

Unification Church view of Jesus

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Jesus has a great importance in the teachings of the Unification Church, although its view of him differs from that of mainstream Christianity. Unification Church beliefs are expressed in the book *The Divine Principle*, written by an early disciple of the Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, Rev. Dr. Hyo Won Eu. Rev. Moon guided him and gave special instructions to create systematic version of his teachings. The *Exposition of the Divine Principle* was completed in 1966.^[1]

The Divine Principle is based on the Bible and includes new interpretations not found in Jewish and Christian tradition.^[2] Central to Unification Church teachings is the concept that fallen mankind can be restored to God only through Christ (the Messiah), who comes as a new Adam to become the new head of the human race (replacing the sinful parents), through whom mankind can be reborn into God's family. According to Divine Principle, Jesus of Nazareth is this Christ.^[3]

The Divine Principle teaches that Jesus was supposed to marry and establish an ideal family. The Messiah's role is essentially to fulfill the role of Adam. The Principle thus affirms that Jesus' original mission was to restore the understanding of Adam's mission, to perfect himself, marry, establish a God-centered family, and expand this foundation to a clan (his disciples), the nation of Israel, and eventually the entire world. Divine Principle holds John the Baptist largely responsible for the rejection of Jesus as Messiah during his lifetime. Therefore, Divine Principle teaches that Jesus' death on the Cross was not a preordained necessity. Rather, it was a secondary course made necessary by disbelief in his teachings and rejection of his role as Messiah while he was alive on Earth. Like traditional Christianity, however, Divine Principle teaches that Jesus' death served to accomplish the redemption of humanity's sins for those who believe in him. Unlike traditional Christianity, however, Divine Principle teaches that Jesus' resurrection was spiritual, not physical.^[4]

In 1980 Unification Church theologian Young Oon Kim wrote:

Unification theology teaches that Jesus came to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. As St. Paul wrote, Jesus was to be the new Adam restoring the lost garden of Eden. For this purpose he chose twelve apostles, symbolizing the original twelve tribes of Israel, and sent out seventy disciples, symbolizing all the nations of the world. Like John the Baptist, Jesus proclaimed that the long-awaited kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matt. 4:17). Jesus was appointed God's earthly representative in order to subjugate Satan, cleanse men of original sin and free them from the power of evil. Christ's mission involved liberation from sin and raising mankind to the perfection stage. His purpose was to bring about the kingdom of heaven in our world with the help of men filled with divine truth and love. Jesus' goal was to restore the garden of Eden, a place of joy and beauty in which true families of perfected parents would dwell with God in a full relationship of reciprocal love.^[5]

The Unification Church view of Jesus has been criticized by mainstream Christian authors and theologians. In their influential book *The Kingdom of the Cults* (first published in 1965), Walter Ralston Martin and Ravi K. Zacharias disagreed with the *Divine Principle* on the issues of the divinity of Christ, the virgin birth of Jesus, the Unification Church's belief that Jesus should have married, the necessity of the crucifixion of Jesus, and a literal resurrection of Jesus as well as a literal second coming of Jesus. They add: "Moon makes all men equal in 'divinity' to Jesus, thereby striking a blow at the uniqueness of Christ."^[6]

The *Divine Principle* responds to this criticism by saying:

There is no greater value than that of a person who has realized the ideal of creation. This is the value of Jesus, who surely attained the highest imaginable value. The conventional Christian belief in Jesus' divinity is well founded because, as a perfect human being, Jesus is totally one with God. To assert that Jesus is none other than a man who has completed the purpose of creation does not degrade the

value of Jesus in the least.^[7]

References

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3. Sontag, Fredrick (1977). *Sun Myung Moon and the Unification Church*. Abingdon. pp. 102–105. ISBN 0-687-40622-6.
4. "Divine Principle" (http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Divine_Principle), *New World Encyclopedia*.
5. Kim, Young Oon, 1980, Unification Theology (<http://www.religious.org/ucbooks/UTheol/toc.htm>), Barrytown, NY: Unification Theological Seminary, Library of Congress Cataloging number 80-52872
6. Walter Ralston Martin, Ravi K. Zacharias, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Bethany House, 2003, ISBN 0764228218 pages 368-370
7. Divine Principle (<http://www.unification.net/dp96/dp96-1-7.html#Chap7>), Chapter 7, Section 2.2

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