

## Second Coming of Christ

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Will He return on the cloud?

***“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.” (Matt 24:32-34)***



Although, in Matthew 24:36, Jesus said: “But of that day and hour no one knows...” indicating it would be fruitless to speculate as to the time of his return. However, in Matthew 24: 15: Jesus said ” ***See, I have told you ahead of time.***” He also said that the father knows, and Amos 3:7 says, “Surely, the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants, the prophets.”

Jesus’ prophecy stated above, was Jesus’ answers to his disciples’ initial question as to “when shall these things be?” The phrase “until all these things” used by Jesus at the end of this prophecy was to those events that he had just told his disciples would happen in the end times, including prophecies about the Antichrist, the tribulation, the Lord’s return to earth, etc. So, what did Jesus mean when he said *the generation that sees the fig tree bloom would not pass away until all those things have happened?* What’s got a fig tree had to do with the end times and the Lord’s return?

Before we examine the issue of timing, lets us first understand something about the fig tree. The following is an explanation on the fig tree noted in Mr. John Price’s book, *The End of America* (The End Times, page 4-5).”Hosea described Israel in this way: ***“When I found Israel...it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree.” (Hosea 9:10).*** Over time the clear consensus has been that the reference to the fig tree is an allegorical identification of Israel, and its re-birth in the land, as prophesied, in both the Old and New Testament (Deuteronomy 30, Matthew 24). In the "American Prophecies" author Mike Evan has written: “The fig tree has always been a symbol of the nation of Israel. The leaves of fig tree are common ornaments on government buildings in Israel.”(The return, Nelson, 1986).. Therefore, it’s important to understand, that when Jesus told his disciples about the re-birth of Israel, and illustrate it by describing a future budding of the fig tree, his words were a meaningful symbolic prophecy to his disciples, because of what they saw and heard from Jesus in about the same time frame. Mr. Price gave a Bible verse indicating Israel’s rejection of Jesus. Mark 11:13 says, that as Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem in the days before he was to be crucified, he left Bethany, just east of Jerusalem. On the way, he saw a fig tree. Alas, the fig tree, though covered with leaves, had no figs on its branches. Jesus spoke to the tree and admonished it for not bearing fruit. He then pronounced on the fig tree that this particular fig tree would never bear fruit, a malediction which was confirmed the next day, as Jesus and his disciples passed by the same fig tree, now ***“withered away”*** and ***“dried up from the roots.”*** (Mark 11:20, 21).

Obviously, as Mr. Price noted, this was about more than talking to a tree. One of the stated signs of God’s blessings on the Israelites was that ***“every man will sit under his own vine and under his own fig tree.” (I Kings 4: 25; Isaiah 36:16, Micah 4:4)*** Fig trees bear fruit and are blessing to their owners. This particular tree was no blessing, as it had literally no fig, and symbolically, no spiritual fruit. So, as Jesus ended his earthly ministry, he gave a symbolic assessment of Israel’s rejection of him, by finding no fruit on that fig tree, representing Israel, and by saying that this early fig tree, Israel at the time of Christ, would not bear fruit. His statement, of course, was accurate, as early Israel didn’t bear spiritual fruit, itself withering away and going into dispersion within a few short years after the rejection of its Messiah.

Now, returning to Jesus’ prophesy, that another, a second, fig tree would bloom signaling the end times. As Mr. Price noted, there has been some significant level of dispute as to what Jesus meant by telling us the generation that would see the fig tree redbud/Israel return, would not pass away/die until “all these things (the end times prophecies he gave us) have all ”happened.” What then did Jesus meant when he

said the generation? In this verse, Jesus is speaking of the generation that was in existence, or that witnessed the budding of the fig tree, would not pass away, or die out, before all of the prophesied events would happen. So, this brings us to the timing, the prophecies of the return of the Jews back to their home land have been fulfilled in 1948 when Israel was reinstated as a sovereign independent nation. In other words, the generation that was born between 1920 to the year 2012 and saw the rebirth of the fig tree/Israel on May 14, 1948, is the generation that witnessed the Second Coming of Christ!

Will Christ return on the clouds?

Christians have traditionally believed that Christ will return on the cloud. However, in Luke 17:24,25 we read that Jesus, anticipating what was going to happen at the Second Coming, said, "...so will the Son of man be in his days. But he must suffer many things and be rejected by his generation." So, if the Lord should come again amidst power and glory, with the trumpet call, who would dare deny and persecute him? However, if he does not come on a literal cloud, and instead be born in the flesh, as at the First Coming, then it becomes apparent why Jesus said he would first suffer before finally being recognized(LK 17:24,25).

Before we discuss the timing, who, where, when and how will the returning Christ take place, we must first clarify the issues surrounding the two opposing concepts on who and how the "Messiah" would appear, which is held by the Israelites of Jesus' time that Christians had adopted, and was much of the confusion.

The Messiah

According to the New World Encyclopedia definition of "Messiah", (Hebrew, Mashiach) was developed during the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people. One of the earliest prophecies was written in the eight century B.C.E., by the Prophet Isaiah, who wished for a more powerful and righteous political ruler than the current occupant of David's throne. It refers to the coming of a new Davidic King who will unite Israel (Southern Kingdom) and Judah (Northern Kingdom), conquer their surrounding nations and enable the return of the Israelites taken into captivity by the Assyrian empire (Isaiah 11:10-14). Approximately a century after Isaiah the Prophet Jeremiah reiterated Isaiah's prophecy.

*"The days are coming, declares the Lord, "when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord [is] Our righteousness." (Jer. 23: 5-6)*

The term "Mashiach" literally means "the anointed one," and refers to the ancient Jewish practice of anointing kings with oil when they took the throne, much like the ceremonial inauguration of presidents in the United States, but instead of being anointed by oil, they swear on the Bible. However, it should be noted that to the Jews, the word "Mashiach" does not mean "Savior." The notion of an innocent, Divine Being who will sacrifice himself to save sinners, is a purely Christian concept with no basis in Jewish belief.

By the first century B.C.E., The Jews interpreted their Scriptures to refer specifically to someone appointed by God to deliver them from oppression under the Roman Empire. However, the Israelites' concept of "Mashiach" had split into two opposing trends of thought on what the Messiah was expected to be, which complicated matters even further by the time Jesus began his public ministry, proclaiming himself the Son of God. The Ideals based on the Book of Isaiah, emphasizing the Messiah as a Prince of Peace and deliverer of Israel from oppression represented one trend of thought. Apocalyptic promises of supernatural intervention by prophets such as Zechariah, Joel, and others, represented a more other-worldly trend. In the first century B.C.E., a separatist Jewish sect, known as the Essenes, who lived in the Qumran desert, reacted against the corruption of both priestly and political authorities, foreseeing the imminent coming of the Day of the Lord in which both a Divine and a Davidic Messiah should arise to lead the "children of light" in the battle against the Romans, gentiles and other "children of darkness". In the period when Jesus was born, confusion, political and religious upheaval abounded. Among the emerging sects, were the Pharisees, who saw the Messiah as a deliverer along the lines of the of Isaiah's prediction. Others expected cataclysmic events such as described in the book of Daniel:

*"In my vision at night (dream) and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the cloud of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power, all peoples, nations and men of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13-14).*

Such were the Messianic hopes and expectations that flourished a few decades prior to Jesus' birth, during the reign of Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.E.) Tragically, however, the much-prepared Chosen People failed to recognize Jesus as their Messiah. Jesus cried out that he was the Son of God, but his words fell on deaf ears. He was never understood; he was branded a blasphemer and ultimately crucified! After Jesus death, the Jews rebelled against the Romans, which led to the destruction of the Temple and the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem in 70 C.E., thus, marking the beginning of Christian history. Christianity emerged in the first century, C.E., as a movement among Jews who believed Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah.

However, the Christian concept of the Messiah remained unsolved and the conflicting trends of thought (the literal vs. metaphoric concepts of the Messiah, which divided the Jews of Jesus' days) continue to haunt Christianity to the present! Evidently, the Christian concept of the Second Coming of Christ is taking after Daniel's supernatural concept, which was carried by the Qumran Essenes, and influenced early Christian thought of a divine Messiah appearing in the clouds of Heaven. This of course, has caused much debate in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

As the new millennium grew closer, there was much talk and anticipation about the "End of Time", The Mayan Calendar, and Second Coming of Christ. TV documentaries, and Church preaching still continue to this day; one only has to listen to newscasts and Christian evangelical TV programs in order to see Biblical prophecies being fulfilled. There have been more prophecies fulfilled in the twentieth century than in any other time in Christian history. The question remains: Would the returning Christ come on the literal clouds or would he be born in the flesh, as in His first coming?

Is Reverend Moon the Messiah?

Although throughout the past 2000 years of Christian history, there were few messianic claimants, there arose no greater messianic figure than the 20<sup>th</sup> century claimant, the late **Reverend Sun Myung Moon**, 01/06/1920 to 09/03/2012. The Unification Church is a contemporary Christian offshoot which proclaims its founder Sun Myung Moon to be the Second Coming of Christ. Although the Unification Church's messianic teachings affirm traditional Christian doctrine that Jesus' death on the Cross brought atonement for sins of mankind, it also maintained the traditional Jewish position that the Messianic mission originally was to go much further, completely establishing God's reign on earth. Rev. Moon taught that Jesus' death on the cross was a tragic mistake on the part of the Jewish religious leaders. Jesus Christ should have lived a longer life, been blessed in marriage with a specially prepared holy bride and had a "True Family" with children free of original sin. He was also to build God's Kingdom on earth, but tragically was prevented from completing his Messianic mission. Therefore, at the Second Coming, the spirit and mission of Jesus Christ will return in the flesh, just as the spirit and mission of Prophet Elijah returned and worked with John the Baptist during Jesus' time ( Malachi 4:4-5 and Mt. 11:14;17:13) to complete the messianic task.

The formal title given to the messianic couple (the Reverend and Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon) in the Unification Church is "True Parents." It is believed that the mission of the Messiah is carried out, not by man alone but by a couple, a restored Adam and Eve, who as True Parents found a new lineage free from original sin. Together they will engraft all humankind to become true sons and daughters of God in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The process of engrafting is conducted through the "Blessing of Marriage" offered by the True Parents. Rev. and Mrs. Hak Ja Han Moon.

The question of whether or not Rev. Moon is the Second Coming of the Messiah depends heavily on faith and sincere prayers. Just as in Jesus' time, the Messiah God had sent was rejected by the very people the Lord tried to prepare. *"He came to his own home and his people received him not."* (John 1:11) the Apostle Paul testified that *"none of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor 2:8).* But on the other hand, we find there were few "prepared" faithful believers who followed him and died for his cause. The question remains, why did some people believe in God's sent Messiah while others did not? The answer to this question is that first of all, the Bible tells us that God had already made people prepared for the Lord, and secondly, as I noted earlier, it depends on sincere prayers to find out whether you were one of those whom God had prepared and whether you thirst for God's love and truth. Reverend Sun Myung Moon is the Lord of the Second Advent. He had done all he could to help us know God and His will far closer and richer than ever before. The Messiah is a beautiful normal, but holy human being, but traditional beliefs try to deify him, expecting him to have supernatural powers, like walk on water or something. As we have learned from history, this not a true description of the Messiah, for if he was, he would not have to suffer untold miseries by men.

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