the world. Only one sign in two thousand years! The time between the two Advents of Jesus has been marked by wars, violence, disasters, plagues, famines and disasters. These are **signs of the age--not signs of the end!**

Jesus continued, after describing the desecration of the temple and warning His followers in Jerusalem and Judea to flee for their lives,

For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again. If those days had not been cut short, no-one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time. So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather. Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:21-30)



The world around us is violent and uncertain now, as it has been for 2000 years. The evening news seems to get worse and worse. The purpose of Jesus' words to His disciples in the Olivet Discourse was not to alert them that the end was near, but to stabilize them—the entire 2000 years between His two advents would be filled with wars, rumors of war, natural disasters, with great deceivers on both the religious and the secular scene. We are to watch—and to be ready at all times!

The above is actually a composite of two articles found in the Internet. I hope it has been enlightening. It should be noted that the end will come only when the following conditions are fulfilled:

1. The Gospel must be preached to the whole world. "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matt 24:14)
2. It will be a time of prosperity. "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man." (Matt 24:37-39)
3. It will be an unexpected hour. "But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Matt 24:43-44)

We are not told to worry about when Jesus will come again but to be ready for His return at all times. So plan like Jesus will come back in the far future but live like He will come back tomorrow.

Martin Cheah

WEDNESDAY NIGHT PRAYER MEETING

10TH OCTOBER 2001

Bro. Peter Cheong shared about how he had to rush to Thailand to bring back his father's body for cremation.

When he received news of his father's death from the Singapore embassy, it was already Saturday 12.00 noon and he had to rush to the embassy for an identification and confirmation procedure and thereafter to check into the airport by 3.30 pm to catch the only flight departing for Hatyai at 4.40pm. He needed two confirmed seats and managed to get them through two different ticketing agents. Arriving at Hatyai, he had great problems communicating with the various authorities but thanks be to God he managed to get all the relevant legal documents done on the following Monday, even though there was a power failure for 2 hours which delayed the processing of the last but most vital document.

The casket arrived at Singapore airport on Tuesday 12.00 noon on the same flight with Peter and his brother. By faith Peter had before departing from Singapore decided to confirm their return flight on Tuesday, 25 Sep, trusting God to provide help and guidance over them. It was not possible to know how long they would have to stay in Thailand and when exactly his dad's body could be ready for departure home because of the uncertainties and language problem. Truly, God answered his prayer need.

Not knowing how much to bring, he had changed only about \$700 into bahts, and when he finally arrived home, there was not a baht left - it was just enough. While in Hatyai, he was fortunate enough to find an ATM machine which was able to accept his Autocash card and delivered him just the right amount of bahts he needed for final cash payment to the embalming company for its services and documentation work.

All glory be to God for making Peter's path smooth as he wandered around in Thailand.

THE PARABLE OF THE NEW CAR

Some 4 months ago I wrote about wanting to buy a new car. Now let us consider whether I have enough good reasons to buy a new car as opposed to doing a major overhaul of my current car, giving it a new coat of paint, changing its suspension and wheels and even renewing its COE.

If I were to do the latter, ie to just upgrade my current car, it would cost only a fraction of what a new car would cost. The number of people in my family is unlikely to grow bigger than the capacity of the car so there is no need to buy a bigger car. The car I have now is just sufficient to provide a decent means of transport so why do I have a craving for a new one?



The price of cars now is quite low. For about the same price as what I had to pay for my existing car, I could get a brand new car with bigger engine capacity, more safety features like airbags and ABS brakes, newer design and even a CD player plus power windows and the lists goes on. To top all that, the financing element is also much better, a mere 2.5 % interest on the car loan. Doesn't all these reasons give an attractive option to buying as opposed to overhauling?



I know of people who keep their cars forever, like the Volkswagen Beetle or the Mini, and these are called vintage cars. However for most people, they buy new cars after five to seven years. Which are you, and what would be your advice for me? Of course there is still one final option - go Public and forget about driving cars.

Martin Cheah