



NEW LIFE

BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

Vol. 11 No. 13

LORD'S DAY 25 MARCH 2007

My dear readers,

"A gentle Reminder"

To all ageing readers (which means everybody!), please be reminded, a quarter of 2007 has whizzed away into eternity, cutting down our sojourn on Planet Earth by another three months, speeding us ever nearer to "D-day." You will want to know what "D" stands for. If you do not know already, "D" means Departure, otherwise called Death.

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps 90:12), "redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:16). When you read this "Pastoral Chat" next Lord's Day (25 March) only 281 days of 2007 remain to your credit. **Question:** How did you spend the first 84 days of the "New Year" 2007? And how will you spend the remaining days? The Year also grows older, like you and me!

Be wise ... redeem time for the Lord. Make every day count for His Kingdom. Make your life useful for God. Live each day with eternity's values in view. No Christian should live just for himself, least of all, for the passing perishing world.

*Lovingly in the Lord
Dr Tow Siang Hwa, Sr Pastor*

Greetings from Rev Jack and Mrs Angie Sin

Dear Pr Mok and Members of New Life BPC (London),

Greetings to the leaders and brethren at New Life BPC in the blessed name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We are looking forward to the ministry of the Word, mutual encouragement in a week's time in the New Life Easter church camp together (studying the whole book of Jonah), the 3 seminars on Marriage, Discipleship, and the Role of women in the church and the 4 worship services. We are especially blessed and encouraged by your enhanced zeal to serve the Lord over the past six months. Let us all pray fervently for a revival and let us all come for these meetings and be engaged in the meditation of the Word of the Lord, edifying fellowship and the saving of souls as we await the Lord's imminent return .

It is our prayer that you will continue steadfast to labour fervently with the needful work in London that you have started more than a decade ago and with Lord's enablement, growing in spirit and in numbers. Your labour of love is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58) as we persevere in evangelism to the saving of souls, Christian fellowship, God honouring worship and responsible stewardship of the ministry, providing spiritual services to the building up of the saints in your church and beyond.

See you all on 31 Mar at the seminar on "The Call and Cost of Discipleship."

*Regards
Jack and Angie Sin*

UNDERSTANDING DISASTERS AND THE CHRISTIAN

Introduction

Other than the book of Revelation, the largest and most important prophetic portion of the NT is Matthew 24-25 commonly known as the Olivet Discourse. It is the second longest message of Christ recorded in Scripture. The only longer one, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7), was a public sermon given to multitudes in Galilee near the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry. By contrast the Olivet Discourse was a private message to His disciples in Jerusalem near the end of His earthly ministry. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke these words while seated directly across from the temple on the Mount of Olives. So the popular name of this discourse is a reference to the place where it occurred.

The central message of Christ's Olivet Discourse is a twofold admonition. First, Christ is warning that before He returns the world will become more and more hostile to the people of God. Secondly, He is urging people to be prepared for His coming and the judgments that are associated with it. Those themes dominate the whole discourse including the parables at the end. The world's hostility to Christ will not diminish, but on the contrary, will increase dramatically (v.4-20). The final result will be a time of tribulation like none the world has ever known (v.21-29). Remember the Olivet Discourse was given to a group of disciples who *"thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear"* (Luke 19:11). Christ was making it clear to them that the earthly kingdom they hoped for belonged to the eschatological future. While Christ did not set a precise time or date for those events (v.36) He did outline many signs that would indicate the time was drawing near. All those signs point to a time of tribulation unlike any other in the history of the world, a time so filled with suffering and affliction that if Christ did not intervene, everyone on earth would have perished (v.21-22).

The afflictions Christ outlined in Matt 24 closely parallel the dreadful judgments described in Rev 7-19. A comparison of the two passages reveals several unmistakable connections. Both passages describe a time of unprecedented affliction culminating in the glorious return of Christ. The only reasonable interpretation is that they both refer to the same cataclysmic period of distress and hardship. Rev 7:14 refers to it as "the great tribulation." Christ likewise described this era as a time of "great tribulation" (v.21). He was quite obviously describing the same period of apocalyptic judgment depicted in detail in the Apostle John's vision.

Some have asked why the Lord warned people during NT times as He did in this message when He knew they would never live to experience these terrible signs. Why include this in the Gospel account where it has stood as a warning to the church in every generation? But a similar question could be asked about Isaiah's prophecy and his warnings about the Babylonian captivity (Isa 39:6-7) which did not occur until after all the people of Isaiah's generation were dead. The message is given to be a warning to all about the consequences of sin as a specific warning to those who will actually experience the terrible judgments.

Now let us turn to the text of the Olivet Discourse itself and see what those signs are.

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Christ began His discourse with a long list of calamities He likens to the labour pains that precede childbirth. The word "sorrows" in the original speaks of the travail and pain of childbirth. The afflictions Christ lists here are like birth pangs. At first they are relatively mild and infrequent but then they come in relentless waves, faster and harder as the time approaches. The imagery of birth pangs is fairly common in Jewish apocalyptic literature. The apostle Paul used a similar figure to describe the approach of the day of the Lord (1 Thess 5:3). What are the birth pangs? Christ names six distinct signs: (1) False prophets (2) Wars and rumours of wars (3) Famines, pestilences and earthquakes in divers places (4) Persecution of the saints (5) Defection of false believers (6) The Gospel proclaimed to the whole world. We shall focus on the third sign, i.e. disasters.

The onset of birth pangs will also bring about an unprecedented increase in natural and man-made disasters. The parallel verse in Luke 21:11 includes *"fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven"*. The "signs from heaven" could possibly include asteroids, debris from a comet or similar cosmic disasters. The prophet Joel repeatedly spoke about the darkening of the sun and moon (Joel 2:10; 3:15) as well as the apostle John in Rev 6:12 suggesting that these cosmic signs will eventually reach epic proportions as the pains of labour become more intense. This third sign of birth pangs makes it absolutely clear that the birth-pang afflictions are a display of God's judgment. Because religious deception and wars involve deliberate human acts, some might be reluctant to conclude that they represent any kind of divine judgment. Pestilences and famines are often immediate consequences of sin, so some might also suggest that God has no hand in bringing these about. But earthquakes and cosmic catastrophes are direct, undeniable acts of God (Scripture teaches that religious deception and war as well as natural consequences of human sin often represent divine judgment, see 2 Thess 2:11-12; Joel 3:9-10), so all the birth-pang signs are expressions of divine judgment. God exercises sovereign, providential control over all such afflictions and catastrophes and their sudden, dramatic increase will signify that He is beginning to pour out His judgment on the earth. The global increase in disease, famines and natural disasters will torment mankind. It will seem as if the world itself is beginning to disintegrate. God will withdraw His providential mercy and unleash the full consequences of sin one day. And He will allow the full repercussions of the curse to be felt in the natural disasters that occur.

That is exactly what happened when an earthquake measuring 9.0 on the Richter scale off the western coast of Sumatra unleashed a tsunami that hit eleven countries on two continents in the Indian Ocean, killing about 230,000 people where more than two-thirds in Indonesia's Aceh province, causing widespread devastation on an unprecedented scale on Sunday Dec 26, 2004. This was the worst earthquake in 40 years that shocked the world. Forty feet mammoth tidal waves travelling at 400 km/h, hydrodynamic forces of a colossal proportion, hitting the shorelines of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Malaysia, Maldives, Thailand, and travelling across the Indian Ocean to hit the African Continent (remember the global deluge of Noah's days which covered the entire earth in forty days). The first scientifically monitored earthquake occurred in Antioch on 20 May AD 526 and left about 230,000 people dead.

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Another major quake occurred in Shenxi, China on 24 Jan 1556 claiming 830,000 lives and yet another mammoth earthquake occurred in Calcutta, India on 11 Oct 1739 leaving 300,000 dead. An earthquake measuring 8.6 on the richter scale hit Lisbon, Portugal in 1785 killing 60,000 people. From 1923-2005, earthquakes have hit Yokohama & Kobe (Japan), Tang Shan (China), Turkey, Afghanistan, Morocco, Iran, Chile, Yugoslavia, Alaska, Peru (7.7), Bolivia (8.2), Columbia (6.8), Indonesia (9.0), California (6.8), Papua New Guinea (7.0), Mexico (7.2), Guam (8.0), Fiji (6.7), Greece (6.0) and Pakistan claiming hundreds of thousands of lives and causing widespread property damage. In the past 50 years we witnessed an increasing intensity and frequency of giant quakes in the world.

As for pestilences, the world witnessed the outbreak of the mad cow disease in the 1980s in UK and Europe, the epidemic with pigs in Malaysia (Nipah virus). In April 2003 many countries were affected by the outbreak of SARS which caused the deaths of many people (Singapore was not spared). This is a flu-like virus from the strain of the coronavirus, an atypical pneumonia that spread globally. In 2004 Australia (New South Wales), Israel (Eliat) and West Africa were invaded by swarms of locusts (billions) which are capable of travelling 500 km in a night and causing widespread devastation to agriculture. Again, the Avian flu (or Bird flu) has killed many people worldwide since it started ravaging Asian poultry stocks in late 2003 according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Although the H5N1 virus remains essentially an animal disease, experts fear it could spark a pandemic if it mutates into a form that is easily transmitted from human to human (Psalm 91:6-7).

In August 2005 Hurricane Katrina struck the coast of Louisiana (New Orleans), Mississippi and Alabama causing widespread devastation and damage (in excess of US\$65 billion) and killing more than 1,000 people. This was followed almost immediately by Hurricane Rita (the southern part of US experienced the hurricane season from August to November each year).

Still these are merely birth pangs, the onset of labour "the beginning of sorrows." Things are going to get worse. These birth pangs bring "tribulation." "Great tribulation" is yet to come and the state of fear and foreboding that will grip an unbelieving world in those indescribable days will be terrifying indeed. Again, the Apostle John's account in the book of Revelation exactly parallels what Christ predicts here. In John's vision when Christ breaks the fourth seal, death and Hades is unleashed (Rev 6:8). These correspond exactly to the famines and pestilences described in Matt 24:7. Then at the breaking of the sixth seal, a massive earthquake which could be a series of major earthquakes along the edges of the earth's tectonic plates that may wreak global havoc (Rev 6:12-15). That pictures global catastrophe on a scale unprecedented since the global flood of Noah's days. It includes the earthquakes in many places recorded in Matt 24:7 as well as the fearful cosmic phenomena described in Luke 21:11. The Apostle John described how the seventh seal is broken and seven angels appear before God. Each is handed a trumpet signifying God's judgment. Incense is given to God in a golden censer and John says that incense represents the prayers of the saints. To be precise these are prayers for God to rise up and enact justice against His enemies (Rev 8:3-4). An angel takes the censer, fills it with fire from the altar and throws it to earth, signifying

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that those prayers for justice have been heard and God's judgment is about to fall. Then the angels with the trumpets prepare themselves to sound (Rev 8:5-6) and what happens next is frightening (Rev 7-13), so even massive catastrophes such as those are still merely the prelude to an even greater judgment yet to come. Rev 16:18 describes "a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great" which is far worse than the one in Rev 16. The birth pangs continue to get worse *"but the end is not yet"* (Matt 24:6).

So what should be our proper response as Christians?

The Lord Jesus Christ said in Luke 13:1-5: *"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."* Are we ready to meet our God if He comes today or when He takes us home? (Amos 4:12). We must, therefore, be vigilant and alert at all times and seek Christ without delay and not take His grace for granted. Mark 13:33 reads, *"Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is."*

There was no advance warning before the tsunami hit the shorelines and likewise *"the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness"* (2 Pet 3:10-13).

Conclusion

Are you prepared and ready for the Lord's second coming? Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation! Let us therefore, seek the Lord in repentance of our sins and embrace Christ as our Saviour and Lord, and re-consecrate our lives once again to God and give up our pursuit of worldly pleasures and sins and take up the cross and follow Him daily (Luke 9:23). Today, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts (Ps 95:7-8).

*Elder Thomas Liaw
Maranatha B-P Church, S'pore*

(Extracted from Maranatha Messenger dated 18 March 2007)

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

CHURCH THEME: WALK IN THE NEWNESS OF LIFE (Romans 6:4)

Our **worship services** begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm**.

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

| Worship Services | | | WELCOME |
|--|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Morning | Today: 25/03/2007 | Next Week: 01/04/2007 | We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We welcome Eve Maria Ravenscro to our morning worship service last week. |
| <i>Chairman:</i> | John Poh | Pr Mok Chee Cheong | |
| <i>Speaker:</i> | Pr Mok Chee Cheong | Rev Jack Sin | |
| <i>Message:</i> | True And False Repentance | Why We are Christians? | |
| <i>Text:</i> | 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 | Tbd | |
| <i>Organist:</i> | Anthony | Yanning | |
| Evening | | | NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS |
| <i>Chairman:</i> | Seetoh Yoong Chiang | Jonathan Kim | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journey Mercies: Pray for Rev Jack and Mrs Angie Sin as they travel to London to minister to us for next 2 weeks. Rev Jack Sin will be the speaker for the church Easter camp. • Church Easter Camp: Please take note that camp registration closes today. This is to facilitate the planning of food, logistics and accommodation. Please see Sis Sharon Chan or Grace Lim to obtain/submit your registration form. • Pre-lunch Bible Study, 1 April: Mrs Angie Sin will be conducting a bible study on the topic of "The Roles of godly Women in the Covenant Home and Church". All are encouraged to attend the bible study. • ECM, April 07: In preparation of the upcoming ECM in Apr 07, all members are requested to spend time in prayer regarding the ECM and their membership status with the church. Members are requested to respond to the letter by 1 April. Members please note that it is your duty to attend the ECM which will be held on 8 Apr 07. |
| <i>Speaker:</i> | Pr Mok Chee Cheong | Rev Jack Sin | |
| <i>Message:</i> | The Names of God – Jehovah-Jireh | Why We are Bible-Presbyterians? | |
| <i>Text:</i> | Genesis 22:14 | Tbd | |
| <i>Pianist:</i> | Feng Qian | Feng Qian | |
| Other Duties | | | |
| | Today: 25/03/2007 | Next Week: 01/04/2007 | |
| <i>Ushers</i> | Daniel/Sharon | Chin Kiong/Evelyn | |
| <i>Sunday Sch:</i> | Yanning | Carol | |
| <i>Lunch:</i> | Constance | Maureen | |
| <i>Washing-up:</i> | Volunteers | Volunteers | |
| <i>Bible Study:</i> | BBK / DHW | Special Bible Study (refer to announcements) | |
| Appointments of the Week | | | |
| Fri 30 Mar | 7.00 pm | Young Adults Fellowship: Volunteers needed for church cleaning up for Easter camp | |
| Sat 31 Mar | 4.00 pm | Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Spkr: Rev Jack Sin | |
| Last Week's Worship Service Collections | | | |
| Offering: £345.25 | | Lunch: £41.38 | |
| Memory Verse | | | |
| <i>Previous Week (Mar07 Wk 3): John 15:5</i> | | | |
| I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. | | | |
| <i>This Week (Mar07 Wk 4): 2 Corinthians 7:10</i> | | | |
| For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. | | | |