

Strange Coincidences?

God Created



*IN THE BEGINNING GOD AND
MAN HAD CLOSE FELLOWSHIP.
THIS LEADS TO TRUE HAPPINESS!*

示 + 一 + 口 + 田 = 福

God One Man Garden Happiness, Blessing

In the beginning, God placed man in a beautiful garden, or paradise.
In the garden, God blessed man.
In the garden, God and man enjoyed close fellowship.
But something happened to destroy man's happiness and his close
relationship with God. (Genesis 1:26 - 3:9)



Strange Coincidences?

Fellowship is Lost



And the Lord God gave the man orders, saying, "You may freely take of the fruit of every tree of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not take; for on the day when you take of it, death will certainly come to you."
(Genesis 2:16-17)

*MAN WAS FORBIDDEN TO EAT ONE OF THE TWO TREES -- IF
HE ATE THE FORBIDDEN TREE THE OTHER WOULD BE TAKEN
FROM HIM ALSO.*

木木 + 示 = 禁

Two Trees Command Forbidden



Strange Coincidences?

Fellowship is Lost

Man's guilt of sin separated him from fellowship with God. But God provided a way for man's relationship with Him to be restored through sacrifice. Just as in the story from the Bible, the ancient Chinese people knew that the sacrifice of a lamb brought righteousness and God's favor. (Genesis 4:4)

Coincidence or by Design?

手 + 戈 = 我
Hand + Lance (Spear) = Me

我 + 羊 = 義
Me + Sheep = Righteousness

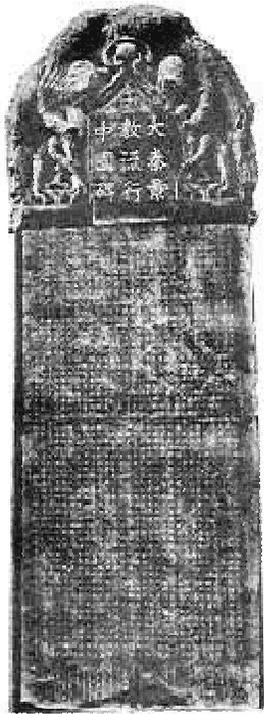
Christian Faith in China

64 AD. According to various traditions, Christianity arrived in China through Thomas, one of Jesus' original twelve followers. Some believe a stone dating back to the Han Dynasty (25 AD – 220 AD) depicts the birth of Jesus.¹ The wise men bearing gifts are on the left, the manger scene is in the center, and assassins are on the right.



638 AD. A stone inscription is carved testifying to an already large, established church in the ancient Chinese capital of Xian and influential in the upper levels of the Tang Dynasty.

¹ Wang Weifan, Professor of Theology at Jinling Theological Seminary in Nanjing. See http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-12/22/content_505587.htm



This stone describes Christian missionaries from Mesopotamia, lists Christian priests, and indicates that there were millions of Chinese Christians by the year 635 AD. Though the claim of ‘millions’ may be exaggerated, this is significant because it indicates that Christianity in China was ancient, and not a ‘western religion.’ In fact, when this stone was discovered in the 1637 by Jesuit missionaries, the emperor could no longer argue against Christianity on the ground that it was a new religion, seeing it was now proved that it had been there a thousand years before.

1215 AD. Genghis Khan’s son Tolui married a Christian woman named Sorkaktani, a Christian. Of her five sons, one was Kublai Khan, who became Emperor of China, another became Emperor of Mongolia and a third became Emperor of Persia. She influenced them heavily. Were it not for a later conqueror named Tamerlane (1500) who persecuted Christians viciously, Christianity would have remained firmly rooted in China, Mongolia, and Persia.

1275 – 1295 AD. Marco Polo found large numbers of Christians in China. Christians were even in places of high influence.

1582 AD. Jesuits led by Matteo Ricci once again initiate mission work in China, introducing Western science, mathematics, and astronomy.

1800 AD. Records indicate 250,000 baptized Roman Catholics, but no known Protestant believers out of an estimated 362 million Chinese.

1884 AD. Sun Ti-Hsiang was baptized in Hong Kong as a Christian and changed his name to Sun Yat-Sen, meaning ‘new day.’ He founded the Revive China Society in 1894 to fight corruption in the Qing Dynasty. Others, including Chinese Christians, joined him. In 1911 the Wuchang Uprising succeeded: Two-thirds of the provinces declared independence. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen was elected the Provisional President of the Republic of China. He implemented democracy and tried to reform the culture and society.

1925 AD. In his will, Dr. Sun Yat-Sen said: 'As a Christian I have wrestled with the devil for forty years. You should do likewise and believe in God.' Previously, he had said, 'Even when I die I want people to know that I am a Christian.'

1949 – present. Indigenous Chinese Christianity has been growing at an unparalleled rate, despite persecution by the communist government. Most of the growth has taken place in the unofficial Chinese house church movement. Independent estimates have ranged from 40 million to 130 million total Christians.

Jesus and the Chinese-American Experience

Coming to America

- Population: ~3.5 million Chinese Americans
 - Chinese: 3rd most common language in the US
- Three waves of Chinese immigration
 - 1820-1882 – less than 20% Christian
 - 1949-1977 – changes in U.S. legislation
 - 1980-present - 66 churches to 800 churches
- Chinese Social Societies
 - Clan or Company, “Kongsi”
 - Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association
 - Tongs

800 churches, yet Buddhism, Daoism, ancestral worship, and Confucianism remain strong in the Chinese American community. Story about Grandma’s “evangelism”

The immigrant church wasn’t the social center like in the Korean American experience. These social societies were the way Chinese immigrants could have a voice, maintain solidarity, and create a social network for jobs, health care, child care, etc.

“Chinese build restaurants, Koreans build churches.” Dad’s arrival, the pastor didn’t pick him up, the restaurant owner did. Everyone knew each other through the restaurants not church. Korean American men need the church to get married, Chinese American men need restaurants. Tell the story about dinner, and how 4th uncle knew Anita’s (fiance’s brother’s girlfriend) dad and arranged Jimmy’s marriage to her when they were working in the restaurant’s together.

Chinese-American Christianity

1. Dissolving of the Tongs
 - Your Chinese is funny
 2. Cultural and Language Centers
 - What ? No Chicken Chow-Mein?
 3. Preservation of Spiritual Norms
 - “I don’t know.” or “Don’t shoot me!”
 4. Social Services
 - If you give them badminton, they will come
 5. Political Advocates
 - Getting rid of the “combat zone”
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1. The 2nd and 3rd wave brought many dialects of people. The Tongs and Benevolent Associations could not maintain solidarity. If you were not from a particular village, town, or city, you were excluded from the Tong. Example: 1980s NYC gang wars. The dissolving of Tongs into CCYL, Fookanese Dragons, Ghost Shadow, etc.
 - a. Churches are still struggling to respond – Example of OCM Chinatown’s effort to draw Chinese American support back to Chinatown, NY for the Fujianese and Fookanese immigrants. They lack jobs, housing, and often have immigration issues. Cantonese Chinese culturally aren’t expected to help non-Cantonese immigrants. The church is teaching the reconciliation of Chinese people groups. Asking wealthier Chinese Americans to move into Seaport area instead of suburbs.
 2. Chinese Schools, Chinese food, similar to Korean Americans, where they can cook and eat their own food with their own people. Don’t belabor the point, it was already highlighted last week.
 3. Matteo Ricci to today, Chinese Americans find Christianity appealing in light of American liberalism and the disintegration of the nuclear family.
 1. Confucianism – traditional family values, respect for elders and teachers, moral grid
 2. Daoism – The three jewels – compassion, moderation, and humility. Exercised through Christianity

3. Buddhism – the value of silence, illustrate with prayer and praise culture shock when first arriving at BC ACF.
4. Social Services
 1. Sports – even when bad things happen, the church responds graciously. Example: Playing basketball late into the night and forgetting to lock the doors or turn off the lights. Or more seriously, people have come to play basketball and stolen things. But, this is a way for us to bring our friends into the church building at least, and get to know other church goers.
 2. Restaurant fun nights – catering to the restaurant schedule, 11pm, 12am events.
 3. You can see how the Church has filled the gap after the breakdown of the Tongs. Especially now, the Tongs have a negative connotation because of the illegal activity and violence. CCCRI's absorption of RIACAA into the basement, like the church absorbing the Benevolent Associations.
5. BCEC advocated to get rid of the red light district in Chinatown, it is now all gone except for one club. Combat zone happened after Government Center, and the red light district saw an opportunity to exploit the language and cultural dissipation. CCCRI supporting Allan Fung. CCCRI and housing Patrick Kennedy.
6. Present estimates - 32% of Chinese Americans are Christian (as of 2009)

Discussion Questions

1. What can you say to a person who says, 'Christianity is a white man's religion'?
2. What if you think Jesus is strange because you're just forgetful? Forgetting your own history has a cost to you.
3. Today, when there are fewer social justice needs for 'my community', what happens? How do/can Christians engage social justice issues today more broadly?
4. What commonalities and differences do you see here at BC between Chinese and Korean Christians? What impact does that have here?