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Comparative Timeline

World History	Chinese History	Hebrew History
3500 B.C. first known writing, in Mesopotamia		
3000 "di" phoneme found in Middle East cuneiform tablets dating to this period.		
3000 Sumerians in southern Mesopotamia build ziggurats		
c.2700-2400 Egypt's Old Kingdom period, era of pyramid-building	c.2700 B.C. beginning of Chinese writing	c.2700-2600 B.C. Tower of Babel
	2697-2599 reign of Huang Di, built altar to Shang Di at Mt. Tai	
c.2500 Development of the Indus River civilization in modern day India and Pakistan	c.2500-2000 Long Shan Culture	
	2357-2258 reign of Emperor Yao	
	2255-2208 reign of Emperor Shun	
	2207-2198 reign of Emperor Yu, tamed a great flood, unified his nomadic people, wrote Yu's Tributes, founder of Xia Dynasty	
	2070-1600 Xia Dynasty	
1792-1750 Babylonian king Hammurabi the Great, during his 20-year reign he issues the famous Law Code of Hammurabi. He may have begun building the tower of Babel	c. 1765-c. 1122 Shang Dynasty	c.2100 Abram (later Abraham) moves from Ur to Canaan
	1766-1754 B.C. reign of Emperor Tang, who offered self as human sacrifice to break drought	c.1900 Joseph sold into Egyptian slavery by his brothers
		c.1800-1400 Israelites in slavery in Egypt
1600-1200 Egypt's Empire period; also time of Israel's sojourn in Egypt		1440 Moses leads Israelites out of Egyptian slavery (the Ten Plagues, crossing of the Red Sea, 40 years of wandering in the desert)
		Moses received God's Law and sacrificial code
c.1200 The Iron Age begins in Europe	c.1200 earliest inscribed oracle bones	c.1200-1020 Period of the Judges

Introduction

WHY THIS BOOK?

This is not the first book to consider the parallels between the ancient beliefs of the Chinese people and the teachings of the Bible and Christian faith. What I discovered in my personal study of this subject, however, has compelled me to write this book, which is a systematic examination of works by other scholars on this topic, along with new revelations and my own insights. As a result of my study, I have been able to reconcile my rich cultural heritage as a Chinese with a priceless personal Savior who has been associated throughout history with the Western world. My hope is that this book will be easy to read and will lead others to understand, through the perspective of Chinese culture, the truth of the Bible and the faithfulness of God. In particular, I hope that my fellow Chinese will see that the God spoken of in the Bible and now worshipped throughout the world is the same God that our ancient forefathers revered.

Faith of Our Fathers is the result of my own discovery of this little-known truth. I am a fourth-generation overseas Chinese from Singapore, and, like most Chinese families of my generation, we held to many traditional beliefs and carefully observed traditional practices and rituals. As a required form of veneration, I faithfully offered sacrifices of fruit and meat at the altars of our ancestors on traditional holidays, such as Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn Festival. Each of us lived in deep fear of a netherworld filled with evil spirits and ghosts of all kinds. At the same time, my family also practiced the wonderful time-tested virtues valued in Chinese culture: respect for elders, modesty, humility, diligence, and commitment to the family. When I discovered the God of the Bible and became a Christian at age 19, I was made to believe that I had abandoned my roots and betrayed a rich Chinese heritage. My Christian spiritual journey of the past three decades has been a joyous one, but always in the far reaches of my consciousness

was an irritant, like a pebble in my shoe: the feeling that I had turned my back on my culture by adopting a foreign faith.

Happily, that irritant was removed a few years ago, after our family moved to Beijing in 1995. Living in the Chinese capital, I had many opportunities to visit the Temple of Heaven, where Chinese emperors traditionally performed the annual sacrifice for good harvest. As I became aware of the fact that the ancient Chinese had a sacrificial system similar to that found in the Old Testament, my interest was piqued. I had heard about the redemptive analogies found in Chinese characters, but that interest was superficial. Like many others, I found these analogies titillating but initially unconvincing. I was intrigued, however, by what I learned about the sacrifice performed at the Temple of Heaven, and I began to pay attention.

As I learned more about the details and history of this sacrificial system, I started examining other aspects of Chinese history and culture. It was as if God had gone before me and had set up signposts or historical markers to direct me on this journey of personal discovery. These were the signposts that I found, left by a faithful God who desires us to know Him:

1. The composition of ancient Chinese characters suggests knowledge of the earliest events of human history as described in the Bible.
2. The Supreme Being venerated by the ancient Chinese as described in historical texts corresponds to the God revealed in the Bible.
3. The Border Sacrifice ceremony performed by the emperor at the Temple of Heaven for more than 4,000 years shows startling and meaningful parallels with the sacrificial system prescribed in the Bible.
4. The judgment of some eminent scholars from the 16th to 19th centuries supports the view that the ancient Chinese venerated a Deity who bears remarkable resemblance to the God of the Bible. These scholars were the intellectual giants of their time and devoted years to the study of classical Chinese historical texts, some of which are no longer available. These great men are still regarded today as among the greatest Sinologists in history and are esteemed for their intellect, scholarship, and virtue.

5. Striking similarities exist between the Hebrew and the Chinese approach to moral truth, particularly as it pertains to man's responsibilities to society and his relationship to the Divine.
6. The ancient rulers of China understood and set forth a godly way of ruling the people. Although the Chinese were not a "chosen nation" in the same sense as Israel, the rulers of China saw themselves as serving Heaven by serving the people. Since they understood their highest responsibility was to a righteous Supreme Being, they felt themselves obligated to rule the nation with goodness and humility.
7. Chinese historical records appear to confirm some key astral events spoken of in the Bible. This mutual corroboration lends credibility to the testimony of both the Hebrew Bible and China's historical records. Perhaps more significantly, the Chinese records were not merely a simple chronology of these cosmological events. They contained interpretations of these events that are astonishingly consistent with the stated intent of the Bible, which is to draw mankind to a deeper understanding of God.

When I put all these pieces together, I became convinced that the ancient Chinese worshipped the Creator of the Universe in a manner similar to that prescribed in the Old Testament. I have now come to the studied conclusion that the ancient Chinese were one of the many original nations dispersed after the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel, described in Genesis 11 of the Bible. Some among these dispersed nations were alienated from God, while others wanted to follow His way. Like the Pilgrims who went to America to preserve the purity of their religious beliefs, the people group that went on to found the Chinese civilization was, I believe, a God-fearing race that desired to worship God appropriately.

These ideas may sound incredible, but I ask you to read this book with an open mind. Each of the "signposts" listed above may not, on its own, be strong enough to make a case, but taken together, they lead to the conclusion that the early Chinese forefathers worshipped God in a manner similar to that set forth in the Bible. As God continued to reveal His truth, these revelations that the ancient Chinese acknowledged were in many ways similar to those found in Genesis, the

first book of both the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures. God's plan of salvation and reconciliation was difficult for the Chinese to fully grasp, as it was for the Jews, but the puzzle was finally made clear with the incarnation of Jesus 2,000 years ago.

I firmly believe that God wanted the Chinese people to know Him and to love Him, and to that purpose, He left many markers or signposts scattered throughout Chinese history and culture. Jesus Christ, the Son of God born into a Jewish carpenter's family, was the One to whom the markers pointed, and He is therefore the fulfillment of the deepest longings of the Chinese people.

The God who made the world and all things in it, ... made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us...

Acts 17:24-27

The Chinese and Jewish peoples share the distinction of having the longest consecutively preserved cultures and histories in the world. China's more than four millennia of history shows what I believe to be the preserving hand of God and reveals an amazingly accurate knowledge of that one true God, whom the Chinese reverentially referred to as Shang Di. The Bible says that God honors those who honor Him. As it is true of individuals, surely it is also true of cultures. The material in this book is presented with a desire to raise the reader's sensitivity to the God who is active and intimately acquainted with the affairs of all human beings. It is my special hope that my fellow Chinese will see that believing in the God spoken of in the Bible is not a betrayal of our Chinese roots. Rather, it is a return to the foundations of our ancient cultural heritage. So, let me invite you to take this first step with me on this journey of discovery, by looking at: Roots.

1

Roots



In a forest, the healthiest trees have the deepest and most extensive root systems. A tree draws nourishment through its roots, and the roots anchor it to the ground, preventing it from toppling over. The larger the tree and the further its branches extend, the deeper its roots must be. Our own roots perform a similar function by providing stability in times of personal crisis and uncertainty; understanding who we are is an important first step to becoming the person we are meant to be. Perhaps this is why interest in genealogy is growing and why many people expend much time and effort on reconstructing their family trees.

Rather like the root systems of the healthy trees, our cultural roots can similarly ground us in today's turbulent and ever-changing world in which globalism is blurring cultural distinctions. By digging deep, we can find significant historical details and patterns to enlighten us, providing us with a greater understanding of the past and in turn of the present. This chapter is the beginning of a journey that will guide us to some amazing facts and startling similarities in the history of the world's two longest surviving civilizations: the Hebrew and the Chinese. These facts, founded on the truth of the past, offer us confidence for the present and a sure hope for the future.

RECORDING HISTORY

In the earliest era of human existence, before mankind learned to write and therefore

Photo at left shows a 500-year-old juniper tree on the grounds of the Altar of Heaven complex in Beijing.



FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

before historical records could be kept, oral traditions were the only means of preserving cultural history. The written record we now possess of actual events that occurred in ancient times came into existence through the following four-step process:

- An event occurred.
- An account of the event was told and retold, repeated so often that it became widely known.
- The account of the event became fixed in the collective memory, so that it was retold in similar ways.
- Eventually, the event was recorded in written form.

Can these orally transmitted traditions and accounts be trusted? We may be inclined to doubt the reliability of oral traditions, an entirely reasonable response given the long passage of time between the beginning of human history and the time when these events were finally committed to writing. Many biblical and Chinese materials presented in this book fall into this category of oral traditions. Rather than dismissing these accounts as being totally unreliable, however, many scholars today acknowledge that extant ancient records contain an essential core of truth, some of which are well substantiated.¹

Myth, Legend, or History?

In considering the validity of ancient tradition, whether it be oral or written, it is necessary first to clarify the terms myth, legend, and history as they are used in this book. Being precise about these distinctions is vital to avoiding confusion about what really happened in history.

Myths are narratives, usually of unknown origin, that ostensibly recount actual events that occurred at an unspecified time in the past. Myths are woven around extraordinary events or circumstances that, so far as human intelligence can tell, could not have happened. There is a myth about ten suns appearing in the heavens during the reign of Emperor Yao 堯, who commanded the great archer Hou Yi 後羿 to shoot nine of the suns out of the skies. Likewise, the equally implausible story of Nüwa 女媧, who patched up a gaping hole in the sky with five colored

1. R.M. Fales, Ph.D., "Archaeology and History Attest to the Reliability of the Bible," *The Evidence Bible*, compiled by Ray Comfort (Gainesville, Fla.: Bridge-Logos Publishers, 2001), p.163. More information on the reliability of the Bible is available online at sites such as this page on "Manuscript evidence for superior New Testament reliability" by Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, <http://www.carm.org/evidence/textualevidence.htm>. (Cited July 2006). The reliability of ancient Chinese writings will be dealt with later in this chapter.



Emperor Yao



Hou Yi



Nüwa

stones, must also be considered a myth. These two stories are well known to the Chinese, but no one considers them to be true historical events. Nothing about Nüwa is recorded before 300 B.C., and none of the other Chinese myths can be traced to an earlier time: all appear similarly late in ancient history. Because of the lack of corroborating evidence, common sense tells us that events such as these likely were not actual historical occurrences.

Legends are embellished or exaggerated stories of real people known to have actually lived or of events that actually happened. Americans are familiar with the story of a young George Washington chopping down a cherry tree and then confessing the misdeed. Although this event may not have actually taken place, there is no dispute about the historical existence of George Washington and the universal recognition of his good character. The same is true of some Chinese stories. The origins of *zongzi* 粽子, the bamboo leaf-wrapped rice dumplings eaten on the day of the Dragon Boat Festival 端午节 (*duanwu jie*), is one example. The story goes that *zongzi* originated from rice balls that people threw into the river to keep fish from eating the body of the beloved imperial advisor Qu Yuan 屈原, who committed suicide when invading forces captured the capital of his country. As with the story of Washington's cherry tree, the legend may not be accurate in every detail, but the historical existence of Qu Yuan and the fact of his love for his country are without dispute.

Therefore, a key distinction between a myth and a legend is that the former involves the outrageously improbable while the latter is grounded in historical



IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH A WESTERN IDEOLOGY THAT IS FOREIGN TO AND INCOMPATIBLE WITH CHINESE CULTURE?



Chinese civilization is generally referred to as having an unbroken history of more than 4,000 years. In this landmark book, Chan Kei Thong brings to light some startling and fascinating revelations of God's "fingerprints" throughout China's long history. With much clarity and accessibility, Thong establishes that the original form of worship in China was monotheistic and was in a manner similar to those found in Genesis, the first book of both the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures.

Indications of God's hand on China include:

- ✦ The Chinese language itself, which reflects knowledge of the first events of human history as recorded in the book of Genesis.
- ✦ The old name the Chinese gave to their country, Shen Zhou (God's country), which is revealing of their consciousness of God's ultimate sovereignty.
- ✦ The annual prayers and sacrifices at the Temple of Heaven, which have extraordinary parallels with the blood covenants in the Old Testament.
- ✦ The Chinese emperors, who were called the "Sons of Heaven" and were regarded as an intermediary between Shang Di and the Chinese people.

You will be intrigued and captivated by Thong's compelling account of how God has had His hand on China, and His involvement in significant events of China's history, thus revealing His desire to receive humanity unto Himself.



Chan Kei THONG is President of LDi, Inc, a U.S. company which provides executive coaching, leadership training, and operates five international schools in China. Born and educated in Singapore, he received his MBA from California State University, and travels extensively for speaking engagements. He and his wife, Lisa, have lived in China for over 20 years. They have three children.

Charlene Fu has been a journalist and editor since 1986. She is a Beijing-based foreign correspondent for the Associated Press, and editor of a Chinese language quarterly magazine published by the U.S. State Department.



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