



SHINCHEONJI: The Cult of Lee Man-hee Spreads in Africa

Across Africa, pastors and lay Christians who would love to attend Bible school but can't afford to do so are being approached—and seemingly befriended—by strangers who offer them the chance to do so for free.

An aggressive missionary cult called Shincheonji is luring unwary believers to enroll in Bible training online or at its local “Zion Truth Bible Centers.” Its recruiters slip into churches, Bible studies, and campus fellowships. Their methods are polished, their language sounds biblical, and their claims are bold. Shincheonji boasts of being “The Only Church in the World to Master the Book of Revelation,” and that its members “take weekly exams to become walking Bibles.” And it carefully conceals its core belief: that all the Christian churches in the world must surrender their congregations to its elderly founder, Lee Man-hee.

About Shincheonji and Lee Man-hee

Shincheonji Church of Jesus, the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony (hereafter SCJ) was founded by Lee Man-hee in South Korea in 1984. It claims to be active in at least 17 countries in Africa—sometimes using names such as **Hope Church** (South Africa), **New Heaven New Earth** (Malawi), along with Shincheonji Church of Jesus (Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania).



By 2023 SCJ claimed over 360,000 adherents worldwide; it also boasts that over 100,000 students graduate from its “Zion Christian Mission Center” school annually. Its “Introductory Level Course” focuses on “the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, hidden in parables by Jesus.” The cult’s 2024 brochure explains that “the prophecies in Revelation and their fulfilment...have been kept a mystery in the Christian world.” **According to SCJ, only those who accept Lee Man-hee’s personal interpretation of the Book of Revelation can be accepted into membership and hope to gain salvation.**

Recruitment: Lying for “the Truth”

Former members across the world describe a campaign of calculated deception, from social-media strategies to sidewalk encounters. The tactics of SCJ involve:

- **Pretence:** Members pretend to be ordinary, non-denominational Christians but always aim at funneling people into their “Zion Christian Mission Centers” or free online “Equipped Bible Seminars.”
- **“Harvesting” through infiltration:** They attend Protestant churches, volunteer, initiate friendships, and quietly draw unsuspecting believers into private Bible studies without revealing their church identity. Online, they recruit via Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, and dating apps like Bumble and Tinder.
- **Pastor partnerships and MOUs:** SCJ offers special training opportunities—sometimes with overseas travel—and seeks formal agreements with unsuspecting pastors with the goal of capturing their churches and “changing signboards” to Shincheonji.
- **Control:** Members are required to increasingly surrender their free time and family ties to proselytise nearly every available hour of the day, at great cost to their mental and spiritual health. **Those who leave SCJ are labeled “betrayers”** and threatened with severe spiritual consequences.

Inside SCJ, constant lying to potential converts is spiritualised as “the wisdom of hiding,” supposedly justified by Paul’s words about becoming “all things to all people” (1 Corinthians 9:20–22). Yet the Bible is clear: God hates lying lips (Proverbs 6:16–17, 12:22). Of the 144,000, Revelation 14:5 says that “no lie was found in their mouth,” a devastating irony for a group claiming that very identity. Such manipulation is the opposite of the transparent, truth-loving evangelism modelled in the New Testament (Acts 20:20; 2 Corinthians 4:2).

God, Jesus, and Lee Man-hee

SCJ distorts the very heart of the Christian faith—denying the historic, biblical doctrine of the Trinity, teaching instead that God is a single person who merely works through Jesus. Yet from the opening of John’s Gospel (“the Word was with God, and the Word was God”) to Jesus’ Great Commission to baptise “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” the Bible reveals one God in three persons, mysterious yet unmistakable.

The cult’s theology simultaneously diminishes Jesus’ nature while exalting Lee Man-hee’s role to directly parallel that of Christ. One online video teaches that Lee Man-hee “sits with Jesus on his throne” and “rules over all nations with the iron sceptre.” Lee writes of himself: “When the promised pastor [himself] comes everyone must go to him to attain salvation” (*The Creation of Heaven and Earth*, p. 54).

SCJ also denies Christ’s bodily resurrection and future glorious return—claiming instead that Jesus existed only from his birth, that he wasn’t resurrected with a physical body, and that his second coming already happened invisibly in 1966. Paul anticipated such distortions. He warns of “another Jesus” and “another gospel” (2 Corinthians 11:4). The New

Testament insists that Jesus rose bodily (Luke 24:39), ascended visibly (Acts 1:9–11), and will return in the same way. Denying these truths isn't a harmless theological misstep; **it is to reject the biblical Jesus who saves.**

Is SCJ the Only True Church?

SCJ claims that Lee Man-hee was taken to heaven and personally witnessed all the events of the Book of Revelation. Today he is said to be “creating God’s kingdom of heaven here on earth, exactly as he witnessed it in heaven.” Thus SCJ presents itself as “the only denomination acknowledged by God.”

As one former member explains, **now that Lee Man-hee has come as God’s “new promised pastor,” it is the duty of all “general pastors” worldwide to direct their congregations toward him**—disbanding their churches, changing their names, and becoming followers of Lee Man-hee. LMH wrote that pastors who do not “hand the sheep they have cared for over to him” and who “persecute the promised pastor [him]...will not be able to escape judgment” (*The Creation of Heaven and Earth*, p. 165).

But Scripture consistently points to Christ Himself, not any human organisation, as the foundation and head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; Matthew 16:18). The true Church is defined not by a special registration list but by faith in the crucified and risen Lord. Any group claiming exclusive access to God automatically contradicts Jesus’ promise that “whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (John 6:37).

Salvation: From Faith in Christ to Faith in a Man

Perhaps most alarming is SCJ’s open denial of salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. According to Lee Man-hee, under what he calls “the New Covenant of the Book of Revelation,” salvation requires membership in SCJ; accepting its private interpretation of parables; and believing his testimony. In *The Physical Fulfilment of Revelation* (p. 10), Lee declares that “no one can come to Jesus, gain eternal life, or enter heaven except through the one that overcomes.” Who is that? Lee Man-hee means himself. He further stresses that “anyone who breaks away from us and opposes us is Satan” (*The Creation of Heaven and Earth*, p. 32).

The Bible’s answer is unambiguous. Salvation has always been by grace alone through faith alone—never by joining a particular movement (Ephesians 2:8-9); nor by following a mere man. “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life” (John 3:36). To add any mediator besides Christ is to repeat the Galatian error: “If righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing” (Galatians 2:21; 2 Timothy 2:5–6).

A Biblical Response

How should Christians respond? Not with fear, but with clarity and confidence in Scripture.

- **Know the real Jesus.** The best safeguard against counterfeits is deeply knowing the genuine thing. Regularly read the Gospels and epistles that exalt Christ. Know him who is eternal, incarnate, crucified, risen, and returning.
- **Stay in healthy fellowship.** Isolation makes people vulnerable. Hebrews urges us not to neglect meeting together but to encourage one another daily (Hebrews 10:24–25).
- **Hold fast to grace.** Any system that adds secret knowledge or allegiance to a “promised pastor” undermines the sufficiency of Christ’s finished work.
- **Speak the truth in love.** If you meet an SCJ recruiter, remember Paul’s counsel to “correct opponents with gentleness” (2 Timothy 2:25). The goal is rescue, not ridicule.

Stay Watchful, Stay Rooted

Lee Man-hee’s Shincheonji isn’t merely another denomination with a few eccentric teachings. By capturing churches and dividing the body of Christ, rejecting the Trinity, twisting the person of Christ, and making exclusive claims to authority and salvation, it places itself completely outside the historic Christian faith. Jesus warned that false prophets come “in sheep’s clothing” (Matthew 7:15). The solution isn’t paranoia, but discernment. So let us strive to know both Scripture and the Saviour it reveals.

Whether you’re a pastor, a student, or simply a believer who loves Christ, stay watchful and rooted. Remember the promise that keeps us steady: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish” (John 10:27–28).

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<https://truthaboutshincheonji.com>

<https://closerlookinitiative.com/scj>

https://www.watchman.org/Shincheonji_Profile.pdf

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