

The Future of Christianity, Part II

Sun Myung Moon

October 28, 1973

Last month we printed part I of "The Future of Christianity," given by Reverend Moon as part of his Day of Hope talks in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 28, 1973. Part I analyzed the meaning of the "Last Days" and the "end of the world," pointing to a separation of good and evil and a time of judgment by God's word. In Part II, Reverend Moon explained the mission of Jesus and the nature of the second coming.



What would have happened if the people of Israel had wholeheartedly accepted Jesus Christ? Imagine the nation of Israel united with Jesus. What would that have meant? First of all, Jesus would not have been killed. People would have glorified Jesus as the living Lord. They would have then marched to Rome with the living Christ as their Commander-in-chief, and Rome would have surrendered to the Son of God in his own lifetime. But in the sad reality of history, it took four centuries for a band of Jesus' disciples to conquer Rome. Jesus never won the chosen people of Israel, and he never gained the support he needed from them. He came to erect the kingdom of God on earth, but instead he had to caution his disciples even to keep his identity a secret because people did not accept his legitimacy as the Messiah, and he therefore lacked the power to be the King of kings.

Today we have much to learn, and we must not believe blindly. We must know the hidden truth behind the Bible. Jesus was crucified, not by his own will, but by the will of others. The faithlessness of the chosen people of Israel killed Jesus Christ. Right now I am making a bold declaration. Jesus did not come to die. Jesus Christ was murdered. Let me repeat: Jesus Christ was murdered, and his own people killed him. Even the Roman governor Pilate wanted to release Jesus. He did not find any fault with Jesus. But Christ's own people rejected him and forced Pilate to release Barabbas instead. What a pity! What a tragedy!

This may be shocking and astounding news to you, but if you are only surprised, then you have missed my purpose. I am revealing these things because of my duty to bear witness to the truth.

It was the chosen people of Israel, the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, and the faithful, who shouted at Pilate's court, "Crucify him!" St. Paul said, "None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (I Cor. 2:8)

The crucifixion of Jesus was a result of the faithlessness of the Jewish people. If Jesus had come to die, then he would not have offered that tragic and anguished prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus said to his disciples:

"My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." (Matt. 26:37)

Jesus prayed this way not just once, but three times. If death on the cross had been the fulfillment of God's will, Jesus would certainly have prayed instead, "Father, I am honored to die on the cross for your will."

Why Jesus was sorrowful

But Jesus prayed asking that this cup pass from him. If his prayer came out of fear of death, such weakness would disqualify him as the Son of God. We have witnessed the courageous death of many martyrs throughout Christian history and even elsewhere -- people who not only overcame their fear of

death, but made their final sacrifice a great victory. Out of so many martyrs, how could Jesus alone be the one to show his fear and weakness, particularly if his crucifixion was the glorious moment of his fulfillment of the will of God? Jesus did not pray this way from weakness. To believe such a thing is an outrage to Jesus Christ.

The prayer of Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane did not come from his fear of death or suffering. Jesus would have been willing and ready to die a thousand times over if that could have achieved the will of God. He agonized right up to the moment of death, and he made one final plea to God, because he knew his path would only cause the prolongation of God's dispensation.

Jesus wanted to live and fulfill his mission. It is a tragic misunderstanding to believe that Jesus prayed for a little more earthly life out of the frailness of his human soul. Young Nathan Hale, in the American struggle for independence, was able to say at the time of his execution, "I regret that I have but one life to give for my country!" Do you think Jesus Christ was a lesser soul than Nathan Hale? No! Nathan Hale was a great patriot. But Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Think this over. If Jesus came to die on the cross, would he not need a man to deliver him up? You know that Judas Iscariot is the disciple who betrayed Jesus. If Jesus fulfilled God's will with his death on the cross, then Judas should be glorified as the man who made the crucifixion possible. Judas would have been aiding God's dispensation. But Jesus said of Judas, "The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born." (Matt. 26:24) Judas killed himself.

Furthermore, if God had wanted His son to be crucified, He did not need 4,000 years to prepare the chosen people. He would have done better to send Jesus to a tribe of barbarians, where he could have been killed even faster and the will of God would have been realized more rapidly.

I must tell you again, it was the will of God to have Jesus Christ accepted by his people. That is why God labored in hope and anguish to prepare fertile soil for the heavenly seed of the Messiah. That is why God established His chosen people of Israel. That is why God sent prophet after prophet to awaken the people of Israel to ready themselves for the Lord.

God warned them and chastised them; He persuaded them and scolded them, pushed them and punished them because He wanted His people to accept His Son. One day the disciples asked Jesus, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." (John 6: 28-29) The chosen people of Israel did the very thing God had labored to prevent. They rejected the one He had sent.

The purpose of Jesus' ministry

Jesus had one purpose throughout the three years of his public ministry: Acceptance. He could not fulfill his mission otherwise. From the very first day, he preached the gospel without equivocation, so that the people could hear the truth and accept him as the Son of God. The word of God should have led them to accept him. However, when Jesus saw that the people were not likely to receive him by the words of God alone, he began to perform mighty works. He hoped that people could recognize him through his miracles.

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. (John 20: 30-31)

Jesus gave sight to the blind and made the lepers clean. He healed the lame and blessed the deaf with hearing. Jesus raised the dead. He did these things only because he wanted to be accepted. Yet the people said of him, "It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons." (Matt. 12:24) What a heartbreaking situation! Jesus soon saw the hopelessness of gaining the acceptance of the people. In anger and desperation he chastised them: "You brood of vipers!" (Matt. 12:34) He did not hide his wrath, but exploded in anger. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." (Matt. 11:21) And he wept when he drew near the city of Jerusalem.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! (Matt. 23:37)

Whoever understood this broken-hearted Jesus? He said, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes." (Luke 19:42) By that time Jesus knew there was absolutely no hope of avoiding death. Yet he pleaded with God in Gethsemane, and he pleaded with God on the cross: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46)

Thus Jesus died on the cross, not of his own will, not of the will of God, but by the will of men. Christ was destined to return from that moment on. He will return to consummate his mission on earth. Mankind must await his second coming for the complete salvation of the world.

Why two lines of prophecy?

Many people may now ask, "What about the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the death of Jesus on the cross?" I am aware of those prophecies, such as Isaiah, Chapter 53. We must know that there are dual lines of prophecy in the Bible. One group prophesies Jesus' rejection and death; the others, such as Isaiah, Chapters 9, 11, and 60, prophesy the glorious ministry of Jesus when the people accepted him as the Son of God, as the King of kings. For example:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. (Is. 9:6-7)

This is the prophecy of the Lord of glory, Jesus as the King of kings, and Prince of Peace. On the other hand, we can read:

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. (Is. 53:4-8)

This is the prophecy of the suffering Christ. It is indeed the prophecy of the crucifixion. Then, once again, why did God prophesy in two contradictory ways in the Bible?

It is because God has to deal with men -- fallen men -- in His dispensation. And fallen man is wicked and untrustworthy and possesses the capacity of betrayal.

In a way God fears man, and Satan fears man also--because of man's ability to betray. God is absolute good, and He never changes His position; Satan is absolute evil, and he never changes his position either. In this respect God and Satan are similar. However, man is a mixture of good and evil. Man stands between God and Satan and has the ability to change. Therefore, man is unpredictable. One day a man may profess his untiring faith in God and desire to serve Him; and the next day the same man may curse God, unite with Satan and become his slave.

Since God did not know how man would respond to His providence for the Messiah, He had no choice but to predict two contradictory results--dual prophecies, each possible depending on man's actions. Thus the faith of man was the factor determining which one of the two prophecies would be fulfilled. In the case of Jesus, if the chosen people of Israel demonstrated faith and united with him, then he would be accepted. The full realization of the prophecy of the Lord of glory would result.

On the other hand, if the people were faithless and rejected the Messiah when he came, inevitably the second prophecy, that of the suffering Christ, would be fulfilled. And history shows that the chosen people took the second way. Therefore, the prophecy of the suffering Lord became reality instead of the prophecy of the Lord of glory. Thus the crucifixion and the story of the suffering Christ became the course of history.

Since the prophecy of the suffering Christ became fact in the time of Jesus, the prophecy of the Lord of glory has been left unfulfilled. And this is the prophecy which will be fulfilled at the time of the Lord of the Second Advent.

Jesus was a misunderstood man. I would like to also observe that the Bible does not provide much record of the life of Jesus prior to his public ministry, except for the story of his birth and a few accounts of his childhood. Haven't you ever wondered why?

For thirty years Jesus lived in great rejection and humiliation. There were many events and circumstances which grieved and agonized Jesus. He was a truly misunderstood person--in his society and even among his own family. Nobody, absolutely nobody treated him as the Son of God. He was not even accorded the common respect due to any man. His society ridiculed him. God's heart was very deeply grieved by Jesus' life. It revealed just a glimpse of some of the situations of heartbreak and sorrow surrounding the manhood of Jesus, that obscure figure, the man of Nazareth, you would not only be shocked and stunned, but you would burst into tears of sorrow.

God did not wish mankind to know the tragedy, the heart-breaking reality of the humiliation of Jesus Christ. The death of Jesus was neither his will nor his fault. The death of Jesus was murder, and his body was taken by Satan. Our salvation in Christianity comes not from the cross but from the resurrection.

Without the resurrection, Christianity has no power. The crucifixion itself was a criminal act of faithlessness. However, the resurrected Jesus brought new hope, new forgiveness, and a new power of salvation. Therefore, when we place our faith in Jesus Christ of resurrection and unite with him, our salvation comes.

Please ask seriously in your prayers for a final answer on these matters. Ask either Jesus Christ or God

Himself. If Jesus had lived and fulfilled his primary mission of bringing the kingdom of God on earth, Christianity would never have been what it is today. The purpose of Jesus' coming was for the salvation of the world. The Jewish people were to be God's instruments. However, salvation was not intended only for God's chosen people. For every soul upon the face of the earth, Jesus is the savior. He is the savior of all mankind. Since Jesus left his mission uncompleted, he also left us the promise of his Second Coming.

Then let us examine when the end of the world will come. This is very important to us. The gospel says that in the last days God will separate the sheep from the goats. What is the difference between these two kinds of animals? Sheep recognize their master, the shepherd, while goats do not follow a shepherd.

Today you know that our world is divided into two opposing camps. One is the democratic world, the other is the Communist world. Our free world says, "There is a God." We accept our shepherd. The Communist world says, "God does not exist." They deny their master. Thus the free world may be symbolized by sheep, and the Communist world by goats. At the time of the formation of these two conflicting ideological worlds we can know we have come to the end of the world.

How will the Lord of the Second Advent come? Our position as Christians exactly parallels the position of the elders, scribes and priests at the time of Jesus. In those days, the people were waiting for Elijah and the Messiah to arrive in the clouds of heaven. Why did the people think this way? Why did they hold this kind of belief?

Will the Lord come with the clouds?

They were simply following the Bible prophecy written down in Daniel 7:13: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him." Because of the great prophet Daniel, the people of Israel had every reason to expect the arrival of the Messiah with the clouds of heaven. Christians are expecting the arrival of the Lord of the Second Advent in the same way today, from the clouds of heaven.

John said, "Many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist." (II John 7) The Bible says that many people were denying the appearance of Jesus Christ in the flesh. And John condemned those people as the antichrist. But let us not forget the Old Testament prophecy of the coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven. Unless we know the whole truth, we, like the people of Jesus' time, become victims of the words of the Bible.

Then, may I ask, what would you do if the Lord returned to earth not in the clouds but as a man in the flesh? What would you do? I am telling you, the Lord of the Second Advent will in fact appear as a son of man with flesh and bones. The first thing you may want to say is "Rev. Moon, you are a heretic."

It is important to know on which side God will be and how God fulfills His plan. It is not important whether a man or his views are considered heretical or not. It does not matter how I look at the world or how you look at the world. It only matters how God looks at the world. And in God's view, we once again find in the Bible a dual prophecy concerning the coming of the Lord of the Second Advent. Revelation 1:7 definitely prophesies the arrival of the Lord of the Second Advent with the clouds. However, I Thess. 5:2 states: "For you yourself know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." There are then two opposing prophecies. What shall we do? Would you simply choose the prophecy which is most convenient for you?

Perhaps the Lord will appear with a loud noise in the clouds of heaven, because the prophecy says so. But on the other hand, the Lord may appear like a thief in the night. If he comes in the clouds, he surely cannot slip into the world unseen like a thief. Tremendous attention would surround the spectacle of his coming in the clouds. I cannot imagine how such a thing could be hidden from your eyes.

Find out the truth from God

Then just what is the truth? We have a crucial question before us. What is the truth? When you see the signs of the Last Days, the Bible urges you to go into a dark room and pray. Who can tell you the time of the Last Days? The angels do not know that day. Jesus said not even the Son of man knew when that day would arrive. Only God knows the time of the Last Days. That is why we have our answer from God. I am not saying you must believe me-not at all. I am just revealing what I know to be the truth, but you must verify this truth with God.

In the Last Days, the Bible says, do not just believe anybody. Do not believe me, and do not believe your church elders. Do not believe your ministers, and do not believe famous evangelists. Heaven is so near, and you can be lifted up by the spirit so high, that you can speak with God and receive the answer directly from Him if you are earnest enough.

There are many ministers in New Orleans, many clergymen and many church elders. How many of them are really listening for the voice of God? These ears of ours do not mean much, nor these eyes serve any useful purpose, unless we have spiritual ears and spiritual eyes. Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Matt. 11:15) And he said to his disciples, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear." (Matt. 13:16) He was not referring to physical sense organs.

When you use your spiritual senses and listen for the word of God, you will find His direction and guidance. But it is not easy to become a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. It is very difficult for a foreigner to become just a citizen of the United States. How much more difficult it is to remove ourselves from our earthly life and transfer ourselves into the kingdom of heaven. But we can achieve this very thing.

We know that even after Adam and Eve fell in the Garden of Eden, they were still able to communicate directly with God. Do you think that after the days of the Old and New Testaments, God has for some reason become deaf and dumb? No, God is very much alive, and today we can talk directly to Him. God can speak to you, and you can have a direct confrontation with Him.

The book of Acts of the Apostles says that in the Last Days, "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." (Acts 2:17) We must know the truth. We have to know how to apply for citizenship into the kingdom of God. We have to know when the Lord will come, and how he will arrive. Even with clear guidance in our lives, there is still the chance of failure to reach the goal. But today we have no guidance, and no direction we feel confident to follow.

Let us look to our Bible and clarify how the Lord of the Second Advent will appear. In Luke 17:20-21, Jesus was asked by the Pharisees how the kingdom of God was coming. He answered, "The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;... the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." Jesus then told his disciples, "The days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and you will not see it." But if the Lord comes in the clouds of heaven, how could we not see it? Revelation 1:7 says, "Every eye will see him, everyone who pierced him."

What can this mean? Why would we not see him? The only way we might miss that day is if we look for the Lord to come from one direction, and he appears from another direction in an entirely unexpected manner, just as Elijah did at the time of Jesus. This is the reason you may not see the Lord at the time of his Second Coming.

The Lord will be rejected. Another mysterious prediction was given by Jesus Christ himself. He declared about the Lord at the Second Coming: "But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation." (Luke 17:25) If Christ at his Second Coming appears in the glory of the clouds of heaven, who would dare deny him? Nobody would cause him suffering and pain.

The only way this prophecy can be fulfilled is if people expect his return from the clouds and he suddenly appears as a humble man in the flesh. Do you not think that Christian leaders of today would make the same mistake that the priests and scribes and elders committed at the time of Jesus? Yes! They may very well deny him and reject him, because the manner of his coming would be very difficult for Christian leaders to accept. However, in this way the Bible will be fulfilled. *He will first suffer and be rejected by this generation.*

Jesus once asked a most important question: "When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8) How does this question concern us today, when Christian faith covers the face of the earth? It is because although we do have faith today, it may be mistaken faith—a belief which expects the Lord must come on the clouds of heaven. There are few men on earth with the kind of faith ready to accept the Son of man even appearing in the flesh. If this were not the situation, the Bible would not be fulfilled. Please note that Jesus did not say there would be no believers, but he said there would be no faith.

Jesus also said,

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, lord, did I prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you evildoers.'" (Matt. 7:22-23)

This prophecy cannot be realized if his Second Coming is on the clouds of heaven.

At the time of the Second Advent, people will be again crying out, "Lord, lord." At the same time they may be in the process of trying to crucify the Lord of the Second Advent himself if he appears in a manner different from their own expectations. They will then be the worst evildoers.

This is the Bible. Those who truly have eyes will see. Those who truly have ears will hear. Throughout history, God has sent His prophets before the time of fulfillment. He warns the people of His plan. No matter how devout Christian faith is today, no matter how many millions of people are in the Christian churches, they and their churches and their world will be doomed to decline once they fail to accept the Lord, however he may appear. This was the tragic fate of the people of Israel when they denied Jesus Christ, regardless of their righteousness otherwise.

We must therefore also be open to a new message. Jesus Christ did not come to repeat the Mosaic Law. Just as Jesus revealed himself with the new truth, the Lord of the Second Advent will reveal himself with

God's new truth for our time. That truth will not be simply a repetition of the New Testament.

The Lord comes to restore God's ideal

The Lord will not appear miraculously in the clouds of heaven. Why? Because God is sending His Son to restore the things that once were lost. The first ancestors lost the kingdom of God on earth. Satan invaded the world and took Eve to his side, and then Eve took Adam away, leaving God alone and separated from man. All mankind has therefore suffered under the bondage of evil. God must send a new ancestor for humanity, to begin a new history.

The work of God is restoration, always in the opposite direction from His original loss. This means that God first needs to find His perfected Adam, an Adam who instead of betraying God will become one with God. And then Adam must restore his bride in the position of Eve. Perfected Adam and perfected Eve, united together, will be able to overcome Satan and expel him from the world. In this way, the first righteous ancestors of mankind will begin a new history.

God's first beginning was alpha. This was invaded by evil, so He will restore the world in omega. Jesus is referred to as the Second Adam in I Cor. 15:45. God wanted to bless Adam and Eve in marriage when they were perfected. As a heavenly couple, they could bear children of God. This life was not realized in the Garden of Eden. That is why Jesus came in the position of Adam. God intended to find the true bride and have Jesus marry. The True Parents of mankind would have begun in the time of Jesus, and they could have overcome and changed the evil history of the world. Since that hope was not fulfilled by Jesus, after 2,000 years he is returning to earth as a man to complete in full the mission he only partially accomplished. The kingdom of heaven on earth will be established at that time.

The new history of goodness will thus begin. With the truth of God and True Parents for mankind, a new alpha in God's history will begin and continue for eternity. The ideal of God is to restore the first God centered family on earth. With this one model as a center, all the rest of mankind can be adopted into this family. We will become like them, and the first heavenly family will be expanded, multiplying into the tribal, national, and worldwide kingdom of God on earth.

The kingdom of heaven is to be literal and tangible. Jesus gave Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven and said, "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matt. 16:19) So accomplishment on earth must precede fulfillment in heaven; the kingdom of heaven will be first achieved on earth. At this time only an intermediate place in the spirit world is open. That is called "Paradise." Jesus and his disciples dwell in Paradise, and even they cannot actually enter the kingdom of heaven until it is established on earth. One reason for this is because the kingdom of heaven is prepared not for individuals, but for the family of God—for the father, the mother, and God's true children.

Therefore, the promise of the Lord of the Second Advent will be fulfilled. He is destined to come to earth as the Son of man in the flesh. He comes as the third Adam. He will take a bride and thereby bring about the most joyful day of heavenly matrimony, referred to as "the marriage supper of the Lamb" in the book of Revelation. He will fulfill the role of True Parents. True ancestry from God will be established and heaven on earth can then be literally achieved.