

The New Future of Christianity

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Ladies and gentlemen, I am very happy to be here tonight. Thank you very much for coming. We are gathered together in this impressive setting of Madison Square Garden tonight in the name of God.

My topic tonight is "The New Future of Christianity." But before I begin this evening's message, I would like to make one personal plea. I did not come here to repeat what you already know. I have come to reveal something new. I want to share with you a revelation from God.

There is only one God, one Christ, one Bible. Today, however, in the Christian world alone there are more than 400 different denominations, all looking at the same Bible from very different points of view, with many different interpretations.

What we are interested in is not the human interpretation of the Bible, but how God interprets the Bible, and what God's Will really is. Therefore, no person by himself is capable of satisfying us. That information must come from God, in the form of revelation.

And I want to share that revelation with you tonight. Since this message came from God, and since it is from God's point of view, the content naturally may be different from human understanding. Therefore, it may be very new to you. But what we need is new ideas—God's ideas because man has exhausted all of his own ideas already. That is the reason for my coming to talk to you tonight.

So I ask each one of you to open your mind and open your heart, so

that the spirit of God can speak to you directly.

For 2,000 years, Christians of the world have been looking forward to one great culminating day, as prophesied in the Bible—the day of the Second Coming of the Lord. Since this has been the promise of God, the Second Coming of Christ will definitely be fulfilled.

Why is the Lord coming a second time? He is coming to consummate the will of God. Then what is the will of God? Do we know clearly what God's will is?

God is eternal, unchanging, and absolute. And He has one will, which is also eternal, unchanging, and absolute. In the beginning, God had a definite purpose for creating the universe and this world. That purpose was the reason for creation. And God began the creation of the universe and man to fulfill that purpose.

According to the Bible, after the first man and woman were created—Adam and Eve—God gave them a commandment. That commandment

'Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.' (Gen. 2:17)

God asked them to obey His commandment. God was implying that by Adam and Eve's obedience to the law, His purpose would be fulfilled. However, God made the consequence of disobedience very clear. He said, "The day that you eat of it you shall die." The fruit of disobedience was death.

However, Adam and Eve disobeyed God. The result was the fall of man. Spiritual death came to mankind, and the purpose of God was not realized. The fall of man means their deviation from the original state that God intended. Adam and Eve departed from the fulfillment of the purpose of their creation. They made a wrong choice, creating the opposite of what God originally intended.

After their disobedience, God had no choice but to expel this man and woman from the Garden of Eden. The Garden of Eden is a symbolic expression of the Kingdom of God on earth. Adam and Eve no longer deserved citizenship in God's Kingdom, so they were cast out into the ungodly realms, the living hell—which was their own creation.

KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

If Adam and Eve had obeyed God, they would have brought the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. What would that kingdom be like? Adam and Eve were created sinless, with the potential for perfection. And they were to grow into perfection by obeying the law of God. While they were growing into fully perfected man and woman, their relationship was to be that of brother and sister. They were expected to set the true tradition of brotherhood and sisterhood.

What is perfection? Perfection is man's total union with God. A man is supposed to be the temple of God, in which the spirit of God dwells. Such a man is divine, as God is divine; that man is holy, as God is holy.

Jesus was the first such perfect man. This perfection is the state that Jesus was speaking of when he said,

‘Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me.’ (John 14:11)

When you become one with God, His divine power is yours, and you shall be perfect as God is perfect. Therefore, Jesus set as man’s goal to be perfect as God is perfect when he said,

‘You, therefore, must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.’
(Matt. 5:48)

God created one male and one female. Why? After their reaching the state of perfection, God wanted to bring them together into one heavenly couple, through the blessing of heavenly matrimony. God intended to begin His Kingdom with Adam and Eve as the first husband and wife.

If that had become a reality, then God’s blessing to be fruitful and multiply would have been fulfilled. He would have given them the power to multiply children of God. And those children would have been sinless and perfect. What else could they be? Sin would never have been introduced into the human race. By having children, Adam and Eve would have become the God-centered True Father and Mother—the True Parents of mankind.

If Adam and Eve had formed this first God-centered family, from them would have come a God-centered tribe, a God-centered nation, and a God-centered world ruled by God alone. Then perfection would have reigned from the beginning to eternity.

Where did God create Adam and Eve? Up in the air, out in space? No, right here on earth. Therefore, the prospering of Adam’s family should have brought the realization of God’s ideal here on earth, and God would have become the center of mankind. This would have been nothing other than the Kingdom of God on earth, in which God would have dwelt with men and women.

If that had been accomplished in the beginning, there would be no great divisions of races and languages. We would all belong to the one race of Adam under the one tradition of Adam. And Adam’s one language would be our universal tongue. And indeed, the whole world would be one nation under God.

So, in God’s plan, all men are supposed to be born into the Kingdom of God on earth. We are to enjoy the heavenly life on earth. And then when our physical earthly life is over, we are to be elevated into the Kingdom of God in the spiritual heaven, where we shall live for eternity. That was God’s original plan.

There could be no Satan, no evil, and no hell in that world. Indeed, God did not create hell for His own children. No good father would construct a prison for his newborn child. Why would God need a hell for His

children? Only heaven was God's original will. Because of sin, however, people lost their original value and became human trash. Hell is like a trash can. But it was necessary only after the fall of man.

KINGDOM OF HELL—PARADISE LOST

Then let us further examine the state of the fallen people and the fallen world. We read in John that Jesus says,

'You are of your father the devil.' (John 8:44)

By the fall, man was brought under the false fatherhood of Satan. Man changed fathers. We left our true father, God, and united with the false father, Satan. The first man and woman became the children of Satan. Under the false fatherhood of Satan, Adam and Eve united unlawfully as a couple without God's blessing or permission. And when they multiplied children, they all came under the same false father. They were all born as the children of sin, not the children of God. Therefore, the multiplication of sinful children from one generation to another has brought about this fallen, sinful world.

Because God is not at the center, this is a world of sin, a world of mistrust, a world of crime, a world of war. And we, the nations and societies of this world can destroy each other and feel no pain. This is the kingdom of hell on earth.

The master of this world, indeed, is not God, but Satan. This is why John 12:31 indicates that Satan is the ruler of this world. We know this universe was created by God. We know God created us. But God is no longer the master, because people changed masters. Man betrayed God and united with a false master, Satan. This Satan became the father of mankind.

The fall of man has brought great grief to the heart of our Heavenly Father. God lost everything when His people turned against Him. That is why we read in Genesis,

The Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. (Gen. 6:6)

God was grieved because the exact opposite of His will had become the reality. If God's intention had been fulfilled, He would have been joyful. If the consequences of the fall were the result of God's own plan, why should God be grieved to His heart? Why would He have been sorry that He had made us?

SALVATION IS RESTORATION

Almighty God is a God of love, a God of mercy. His heart is compassionate and He grieved at the living death of His children.

He knows no person is capable of breaking his chains and getting rid

of sin by himself. He knows that only one power can bring people into salvation—God Himself. And God, in His mercy, is determined to save this world.

What is salvation? Salvation is simply restoration. What does a doctor do to save his patient? He restores the patient to normal health. That is a cure. What would you do to save a drowning person? You would save him by bringing him out of the water and restoring him to dry land. That is a rescue.

By the same token, God's salvation of man is simply to restore man from an abnormal, deviated state to the original state of goodness.

So, salvation is equivalent to restoration. God is going to restore the kingdom of hell to the Kingdom of Heaven.

God made His determination clear in the Bible:

'I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.' (Isaiah 46:11)

God did not say He might do it. He said He will do it, showing His absolute determination to restore man and the world to the original design.

How? By the Messiah. To restore mankind, God sent His only son, Jesus Christ, into this world as the Savior—as the Messiah. Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ came into our world as the author of life. He came to transform all sinful people into Christ-like people. He came to restore the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

Therefore, Jesus Christ proclaimed as his first gospel,

'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' (Matt: 4:17)

With the coming of Jesus Christ, people were truly at the threshold of the Kingdom of Heaven.

PREPARATION FOR THE MESSIAH

However, before God could send His Son to restore the world, He had to prepare the way step by step, starting with one individual and expanding to a nation, in order to establish a foundation of faith upon which the Messiah could come.

After all, this world had been Satan's world. If the Messiah were to come to this earth without a prepared foundation, the satanic world would destroy him. So God worked diligently and carefully to establish one nation, one sovereignty over which He could have control. The nation of Israel was the result of that preparation for the Messiah.

God prepared the nation of Israel as the "landing site" for the Messiah. Upon Israel's foundation of faith, God could send His ultimate champion, the Messiah.

Likewise, Christianity today is the parallel landing site of the Messiah for his Second Coming. And Christians are supposed to be forming a foun-

dation of faith for the return of the Messiah in the final hour of fulfillment.

Today, as never before in our troubled world, the Messiah is our hope! The mission of the Messiah is restoration—to bring fallen, suffering humanity out of this world of evil and restore man into the original perfection and goodness of God. He is to destroy Satan's evil sovereignty over this world and establish God's sovereignty.

Jesus Christ came as the Messiah of 2,000 years ago for this purpose—to restore God's Kingdom. Today we are waiting for the Second Coming of Christ. The purpose of that Second Coming is precisely the same—the restoration of God's original Kingdom. That is the one purpose and one will of God.

We Christians are today's chosen people of God. Christians are Christ's co-workers. So we are in a position to prepare a foundation for the Lord, to welcome and accept him when he comes, and to participate in his mission to destroy Satan from the face of the earth, and bring all mankind to salvation.

But today, Christians are not sure about the will of God. We are more interested in our own personal salvation, our own heaven somewhere, and the guarantee of our own little niche up there. But that is not the way God intended Christians to be.

WHERE ARE YOU, MY DAVID?

God is looking for His champions among the Christians of the world today. And the work of God needs a sacrificial spirit. How many Christians are now saying, "Use me as a lamb on Your altar, and out of my sacrifice save this world"? God is seeking a self-denying spirit. God is searching for the bearers of the cross for the 20th century. And today's Christians are deaf to that call.

Instead, Christians today are crying out for "my heaven," "my salvation." What about God? What about the rest of the world? Will you be able to keep your small piece of heaven when the rest of the world is crumbling? No. If, on the other hand, the whole world were saved, would your own salvation not already be included?

Today, if the Christian churches persist in the same individual-centered way, the spirit of Christianity is bound to decline. Before we cry out for our salvation, let us cry out for the fulfillment of God's will. We must liberate God from His sorrow, His grief. When we have solved God's problem, man's problem will automatically be solved. Then Christian fire will truly burn for the sake of the broken heart of God, not for ourselves.

In their 2,000 years of history, Christians had great opportunity to bring the entire world to God. But Christians simply did not clearly know the will of God. They did not act when opportunity knocked.

That same opportunity is knocking once again. This time the opportunity has come to America. If today's American Christians recognize the will of God in the present day and act upon it, we can turn the world upside

down and right side up, and bring heaven down on earth. The hour of the Second Coming of Christ is at hand, yet we are missing the signs of the times.

Instead of continuing to ask and pray,

'Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,'

(Matt. 6:10)

we can act upon God's will now, and make that heaven a reality right here in New York, because we have already arrived at God's scheduled hour of fulfillment.

Each one of us is part of the body of Christ, so when Christ comes we are the extensions of his living body. If each one of us is willing and ready to nail his body to the cross in order to have our world live, then we shall indeed turn this world into the Kingdom of Heaven. To live and die for God and Christ—this is the privilege of being a Christian!

Remember, God's will is to save the whole world—not just Christians, not just churches. There is a universally known verse in the Bible, which we learned as children in Sunday school:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

(John 3:16)

The emphasis there is on the word "world." God so loved the world, not just the church, not just the Christians, not just one particular people, but the whole world. For that reason—to save this world—the Messiah is sent.

If you asked our Lord the question, "Are you the savior of only the Christians?" he would answer "No! I am the savior of all mankind."

If you asked God, "Are You the God of the Christians?" God would say, "No! I am the God of the universe, the God of all creation, the God of all people."

Two thousand years ago, people were awaiting the coming of the Messiah, but for very self-centered reasons. They thought that the Messiah was coming as a sort of military conqueror to avenge them and defeat the Roman Empire, and to reward Israel with great glory and power in an earthly sense. And they simply missed the whole point.

On the contrary, the Messiah was coming to Israel to lead the people as a sacrifice to reach out to the rest of the world, to bring the entire world into God's salvation.

God determined to restore the entire world, and to bring all people into goodness and perfection. If God could not do that, He would be a defeated God. Defeated by whom? By Satan! Then God would not be God. Imagine yourself in the position of God. When God looks upon the Christian world today, I do not think He is pleased. He foresees a great battle to be fought and won. God must have a confrontation with the formidable power of the enemy, the power of Satan, the power of sin.

For that, God needs a modern day David to confront this Goliath, Satan. Do you not hear God's cry, "Where is my David? Where are you, my David?" And God expects today's Christians to respond, "Yes, my Lord! I am Your David. Your will be done!"

But the Christians of this world seem to be in deep sleep. And the handful who are awake are busy fighting among themselves. The time of harvest has come in this cosmic autumn, but God has no workers to send out to the fields.

Ever since the fall of man, God has been waging a divine war against the power of Satan. That war has not ended. The final battle is yet to come. Christ is coming for the second time, as the commander in chief, to wage that final battle. And that hour has arrived. Yet, alas, no heavenly soldiers are ready. Christians are asleep.

So far, God has only been able to engage in "guerrilla warfare" against Satan, not total war. However, God has been preparing for one great day, a heavenly "D-Day"—like the D-Day of the Normandy landing—when God can launch an all out offensive. That day is the day of the return of Christ. That D-Day of God is at hand! The Bible is the record of God's patient preparation leading mankind into that final battle. The fulfillment of the Bible is the coming of the Lord—the return of Christ for that D-Day.

THE BIBLE IS A CODED MESSAGE

What is the Bible, more precisely? The Bible has been a book of mystery. However, the Bible contains God's message to you and me.

The Bible does not use plain language, but is written in symbols and parables. Do you know why God has presented the Bible in symbols and parables? Why did He not speak the truth clearly?

God has had to deal with the world of evil. Throughout the ages, God has hand picked His workers, or champions, out of this evil world. Abraham was such a champion. Noah was such a champion.

And God's champions were always in the utter minority in the evil world. If God revealed His strategy too openly or plainly, the enemy would use that information against God's champions. Thus, the Bible was written as a coded message, so that only God's agents or champions could decipher it.

Let me make an analogy. To protect her security, America sends out many agents overseas to collect vital information concerning potential enemies. When the home headquarters is communicating with these agents overseas, particularly in enemy territory, would they communicate openly and plainly? No. No one would be that naive. They would communicate in coded messages—secret messages—so that the enemy could not decipher them.

Throughout history, righteous people have faced nothing but suffering on this earth, simply because they were in enemy territory, and Satan did not want to have God's agents prosper. Whenever Satan's forces discovered God's representatives, they tried to destroy them.

We must realize that God has had to give His instructions in coded mes-

sages. Thus the Bible is written in symbols and parables. In a sense, the Bible is intended to be mysterious. Then how can we know the true meaning of those symbols and parables?

It is simple, in a way. If you are an agent dispatched by your headquarters, and you want to decipher a coded message, then you must either have a code book, or communicate directly with your home headquarters.

By the same token, the meaning of the symbols and parables in the Bible can only be clear when we communicate with our "home headquarters"—God. This is truly the only sure way we can know the ultimate meaning of the Bible.

Two thousand years ago our Lord Jesus Christ brought the blueprint for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. However, he could not speak plainly about his plan even to his own disciples. Jesus spoke in figures and parables. Why?

Jesus knew the adverse circumstances in which he had to work. There was political pressure from the Roman Empire. There was the ruling monarchy, who opposed any change. And there was a strong religious system and tradition. These could all be directed against the building of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus came to kindle the fire of revolution in people, which would in due course change the structure and the life of the entire nation. But he could not speak plainly of any of this even to his own disciples. Instead, he had to speak in figures and parables, saying,

'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.' (Luke 14:35)

If you attempt to interpret the Bible literally, word for word, letter for letter, without understanding the nature of the coded message of the Bible, you are liable to make a big mistake.

Therefore, in this day, at this hour, what the Christian world needs is a revelation from God. God must reveal to us His plan; He must tell us His timetable, and give us instructions as to what to do at this time. God indeed promised that by saying, in Amos,

'Surely the Lord God does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.' (Amos 3:7)

Tonight I am standing here at Madison Square Garden not according to my own will, but in obedience to the divine will of God. God has called me as His instrument, to reveal His message for His present day dispensation, so that there may be a people prepared for the day of the Lord.

Tonight I am going to concentrate on the divine revelation concerning the coming of the Lord of the Second Advent—the vital issue of the Second Advent—the most important question of our time. And in order to understand this more clearly, we must first know the circumstances of the coming of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago.

JESUS DID NOT COME TO DIE

There is one historical puzzle that not been solved.

For 4,000 years before the coming of Jesus Christ, God had prepared the people for the Messiah, as I explained earlier. Through His prophets, God had forewarned the people to be ready for the Messiah. God was working to build up expectation, and there was indeed great messianic fervor in Israel. And at the appointed hour, God fulfilled His promise. The Son of God, Jesus Christ, came to his own people on time.

Then what happened? History is the witness We did not know him. We rejected him, rebelled against him, and finally crucified him on the cross. Why?

The Christian churches say, "Well, the answer to that question is, simply, God sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross. The crucifixion was the predestined will of God from the beginning."

Then let me ask those Christians, "What will you do when Jesus Christ returns to you today?" All Christians undoubtedly will answer, "We will receive him! Welcome him! Unite with him! Follow him!" Let me further ask, "Will you crucify Christ when he appears?" Your answer must be, "No!"

If that is so, then what about the people of 2,000 years ago? If they had accepted Jesus—as you would today—would they still have had to crucify him? No! It was a mistake! It was in ignorance that we crucified Jesus Christ.

It was God's will that His people accept the Messiah. But we crucified him instead. And then Christians "passed the buck" by saying that was the will of God. Ridiculous! This is not acceptable to our logic. Something must have gone terribly wrong. What was it?

IGNORANCE KILLED JESUS

The people did not know who Jesus of Nazareth was. They did not know him as the Son of God. If they had clearly known Jesus was the Messiah the Son of God, they would not have crucified him.

He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. (John 1:11) 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)

If they had only known who he was, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. It was a mistake. It was ignorance and blindness that killed Jesus Christ!

Christians of the world have not realized the truth about what actually happened in Jesus' time. If God's only purpose in sending His Son was to have him nailed on the cross, then why would God spend the time to prepare the people in the first place? It would have been much easier for God to send His son among the disbelievers, or even among savages. They would have killed him more quickly, and salvation would have come faster.

SLAVES TO THE LETTER OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Then the question is, why did the people not know who Jesus was? Believe it or not, the first reason why God's people did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah was because of the Old Testament. This may be surprising to you. But the people interpreted the Old Testament literally. They did not realize that the Bible was in code. They did not look for a code book. Instead, they took the Bible literally, word for word, letter for letter. In other words, they became slaves to the letter of the Old Testament.

Let me give you the evidence. The book of Malachi in the Old Testament has a parallel purpose to that of the Book of Revelation in the New Testament. It clearly shows the timetable and the last minute description of how the Messiah would come. In Malachi, you will find these words:

'I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers' (Mal. 4:5-6)

Who was Elijah? He was a great prophet of Israel who had lived approximately 900 years before Jesus Christ, and who had ascended into heaven in a chariot of fire in a whirlwind, according to the Old Testament. So people believed that Elijah would literally return from the blue sky in a chariot of fire and announce the Son of God; This is what people expected.

But did Elijah come? The problem was, Elijah did not return in the manner people expected. The people never heard anything about his returning miraculously. However, one day they did hear an extraordinary declaration. A young man from Nazareth, whose name was Jesus, was being proclaimed by his followers as the Messiah, the Son of God. That was indeed an incredible announcement.

And what was the people's immediate reaction? "Impossible!" they said. "How could Jesus of Nazareth be the Son of God? We have not heard anything about Elijah." No Elijah, no Messiah.

In order to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God, they would have had to disregard their 4,000 year old tradition and throw their Bible away. But no one was willing to do that.

People at that time truly misunderstood Jesus, the Son of God. They said to him,

'It is not for a good work that we stone you but for blasphemy; because you, being a man, make yourself God' (John 10:33)

And they picked up stones, ready to stone Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Furthermore, when Jesus performed many mighty works and miracles, people did not honor Jesus. They said instead,

'It is only by Beelzebub, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.' (Matt. 12:24)

What a tragedy! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the prince of peace, was belittled and relegated to the prince of demons!

Pontius Pilate, the governor from Rome, did not want to crucify Jesus, because he could not find any fault in him. However, Jesus' own people were the ones who were shouting, "Let him be crucified! Let him be crucified!"

People whom God had prepared to receive him wanted Jesus to be killed, and to have the criminal Barabbas released instead of him. Was that the will of God? No! Jesus Christ was the victim of the ignorance and blindness of his own people. And they misread the prophecy—they misread the Old Testament.

Imagine that Elijah had come in a supernatural manner, in a chariot of fire from the sky, as people expected. It would have created a great sensation. And imagine Elijah appearing in front of the multitudes and proclaiming, "This man, Jesus of Nazareth, is indeed the Son of God." Then I am sure everyone would have knelt down and worshipped him right there. Then who would have dared to crucify Jesus Christ?

However, that sort of miracle was not the meaning of the prophecy. Malachi's prophecy of the coming of Elijah was indeed an obstacle to Jesus' successful ministry. When Jesus' disciples went out all over Israel teaching the gospel and proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God, the people repudiated their words, saying, "If your master is the Son of God, where is Elijah? The book says Elijah must come first."

JOHN THE BAPTIST WAS ELIJAH

Jesus' disciples were not well prepared to answer this question. As a matter of fact, they were not learned in the Old Testament. After all, they were lowly fishermen of Galilee and tax collectors. So the embarrassed disciples one day decided to go to Jesus to ask for his help in this matter. An account appears in Matthew:

And the disciples asked him, 'Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?' He replied, 'Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come.' ...Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. (Matt. 17:10-13)

This was a real shock to the disciples. And then they understood, according to the Bible, that Jesus was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Was John the Baptist Elijah? Yes, Jesus said so. But the people were never convinced. They said, "Outrageous!"

Let us imagine we can transpose these events to our time. John the Baptist of 2,000 years ago was a person of tremendous influence, enjoying great prestige all over Israel as a great man of God—just like Billy Graham of today, a great Christian leader.

Let us say some unknown young man suddenly appeared and began

proclaiming himself to the world as the Son of God. As a student of the scriptures, you would ask him, "If you are the Son of God, where is the promised Elijah?" If this man said, "Do you not know that Billy Graham is Elijah?" what would be your reaction? You would undoubtedly say, "Impossible! How could Billy Graham be Elijah? He did not come out of the blue sky. We all know he came from North Carolina!"

You could not accept that, could you? Precisely this same kind of unbelief confronted our Lord Jesus Christ. People could not accept John the Baptist as Elijah, simply because he did not come from the sky. The people of 2,000 years ago were stubborn in their belief that the prophecy of Elijah's return must be fulfilled literally, that he must come from the sky. They were the victims of the letter of the Old Testament.

JOHN THE BAPTIST, MAN OF FAILURE

Yet Jesus Christ continued to preach with power and authority in spite of scornful public opinion. The people could not dismiss such a man lightly. They wanted to be sure of themselves. So they decided to go to ask John the Baptist himself and settle their questions once and for all. They asked John,

Who are you? He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ' And they asked him, 'What then, are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not.' 'Are you the prophet?' And he answered, 'No.' (John 1:19-21)

John the Baptist denied everything. He said, "I am not Elijah." He even denied the title of prophet. Everyone knew and recognized him as a prophet of God, but he said, "I'm no prophet." Why? He evaluated the situation and knew that Jesus Christ was treated by his own society as an outcast. Jesus seemed to be a loser, and John decided not to side with Jesus. He thought it would be much better to deny everything.

By doing so, John the Baptist pushed Jesus into a corner, making him seem a great impostor without defense. After John's denial, Jesus had no further recourse on this point.

Then why was Jesus crucified? First, he became the victim of literal interpretation of the Old Testament. Second, Jesus was rejected and finally crucified because of the failure of the mission of John the Baptist. We can read in Matthew that John the Baptist, waiting in prison to be beheaded, sent two of his own disciples to Jesus to ask the following question:

'Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?' (Matt. 11:3)

Is this the question of a man who has faith in Jesus as the Son of God? John the Baptist had earlier testified to Jesus at the Jordan River:

'I have seen and have born witness that this is the Son of God' (John 1:34)

Yet this very same person, with the very same tongue, was now con-

fronting Jesus by asking, "Are you really the Messiah, or shall we go and look for somebody else?" How disheartening that question must have been to Jesus! What a man of little faith John was!

The mission of John the Baptist was very important to the fulfillment of the mission of the Messiah. God sent John specifically,

... to make ready for the Lord a people prepared. (Luke 1:17)

That was John's responsibility as the forerunner of Christ.

Jesus relied very much upon the success of the mission of John the Baptist. When this very John the Baptist sent his disciples to Jesus to ask him, "Are you really the Messiah?" it was more painful for Jesus than if he had stabbed him with a knife. Anger overwhelmed him. Jesus refused to answer yes or no to that impossible question. Instead Jesus said,

'Blessed is he who takes no offense at me.' (Matt. 11:6)

This was Jesus' consolation to John when he saw that John was failing. Jesus was really saying, "Poor John, man of failure. You no longer have faith in me. You are taking offense at the Son of God. I am sorry for you, John."

And then Jesus spoke to the crowd about John in indignation, saying,

'What did you go out into the wilderness to behold? A reed shaken by the wind? Why then did you go out? To see a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, those who wear soft raiment are in kings' houses. Why then did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet' (Matt. 11:7-9)

John was more than a prophet, because he came to bear witness directly to Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was born for this extraordinary mission. God entrusted that glorious responsibility to John. What an honor for a man to be called "more than a prophet" by Jesus! Yet John failed to live up to this honor. Therefore, Jesus said in Matthew,

'Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no one greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.' (Matt. 11:11)

John had fallen to the point where even the least in the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than he. The meaning of Jesus' statement has remained mysterious. Christians have not understood its true significance because they have not realized that John the Baptist was a man who failed his mission. Tonight we know the true meaning.

John the Baptist was the greatest among those born of women because of his mission, which was to testify to the Son of God. All the prophets in

the past had the same mission. But the prophets who came before John had borne witness to the Messiah with a distance of time between them and the Lord.

John was born as a contemporary of Jesus Christ, so he had the privilege to bear witness to the living Christ when he appeared in person. So far as his mission was concerned, John the Baptist had the greatest, most glorious mission of all. Thus Jesus said he was the greatest among those born of women.

However, in carrying out his mission, John was the very least; he was the most miserable failure of all. All the prophets who had lived before him were watching from the spirit world. They knew who Jesus Christ was. But John did not. He doubted. He became skeptical and finally blind to Jesus' identity. In the end, he failed to maintain his own testimony to the Son of God. He became a man of failure and therefore the least of all in the Kingdom of Heaven.

I will give you another indisputable proof of the failure of the mission of John the Baptist. The people said to John,

'Rabbi, he. . . Jesus who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you bore witness, here he is, baptizing, and all are going to him.' (John 3:26)

Then John answered,

'He must increase but I must decrease' (John 3:30)

Christians have interpreted this to mean that John was truly a humble man and a great prophet. They believe that he felt in all humility that Jesus must increase, while he himself had to decrease.

On the contrary, this is proof of the arrogance of John the Baptist. If John had taken Jesus Christ seriously as the Son of God, he would have no choice but to become one with Jesus and follow him wholeheartedly, rain or shine. He would have risen or fallen together with Jesus, bound by the same destiny. This passage shows that John did not in fact follow Jesus. He took an independent course and deserted Jesus. He did not, indeed, take Jesus seriously.

John the Baptist was finally beheaded. He could have been a glorious martyr had he been beheaded for performing his ordained mission: witnessing and proclaiming to the world that Jesus Christ was the Son of God! But he was beheaded merely for becoming involved in the love scandal of King Herod's family. That affair was none of John's business. Attending the Son of God was his sole responsibility. But John deserted this divine mission and suffered a meaningless, even shameful death. This truth must be told, however painful.

Therefore, Jesus said of John,

'From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force.' (Matt. 11:12)

This means that because of the failure of the mission of John the Baptist, the kingdom heralded by Jesus Christ suffered and was left open for competition. When a champion of God fails in his mission, someone else must take up that mission and put forth great effort to accomplish it. Thus, men of violent faith—like Peter—took John's position by force of their own merit.

However, had John the Baptist been a man of great faith, what would have resulted? He would have indeed become the chief disciple of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. If Jesus had been king, John the Baptist would have been prime minister. That was the position that God ordained for John.

In that case, then, the 12 apostles, the 70 disciples, and the 120 people chosen by Jesus all would have come from the ranks of John's own followers. John would have served as a mediator to bring unity and harmony between the chosen people of Israel and the Son of God. Who would have dared to crucify Jesus under those circumstances? No one! The crucifixion would never have occurred.

I am sure that many people who read the Bible must have wondered about John, "If he was such a great man, why did he not become the chief disciple of the Son of God?" Jesus himself indicated the mission that John the Baptist came to fulfill:

'For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come' (Matt. 11:13)

John the Baptist represented the consummation of the Old Testament, the law and the prophets. He was the prince of the old age. Jesus Christ came as the prince of the new age. Had he been supported by John the Baptist, he could have stood upon the firm foundation of the Old Testament Age. Then the new age could have blossomed in the fertile soil of the accomplishments of the old age. The Son of God could have established his glorious kingdom at once. And John the Baptist would have been the cornerstone of that kingdom.

Had John the Baptist followed Jesus, the distinguished leaders of that society would have been the first to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Then who would have crucified the Lord of glory?

When God sent His only Son to this world to establish His kingdom on earth, don't you think He wanted to be followed by the most able people of his age? Do you think that God wanted only the outcasts of society to follow Jesus? Not at all! The simple failure of John the Baptist broke the link between the Son of God and the people. And as a result, only fishermen, tax collectors, harlots and lepers followed Jesus Christ. This brought great grief to the heart of God.

If the Lord is returning to the world today, is it not most logical that all the leadership of Christianity—the bishops, the cardinals, the pope, and all the evangelists and great ministers of the world—should become the first group to welcome the Christ? If they followed the Lord and became his first disciples, the establishment of his kingdom would be infinitely easier.

You may say, “Reverend Moon, by what authority are you speaking? What makes you so sure?” I do have the authority to say these things. God showed me the truth. I met Jesus. Jesus himself showed me these truths. And I met John the Baptist, too, in the spirit world. He himself bore witness to the truth of this testimony. After these extraordinary spiritual experiences, when I returned to the reality of this world, the same Bible I had been reading took on a whole new meaning.

Even if you cannot accept these things as the truth now, you must at least suspend judgment. One day we will all know the truth. Eventually we are all going to die. Every one of us will end up in the spiritual world, where truth is like the sunlight. No one can escape it there. On that day we shall all see the whole truth.

However, blessed is he who can be humble enough to accept the truth while he has the opportunity here on earth. Your knowledge of the truth and of God here on earth will determine your eternal life.

JESUS EXPECTED ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

There a third vital reason why Jesus was not accepted as the Messiah. Two thousand years ago the people expected the Son of God to come on the clouds of heaven, according to the prophecy of Daniel:

‘I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man.’ (Dan. 7:13)

But Jesus Christ did not appear miraculously on the clouds of heaven.

He was born of a woman Mary, the wife of Joseph. The people said, “Well, how could this Jesus be the Son of God? He is a mere man, Just like you and me.” This was another overwhelming reason why the people rejected Jesus.

Some might object that Daniel’s prophecy was not intended for the first coming of Jesus Christ, but rather for the coming of the Lord of the Second Advent. But I say this is not the case, because Jesus testified that all the prophecies and the law given prior to John the Baptist were intended to be fulfilled in the time of Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:13).

So the prophecy of the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven was intended for the coming of Jesus Christ 2,000 years ago. In those days there was no New Testament, and the thought of the Second Coming of the Lord was not even in the mind of God.

This prophecy of Daniel posed much difficulty for the ministry of Jesus. For instance, we can see the apostle John warns in the New Testament,

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of the Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist. (II John 7)

This is what John was saying 2,000 years ago about those who disbelieved in Jesus Christ, rejecting him simply because he was a man in the flesh. They did not accept Jesus, but continued waiting for a supernatural appearance on the clouds. John condemned these people in the worst terms, saying, "such a one is the antichrist."

These historical truths have remained hidden from the Christian world. Today, for the first time, all these circumstances of Jesus' ministry are being brought to light.

Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfill the mission of bringing God's kingdom to earth. But we did not understand him. We committed the great tragedy. Then later we claimed that was the will of God. How ironic!

The conviction that Jesus came to die on the cross has become the very foundation of Christianity. But this mistaken belief has been piercing the heart of God again and again for the last 2,000 years. God's heart was broken when Adam rebelled against Him, and again when His Son was nailed to the cross on the Mount of Calvary. We have sadly misunderstood both God and Christ.

Why, then, has this truth been revealed at this particular time? Because the time of the Second Coming of Christ is near. And God does not want Christians to commit the same mistake made at Jesus' time.

Only with the revelation of the clear truth from the Heavenly Father can all the Christian churches become one. Yes, truth makes us one. If we know the truth, that truth will liberate us from our mistaken beliefs and disunity. And the plain truth of God has now been revealed.

CRUCIFIXION—SECONDARY MISSION OF JESUS

The crucifixion was not at all the original mission of the Son of God, but represented an alteration of his intended course. It was a secondary mission. It was decided on the Mount of Transfiguration. An account of this appears in Luke.

And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure [his crucifixion], which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:30-31)

When Peter, Jesus' chief disciple, was informed by Jesus that he would suffer in Jerusalem and was to be crucified, Peter violently protested, as we read in Matthew:

'God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you' (Matt.16:22)

Then Jesus lashed out at him saying,

'Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men.' (Matt. 16:23)

Christians often quote this particular passage as proof that Jesus came to die on the cross. Many explain, "Look what Jesus said. He said he came to die. So that is why he rebuked Peter and called him Satan, because Peter opposed Jesus' going to the cross."

But that interpretation misses one vital point. Jesus rebuked Peter after he knew that God had changed His plan and altered Jesus' mission. Since the people rejected Jesus, God knew that Jesus could not carry out his primary mission, the establishment of the kingdom on earth, which required the cooperation of the people.

At that late point in his ministry, God then asked Jesus to fulfill only the limited goal of spiritual salvation. Jesus therefore began preparing for this secondary goal. And poor Peter knew nothing about this change in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Jesus called Peter "Satan" because Peter's seemingly comforting words had no relevance to the will of God at that point. Peter spoke from ignorance and blindness. But Jesus could not risk losing this secondary mission—for then his coming would have been completely in vain.

ACCEPTING JESUS WOULD HAVE BROUGHT GOD'S KINGDOM

Let us consider what actually would have happened had Jesus been accepted by the people of Israel. Indeed, he would have become the king of Israel; he would have united his disciples with all of the descendants of Abraham, 12 tribes of Jacob, and all the Arab tribes as well. All of them would have become one family of the Son of God.

Jesus Christ would have set up a heavenly sovereignty centered upon the nation of Israel. The constitution of the Kingdom of God would have been promulgated in his time. An invincible nation would have been established, with the sovereignty of God spearheaded by the last Adam—Jesus Christ—as king. Even the Roman Empire would have been humbled before God's kingdom. This is the prediction of Isaiah:

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 for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (Is. 9:7)

After Jesus' death, his disciples marched toward Rome barehanded, suffering and shedding their blood. And within 400 years, the Roman Empire collapsed before this weaponless army. Had Jesus Christ not been crucified,

but personally commanded this holy army, the entire Roman Empire would have come under the sovereignty of God during Jesus' own lifetime.

In those days, the great Roman Empire was the hub of the world. God's plan of salvation was to restore the whole world. Thus, God prepared Rome in a central role so that once the kingdom came to Rome, it could be spread easily to the whole world. Had Jesus been able to establish his kingdom in the Roman Empire, then through Rome's power and influence, people in every corner of the globe would have heard his gospel while he lived on earth.

Thus, in his lifetime Jesus would have established the Kingdom of Heaven on earth as a reality. The nation of Israel would have been the glorious center of his kingdom. Then there would be no divided Christianity as we have today—no Roman Catholicism, no Presbyterianism, no Methodism, no Church of Christ. None of these would be necessary. You no longer need a vehicle when you have reached your destination.

You and I would already be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. There would have been no bloody history of Christianity—no martyrs. And there would be no reason for the Second Coming. A doctor is unnecessary if there are no patients to cure.

The sad reality, however, is that Jesus Christ was met with rebellion. Without the obedience of Adam and Eve, God could not fulfill his ideal in the Garden of Eden. And without people's cooperation, Jesus Christ could not establish his kingdom on earth.

CRUCIFIXION BROUGHT ONLY SPIRITUAL SALVATION

So Jesus focused on his secondary mission, spiritual salvation. Due to the sin and blindness of the people, God permitted His son to be a sacrifice. That was the significance of the crucifixion. God allowed Jesus to die on the cross as a ransom paid to Satan. In exchange, upon Jesus' resurrection, God could claim the people's souls, though redemption of the body was not possible.

Therefore God's victory was not in the cross but in the resurrection. The resurrection brought the salvation Christianity offers.

At Jesus' crucifixion, Christianity was crucified as well. At the hour of the Lord's tribulation, no one remained faithful. Everyone betrayed Jesus. Even Peter denied Christ.

But with the resurrection, Christianity revived as well. Then for 40 days, Jesus rejoined and cemented the shattered fragments of Christianity. That was the beginning of the Christianity of today.

Yes, our salvation does come from Jesus' victorious resurrection. This is the victory of Christ, and Satan's power can never influence it. But the body of Jesus Christ was given up as a sacrifice and a ransom. In giving up his body, Jesus also gave up the body of mankind. Our salvation is limited to spiritual redemption, because the redemption of the body remained unfulfilled 2,000 years ago. And our world still suffers under Satan's power. Sin rages and dominates this world through our bodies.

Therefore, Paul shouted out in anguish,

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. (Rom. 7:24-25)

Paul was living in the grace of the Lord. Still he confessed that he could serve God only with his mind, and his flesh served the law of sin. His body yearned to be redeemed; he still anguished over sin.

And so it is for us. By accepting Christ, we receive spiritual salvation. But our bodies serve the law of sin under Satan's domain—until Christ returns and liberates us from the bondage of sin. The Lord of the Second Advent alone can give total salvation: spiritual salvation and redemption of our bodies as well.

Christianity's power is limited to spiritual salvation. Unlike the nation of Israel, Christianity has no physical base, so God's dominion in Christianity is over only a spiritual kingdom.

Therefore, our great hope is the Second Coming of the Messiah. This is the hope of America, the hope of the world. America—this unique Christian nation—must awaken now and ready herself for the day of his coming.

American Christianity stands in the spiritual position of Israel 2,000 years ago. America is destined to serve as the Messiah's landing site for the 20th century. God wants to reach out to all people, and has chosen to reach out first to America and through her to the world.

America's role parallels that of the Roman Empire 2,000 years ago. As Rome was the hub of the world then, America is the hub of the world in modern times. Jesus set his eyes on Rome. And when Christ returns, he will set his eyes on America.

PRAYER IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

In our ignorance, we Christians have missed the true spirit of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. There he told 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. 26:28-39)

He prayed this way not once, but three times. He was sorrowful even to death. Many in the Christian world suppose Jesus prayed this way out of human weakness, shrinking from his mission of dying on the cross. Nothing can be further from the truth!

Under Roman tyrants hundreds of thousands of Christians were martyred. They never said, "Please let this cup pass from me."

Simon Peter, when he himself was about to be crucified, told his persecutors, "I am not worthy to die in the same manner as my Lord. Do me a favor! Crucify me upside down." Even he did not say, "Please let this cup pass from me."

When Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was being stoned to death, he did not say, "Let this cup pass from me." Rather, he died peacefully, praying for his tormentors.

Such bravery is not limited to the Bible, Nathan Hale, a young officer captured in the American Revolutionary War, said as he was about to be hanged, "I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country." He did not say, "Please let this cup pass from me."

Do you suppose that the Messiah, the Son of God, was weaker than all these people—especially if you think he came for the sole purpose of dying on the cross for world salvation? No! Were that the case, he would be unqualified as a Messiah. We have not understood the Lord Jesus.

The prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane was not uttered out of any selfish concern or fear of death. Jesus Christ, our Lord, was ready to die a thousand times over if that were the only way to bring about the salvation of humanity.

Jesus' concern was for his mission. He grieved at the suffering of his Heavenly Father. He was in turmoil because he could foresee the terrible consequences of his crucifixion. Jesus knew well that his crucifixion was not God's ultimate will. He knew his death would postpone the realization of the Kingdom of Heaven another 2,000 years, and that in the meantime humanity would suffer terribly.

He knew that millions of future followers would have to suffer, shedding their blood and being martyred as he had been. He knew Israel would be forsaken and desolate. And most of all, he had longed to bring victory and glorious fulfillment to his Father's throne in heaven, not to return alone through the crucifixion. He had hoped for a triumphant homecoming.

So in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus made his final desperate plea to God: "Even at this late hour, is there any possible way that I can remain on earth to fulfill my mission?" If we are to become true followers of Christ, we must fathom the grief and anguish that Jesus Christ suffered.

Furthermore, had the crucifixion been the full will of God, then Judas—Jesus' betrayer—should be regarded as a hero and awarded a heavenly medal, because somebody had to hand the Son of God to the enemy to be crucified. Yet, Jesus said of Judas,

'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)

And why should Jesus shout on the cross,

'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matt. 27:46)

If his crucifixion had been the will of God, Jesus should have been overjoyed. He would have shouted, "God, I am honored! Rejoice, Father, I am victorious!"

Christianity today has maintained the traditional view that Jesus came simply to die on the cross. This is how Christians have rationalized the murder of the Son of God!

HOW THE SECOND COMING WILL BE FULFILLED

Today, people cannot believe anything unless it is logical. God is truth, and truth is logical. There can be no perfection in ignorance.

Christian prayer alone could not lift Neil Armstrong to the moon. Scientific truth was necessary. I myself was once a student of science, and I know that God is also the God of science. God's message has to be scientific, logical, and convincing to men of the 20th century.

Let me come now to the apex of this evening's talk by discussing how the Second Coming of Christ will be fulfilled.

We read in the Gospels,

'They will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.' (Matt. 24:30)

And in Revelation we read:

Behold, he is coming with the clouds. (Rev. 1:7)

But on the other hand, Paul wrote,

The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (I Thess. 5:2)

One prophecy envisions the Lord appearing with the clouds of heaven, and the other sneaking in like a thief in the night. These two prophecies are somewhat in conflict. If he comes as a thief, he cannot at the same time appear in the clouds. Shall we just choose one prophecy and throw the other out?

The people of 2,000 years ago did not know the message of God was in symbols. In interpreting it literally, they made a grave mistake. And when we Christians read the New Testament, we must not make the same mistake. We must read the Bible in the spirit of God, and discover the true meaning of its symbols and parables.

Two thousand years ago everyone expected Elijah to appear from the blue sky, but he did not come that way. Likewise, they expected the Messiah to come with the clouds of heaven, but he did not come that way either. Today, Christians await the Lord of the Second Advent's arrival on the clouds. But do you have any guarantee that such expectations will not be disappointed this time?

Let us be humble and open minded enough to accept both possibili-

ties—his coming on the clouds of heaven, and his coming as a thief at night. If you fix your mind only on the Lord's coming on the clouds, and it turns out that he comes as the Son of Man in the flesh, you will most likely commit the same crime as the people 2,000 years ago.

However, if you are humble and capable of accepting the Lord as the Son of Man in the flesh—which is the only way he could come as a thief—you win either way. You will be assured of meeting the Lord whichever way he comes.

If you could miss the Lord at all, it would be only if he came as a thief. If he comes on the clouds, you have no worry. Every eye would see him then. The television networks would make sure of that!

But I must advise you that God will not send His Son literally with the clouds of heaven. If you are gazing up in the sky and waiting for the Second Coming of the Lord, you will be disappointed. He will come, once again, as a man in the flesh.

This is God's revelation. Let me testify to it by reading the significant prophecies of the Bible. In Luke we read,

Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he Jesus answered them, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed.' (Luke 17:20)

Everyone would see the clouds of heaven. But Jesus said we would not observe the kingdom's coming. Did the people see the coming of the Messiah 2,000 years ago? No, they did not, because he came as the Son of Man in the flesh. Next let us examine a most extraordinary statement of Jesus Christ.

Most people ask, "Does the Bible really say that?" Look in Luke, where Jesus said,

'But first he the Lord of the Second Advent must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.' (Luke 17:25)

If the Lord is coming with the clouds of heaven, in power and great glory, with the trumpets of angels, who could dare reject him or cause him suffering? Would you? These are Jesus' words: He will suffer and be rejected, because he is coming as the Son of Man in the flesh. At first, people will have a difficult time recognizing him as the Christ.

Christian churches and devout Christians are expecting the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven. They are all looking up, waiting for his appearance. But if that expectation does not come true, and the Lord appears unexpectedly as the Son of man in the flesh—as Jesus came to this world the first time—then what will happen?

At first people will reject him and cause him suffering. There will be no faith on earth. There will be no initial acceptance of Christ. Many Christians will pick up stones to throw at him. Many Christians will call him

a blasphemer, a heretic, a man possessed by demons. Those were the very charges brought against Jesus 2,000 years ago.

In Luke we read,

As it was in the time of Noah, so will it be in the days of the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. (Luke 17:26-27)

This is the description of the days of the Son of Man. And this will happen when the Lord comes as the Son of Man in the flesh.

The coming of Jesus as a man will herald the Kingdom of Heaven. But nobody will heed him. In fact, people will laugh at him, ridicule him, and persecute him, and do all kinds of evil against him.

And in the meantime, the world will continue in its usual way, in carnal business—eating, drinking, marrying—until the day the Lord is lifted up to the throne of judgment. When the world recognizes him as the Lord of Judgment, it will be too late! The ark will be closed. The judgment will already be at hand.

Now, I want you to consider another passage:

'I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?' (Luke 18:8)

Jesus questioned whether there would be faith on earth when Christ returned. Why?

History may repeat itself. Two thousand years ago tremendous faith existed. People prayed in the synagogues morning, noon, and night. They constantly read the Scriptures, writing them on their lapels, reciting them every day. They kept the Ten Commandments and all the laws. They brought their tithes to the temple. They fasted and fasted.

However, when the Son of God appeared, they failed to recognize him, and condemned him to the cross. Did Jesus find any faith? In the sight of Jesus Christ, there was absolutely no faith on earth.

So when he returns as the Son of Man in the flesh, there also may be no faith on earth. Millions of Christians and thousands of churches may never see the Son of Man coming, because it will be in the flesh.

Now, finally, let us read Matthew,

'On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast our 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)

What does this mean? Why should these devout Christians, who are calling on the name of the Lord, be condemned as evildoers? What wrong will

they have done?

Throughout history many crimes and sins have been committed in the name of the Lord, in the name of God.

There is no better example of this than what happened in Jesus' time. The people who plotted to kill Jesus Christ—and finally succeeded in crucifying him on the cross—were the very people who had faithfully followed the word of God day and night. But when the Son of God came to them, they committed the worst crime in history. They killed God's only Son, and they did it in the name of the Lord!

By the same token, when Christ comes to us once again as a man in the flesh, how can we be sure that the Christians of today will not be the first ones to cast stones at the returned Christ? Today we have the same responsibility as the people of 2,000 years ago. No matter how great our works or our prayers, when God sends His Son, if we do not recognize him and unite with him, he will say to us, "Depart from me, you evildoers."

If it is ever true that history repeats itself, then the Christians of today could become the worst enemies of the returned Christ. They may attempt to crucify him once again in the name of the Lord.

However, even though the initial rejection and persecution may be very severe, Christ is not returning to be crucified again. The Lord of the Second Advent will be victorious, and will finally be elevated to the throne of judgment, and shall judge the world as the Lord of Judgment.

When he is lifted up to the throne, then every eye shall see him. It will be unmistakably clear to everyone who he is. And those who have previously accused and rejected him will wail and mourn because of the evil they have done to him. But it will be too late. The Lord will say to them, "I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers."

The Lord is coming. And he is coming as a man. Yet, he is also coming with the power and glory of God. And he will judge the world. Only the meek will be blessed. The arrogant will see the unquenchable fire.

MEANING OF THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

Then what is the true meaning of the "clouds of heaven"? Let us note once again that the Bible is written in symbols. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches." This is, of course, a symbolic expression.

By the same token, the "clouds of heaven" has a spiritual meaning, not a physical one. For instance, we read in Revelation,

The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. (Rev. 17:15)

The Bible indicates that water is a symbol for the multitudes of fallen mankind.

What are clouds? They are vaporized water. Water is often impure, dirty, with many foreign elements in it, but when such water is evaporated into clouds, it leaves its impurities behind. Thus, those people who are

vaporized and purified from among the waters of mankind are symbolically in the position of the clouds of heaven.

Jesus is coming among those prepared people, God's people. He is coming among the consecrated, reborn Christians—those who are purified, elevated, cleansed from sin. They will form the foundation of the Kingdom of God when Jesus returns to earth. This is the true meaning of the clouds of heaven.

GOD'S PURPOSE FULFILLED

First Adam and Eve: God actually intended His Kingdom on earth to begin with the first Adam and Eve. If they had been truly obedient to God and achieved perfection, God would have united them in heavenly matrimony and established the first family on earth according to His will. This family would have become the cornerstone of the Kingdom of God on earth, with Adam and Eve as the True Father and True Mother of all people. The Garden of Eden is the symbolic expression for that kingdom. And this world would have been the world of joy for God.

Second Adam and Eve: Although the first Adam and Eve failed, God's ideal remained the same. God determined to realize that original kingdom and fulfill the world of joy. And 4,000 years later in biblical history, God intended to restore that Kingdom of God on earth through another perfected Adam. Jesus Christ was that perfected Adam.

Paul called Jesus the "last Adam," or the second Adam (I Cor 15:45). He came as the perfected Adam 2,000 years ago in place of the first Adam, who had failed.

The restoration of Adam alone could not bring a kingdom. There had to be a bride, a mother—another Eve. So God intended for this perfected Adam—Jesus Christ—to restore his bride, the perfected Eve. This would have been the restoration of the first family, lost since the Garden of Eden.

Third Adam and Eve: Because of the rebellion of the chosen people of Israel, however, this never happened. Nevertheless, God is determined to fulfill His will. Thus, He has promised the return of Christ.

Approximately 2,000 years have passed since Jesus Christ's death. And now, God is once again ready to send His son—in the capacity of the Third Adam. Throughout history, God has always fulfilled His goal at His third attempt. It is true that the number three is the number of perfection. This time, God will definitely fulfill His age old ideal by blessing the perfected Adam and Eve in heavenly matrimony, thus laying the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth.

This ultimate condition is prophesied in the Book of Revelation as the marriage supper of the Lamb. And the Lord of the Second Advent is that Lamb, that perfect Adam. The Lord is coming as perfected Adam, and he will restore perfected Eve. Then they will be lifted up as the first True Parents of mankind. At last, God's joy will be complete.

Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus said to Peter,

'I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.' (Matt. 16:19).

The error was made here on earth. Sin was committed here on earth. So the error must be remedied and sin eradicated here on earth. Jesus asked us to pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Earth is the problem. That is why Christ must come back to this earth.

Many Christians believe that at the end of the world, God will destroy everything. The sun will be darkened, the stars will fall, and the earth will be burned up. A mere handful of Christians will be lifted up in the air, to spend the millennium with Christ.

If God did that, then He would become a God of failure, His original will forever unfulfilled. He would be relinquishing this earth to Satan. Then Satan would actually become the victor, and God the loser. This will never happen! God is almighty. He will not give up on this earth. It was meant to be, and it shall be, His kingdom. This New York shall be His kingdom, too.

You can be the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven if you meet the coming Messiah. He is your hope, my hope, and the only hope of America and this world.

If we fail to see him, however, then Christianity will have no hope. Christianity will decline. Its spiritual fire will be extinguished. The churches will become the tombs of the old legacy. Our world then will be doomed.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have come here to Madison Square Garden tonight in obedience to God's command. The Bible says,

And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my spirit on all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.' (Acts 2:17)

We are living in such an extraordinary time, at the birth of a new age! Heaven is quite near. And if you earnestly call upon God, He will answer you.

You must urgently ask Him, "How can I know if Reverend Moon is telling the truth?" Do not let me or anyone else answer that question for you. Let God answer you directly.

So go in peace, and please ask God earnestly, sincerely. Confront God in prayer. God will reveal the answer to you.

The new hope for mankind is the Messiah. And that "great and terrible day of the Lord" is at hand. It is up to you whether that day will be great or terrible. If you meet the Messiah, for you that day will be great. But if you fail to meet him, then for you that day will indeed be terrible.

God bless you. Thank you for your attentive listening.

Kamsa hamnida! Thank you, and good evening.