

# MARANATHA MESSENGER

Weekly Newsletter of

**MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

*"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)*

Private Circulation Only

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Sunday School: 9.45 am Worship Service: 10.45 am Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.00 pm

Pastor: Rev (Dr) Jack Sin (HP: 9116 0948)

## Q & A

### **Can a Christian continue with ancestor worship and the worship of God as well?**

That is a good question. Ancestor worship is the adoration and worship of deceased kinsmen. This is different from the general rites for the burial of the dead and beliefs about the dead in general. The reference to worship of dead kinship is very important in ancestor worship.

When I was a boy, my mother used to offer food, pray and burn joss sticks in honour of the dead forefathers. She would often offer them cooked rice, vegetables, meat like chicken, joss papers and incense and bowed to the ancestral tablet. This was done at least once a year and the forefathers were generally forgotten until the following year. (Now that my parents are saved by God's grace and mercy, she has since stopped this practice.)

Ancestor worship, which is a common practice in eastern religions, is the superstitious worship of the dead parents and grandparents, and it is then extended to a group of ancestors. It is required that rituals (ie offering of food and chanting) be offered to these ancestors so that they are satisfied and will live in peace in the world beyond, which is a superstition and is unfounded in the Word of God (Luke 16:19-31).

### **Ancestor Worship Forbidden in the Word of God**

Is there any specific reference to ancestor worship in the Bible? There is a clear indication that the giving of offerings to the ancestors was practiced by the Canaanites and strongly forbidden in the Bible for God's people. In Deuteronomy 26:14, the tithe-giver was commanded to assure and say, *"I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, **nor given ought thereof for the dead**".*

There is reference to the burning of incense for the dead in Jeremiah 34:5, *"But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall **they burn odours for thee**; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD."*

In Ezekiel 43:7-9 we read a strong condemnation of the practice of worshipping the dead (kings):

*"And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by **the carcasses of their kings in their high places**. In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between*

*me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. Now let them put away their whoredom, **and the carcasses of their kings**, far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever."*

The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 65:1-4 gave a powerful rebuke of the practice of rendering worship to the graves of dead family members:

*"I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts; A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that **sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick**; Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine's flesh, and broth of **abominable things** is in their vessels".*

The living is to have no communication with the dead (ie necromancy) at all (Luke 16:27-31, Deuteronomy 18:9-14). Consider once again Isaiah 8:19, *"And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have **familiar spirits**, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a **people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?"***

### **A Christian Response to Ancestor Worship**

How do we as Christians respond to ancestor worship? Note that ancestor worship is not based solely upon respect and deference for dead family members. *This is not rejected in Christian thought: The Bible commands us to honour and obey our parents and elders.* It is not wrong to remember the dead in a meaningful way without worship. However, going beyond showing respect to veneration in worship of them is against the Word of God. Honouring the dead in an excessive manner by setting up images, candles, performing rituals, and making offerings of various kinds of sacrifices to them indicate that some kind of idol worship is involved and gives a false understanding of the afterlife. As Christians, we should make a stand against this (ie in funeral rites) and not indulge in it, for God does not approve of this in His Word.

This applies also to non-Christian funerals where religious rites require bowing to the deceased in worship or carrying of joss sticks or burning of incense or chanting rituals.

Ancestor worship and biblical Christianity are incompatible. 1 Thessalonians 1:9 speaks of turning away from idols to serve the living and true God. Those who are saved by the Lord, need to prayerfully stop their ancestor worship and worship only Christ the true and living God instead in obedience to His Word.

Hope this helps.

*Jack Sin*

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### **Thanksgiving to God from A Believer**

I want to thank my God and the Lord Jesus Christ for His Mercy and Grace, by bringing my family to worship at Maranatha BP Church more than 6 months ago.

I can say that I am like "pertanian pindals" (change farming), normally practice by "jungle man" (Orang Asli) in Malaysia, when their crops cannot grow well or not bear fruit anymore, they must search for a good ground to grow the crops. I am like that (spiritually speaking). By the grace of God I will leave the Church if I find the Church is lukewarm or not faithfully following what the Holy Bible says (reason that I cannot grow spiritually). In many churches I had attended, some give only milk, it is not wrong to drink milk, but not always milk, meat as well (Hebrews 5:13-14); some speaking in tongues, saying it is the gift of God, but the Bible says tongues have already ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8); some abuse God's Almighty Word and do not give glory to God, but for themselves and to cover their mistakes (Ecclesiastes 10:13-14); some had a head knowledge and not with the will of God, but the will of themselves and love to judge others but not himself (Matthew 7:3-5). If they judge according to the Word of God, I will respect!

I thank my God for all the lessons that I had learnt from other churches. When I first met Pastor Jack, the servant of God, I can sense the spirit of God in him, for he speaks according to his Heavenly Father's will and not of his own. Praise to God!

I thank God who brought my family to this blessed ground that I and my children can grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I thank God also for His beloved co-workers, namely, Eld Thomas Liaw, Pr David Weng, Dn Daniel Tau, Dn Terence Tan, Dn George Tan, Dn Steven Ng, Sis Angie Sin and others. The Lord of the heaven will reward them! ("And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." 1 Peter 5:4), and Solomon says, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Lastly, after attending Maranatha and hearing the servant of the Lord, Pastor Jack's faithful preaching of the spiritual truths, by the grace of God, I found strength to ask my mother in Malaysia to take a step to seek Christ and to be baptised and throw away all the idols, Hallelujah (a historical record), God moved her heart and she was willing to believe God and be baptised and threw all the idols away!

Many prayers had been answered, even I can see my two little children, Joshua and Esther, growing in the grace of our Lord. They love to do their Bible reading or read RPG and pray too! (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

Thank you, Lord, for this little paradise on earth, where thy people love God and His servants care. Amen.

*Peter Koid Beng Sun*



Bro Peter Koid (on the extreme left) serving God with victory from above (Praise the Lord!)

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## Maranatha Resource Ministry

By the higher hand of God, Maranatha BPC started the Maranatha Resource Ministry in 2002 and it is like a Christian bookroom that has many practical and useful biblical resources developed by BP or reformed pastors or sourced to cater to the various spiritual needs of the local church, family and individual Christian edification. This is available to all members and friends for purchase for church, family or personal use or for the ministry of the church or missions. Some of them are designed particularly for leaders in churches, fellowships, fellowships Bible studies and Sunday School ministry use as well (ie training of deacons, discipleship, equipping of elders and preachers, elements in biblical vs contemporary worship, biblical perspective of church music, biblical counselling, books of the Bible, Bible study on 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, creation vs evolution, revival in the church, charismatic phenomena, Christian education, apologetics church history, missions and evangelism, cult and occult, protestant reformation, children books, running a Christian kindergarten, CDs, DVDs, children Christian VCDs, KJV English bibles, English-Chinese Pin Yin bibles, the latest resources on Sunday School materials for youths and biblical missions in Acts, and others, etc).

If you are interested in any of the resources, you may contact Dn George Tan at [gketan@starhub.com.sg](mailto:gketan@starhub.com.sg) or the MBPC office at 65458627, and a resource list is available upon request.

*Jack Sin*

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Fortnightly evangelistic BS with nurses at the Christian Home for the Aged by Mui Leng and pastor.



Ivy teaching the Primary Sunday School class.



Angie sharing on the character of Deborah with the YFers.



Come and join the monthly MYAF meetings on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after service.

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**At the Pulpit**

*Theme for the Quarter:*

**Studies on 1 Peter: Testings In The Believers' Sojourn On Earth**

Rev (Dr) Jack Sin

**"The Demeanour Of Christians"**

(1 Pet 2:18-25)

[End of MM]