

Jurong Christian Church

A branch of the.....

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Veronica
An amazing testimony



John Lee
Trusting the Holy Bible



Golf Challenge 2015

Playing through the rain
To raise funds again



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JCC ambassadors @
Jurong Country Club
for the Golf Challenge
2015



From left to right:
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HOM'S Reflections

Starting with this issue of The Vine there will be more photos because a picture is worth a thousand words and I fear that we may lack a thousand words to fill up

the pages of The Vine in the year to come.

Rev Keith Lai in his homily on Sunday 22nd November mentioned that we could be running on empty and suffer from burn out if we do not take a sabbatical to get recharged. Conceivably after 25 years of The Vine, a sabbatical is required. We may need to take turns to go on sabbatical so that The Vine can continue until we find younger hands to take over.

John Lee always advised me that if we do not have enough articles to fill the pages, then we enlarge the photos and fonts. I will accept his advice because as age catches up, more people will feel comfortable with bigger print.

The trend in business is also towards Visualization of Data, meaning showing everything in charts instead of numbers. Perhaps it is because we are going back to

hieroglyphics or cave drawings to tell a story.

With this change in format, I hope The Vine will continue to support the church ministries by our reporting and give our readers a more visual presentation of our stories.

Martin Cheah

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Thanksgiving



I want to thank all the brothers and sisters from Jurong Christian Church for your prayers and encouragement when I underwent a surgery to remove a tumour from my liver on 7th October 2015.

When I was under anesthesia in the operating theatre, I dreamt of angels and heaven. I was told to go back to Earth

and that a lot of people were praying for me.

After the surgery, I was placed in a high-dependency ward for 1½ days and then transferred to a normal ward. I was discharged two days later, although the doctor had advised that it would normally take three to five days of stay in hospital for such a surgery.

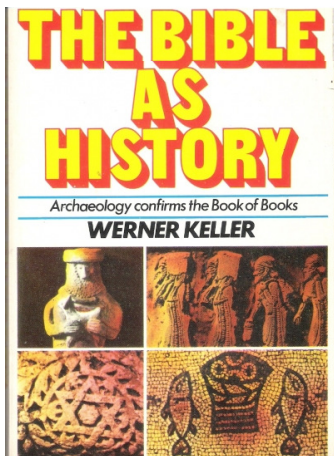
I thank God for a successful surgery and fast recovery. I believe that there is God and He has given me a new life.

Brothers and sisters, please trust and believe that God is here for all of you. God bless you all. Amen!

Veronica Toh



Trusting the Bible as a History Book



The Bible is a collection of manuscripts from archaeological discoveries. A plain reading of the Bible clearly elicits the fact that it embraces a historical document (albeit it is more than being a historical book) – with descriptions of ancient places, people, wisdom and events. It would be a stretch to deny this fact.

Even if you think that there are recording “errors” in this historical document, it is not a sufficient reason for you to dismiss the Bible as a useful reference for your inquiry into the Bible history. By illustration, if you read a

history book about WWII and feels that there are criticism-worthy “faults” here and there, you do not reject it wholesale and deny that it is a history book with valuable insights you can gain about WWII.

If a student of history does not instantly reject his history text on account of his perplexity over certain portions, how would anyone logically justify snubbing the whole Bible owing to his uncertainty with parts? Casting off the Bible out of hand as wholly untrustworthy is like throwing out the baby with the bathwater; i.e., losing the valuable discernments that the Bible provides by dumping them together with what one is cynical about.

Nobody (even experts) can claim 100% understanding of any historical account. The lack of understanding is not a persuasive reason to discard any history book (including the Bible).

For me, if I start off with misgivings about what I read, I do not simply assume that I am right straightaway. Instead, I am inspired by my doubting mind to do a parallel study of other independent sources of knowledge before I form any conclusion.

Imagine that you have done a time-travel to an ancient period before the advent of modern astronomy:



You are now resting at a seaside, enjoying the breeze while admiring the horizon and feeling relaxed under a coconut tree and contemplating the mysterious universe. You are deeply aware of the commonly-held view that the earth is flat and supported physically.

Someone comes to you with a History Book that records what Isaiah and Job had said about the earth. Upon reading, you get shocked by the “FOOLISHNESS” OF ISAIAH, the “STUPIDITY” OF JOB, and the “RIDICULOUSNESS” OF this History Book in advocating the “RUBBISH FACTS” that the earth is round and is suspended on nothing, against the “WISDOM” of the contemporary experts.

- *“He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in.” – Isaiah 40:22*
- *“He [God] spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing.” – Job 26:7*

As you feel utterly incredulous about the reliability of this so-called History Book (a.k.a. the Bible), you feel like chucking it straight into the sea. Suddenly, you feel a jolt because an incoming sea breeze unexpectedly brings down a coconut which triggers the engine of your time-travel machine for your return journey.

eureka!



As you are back to this 21st Century, it is a moment of discovery for you on the WISDOM OF ISAIAH, the INTELLECT OF JOB and the RELIABILITY OF THE

BIBLE in recording that the earth is round and suspended on nothing long before experts would accept it as fact.

It is very much in our life experience that many “obviously impossible things” in our thoughts do become possible when we peruse them with newer knowledge. Inability (in respect of any point in time) to comprehend the sensibleness of the descriptions of ancient places, people, wisdom and events in the Bible cannot be used as a conclusive determination of the legitimacy of the descriptions.

As you read the Bible as a book of history with an open mind, cognizant of the time stamps on the different historical episodes, you will unavoidably be as much stunned by the apparent “incredulity” of some narratives as you will be awed by the mind-blowing perfect fulfillment of detailed prophecies centuries after these prophecies were first made.

“For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” – 2 Peter 1:21

Unless you can prove that the archaeological evidences are fakes, your encounters in the Bible should stimulate you to search for illumination instead of throwing away everything – the baby (the “awesome” parts) with the bath water (the “incredulous” parts).

School history books tell you about the Holocaust, the atomic bombing of Japan during WWII, etc. If you can accept the reliability of the history texts without claiming perfect understanding or first-hand experience, it shouldn't be surprising that applying the same reasoning power, people are able to trust the reliability of the Bible with its history component without demanding perfect knowledge of everything as a prerequisite for the trust.



If you are a doubter with boldness to do your honest inquiry, God will bless you with your Eureka! moment regarding the truth!

John Lee



A JCC member asked me this question:

What does this statement mean?

“A Church that is not eschatological is not an authentic Church.”

Here I share my personal opinion:



The word “eschatology” in Christian usage refers to a study on issues related to when and how the world is going to end. Therefore, a church that is eschatological possibly has the characteristic of being very cognizant of her present existence in the End-Time; not merely as a body of Christians but as an eschatological community, a community living in the End-Time, aware of the fact that the return of Christ is imminent.

By contrast, if there is such a church called “non-eschatological church”, it might be a church that is not so concerned or conscious that the eternal Kingdom with God’s full reign is nigh – a church that just exists day by day on an unremitting journey on the basis of a historical narrative.

What do you think? Are we already in the End-Time?

Note that End-Time here does not refer to a specific point in time; rather, it refers to a time period. So if one holds the view that we are already in the End-Time, a related question might be about when this End-Time actually began. While there are differing perceptions about the beginning (one view being that it began at the first coming of Christ), no one can say for sure when the Last Day of the world will be.



Years ago, National Geographic Channel had a documentary about Doomsday Preppers. From time immemorial, people “crazy” or “wise” have made fervent predictions about the apocalypse, and many people

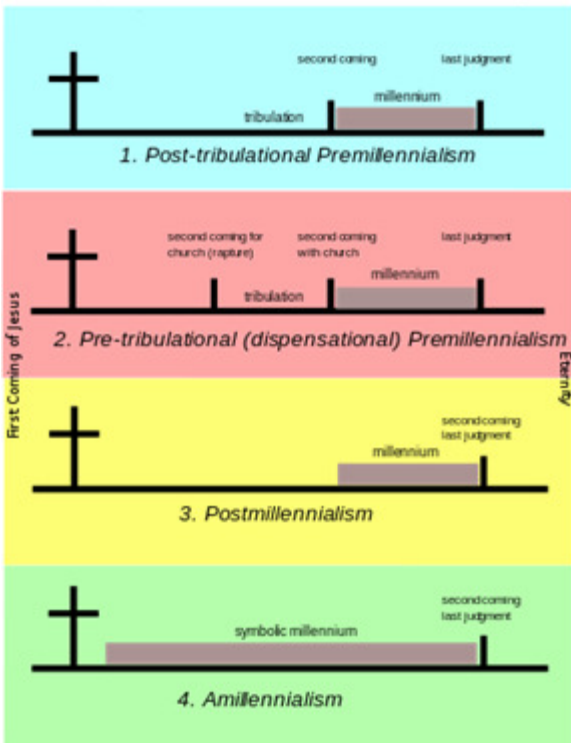
also made extreme preparations to confront doomsday. We can see that a belief in “end things” (an economic doomsday, an end to life, the end of an age, etc.) does have a significant impact on human behavior. If tomorrow is

the end of the world, what would you do today? Would you still be enjoying a party? If tomorrow is the last day of one's life, would the person still enjoy his last meal?

Admittedly, what we think about End-Time may have an effect on our attitude towards our Christian life:

- If the end-of-the-world is in the “distant future”, for millenniums to come, we can afford to be “free and easy” with our life for now. There is no urgency for us to change.
- If the end-of-the-world is near, would we not be anxious to make haste with effort to turn our sinful life around?

Comparison of Christian millennial teachings



This said, however, I must also state that the Bible does not say that we have to be anxious. We just have to be on guard and alert, because about the Last Day or Hour, “no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Mk 13:32-33)

There is no real need for us to be overly concerned about the actual timetable, or seriously promote a prospective timetable as a stimulant for Christians to keep watch!

The statement “A Church that is not eschatological is not an authentic Church” seems to say that an eschatological vision (particularly of being already in the End-Time) is critical to the authenticity of a Church.

An eschatological vision has a premise on the idea that a true Church does not exist for herself but for the Kingdom that is near.

In Kingdom theology¹, the concept of “Already but Not Yet” is very well known. Briefly, it means that we are already in God’s Kingdom (within the reign of God); but the full glory of the eternal Kingdom is not yet consummated by the Church and this will remain so until the second coming of Christ. I am stating this not with the intention of going into the theological details, but just to provide an inkling that shades of theological opinions exist about the purpose of the Church’s existence, with a range of eschatological expectations.

Without undermining the eschatological (futuristic) dimension to underpin our Christian hope, we must not neglect to recognize that there is also the important historical dimension that undergirds the Church’s existence – from Creation to the Fall of Man to the Advent to ... – in context of the Pilgrims’ progress from this world to that which is to come. In short, **a good balance of both historical and eschatological perspectives is preferable in explaining the Church’s existence** vis-à-vis the Pilgrims’ journey along a continuum of time from the past to the future.

To say that a “church” that does not preach the Trinity is not authentic is one thing (which I wholeheartedly agree), but to say that “A Church that is not eschatological is not an authentic Church” is something I am not too ready to accept because the statement hints of a dogmatic slant that focuses on a church’s eschatological vision in defining her authenticity.

In the light of a heterogeneous understanding of eschatological issues among theologians, it is unnecessary to pass judgment on whether a church is authentic or not simply on account of whether it possesses some eschatological vision; just as it is not helpful for one Christian to pass judgment on another on account of whether the latter has the solid marks of being “born again”. All churches and all Christians have their virtues and shortcomings. In my humble opinion, a “church” is not authentic if she does not subscribe to any of the basic tenets of faith in Christ.

The doctrine on eschatology is a very important and challenging one. We must neither anyhow speak nor anyhow follow a stranger’s voice (John 10:5) just for the sake of satisfying boundless human curiosity. From time to time, we may unintentionally make flawed statements by “reference to the Bible”. “Reference to the Bible” is not good enough. On such a major doctrine, we need “reference to the WHOLE Bible” as distinct from simply referencing

¹ Theology that studies the Kingdom of God

selective portions. Moreover, with the diversity of understandings in the Christian community, we need to be prayerful for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

As we pursue progress in our Bible knowledge and mature our eschatological vision, let us also wisely have our feet firmly planted on the historical narrative buttress. Whatever the level of maturity of our eschatological vision, it should not be used as an excuse for us to make predictions about the Last Day. Many modern-day self-professed "prophets" liked to make eschatological prophecies that went astray (did not come true). Some ignorant lay Christians also proffered to tell the time and signs of the last days with exactitude only to prove their own foolishness. There is no shortage of speakers or authors who jumped on the bandwagon with their crowd-pulling and best-selling efforts at speculations that were nevertheless of great entertainment value even though such speculations turned out to be untrue. In summary, these people based their eschatological pronouncements on populist appeals to emotions and fears rather than on a proper reading of Scripture. "Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." (Matt. 15:14) The simple believe anything, but the prudent give thought to their steps. (Prov. 14:15)



Ultimately, the clarion call is for us to remain steadfast in our faith in Christ regardless of our understanding about the End-Time start date or

the Day of Judgment date. We are to keep ourselves alert, not wandering astray, as the Jesus' parable of watchmen in Mark 13 instructs.

John Lee



Golf Challenge 2015

The day began with a bright, haze-free sky. The committee after many months of preparations and fearing the haze might cause the game to be called off were in an elated mood. We reached Jurong Country Club (JCC) around 9:30 am and immediately started preparations for the Golf Challenge which would commence at 1:00 pm. We had a briefing followed by a prayer and then everyone went about their business preparing for the first players to arrive.

Some managed the registration table, while others were positioned as greeters to welcome the players. We took turns having our lunch and soon we were informed that some of the players were starting to arrive. Action stations, as we quickly downed the last bite and went to meet with our guests.

The guests registered and were given some goodies and were promptly ushered to lunch. Once the lunch was over, everyone trooped over to the buggies to start their golf game.



The sky was starting to turn dark when the buggies rolled out into the course. I think even before the first ball could be hit, the rains came. At first lightly but it got progressively heavier. I was amazed that the rains did not faze the players as

they continued with their game. Nick and I with our cameras getting wet kept on shooting in the rain.

The rains got so heavy that the club sounded the alarm to recall the players from the course. We were relieved to get out of the rain and dry our equipment a little. However, within a short time, the rains lightened and the players were given the all clear to continue with their game. They all went forth, even though it was still drizzling.



I decided to remain in the shelter of the clubhouse to prepare the photos I had taken earlier into a slide presentation for the dinner later that night. It was a stressful 3 hours to look through hundreds of photos to select the better ones and also to do some

software editing to improve the photos and then to compile it into a show with music.



All too soon, the people were coming into the dinner hall as I was testing the final version of the presentation. It was cutting it too close but the final cut was ready at the expense of my skipping a warm shower after a wet day in the rain.

The guest of honor, DPM Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam arrived with his retinue and was given a round of applause by an appreciative audience. He went around some of the tables to mingle with the people. I can see that they were very happy to talk with him. He even came to have a personal chat with a young pianist from our Chinese section, who performed some classical pieces.



As the night went on, our MC, Benedict started the auction for some pieces of art. The first piece was a calligraphy by Mr Tharman. With adroit speech, Benedict coaxed the bid from an initial \$10k to end with a final bid of \$20k. I was told Mr Tharman was suitably impressed.



At the end of the night, by final reckoning, we managed to raise about \$90k for the Golf Challenge 2015.

As I reflect on this event, our last fund raising event for 2015, I wonder why God did not intervene to stop the rain. Don't the Maker of Heaven and Earth have the power to do so? Has He stopped listening to our prayers? Was the rain the only means to stop the haze? Is He revealing to us that whether it rains or shines, He can still provide the money we need for the rebuilding?



I have no answer, but I thank God that even though I was soaked and freezing in the air-conditioned dining hall, I did not get pneumonia. It is His Grace that saves me.

Martin Cheah



MISSION MONTH @ LCOR

For two Sundays in November, LCOR had organized a Mission Month with keynote speakers, Dr Tan Lai Yong and Rev Anthony Loh. Dr Tan spoke about his mission work overseas, while Rev Anthony related mission to the rebuilding of JCC. After Rev Anthony's message, one lady came up to me and told me that Rev Anthony spoke very well.



The Fund Raising Team was on hand to raise funds through the sales of calendars, handicraft and interest-free loans. We mingled with the members of LCOR and found them to be very mission minded and also supportive of JCC's rebuilding project. They labored with us to sell food and other stuff to raise funds for our rebuilding.



They even provided us with free lunch.

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? (1 John 3:17)

Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward. (Mark 9:41)



12 Signs You Are a Modern-Day Pharisee

By Frank Powell (*article recommended by Rev Anthony*)

Pharisees still exist today. And nobody wants to be a modern-day Pharisee. It just happens. Most Pharisees begin with good intentions. But somehow those intentions and motives morph into something not so good.

Here is my hope and prayer ... you will read this and do an inspection on your heart. The following things flow from my own personal struggles with legalism and being a Pharisee. In many ways, I am a recovering Pharisee. I still have a long way to go. But I am thankful the grace of God allows me to stumble. Allows me to struggle. And still be His child.

So, here are 12 signs you are a modern-day Pharisees.

1.) You believe showing up for worship every Sunday makes you right with God.

Modern-day Pharisees try to measure everything. Something to measure their righteousness. Anything to give them some security with God. Modern-day Pharisees see measurements as essential to righteousness and salvation. Worship is not a time to draw into God. Worship is another check off the list.

For modern-day Pharisees, Christian living is not so much about transforming into the image of God. It is more about living up to the standard of God. And no one can live up to God's standard. Except Jesus.

2.) You spend more time talking about what you are against, not what you are for.

Pharisees love to argue. They love to spend their time convincing others. If they had to list the actions and issues they are against, the pencil would run out of lead. But turn around and ask them to list what they are for? The pencil would not have to be re-sharpened.

Pharisees believe their job is to defend God and legislate morality. So they are against drinking, smoking, cursing, short skirts, talking back to parents, holding hands before marriage, and so on. And all of these things come before the gospel. Or maybe they are the gospel. Modern-day Pharisees can't tell the difference.

3.) You believe God actually needs you.

Modern-day Pharisees believe God needs them on His team. They believe the church is dependent upon them.

Let me be real with the modern-day Pharisees. If God needs a human being for His church to survive, He is not a God worth serving. God needs no one. God simply allows us to play a role. He allows us to play a part.

We just need to know our role. Play our part. And don't think too highly of ourselves.

4.) You don't repent of sin ... you don't have any "serious" sin to repent of.

Remember that time the modern-day Pharisees repented of sin in their life? Oh wait, they never have. They don't have any serious sin to repent of. Pharisees have a reputation and status to maintain. Repentance involves vulnerability and weakness. Pharisees don't show weakness.

Who cares if the God of the universe was humiliated and mocked by mere men? That has no bearing on a modern-day Pharisee. Repentance is for people who sin really bad. Not for them.

5.) You make every issue black and white.

The Bible is grey on many issues. But modern-day Pharisees don't deal in the world of grey. They must have everything black and white. You see, if an issue is grey, modern-day Pharisees have to do some work on the heart. And Pharisees don't work on the heart. They don't consider motives.

Here is another thing about grey. It does not allow modern-day Pharisees to keep score. Black and white issues, however, allow them to keep a tally of their righteousness. "I have never drank or smoke or gambled or cheated on my wife." Who cares if their heart is full of lust, anger and envy?

Making a grey issue black and white means modern-day Pharisees don't have to deal with the motives underneath their actions.

6.) You would never condone homosexuality or fornication ... but have no problem watching movies that do.

If someone were to preach on the evils of homosexuality or sex before marriage, a modern-day Pharisee would nod his or her head in agreement. "Yeah, that's right preacher. Preach on!" But on Sunday night, they plop down

in the recliner and find humor from a movie or TV show glamorizing the very thing they just agreed was wrong.

This is the real issue with modern-day Pharisees. They love to put on a show when the lights are on. They want people to think they are righteous. But Jesus does not inform the rest of their lives.

7.) Your salvation is based on your works, not on Jesus.

Modern-day Pharisees believe in their works. That's why they love James 2:14-26. But they skirt around passages about grace. Oh, yeah. They believe Jesus died on the cross for their sins. But they turn around and mock the cross by trying to earn their salvation.

8.) You read the Bible to substantiate your convictions, not to be shaped into God's image.

During the time of Jesus, no one knew more Scripture than the Pharisees. They studied the Scriptures relentlessly.

Modern-day Pharisees do the same. But they turn around and use the knowledge to convince others why they are wrong. The Bible is their personal weapon. Modern-day Pharisees use it to throw rocks at all the misguided, evil sinners in the world.

To modern-day Pharisees, the Bible is not a means to grow into the image of God. It is a means to convince the world of fallacies and misguided theology.

9.) You believe outsiders should conform to a certain lifestyle before they are accepted as "Christian."

This is a Pharisee trademark. Before non-Christians can be considered "part of the group," they must conform to a certain lifestyle. Stop all of the cursing and drinking. And stop doing all the stuff "bad people" do.

Once potential Christians "fix their lives," modern-day Pharisees gladly welcome these people into their family. Just don't revert back to "sinning" again. Membership in the group is always conditional.

Instead of meeting people where they are, modern-day Pharisees force people to come up to their level. And until these people live up to the standard, they will be on the outside looking in.

10.) You don't know the difference between a convert and a transfer.

Modern-day Pharisees get just as excited when someone joins their church as they do when someone joins the kingdom of God. In fact, they don't see much distinction between the two. They celebrate a baptism the same way they celebrate a family moving from across the street.

This is why no real desire for the lost exists. The church is adding "members." But they are being added to the directory of the local church, not the directory of the Kingdom. Modern-day Pharisees don't care. As long as the "church" is adding people.

11.) All of your Christian friends look and act just like you do.

Pharisees are exclusive. They pick and choose who enters the group. But Jesus never valued exclusivity. Just look at his chosen 12. A tax collector (Matthew). Fishermen (Peter and Andrew). A Zealot (Simon). That's a conglomerate of guys from many different backgrounds.

So, look around at your group? Is it essentially a collection of men and women cut from the same mold?

12.) If someone tries to rebuke you, you get angry and offended.

When Jesus called out their sins, the Pharisees crucified him. Modern-day Pharisees see any rebuke as a personal attack. They immediately go on the offensive. Some get angry and storm off. Others proceed to make a list of sins to the person rebuking them.

Regardless, modern-day Pharisees refuse to have a heart receptive to rebuke. It undermines their external righteousness. And it undermines the lie that they are perfect.

I hope the author will excuse me for trimming his article to fit into the available pages of this issue of The Vine.

Check out the full article here:

http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/263528-12-signs-you-are-a-modern-day-pharisee.html?mkt_tok=3RkMMJWWfF9wsRolu6nNZKXonjHpfsX56e8vXaGzhYkz2EF

Jurong Christian Church Kindergarten's 37th Graduation Ceremony cum Concert

(extracted from <http://www.preschoolmarket.com/blog>)

Jurong Christian Church Kindergarten's 37th Graduation Ceremony cum Concert was held on Saturday 31st Oct. DPM Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam was the Guest of Honour.

In his opening speech, DPM Mr Tharman shared that it is very important to give our children the right confidence, and as parents, we must give them many experiences to learn and try.



We must allow the children to do things that we were scared to do and allow them to say things that we were scared to say. We must not force our children to follow the rules all the time, but allow them to test the rules. In Singapore, we are too rigid.



The children from Gentleness (AM and PM) and Faithfulness (AM and PM) put up a series of great performance for parents, guests and their teachers.

