Time-setting and delay of the Parousia: a case study

Byung Ho Jang

March 1992

Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

Unpublished Dissertation (DPTh): 288 pages

Abstract:

This study intends to investigate a time-setting movement from a case taken out of a local rural Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church. The investigation begins by presenting the case of Kim Moon-sik, a member of Ch’unyang SDA Church. The study follows the three steps in pastoral theological reflection: analysis, interpretation, and action.

Part I: PRESENTATION

In the early 1960s, Kim Moon-sik received a teaching of Noah’s 120-year theory and believed that Jesus would come in 1964. Consequently, he moved into a mountain area and began to live a reclusive life with his family. Later Kim Moon-sik learned the jubilee and 6,000-year theories from time-setters; he came to believe that Jesus would come before A.D. 2000. As he felt that the time of the Parousia was very near, he again went into the mountains. In spite of his pastor’s persistent pastoral endeavor, he did not change his mind about the time-setting idea or alter his determination to live the mountain life.

Part II: ANALYSIS

The analysis part of this study deals with various important influences and factors that combine to raise the analyzed from the socio-cultural and religious dynamics standpoint related to Korean traditional values. One factor is the Father’s influential role in the family. Korean
society has been traditionally dominated by the male, thus Kim Moon-sik made the decision to accept the teachings of time-setters and move his family into the mountains. This decision was also influenced by a characteristic Korean trait—a sense of an urgent need for preparation developed under severe national crises in Korea’s past, such as wars, persecution, and poverty. All of these factors seemed to underlie the circumstances of Kim Moon-sik’s case.

Part III: INTERPRETATION

The interpretation part of the study contains an examination of the assertions of the time-setters that the time of the Parousia could be calculated from biblical materials, the writings of Ellen G. White¹, and historical sources.

Although some time-setters tried to calculate the time of the Parousia using Noah’s 120-year theory based on Matt 24:36, this study suggests that this idea has no scriptural bases. Rather, Matthew compares the terribly degraded social and moral situation of these days with the days of Noah. Other time-setters have insisted that the jubilee system should be studied as the basis for calculating the time of the Parousia related to the 6,000-year statements of Ellen G. White. This study revealed that she did not make a single statement related to the exact or approximate time of the Parousia. Rather, Ellen G. White used the prophecies pointing to Christ’s second coming to show the long passage of time of the great controversy between Christ and Satan along with the long-suffering nature of God.

¹ Ellen Gould white wrote under the following names: before marriage, Ellen Gould Harmon, Ellen G. Harmon, Ellen Harmon, and E. G. Harmon. After marriage, Ellen Gould White, Ellen G. White, E. G. White, and Ellen White. For the purpose of clarity in this paper the name Ellen G. White will be used consistently, both in the narratives, in the footnotes, and in the bibliography (Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, 1976 rev.ed., s.v. “White, Ellen Gould [Harmon]).”
The study touches the delay of the Parousia based on the Bible and writings of Ellen G. White. Finally, the findings suggest that the preparation for the Parousia is much more necessary for believers than trying to know the time of the Parousia.

Part IV: PASTORAL ACTION

In this last part, certain appropriate pastoral strategies are presented for the benefit of the church and its members. Moreover, the result of the study suggests the necessity for dynamic pastoral care and counseling, not only for Kim Moon-sik, but also for other time-setters and the body of sincere church members. The dissertation ends with a condensed conclusion, suggesting the timing of the Parousia belongs solely to God Himself.