

03-1999 15011999

(A) Who was Prophet Muhammad's favourite wife?

1. Xian Sheng asked the followers whether they knew the name of Nabi (Prophet) Muhammad's favourite wife and her ordinal position in listings.
2. Brother Lim Leo Chee mentioned Aisha, and Brother Woo Kwai Moon mentioned No. 6. (Aisha bint Abi Bakr is actually third in almost all listings.)
3. He then inquired about the total number of wives. Some sources suggested there were thirteen wives. (The status of Rayhana bint Zayd and Maria al-Qibtiyya is debated, as they are sometimes regarded as concubines.)
4. Xian Sheng asked why, if Aisha was Prophet Muhammad's favourite wife, he had subsequent wives. He considered this an interesting topic for discussion.
5. Since they were already familiar with the name of Prophet Muhammad's favourite wife, he asked for their reasons why they believed Aisha became his favourite.
6. Xian Sheng asked them to guess why Aisha was the favourite wife. Their guesses included:
 1. Aisha was more beautiful,
 2. She was a spinster,
 3. She understood him better than the others,
 4. She got along well with him,
 5. She was the youngest of the lot.
7. Regarding the guess that Aisha understood Prophet Muhammad better, Xian Sheng quoted, "It takes a woman to understand a man."
8. Xian Sheng stated that Prophet Muhammad had twelve wives. He expressed satisfaction that some individuals present knew all their names.
9. Despite this, he wanted more opinions on why Aisha was regarded as the favourite wife and requested further suggestions. Subsequent guesses included:
 1. Aisha's obedience,
 2. Her faithfulness,
 3. Her skill in entertaining him.
10. One person guessed that Aisha was a good cook, leading Xian Sheng to remark, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach."

(B) Can Xian Sheng have more than two wives?

1. Xian Sheng mentioned that he found it interesting to read about a Prophet of GOD. He then referred to Chapter 31 of Muhammad H. Haykal's book, *The Life of Muhammad*.
2. Xian Sheng clarified that in Islam, a man is permitted to have up to four wives at once, provided he treats them all with equal fairness and justice.
3. However, Prophet Muhammad could have more than four wives. In fact, he had twelve.
4. Based on this understanding, Xian Sheng joked, "So, I can also have more."
5. However, the male followers could only have two¹. Since the male followers could have two, he joked that he could have more than two.
6. He reasoned that because Prophet Muhammad permitted Muslims four wives while allowing himself more, Xian Sheng's allowance of two for Baitiangong followers naturally implied a similar privilege for himself to have more.
7. Xian Sheng then read aloud **Chapter 31: The Prophet's Burial.**
"Muslim Shock at the News of Death."
"It was therefore in 'A'ishah's quarters, while his head lay in her lap, that the Prophet—May GOD's peace and blessing be upon him—chose the company of GOD on High. When this happened, 'A'ishah laid his head down on a pillow and joined the other women of the house who rushed to her upon hearing the news and began to cry in bereavement and sorrow."
8. *"The Muslims at the mosque were taken by surprise by the sudden noise. In the morning, they had seen the prophet and were convinced his health was improving so much that Abu Bakr, it will be remembered, sought permission to go and visit his wife at a place at al Sunh."*
9. Xian Sheng spelt the location: A-L-S-U-N-H.
10. He explained that Abu Bakr took leave from Prophet Muhammad because he was convinced that Prophet Muhammad was getting well.
11. He then asked, "So what happened?"
12. Instead of getting well, Prophet Muhammad died in the lap of Aisha.
13. Xian Sheng posited that Prophet Muhammad died on Aisha's lap was probably the reason for the speculation that Aisha was his favourite wife.
14. He went on to explain that Aisha removed the Prophet's head from her lap and placed it on a pillow. He restated that this action was probably the actual reason that fueled the speculation.
15. Xian Sheng explained that in Islam, Muslim husbands have to treat all their wives equally and fairly. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad could ill afford to have a favourite wife, as favouritism is forbidden.

¹ This is based on the 9th Spiritual Guidelines on Sexual Relationships, which states that monogamy is the best, but permits one mistress.

16. He reemphasised that since Prophet Muhammad died on Aisha's lap, that was the only reason the Islamic writers could think of to make that speculation. Additionally, she was his primary caregiver during his illness.²

(C) You must never swear in GOD's name.

1. Xian Sheng questioned whether the early Muslims could believe that their Prophet had passed away. He urged the followers to explore, listen, and learn about this subject.
2. **“‘Umar Belies the News”**
"Upon hearing the news and hardly believing it, ‘Umar returned quickly to the Prophet’s quarters." Xian Sheng emphasised that 'Umar could hardly believe Prophet Muhammad had passed away. Upon arrival, he went straight to Muhammad’s bed, uncovered it, and looked at his face for a while. He perceived its motionlessness and deathlike appearance as a coma from which he believed Muhammad would soon emerge."
3. *"Al Mughirah tried in vain to convince ‘Umar of the painful fact. ‘Umar, however, continued to believe firmly that Muhammad did not die. When al Mughirah insisted, ‘Umar said to him in anger, “You lie.””*
4. Xian Sheng explained that Al Mughirah—a prominent companion of Prophet Muhammad and a shrewd politician—attempted to convince ‘Umar of Muhammad’s death. ‘Umar, however, cautioned him against proclaiming it.
5. *"The two went to the mosque together while ‘Umar was proclaiming at the top of his voice, “Some hypocrites are pretending that the Prophet of GOD—May GOD’s peace and blessing be upon him—has died."*
6. ‘Umar stated, *"By GOD, I swear."* Xian Sheng paused in his reading and instructed the followers to remember his words: *"You must never swear in GOD's name."*
7. *"By GOD I swear that he did not die; that he has gone to join his Lord, just as Moses went before. Moses absented himself from his people fourteen consecutive nights and returned to them after they had declared him dead. By GOD, the Prophet of GOD will return just as Moses returned. Any man who dares to perpetrate a false rumour such as Muhammad’s death shall have his arms and legs cut off by this hand."*
8. *Following 'Umar's threats to cut off the arms and legs of anyone proclaiming Muhammad's death, Xian Sheng stated that no one would dare voice such a claim.*
9. *"At the mosque, the Muslims heard these proclamations from ‘Umar—they were shocked and stupefied. If Muhammad truly died, woe unto all those who saw him and heard him, who believed in him and in the GOD WHO sent him a conveyor of true guidance and religion. Their bereavement would be so great that their hearts and minds would break asunder. If, on the other hand, it were true that Muhammad had not died but had gone to join his Lord, as ‘Umar claimed, that was reason for an even greater shock. The Muslims should then await his return which, like that of Moses, would be all the more reason for wonder."*

² The Prophet had requested to stop the rotating schedule among his wives, spending his final days permanently in Aisha’s house.

10. *"The Muslim crowds sat around 'Umar and listened to him, inclined as they were to agree with him that the Prophet of GOD did not die. At any rate, they could not associate death with the man whom they had beheld in person only a few hours before and whose clear and resonant voice they had heard pray and invoke GOD's mercy and blessing. Moreover, they could not convince themselves that the friend whom GOD had chosen for the conveyance of HIS divine message, to whom all the Arabs had submitted, and to whom Chosroes and Heraclius were also soon to submit, could possibly die."*
11. Xian Sheng explained that the initial Arab converts to Islam struggled to accept Muhammad's death. He also noted that, at the time of the Prophet's death, approximately 5% of the Arabian Peninsula's Arab population had embraced Islam.
12. *"They could not believe that a man could die who had shown such power as had shaken the world for twenty consecutive years and had produced the greatest spiritual storm of history."*

(D) Were stringent laws like Hudud practised during Prophet Muhammad's time?

1. *"The women, however, were still beating their faces and crying at Muhammad's house, a sure sign that Muhammad had really died. Yet, here in the mosque, 'Umar was still proclaiming that Muhammad had not died; and that he had gone to join his Lord as Moses had done; that those who spoke of Muhammad's death were hypocrites who would suffer the cutting of their arms and necks by Muhammad upon his return."*
2. He explained that 'Umar's threat was serious and repeated the lines: *"that those who spoke of Muhammad's death were hypocrites who would suffer the cutting of their arms and necks by Muhammad upon his return."*
3. Xian Sheng asked the followers whether they thought that the cutting off of limbs was prevalent during Muhammad's time. He mentioned that the book would strongly suggest it was, in simple, straightforward English. He read aloud the text again and emphasised the words *"by Muhammad."*
4. This meant that Prophet Muhammad ordered the chopping of hands and necks.

(E) If you're going to die anyway, you'd better fight.

1. Xian Sheng explained that in Baitiangong, followers are not allowed to chop off others' hands (this implies that there are no rules or laws in Baitiangong to discipline or punish errant followers) except in the course of defending themselves.
2. Xian Sheng quoted the tragic incident during the 15 May 1998 riots at Plaza Sentral Klender (Yogya Klender Mall), East Indonesia, where certain people torched and burned the mall, killing 250 people trapped inside. In this example, when people are cornered, he said, "For goodness' sake, go out and fight."
3. At the very least, they should go out and attack those who are holding the torch. He questioned why the 250 people sat idly inside the mall and allowed themselves to be burned to death.
4. Xian Sheng criticised their inaction that led to their deaths as, "That's not the way to die; that's the death of cowardice."
5. If there were no means of escape for them, they should have organised among themselves and sent a few to attack. He believed that out of the thousand mob members gathered outside the mall, only a few were actually pouring the petrol and lighting the torches. He estimated those truly involved to be around 10 to 20 people.
6. Xian Sheng explained that out of the 250 people, they could have selected 10% among them to form an offensive front. The mall was stocked with whisky, brandy or kerosene. He explained that they could have created Molotovs using these, with fuses made from strings or cloth inserted into the bottles.
7. They would light the fuse and throw the bottle at the perpetrators, trying to burn them instead. He added that homemade Molotovs are dangerous as the bottle would break and explode when thrown.
8. He added benzene, which is normally found in thinners at hardware shops, to the list of potential Molotov bottles.
9. Xian Sheng asked why anyone would sit around waiting for the mob to burn them alive, instead of fighting back. He specifically mentioned the stupid Indonesian Chinese.
10. He reminded the followers who pray to the CREATOR and fear nothing except GOD that they must not do what those ethnic Chinese Indonesians did. Come what may, they must defend their lives and not allow harm to come to them without a fight.
11. Xian Sheng clarified that when a person or group of people armed with parangs comes at them, they could run away. However, if they are cornered, then they must fight their way out.
12. Xian Sheng concluded by saying that one can only kill in self-defence. In Baitiangong, it is not permissible to order someone to kill or to cut off the hands or legs of others.
13. Returning to the Muslim world of Prophet Muhammad's time, punishment by amputation was common.

14. Nevertheless, even at present, someone in authority is ordering the Sunnis and Shi'as to kill each other. He recalled an incident where Shi'a Muslims went to a Sunni mosque on motorcycles, fired their machine guns at those praying inside the mosque and then drove off.
15. Xian Sheng explained that we do not use violence but arrange to sit down, talk and find a way to settle conflicts amicably. Killing is not a good way to resolve any issue. This applies whether one is Muslim, Hindu or of any other religion.
16. He reiterated that when one is cornered, then they are allowed to defend themselves, even by killing.
17. To a question posed by Xian Sheng about whether they would prefer to sit and be burned to death or go out fighting, one follower replied, "If we're going to die anyway, better fight." Xian Sheng liked this answer.
18. He said that Baitiangong followers must be like that: If you're going to die anyway, you'd better fight. He reminded them not to be like the 250 ethnic Chinese Indonesians in the mall, surrounded by so many things that could have been used to defend themselves. Tools like parangs and knives, and throwables like whisky, brandy, turpentine and even acids, were available on the shelves.
19. He repeated his belief that not all among the thousands of mob members gathered outside the mall were holding torches. He estimated around 10 were holding torches while others were pouring petrol. If someone from the mall had rushed out, killed the one holding the petrol can and doused the one holding the torch, that would have been a better way of going out while fighting.
20. If the 10% selected among the 250 people were to die defending, they should be replaced by another 10% and form a perimeter of 100 yards (91.44 metres). If anyone with torches entered the perimeter, they would be attacked.
21. Xian Sheng explained that when a single person armed with a parang attacks a large group — for example, a crowd of 50 people — they have the potential to cause more harm than in a one-on-one attack. This is because the attacker can swing the parang repeatedly and strike multiple people nearby, making it easier to injure several mob members at once.

(F) What is the significance of Surah Al-Imran 3:144?

1. *"What would the Muslims believe? As they recovered from their severe shock, hope began to stir within them in consequence of 'Umar's claim that Muhammad was to return, and soon they almost believed their own wishes. Their wishful thinking had apparently painted for them the sky a beautiful blue."*
2. **"Enter Abu Bakr"**
"As they wavered between believing 'Umar or the indubitable meaning of the women's crying, Abu Bakr heard the news and returned from al Sunh. He looked through the door of the mosque and saw the Muslims being addressed by 'Umar, but he did not tarry there. He went straight to the quarters of 'A'ishah and asked for permission to enter. He was answered that there was no need that day for permission. He entered and found the Prophet laid down in a corner and covered with a striped cloth."

3. *"He approached, uncovered the face, and kissed it, saying, "How wholesome you are, whether alive or dead!" He then held the Prophet's head in his hands and looked closely at the face which showed no sign whatever of death's attack. Laying it down again, he said, "What would I not have sacrificed for you! The one death which GOD has decreed for you, as for any other man, to taste, you have now tasted. Henceforth, no death shall ever befall you." He covered the head with the striped cloth and went straight to the mosque where 'Umar was still proclaiming loudly that Muhammad had not died."*
4. *"The crowds made a way for him to the front, and as he came close to 'Umar he said to him: "Softly, O 'Umar! Keep silent!" But 'Umar would not stop talking and continued repeating the same claim. Abu Bakr rose and made a sign to the people that he wished to address them. No one could have dared impose himself upon the congregation in such manner except Abu Bakr, for he was the ever-trustworthy friend of the Prophet, whom Muhammad would have chosen from among all men. Hence, it was natural that the people hastened to respond to his call and move away from 'Umar."*
5. **"Muhammad Is Truly Dead"**
"After praising and thanking GOD, Abu Bakr delivered the following brief address: "O Men, if you have been worshipping Muhammad, then know that Muhammad is dead. But if you have been worshipping GOD, then know that GOD is living and never dies."
6. *"He then recited the Qur'anic verse Surah Al-Imran (3:144):"*

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَى أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ

- "Muhammad is but a prophet before whom many prophets have come and gone. Should he die or be killed, will you abjure your faith? Know that whoever abjures his faith will cause no harm to GOD, but GOD will surely reward those who are grateful to HIM."*
7. Xian Sheng explained that the verse from Surah Al-Imran, 3:144, recited by Abu Bakr, was entirely positive. If one were to renounce their faith after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, it would not harm GOD in any way. However, GOD would reward those who are grateful.
 8. Abu Bakr stressed the importance of GOD rather than 'Umar, who instead focused on the Prophet Muhammad.

(G) Early Muslims started dividing even before Prophet Muhammad's body was buried.

1. *"Realising that the people were withdrawing from him and going to Abu Bakr, 'Umar fell silent and listened to Abu Bakr's speech. Upon hearing Abu Bakr recite the Qur'anic verse, 'Umar fell to the ground. The certainty that the Prophet of GOD was truly dead shattered him. Beguiled by 'Umar's speech, the people listened to Abu Bakr's statement and to the Qur'anic verse as if it was given to them for the first time. They had forgotten that there was any such revelation. Abu Bakr's stark words dissipated all doubt and uncertainty. His Qur'anic quotation reassured the Muslims that their holding fast to GOD, Who never dies, would more than compensate for Muhammad's passing."*
2. Xian Sheng explained that Abu Bakr reminded them to hold fast to the CREATOR rather than cling only to the memories of Prophet Muhammad.
3. **"Further Thoughts on Muhammad's Death"**
"Did 'Umar exaggerate when he convinced himself that Muhammad had not died, when he tried to cause the people to believe likewise? The answer must be in the negative. In like vein, men of science tell us that the sun will continue to rise in the morning until a certain day when it will explode and disappear. Does anyone of us accept such a claim without entertaining a doubt as to its validity and truth? Does not everyone of us ask himself, "How could the sun explode, disappear, and go away, the sun by whose light and warmth everything in the world lives? How could it explode and disappear and the world continue thereafter even for one day?" And yet, was the light of Muhammad any less brilliant than that of the sun or his warmth and power any less strong than those of the sun?"
4. *"The sun is source of much good. But was not Muhammad the source of as much and equal good? The sun stands in communion with all beings. But was not the soul of Muhammad equally in communion with all being? Does not his blessed memory still fill the whole universe with its grace and beauty? No wonder then that 'Umar was not convinced that Muhammad could have died, and in truth, in one sense Muhammad did not die and will not die."*
5. *"Having seen him that morning when he went to the mosque and, like all other Muslims, having thought that the Prophet had recovered his health, Usamah ibn Zayd returned to al Jurf with those of his colleagues who had accompanied him to Madinah in search of reassuring news. He ordered the army to prepare to march to al Sham; but before the army proceeded forth, it heard the news of the Prophet's death. Usamah ordered the army to return to Madinah. He hung his command flag on the door of 'A'ishah's quarters and decided to wait until the Muslims recovered from their shock."*
6. **"At Banu Sa'idah's Court"**
"In fact, the Muslims were wondering which step to take. After hearing Abu Bakr and knowing for certain that Muhammad had died, they dispersed. Some of the al Ansar gathered around Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah in the courtyard of Bani Sa'idah. 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, al Zubayr ibn al 'Awwam, and Talhah ibn 'Ubaydullah gathered in the house of Fatimah; and the Muhajirun, together with the Usayd ibn Hudayr as well as Banu 'Abd al Ashhal, gathered around Abu Bakr."

7. *"Soon a man came to Abu Bakr and 'Umar to inform them that al Ansar were gathering around Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah. The informant added that the two leaders should go out and reorganise Muslim leadership before the division of the Muslim community got any worse. Since the Prophet of GOD—May GOD's peace and blessing be upon him—was still laid out in his house and unburied, it was surely unbecoming that the Muslims begin to divide among themselves."*
8. Xian Sheng pointed out that the early Muslims started dividing into factions even before the body of Prophet Muhammad was buried.
9. *"'Umar pleaded with Abu Bakr to go with him immediately to al Ansar and see what they were doing. On the way thither, they were met by two upright and trustworthy Ansar men who, when questioned, remarked that al Ansar were contemplating separatist ideas. When the two Ansar men questioned Abu Bakr and 'Umar in turn and learned from them that they were going to al Ansar's gathering, they advised them not to go but to try to settle the Muhajirun's own affairs. 'Umar was determined to go and Abu Bakr was not difficult to persuade on this point."*
10. *"They came to the courtyard of Bani Sa'idah and found that al Ansar had gathered around a man wrapped up in a blanket. 'Umar ibn al Khattab asked who the man was, and he was told that that was Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah suffering from a serious sickness."*
11. *"'Umar and Abu Bakr, joined at this moment by a number of Muhajirun, took their seats in the assembly. Soon, a speaker rose and addressed al Ansar in the following words after praising GOD and thanking Him: "We are al Ansar—i.e., the helpers of GOD and the army of Islam. You, the Muhajirun, are only a brigade in the army. Nonetheless, a group of you have gone to the extreme of seeking to deprive us of our natural leadership and to deny us our rights.""*
12. Xian Sheng explained that the two groups that fought for the right of leadership were the Muhajirun and the al Ansar.³

(H) No preparation leads to a power struggle for leadership.

1. *"Actually, this complaint had always been on al Ansar's lips, even during the Prophet's lifetime. When 'Umar heard it being voiced again, he could hardly restrain himself. Indeed, he was ready to put an end to this situation once and for all by the sword, if needed."*
2. *"Fearing that harsh treatment might aggravate rather than improve matters, Abu Bakr held 'Umar back and asked him to act gently. He then turned to al Ansar, saying:"*
3. *"O men, we, the Muhajirun, were the first men to convert to Islam. We enjoy the noblest lineage and descendance. We are the most reputable and the best esteemed as well as the most numerous of any group in Arabia. Furthermore, we are the closest blood relatives of the Prophet."*

3 The Muhajirun were the early Muslims who emigrated — made Hijrah — from Makkah to Madinah to escape persecution. The word Muhajirun means emigrants. They left behind their homes, families, and wealth for the sake of their faith and were among the Prophet's closest supporters. The Ansar were the local inhabitants of Madinah who welcomed the Muhajirun and supported them. The word Ansar means helpers. They offered shelter, shared their resources, and defended the new Muslim community.

4. *"The Qur'an itself has given us preference. For it is GOD—May He be praised and blessed—Who said, 'First and foremost were al Muhajirun, then al Ansar, and then those who have followed these two groups in virtue and righteousness.'"*
5. *"We were the first to emigrate for the sake of GOD, and you are literally 'al Ansar', i.e., the helpers. However, you are our brethren in religion, our partners in the fortunes of war, and our helpers against the enemy. All the good that you have claimed is truly yours, for you are the most worthy people of mankind."*
6. *"But the Arabs do not and will not recognize any sovereignty unless it belongs to the tribe of Quraysh. The princes shall be from among us, whereas your group will furnish the viziers."*
7. *"At this, a member of al Ansar became furious and said: "Rather am I, the experienced warrior! On my arm every verdict shall rest. And my verdict is that the people of Quraysh may have their prince as long as we, too, may have our own."*
8. *"Abu Bakr repeated his proposition that the princes of the Muslims must be of the Quraysh whereas their viziers must be of al Ansar."*
9. *"Taking the hand of 'Umar ibn al Khattab as well as that of Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al Jarrah, who were sitting on either side of him, Abu Bakr said, "Either one of these two men is acceptable to us as leader of the Muslim community. Choose whomsoever you please."*
10. Xian Sheng summarised the above by stating that immediately after Prophet Muhammad's death, two groups tried to seize the leadership of the Muslim community.
11. Xian Sheng asked the followers why this happened. He replied, saying, "There was no preparation."
12. In Baitiangong, we have the Council consisting of the Button Holders, Elders, and ACCs to ensure continuity. Therefore, there shall not be any fight for leadership of the Spiritual Movement.
13. At least we have laid down the foundation for the continuity of the Spiritual Movement, unlike Prophet Muhammad in his time, where there were clearly two specific orders, as stated in the book.

(I) Abu Bakr took over as the successor to the Prophet Muhammad.

1. ***"Nomination of Abu Bakr to the Caliphate"***
"At that moment, all the men present began to talk at the same time, and the meeting itself was on the verge of disintegration. With his usual clear and loud voice, 'Umar said: "O Abu Bakr, stretch forth your hand and I will give you my oath of fealty. Did not the Prophet himself command you to lead the Muslims in prayer? You, therefore, are his successor. We elect you to this position. In electing you, we are electing the best of all those whom the Prophet of GOD loved and trusted."
2. *"'Umar's words touched the hearts of the Muslims present, as they truly expressed the Prophet's will up to and including the last day of his life. On that day they had witnessed his insistence that Abu Bakr lead the prayer even in his presence. Thus, the difference between*

al Muhajirun and al Ansar was dissolved, and members of both camps came forward to give their oath of fealty."

3. **"Abu Bakr's Election"**

"On the following day, as Abu Bakr took his place at the pulpit of the mosque, 'Umar ibn al Khattab rose before the congregation and said, after offering due praise to GOD:

"Yesterday, I presented to you a novel idea. I drew it neither from the Book of GOD, nor from any memory I have of the Prophet of GOD. It just occurred to me that the Prophet of GOD would continue to lead us in this world forever and that he would survive us all. But now I know better."

4. *GOD has left us His Holy Book, the Repository of His "Prophet's guidance. If we hold closely to it, GOD will surely guide us to the same felicity to which He guided His Prophet. GOD has consolidated you together under the leadership of the best man among you, of the companion of the Prophet of GOD—May GOD's peace and blessing be upon him—who was blessed by GOD with the honor of the Prophet's company in the cave when the Makkans were following in close pursuit. Rise and give him your oath of fealty."*

5. *"All the men rose and pledged their loyalty to Abu Bakr. That was the public bay'ah, following the private bay'ah in the courtyard of Bani Sa'idah."*

6. Xian Sheng explained that Abu Bakr became the leader of the Muslim community after the death of Prophet Muhammad. Xian Sheng praised Abu Bakr as a modest man. The book stated under the subheading:

"Inaugural Speech of the First "Rashidiin" Caliph"

"Thereafter, Abu Bakr rose and delivered a speech which may be regarded as one of the most illustrious embodiments of wisdom and sound judgment."

7. He continued reading the rest of the paragraph. *"After thanking GOD and praising Him, Abu Bakr said: "O Men! Here I have been assigned the job of being a ruler over you while I am not the best among you. If I do well in my job, help me. If I do wrong, redress me. Truthfulness is fidelity, and lying is treason. The weak shall be strong in my eyes until I restore to them their lost rights, and the strong shall be weak in my eye until I have restored the rights of the weak from them. No people give up fighting for the cause of GOD but GOD inflicts upon them abject subjection; and no people give themselves to lewdness but GOD envelops them with misery. Obey me as long as I obey GOD and His Prophet. But if I disobey GOD's command or His Prophet's, then no obedience is incumbent upon you. Rise to your prayer, that GOD may bless you."*
8. Xian Sheng concluded by saying that this was how Abu Bakr managed to gain the confidence of the majority and took over the leadership of the Muslim ummah.

(J) The debate on the burial site for Prophet Muhammad.

1. Xian Sheng, prior to reading the next paragraph, asked whether Prophet Muhammad had given clear instructions for a definite burial site for himself.
2. ***"The Quest for a Burial Site"***
"Throughout the Muslims' disputing of the question of succession at the courtyard of Bani Sa'idah and in the mosque, the Prophet's remains were lying on his bed surrounded by his next of kin."
3. Xian Sheng paused to highlight that the body of Prophet Muhammad remained unburied for quite some time after his death.
4. *"After the election of Abu Bakr, the people came to the Prophet's house to prepare for his funeral and burial. There was disagreement as to where the Prophet was to be buried."*
5. *"Some Muhajirun advised that he ought to be buried in Makkah, his native town, in the proximity of his own relatives."*
6. *"Others advised that he ought to be buried in Jerusalem where the Prophets were buried before him. The latter was certainly a baffling view considering that Jerusalem was in the hands of the Byzantines, and the relations between them and the Muslims were most hostile, especially since the Mu'tah and Tabuk campaigns. Indeed, an army which the Prophet himself had mobilized and placed under the leadership of Usamah was supposed to fight them and avenge the Muslim defeat in those campaigns."*
7. *"At any rate, the proposals to bury the remains in Makkah or in Jerusalem were both rejected."*
8. Xian Sheng explained that the early Muslims were considering where to bury the body. Jerusalem was rejected, as the rulers of Jerusalem at that time were the Byzantines, who were against the Muslims.
9. [Skipped by Xian Sheng] *"The Muslims resolved to bury him in Madinah, the city which gave him shelter and assistance and which was the first one to raise the banner of Islam. Once this decision was made, they proceeded to look for a proper location for burial. Some advocated burial in the mosque where he used to address the people, preach the faith, and lead them in prayer."*
10. *"They thought that the most appropriate place was either the very spot of ground where the pulpit stood or the spot next to it. This opinion, however, did not meet with approval."*
11. *"A'ishah had related that in his last days, whenever his pain increased, the Prophet used to uncover his face to curse such people as had taken the grave of their prophets as places of worship. Abu Bakr solved the issue when he proclaimed that he had heard the Prophet say that prophets should be buried wherever they die. This opinion carried the day."*
12. Xian Sheng explained that when Abu Bakr stated that he had heard Prophet Muhammad say that prophets should be buried wherever they die, everyone accepted his word.
13. ***"Preparing the Body for Burial"***
"Washing the Prophet's body before burial was performed by his next of kin, by 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, al 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al Muttalib and his two sons, al Fadl and Qutham, as well as by

- Usamah ibn Zayd. Usimah ibn Zayd and Shuqran, the Prophet's client, poured the water while 'Ali washed the body, covered as it was by Muhammad's nightgown. It was decided that the Prophet's body should not, under any circumstance whatever, be fully exposed."*
14. *"As they performed their washing, contrary to what is usual in such cases, the body emitted beautiful smells, so that 'Ali said continually: "By GOD, what would I give for you! How sweet you are and how wholesome you are, both alive and dead!"*
 15. *"Some western Orientalists sought to explain this fair scent emitted from the body of the Prophet by calling it the result of the perfume which he used so lavishly, remembering that he once declared it one of the good things he truly loved in this world."*
 16. *"When the washing was completed, the Prophet's body was wrapped in three shrouds: two made in Suhar and the third in Hibarah in Yaman. When this operation was completed, the body was left where it was and the doors were flung open for the Muslims to enter from the mosque, to take a last look at their Prophet, and to pray for him. Undoubtedly, they emerged deeply moved and conscious of their terrible bereavement."*
 17. **"The Funeral Prayer"**
"The room was practically full when Abu Bakr and 'Umar entered the room and joined the Muslims in a funerary prayer for the Prophet. The prayer was performed without a leader."
 18. *"When it was over, Abu Bakr began to pray aloud, saying: "Peace, mercy, and blessings of GOD be upon you, O Prophet of GOD. We witness that the Prophet of GOD and His apostle conveyed the message entrusted to him by his Lord and that he exerted himself and fought in His cause until GOD gave victory to His religion. We equally witness that the Prophet of GOD and His apostle fully performed his promise and that he commanded us to worship none but GOD alone who has no associates." At the end of every phrase, the Muslims responded together, "Amen, Amen."*
 19. *"When this prayer was complete, the men left and the women and children took turns taking a last look at the Prophet. One and all, every man, woman and child, emerged from that room torn with sorrow and crushed by a sense of bereavement for the loss of the Prophet of GOD, the Seal of His apostles. They were full of apprehension that some calamity might befall the religion of GOD in the future."*
 20. Xian Sheng explained that even before the burial of Prophet Muhammad, the Muslims were already thinking about the caliphate. This was why there are so many divisions—more than 70 groups—within the Muslim community.
 21. Xian Sheng asked whether the followers knew which group Malaysian Muslims belonged to. He stressed that we must know the answer, saying, "You cannot say you don't know."
 22. The followers replied that it was a branch of Sunni.
 23. Xian Sheng asked what would happen if the Shias were to come to Malaysia. Would they be imprisoned?
 24. He believed that the Shias would be allowed to come, but if they were to preach and try to convert the Sunnis to Shia, then there would be conflict.

(K) Thank those who abjure Baitiangong.

1. "A Grave Moment of History"

"No man can today reconstruct this thirteen-centuries-old scene in his imagination without being filled with awe and reverence. The anguishing view of this body laid down in a corner of the room which was to become a grave the following day and which until the day before reverberated with Muhammad's vitality, mercy, and light, filled the hearts of the faithful mourners with apprehension. It could not have been otherwise. For, there lay the man who had called men to truth, to the path of righteousness and had struck for them the highest example of goodness, mercy, courage, chastity, purity, and justice."

2. "As the crowds of Muslims passed by his bier despondent, disheartened, and dispirited, every man, woman, and child among them saw in the body that lay motionless before him his own father, brother, friend, trustworthy companion, Prophet, and Apostle of GOD. To recall that hour is surely to reconstruct a pathetic scene. Even as he writes about it, this author is seized by the grip of its terror and can hardly overcome the consequent anguish."

3. "Confusion of the Men of Little Faith"

"It was natural for the Muslims to be apprehensive of the future. Indeed, as soon as the news of the Prophet's death spread in Madinah and reached the Arab tribes in the surrounding area, Jews and Christians sprang to their feet, hypocrisy took a new lease on life, and the faith of many weak Arabs fell into confusion."

4. "The Makkans sought to abjure Islam, and they did so to the extent of instilling fear in 'Attab ibn Asid, their governor appointed by the Prophet to rule them. Suhayl ibn 'Amr, following the news of the Prophet's death, stood up in their midst and said: "The Prophet's death shall increase the power of Islam and strengthen it. Whoever attacks us or abjures our cause, we shall strike with the sword."

5. Xian Sheng explained that the Makkans sought to renounce Islam and abandon their faith. Suhayl ibn 'Amr warned them that the faithful Muslims would strike and kill the faithless Muslims with the sword.

6. Xian Sheng reminded the followers that if anyone were to leave Baitiangong, we should thank them instead. He said that there would be fewer problems for us, as we would not have to attend their funeral or kneel down to pray for them.

7. Therefore, there is absolutely no reason to use the term 'strike with the sword', as we should thank them instead.

8. "O People of Makkah! You were the last to enter Islam. Do not, therefore, be the first to desert it. Have faith that GOD will bring you final victory just as the Prophet of GOD—May GOD's peace and blessing be upon him—has promised you." Only then did the Makkans change their minds."

9. Xian Sheng ended this paragraph by explaining that if the Makkans had not changed their mind about renouncing Islam, they would have been struck down with the sword.

(L) Burial dilemma.

1. Xian Sheng explained that they faced another dilemma: how to dig the grave for Prophet Muhammad's remains.
2. There were no specific instructions left by the Prophet for dealing with his remains after his death. In Baitiangong, we have the Baitiangong way of Obsequies, which specifically encourages cremation and scattering the ashes into the sea.
3. **"The Prophet's Burial"**
"The Arabs knew two ways of digging graves. The Makkans made their graves flat at the bottom while the Madinese made them curved. Abu 'Ubaydah ibn al Jarrah was the gravedigger for the Makkans, and Abu Talhah Zayd ibn Sahl was gravedigger for the Madinese."
4. Xian Sheng clarified that Makkan gravediggers dug their graves with a flat bottom, while the Madinese gravediggers dug theirs with a curved bottom.
5. Xian Sheng asked a rhetorical question—whether the followers preferred a flat or curved-bottom grave.
6. *"The Prophet's relatives could not choose between them."*
7. Xian Sheng explained that Prophet Muhammad's relatives could not decide, as some wanted a flat bottom while others wanted a curved one. There was no unanimity in their decision.
8. *"The Prophet's uncle, al 'Abbas, sent two men to call the two gravediggers for a consultation. Only one was found and could respond to the call, and that was Abu Talhah, the Madinese. He therefore was commissioned to dig a grave for the Prophet of GOD as he knew best."*
9. *"When evening came and the Muslims had taken leave of the body of their Prophet, Muhammad's relatives prepared for the burial. They waited until a quarter or a third of the night had passed before proceeding with the burial. In the grave, they spread out a red mantle that once belonged to the Prophet, and the men who had washed the body lowered it to its last repose. They built over it a bridge with bricks and then covered the grave with sand."*
10. *"A'ishah said: 'We did not learn of the burial of the Prophet of GOD—May GOD's peace and blessing be upon him—until midnight or later'; and so did Fatimah report. The Prophet was buried on Tuesday night, 14th of Rabi' I, two days after his death, in the year 10 A.H."⁴*
11. Xian Sheng explained that 10 AH refers to the Muslim (Hijri) calendar. Therefore, the Gregorian year 1999 corresponds to 1419 AH in the Islamic (Hijri) calendar.
12. *"A'ishah lived thereafter in her quarters, next door to the Prophet's grave, contented with her proximity to this holy precinct. When Abu Bakr died, he was buried in the immediate vicinity of the Prophet's grave, as was 'Umar ibn al Khattab thereafter. It is related that 'A'ishah used to visit the grave room without a veil until 'Umar was buried therein, i.e.,*

4 Majority believes the Prophet passed away on Monday, 12 Rabi' al-Awwal 11 AH.

during the time it contained only the grave of her father and husband. But after 'Umar's burial, she entered the room only when fully veiled."

13. Xian Sheng explained that Aisha did not wear a veil covering her face when she visited the graves of Prophet Muhammad and Abu Bakr, who were her husband and father, respectively. It was only after 'Umar's grave was also placed there that Aisha started wearing a veil when visiting the graves. This is because 'Umar was not closely related to her. In the olden days, it was not universally required for women to wear a veil.
14. Xian Sheng read the entire paragraph again. He highlighted that Abu Bakr was Aisha's father. She only started wearing a veil after 'Umar's remains were buried there too.
15. Xian Sheng concluded the chapter "The Prophet's Burial" by stating that all three—Prophet Muhammad, Abu Bakr, and 'Umar—were buried in Aisha's quarters.
16. Prophet Muhammad was buried where he died, as proclaimed by Abu Bakr, who said that he had heard the Prophet say that prophets should be buried wherever they die. Xian Sheng stated that he was sure Abu Bakr and 'Umar did not die there, but elsewhere, and their bodies were buried next to the Prophet, in the place where Aisha was staying.
17. Returning to his first question—why Aisha was said to be Prophet Muhammad's favourite—the strongest reason for that was because Aisha truly took care of the Prophet, to the extent that he died with his head on her lap.

(M) They That Take the Sword...

1. Xian Sheng said he did not understand the author Haykal's justification when he said, "Islam Has Never Taken Anything by the Sword", because earlier, the author mentioned Prophet Muhammad and 'Umar chopping off limbs and necks with swords.
2. *"There remains the last sentence of Washington Irving's statement. It is that by which the West indicts us with that which it had better indict itself—namely, the sword. The crime is indeed that of the Western world, not ours. It is its stain of shame, the sinister seed which will finally destroy its false pride and civilization. Irving says: "That the crescent has waned before the cross, and exists in Europe where it was once so mighty, only by the sufferance or rather the jealousy of the great Christian powers, probably ere long to furnish another illustration, that 'they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'"*
3. *"“They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” This verse of the New Testament Irving directs accusingly toward Islam in the name of Christianity. How strange! Perhaps Irving might have had some excuse had he hurled his accusation a hundred or so years ago when the imperialism of the West (as we like to call it), or of Christendom (as Irving likes to call it), had not reached the terrible degree of greed and covetousness, of conquest and aggression by the sword which it has reached today."*
4. *"When Field Marshal Allenby captured Jerusalem in 1918 in the name of the Allies, he made this terrible proclamation standing on the steps of the Dome of the Rock: "Today the Crusades have come to an end." Doctor Peterson Smith, in his book on the life of Jesus, wrote, "This capture of Jerusalem was indeed an eighth Crusade in which Christianity had finally achieved its purpose." And it may even be true to say that the capture of Jerusalem*

was not a purely Christian effort, but that it was equally the effort of the Jews, who used the Christians in order to realize the old diaspora dream of making the Land of Promise a national home for the Jews."

(N) Islam Has Never Taken Anything by the Sword.

1. *"'They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' If these words of the New Testament are true at all, and truly applied to any nation, they certainly apply today to the nations of Christian Europe more than any other. Islam did not take the sword and therefore will not be taken with the sword. Rather, it is Christian Europe which has taken the sword throughout the modern period, and it is Christian Europe—which gives itself utmost license in the enjoyment of pleasure and comfort—which Irving falsely imputes to Islam and to the Muslims."*
2. *"Today, Christian Europe is playing exactly the same role which the Mongols and Tatars played in the past in relation to Islam. The latter had put on the appearance of Islam and conquered its territories without paying any heed to Islamic teaching at all. Jesus's judgment fell rightly upon them as they brought corruption and disintegration to their Muslim subjects. Indeed, Christian Europe stands today even more guilty than those Tatars and Mongols of the past. The countries which the latter conquered quickly entered into Islam as soon as they were able to see its simplicity and greatness."*
3. *"Europe, however, does not conquer in order to spread a faith, nor in order to spread a civilization. What it wants is to colonize; to this end, it has made the Christian faith a tool and instrument. That is why the European missions never succeeded—for they were never sincere, and their propaganda served ulterior motives. They did not meet with any success at all in the Muslim countries—and indeed they never will—because the greatness of Islam, its simplicity, its rational and scientific character, leave no room in the minds of its adherents for any alien religious propaganda at all."*
4. *"'They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' That is true. If this dictum was once true of the late Muslims who conquered for the sake of conquest and colonization, not in self-defense nor in defense of the faith, it is all the more true of this Christian West which conquers and vanquishes the peoples of the earth in order to colonize and to exploit."*
5. *"As for the early Muslims during the time of the Prophet and of his immediate successors, they did not conquer for the purpose of conquest and colonization but in defense of their faith when it was threatened by Quraysh, Arab tribes, Byzantines, and Persians. Throughout their conquests, they never imposed their religion on anyone, for it was a cardinal principle of their faith that 'there shall be no coercion in religion.'"*
6. *"Forced by the needs of defense against persistent attack, the Muslims' conquests were never motivated by the will to colonize. The Prophet left the kings of Arabia and her princes on their thrones with their territories, economies, and political structures virtually untouched. In conquering, the Muslims sought the freedom to preach the faith. If the Islamic faith spread, it was simply because it was strong by virtue of the truth which it proclaimed, the universalist nondiscrimination between Arab and non-Arab which it commanded and its*

adherents practiced, and the strict monotheism by which Islam enabled man to have no master except the one true God."

7. *"It was because of these innate strengths of the Islamic faith that it spread throughout the earth, just as any genuine truth would spread. When the Tatar latecomers to Islam fought only for the purpose of conquest and took men by the sword, they too were soon taken by the sword. But Islam never took anything or anyone by the sword, and no one will take it by the sword. On the contrary, Islam conquered the minds, hearts, and consciences of the people by its innate strength."*
8. *"Consequently, the Muslim people have seen many governments, dictators, and tyrants, none of which has changed their faith and religion in the least. Today, Europe is still the ruler of the Muslim peoples and the tyrannic administrator of their affairs. But her tyranny will not change the Muslims' faith in God. And as she has taken the Muslims by the sword, she cannot and will not escape the destiny of being taken by the sword. Matthew's principle will once more prove true, but this time to mete out to Christian Europe her due."*
9. Xian Sheng concluded the passage by saying that the author spoke about the Muslim League of Nations.

(O) How can they call themselves Muslims?

1. With reference to the passage⁵, Xian Sheng asked whether they believed there was no discrimination in Islam. He answered, "Of course there is discrimination."
2. Xian Sheng clarified that, according to the actual teachings of Islam as expounded in the book, Muslims do not practise discrimination and do not force their religion on others.
3. Xian Sheng asked whether they knew the consequences for a Muslim in Malaysia who tries to abjure their Islamic faith. They would not only lose their Muslim rights but also their Bumiputera rights and privileges. Therefore, Xian Sheng commented that what the author wrote does not hold water.
4. He said that a true Muslim is one who gives a license to any person wanting to do business, regardless of their race, religion, or creed.
5. With regard to the Muslims who hold the power to approve the registration of the Baitiangong Universal Spiritual Movement but refuse to give us the licence or approval to manage our Spiritual Movement⁶, Xian Sheng questioned whether they are truly Muslims.
6. According to the principles described in the book, they are not Muslims. Xian Sheng queried, "How can they call themselves Muslims?" When they act as they do, they are corrupted and no longer Muslims.

5 *"In conquering, the Muslims sought the freedom to preach the faith. If the Islamic faith spread, it was simply because it was strong by virtue of the truth which it proclaimed, the universalist nondiscrimination between Arab and non-Arab which it commanded and its adherents practiced, and the strict monotheism by which Islam enabled man to have no master except the one true God."*

6 Federal Constitution. Freedom of Religion. Article 11.
Clause (3): Every religious group has the right—
(a) to manage its own religious affairs;
(b) to establish and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes; and
(c) to acquire and own property and hold and administer it in accordance with law.

7. On the part where the author wrote: *"Islam Has Never Taken Anything by the Sword"*, Xian Sheng said he knew of a stretch of land bordering Kepong Baru and Batu where the Chinese used to occupy the land. The Malays took over the land and built bungalows on it for themselves.
8. Islam started with the sword, but if they are to be true Muslims, they must not live by the sword anymore.
9. Xian Sheng respectfully disagreed with the author's stance that the phrase, *"They that take the sword shall perish with the sword"*, does not apply to Muslims.
10. In Baitiangong, we do not live by the sword (meaning we do not resort to violence such as killing people), except only in self-defence.
11. The author similarly stated that the Muslims took up the sword only for defence against persistent attacks by the Quraysh, Arab tribes, Byzantines, and Persians. Nevertheless, Xian Sheng found it difficult to accept, considering that the early Muslims had conquered much of the surrounding lands next to their homeland.
12. The author also claimed it was for the defence of their faith, stating: *"In conquering, the Muslims sought the freedom to preach the faith."*
13. On the other hand, if the conquered people who converted to Islam under the rule of the Caliphates were to leave Islam, they would do so under the threat of the sword. Xian Sheng found this very contradictory, especially when the author also wrote, *"there shall be no coercion in religion."*
14. Nonetheless, Xian Sheng said that we must read the book in line with what Baitiangong is. This means we should interpret and understand the book according to Baitiangong's principles and teachings.

(P) No need to cut off hands.

1. Brother John Yap asked whether the use of the sword to enforce justice and freedom of faith was a teaching handed down by Prophet Muhammad.
2. Xian Sheng referred to the text he had read earlier: *"... who would suffer the cutting of their arms and necks by Muhammad upon his return"*, and said that Prophet Muhammad himself used a sword. This implies that the practice of cutting someone's hands was indeed carried out during the Prophet's time.
3. Xian Sheng referred to the Hudud punishment, where the amputation of the hand for theft is part of the legal system in Saudi Arabia.⁷
4. There are many people without a right hand. Xian Sheng demonstrated that hands are cut off at the wrist joint. He clarified that the hand is not chopped off with a sharp blade, as many might imagine; instead, the amputation is performed surgically, under medical supervision and using anaesthetics.

⁷ The punishment for theft is based on the Qur'an, Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:38):
 "As to the thief, male or female, cut off his or her hand: a punishment by way of example, from GOD, for their crime: and GOD is Exalted in Power."

5. Xian Sheng does not believe that we should follow such practices in Baitiangong. Sometimes, it may seem justified to cut off the hands of corrupt officials in Malaysia, and he has at times spoken about it in that context. Nevertheless, Xian Sheng said that he does not actually support these kinds of actions, calling them nonsense.
6. There is no need to cut off the hands of corrupt officials, as we understand that after death, their souls will suffer by repeatedly cutting off their own hands in hell.

(Q) Not easy to change a person to pray to the CREATOR in the olden days.

1. Xian Sheng asked for opinions on what they thought about what he had read to them.
2. Brother John Yap expressed the view that humans in the past had a more violent nature⁸. Xian Sheng did not completely agree with his view.
3. He explained that even in the olden days, it was not easy to change a person's mind to pray to the CREATOR.
4. If we were to read books about the Saracens⁹, we would see that they rose up and fought many wars to expand Islam by the sword. Nevertheless, the Christian Crusaders similarly fought many wars with the sword. However, they had what was seen as a valid excuse: trying to reclaim the Holy Land of Jerusalem, as well as other lands that had been conquered by the Muslims.
5. Xian Sheng explained that the Christian Crusaders were defeated miserably by the Saracens due to the Saracens' superior swordplay with their curved swords, as well as their sheer numbers that overwhelmed the Crusaders.
6. Furthermore, the Crusaders were not well prepared to fight in the desert environment. Their heavy armour and large two-handed swords limited their manoeuvrability on horseback. In contrast, the Saracens relied on their superior horsemanship and agility, employing tactics such as the horse-slide technique—where riders would swiftly slip to the side or beneath their mounts to evade incoming attacks and remain concealed. This manoeuvre, combined with their fast attack speed and light curved swords, allowed the Saracens to win skirmishes and maintain control of the battlefield against the heavier, less agile Crusader knights.
7. Xian Sheng suggested that the Crusaders' mistake was probably due to underestimating the Saracens' fighting ability.

8 probably because both the Muslims and, subsequently, the European Christians used conquest as the primary means to expand and propagate their beliefs.

9 a term historically used in medieval Europe—especially by Christian writers—to refer to Muslims, particularly Arab Muslims during the time of the Crusades

(R) Xian Sheng longed to visit Moses's grave.

1. Xian Sheng read the book *The Life of Muhammad* by Muhammad H. Haykal to the followers, explaining that it is important for us to know about Prophet Muhammad and the events surrounding his death.
2. Brother John asked if they knew where Prophet Muhammad was buried. Xian Sheng replied that they did.
3. Xian Sheng mentioned that they also knew where Moses's grave is located.
4. He asked the followers whether they knew where Moses's grave was. He answered that it is near Srinagar and is still maintained by caretakers to this present day.
5. He searched through books for pictures related to Moses's grave to show to the followers.
6. Xian Sheng recalled from the Bible that Moses was not allowed to enter the Holy Land. Moses, therefore, passed away at the top of the mountain overlooking the Holy Land.
7. The Israelites whom Moses led out of Egypt consisted mainly of the descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel. Xian Sheng explained that the present-day Kashmiris are descendants of the Lost Tribes.
8. Moses led the descendants of the 12 tribes out of Egypt. According to the Bible, Moses was not allowed to go down to the Promised Land¹⁰ and, therefore, remained on Mount Nebo and died there. The Bible stated that the Promised Land or Holy Land is Israel, but Xian Sheng said that it was Kashmir.
9. The books from which Xian Sheng derived his knowledge about Jesus and Moses in Kashmir are not easily found in bookstores, as Christians stopped their circulation, considering them very damaging to the Christian faith.
10. Xian Sheng honestly believed that Christians know the truth—that Jesus did not die on the cross but went to Kashmir. He quoted Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:17: "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain."
11. Xian Sheng expressed his longing to visit Moses's grave, but unfortunately, no outsider can safely go to Kashmir and would be subjected to the constant threat of death because of the militants' aggressive activities.
12. Xian Sheng repeated that he would very much like to go back to Kashmir and wondered when they would stop this conflict.
13. Brother Robert Low recalled seeing the picture of the caretaker of the Tomb of Moses sitting on a log in the book *Jesus Lived in India*.

10 Numbers 20:12 "But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in me enough to honour me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them.'"

Deuteronomy 32:51–52 "...because you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel."

Deuteronomy 34:1–4 (Moses views the land but cannot enter) "Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo... There the LORD showed him the whole land... Then the LORD said to him, 'This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob... I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.'"

(S) Moses was buried in Mount Nebo, Kashmir.

1. ***"Who Was Moses?, pg. 42"***

"Moses is still very much regarded as the great lawgiver, but the Ten Commandments in fact represent no more than a codified summary of laws that had been in force among the peoples of the Near East and India long before Moses' time. The same precepts are even to be found among the famous laws promulgated by the Amorite King Hammurabi of Babylon (1728–1686 BC) five hundred years earlier."

2. Xian Sheng was looking for the map where Moses was buried. The sketch map showed the area surrounding the Tomb of Moses on Mount Nebo, or Mount Nebu. This region falls under the administration of India.

3. ***"The Tomb of Moses in Kashmir, pg. 45"***

"The Bible names five landmarks in relation to Moses' burial site (Deuteronomy 34:1-7): the Plains of Moab, Mount Nebo (in the Abarim mountains), the peak of (Mount) Pisgah, Beth-peor, and Heshbon."

4. *"The Promised Land beyond the Jordan had been expressly reserved for the children of Israel, and not for all Hebrews (Numbers 27:12). If it is possible to find the places mentioned in the texts, the true location of the Promised Land should also become clear."*

5. *"The literal meaning of Beth-peor is 'place that opens out', as might refer to a valley that opens on to a plain. The River Jhelum in the north of Kashmir is called Behat in Farsi (Persian), and the small town of Bandipur at the point where the valley of the Jhelum opens out on to the broad plain of Lake Wular used to be called Behat-poor. Beth-peor, then, would seem to have become first Behat-poor and latterly Bandipur in the Sopore district, 70 kilometres north of Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir."*

6. Bandipore is estimated to be 70 km from Srinagar based on the old roads. If we calculate 70 km in a direct line north of Srinagar, it would place it near the border, as mentioned by Xian Sheng.

7. Xian Sheng shared a photo of Wali Rishi, the custodian of the Tomb of Moses. He remarked that the caretaker does not look like an Arab, but has features resembling a Jew.

8. Xian Sheng stated that the descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel and Jesus are now all Muslims.

9. In response to a question from a brother about why they had converted to Islam, Xian Sheng explained that in Islam, Prophet Muhammad is considered the final prophet in a long line of prophets—starting from Adam and including Jesus—within the Abrahamic religions.

(T) Failed Access to the Tomb of Jesus.

1. Xian Sheng emphasised that Christianity was founded by Paul. He said the book is very useful as it counters the lies claiming that Jesus died on the cross.
2. At the Shrine of Rozabal, where Jesus was said to be buried, a pair of footprint impressions with visible nail marks were carved on a slab of stone.
3. These footprint impressions¹¹ were not discovered until recently, after Jammu and Kashmir were divided between India and Pakistan following their independence in 1947.
4. Xian Sheng went on to explain that the Governor of the state of Jammu and Kashmir, Dr Farooq Abdullah, had authorised the unsealing and inspection of the tomb chambers.
5. He expressed that, had the operation taken place, it would have been a beautiful moment for confirmation—providing physical evidence linked to Jesus.
6. Unfortunately, on the evening before the planned opening, violent unrest broke out in Srinagar's old town, sparked by Kashmiri Muslim fundamentalists. The chief of police halted the operation, citing the extreme religious sensitivities in the region.
7. Since then, no one has dared to excavate the tomb due to the ongoing militant conflicts. Anyone attempting to do so could be shot, as the situation was extremely volatile then and has escalated further, with bombs now being released at random locations.

(U) So close yet so far away.

1. Xian Sheng recalled his experience at the Hemis Monastery in July 1996. The Chief Monk, who was in charge of the keys to the safe that housed the parchments, was away in Tibet. As a result, they could not open the safe to view the parchments.
2. Xian Sheng commented that the Tibetan monks have very peculiar rules. The Chief Monk had returned to Tibet, China, to get married. They had no idea whether he would come back to the Hemis Monastery. However, the keys to the safe were under his care, and no other monk dared to touch them.
3. When Xian Sheng and the Baitiangong brothers visited the Hemis Monastery, they received VIP treatment and were allowed to enter the VIP chamber where the parchment that Nikolai Notovitch had read was housed.
4. Xian Sheng expressed his disappointment that he could not pick up the parchments and hold them in his hands.
5. A professor who was proficient in the Pali language accompanied them. The professor lectured at the Buddhist College. They were granted VIP treatment by the General Secretary of the Buddhist Association, who also accompanied them.
6. Unfortunately, the parchment was locked in the safe in the chamber, and no one dared to open it without the Chief Monk's permission.

11 Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiyya movement, initially discovered the footprint impressions in 1899, but his discovery was only officially confirmed around 1975, after centuries-old layers of wax were removed to reveal the footprints.

7. Brother Woo Kwai Moon asked what would happen if the Chief Monk passed away—who would then be entrusted with the keys? Xian Sheng admitted that he did not know. They would probably have to wait for the Chief Monk to “kick the bucket” (pass away) before the post was handed down to the next monk, along with the responsibility for the keys.
8. Xian Sheng explained that during the visit of Dr Elisabeth Caspari and Gloria Gasque to the Hemis Monastery in the spring of 1939, the Chief Monk at the time had shown them the parchment. They took a photograph of it.
9. Xian Sheng noted that they had brought video cameras with them, which would have been better than plain photography, as they would have been able to record the professor translating the Pali text to them—if only they had been able to get their hands on the parchments.

(V) Place Xian Sheng's ashes in an Urn and keep them in a large hall?

1. Once again, Xian Sheng reminded the followers that they must understand the history of Prophet Muhammad's death and burial.
2. During the Prophet's time, the early Muslims did not know how to handle the Prophet's burial arrangements.
3. The Baitiangong followers have the advantage, as we have the Sixth Spiritual Guidelines — The Baitiangong Way of Obsequies — to guide us in cremating and scattering our ashes into the sea.
4. Xian Sheng asked the followers what they would do when he passed away, and specifically what they would do with his ashes.
5. Brother John Yap and Brother Lim Leo Chee said that Xian Sheng had once mentioned collecting his ashes into an urn and placing it in a single place. This was confirmed by Xian Sheng, who added that the place would preferably be a large hall.
6. Nevertheless, the question remains: how are we going to have a large hall to store all the urns?¹²
7. Xian Sheng clarified that he had earlier spoken about having a place of prayer where the ashes could also be kept.
8. He further clarified that ashes can be placed anywhere, including being scattered around trees to serve as fertiliser.
9. Brother Roger Loo asked whether cremation is the preferred method or a must. Xian Sheng replied that cremation is the preferred method and the best way.
10. When Brother Roger Loo repeated the question — whether cremation is a must — Xian Sheng immediately replied that it is not a must. In Baitiangong, there is no single definite way. Nevertheless, the best option is to have the body cremated. The ashes can then be placed anywhere they wish, including being returned to nature.

12 This applies to followers who choose to have their ashes kept in urns instead of scattered into the sea.

- 11.Xian Sheng went on to say that the memories of deceased brothers and sisters can be preserved in the form of photographs in books. That would be the best way to keep their memories alive.
- 12.Every follower, including the Elders and ACCs, can write something into a book, along with their photographs. This book would then be handed down to the next generation for safekeeping.
- 13.He suggested that these books could later be collated into a single compilation, along with all the Baitiangong Anniversary books, including the 1981 diary.
- 14.Someone should maintain all these, including certain artefacts, in one secure location — under lock and key — to preserve them for future generations.
- 15.Xian Sheng mentioned the idea of preserving everything using microdot technology. However, storing the material as digital information on Compact Discs (CDs) is currently the more accessible method.
- 16.Essentially, Xian Sheng wanted to maintain a chronological record of the memories of followers, Anniversary books, the 1981 diary, other written articles, and audio and video recordings for future reference.