



# **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. 29 No. 04

**LORD’S DAY 26 JANUARY 2025**

### ORDER OF WORSHIP

#### **Morning Service – 11am**

**Prelude**

*The Lord Is in His Holy Temple*

**Call to Worship**

Psalm 108:1-5

**Opening Hymn \***

RHC 15 – “How Shall I Sing That Majesty”

**Opening Prayer**

John Poh

**Responsive Reading**

Psalm 136

**Second Hymn \***

*Psalm 136 verses 1-4, 23-26*  
*(to the tune of Darwall, RHC 217)*

**Scriptural Text**

Acts 10

**Pastoral Prayer**

Mr Charles Scott-Pearson

**Sermon Message**

***The Opening of the Kingdom of God***

**Closing Hymn \***

RHC 549 – “When We All Get to Heaven”

**Benediction/3-Fold Amen \***

Mr Charles Scott-Pearson

**Postlude**

*The Lord Bless You*

\* *Congregation Stands*

#### **THE LORD IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE**

The Lord is in His holy temple,  
The Lord is in His holy temple:  
Let all the earth keep silence,  
Let all the earth keep silence before Him -  
Keep silence, keep silence before Him. Amen.

#### **THE LORD BLESS YOU**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord lift His countenance upon you,  
and give you peace, and give you peace;  
The Lord make His face to shine upon you,  
And be gracious unto you, be gracious,  
The Lord be gracious, gracious unto you. Amen.

### **SHORTER CATECHISM QUESTION 41**

**Q: Where is the Moral Law summarily comprehended?**

**A: The Moral Law is summarily comprehended in THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.**

Comments:

The Moral Law is the law which teaches us how we ought to think and act with regard to God and man. When God created man, he set this Moral Law in his heart, so that he knew his duty without a Bible. But when man sinned, this knowledge was partly lost, and God therefore had to give it anew. He gave it fully in the Bible, and briefly in the Ten Commandments.

Scriptural Reference:

Deuteronomy 10:4, Matthew 19:17

Dear brethren, as the Chinese New Year approaches, our bulletin this week will cover part 1 of the article "A Christian Perspective of some Chinese New Year traditions and practices" written by Rev Jack Sin, pastor of Sovereign Hope Bible-Presbyterian Church. Do read Chan kei Thong, Faith of our Fathers, Discovering God in Ancient China, Imprint Edition, 2008 for an insightful study of this relevant subject.

## **A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE OF SOME CHINESE NEW YEAR TRADITIONS AND PRACTICES – Part 1**

### **Introduction**

The Americans have their Thanksgiving in late November every year in remembrance of God's goodness and faithfulness and the good harvest during the times of the Pilgrim Fathers in the early 17th century when they first came to America on Mayflower. In the same vein, the Chinese too has their Chinese New Year celebrations. The Chinese culture has more than 5,000 years of rich human civilization and its mores, beliefs and norms and culture are deeply rooted in symbols, traditions and festivals.

The Chinese New Year will be ushered in this coming month on 10 Feb 2024 and will last for the next 15 days and there are some traditional practices that will normally accompany it for most Chinese households. There are some good oriental traditions that we can practice but some of our Chinese New Year celebrations are earth bound and focus too much on our temporal earthly life and tangible success. As Christians, as much as we value our culture, we must also seek to understand the symbols of our culture in the right perspective and be careful about those religious elements that do not accord with Holy Scriptures. We must put God first before our culture, and honour God in the centre of our culture at the same time. It is also important that we do not lose the non-religious part of our cultural heritage as Chinese Christians, while not compromising our celebration with materialistic or religious, beliefs and experiences that are superstitious and hence displeasing to God. Let us consider a few of them.

### **The Chinese Lunar Calendar**

Background and Concept. The Chinese animal signs are a 12-year cycle used for dating the years. They represent a cyclical concept of time, rather than the Western linear concept of time (the latter is correct). The Chinese Lunar Calendar is based on the cycles of the moon, and is constructed in a different fashion than the Western solar calendar. In the Chinese calendar, the beginning of the year falls somewhere between late January and mid February. The Chinese generally have adopted the Western calendar since 1911, but the lunar calendar is still used for festive occasions such as the Chinese New Year. Many Chinese calendars will print both the normal calendar dates and the Chinese lunar dates.

### **The Twelve Animal Signs and the Chinese Zodiac Chart**

Astrology is one of the most ancient philosophies still in existence in China. Some estimate it to be more than 3,000 years old but recent study of more esoteric beliefs place it further back into the clouded past of human history. In ancient China, and up till today, Astrology has been used to predict what happens to people's lives, countries, the outcome of wars, economic trends and much more.

Our calendar is dated from the birth of Jesus Christ, for example, AD 1977 means 1,977 years after the birth of Christ (although Christ was born in 4 B.C.). This represents a linear perception of time, with time proceeding in a straight line from the past to the present and the future. In traditional China, dating methods were cyclical, meaning something that is repeated time after time according to a pattern. A popular folk method which reflected this cyclical method of recording years is the Twelve Animal Signs. Every year is assigned an animal name or "sign" according to a repeating cycle: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Boar. Therefore, every twelve years the same animal name or "sign" would reappear.

Chinese Astrology is organized according to the Twelve Animals Signs. One Chinese legend attributes the creation of the animal signs to the semi-mythical Yellow Emperor in 2637 B.C. According to another legend, a certain deity summoned all the animals to come to him before he departed from Earth. Only 12 animals came to bid him farewell. As a reward, he named a year after each one in the order that they arrived. First came the Rat, then the Ox, the Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig. Thus we

have 12 signs today. There is a belief that the animal ruling the year in which one was born is believed to exercise a profound influence on his or her life. This is both speculative and unfounded.

Horoscopes have developed around the animal signs, much like monthly horoscopes in the West which have been developed for the different moon signs, Pisces, Aries, etc. For example, a Chinese horoscope may falsely predict that a person born in the Year of the Horse would be, "cheerful, popular, and loves to compliment others". These religious horoscopes though popularly believed, are not sound or true at all and as Christians saved by grace and made in the image of God (and not in the image of animals) we do well to avoid using them and to stop telling people our so-called animal's zodiac signs which are both unbiblical and superstitious in nature.

Note that the practice of astrology is strongly forbidden in the Bible, Isaiah 47:12-13 reads, *"Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee."*

The occultic use of charts or the worship of the celestial bodies like the moon, sun and stars to predict behaviour, businesses, relationships or the future is strictly forbidden in the Bible (2 Kings 23:5-7) and that include the consultation of a geomancer or feng shui master, black magic, tarot cards, witchcraft, bomoh or shaman as well (Deuteronomy 18:10-13). As Christians, let us be careful and not propagate a false and superstitious belief or practice that is clearly disallowed in the word of God (Leviticus 19:26-31).

## **Greetings and "Ang Pows"**

In the festive spirit of wishing one another blessed new year, there is the giving of "ang pows" which are red packets with money to children or to our parents or grandparents or other children. This is a good practice of giving, showing love and filial piety that can be continued by believers. In giving "ang pows", it is acceptable as we understand it as a gesture of love, appreciation and gratitude and that we are not distributing symbols of gold and wealth, but that they are meant to show God's grace and blessings in our lives. The colour "red" is indifferent for Christians and one should not be enamoured with materialistic prosperity, wealth and worldly success. For us as Chinese Christians, we are not obsessed with any colour or the colour "red". In our Chinese New Year greetings, as Christians it is not appropriate or meaningful to wish people "Gong Xi Fa Cai" which is a reference to wishing tangible or financial wealth for that person, but 新年平安 or peace in the new year or eternal joy from God, are more appropriate. We have reason to be joyful and happy because we are blessed of God by His saving mercies and pardoning grace. We have Christ as Lord and Saviour of our lives who died for us, redeemed us and rose from the dead, having destroyed sin and death, and brought everlasting life into our lives. For the Christian, only Christ is the basis and meaning of our new hope in the new year. That is why we have lasting peace, eternal hope and great joy in our hearts today. We are to constantly testify, give thanks and recognize how blessed we are by God Almighty, who is the Giver of eternal life and all good things (1 Timothy 6:17). He is the only source of everlasting hope and even if we should experience pain, failure or tribulations during the year, we know that His grace will be sufficient for us (2 Corinthians 12:9). God must not be forgotten and Christians are to make a conscious effort to put Him the centre of our Chinese New Year celebration, as Deuteronomy 8:18 says, *"But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day."*

The Christian life is founded on our saving relationship with Christ by faith through grace alone in Christ and not by works or wealth. We can exchange or give oranges which do not symbolize "gold" for us but a fruit for eating; the colour "red" is not required in our dressing; "ang pows", which are red packets with money in it, is given to wish the person well. Some others even hang paper pineapples in their homes. Why? Because in Chinese the pineapple is called "ong lai", and this means "prosperity comes to our homes" and we do not need to practice that or invert the Chinese word for prosperity, "福", upside down on the wall "to bring in the prosperity" as practiced by some. During Chinese New Year, some older folks may resort to gambling cards or mahjong too. (now with the opening of the IR as well ) We often see pictures of gold bars, to symbolize prosperity and wealth. This is forbidden or to be avoided by the Christian families as it depicts a covetous spirit which is warned in the 10th Commandment (Exodus 20:17; 1 Timothy 6:6-10).

*(to be continued...)*

# WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

Our Lord's Day activities begin with the **Worship Service** at **11.00 am** followed by a **Bible Study & Children's Sunday School** at **1:30pm**. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

## NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dear Worshippers, we extend a warm welcome to you this Lord's Day. We hope that you have a blessed time worshipping with us today.

For those unable to attend Church in person, please join our Worship Service and Bible Study on our live-stream via YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/@NewLifeBPCLondon>

**We thank God for providing Mr Charles Scott-Pearson to minister to us this Lord's Day.**

Next Lord's Day, our speaker will be Eld George Chew.

Please note we not hold the Bible Study nor the Sunday School classes next Lord's Day.

**Tithes & Offerings** – The offering box is located at the entrance to the Church Sanctuary.

**After-Service Fellowship** – Join us for lunch fellowship after the morning worship service.

Please bring your own lunch as only drinks will be provided.

**Afternoon Bible Study** – Mr Scott-Pearson will deliver the study entitled “The Making of the Ark of the Covenant” taken from Exodus 25:1-22.

**Children's Sunday School** – held after the After-Service Fellowship at 1:30pm.

**Chinese New Year Carry-In Lunch, 2 February** – Do join us for our carry-in lunch next week. If you would like to contribute a dish, please inform Mark/Jonathan.

## MEMORY VERSE

### Last Week

*“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”*

**Ephesians 3:20-21**

### This Week

*“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*

**Acts 10:34-35**

## Pre-cautions for Worship Services held at the church premises:

Dear all,

When attending the church Worship Service and Bible Study, we will continue to observe the following precautions:

- We continue to urge those who feel unwell (especially with Covid symptoms) to stay home and join us online.
- Please place your offerings in the offering box when entering or exiting the church.
- During worship services, please continue to sit with your own households.

To join our online services or for more information, please visit the church website ([www.newlifebpc.org.uk](http://www.newlifebpc.org.uk)) or call the church manse (020 73280869).

With the Lord's blessing,

John Poh & Jonathan Kim,  
Task Force Members