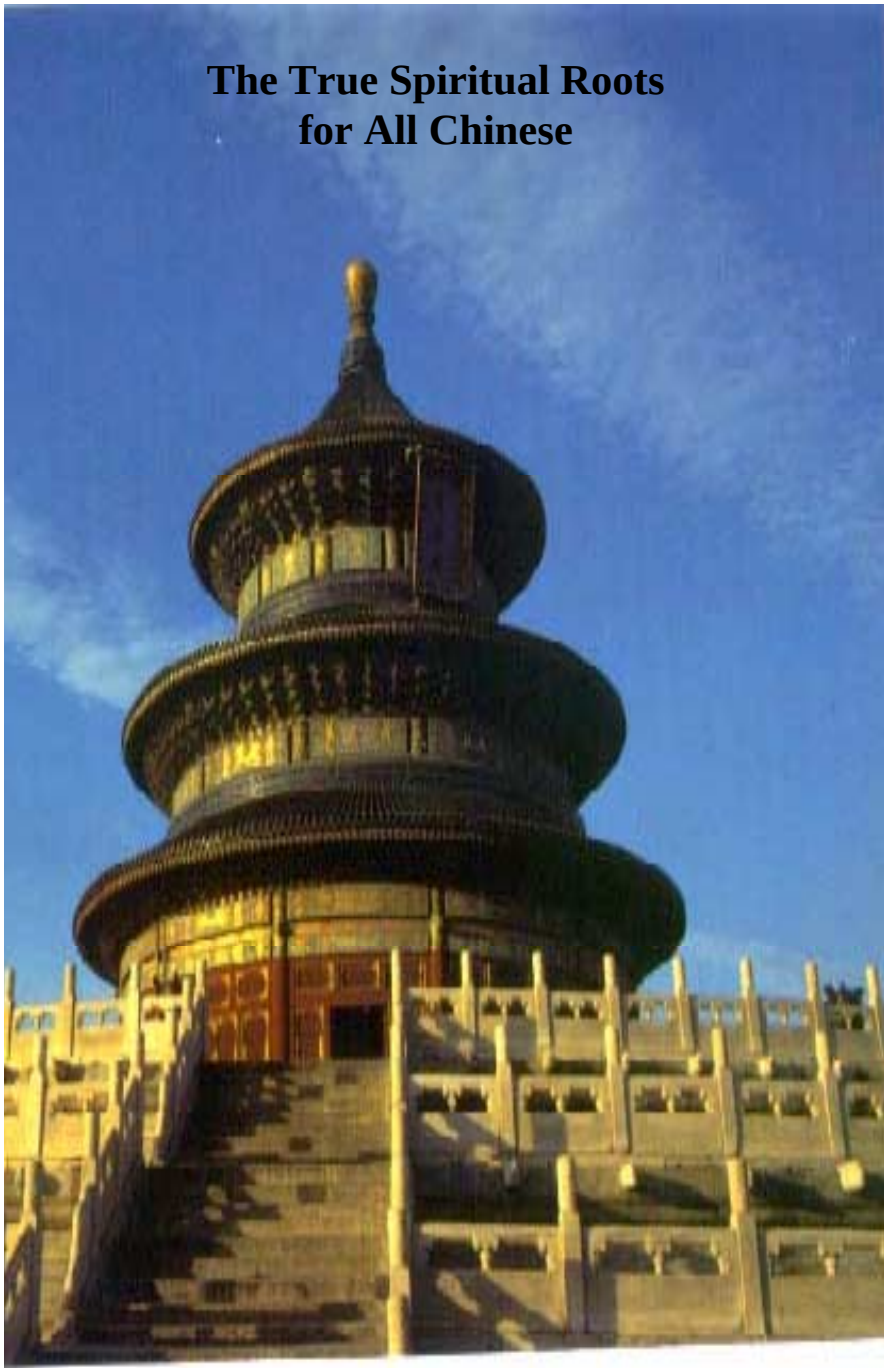

飲水思源

"When you drink water, remember the source"

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Preface

Purpose of this Pamphlet

Are you Chinese? Do you know where your true roots really are: as a Chinese and as a person? Do you know why you are here on this earth and how you got here? Through historical comparison and discourse, this pamphlet explains the true spiritual and religious roots of the Chinese people. Are your true spiritual and religious roots found in Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Atheism, or even Christianity!? You will find out the exciting answers to these questions and more in this pamphlet!

Introduction

All information presented in this pamphlet has been thoroughly researched and documented. A large portion of the information contained in this booklet is taken from several scholarly sources, including:

1) The *Wu Jing* 四書五經, or *Chinese Classics*

For centuries since the time of Confucius, the *Si ShuWu Jing* served as the "bible" of Chinese thought. Until recent times, they were widely studied and revered. Of the five books included in the *Chinese Classics*, the most often referenced to in this pamphlet is the *Shu Jing* (書經, or 尙書), the *Book of History* or *Book of Documents*, compiled by Confucius. Much of what we know about the early beginnings of Chinese civilization comes from the records contained within the *Shu Jing*. Its historical account spans from the legendary period, the earliest times of Chinese history, to the middle of the Zhou/Chou 周 Dynasty.

2.) *The Notions of the Chinese Concerning God and Spirits* by James Legge

This book covers topics concerning Chinese beliefs and concepts concerning the terms for God 上帝 and spirits 神. Within its pages, Legge gives us an account of the Ming emperors, and their reasons for building the Temple/Altar of Heaven 天壇, located in present-day Beijing.

3.) *Emperor of China: Self-Portrait of Kang-Hsi* by Jonathan D. Spence.

This book is a shortened version of the *Veritable Records* for Kang-hsi. The *Veritable Records* are the day-to-day chronological history of the governing of China. These *Veritable Records* for K'ang-Hsi spans a total of about 16,000 pages. Spence has condensed these 16,000 pages into a 200 page text. This book is essentially an autobiography or diary of the life of K'ang-Hsi, the first emperor of the Qing/Ching 淸 Dynasty

4.) The *Holy Bible*

The *Holy Bible* consists of a total of 66 books. The most often referenced to within this pamphlet is the book of *Genesis.* Here we find a record of our roots as human beings. Most pre-Chinese history is taken from this book. Of all the references and resources used to compile this pamphlet, the *Holy Bible* is the only book that claims to be divinely inspired.

Accompanying this pamphlet is a chronological chart that will assist you with the historical events and people described within this booklet.

Creation of the Heavens and the Earth

God created the heavens and the earth. This means that space, matter, and even time itself had a beginning. The history of the universe begins here.

> *"In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth."* Genesis 1:1

The Beginnings of Recorded History:

According to *The World Almanac and Book of Facts (1998 ed., pp. 551)*, recorded history begins approximately 4,000 BC. This matches well with the beginning of recorded history in the Bible, beginning with the account of Adam and Eve. According to God's Word, the Bible, you are specially created for a special purpose!

This means that God has planned a glorious destiny for you! Continue reading to find out more about this exciting destiny!

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7

"And He[Creator God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings. So that they should seek the Lord, in hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He be not far from each one of us." Acts 17:26

"I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well." Psalms 139:14

We see here that from the very beginning, we were a special creation, unlike monkeys or apes.

The Fall of Man

Shortly after their creation, Adam and Eve disobeyed God. As a result of their sin, death and suffering were brought into the world.

"Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Romans 6:23

"For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked…" Jeremiah 17:9

Noah

Many generations after Adam, people became extremely corrupt and violent in thesight of the LORD God. So God decided to send a Global Flood as judgment for man's wickedness. In those days, there was one man by the name of Noah who was righteous in God's sight. God therefore spared Noah's life, and the lives of his family members. God commanded Noah to build an ark large enough to house his own family and to take aboard at least two (male and female) of each kind of land and air animal.

"Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Genesis 6:5-8

"And God said to Noah, The end of all flesh has come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them: and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopherwood..." Genesis 6:13-14

The Global Flood

The Flood that God sent was his righteous judgment on man's wickedness, and it killed all land and air creatures, including all people. Only the animals and people aboard Noah's ark were saved. These people included Noah, his three sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives: a total of eight people. After the flood waters had receded, Noah, his family, and all the animals exit the ark. Upon exiting the ark, Noah first builds an altar and offers burnt sacrifices to the God of Heaven for His mercy, grace, and for saving his entire family. It is noteworthy that the Chinese have a very similar custom of offering burnt sacrifices to the Supreme Being whom they call Shang-ti 上帝. This custom extends to the very beginnings of Chinese civilization. We will take a closer look at this later.

"And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man." Genesis 7:19-21

"So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood." Genesis 7:7

"Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma.." Genesis 8:20-21

Tower of Babel

After the Flood, God commanded man to multiply, spread, and repopulate the whole earth. At this point in human history, mankind spoke only one language, had only one national government, and were united under one culture. Because of man's sinful nature, the people took advantage of this unprecedented unity to rebel against their Creator God. They did so by refusing to spread out and attempted to build a tower, located in ancient Babel, whose top would "reach the heavens." Because of their rebellion, God forced mankind to scatter across the whole earth by confusing their languages. As people began to split up and spread out according to their languages, nations and ethnic groups began to form. The origins of all ethnic groups and nationalities, including the Chinese people, begins here.

"So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth." Genesis 9:1

"Now the whole earth had one language and one speech." Genesis 11:1

"And they said, Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." Genesis 11:4

"And the LORD said, Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city." Genesis 11:6-8

King Yao 堯

Yao was one of the great rulers from China's legendary period. He reigned before the founding of the Xia/Hsia 夏 Dynasty. Yao is best known for having passed on his rulership, not to his sons because they were *"insincere and quarrelsome,"* [1] but to a man named Shun 舜 who was virtuous and morally worthy to rule. King Yao once said: *"Point out someone among the illustrious, or set forth one from among the humble and mean."* [2] So he searched and found a man named Shun, who was *"son of a blind man. His father was obstinately unprincipled; his step-mother was insincere; his half-brother Hsiang was arrogant. Yet, he has been able by his filial piety to live in harmony with them, and to lead them gradually to self-government, so that they no longer proceed to great wickedness."* [2]

King Shun 舜

Shun lived from 2317 to 2208 BC, and was the last emperor of China's legendary period. According to the Shu Jing, Yao offers Shun the throne after Shun proved his moral worthiness. Though Shun wished to decline in favor of someone more virtuous than himself, Emperor Yao could find no such person. Upon ascending the throne, Shun offers sacrifices to Shang-ti 上帝 and to the spirits 神 at the Round Mound.[3] This sacrifice to Shang-ti at the Round Mound is the same type of sacrifice that the Ming and Qing/Ching emperors offers to Shang-ti at the Temple/Altar of Heaven, located in present-day Beijing. We will discuss more about this sacrifice later. Some time later, Shun also presents burnt offerings to Heaven, where a pile of wood was reared on the altar for placing animals and other offerings.

King Yu 禹

Yu, founder of the Xia/Hsia 夏 Dynasty, was appointed to the throne by Shun because of his ability to control China's great flood. He is the ruler credited with

draining off the flood waters of the North China Plain. It is noteworthy that the founder of the Xia Dynasty, *"when his house was at its strength, he sought for able men to honor Shang-ti"* [4] We see that the ancient Chinese believed that honoring Shang-ti was the most important factor for the empire to flourish. Up until the time of Shun, virtue was the most important qualification for determining who was worthy enough to become the next ruler. However, from the Xia Dynasty and onwards, heredity became the determining factor.

Xia/Hsia 夏 Dynasty

Almost all we know about the Xia Dynasty originates from the Shu Jing, The Xia Dynasty lasted from 2183 to 1751 BC. Its decline marked the beginning of the Shang 商 Dynasty. It is noteworthy that throughout their entire history, the Chinese believed that it was ultimately an emperor's moral rectitude and good standing with the eternal God Shang-ti that qualified him for rulership.

Abraham (2165 - 1990 BC)

Before the Tower of Babel, all of humanity spoke only one language. Thus, when God revealed Himself, that revelation was passed to all peoples. After the dispersion at Babel, God no longer spoke directly to mankind as a whole. Instead, God chose Abraham (also known as Abram) to become the father of a new nation to receive His commandments and revelations. Abraham's descendants are known today as the Jewish people. Once God had given the Jewish nation revelation concerning Himself, it was their responsibility to spread God's revelation to the rest of the world. It was the purpose and responsibility of the Jewish nation to become a blessing for the entire world by sharing their special revelation. Abraham knew the one true God by the names *"El Shaddai"* and *"Jehovah."* The Hebrew "Jehovah" is translated as "LORD" in the English Bible, and "El Shaddai" is translated as "God Almighty."

"Now the LORD [Hebrew: Jehovah = "LORD"] had said to Abram: Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those that bless you, and I will curse those that curse you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 12:1-3

Melchizedek

Melchizedek was the Canaanite king and priest of Salem (later known as Jerusalem) during the time of Abram. Melchizedek personally knew a deity named *"El Elyon"*, translated in the English Bible as *"God Most High."* After Abram fought and defeated several kings in battle, he returned to Canaan and encounters Melchizedek. After interacting with Melchizedek, Abram identifies *"El Elyon"* of the Canaanites as being the same God as *"Jehovah."*

"Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; he was the priest of the God Most High [Hebrew: El Elyon]. And he (Melchizedek) blessed him (Abram) and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High [El Elyon], possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High [El Elyon], who has delivered your enemies into your hand..." Genesis 14:18-19

"But Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have raised my hand to the LORD [Hebrew: Jehovah], God Most High [El Elyon], the possessor of heaven and earth." Genesis 14:22

We see that the God of the Bible has revealed Himself to different peoples and nations by different names. Abraham, a Hebrew, knew the one true God by the name *"Jehovah"* while Melchizedek knew Him as *"El Elyon."* This same creator God has revealed Himself to the Chinese people by the name Shang-ti 上帝 and Heaven 天! The God of the Bible did NOT ignore the Chinese for 5,000 years of their history! He has always been there from the very beginning! Continue reading to find out more about this exciting history!

Jacob/Israel

Jacob (also called Israel) was the grandson of Abraham and forefather of the Jewish people.

Nation of Israel Enters Egypt:

Jacob (Israel) and his entire family leave their homeland because of severe famine, and enter Egypt approximately 1870 BC.

Moses

For about 400 years, long after Jacob and his family entered Egypt, the Jews served the Pharaohs of Egypt as slaves. Moses was the man whom God had called to free the Jewish nation from Egyptian bondage. These events began with Moses' vision of the Burning Bush. Here, God reveals himself to Jewish people for the first time by his name *"Yahweh,"* which is simply translated as *"I AM"* in the English Bible.

> *"And God said to Moses, I AM WHO I AM. And He said, Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM [Hebrew: Yahweh = "I AM"] has sent me to you."*
>
> Exodus 3:14

From approximately 1400 BC to 400 BC prophecies concerning the Messiah were recorded in the Old Testament holy scriptures. The Messiah is the one whom God promised that He would send to save and free humanity from the penalty and power of sin.

Shang 商 Dynasty

Also known as the Yin 殷 Dynasty, the Shang Dynasty spanned from 1751 to 1111 BC. Unlike the Xia Dynasty, all of the Shang kings mentioned in the Shu Jing have been verified by archaeology (e.g. the Shang oracle bones). [5] The Supreme God of the Shang people was Shang-ti 上帝. He was the omnipotent Supreme God at the top of the spiritual hierarchy who had control over the rain, harvests, and victories or defeats in battle. At this point in history, we have the oldest existing writing of Chinese characters, which are found in the Shang oracle bones. The oracle bones were usually turtle shells or cow bones engraved with Chinese characters, many of which are still preserved to the present day. We find that Shang-ti was already an all-powerful, all-knowing Supreme Deity in China's earliest beginnings. He was already present in His full glory as the Supreme God above all else.

One of many Shang oracle bones discovered by archaeologists within the last century.

King Wu Yi 武乙

King Wu Yi, who reigned for only four short years, was considered to be one of the most corrupt Shang Dynasty rulers. For over a thousand years of early Chinese history, there was no known record of the Chinese ever fashioning idol images. Wu Yi is attributed with the making of the first idol image in Chinese history. According to Sima Qian 司馬遷 , the Grand Historian of the Han, Wu Yi made an idol of Shang-ti from wood. Then, he played dice with it, causing someone else to play on behalf of the image. When the idol of Shang-ti lost the game, Wu Yi would ridicule and disgrace the image. He would then make a leather bag filled with pig blood, hang it on the idol's neck, and shoot it with an arrow, causing blood to splatter everywhere. He called this sport "shooting at Heaven." In the fourth year of his reign, while hunting between the Ho and Wei Rivers, he was suddenly struck dead by lightning from heaven. The common people recognized this as the just and appropriate vengeance of Heaven, whom Wu Yi had insulted. [6] The Chinese knew that they were never to make an idol of Shang-ti, and they almost never did throughout their 5,000 years of history.

Zhou/Chou 周Dynasty

The Zhou Dynasty began in 1111 BC with King Wen's 文王 conquest of the Shang people, and lasted until 221 BC. At this time in their history, we are told *"great importance was attached to teaching the people about sacrifice."* [7] The Shu Jing explains that the Shang people were defeated because they did not live up to the virtuous standards. The Zhou tribe knew the one true God by the name Tian 天, or Heaven, who had supreme power over the universe and humanity. In their own writings, they regarded Heaven and Shang-ti to be the same deities – two names for the same Supreme God. The Zhou argued that it was useless for the Shang to resist because Heaven willed that the House of Zhou should rule. This doctrine came to be known as Tian Ming 天命, or Heaven's Mandate, and it formed the cornerstone of the Chinese state. Heaven, they said, elected or commanded certain men to be rulers over the tribes of the world, and their heirs continued to exercise this power as long as they carried out their religious and administrative duties with piety, wisdom, and justice. But if the ruling family declined, turned their backs on Shang-ti and the spirits, and abandoned the virtuous ways that had made them worthy to rule, then Heaven would discard them and elect a new family or tribe to be the destined rulers of the world. The Shang kings, they argued, had once been wise and benevolent rulers, and thus enjoyed the full blessing and sanction of Heaven. But in later years, they had become cruel and degenerate. Thus, Heaven called upon the Zhou chieftains to overthrow and punish the Shang to usher in a new dynasty. Sometime

during the early Zhou period, the Zhou rulers also introduced the concept that the emperor was the Son of Heaven 天子. Thus, they argued that the emperor, being the Son of Heaven, was the only one worthy enough to worship Shang-ti. Shang-ti, after all, was too high for the common people to worship. As a result, the common people were forbidden to worship Shang-ti.[8] From that time onward, only the emperor would worship Shang-ti, usually once a year on the winter solstice (around December 22nd), and a few other rare occasions. At this point in history, the common people began to loose touch and forget Shang-ti. Most modern scholars believe that the motivation for these new doctrines was for the Zhou to consolidate political power.

Buddha

Buddha, also known as Siddhartha Gautama, was the founder of Buddhism. He lived from 557 BC to 477 BC in India. He never claimed to be a deity or divinely inspired.

Laozi/Lao Tzu 老子

Laozi was the founder of Taoism and was born in 604 BC. He taught that rather than strive for success, men should pursue a passive inaction, and that all things will come naturally to a successful conclusion. Taoism is not the true spiritual roots of the Chinese people. It was introduced over 1,500 years after the beginning of Chinese civilization.

Confucius 孔夫子

Confucius lived from 551 BC to 479 BC in the Shangtung 山東 Province. He is considered to be China's greatest sage and philosopher. Confucius lived in a period when the Zhou empire was in its decline, and the provinces were fighting for supremacy. During his lifetime, he attempted to restore the glory of the Zhou empire by reviving the moral values of the ancient past. Confucius looked to the golden ages of the sage-kings Yao 堯, Shun 舜, and the early kings of the Zhou Dynasty who ruled the empire with virtue and wisdom, when all was at peace. He revised and compiled several books now contained in the *Chinese Classics* 四書五經, including the *Book of History* 書經, the *Book of Poetry* 詩經, and *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋. Though Confucius himself never claimed to be a diety, Confucian temples are found throughout China and Taiwan today where many Chinese worship him. Though he was a great teacher and philosopher, our true spiritual roots as Chinese are not found through worshipping Confucius.

Mencius 孟子

Mencius was a follower of Confucian thought, and lived from 371 to 289 BC. He helped develop Confucianism.

Warring States Period 戰國

The Warring States period, spanning from 453 BC to 221 BC, was a time of great political, social, religious, and cultural chaos. Disunity within the Zhou empire eventually led to civil war where each province fought for supremacy. During this period, much of the rites and music associated with the worship of Shang-ti 上帝 became corrupted amid the contending states.[9] These rituals finally perished after the State of Qin 秦 emerged as the final victor of the Warring States Period. It wasn't until the Ming Dynasty that many of these rituals associated with the worship of Shang-ti were restored and established once again.

Qin/Chin 秦 Empire

In 221 BC, after more than 200 years of constant warfare, the State of Qin/Chin

The Chinese Terracotta Army, where the tomb of the First Emperor of Qin resides. It was accidentally discovered in March 1974, and is now renowned as the 8th Wonder of the World. It consists of more than 7,000 life-sized tomb figures of warriors and horses buried Qin.

emerges as the final victor, unifying China and putting an end to the Warring States Period. Upon his conquest, the king of Qin assumed the title "First Emperor of Qin" 秦始皇帝. It is from "Chin" 秦 where the terms "China" and "Chinese" are derived. The First Emperor standardized the writing system, currency, weights, and measures. In 213 BC, he issued the infamous order to "Burn the Books" on the advice of his prime minister, Li Si 李斯. Then, in 212 BC, he orders Confucian scholars to be buried alive. He also erected four altars to offer sacrifices to the White, Green Yellow, and Red Ti's 帝, deities probably of Taoist origin. Later, after Liu Bang 劉邦 overthrew the Qin Empire, he founds the Han Dynasty and adopted the same erroneous practice of sacrificing to the four Ti's, and even invented the Black Ti. It is noteworthy that we find absolutely nothing concerning these five false Ti's in the *Book of History*, the *Shu Jing* 書經. It was under Liu Bang, also known as Emperor Wu 漢武帝, that the sacrifice to Shang-ti was altogether neglected. Later scholars and philosophers had difficulty comprehending the worship of these Ti's. They argued that there was only one Heaven. How then could there be five Ti's? As a result, they introduced the idea that there were six heavens, where the five Ti's and Shang-ti lived. The worship of these five false Ti's and the six heavens continued until the time of the Ming Dynasty. It was the Ming who abolished the worship of these five false Ti's and re-established the true worship of Shang-ti as the one Supreme God above all else. [10]

Burning of the Books

In 213 BC, the First Emperor, who abhorred Confucian philosophy, issued the infamous order to "Burn the Books" on the advice of his prime minister Li Si 李斯. It was because of this event that we almost lost the *Chinese Classics* 四書五經. We are very fortunate today that these books were preserved to the present day by the providence of God. We would not be able to present the exciting message contained in this pamphlet had the *Chinese Classics* been lost in the fires of Qin.

Buddhism Enters China from India

Buddhism enters China in 67 BC from India. Buddhism is a religion of Indian invention. It is not of Chinese origin, and therefore cannot contain the true spiritual roots of the Chinese people.

Plato & Aristotle

Plato lived from 427 BC to 347 BC, and Aristotle lived from 384 BC to 322 BC. They are considered to be among the greatest philosophers of the Greek world. In their writings, they refer to the one true God as *"Theos"* and *"Logos."* The early Christians of the first century AD realized that this was the name by which God had revealed himself to the Greeks. Thus they adopted these terms as legitimate names for the one true God. In fact, the New Testament was originally written in Greek, and uses the terms *"Theos"* and *"Logos"* as the name for the one true God of creation. The Greek *"Logos"* is translated as "Word"(with a capital W) in the English Bible, and *"Theos"* is translated as simply "God."

"In the beginning was the Word[Greek: Logos = "Word"], and the Word [Logos] was with God [Greek: Theos = "God"], and the Word [Logos] was God [Theos]." John 1:1

Jesus Christ Comes to Earth

Jesus Christ is the promised Messiah, the savior that God promised to send to save mankind from the penalty and power of sin. Though he himself was sinless, Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross for our sins because the penalty for sin is death. The God of the Bible is both a God of love and justice. Therefore, He must execute justice by punishing sin. Jesus took those penalties upon his own shoulders so that we might not have to pay it ourselves. He resurrected from the dead on the third day, and ascended back to heaven never to die again. If we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior into our hearts, and put our faith on Him, we shall be saved from the condemnation of sin. We therefore need not suffer the eternal penalties of sin in Hell after we die.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:1,10,14

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9

"And Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die..." John 11:25

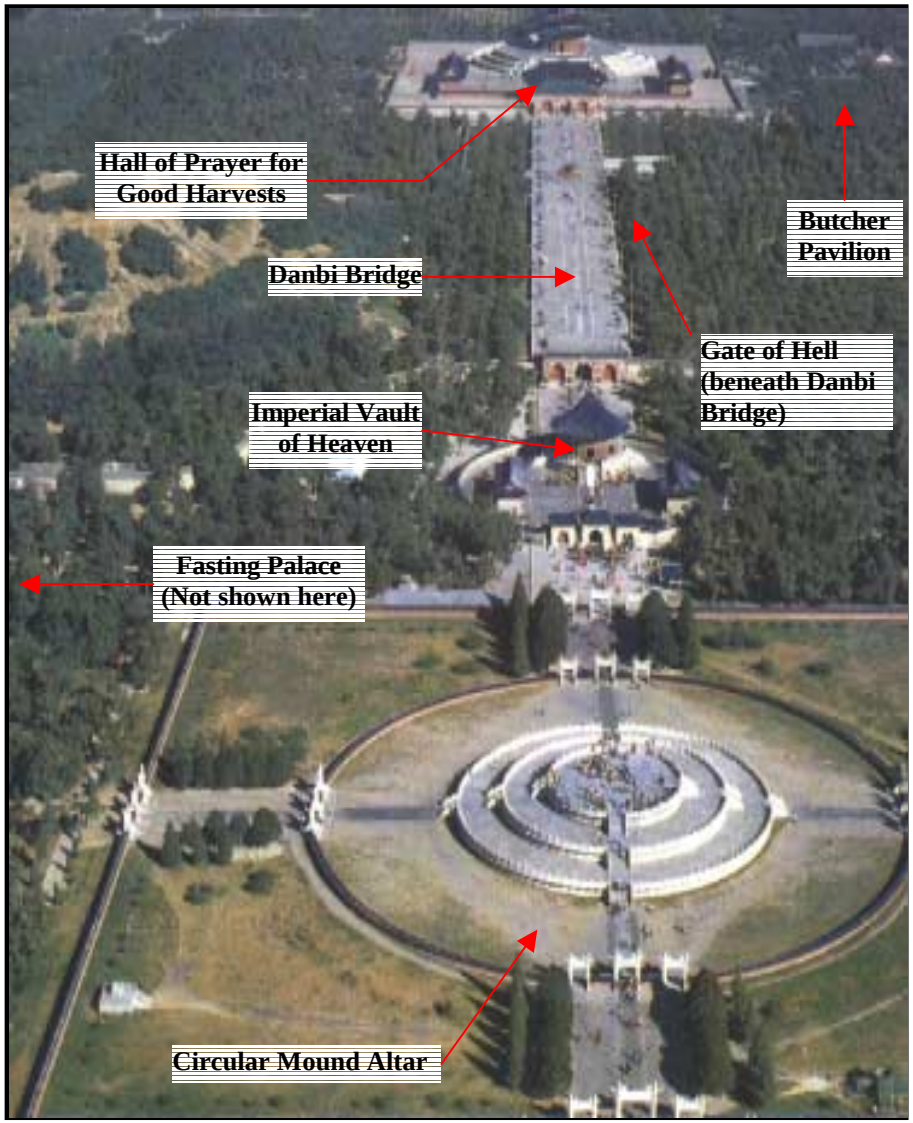
"For God so loved the world, that He gave is only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Ming 明 Dynasty

The Ming Dynasty lasted from 1368 to 1644 AD. From the Han 漢 Dynasty until the end of the Yuan 元 Dynasty, the emperors of China sacrificed to the five Ti's and six Heavens, rituals that began with the corruption of the First Emperor of Qin. However, the Ming desired to return to their true religious and spiritual roots. So they appointed two committees at the beginning of their dynasty to investigate topics pertaining to the corruption of the rites and music. After they had completed their research, the Ming family altered the rituals that had been transmitted from preceding dynasties. They abolished the sacrifices to the six heavens and to the five Ti's. These sacrifices, they maintained, had been added to the original rituals performed by the Xia, Shang, and early Zhou, which knew of only two great border sacrifices -- those to Heaven and earth. It was the Ming who researched their ancient beliefs and restored the emperor's worship of Shang-ti, as close as they could, to its original form under the Xia, Shang, and early Zhou emperors. Based on their research, they then built the Temple/Altar of Heaven for the worship of Shang-ti (i.e. Heaven) and attempted to re-establish the rituals and music as close to its original form as possible.[11] We can learn a lot about what the ancient Chinese believed by Shang-ti by examining these rituals.

Temple/Altar of Heaven 天壇 Built

Located in southeast Beijing stands the monument called “Tian Tan” 天壇, built specifically for the emperor's worship of Shang-ti. Although in English we know this monument as the "Temple of Heaven," the word "tan" (altar = 壇) means "altar," not "temple" (temple = 廟). Therefore, we can more accurately refer to it as the “Altar of Heaven.” This monument consists of several distinct structures that can be seen in the accompanying aerial photograph.



Aerial photograph of the Temple/Altar of Heaven complex, with its main structures labeled.

Notice the Circular Mound Altar 圜丘壇, Fasting Palace 齋宮, Danbi Bridge 丹陛橋, Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests 祈年殿, Imperial Vault of Heaven 皇穹宇, and Butcher Pavilion 宰牲亭. Among all the sights and wonders in China, only the Great Wall rivals the Temple of Heaven in popularity as a tourist attraction.

After its completion in 1420 AD, the Altar of Heaven was repaired and expanded many times in the following 300 years. The two main builders were Emperor Jia Jing 嘉靖 and Emperor Qian Long 乾隆. It was here that the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties offered sacrifices to worship Shang-ti once a year on the winter solstice (approximately December 22). So important was this sacrifice that Confucius himself, when asked about the meaning of the "great sacrifice" 大 祭, replied: *"I do not know. He who knew its meaning would find it as easy to govern the kingdom as to look on this; -- 'pointing to his palm.'"* [12] We see that the meaning of these sacrifices to Shang-ti had already been lost by the time of Confucius. The rituals remained in tact, but its meaning was lost. The good news is that because Shang-ti is also the same God of Christianity, we can re-discover the meaning of these Heaven-worshipping rituals by comparing them with the revelation within the Bible!

Photo of the Circular Mound Altar

The annual Heaven-worshipping ceremony began at the Hanqiu Tan 圜丘壇, or Circular Mound Altar. The origin of this altar extends at least as far back as the time of King Shun 舜, who offered sacrifices to Shang-ti at the Round Mound upon ascending the throne. It was the Ming who had embellished this Round Mound into the Circular Mound Altar for offering sacrifices to Shang-ti. Every year on the winter solstice the emperor would come in person to this particular altar to pray and present sacrifices to Shang-ti. The sacrifice usually consisted of a *"calf-bull, of unmixed colour and without flaw."* [13] It was here that the emperor reported to Heaven of the year's good harvest and the country's prosperity, and asked Shang-ti to grant prosperity and peace for the coming year. But why was the sacrifice supposed to be of unmixed color and without flaw? And why must it be offered upon an altar?

*"Then Noah built an **altar** to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and **offered burnt offerings on the altar**. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma.."* Genesis 8:20-21

*"If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the **cattle**, even of the herd, and of the flock. If his offering be a **burnt sacrifice** of the herd, let him offer a male **without blemish**…and he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him"* Leviticus 1:2-4

*"And he said to Aaron, 'Take for yourself a young bull as a sin offering and a ram as **a burnt offering, without blemish**, and offer them before the LORD."* Leviticus 9:2

We see here that the historical account found in the Holy Bible agrees amazingly well with the account found in Chinese history! In fact, even the Chinese word for sacrifice 犧 bears witness to this truth.

牛	+	羊	+	秀	+	戈	=	犧
bull, ox		lamb		beautiful (unblemished)		spear head		sacrifice

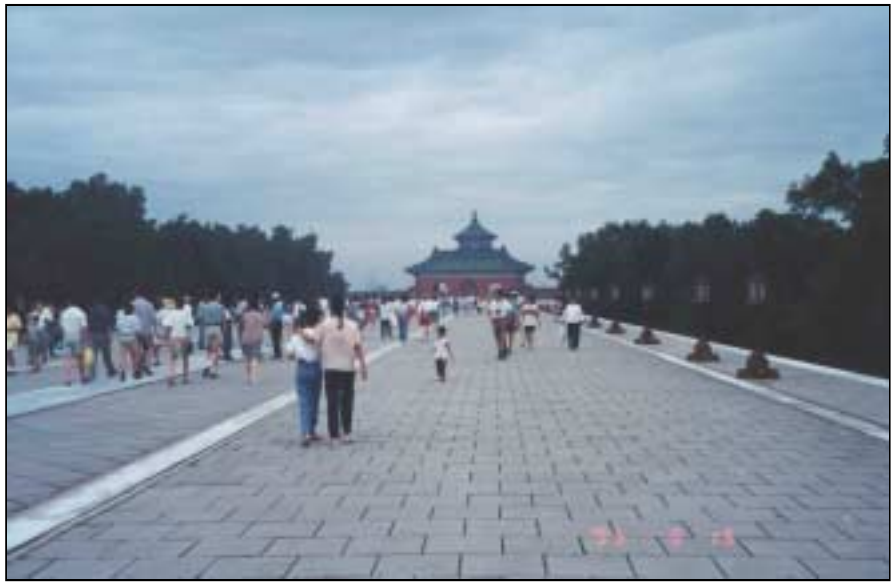
These practices of offering burnt sacrifices began with Noah's sacrifice to the God of Heaven upon exiting the ark after the Flood. The Bible clearly states that the sacrificial animals used in the burnt sacrifices symbolize Jesus Christ. The sacrifice was usually either a lamb or an ox, and must be without flaw to symbolize Jesus' perfection and sinless life.

*"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold**, the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!'"* John 1:29

The sacrificial animals the emperor presented to Shang-ti at the Circular Mound Altar were sent to the Butcher Pavilion 宰牲亭 through an arched gateway called the Gate of Hell 鬼門關. This gate was originally called the "gate allowing cattle"

The Gate of Hell, an arched gateway located beneath the Danbi Bridge

走牲道, and is located beneath the Danbi Bridge 丹陛橋. It became known as the Gate of Hell because all animals that went through it must die. None of the sacrificial animals were allowed to walk on the Danbi Bridge. Perhaps the Chinese had some understanding that these sacrificial animals symbolically took the penalty for their sin. According to the Bible, Jesus Christ was the sinless sacrifice who took the penalty of our sins by suffering and dying a horrible death on the cross. On the third day, he rose from the dead never to die again! If we only would believe in Him, we shall be saved, and have eternal life.



A close up view of the Danbi Bridge.

"But God commends his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

The Zhai Gong 齋宮, or Fasting Palace, was located near the West Gate. It was at the Zhai Gong that the emperor fasted for three days before he was allowed to worship Heaven. In addition to fasting, he also abstained from recreation, women, and handling of criminal cases. The emperor must demonstrate his humility and pure heart toward Shang-ti before he can worship him. Shang-ti would accept nothing less than the emperor's whole heart, mind, and soul.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." Psalms 66:18

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Matthew 5:8

Front Entrance to the Fasting Palace. This is the place where the emperor fasted for three days before worshipping Heaven.

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." Mark 12:30

Exterior view of the Imperial Vault of Heaven

The Imperial Vault of Heaven 皇穹宇, located directly north of the Circular Mound Altar, was used exclusively to house the sacred tablets of Shang-ti and the ancestors of the royal family. Inside the Imperial Vault of Heaven, the throne at the center served as the shrine of Shang-ti. A tablet with Chinese and Manchu inscriptions engraved in gold is found erected upon this throne. These inscriptions read 皇天上帝, or "Heavenly Sovereign Shang-ti", with its equivalent translation in Manchu on the left side of the tablet.

Although the Manchurians were a small minority in China, they somehow managed to overthrow the Ming 明 Dynasty to establish the Qing/Ching 清 Dynasty. The Manchurians were not Chinese, yet they acknowledged Shang-ti as the Supreme God of the Universe! We see here that Shang-ti is not only the Supreme God of the Chinese, but also the Supreme God of all peoples!

Interior view of the Imperial Vault of Heaven. The throne and tablet of Shang-ti are erected at the center.

"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?" Jeremiah 32:27

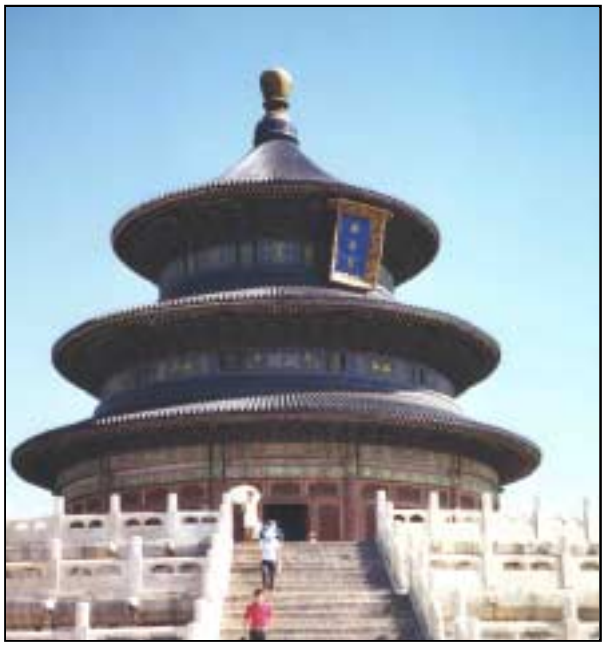
On either side of the throne are lesser shrines of the ancestors of the royal family. The emperor came to the Imperial Vault of Heaven on the day before the Heaven-worshipping ceremony to read prayers for blessing and burn incense, respectfully inviting all his ancestors to worship Heaven before the official ceremony.

Close up view of Shang-ti's tablet, with the inscriptions 皇天上帝 **engraved in Chinese and its equivalent in Manchu on the left**

Photo of a Firewood Stove used to offer burnt sacrifices to Heaven.

Outside the Gate to the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, stands a Fanchai Stove 燔柴爐, or Firewood Stove. It was here that the emperor would burn the sacrifices that his officials had prepared and slaughtered for him in the Butcher Pavilion. Displayed on top of this stove is a reproduction of a sacrificial ox. The practice of offering burnt sacrifices stems at least as far back as the time of Shun 舜, who also presents burnt offerings to Heaven after ascending the throne. But where did Shun get the notion of offering burnt sacrifices to Heaven?

"If any man of you bring an offering unto the LORD, you shall bring your offering of the ***cattle****, even of the herd, and of the flock. If his offering be a* ***burnt sacrifice*** *of the herd, let him offer a male* ***without blemish****…and he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him"* Leviticus 1:2-4



Exterior of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvest

The Qiniandian 祈年殿, or Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, was also known as Qigutan 祈穀壇, or the Altar of Prayer for Good Harvests. The entire structure was built one layer upon another without a single brick or nail. It is renowned as an architectural masterpiece around the world. The Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests was the sacred place where the emperors of the Ming and Qing dynasties prayed to Shang-ti for good harvests. Because China was an agricultural society for thousands of years, fruitful harvests were vital to the prosperity of the people. The emperor openly acknowledged his dependence on the Heavenly Sovereign Shang-ti for his country's agricultural prosperity. According to the Bible, one way God reveals himself to other nations is through good harvests.

"We also are men with like passions with you, and preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God, who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in it: Who in times past allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. ***Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons****, filling our hearts with food and gladness."* Acts 14:15-17

Although in the past, God allowed all nations to *"walk in their own ways,"* yet he did not turn his back on them. He still gave us rain and fruitful harvests. It was Shang-ti who has provided for our needs throughout our five thousand years of Chinese history! It is Shang-ti who has made the Chinese the most populous people in the world!

Interior of the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, resides no idols but the throne of Shang-ti. It is the only temple in all of China without an idol.

Inside the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests resides no idols but the throne of Shang-ti at the center. On top of this throne, the emperor placed the tablet of Shang-ti, which he took from the Imperial Vault of Heaven. It is the only known temple in all of China without an idol.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image (i.e. idols)" Exodus 20:4

How did the Chinese know that Shang-ti accepted only blood and burnt sacrifices? How is it possible that the Chinese have a custom of offering sacrifices to Shang-ti so similar to the Jews' sacrifices to Jehovah? How did the Chinese know that they were NOT to make an idol of Shang-ti? We see here that the historical account found in the Holy Bible agrees amazingly well with the account found in Chinese history! These practices began with Noah's sacrifice to the God of Heaven upon exiting the ark after the Flood. The God of Christianity did NOT ignore the Chinese for 5,000 years of their history! He has always been there, and has always left a witness of Himself that we might come to know Him personally

"Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent: because he has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained. He has given us assurance unto all men, in that he has raised him from the dead."
Acts 17:29-31

In times past, God has allowed us to *"walk in our own ways"* by pursuing false religions, vain philosophies, and idol worship. He has overlooked our ignorance in the past, but now is commanding us to repent and receive his only begotten son Jesus Christ as our personal savior.

"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold, ***the Lamb of God*** *who takes away the sin of the world!'"* John 1:29

Even the Chinese character for righteousness 義 shows us the truth of how we can be made righteous in the sight of God.

羊 + 我 = 義

lamb I, me righteousness

In the Chinese word righteousness 義, notice that the character for lamb 羊 is on top of the character for me 我. It is the lamb over me that makes me righteous! It is the lamb covering over me, and especially my sins, that makes me righteous!

"That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10:9-10

Qing/Ching 清 Dynasty

The beginning of the Qing Dynasty, which lasted from 1644 to 1911 AD, marked the end of the Ming Dynasty. The Qing Dynasty was the last dynasty in Chinese history. The Qing emperors left the rituals and music associated with the annual sacrifice at the Altar of Heaven virtually unchanged from the Ming.

Emperor Kang Xi/Kang-hsi 康熙

Emperor Kang Xi of the Qing Dynasty was considered one of the greatest and wisest emperors in Chinese history. He reigned from 1661 AD to 1722 AD. During his reign, a controversy raged among the missionaries concerning the correct rendering of the Christian God into the Chinese language. The Jesuits wanted to use the terms Tian 天 and Shang-ti 上帝 for the one true God. The Dominicans and Franciscans objected. In fact, even one of the Catholic Bishops by the name Maigrotasserted asserted that Heaven was a material thing and should not be worshipped. This controversy was eventually presented to emperor Kang Xi, who issued the following statement:

> *"I had agreed with the formulation the Peking fathers (i.e. Jesuit Missionaries) had drawn up in 1700: that Confucius was honored by the Chinese as a master, but his name was not invoked in prayer for the purpose of gaining happiness, rank, or wealth; that worship of the ancestors was an expression of love and filial remembrance, not intended to bring protection to the worshiper; and that there was no idea, when an ancestral tablet was erected, that the soul of the ancestor dwelt in the tablet. And when sacrifices were offered to Heaven it was not the blue existent sky that was addressed, but* ***the Lord and Creator of all things****. If the ruler Shang-ti (上帝) was sometimes called Heaven, Tien (天), that had no more significance than giving honorific names to the emperor."* [14]

Later, when Kang Xi was pressured by missionaries to accept baptism, *"he always excused himself by saying that he worshipped the same God as the Christians."* [15] We see that Emperor Kang Xi understood that both Shang-ti 上帝 and Heaven 天 to stand for the one Supreme Being, the same God of Christianity!

Conclusion

From our brief study of Chinese history, we can clearly see that the Supreme God Shang-ti 上帝 has always left himself a witness from the very beginning to the present day so that we might know come to know him personally. He has never ignored nor forsaken the Chinese people. He is the sovereign God who has created all things, and has made the Chinese the most populous people group in the world. God must love the Chinese very much! Throughout our history, we drank from the river of God's abundant blessing. The famous Chinese proverb 飲水思源 literally means *"when you drink water, remember the source"*. We have taken Shang-ti's abundant blessings, but we have neglected and forgotten him.

Man was created to worship and have fellowship with his Creator God. When we cannot or will not do that, we will very quickly find other things to fill the spiritual void in our lives, but they never can. Only the one true Creator God, Shang-ti, can fill the deepest voids in the human heart!

Throughout our history, we have pursued vain philosophies and religions through Buddhism, Taoism, Atheism, ancestral worship, agnosticism, idol worship, and the mere worship of human beings whom we made into gods. We have turned our backs on our true roots in Shang-ti. It is time to acknowledge the true source of all our blessings in the eternal God Shang-ti. Will you return to your roots now in the Eternal God, Shang-ti? Shang-ti sent His one and only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for your sins and mine. God did not ignore the Chinese for 5,000 years of their history. Christianity is not a western religion. Will you repent of your sins and put your faith in the Supreme God Shang-ti, who has always watched over the Chinese people for thousands of years?

We must each personally receive Jesus Christ as the Savior and Lord of our lives to be saved from the penalties of our sins. Shang-ti knows your heart, and is not

concerned with your words as much as He is concerned with the attitude and sincerity within your heart. Jesus said:

> *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me."*
>
> Revelations 3:20

Jesus Christ is asking you to open the door of your heart. Will you repent of your sins now and ask Christ to come into your life? The following is a suggested prayer:

> *"Heavenly Father, I realize now that you are the true source of all the blessings in my life. I never thanked you as I should have. I've never worshipped you as the one true God of all creation. Yet you still blessed me. I realize that my sin deserves to be punished. I believe that you sent your only begotten son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I know I am a sinner. I believe you died for me and resurrected from the dead. I trust in you alone as my Savior. I open the door of my heart and life to receive you as my Savior and Lord. Thank you for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. In Jesus' Name, Amen."*

Does this prayer express the desires of your heart? If so, please pray this prayer right now. If you have prayed this prayer, or would like someone to lead you through this prayer, please contact us. Our contact information is provided below.

email: Chinese4Jesus@yahoo.com
web: http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~davytong/publications/

If you are interested in learning more about your Chinese roots, about our church, or about how to become a Christian, please give us a call, or come and visit! Thank you for taking the time to read this pamphlet.

You may also contact the person or church group that gave you this pamphlet at the following address:

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